

**United States Department of the Interior  
 National Park Service**

# 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.

**1. Name of Property**

Historic name: Downtown Franklin Historic District

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

**2. Location**

Street & number: 15-104 East Main Street; 5-81 West Main Street; 268 East Palmer Street; 25 Phillips Street

City or town: Franklin State: NC County: Macon

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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

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

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

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
<p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	
<p>In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____  <b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
<p>_____  <b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

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- 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

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>18</u>	<u>8</u>	buildings
<u>10</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>29</u>	<u>8</u>	Total

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

**6. Function or Use**  
**Historic Functions**

- COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
- COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant
- COMMERCE/TRADE: business
- COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution
- COMMERCE/TRADE: department store
- COMMERCE/TRADE: professional
- COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse
- SOCIAL: meeting hall
- DOMESTIC: hotel
- DOMESTIC: single dwelling
- GOVERNMENT: post office
- GOVERNMENT: courthouse
- GOVERNMENT: correctional facility
- LANDSCAPE: park
- RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater
- RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker

**Current Functions**

- COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
- COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant
- COMMERCE/TRADE: business
- COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution
- COMMERCE/TRADE: professional
- GOVERNMENT: courthouse
- GOVERNMENT: government office
- LANDSCAPE: park
- RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker
- RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style  
LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival  
MODERN MOVEMENT

### Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Walls: BRICK, STONE, STUCCO, CONCRETE

Roofs: METAL, SYTHETICS

Foundation: BRICK, STONE, STUCCO, CONCRETE

Other: METAL, STONE-Marble, STONE-granite

### Narrative Description

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#### Summary Paragraph

The Downtown Franklin Historic District is located at the core of the Town of Franklin, the county seat of Macon County, roughly one-half mile west of the Little Tennessee River. The linear district stretches along portions of East and West Main Streets from Patton Avenue at the east to slightly beyond Macon Avenue at its west. The district contains parcels that front Main Street, some of which are shallow and others that stretch north or south to parallel streets. At the center of the district, essentially if not literally, is the former town square at the intersection of Main with Iotla and Phillips Streets. Most of the contributing resources are two-story, masonry commercial and mixed-use buildings with party walls and a consistent setback along Main Street. Notable exceptions include the former U.S. Post Office, the Macon County Courthouse, and the three small parks that mark the former town square.

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#### Narrative Description

The roughly 8.85-acre Downtown Franklin Historic District is organized around Main Street, the town's major east-west thoroughfare. The legal parcel lines delineate the district and stretch north to Church Street and south to East Palmer Street in some areas. Along the spine of Main Street is an assortment of largely one- and two-story commercial masonry buildings. Main Street is a one-way, two-lane road, travelling west, with angled parking on its south side and parallel parking spaces along the north side. The street has views of the mountains to both the east and west. The district encompasses one fully intersecting road, Iotla Street, north of Main and Phillips Street to the south. Phillips Street has angled parking on its west side and parallel parking on its east, while both sides of Iotla have parallel spaces.

While not the geographic center of the district, the intersection at Main with Phillips and Iotla is its core. The county courthouse is located at the northwest corner of the intersection and there are

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three parks in the remaining corner lots, defining the public realm. This four-corner area is accentuated with brick sidewalks along Phillips and Iotla Streets to Palmer and Church Streets respectively, and along East and West Main Streets to the extent of county-owned properties (the courthouse and three parks). Beyond this, the sidewalks are poured concrete.

The courthouse exhibits some stylistic characteristics of New Formalism, with its concrete blind arcades supporting a projecting upper level and flat roof. The corner tower is more abstract and Brutalist. The building is set back somewhat from Iotla Street, creating a small brick plaza housing flagpoles and plaques.

Public space is more expansive in the three parks, all of which have a central organizing feature. The park at the northeast corner of the intersection had a fountain with a brick-veneered oval base, and brick paths radiate from it in the four cardinal directions. As the fountain is inoperable, a small gazebo now stands on the base. Park benches ring the exterior of the park. Seasonally this park hosts a large welcome sign for Appalachian Trail hikers. The southern parks have more expansive planting beds. The southeast park has an arcaded brick base supporting the former courthouse clock tower, and the southwest park has a central Confederate monument with a stone plinth supporting a stone statue of a soldier, beyond which to the south is a small former jail, now a museum.

Another prominent government building anchors the east end of the district: the former U.S. Post Office, now county offices. This 1935 Classical Revival building was designed by federal government architects working under Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon. As with other federal buildings of this era, the Colonial Revival style was a popular choice, hearkening to the country's beginnings in a symmetrical celebration of red brick, quoins, and classically inspired white trim.

Main Street creates a central spine for the district, and the majority of the resources along Main Street are one-or two-story masonry buildings with flat roofs rendered in a standard commercial style, regardless of use. A good example of this is the shop at 94 East Main Street. This one-story brick building with a parapet roof has a central glazed entrance flanked by display windows that provide an opportunity to market wares to the casual pedestrian passerby. Modest brick detailing on the façade remains, though slightly obscured by paint and a fixed canvas awning.

Many of the two-story buildings housed retail uses on the first floor with professional offices above, and some still do. The Ashear Building at 29 East Main Street was built in phases. First-floor tenants have historically included retail stores, restaurants and specialty stores. The second floor is divided into office suites that once housed a unit of the U.S. Forest Service. The exterior brickwork is relatively simple but includes a corbelled cornice. The first floor has storefronts with large display windows, while the second story, accessed from a street level door to a stair hall, has paired sash windows, fenestration more suitable for offices. The Scott Griffin Hotel is a three-story brick building with a frame rooftop roof garden and terrace, allowing for al fresco entertaining with expansive views. The hotel, however, as with most Main Street addresses, reserved much of the first floor for retail and service uses.

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On the south side of East Main Street is the ca. 1901 Franks Building, which echoes most of the style and forms found along the street. The two-story brick building has a facade that is divided into three parts with two large, street-level storefronts with copious amounts of plate glass flanking a central entrance bay. Above that is a regular pattern of sash windows in the second story. The buff-colored brick on the facade has subtle detailing with corbelling, soldier course window lintels, and rowlock beltcourses. It faces the 1957 Belk's Department store, a two-story masonry building almost devoid of ornament and texture. An almost entirely glazed first floor with a canted central entrance bay is sheltered by a suspended fixed flat awning. Above the awning there is no fenestration, and four gooseneck light fixtures are a modern alteration. Historically the building used the blank slate of the second-floor facade to support oversized signage, creating in effect a store that served as a billboard.

The southernmost property in the district fronts on Palmer St. but is part of a larger parcel that extends north to Main Street. The Farmers Federation building was originally constructed as a garage and warehouse but is more closely associated with an early tenant, the Farmers Federation. Making use of the sloping lot, the embankment allowed for the use of both levels of the building for storage and warehouse functions, given the ease of loading at both the first and second stories.

In the late 1960s Franklin participated in the Townlift program sponsored by the Tennessee Valley Authority. The program provided organizational and design assistance to smaller towns within its service area. The influence of the Townlift program can be seen in several aspects of the district. The relocation of the courthouse from a central courthouse square to a point within the street grid was a direct recommendation of the program. With the demolition of the former County Courthouse in 1972, the town square that surrounded it was reimaged. The northwest quadrant became the location for the new courthouse, a traditional orthogonal intersection of streets was created, and the three remaining quadrants were transformed into parks

The program also recommended the improvement of alleys from Main Street to parking lots behind street-facing buildings. Schematic drawings for the alley on the north side of the street can be found in the Townlift records at National Archives. Townlift recommended the introduction of parallel parking on one side of Main Street, but this was not implemented until sometime between 2017 and 2020. The implementation of a more "unified" streetscape in terms of signage and awnings was a direct recommendation of the program, and subsequent improvements followed that guidance.

## **INVENTORY**

Many of the resources in the district were surveyed in the 1990s, primarily by architectural historian Jennifer Martin. As part of this project, files for the entire project were reviewed, earlier data was keyed into the state's survey database, and new surveys and updates to older surveys were added. Where previous survey property descriptions remain apt, they have been used in this inventory, as in the survey database. The inventory is organized primarily alphabetically by street name and secondarily by address/street number ascending low to high. Resources listed as noncontributing were either built after the period of significance or have been altered to the

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extent that they do not have sufficient integrity to be contributing. Entries contain the unique North Carolina resource identification survey site number in parentheses after the street address. Parking lots are enumerated and evaluated in a manner consistent with guidance found in National Park Service "Considering Parking Lots" *Best Practice Review*, April 2025.

### **East Main Street**

#### **Southeast Town Square Park                      ca. 1972                      Contributing Site**

E. Main Street at Phillips Street, South Side (MA0830)

At the center of this park at the southeast of the Town Square is the former courthouse tower on an arcaded brick base in a small plaza. This central tower plaza is accessed by crisscrossing brick walkways that are asymmetrical in plan. All walkways lead to a bricked area that surrounds the tower. The tower has a planting bed at its southeast and south. The areas between the brick pathways are curved planting beds that include crepe myrtles along the north side of the park, a large deciduous tree near its southwest corner, and a clump of evergreen trees at the southeast corner.

#### **Northeast Town Square Park                      ca. 1972                      Contributing Site**

E. Main Street at Iotla Street, North side (MA0828)

This park originally had a fountain that became too expensive to maintain so only its masonry base remains, part of which now supports a wooden gazebo. Brick paths extend from the center of each side of the park to the central fountain base. Between the paths, the park is planted in grass. The park has several benches and a large rock with a bronze plaque commemorating the travels of botanist William Bartram.

#### **Angel Building    1932    Contributing Building**

26 E. Main Street (MA0822)

The Angel Building on Town Square has housed numerous functions including the Arnold Cafe and Angel's Drugstore. Other tenants have included a barber shop, a tobacco shop, a laundromat, and a shoeshine stand. The one-story building is laid in running bond brick. The facade is divided into two storefronts. The eastern storefront is smaller and has a single-leaf glazed door with a transom flanked by narrow plate glass windows. The western storefront also has a single-leaf entrance flanked by plate glass windows, but these windows are wider. Given the building's placement on essentially a corner lot, the northern bay of the west elevation continues with additional display windows. An awning wraps the northwest corner of the building. Beneath the awning it is apparent that upper windows exist above the display windows. There are two small windows on the upper portion of the west elevation. A third storefront near the southern end of the building has a central entrance flanked by display windows, and the entrance is accessed by concrete steps that ascend to the east between the two display windows. A small enclosure on the south elevation shelters stairs that descend to the east to a basement-level unit.

#### **Leach Building    1937    Contributing Building**

28 E. Main Street (MA0821)

Built by brothers Tom and Gus Leach, the building housed the Dixie Store and Stewart's Electrical Appliance Store, both on the first floor. The Dixie-Home Store, Franklin's first

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supermarket, opened in 1947 on the entire first floor. The northern half of the building is two stories; the southern half, which may be an addition, is one story. The facade is four bays across and is divided visually into two storefronts on the first floor. Flanking each storefront on the east and west sides of the facade respectively are single-leaf doors that service stairs to the upper floor. The east storefront has double-leaf glazed doors with a transom above, flanked by large plate glass windows. A large awning spans the eastern storefront but not the east access door. The western storefront projects and the access door and the storefront door are recessed on either side. A pent roof spans the west storefront and the west access door. The brick that is exposed on the first floor is painted. On the second floor it is unpainted and laid in a pattern with five courses of running bond to a single course of Flemish bond. The second floor has four sets of paired one-over-one windows that appear to be replacements yet follow the original fenestration openings. Each pair shares a common rowlock sill. The building has a modest cornice with one course of dog tooth brickwork. On the south elevation there are two doors, one servicing each store. Both doors are accessed by wooden decks with wooden steps that descend to the east. A large green awning spans both entrances. East and west of the entrances are masonry openings that have been infilled.

### **Ashear Building**

**1931-1933**

### **Contributing Building**

29 E. Main Street (MA0827)

In the 1920s Joseph Ashear purchased property along E Main St. that he later developed. In 1930 he began work on a one-story building with a basement to be 44 feet wide and 78 feet deep. When the building opened in March 1931, *The Franklin Press* noted that he opened the building with a festive square dance.<sup>1</sup> The article further noted that Ashear had moved to Franklin in 1911 from Syria. He opened a store on the square that moved to larger spaces in 1913 and 1922. Anticipating the need for even more space, Ashear built this structure with the capacity to be expanded in the future. In 1933 he announced plans for a two-story brick building facing Main Street that would measure approximately 40 by 100 feet, with stores facing Main Street and the square, and offices on the second floor. The building was designed to have steam heat, and Ashear pledged to hire only local labor.<sup>2</sup> The new building would adjoin his earlier building.

Work was well underway by June 1933, when it was announced that the second story would expand over his pre-existing one-story store and that both buildings would be finished with a tapestry brick on the outside to look like a single large building.<sup>3</sup> The building opened in the fall of 1933. Tenants included the S & L 5 and 10 Cent Store, Sloan and Company, the Watkins Sandwich Shop, and the Franklin Shoe Shop. It was also disclosed that there would be 25 offices on the second floor, but those offices were not completed until 1934. At that point it was announced that the Forest Service had rented space. It was noted that the roof had “ingenious devices, much like ship ventilators, to keep the second-floor offices cool in summertime.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Joe Ashear, in Business Here for 20 Years, Moves to Spacious Modern Store,” *The Franklin Press*, March 19, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> “Ashear Plans New Building,” *The Franklin Press*, April 27, 1933.

<sup>3</sup> “New Building Rises Rapidly,” *The Franklin Press*, June 29, 1933.

<sup>4</sup> “New Offices are Now Open,” *The Franklin Press*, August 6, 1934.

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The Ashear building is a two-story brick building laid in running bond with a flat roof. The facade has a corbelled brick cornice. On the second floor are six masonry openings housing paired one-over-one windows with rowlock sills. A fixed pent roof spans the façade, sheltering the storefronts below. There are four storefronts facing Main Street. Each storefront has a single-leaf glazed door in a recessed bay flanked by display windows. Centered on the façade is a single-leaf glazed door that leads to stairs to the second story.

The west elevation has four first-floor masonry openings. The one on the southern side of the elevation appears to have been a display window servicing a store fronting Main Street. The other three are set further north on the elevation. The northern two are active; the one immediately to their south has been boarded up. The second floor has a series of paired windows with rowlock sills spaced at regular intervals. The corbelled cornice from the facade wraps to stretch along this elevation. The north elevation suggests that the building was originally L-shaped in footprint, with one section extending north on the west side of the building. A later one-story addition has been constructed, creating a courtyard of sorts between them. The western portion of the north elevation mirrors the brickwork, cornice, and fenestration on the south and west elevations. An exterior metal stair has been added that ascends to the east along the wall to a landing and a walkway that proceeds south along more paired windows to a framed-in vestibule with access to the second floor of the building. The setback, two-story section of the north elevation continues the predominant brick and fenestration patterns and has an exterior end brick chimney. A one-story brick addition extends north from the eastern side of the north elevation. Its north elevation is clad in board and batten siding. It has a glazed door, two windows, and a metal pent roof. The east elevation of the one-story wing has no masonry openings.

**Paved Parking Lot**

**pre 1970<sup>5</sup>**

**Contributing Site**

North of the building, on its lot, is a paved surface parking lot that extends to roughly the center of the block.

**Idle Hour Theater**

**1924**

**Contributing Building**

36 E. Main Street (MA0820)

As early as 1924, *The Franklin Press* was running advertisements for the Idle Hour Theater, which was housed in the first floor of this building. A ca. 1931 photo shows a set of exterior steps ascending to the south along the west side of the building.<sup>6</sup> The photo shows the two sets of paired windows on the second floor. It shows a large masonry opening on the first-floor façade, nearly the width of the façade, with a recessed entrance and a projecting canted box office. The masonry opening still exists, but now there are flush display windows at the east and west and a central recessed entrance bay housing double multi-pane doors with a fanlight above. The building has a small brick cornice with a dogtooth course that matches the adjacent buildings. The south elevation has a single-leaf door on the main level to the east. Given the change in

<sup>5</sup> USDA Aerial Photo Macon County 1970. Earlier photos lack the focus to determine a definitive construction date. This applies to all surface lots enumerated in this inventory.

<sup>6</sup> Photograph by Denton Higdon, "You Might be from Franklin, NC if . . .", Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/260406410652252>.

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grade, the door is accessed by concrete steps that ascend to the east to a small stoop. There is a basement level entrance behind the steps. There are two masonry openings on the main level, both boarded. On the upper level are two masonry openings with rowlock sills. They are boarded, but one is partially exposed and shows a single one-over-one window, likely one of a pair. A green awning stretches the width of this elevation at the ceiling level of the first floor. A ghost sign reads "The Twins Shop," which was a retail establishment in this building after the theater closed.

**McCoy Building**

**ca. 1916**

**Contributing Building**

38-46 E. Main Street (MA0834)

The McCoy building is said to have been constructed ca. 1916. It was developed by W. L. McCoy, who also bought the neighboring Jarrett Hotel. The McCoy building once housed the Franklin Millinery Company as well as Pearl's Beauty Shop. Although the facade is unified to a large extent, the south elevation suggests the building may have been erected in more than one campaign. The facade is nine bays across and as with many buildings on Main Street, the first floor has been altered. The second floor is clad in running bond brick and has nine arched masonry openings with three-course, rowlock segmental arches above eighteen-light replacement windows. Spanning the facade is a corbelled brick cornice with a dog-tooth course.

On the first floor, the eastern two storefronts are recessed between stone-faced piers, and each has a single glazed door to the east with display windows to their west.<sup>7</sup> A large black awning stretches across the eastern bays of the façade. The three western bays of the first floor contain a single-leaf door adjacent to the eastern storefronts that accesses a stair to the second story; to its west are a display window and recessed glazed entrance. A green awning stretches across these three bays.

Signage affixed to the façade above the awning obscures the brickwork but, there appear to be several decorative courses including a Flemish bond course and two rowlock courses. If these decorative courses continue to the east, they are obscured by stone facing. Second-story windows have rowlock sills that are easier to see in the three western windows. The south elevation is obscured by fencing, but it is evident that the two east bays are not a full two stories for the entire depth of the building. The one-story section at the south has two arched openings. The seven bays to the west are a full two stories with the four western bays set slightly back. The second floor has arched masonry openings with soldier course segmental arches and rowlock sills housing replacement nine-over-nine sash windows. A shed-roofed porch extends across much of the first floor in the central bays.

**Scott Griffin Hotel**

**1927**

**Contributing Building**

45 E. Main Street (MA0579)

Throughout the 1920s there was a growing appreciation of western North Carolina as a tourist destination, particularly with improvements in infrastructure and parks. In the summer of 1926 Sam Franks (postmaster), W.C. Cunningham (merchant), and Henry Cabe (banker), who had

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<sup>7</sup> Stone facing visible in ca. 1968 Townlift photo.

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started construction of a commercial building on Main Street on the “Higdon property,” made the announcement that it would instead be a hotel.<sup>8</sup> The Sloan Brothers Company storeroom was incorporated into the building’s first floor.

In 1927 it was described as four stories in height, with 36 bedrooms, a dozen baths, steam heat, and hot and cold water in every room. The first floor included Sloan Brothers, Smith's Drugstore, and a barber shop as well as the hotel office and a lobby, which had a fireplace. Bedrooms and baths were on the second and third floors. The second floor also included the kitchen, a dining room, and a lady's parlor with a view of Main Street. All lodging rooms had windows. The fourth floor had a roof garden that included a framed enclosure that was smaller in footprint than the lower floors, allowing for a terrace on a portion of the roof of the third floor. The roof garden was touted as a venue for dances and banquets and as having a lovely view.<sup>9</sup>

The hotel, named for Mr. Franks’s father-in-law, Scott Griffin of Rutherfordton, opened in February 1927. Construction costs were reported to have been \$50,000. The interior had plaster walls with furniture and trim of walnut. Supervising the construction work was H. O. Curtis of Sylva.<sup>10</sup>

The façade is clad in running bond brick. A relatively modern pent roof supported by metal posts extends south at the first floor to create a covered walkway. The second floor has six masonry openings with segmental arches and rowlock sills housing paired one-over-one windows; it also has a narrow masonry opening with the segmental arch that houses a door with a transom that led to a veranda where the fixed awning/pent roof over the sidewalk is now. Aligned above the second-floor windows are third-floor windows, also paired one-over-one windows with rowlock sills and soldier course lintels. The brick cornice at the top of the third floor includes soldier course brickwork and buff-colored brick with a canted soldier course, topped by corbelling. The fourth floor is frame and smaller in footprint than the three floors below it, leaving room for a terrace. It has a gable-on-hip metal roof, one-over-one paired windows, and is clad in what appears to be aluminum siding. The first floor has three storefronts all infilled with modern, metal-framed plate glass windows and glazed doors. Above the pent roof and a line above the two western storefronts are recessed brick panels likely once used for signage.

By 1968 the upper-level masonry openings were infilled or boarded and original windows likely lost as seen in Townlift photos. Photos of this period also show fixed awnings which provide some precedent for the current fixed pent roof above the sidewalk.

**Jarrett Hotel**

**ca.1894**

**Contributing Building**

50-60 E. Main St. (MA0833)

An earlier Jarrett Hotel stood on this site and was destroyed by a fire in 1894. The rebuilt hotel was noted for its two-tiered porch. Hamilton Jarrett’s estate sold the hotel in 1920 to W. L.

<sup>8</sup> “Dream of Years to be Realized in the Construction of Big Commercial Hotel,” *The Franklin Press*, May 28, 1926.

<sup>9</sup> “Scott Griffin Hotel to Open,” *The Franklin Press*, February 3, 1927.

<sup>10</sup> “Celebrates Opening of New Commercial Hotel,” *The Franklin Press*, February 10, 1927.

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McCoy, who leased the building then known as the Franklin Hotel and Restaurant. This establishment had 16 rooms upstairs with a restaurant and shops on the first floor. Eventually the front porch became dilapidated and a threat to public safety and was removed ca. 1960. In 1976 the rock facing was added during the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Townlift project.<sup>11</sup> This may also be when the brickwork on the second-floor façade was reworked.

The first-floor façade has three storefronts and a door at grade that leads to a stair accessing the second floor. The eastern two storefronts flank the access door. These storefronts consist of a single glazed door flanked by display windows. Both storefronts currently serve the same tenant, and a large awning spans the facade across the two storefronts. The western storefront has twin doors in a recessed entrance that is flanked by display windows, with a narrow metal pent roof above the recessed entrance. The entire façade is clad in stone up to the windowsill level on the second floor. The second floor has seven masonry openings; the three central masonry openings are arched and are flanked by projecting brick pilasters. The central arched opening has been bricked in save for a two-light arched window at the top. The flanking arched openings have sash windows with fan lights above. Flanking the central section are two sash windows at the east and west. The edges of the buildings are projecting pilasters framing a recessed brick second story with a brick corbelled cornice.

The south or rear elevation is in three parts, a protecting central section flanked by setback sections at the east and west. Given the change in grade, the south elevation is three stories. The central section of the south elevation has a restaurant at grade with a central entrance flanked by display windows all beneath a pent roof. On the third floor of this section are two sets of paired sash windows with common rowlock sills. The east section of the elevation has a business at grade with an awning, exterior steps that ascend to the north to a metal door on the second floor, and two sash windows on the third floor. The west section of the elevation has a display window and a door at grade. Concrete steps ascend to the north and east to a landing that services a door on the west elevation of the central section and one the eastern side of the second-floor business. West of these doors there are two windows. Two sash windows are in the third floor above.

**Bank of Franklin Building**

**1941**

**Noncontributing Building**

55 E. Main St. (MA0826)

An earlier Bank of Franklin building with offices above stood on this site prior to a November 1940 fire that destroyed the building and Harve Bryant's adjacent building. Architects S. Grant Alexander and Associates of Asheville designed the complementary replacement buildings and W. T. Tippet was the contractor.<sup>12</sup> Both buildings were completed in December 1941.

The dates of alteration are yet unknown, but the current building bears scant resemblance to the Gothic Revival-inspired 1941 building. Currently the two-story building has polished stone panel cladding on the first floor, flanking two storefronts set east of center. Between the store fronts is an ATM machine. The storefronts have a composite window with columns of three large, fixed panes. The east storefront has five of these and the west storefront has four. Both storefronts

<sup>11</sup> Joey Stafford, personal conversation with the author March 27, 2024.

<sup>12</sup> Some sources say W. P. Tippet.

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have a single-leaf glazed entrance. The east storefront's entrance is at the east of its display window and the west storefront's entrance is at the west of its display window. A fixed red canvas awning spans the façade between the first and second floors. The second floor is clad in brick veneer and has five masonry openings with rowlock sills, each housing a single-pane fixed window. The only obvious remnant of the 1941 building visible on the façade is the modest cornice with brick corbel brackets, which repeats on the Bryant building next door.

The west elevation is exposed along an alley. On this elevation one can see a slightly shorter rear addition. The earlier portion of the building has brick belt courses above and below a series of regularly spaced second-story windows. The first floor has three masonry openings with windows. In the later addition is a single-leaf door at grade with a window aligned above it, and a second window farther north.

The north elevation suggests that the building may originally have been L-shaped in footprint, with a one-story infill edition added at the building's northeast quadrant. The north elevation is two stories at the west and one story at the east. A colonnade with a green metal roof stretches across, both providing shelter to a double-leaf entrance in the one-story section of the building.

**Paved Parking Lot**

North of the building, on its lot, is a paved surface parking lot that stretches to Church Street.

**pre 1970**

**Contributing Site**

**Harve Bryant Building**

**1940**

**Noncontributing Building**

61 E. Main St. (MA0825)

A November 1940 fire destroyed Harve Bryant building and the adjacent Bank of Franklin. Architects S. Grant Alexander and Associates of Asheville designed the complementary replacement buildings, and W. T. Tippet was the contractor. Both buildings were completed in December 1941. The new Harve Bryant Building was built of steel with brick veneer. The interior was described as being cream and white with hardwood floors, steam heat, and fluorescent lighting.<sup>13</sup> In 1940 Harve Bryant and Lyman Higgins were co-owners of the Macon County Supply Company, which was housed in the new building. Macon County Supply Company was founded in 1909. The general mercantile store was a locally owned institution. Though highly altered, some aspects of the original design remain. The two-story brick building is laid in five-course American bond. The corners of the building are marked by projecting pilasters. A rowlock beltcourse runs across the façade, forming sills for two sets of paired windows on the second floor. The masonry openings housing the windows have soldier course lintels, above which is another rowlock belt course. The brick cornice is subtle and features corbelled brick brackets. The windows appear to be sliding glass with simulated divided lights in a 12-light pattern. The first floor has been clad in stone. It has a single-leaf glazed door with a glazed panel to the west. East of the entrance is a projecting bay with a single picture window. Between the first and second floors is a fixed metal pent roof that spans the façade. Though barely visible, there appear to be windows on the second floor of the building's east elevation.

<sup>13</sup> "Harve Bryant Building," *The Franklin Press and the Highlands Maconian*, December 4, 1941.

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Several building campaigns have resulted in additions on the north elevation, including one with a substantial brick firewall. A large portion of the addition to the north of the firewall is a two-story, concrete block, gable-roofed building. Extending even further to the north is a long, one-story, concrete block gable-roofed building. On its west elevation, beneath the gable, is an inset loggia that provides access to a number of office suites within the wing. The north elevation has a concrete deck that is an uncovered extension of the loggia, leading to a single-leaf door and a set of concrete steps that descend to the north, with a concrete planter east of the deck and steps.

**Higgins Building**

1898

**Noncontributing Building**

62 E. Main St. (MA0819)

Construction of this building by Dr. W. H. Higgins and Lee Crawford began around 1898. At one point the building housed *The Franklin Press*, which later moved to the Franks building in 1928. In the 1940s the building was extensively reworked and housed Cagle's Cafe. The Franklin Lions Club had their organizational meeting in 1939 in the cafe. The building also housed the Boutique Shop. The facade was stuccoed at one point, but the stone facing has been in place since at least 2008.

The two-story facade is divided into two storefronts. The east storefront has a display window, and a single-leaf door housed in separate masonry openings. The west storefront has double glazed doors with a transom flanked by display windows that have low stone walls beneath them. The entire facade is clad in stone veneer. The second floor has four one-over-one windows. The masonry openings on the second floor each have a stone jack arch with keystone. The east and west edges of the facade have projecting, stone veneered pilasters. A green metal pent roof spans the facade between the first and second floors. Given the change of grade, the south elevation is three stories. It has a single-leaf door at grade. The second and third floors have arched masonry openings that have been partially infilled. The third-floor windows have fixed awnings. A single-leaf door cut into a window opening on the main level is accessed by a wooden deck that has wooden steps that descend to the west and south. The rear elevation is slightly narrower than the facade, allowing for a setback bay on the west end of the south elevation with a planter at grade below it.

**Belk's Department Store**

1957

**Contributing Building**

71 E. Main St. (MA0824)

W. C. Burrell built this building with contractor Wiley Clark to house Belk's department store. Belk's had been renting in another building, but this new building gave it double the floor space, as well as a ladies' lounge, air conditioning, and an exterior described as "ultra-modern."<sup>14</sup> A newspaper photo shows that the building not only had "Belk's" spelled out in applied letters mounted flush on the second story of the facade, but a second sign where "Belk's" was spelled out in individual letter tiles arranged vertically and hung perpendicular to the facade wall plane. The signage is gone, but the second floor of the facade continues to be an expanse of brick. A fixed flat metal canopy that extends over the sidewalk remains. Large, slightly canted display

<sup>14</sup> "Belk's Is Credit to Town—Clark," *The Franklin Press*, February 28, 1957.

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windows at the east and west on the first floor flank a recessed entrance. Currently there is a single door, but there may have been two sets of entrances in this recessed bay.

The north elevation has a single-leaf glazed door at grade sheltered by a tall canopy. It is flanked by six-light windows that appear to be hopper windows. These windows have canted rowlock sills. Farther west on this elevation is a service entrance and what may be a basement entrance. Its second floor has a service bay with a roll-up door to the west, and to the east two industrial metal windows. Though difficult to view, it appears there may be additional industrial windows on the second floor of the building's east elevation.

**Paved Parking Lot**

**pre 1970**

**Contributing Site**

North of the building, on its lot, is a paved surface parking lot that stretches to Church Street

**Moore-Benbow Building, East and West 1908**

**Contributing Building**

72 E. Main St. (MA0818)

76 E. Main St (MA0817)

In 1907 J. T. Moore and Frank Benbow had assembled sufficient land to build two interconnected buildings along East Main Street. Frank Smith operated a drugstore in the western half of the building. The Robertson and Benbow law office was upstairs. Later Dryman's Mens Shop replaced the drugstore. The second story was used by the International Order of Elks and the Knights of Pythias, but it is unclear if they used the eastern or western portion of the building. The rough-faced concrete block for the building was made by Willie Hayes.<sup>15</sup> Historic photos indicate that the building had decorative parapets.<sup>16</sup> A narrow parapet was aligned above a single-leaf door at grade. Both the east and west sides of the building had use of the stairs that serviced the second floor through an easement, but the stairs are technically part of the western portion of the building. West of the stairwell entrance bay, the roof had a parapet in a three-part arrangement, the central portion being slightly higher than the flanking portions, and all three sections topped with brackets similar to those across the facade between the first and second floors. The building originally had display windows and a recessed entrance. The display fenestration pattern has been slightly altered and the doors replaced. The awning is a more recent addition. A manuscript addressing historic buildings downtown suggests that the parapet was dismantled because it had become a structural hazard.<sup>17</sup> Five one-over-one windows on the second floor (one in the stair hall bay) conform to the original fenestration pattern however they may be replacement windows. The edges of the building are marked by a vertical course of concrete block that is beveled. Additionally, smooth-faced blocks flanking the central windows were integrated into the larger parapet pattern above. Red brick replaces the concrete block parapet that was removed.

<sup>15</sup> *Downtown Building Histories*, typescript, Town of Franklin records, nd.

<sup>16</sup> As seen in Jessie Sutton (editor), *The Heritage of Macon County, North Carolina* (Hunter Publishing Company, 1987), 35.

<sup>17</sup> *Downtown Building Histories*.



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the Angel shoe store; *The Franklin Press*; a dentist, Dr. Grant; Joseph Ashear's Department Store; and Callahan's Department Store.

The façade is clad in buff-color brick and is divided into three sections, a center two-bay section flanked on either side by three-bay sections. The easternmost section has a single-leaf glazed door on the first floor at the east, which leads to stairs that ascend to the south to access second-floor spaces. West of the door is a large, four-pane, plate glass display window. The center section is flanked by brick piers and within them is a recessed vestibule with two doors. The western section has a five-pane plate glass display window. A large canvas awning spans the façade between the first and second floors. On the second floor the three sections are recessed brick panels flanked by brick pilasters that are continuations of the brick piers marking the central section on the first floor, and those on the outer edges of the building. The recessed brick panels have rowlock sills and corbelling at their tops. Each panel houses masonry openings with rowlock sills and soldier course lintels housing sash windows. The east and west panels have three windows and the center panel has two. Above the panels is a rowlock course, above which the front wall of the façade continues to a projecting brick cornice. The west elevation of the building is a common wall with the adjacent building. The east elevation is brick that has been painted.

The only masonry openings on the east elevation are on the upper level, which has five, each housing a sash window with a cast stone sill. On this elevation a stepped brick parapet can be seen at the roof line. The south elevation has been stuccoed over and cast stone sills of earlier masonry openings can be seen. There is one large door at grade. Four sash windows and a door are on the upper level. This door leads to a metal fire escape with metal steps that descend to the east. On the main level at the western side of the building is a small porch with a shed roof accessed from grade by a set of wooden steps that ascend along the side of the building to the west.

**Jamison Store**

ca. 1953

**Contributing Building**

94 E. Main St (MA0389)

This property was owned from 1911 to 1985 by members of the Jamison family. At one point there appears to have been a frame building on-site, which was moved in 1953 in order to construct the current building which once housed Jamison Jewelers. The one-story building with a commercial storefront has changed very little since the last survey in 1994. The exterior walls on the east, west and south are laid in 10-course American bond; the façade brickwork is obscured by paint. The flat roof has a brick parapet on three sides with terracotta coping. The south elevation has two small windows that appear to be fixed, or casement, each with a rowlock sill.

**(former) United States Post Office**

1935

**Contributing Building**

104 E. Main St. (MA0390)

The post office building was designed by Federal government architects working under Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon (1867-1958), who held that position from 1934-1941, having worked in that office since 1896. Most major federal buildings were designed by this in-house team until the 1930s.



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**Confederate Monument 1909**

**Contributing Object**

**(New) Macon County Courthouse 1972**

**Contributing Building**

5 W. Main St (MA0626)

The building is largely unchanged from the 1994 survey. Not mentioned and perhaps new since 1994 is an enclosed second -story bridge to the former Nantahala Power and Light building. The 1994 survey describes the building thus:

The 1972 Macon County Courthouse is located in the heart of Franklin's central business district on the same corner lot as the earlier courthouse. Fronting on two public parks, the courthouse environs are quite open with active pedestrian traffic through the parks and into and out of the surrounding stores.

The contemporary courthouse, designed by Kyle C. Boone, is a three-story brick veneer structure which has a masonry band and two-story segmental arch arcade applied to the two street side elevations. Four-story curvilinear elevator towers with vertical fixed glass bands are set in the northwest and southeast corners of the nearly windowless building. The entrances are recessed between the towers and the building. The overall impact of the structure is that of a modern bank or commercial office building rather than a courthouse. The interior plan is rather conventional with a long hall flanked by offices on each floor. The finish is of modern materials. Bronze memorial plaques from the front of the old courthouse are affixed to the lobby walls.<sup>20</sup>

**Paved Parking Lot pre 1970**

**Contributing Site**

Northwest of the courthouse, on its lot, is a paved surface parking lot that stretches to Church Street. This lot was part of the design when the courthouse was constructed.

**(former) Dixie Grill ca.1935**

**Noncontributing Building**

26 W. Main St (MA0382)

The only apparent changes from the 1994 survey are the replacement of a non-historic entrance door and the removal of an awning from the façade. The 1994 Survey states:

According to Franklin native Vic Perry, this building originally housed the Dixie Grill. Built around 1935, this one-story brick commercial building features a horizontal recessed brick panel over the front bays. Located near the cornice are two bands of delicate brick courses. The building is topped with a flat roof. The first floor and interior have been altered significantly.<sup>21</sup>

**Wayne and Sally's Log Cabin 1860**

**Noncontributing Building**

32 W. Main St. (MA0831)

This narrow lot next to the Pendergrass building is an extension of the historical society's holdings. A landscaped brick path extends south to the end of the parcel where a ca. 1860 log

<sup>20</sup> North Carolina Historic Preservation Survey files, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> North Carolina Historic Preservation Survey files, 1994.

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cabin has been placed. The side-gabled cabin has a recent, stone-faced chimney on its south elevation. It sits on a concrete block foundation that has been faced with stone. A full-width, shed-roofed porch with a rustic twig railing spans the façade. The cabin was moved to this location in 2020. It is thought that the cabin was originally from Kentucky and moved to North Carolina in the late 20th century. The parcel also has a Civil War marker and a concrete pier with a metal plaque concerning a Franklin bridge.

**Pendergrass Building**                      **1904**                      **Contributing Building**  
36 W. Main St (MA0009)

The building is little altered from the 1994 survey which describes it thus:

Jesse R. Pendergrass had this two-story brick building constructed on a lot on Main Street in 1904. Pendergrass, a native of Old Fort, North Carolina, came to Franklin in 1890 to serve as the preacher for the Franklin Baptist Church. Pendergrass went into the dry goods business instead of serving as a full-time preacher. He operated a store on Main Street with R.L. Bryson until he bought him out in 1899.

Pendergrass sold clothes, food, tobacco, household goods, furniture, farm equipment, and china. After Jesse Pendergrass died in 1934, his son J. Broadus operated the store. In 1975 a fire damaged the store and the next year it was sold to Charles Sill and used as an art gallery. In 1988 the Macon County Historical Society purchased the building and continues to use it as a local history museum.

The Pendergrass Building is an example of a twentieth century rectangular commercial building. The three-bay facade contains a pair of rectangular plate glass windows and a recessed double-leaf entrance. A stepped parapet on the east and west elevations shield a flat roof. Rectangular windows with segmented arches are found on the side elevations. A wood stair was originally located on the east elevation.

The interior of the building remains remarkably intact. Most of the original shelving and counters are intact. A stair rising from the center rear of the first-floor retail area leads to the second floor. The second floor consists of an open room in the rear and lofts on the east and west walls.<sup>22</sup>

The store is individually listed on the National Register.

**(former) Franklin Telephone Co. Building**                      **ca. 1920**                      **Contributing Building**  
43 W. Main St (MA0383)

Since it was last surveyed, the façade has been painted white. A pent roof has been added between the first and second floors, and a canvas awning has been added over the second-floor windows but below the corbelled brickwork. The 1994 survey notes:

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<sup>22</sup> North Carolina Historic Preservation Survey files, 1994.

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This two-story brick building, built circa 1935 originally housed the Franklin Telephone Company and now serves as an accountant's office. The first-floor facade has been altered, but above it are four windows in the second story beneath a band of stepped brickwork. The building is topped with a flat roof.<sup>23</sup>

**(former) Nantahala Power & Light Co. Building ca. 1952 Noncontributing Building**  
63 W. Main St.(MA0384)

The building was begun in 1951, the company having bought the parcel from the county late the previous year. Merchant Construction Company of the Asheville was the general contractor, and the architect is yet unknown. The construction is a combination of steel and concrete block and the building cost an estimated \$200,000 to build. The facade is clad in Mount Airy granite and originally had aluminum panels (that may still remain under later additions). The building had a model kitchen in the interior to display the many uses of electricity in preparing food.

The 1994 Survey describes the building:

The Nantahala Power and Light Company had this office building constructed on Main Street in Franklin around 1952. The faintly art moderne building is the finest example of modern office architecture in the county. Most offices in the county are located in remodeled historic buildings or recently-constructed buildings with little architectural character. The two-story rectangular brick building features a stone veneer and metal facade. Dominating the facade are numerous multi-light sash windows. Both floors feature offices divided by a long corridor which runs east to west. The bottom floor also has a customer service office. A flat roof tops the building.<sup>24</sup>

The building includes a rear wing/annex that was a service area. Macon County bought the building in 1997 and appears responsible for a number of major alterations, including the addition of a metal gable roof painted bright green, replacement windows along the façade, and canvas awnings that may replace original metal awnings. These alterations greatly impair the original art moderne appearance. The original exterior metal paneling may survive under the new awnings. The rear wing extends north at a right angle from the main building. It is a utilitarian masonry wing that has been stuccoed and has a flat roof.

**Garage** **ca. 1952 Noncontributing Building**  
At the northwest corner of the parcel, obscured by a privacy fence, is a two-bay, flat-roofed, concrete garage.

**Paved Parking Lot** **pre 1970** **Contributing Site**  
North of the building, on its lot, is a paved surface parking lot that stretches north to abut the Courthouse's parking lot.

<sup>23</sup> North Carolina Historic Preservation Survey files, 1994.

<sup>24</sup> North Carolina Historic Preservation Survey files, 1994.

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**Johnston-Porter Building**                      **ca. 1887**                      **Contributing Building**  
77-81 W. Main St (MA0385)

From the 1994 survey:

The Johnston-Porter building was constructed in 1887 and 1888. The two-story rectangular brick commercial building originally housed a dry goods store (on the lower right) and Smith's Drug Store (on the lower left) on its first floor. The second floor housed the original Franklin Press offices. The east and west side elevations feature a series of segmental arched windows beneath the stepped parapet walls shielding the flat roof. The front cornice features simple corbelled brickwork. Second floor windows retain their original segmental arches, but modern windows have replaced their two-over-two sashes.

The first-floor storefront has been altered significantly; the original storefront consisted of large display windows with a central recessed double-leaf entrances, but the current bays are flush and feature single-leaf door. Although it has been altered, the building is one of Franklin's few nineteenth century commercial buildings which retains its original brick facade. West's Florist and an antique store now occupy the first floor and the second floor remains vacant.<sup>25</sup>

The eastern half of the façade has been coated in a form of stucco or concrete. One-over-one windows on the second floor of the eastern façade have been replaced with one-over-ones with simulated divided lights in a six-over-six pattern. The pent roof on the western façade has been re-roofed with metal where there were wooden shingles. Second-story one-over-one windows are replaced with one-over-one sash with simulated divided lights topped by fanlights. A deck on the north side of the building's west elevation services a door that appears to have been a window and has exterior steps descending to the north. The deck appears to have been added around 2020

### Palmer Street

**Farmers Federation Building**                      **1926**                      **Contributing Building**  
68 E. Palmer St (MA0832)

The 1924-1934 Sanborn map shows this as a 28-foot-wide, two-story building with autos and general storage on the first floor and a furniture warehouse on the second.<sup>26</sup> The slope of the lot is indicated with a notation that the second floor is level with grade on the north side of the building. Press reports in September 1925 said that W.L. McCoy was building a new garage 60 by 100 feet on Palmer St. that would be brick and two stories high. It was reported that McCoy had a lease to rent the building to the city garage.<sup>27</sup> The building appears to have been completed by the spring of 1926. The building appears never to have been called the McCoy Building, likely to avoid confusion with McCoy's building on Main Street. It is most often referred to as

<sup>25</sup> North Carolina Historic Preservation Survey files, 1994.

<sup>26</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, *Map of Franklin*, 1924-24.

<sup>27</sup> "McCoy Builds Again," *The Franklin Press*, September 25, 1925.

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the Farmers Federation Building. While not the original tenant, the Farmers Federation moved into the building in 1936.

The façade on the south elevation has a fixed shingled pent roof that spans the elevation between the first and second floors. The first floor is divided into three large bays. The center bay has double-glazed doors flanked by plate glass windows. The windows sit atop a low brick wall with a rowlock sill. The east and west bays each have a bank of three plate glass windows, the same dimensions as those flanking the door, all resting on common rowlock sills. On the first floor the brick is unpainted but on the second floor it has been painted, obscuring the bond pattern which appears to be a six-course composition with five courses of running bond to a single course of Flemish bond. The second floor has six masonry openings, evenly spaced, each with a concrete or cast stone lintel above a one-over-one window. As the brick is painted it is not clear whether the square brick patterns aligned above the windows in the attic level are decorative or could have housed attic level windows in the past. Above them is a cornice with a soldier course dog tooth course and basket weave bond above. The framed gable roof atop the structure appears to be a later addition. The east elevation has seven one-over-one windows on the upper level in masonry openings that have been infilled but with a rowlock sill remaining. There's a single masonry opening in the lower level on this elevation. The north elevation has windows in the entrance that are obscured by a shed roofed porch that nearly spans the elevation. The west elevation has four windows in masonry openings. A fifth has been bricked in, and others may exist under applied signage. As with the east elevation, there's a single masonry opening in the lower level on this elevation.

**Paved Parking Lot**

**pre 1970**

**Contributing Site**

North of the building, on the lot it shares with the Jarett Hotel building, is a paved surface parking lot that stretches between them.

**Phillips Street**

**(former) Macon County Jail**

**ca. 1896**

**Contributing Building**

25 Phillips St. (MA0518)

The building appears not to have changed since the 1994 survey, when it was described:

Colonel Benjamin Britton and John Wesley Hall built the original Macon County jail soon after the county was organized in 1829. New replacement jails were built in 1850-1851, and again in 1873. The latter building burned in the last decade of the nineteenth century and was replaced in 1896. In 1930, county commissioners voted to rebrick the building and reinforce it with steel beams. Bill Tippett, a builder whose work is seen throughout Franklin, was hired to oversee the project.

A flat parapeted roof tops this two-story, rectangular brick building. A small one-story addition stands on the south side of the main jail. Four-over-four sash windows with their bars intact grace each facade of the jail. A deeply recessed door pierces the north facade. This

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utilitarian building also features a brick belt course between the first and second floors. The building currently functions as a gem and mineral museum.<sup>28</sup>

### Statement of Integrity

The Downtown Franklin Historic District remains in its original location. There is a single resource that has been moved to within the district boundaries; however it is a noncontributing resource. The district has high integrity of location. The downtown is still the core commercial area for the county seat with residential and less densely developed commercial areas at its periphery. Vistas to the mountains at the east, west, and south are visible at street crossings. The district retains a high degree of integrity of setting. While some aspects of design, workmanship, and materials have changed, the most notable of these, including the reorganization of the courthouse square and façade improvements of commercial spaces, occurred within the period of significance and to some extent reflect the urban planning and design concepts introduced by the TVA in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The retention of the County Courthouse within the downtown commercial area and the adaptive use of the former U.S. Post Office combined with an active and vibrant commercial and retail presence along Main Street reinforce the integrity of feeling and association of the county seat of government and the county's historic commercial core.

### Statement of Archaeological Potential

Based on the Office of State Archaeology's (OSA) current records there have been no archaeological surveys conducted on properties within the Historic District, while there are 9 previously recorded precontact and postcontact archaeological sites located within a one-mile radius. The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail (NC0013) runs through the Historic District along with a segment of the Great State Road, and the Franklin to Camp Scott Trail, both identified by research conducted by archaeologists at Western Carolina University and the North Carolina Trail of Tears Association. The NEQUASEE (NIKWASI) Mound (MA0586, 31MA1) lies within .36 miles of the Historic District along with the NEQUASEE (NIKWASI) Village site (31MA2). The Jesse R. Siler House (MA0002), which is .25 miles from the Historic District, is called a Witness House and has history associated with the Trail of Tears and the Removal Era period. The information obtained from archaeological research in the historic district could address various topics related to the National Register listed Trail of Tears National Historic Trail and the American Indian Nikwasi Village site (31MA2). To date, no archaeological investigations have been conducted to identify intact cultural resources from the precontact or later periods, but it is likely that they do exist within the District, and this should be considered in any future development of the contributing properties.

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<sup>28</sup> North Carolina Historic Preservation Survey files, 1994.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

### Criteria Considerations

- 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

ARCHITECTURE  
COMMERCE  
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### Period of Significance

1887-1976

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**Significant Dates**

1894  
1909  
1935  
1940  
1972

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Love, Robert Gustavos Adolphus  
Tippett, W. T.  
Clark, Wiley  
S. Grant Alexander and Associates  
Simon, Louis A  
Boone, Kyle C.  
Gallimore, B.  
Merchant Construction Company  
McNeel Marble Company  
Bryant Construction Company

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

The Downtown Franklin Historic District encompasses the core of the governmental and commercial center of Franklin, itself the governmental and commercial center of Macon County. The district is significant at the local level under Criteria A in the areas of Commerce, and Community Planning and Development, and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. In addition to a large collection of Commercial Style buildings, most with first-floor retail and upper-level offices, the district contains prominent government buildings in the Classical Revival and Modernist styles. These prominent buildings communicate the importance of the role of the local and federal governments, having housed vital functions including the county courts and the postal service. The majority of the buildings in the district are commercial establishments. While the functions and tenants have changed over time, this commercial center has served the evolving needs of the town and the county supporting retail trade, banking, tourism, and entertainment. Organized along Main Street, the town had centered around a courthouse square, a traditional urban form. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, under the influence of the federal Townlift program of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the town reincorporated the courthouse

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into a street grid pattern and encouraged Main Street improvements to coordinate and modernize the commercial shopping area. The Period of Significance begins in 1887, the date of the oldest extant building that is original to the district, and runs until 1976, to include the construction of the “new” county courthouse and storefront improvements suggested by the Townlift program. The district does contain one log cabin that has been removed from its original location. This small resource, adjacent to the historical society headquarters, is noncontributing. The Confederate monument is a commemorative property, but its age and symbolic value have invested it with its own historical significance.

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### Narrative Statement of Significance

The town of Franklin, the county seat of Macon County, is located at the site of the Cherokee town Nikwasi. The Nikwasi Mound (ca. 1000 CE; NR listed 1980) is located approximately one-half mile east of downtown Franklin, near the Little Tennessee River. The larger region was part of the Cherokee nation. In 1820 the North Carolina General Assembly hired a survey party headed by Robert Love to map the territory transferred from the Cherokee under the Treaty of 1819, which had moved the boundary of the Cherokee nation’s holdings west from an area in current Jackson County to the ridgeline of the Nantahala Mountains.<sup>29</sup>

Macon County was formed from Haywood County in 1828, and in 1829 the first courthouse and jail were built in Franklin. The Town of Franklin, which had initially been surveyed in 1820, was itself not incorporated until 1855. The State Commissioners had originally planned to establish the county seat in another location, but were swayed by the strong influence of chief surveyor Robert Love to select the town’s current location.<sup>30</sup> The General Assembly set aside 400 acres to be a county seat and authorized the sale of 20 lots, each approximately one acre, along the north and south sides of Main Street.<sup>31</sup> Legislation directed a commissioner to “survey and mark out the lots of said town, not exceeding 20 in number, of one acre each, including a public square in the most suitable place.”<sup>32</sup> Love’s survey organized these parcels around a central public square at the current intersection of Main and Iotla/Phillips Streets. Ten lots were organized north of Main Street and ten to the south. The lots were further divided equally on the east and west sides of the public square with the four central lots offset slightly from Main Street to frame the square. Legislation also directed the town to be named Franklin after late North Carolina Governor Jesse Franklin.

Population statistics from the U.S. Census for the town of Franklin begin in 1880 when 207 persons were recorded in Franklin, representing about 2% of the county’s population of 8,064.

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<sup>29</sup> In 1835 the Treaty of New Echota between the Cherokee and the federal government led to the displacement of the Cherokee from the southeastern United States via the Trail of Tears.

<sup>30</sup> Rev. C.D. Smith, *A Brief History of Macon County, N.C.* (self-published, 1891), 1.

<sup>31</sup> *An Act prescribing the mode of surveying and selling the lands lately acquired by the Treasury from the Cherokee Indians*, Laws of North Carolina, 1819; Betty Saunders, “Treaty Began Macon County History,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, June 20, 1976.

<sup>32</sup> *An Act concerning the lands lately obtained by treaty from the Cherokee Indians*, Laws of North Carolina, 1821.

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Population grew to 281 in 1900 but still represented about 2% of the county's population. Most residents continued to live in more rural areas but depended on Franklin to serve important governmental and commercial functions. The *1890 Branson's North Carolina Business Directory* reports that Franklin had five hotels and boarding houses; five lawyers; numerous grain and sawmills; and one fraternal organization, the Junaluska Lodge.<sup>33</sup> Six years later, Branson's directory listed 20 merchants and tradesmen in Franklin, as well as two hotels, two liveries, a drugstore, and nine general stores.<sup>34</sup> In comparative terms there were only 15 other general stores listed for the entire county in the 1896 directory, five of which were in Highlands. The decrease in some businesses between the 1890 and 1896 directories may be a reflection of fire loss. Many of the early buildings in the southeastern quadrant of the proposed district were frame, and destroyed by fire in March of 1894.<sup>35</sup>

Several buildings on East Main Street were constructed in the wake of the fire. The Jarrett Hotel, later the Franklin Hotel and Restaurant, was rebuilt on-site. Immediately adjacent to the Jarrett Hotel was Cunningham's livery, also destroyed by the 1894 fire.<sup>36</sup> The livery was replaced ca. 1898 by the Higgins Building, which has housed retail and commercial uses on the first floor, and *The Franklin Press* between 1908-1922 on the second. The Franks Building, just outside of the original town plot, was constructed between 1884 and 1901. It replaced a series of two-story mixed-use spaces destroyed by the fire known as the Franks-Lyle Block. The Franks Building has housed stores, a doctor's office, a dentist's office, a café, a barber, a shoe store, *The Franklin Press* (beginning in 1928), Ashear's store (from 1916 until the Ashear Building was built), and Callahan's Department Store. Also built on the former livery site was the Moore-Benbow Building (1908), which has housed a drugstore, a men's clothing store, law offices, a lumber company office, and lodge rooms for the International Order of Elks and the Knights of Pythias. Slightly later, the McCoy Building (ca. 1916) was constructed on the site of the former Love Brick Block, an early masonry edifice that was damaged by the fire but slowed its destructive path to the west. The McCoy Building housed a ladies clothing and hat store, as well as a beauty shop. Unlike most of the town's earliest buildings, the Jarratt Hotel, the Higgins building, the Franks Building, the Moore-Benbow Building, the McCoy Building and others that followed were all made of brick.<sup>37</sup>

With the exception of a building moved to Franklin, the only extant building in the proposed district predating the 1894 fire is the Johnston-Porter building.<sup>38</sup> The Johnston-Porter Building (ca. 1887), located near the west end of the district, housed a dry goods store and a drugstore on the first floor and was one of the many homes of the *Franklin Press* on the second. The only other extant nineteenth-century building in the district is the former Macon County Jail (ca. 1896). This jail replaced an earlier ca. 1850 jail that burned in 1896 from a fire thought to have

<sup>33</sup> Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, Raleigh, 1890.

<sup>34</sup> Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, Raleigh, 1896.

<sup>35</sup> "Destructive Fire at Franklin," *The News and Observer*, March 25, 1894.

<sup>36</sup> *Downtown Building Histories*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> Jennifer Martin, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Macon County, North Carolina, ca. AD 600-1945*, National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form, 60.

<sup>38</sup> Wayne and Sally's Log Cabin (ca. 1860) was moved into the district in 2020.

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been set by prisoners.<sup>39</sup> In the 1920s after an aborted plan to build a new courthouse and jail, the nineteenth-century jail was inspected and found not to meet state standards.<sup>40</sup> The building was renovated by W. T. Tippett in 1930 to include a substantial concrete wall reinforcement.<sup>41</sup> It continued to serve as a jail until a new courthouse and jail facility was completed in 1972, after which time it has housed the Franklin Gem and Mineral Museum highlighting the region's rich geological heritage.

In the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, the buildings along Main Street were a mixture of commercial and residential.<sup>42</sup> Eventually houses were replaced with businesses, and frame buildings with masonry ones. The Pendergrass Store, located at 6 West Main Street (ca. 1904), for example, replaced an earlier frame store on-site.<sup>43</sup>

In 1907 the Nantahala National Forest was authorized, stretching over three states and expanding through the early twentieth century. While none of it encroaches on Franklin, the forest covers approximately 46% of Macon County's area. The forest restricts growth in much of the county, funneling it to developable areas such as Franklin and Highlands, the other incorporated municipality. The forest has boosted tourism, and the U.S. Forest Service does make a payment in lieu of taxes to support the local tax base.

A Confederate monument that still stands at the corner of Main and Phillips Street was erected in 1909. Early that year, legislation was introduced and passed for the county to donate land for the monument.<sup>44</sup> It was one of dozens of such monuments erected across North Carolina and the South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The monument depicts a Confederate soldier atop a tall marble plinth. The soldier was made by the McNeel Marble Company of Marietta, Georgia, which was a prolific supplier of similar works. It was dedicated on September 3, 1909 to great fanfare.<sup>45</sup> Unlike most monuments throughout the South, it was not the product of a ladies' memorial association but the brainchild of a Confederate veteran, N. P. Rankin, for whom the square/park was subsequently named.

Development continued through the first half of the twentieth century. Enhanced transportation options supported growth and expansion in the county. The Tallulah Falls Railroad, extending north from Cornelia, Georgia, reached Franklin in 1907, though financial stresses impaired its operations and effectiveness. The State Highway Commission issued millions in construction bonds beginning in the early 1920s to improve or expand road networks throughout the state including Macon County.<sup>46</sup> Franklin's population grew modestly in the first quarter of the twentieth century from 335 people in 1900 to 1,094 in 1930. The McCoy building was

<sup>39</sup> "Macon Jail Burned," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, March 27, 1896.

<sup>40</sup> "Macon County Jail Condemned by Prison Inspector," *The Asheville Times*, October 10, 1927.

<sup>41</sup> "Remodeling of Macon County Jail Underway," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, May 15, 1930.

<sup>42</sup> Sanborn Insurance Company, *Map of Franklin, North Carolina*, 1924.

<sup>43</sup> Carolyn A. Humphries, National Register nomination: Pendergrass Store, 1990.

<sup>44</sup> "House has a Busy Night," *The Raleigh Times*, February 25, 1909.

<sup>45</sup> "Honors to Heroes of Macon County," *The Asheville Times*, October 2, 1909.

<sup>46</sup> Jennifer Martin, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Macon County, North Carolina, ca. AD 600-1945*, National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form, 64.

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constructed in 1916, and the former Franklin Telephone building in 1920. In 1924 the evocatively named Idle Hour Theater opened in a new building that was converted to retail use in 1929. McCoy's Garage, later known as the Farmers Federation Building, was finished in 1926.

Tourism was a growing industry in Macon County in the 1920s. Highlands, the other incorporated municipality in the county, developed as a resort community. A scenic road between Franklin and Highlands was built in the early 1920s along the Cullasaja Gorge offering access to waterfalls and picturesque vistas. The nearby Appalachian Trail was begun in 1922 and completed in 1937. By 1926 there was a steady drumbeat of articles in the local media supporting an increase in the tourism industry and citing the need to expand local infrastructure to accommodate it. In January of that year *The Franklin Press* noted that the town's boarding houses, tourist homes and commercial hotels were insufficient to meet demand "Because Franklin is rapidly becoming one of the premier small town tourist resorts of the entire south."<sup>47</sup>

Bryson City author Horace Kephart addressed the Franklin Chamber of Commerce in August 1926, attesting to the isolation of western communities prior to the state's investment in good roads. Improved transportation and the promise of a new Smoky Mountains National Park were opportunities that towns like Franklin needed to capitalize on, he said, noting Franklin "will need more and better hotel accommodations and amusement facilities than are now to be found in the whole region from Canton to the Georgia line."<sup>48</sup> The Scott Griffin Hotel, then downtown Franklin's largest building, was completed in 1927. The Scott Griffin boasted steam heat and hot and cold water in every room. Amenities included first-floor retail, a dining room and a lady's parlor with a view of Main Street on the second floor, and a roof garden with a terrace for dancing and dining.<sup>49</sup>

Tourism was not the only industry in the county. In the early twentieth century a rise in timbering and mining began to supplant small-scale agriculture and continued to support the county's economy and the commercial center of Franklin.<sup>50</sup> Despite the Depression, commercial expansion continued downtown with the Ashear Building of 1931. It was constructed in phases, with shops on the first floor and office suites above. The following year the Angel Building was erected across the street, replacing the less intensive land use of a mini golf course. In 1935 the Dixie Grill Building was completed and in 1937 the Leach Building, which later housed the town's first grocery store.

The federal government invested in downtown Franklin with the construction of a new post office building, authorized in 1934 and completed in 1935. \$71,000 was budgeted for the building, which was planned to house the headquarters staff of the Nantahala National Forest as well. The project was one of more than 600 federal projects approved that year and one of only two in western North Carolina. Once a site was selected, B. Gallimore of Greensboro prepared the winning bid for construction.

<sup>47</sup> "Franklin as a Tourist Resort," *The Franklin Press*, January 29, 1926.

<sup>48</sup> "Roads and Park to Transform Western N. C., says Kephart," *The Franklin Press*, August 27, 1926.

<sup>49</sup> "Scott Griffin Hotel To Open," *The Franklin Press*, February 3, 1927.

<sup>50</sup> Jennifer Martin, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Macon County, North Carolina*, 53.

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Growth through the midcentury continued, though at a modest scale. From 1930 to 1950 the number of residents increased from 1,094 to 1,975. Redevelopment on the north side of East Main Street was prompted by yet another fire in November 1940. The Bank of Franklin Building was destroyed and several nearby buildings damaged. In the wake of the fire, a new Bank of Franklin building was constructed in 1941 and the adjoining Bryant Building was rehabilitated.

The 1950s and 1960s ushered in new commercial expansion as larger scale department stores replaced the town's traditional specialty stores. In 1957 the North Carolina-based Belk's department store moved from the Ashear Building where it opened in 1945 to a larger, modern, purpose-built facility down the street. The new store, built by contractor Wiley Clark at the cost of \$135,000, boasted three full floors of air-conditioned spaces in a concrete block, steel, and brick veneer edifice. A newspaper article celebrating the opening made specific mention the "eye-catching aluminum and glass front . . . set off by a modern block sign in green and white spelling out BELK'S in a vertical plane."<sup>51</sup> Belk's was followed a few years later by the Bowers Department Store Building.

Population increased from 1,975 in 1950 to 2,336 in 1970. The early 1970s brought more change to downtown. Civic boosters secured federal assistance to rejuvenate the downtown commercial strip. Urban planners from the federal government also influenced decisions associated with construction of a new county courthouse, funded by municipal bonds and opened in 1972. There was a movement to retain the older courthouse, but the county commission voted in 1972 for it to be demolished, citing maintenance and financial challenges.<sup>52</sup> Its clock tower was saved and incorporated into one of the downtown parks.

Franklin is one of two incorporated municipalities in a largely undevelopable county and is the county seat. As such, it has been and continues to be the locus for commercial activity for townspeople and for the majority of residents who live in rural sections of the county. Despite sprawl, Franklin continues to have a vibrant downtown. Its historic buildings continue to house a variety of commercial activities and uses.

The district is notable for architecture showing the evolution of materials, forms and design in commercial buildings between 1887 and 1962; and for the inclusion of two architecturally notable buildings: the 1935 former U.S. Post Office and Federal Building and the 1972 Macon County Courthouse. From the Pendergrass Building to the Belk's Building, one can see an evolution of urban commercial architecture and form. The governmental buildings are strong examples of specific architectural styles.

Early buildings within the district, both residential and commercial, were largely frame. As the town grew, these buildings were replaced by fire or demolition in favor of masonry structures. Early examples such as the Johnston-Porter Building, the Pendergrass Building and the Franks Building demonstrate turn-of-the-twentieth-century architectural features. Two-story brick

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<sup>51</sup> "Belk's Is Credit to Town—Clark," *The Franklin Press*, February 28, 1957.

<sup>52</sup> John Parris, "Progress to Fell Macon Courthouse," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, January 30, 1972.

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buildings, they all have flat parapet roofs. Their facades are largely symmetrical and have large display windows on the first floor and regularly spaced sash windows on the second, allowing for mixed uses with retail establishments on the first floor and office and other commercial uses on the second.

This pattern is disrupted by the Scott Griffin Hotel, notable for its height, and three one-story buildings—the Angel Building, the Dixie Grill and the store at 94 East Main Street. It is unclear whether the single-story buildings were a response to a limited budget or a driving design consideration, but they begin to dismantle the mixed-use multi-functional pattern of earlier buildings in the district. The youngest two commercial buildings in the district move toward a mid-century modernist aesthetic. The Bowers and Belk's Department stores have large continuous expanses of display windows and canted entrances. Both have a structural canopy that extends above the sidewalk, and neither has any fenestration above the canopy. While Bowers is a one-story building, Belk's has two stories but no upper-level fenestration on the façade. This allowed the building to read almost as a sign itself with oversized affixed lettering (no longer extant). In both cases the forms were simplified, stripped of any decorative masonry, and reduced architecturally to bare essentials.

The Classical Revival former U.S. Post Office and Federal Office Building was built during a period of expansion in post office construction. More post offices were built in the 1930s than triple those in the previous fifty years.<sup>53</sup> It was also designed and built during a period of reorganization of the funding, design, and administration of public buildings.<sup>54</sup>

The design was executed under supervising architect Louis A. Simon (1867-1958), whose designs were characterized by restraint and functionality in comparison with earlier eras of federal building. Under his administration, federal buildings were directed to reflect the architectural character and heritage of their region. Franklin's Classical Revival post office is larger than some others of the era, reflecting the inclusion of Forest Service offices. While it does not appear to be a standard design per se, it shares many characteristics of other buildings designed under Simon's tenure: bilateral symmetry, brick exterior walls, and the classical detailing such as quoins, beltcourse, graduated fenestration, applied swags, round-headed composite windows with keystones, and Gibbs door surround. Later additions are relegated to secondary elevations, and the building continues to communicate effectively its style and importance.

Bookending the district near the opposite end of Main Street is a second prominent government building, the Macon County Courthouse. Completed in 1972 it replaced the country's second courthouse, a simplified Italianate-style building finished in 1882 and renovated in 1906 with a mansard roof and the wooden clock tower that now stands in one of the central parks.<sup>55</sup> For decades there were attempts to replace the 1882 courthouse. In the summer of 1941, Macon County Commissioners released a series of renderings of a new county courthouse they hoped

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Postal Service, Office of Real Estate, "History of Post Office Construction 1900-1940," 1982, 14.

<sup>54</sup> Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*. (Oxford University Press, 2000), 237-275.

<sup>55</sup> Jennifer Martin, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Macon County, North Carolina*, 61.

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would be built with federal WPA funds. An article in the local newspaper cited the obsolescence of the current building and noted that Main Street real estate had already been procured. Funding must not have been secured, as the classically inspired art deco design published in the paper was never realized.<sup>56</sup>

In the early 1960s, the movement for a new courthouse gained strength and cost estimates were prepared by architects Foy and Lee of Waynesville.<sup>57</sup> Later architect T. J. Hamilton provided a schematic design for a Georgian-inspired building. Ultimately the chosen design was a quasi-Brutalist building by Kyle Boone of Boone Lyda Associates. The 41,000 square-foot county courthouse and municipal building was constructed by Bryant Construction at a cost of \$1.2 million.

While the south and east elevation display some aspects of New Formalism in the blind arcades rendered in structural polychrome, the corner tower at the southeast is formed of broad expanses of brick that curve to form vertical slots with narrow, inset ribbons of windows. The tower form is repeated at the building's northwest corner. The towers and arcades alter the perception of the building's sense of scale, a phenomenon that is reinforced by the obscured inset windows and setback entrances adjacent to the tower. The lack of strong articulation of windows and doors and dearth of ornament provide no indication of human scale from the exterior and no clue to the building's function. This renders it almost an abstraction, creating the sense of a strong object that anchors the intersection.

While individually architecturally significant, together these two buildings express a range of styles reflecting two radically different approaches to government design. The former post office uses decorative motifs to hearken back to classical precedents inspiring a historical gravitas. The municipal building includes a subtle nod to an arcaded form but generally disposes of all precedents to create a monumental expression of indeterminate scale at a prominent intersection.

Two major aspects of community planning are expressed in the district. One is the original design incorporating a courthouse square, the form of which is captured in the three small central parks. The second is the influence of professional planning as directed and funded by the federal government.

The courthouse square is a common form in North Carolina, though not unique to the state. The central placement of the courthouse establishes and reinforces the importance of the seat of local government and the justice system. The removal of the courthouse from its central position, the simultaneous introduction of a regular street grid pattern, and other commercial building improvements are a result of community planning ideals espoused by planners and designers employed by the Townlift program, a federal program sponsored by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).

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<sup>56</sup> "Court House Plans Made," *The Franklin Press and the Highlands Maconian*, June 5, 1941.

<sup>57</sup> "Grand Jurymen Suggest Election On Courthouse," *The Franklin Press*, December 15, 1960.

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The original plan of the town of Franklin has been lost and is available only in reproductions. Drawn by surveyor Robert Gustavos Adolphus Love (1760-1845), it shows a series of rectangular lots arrayed around the intersection of a main street running east/west and a cross street running north/south. At the intersection of these two thoroughfares is a “public square.”<sup>58</sup> Though it is not entitled a courthouse square per se, perhaps as the survey of Franklin preceded the formation of Macon County, it soon became one.

Paul Haynes, in his study of North Carolina courthouse squares, noted that “the square is usually both the literal and symbolic center of the county.”<sup>59</sup> This was certainly true for Franklin and Macon County. Also true of Franklin was the relationship between the central square and the commercial core of the county. Haynes continued, “the square has similarly then by tradition the commercial center of the town. Business of all types was conducted on the square and in some counties the market stood adjacent to the courthouse.”<sup>60</sup>

The square in Franklin is a variant of what has been termed a “Lancaster Square” after the courthouse square in Lancaster, Pennsylvania that was reserved in the town plan in 1729 for the courthouse completed in 1739.<sup>61</sup> A Lancaster Square is carved out of the street grid and centered on the intersection of two streets. The Lancaster Square has a greenspace, square in footprint, surrounding the building. In that sense Franklin’s plan is a variant as the courthouse was placed north of center and was set within only small area set apart from vehicular traffic and even that space, adjacent to the courthouse at the north, east, and west, appears to have been given over eventually to surface parking. Paul Haynes waxes eloquently on the tradition and importance of the central courthouse square in North Carolina’s historic geography:

The square continues to be a pervasive element in the North Carolina townscape, embodying traditions of central county government and community identity . . . the desire for county identity which contributed so heavily to the ascendancy of the square in the beginning remains the force responsible for the squares persistence today. Stripped of most ancillary functions the courthouse square retains its original and most fundamental role as the symbolic heart of the county and physical core of the county seat.<sup>62</sup>

Hayes continued to note changes over time to courthouse squares and several case studies, and the elements he noted such as the rise of car culture, the need for additional space for county offices due to rising populations, and the increased role of county government all played a role in the decision to build a new County Courthouse in Franklin, one that was large enough to require a new site.

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<sup>58</sup> Robert Gustavos Love, town plan as reproduced in Sutton, *The Heritage of Macon County, North Carolina*.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Haynes, “The North Carolina Courthouse Square: Particularizing Time and Place,” in *Carolina Dwelling*, ed. Doug Swaim (The School of Design North Carolina State University, 1978) 175.

<sup>60</sup> Haynes, “The North Carolina Courthouse Square,” 175.

<sup>61</sup> Edward T. Price, “The Central Courthouse Square in the American County Seat,” *Geographical Review* 58, no. 1 (January 1968): 40.

<sup>62</sup> Haynes, “The North Carolina Courthouse Square,” 183.

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The decision to build a new courthouse grew out of administrative and space needs, but the decision to move the courthouse from the central square to an adjacent parcel, once part of the open square, was also influenced by community planning ideals espoused by planners and designers employed by the Townlift program of the TVA. Established in the 1930s as part of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, the TVA is a publicly-owned power company although its initial mission extended to flood control, economic development, and regional planning within its seven-state service area.

Between 1963 and 1983 the TVA operated the Townlift program, which used "downtown modernization as the focal point for a broader program of community improvement."<sup>63</sup> The program was free to localities, funded by federal appropriations, and offered at the request and invitation of the community. The cover document for its archival files notes that "Townlift primarily focused on central business districts. Particular problems that were addressed included revitalization of historic structures; off-street parking; recommendations for placing overhead wiring underground; and downtown beautification, including appropriate signage and graphic standards. The recommendations were normally conceptual in nature allowing future detailed drawings to be prepared by private consultants." Townlift staff was made up of professional planners, architects, engineers and economists.

The town of Franklin requested Townlift assistance in 1968 and they were scheduled for work beginning in 1969.<sup>64</sup> An early media report suggests that Franklin desired help with "a cluttered central business district" as well as assistance with traffic, parking and a re-visioning of the county court complex.<sup>65</sup> It also mentions the beautification of off-street parking areas. A preliminary Townlift staff memo addressing a possible scope of work emphasized issues of visual coherence downtown, the need for beautification projects, and the possibility of a design competition for the new County courthouse building that would "be the focal point for town lift"<sup>66</sup>

The proposed new county building was a primary issue for the TVA planners. A memo drafted by TVA staff reported from a meeting held on September 13, 1968: "a well-designed and landscaped new county building located in downtown Franklin could be a focal point for city-wide beautification efforts and would substantially enhance Townlift operations, especially along Main Street."<sup>67</sup> The county had received schematic designs by an architect named T. J. Hamilton for what he described as a Georgian-type building. TVA staff had hoped for a design competition

<sup>63</sup> "Operation Townlift program," typescript, October 1967; Tennessee Valley Authority Townlift Program Records (1963-1983), National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta Schedule Number: N1-142-88-003.

<sup>64</sup> Peter Stern, memo to E.P. Ericson, "Expanding Townlift," February 1, 1968; Tennessee Valley Authority Townlift Program Records (1963-1983), National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta Schedule Number: N1-142-88-003.

<sup>65</sup> "Franklin Explores TVA's 'Operation Townlift' Plan," *The Asheville Times*, June 4, 1969.

<sup>66</sup> Algenard Herring, memo, "Franklin, North Carolina-Tentative Work Program for Operation Townlift," August 30, 1968; Tennessee Valley Authority Townlift Program Records (1963-1983), National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta Schedule Number: N1-142-88-003.

<sup>67</sup> Al Herring, memo, "Operation Townlift Franklin, North Carolina," September 18, 1968; Tennessee Valley Authority Townlift Program Records (1963-1983) National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta Schedule Number: N1-142-88-003.

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but in any event disliked the Hamilton design, as they felt that the site and building were narrow, the entrance on Main Street should be reoriented, and that the setback was not sufficient.<sup>68</sup> While further influence on building design and siting is undocumented, the selected architect, Kyle Boone, was simultaneously working to complete and implement the Townlift recommendations for nearby downtown Canton, suggesting his work was appreciated among Townlift consultants.<sup>69</sup>

TVA's initial report provided an overview of current issues impacting the town. Recent road construction to create a greater connectivity in the region had also provided an opportunity for consumers to bypass the town. The report cited parking and circulation patterns as being important considerations and suggested new and improved off-street parking. Circulation and parking had been an issue for downtown for decades. In 1940 the town used federal funding to widen main street approximately six feet and added diagonal parking in order to relieve traffic congestion.<sup>70</sup> In 1956 Main Street was changed from a two-way street to a one-way street for west-bound traffic with Palmer Street, accommodating east-bound traffic.<sup>71</sup> Townlift planners suggested extending cross streets to intersect with Main Street to alleviate some traffic woes, but those suggestions were not implemented.<sup>72</sup> Likewise some of the plantings suggested for parking areas were not installed. However, the basic design for the northeast park, which involves demolition of the historic building, can be seen in a schematic plan for East Main Street.<sup>73</sup> And Townlift suggestions for enhanced pedestrian connections to East Main Street from parking areas at the north and south were implemented to some degree. Attractive alleyways to Main Street were an inducement to use off-street parking, taking traffic strain off of Main Street.

The final thrust of the program's plan for Franklin was to "tidy up" the appearance of the Main Street storefronts. Drawings and photographs documented the hodge podge of existing signage. One report described it as "a lack of continuity of design" The continuity of design referred to a consistent palette and aesthetic for signage, awnings, and shop fronts. The report suggested that initial efforts should focus on the downtown business district, encouraged the local merchants association to be at the forefront of developing and implementing plans, and that the community be actively engaged in projects that would impact the downtown area.<sup>74</sup> Photographic documentation at the period, and drawings of recommended improvements show a contrast between a series of diverse shopfronts with prominent and assertive signage, and a more uniform streetscape with coordinated and discreet signage and a uniformity of placement and continuity of elements such as awnings. While the implementation may not have been immediate, the

<sup>68</sup> Herring, "Operation Townlift Franklin, North Carolina," September 18, 1968.

<sup>69</sup> "Canton Seeks Grant for new Shopping Mall," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, March 19, 1972.

<sup>70</sup> "Main Street Being Widened Through Business District," *The Franklin Press and the Highlands Maconian*, November 21, 1940.

<sup>71</sup> "One-Way Streets are in Operation," *The Franklin Press and the Highlands Maconian*, October 4, 1956.

<sup>72</sup> "Franklin's Face Lifting 'Operation Townlift' in Planning Stage-Waynesville Starts Survey," *The Cherokee Scout and Clay County Progress*, March 6, 1969.

<sup>73</sup> Untitled Plan of East Main Street, nd; Tennessee Valley Authority Townlift Program Records (1963-1983), National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta Schedule Number: N1-142-88-003.

<sup>74</sup> Algenard Herring, *Report and Recommendations to the Business Leaders of Franklin Concerning the Appearance of Franklin*, October 1968; Tennessee Valley Authority Townlift Program Records (1963-1983), National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta Schedule Number: N1-142-88-003.

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current streetscape reflects the Townlift plan with subdued signage and a series of awnings with consistent height, placement and dimensions.

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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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** MA0815

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 8.84

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

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1. Latitude: 35.181933° Longitude: -83.381186°

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the district is shown as the bold line on the accompanying map entitled “National Register Boundary Map, Downtown Franklin Historic District.”

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the single area containing the significant concentration of buildings, sites and objects that comprise the district. Organized along the spine of Main Street and including the central square, the boundary follows property lines that in some cases stretch north or south to the roads parallel to Main Street. On the northeast, the district ends prior to the town hall, a 1990s building with a setback and grassy front lawn that breaks the traditional building pattern along the road. Likewise at the southeast, northwest, and southwest the district ends at points after which topography and surface parking disrupt the rhythm and texture of consistent setback along the public right of way which is a principal design characteristic of the district in combination with the original Town Square. The boundary follows parcel lines per NPS guidance in National Register Bulletin 16A. Some parcels stretch to the streets that run parallel to East and West Main Street, while others do not. Notably one large parcel includes a building that faces East Palmer Street and an intervening parking area. Several others contain parking lots. Because the Townlift program emphasized off street parking, those lots have been retained within the district boundary and are considered contributing.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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**Photo Log**  
for all photos-  
Downtown Franklin Historic District  
Franklin  
Macon County, North Carolina  
Photographer: Mary Ruffin Hanbury  
March 27, 2024

First Block of East Main Street, North  
Side, view to NE  
1 of 14.

Former U. S. Post Office, View to SE  
7 of 14.

First Block of East Main Street, view to  
E  
2 of 14.

Macon County Courthouse, View to NW  
8 of 14.

Moore-Benbow Building, View to S  
3 of 14.

Franks Building. View to SSW  
9 of 14.

Scott Griffin Hotel and Ashear Building,  
View to NW  
4 of 14.

Leach Building, View to S  
10 of 14.

First Block of East Main Street, view to  
W  
5 of 14.

Belk's Department Store Building, View  
to N  
11 of 14.

Pendergrass Building, View to S  
6 of 14.

Northeast Town Square Park, view to  
NE  
12 of 14.

Southeast Town Square Park, view to E  
13 of 14.

Rankin Square, view to S  
14 of 14.

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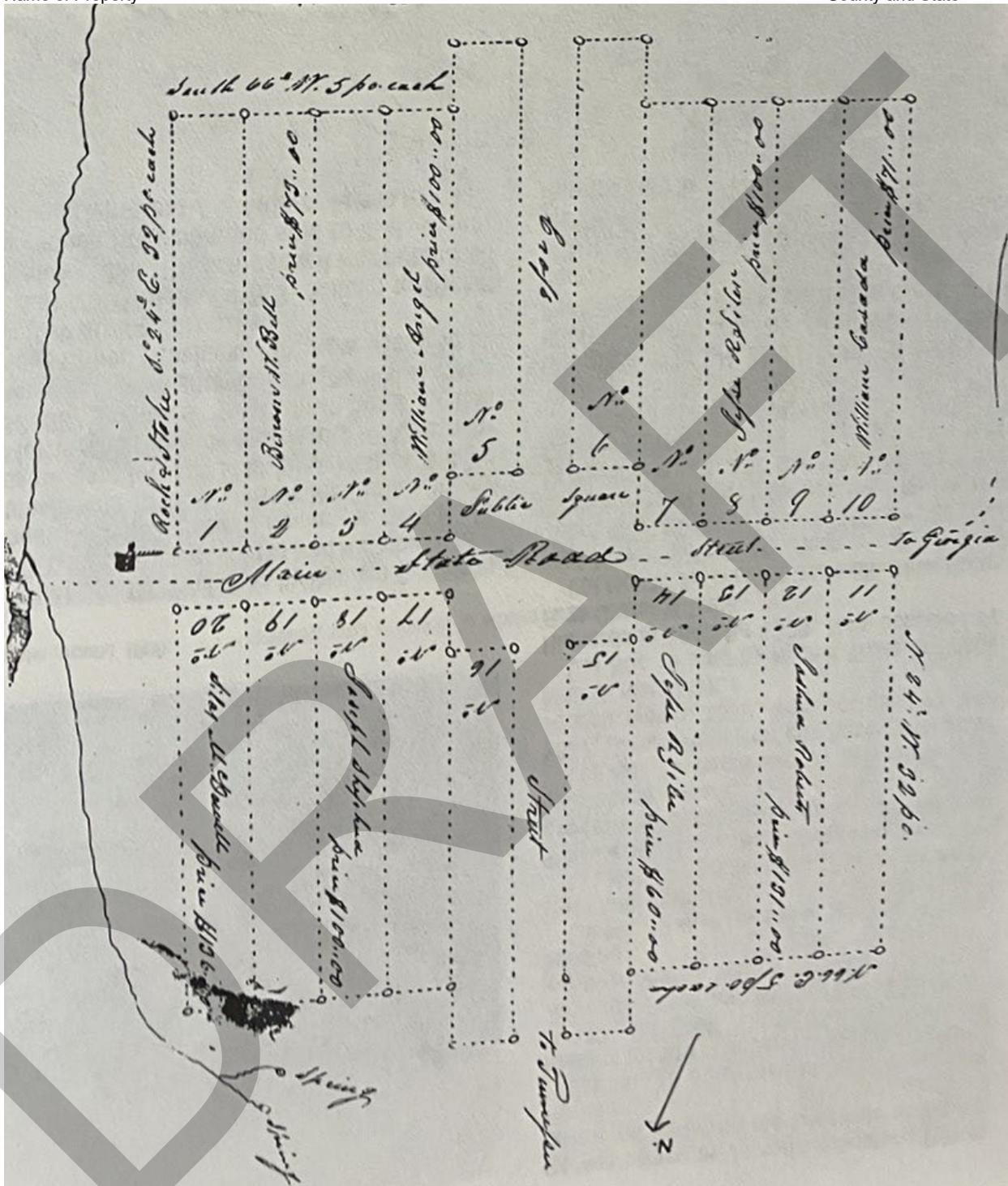


Figure 1 Robert Love map of Franklin as reproduced in Jessie Sutton, ed. *The Heritage of Macon County, North Carolina*. Hunter Publishing Company, 1987.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460

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- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

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