

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Lenoir Downtown Historic District Boundary Increase**

Lenoir, Caldwell County, CW0417, Listed 5/8/2013

Nomination by Heather Fearnbach

Photographs by Heather Fearnbach, February 2013



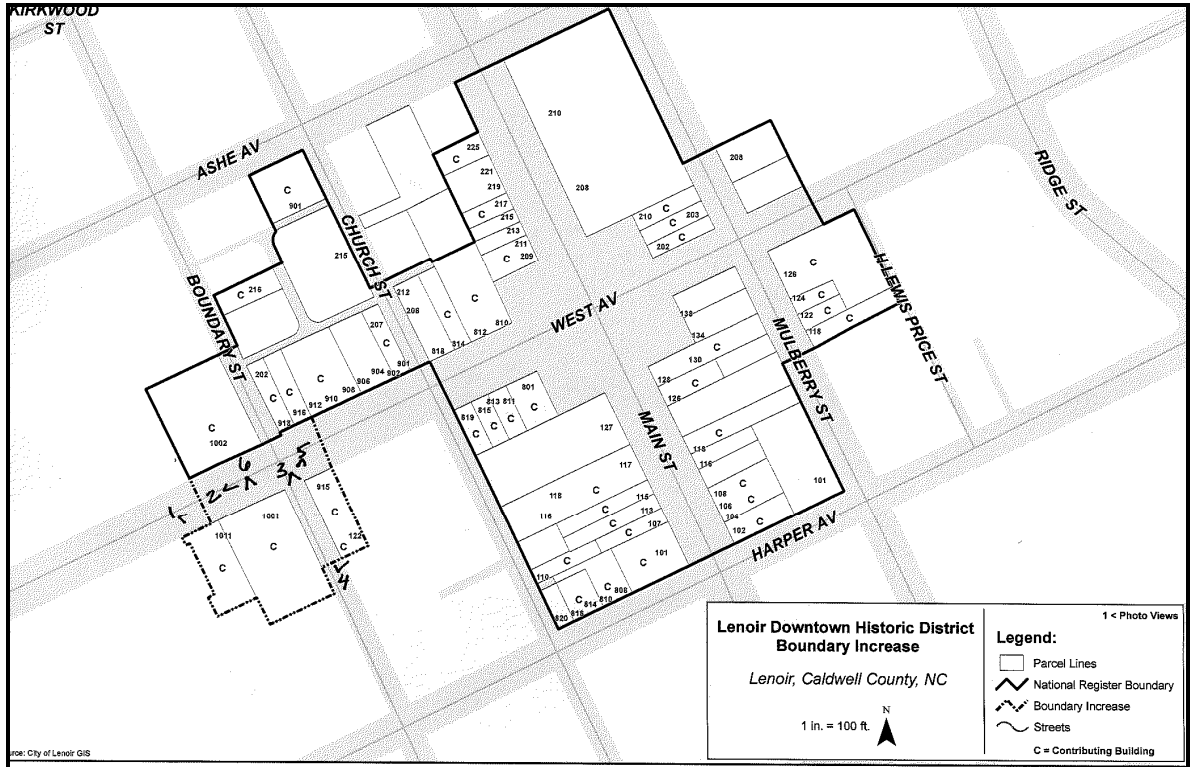
Center Theater, 1011 West Avenue



O. P. Lutz Furniture Company and Lutz Hosiery Mill, 1001 West Avenue



Commercial Building, 122 Boundary Street



Historic District Map

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Lenoir Downtown Historic District Boundary Increase  
other names/site number N/A

## 2. Location

street & number 915-1011 West Avenue and 122 Boundary Street N/A not for publication  
city or town Lenoir N/A vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Caldwell code 027 zip code 28645

## 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

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



**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
4	0	Total

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

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
39

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store

COMMERCE/TRADE: Department Store

INDUSTRY: Manufacturing Facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store

COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant and Distillery

COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant and Distillery

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style

Art Deco

Art Moderne

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

CONCRETE

STUCCO

roof ASPHALT

RUBBER

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Commerce
- Entertainment/Recreation
- 
- 
- 

**Period of Significance**

1937-1959

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Stillwell, Erle G. (architect, Center Theater)

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State Agency
  - Federal Agency
  - Local Government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository:  
North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill

Lenoir Downtown Historic District Boundary Increase  
Name of Property

Caldwell County, NC  
County and State

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### 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreege of Property** Approximately 0.64 acres

**UTM References**

**N/A**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

See Latitude/Longitude coordinates continuation sheet.

1	_____	_____	_____	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Heather Fearnbach  
organization Fearnbach History Services, Inc. date 11/20/2012  
street & number 3334 Nottingham Road telephone 336-765-2661  
city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27104

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

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

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Caldwell County, NC

## Section 7. Narrative Description

The Lenoir Downtown Historic District, listed in the National Register in 2007, contains a cohesive collection of late-nineteenth and early-to-mid-twentieth-century commercial and governmental buildings at the municipality's center. The district extends in all directions from a square at Main Street and West Avenue's intersection.<sup>1</sup> The boundary increase, located at the district's southwest corner, comprises three tax parcels encompassing 0.64 acres and four contributing resources: the 1941 Center Theater at 1011 West Avenue, the 1939 O. P. Lutz Furniture Company and Lutz Hosiery Mill at 1001 West Avenue, the 1937 Dayvault's Drug Store at 915 West Avenue, and the circa 1948 commercial building at 122 South Boundary Street.

These downtown businesses reflect Lenoir's recovery following the economic challenges and building material shortages of the Great Depression and World War II. Architects specified Art Deco and Art Moderne-style facades for the O. P. Lutz Furniture Company and the Center Theater in order to signal a progressive attitude and attract customers. The O. P. Lutz Furniture Company's decorative sawtooth brickwork, black structural glass storefront veneer, and large plate glass display windows drew patrons to the prominent corner location. Black structural glass also embellished the entrance wall below the Center Theater's box office window, contrasting with its white stuccoed exterior and the marquee's neon bands. Frank W. Dayvault updated his red brick drugstore's façade in the early 1950s, adding an aluminum-framed storefront with a rock-face Roman brick surround. The two-story variegated brick commercial building he erected to the rear to house retail tenants and his stockroom is equally streamlined, ornamented solely with brick corbelling above the storefront.

## Inventory List

The inventory list is arranged alphabetically by street name with properties enumerated by street address in ascending order. Each historic property is assigned a name, where possible, based on the first-known and/or a long-term occupant. Some information about these early tenants comes from the *Lenoir City Directories* (1930-1965) located in the North Carolina Collection of the Wilson Library at UNC-Chapel Hill. The city directories are sporadic through 1943 and issued biannually after that date. The descriptions include exact or approximate construction date and the dates of any major alterations or additions. Building completion dates are based on Sanborn Company maps (published for Lenoir in 1902, 1907, 1913, 1921, 1927, and 1950), city directory research, architectural style, historic

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<sup>1</sup> The streets in downtown Lenoir are arranged in a grid pattern, which, as it conforms to the topography, is not exactly situated on a due north-south axis. However, for the sake of clarity, descriptions are written as though the streets run north-south and the avenues east-west. Main Street serves as the district's principal north-south corridor. East and West Avenues intersect Main Street at the square and function as the primary east-west traffic artery. Mulberry, Boundary, and Church Streets also run north-south, parallel to Main.

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photographs, Caldwell County property record cards, and interviews with current and former residents and knowledgeable property owners.

## Integrity Statement

The four buildings in the expansion area were constructed before 1959 and retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, thus contributing to the district's historic significance. The evaluations are based on age and degree of alteration. The Dayvault's Drug Store façade remodeling, a common occurrence in commercial buildings, occurred within the district's period of significance and reflected the business's ongoing success. The O. P. Lutz Furniture Company and Lutz Hosiery Mill's alterations have been more extensive, but were necessary to accommodate the building's changing function. In 1963, the Lutz family undertook a renovation that reflected the needs of their tenant, Roses Department Store. Updates included the installation of square panel sheathing on the façade's upper portion; grey, white, and yellow mosaic tiles on the storefront kneewall, the one-story connector's façade, and the side entrance; and a flat-roofed metal canopy that sheltered bands of aluminum-framed display windows and two double-leaf glass doors at the corner entrance. The windows on the side and rear elevations were infilled with brick. In the space between the furniture store and the Center Theater to the west, open since 1951 when a fire destroyed the Dixie Home Stores grocery, contractors erected concrete block north and west walls to support a steel truss roof system and removed the 1939 building's first-story west wall in order to expand Roses Department Store's square footage.<sup>2</sup> In 2012, the property owner removed the metal canopy and the façade's second-story sheathing panels, exposing the intact original decorative brickwork and reopening the windows on the West Avenue facade.

## Commercial Building 122 South Boundary Street, circa 1948

This austere two-story commercial building features a variegated brick running bond façade and six-to-one common bond side and rear elevations. Metal casement windows illuminate the second floor: two on the façade, two on the south elevation, and one at the rear elevation's north end. The aluminum-framed storefront encompasses plate-glass windows with a brick apron flanking a recessed entrance. Brick corbelling surmounts the storefront and terra cotta coping caps the roof parapet. The first floor originally housed two businesses, but a plate-glass window replaced the south door when the current owners combined the interior spaces. A shed roof above the narrow opening between 915 West Avenue and 122 Boundary Street shelters a wood staircase leading to second floor entrances for both

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<sup>2</sup> Betty Hobbs Lutz, Herbert D. Lutz Jr.'s wife, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 3, 2012; Otis P. Lutz, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 4, 2012; Betty Sue Lutz Wilke, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 8, 2012.



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buildings. A one-story metal canopy creates an outdoor storage area between 122 Boundary Street and the Caldwell County Government Office building to the east.

Frank W. Dayvault constructed this commercial building to serve dual purposes. He rented the first-floor storefronts to a variety of tenants, while most of the second story served as the Dayvault's Drug Store stock room. The second floor also contained the business's restrooms and an employee lounge.<sup>3</sup>

The Boundary Street building is not illustrated on the 1950 updates to the 1927 Sanborn map, but oral history and city directories indicate that it was erected around 1948. Mr. Dayvault's daughter Joanna Dayvault Jones recalls that the structure was in use by the time the family moved to their new home in October 1950. City directory research revealed that the street addresses for this area, including the odd and even numbered sides of the road, have changed, complicating early occupant identification. The first listing for this section of Boundary Street's east side appears in 1943 when the Lenoir Recreation Center, a pool hall that was located in 915 West Avenue's basement, has a 103 South Boundary Street address. In 1948, the building that is now 122 South Boundary Street housed two storefront tenants: barber William A. Watson at 105 South Boundary Street and bicycle proprietor Carl Buchanan at 107. The lessees remained the same through 1951, when Marshall V. Setzer operated the barber shop. Poor Boy's Meat Market occupied 105 ½ South Boundary Street in 1953 and remained there for several years.

## **Dayvault's Drug Store 915 West Avenue, 1937, early 1950s storefront**

Dayvault's Drug Store's exterior retains original Commercial Style elements including the stepped parapet, brick diamond medallions, and rectangular brick panel outlined with a soldier course that ornament the one-story-on-basement building's painted brick façade. The three-part early 1950s storefront consists of aluminum-framed plate-glass display windows and single-leaf doors surrounded by rock-face Roman brick kneewalls and pilasters. A small cast-iron mortar and pestle ornaments the pilaster at the northwest corner, referencing the building's original function.

The side and rear elevations are executed in five-to-one common bond red brick. A painted sign near the west elevation's north end comprises a central section that reads "This is Dayvault's Drug Store, make it yours," flanked by a painted pestle on the north side that states "prescriptions, sick-room

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<sup>3</sup> Prior to 122 Boundary Street's construction, Mr. Dayvault stored his inventory in a small space at the north end of 915 West Avenue's basement. A trap door under the drug store's magazine section adjacent to the front display window provided the only access to the storage room. Joanna Dayvault Jones, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 16, 2012; Frances Dayvault Morisey, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 14, 2012; Freddie H. Moore, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 15, 2012.

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needs, patent medicines, gifts, stationary” and a matching south pestle that reads “fountain service, sandwiches, tobacco, leather goods, magazines.” Double-hung six-over-six sash wood windows with metal security bars illuminate the basement and an auxiliary entrance provides access at the building’s southwest corner.

## **O. P. Lutz Furniture Company - Lutz Hosiery Mill** **1001 West Avenue, 1939; 1963 façade improvements; 2012 renovation, Jessie Plaster, architect**

Otis Peeler Lutz commissioned the construction of an expansive two-story-on-basement brick commercial building at West Avenue and Boundary Street’s southwest corner in 1939 to serve as a furniture store and hosiery mill. The corner building’s three floors functioned as furniture showrooms, while the one- and two-story rear sections housed hosiery manufacturing operations. The interior floor plan was historically open, facilitating its use as a furniture store and hosiery mill. A 1940s photograph illustrates the showroom’s hardwood floors, finished walls, boxed posts, exposed ceiling beams, and the counter and offices at the rear (south) end.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Lutz also erected a one-story edifice that stood between the furniture store and the Center Theater to the west, occupied by the Dixie Home Stores grocery from the early 1940s through about 1951, when it was destroyed in a fire. The space remained vacant until 1963, when contractors erected concrete block north and west walls to support a steel truss roof system and removed the 1939 building’s first-story west wall in order to expand the storefront’s square footage to accommodate Roses Department Store.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, the Lutz family, who had moved to Chester, South Carolina, in 1953, undertook an extensive façade modernization to reflect Roses Department Store’s corporate image. Updates completed before the March 1963 grand opening included installation of square panel sheathing on the façade’s upper portion; grey, white, and yellow mosaic tiles on the storefront kneewall, the one-story connector’s façade, and the side entrance; and a flat-roofed metal canopy that sheltered bands of

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<sup>4</sup> “Furniture Store in Lenoir Street Floor,” photo in the collection of Otis P. Lutz, Fort Mill, South Carolina.

<sup>5</sup> Betty Hobbs Lutz, Herbert D. Lutz Jr.’s wife, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 3, 2012; Otis P. Lutz, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 4, 2012; Betty Sue Lutz Wilke, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 8, 2012; Ernest H. Miller, *Miller’s Lenoir City Directory, 1943-1944* (Asheville: Commercial Service Company, November 1943), 288. The last city directory listing for Dixie Home Stores at 205-207 West Avenue is 1950-1951. The address was listed as “vacant” from 1953 to 1956. The Jacksonville, Florida-based Winn and Lovett supermarket chain acquired 117 North and South Carolina Dixie Home grocery stores (headquartered in Greenville, South Carolina) in 1955, creating “Winn-Dixie Stores, Inc.” “Winn-Dixie,” <http://www.answers.com/topic/winn-dixie-stores-inc.>, accessed in August 2012.

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aluminum-framed display windows and two double-leaf glass doors at corner entrance. The windows on the side and rear elevations were infilled with brick.<sup>6</sup>

In 2012, contractors removed the metal canopy and the façade's second-story sheathing panels, exposing the original decorative brickwork and window openings. Bricks laid at an angle create pilasters and a sawtooth cornice that ornament the three-bay façade, the corner bay, and the long east elevation's northernmost section. Black mastic on the exposed brick marks the location of the black structural glass veneer that surrounded two recessed entrances—one at the corner and one centered on the West Avenue elevation—and the plate glass display windows that flanked them.

## Center Theater 1011 West Avenue, 1941, Erle G. Stillwell, architect

This brick Art Moderne-style theater features a two-part stuccoed façade. The west section, above the original marquee, has a stepped parapet and is scored and painted with a wide vertical black stripe at the center and three thin vertical stripes—black at the center and red on the outside edges—to either side. The triangular marquee advertises the theater name in neon above the reader board's neon bands. Dozens of bare light bulbs illuminate the recessed entrance, where three-double-leaf glass doors provide access to the interior. The ticket window is centered in the curved wall on the entrance's west side, while a movie poster display case occupies the opposite matching curved wall. The terrazzo entrance floor displays an Art Moderne motif with a white field, a central red circle, and outlying red and black bands. The façade's east section has a scored upper portion painted with a black-and-white checkerboard pattern above a panel created by two horizontal red lines at the first-story cornice height.<sup>7</sup> Two movie poster display cases flank a central window. The flat-roofed metal canopy that sheltered the African American entrance on the west side elevation now spans the north end of the alley between the theater and the commercial building to its west. The side and rear elevations are unpainted red brick with buttresses capped with cast-stone and terra cotta coping topping the stepped-parapet walls.

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<sup>6</sup> Betty Hobbs Lutz, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 3, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Architect Erle Stillwell did not specify the existing paint scheme. The building's façade was originally white per the June 1940 working drawings titled "A Theatre for Lenoir Theatres Inc." in the collection of the Henderson Public Library and the descriptions in period newspaper accounts. Edwin Stafford remembers that the exterior was painted warm white with tan trim during his father's tenure. "Most Modern Equipment and Materials Used Throughout the New Center Theatre," *The Lenoir News-Topic*, February 28, 1941; William Mitchell, *Buildings as History: The Architecture of Erle Stillwell: A Descriptive Catalogue of His Drawings in the Henderson County Public Library* (Henderson: Friends of the Henderson County Public Library, 2006), 131; Edwin Stafford, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 10, 2012.

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The 855-seat theater interior is substantially intact, retaining original plaster walls, hardwood floors, and Art Moderne-style light fixtures throughout the lobby, auditorium, and balcony. Several walls feature curved corners, accentuating the streamlined aesthetic. A small closet on the lobby's west side houses the metal letters used for the marquee. The balcony retains original seating and a projection room containing mid-twentieth-century equipment.

The plan reflects the pervasive segregation of Southern public spaces during the Jim Crow era. White theater-goers purchased tickets and entered the central foyer through the front doors. The auxiliary African American entrance opened into a small vestibule containing a ticket window and a staircase that rose to the balcony. The original construction drawings specified a movable railing that separated the African American seats in the balcony's western third from the rest of the space, as well as the restrooms at the section's rear corner. A staircase on the building's east side provided white patrons with balcony access.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Erle G. Stillwell, Inc. Architects, "A Theatre for Lenoir Theatres, Inc., Lenoir, N. C.," Sheets 3 and 4, June 1, 1940, original plans at the Erle G. Stillwell Collection at the Henderson County Public Library, digitized version online as part of the University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's *Documenting the American South* initiative "Going to the Show," <http://docsouth.unc.edu/gtts/content/2826>, accessed in August 2012.

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## Section 8. Statement of Significance

The Lenoir Downtown Historic District Boundary Increase expands the boundaries of the 2007-designated historic district to incorporate four contributing resources erected on three tax parcels encompassing 0.64 acres between 1937 and 1948. Dayvault's Drug Store, the O. P. Lutz Furniture Company and Lutz Hosiery Mill, and the Center Theater manifest Lenoir's economic resurgence as the country recovered from the Great Depression. The 1941 Center Theater, designed by Hendersonville architect Erle G. Stillwell, is architecturally important as an excellent example of the commercial Art Moderne style in Lenoir. The commercial building at 122 Boundary Street reflects the need for new storefronts as the city grew during the post World War II era. The locally-significant Lenoir Downtown Historic District Boundary Increase meets National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Architecture, Commerce, and Entertainment/Recreation. The boundary increase's period of significance begins in 1937 with the Dayvault's Drug Store's construction and ends in 1959, the same date as the original historic district.

## Commerce and Entertainment/Recreation Context

The Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad, a 110-mile freight and passenger line originating in South Carolina, was completed in 1884, but it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that Lenoir's residents initiated manufacturing endeavors on a large scale. Investors reorganized the city's first furniture factory, the Lenoir Furniture Company, established in 1889, as Harper Furniture Company in 1899, presaging the municipality's industrial boom that would last for decades. By 1913, Caldwell County entrepreneurs had opened seven factories that produced furnishings. T. J. Lutz operated the Hudson Chair Company, W. J. Lenoir was Caldwell Furniture Company's proprietor, G. F. Harper owned Harper Furniture Company, T. H. Berryhill established Kent Furniture Company, L. H. Tuttle Kent created Coffey Manufacturing Company, and R. B. Dula founded Lenoir Chair Manufacturing Company. O. P. Lutz managed the Moore-Stone Chair Company, incorporated by F. P. Moore, J. Claude Moore, W. A. Shell, Joe C. Moore, and T. J. Stone in 1909 with \$9,000 in capital stock. The business's seventy-five employees initially assembled solid oak chairs, many of which were purchased by vendors in the northeastern United States, and later diversified to other furniture.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Nancy Alexander, *Here Will I Dwell: The Story of Caldwell County* (Salisbury, N. C.: Rowan Print Company, 1956), 193-194; Robert D. Walker, "Can't and Never Will: Remembering the Carolina & North-Western," in Cary Franklin Poole, *A History of Railroading in Western North Carolina* (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1995), 58-67; Lenoir Chamber of Commerce, "A Protest Addressed to the Office of Defense Transportation...in respect to...the Past, Present, and Future Passenger Train Service of the Carolina and North Western Railway," 1945, 3, 14; M. L. Shipman, commissioner, *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh: E. M. Uzzell & Company, 1913), 166-167. The Moore-Stone complex next to the railroad, which encompassed a factory with machine and bending rooms, a two-story steam drying kiln, offices, a two-story warehouse with finishing space, a power plant, and water and fuel tank, was valued at \$40,000 in 1913. The facility operated for 312 days that year,

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The Lutz family was involved in a wide variety of other endeavors. Lloyd Thomas Jones Lutz, known as “T. J.,” his wife Mary Louise Peeler Lutz, and their son, Otis Plato, called “O. P.,” moved from a Caldwell County farm on the Catawba River near Baton to Hudson, a small community six miles south of Lenoir, in the late nineteenth century. T. J. Lutz opened a general store and a tannery, briefly served as Hudson’s mayor, and was the vice-president of Hudson Manufacturing Company, a cotton mill erected in 1904. Soon after O. P. returned from studying at Eastman Business College in Poughkeepsie, New York, around 1900, he married Ida Melinda Hickman of Hudson and the couple settled in Lenoir. The Lutzes invested in banking, with T. J. Lutz serving as the Commercial Bank’s president and O. P. as the cashier. The operation, established in 1900, was known as First National Bank after its 1906 reorganization.<sup>10</sup>

The family also established the Lenoir Roller Mill—which produced flour, cornmeal, and livestock feed for Caldwell and Watauga County residents—around the turn of the twentieth century. The complex, located at what was then West and Spring (which became Harper) Avenue’s northeast corner near the railroad, is illustrated on the April 1902 Sanborn map and included the Piedmont Bottling Works by June 1907. O. P. continued to work in the furniture industry, collaborating with Thomas Broyhill as National Furniture Company’s treasurer. He celebrated his success by becoming Lenoir’s first automobile owner around 1910.<sup>11</sup>

Trade publications noted that the Lutz Chair Company of Lenoir purchased the Greeneville Chair Company and moved its operations to Greeneville, Tennessee, in 1913 after enlarging that plant. It is unclear if the Lutzes renamed a business they were already involved with to create the Lutz Chair Company or if they incorporated and launched a new firm, but a concern with that name does not appear in North Carolina industrial reports.<sup>12</sup> Clarence Herbert Lutz remembered that the business

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generating \$175,000-worth of chairs. D. P. Waters, “Caldwell County, N. C.,” *The Lenoir Topic*, June 16, 1909, page 2; Sanborn Map Company, Lenoir, N. C., December 1913, Sheet 11.

<sup>10</sup> Clarence Herbert Lutz, August 8, 1974 notes expanded on December 25, 1986 after a conversation with his sister-in-law Mattie Mae Lutz and her son Otis Plato Lutz, document in the possession of Otis Plato Lutz; Franklin McNeill, chairman, *Eighth Annual Report of the North Carolina Corporation Commission* for the year ending December 31, 1906 (Raleigh: E. M. Uzzell & Company, 1907), 450; M. L. Shipman, *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina*, p. 46; D. P. Waters, “Caldwell County, N. C.,” *The Lenoir Topic*, June 16, 1909, page 2; Nancy Alexander, *Here Will I Dwell*, p. 122.

<sup>11</sup> Clarence Herbert Lutz, August 8, 1974 and December 25, 1986 notes; Sanborn Map Company, Lenoir, N. C., April 1902, Sheet 2; June 1907, Sheet 1; December 1913, Sheet 7 and February 1921, Sheet 9. O. P. Lutz owned a two-cylinder Buick. Nancy Alexander, *Here Will I Dwell*, p. 214; *Lenoir News-Topic*, “It’s Hard to Imagine Lenoir’s First Auto,” in E. Carl Anderson Jr., ed, *The Heritage of Caldwell County, North Carolina, Volume I* (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1983), p. 59.

<sup>12</sup> *American Machinist*, December 11, 1913, page 77; *Wood Craft*, January 1914, page 114. Historian Nancy Alexander indicates that O. P. Lutz and other investors acquired the factory that Joe C. Moore and T. J. Stone established



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folded, causing his father O. P. to default on a \$25,000 First National Bank loan. This loss, combined with the economic depression in the 1910s, forced the family to sell all of their property except the bottling plant and their home at 383 Mulberry Street. O. P. and Ida's marriage also suffered, and the couple divorced. At the time of his January 8, 1919, death after suffering complications from pneumonia, O. P. was the proprietor of Mint Cola Bottling Works.<sup>13</sup>

O. P. Lutz left four sons born between 1903 and 1912—Clarence Herbert, Otis Peeler, Ernest Hickman, and James Gordon—in his parent's care. T. J. and Mary Lutz raised the brothers, and although some of them eventually moved elsewhere, Otis Peeler Lutz remained in Lenoir and married Mattie Mae Moore in May 1926. The couple had the first of their five children in 1928, residing on Kings Creek Farm about ten miles northeast of Lenoir. Mr. Lutz attended Majestic Radio Sales School in May 1930 to learn strategic marketing techniques to employ at his store at 107 West Harper Avenue, where he sold Majestic and Atwater Kent appliances. As the economy recovered, he sold that business and expanded into new endeavors including furniture sales, operating a retail space on the square.<sup>14</sup>

In 1938, the Lenoir Board of Trade reported that the city's twelve furniture plants employed thousands of workers, and related manufacturers—makers of mirrors, veneers, and other products used by the furniture industry—provided more jobs. The population numbered twelve thousand, triple that of 1920, and downtown included five hardware and furniture stores and four drug stores.<sup>15</sup> Although most of Lenoir's industrial plants were located along the railroad, O. P. and Mattie Mae Lutz acquired land previously owned by the M. M. Courtney Company, Inc., across from the United States Post Office,

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after the partners sold Moore-Stone Chair Company to Willis Shell. Caldwell Furniture Company leased the second complex for a short time, after which R. C. Robbins and A. G. Jonas purchased it in 1922 and established the Star Mill. Nancy Alexander, *Here Will I Dwell*, p. 199.

<sup>13</sup> Otis Plato Lutz (b. 1942) remembers that the family's company bottled Cheerwine products. Salisbury entrepreneur L. D. Peeler, who operated a franchise of the Kentucky-based Mint Cola Bottling Company in the 1910s, invented Cheerwine in 1917. The company adopted "Cheerwine Bottling Company" as their name in 1924. "About Cheerwine: History," <http://www.cheerwine.com/history>, accessed in August 2012; Clarence Herbert Lutz, August 8, 1974 and December 25, 1986 notes; M. L. Shipman, commissioner, *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina*, 1919-1920 (Raleigh: E. M. Uzzell & Company, 1921), 553; "Otis Plato Lutz," Death Certificate.

<sup>14</sup> Betty Hobbs Lutz, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 3, 2012; Otis P. Lutz, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 4, 2012; Betty Sue Lutz Wilke, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 8, 2012; "Majestic Radio Sales School Class No. 26, May 12 to 16, 1930," photo in the collection of Otis P. Lutz, Fort Mill, South Carolina. Mr. Pegram operated the radio store at 107 West Harper Avenue by November 1936. Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir, NC City Directory, 1930-1931* (Asheville, N. C.: Miller Press, June 1930), p. 155, *Miller's Lenoir City Directory, 1937-1938*, p. 240,

<sup>15</sup> Lenoir Board of Trade and Lenoir *News-Topic, Lenoir, North Carolina* (n.p.: 1938), 3-5; Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir City Directory 1937-1938* (Asheville: Commercial Service Company, 1936), pp. 5-6, and *Miller's Lenoir City Directory, 1943-1944*, p. 267.

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upon which they erected a building designed to house a furniture showroom and a knitting mill in 1939.<sup>16</sup>

Mr. Lutz purchased inventory from local manufacturers including Broyhill and also traveled to the High Point furniture market and New York to acquire new stock. His daughter Betty Sue Lutz Wilke remembers that the basement showroom housed collections such as kitchen table sets, while the first floor was an open display area. On the third floor, partition walls created spaces that were staged as vignettes representing different rooms in a home. Salesmen included D. D. Suddreth, who later established a furniture store that still serves Lenoir residents. Mattie Mae Lutz's younger sister Mary Stafford oversaw the accounting department and handled customers' monthly payments, as the company allowed purchases on credit.<sup>17</sup>

Lutz Hosiery Mill's first mention in the *North Carolina Yearbook*, which appears in 1939, indicates that factory employees operated twenty circular knitting machines to produce infants' socks. By 1941 the mill's equipment included five additional circular knitting machines and four full-fashioned knitting machines, used to manufacture ladies' silk hosiery. Mr. Lutz likely added the full-fashioned equipment after his attempt to revitalize the small community of Mortimer by adapting a vacant cotton mill for use as a hosiery plant failed. A flood decimated the town in August 1940, soon after the mill opened, stranding Mattie Mae Lutz and her children in their home near the plant as well as the twenty young women employed to operate the machines. As the railroad tracks washed away along with the mill equipment, Mr. Lutz, who was in Lenoir when the flood occurred, walked to Mortimer to retrieve his family.<sup>18</sup>

In the early 1940s, he hired experienced textile workers such as Lonnie Blackwell, recruited from Rutherfordton to work in the Lenoir plant, and Mr. Blalock, who oversaw the mill's operation. The

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<sup>16</sup> The Lutzes obtained this property in several transactions. Ralph Z. and Iris Peeler King conveyed lots 29, 30, 34, 35, 36, and 37 that Charles A. and Iris D. Peeler acquired from M. M. Courtney, Inc. for \$100 on August 25, 1933 to O. P. Lutz in a \$10 transaction on October 22, 1936 (Caldwell County Deed Book 146, page 237; Deed Book 158, page 374; and Plat Book 2, page 25). O. P. and Mattie Mae Lutz paid \$2,800 toward the acquisition of lots 31, 32, and 33 fronting West Avenue on May 16, 1938, and the remaining \$2,700 of the total cost on January 11, 1939 (Deed Book 207, page 76).

<sup>17</sup> Mary Stafford kept the books for all of O. P. Lutz's businesses, including the hosiery mill. She later became the accountant at D. D. Suddreth's furniture store, where she worked for many years. She retired from Belk's Department Store. Betty Sue Lutz Wilke, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 8, 2012; Edwin Stafford, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 10, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.; *News and Observer, North Carolina Yearbook* (Raleigh: *News and Observer*, 1939), p. 121 and 1941, p. 120; Betty Hobbs Lutz, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 3, 2012; Glenda Kilby Anderson, "Mortimer," in *The Heritage of Caldwell County, North Carolina, Volume I*, p. 218; Bob Heafner and *The Mountain Laurel*, "Blowing Rock, Mortimer, and Edgemont, NC" <http://www.blueridgeonline.com/Backroads/br-84-08>, accessed in August 2012. The Lutz Family Partnership (O. P. and Mattie Lutz's children) owned the Mortimer property until 2010. Caldwell County Deed Book 1058, page 792 and Book 1738, pages 1184-1885.

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Lutzes moved to 212 West College Avenue in Lenoir around 1942 in order to be closer to the city's schools and to conserve gasoline during World War II rationing. Lutz Hosiery Mill operated through the 1940s and is included on the 1950 Sanborn map and in the 1951 city directory, but Betty Wilke remembers that production ceased around then and Jack Branch opened an Army and Navy Store in the space. The company was not among the four Caldwell County hosiery mills that reported production in 1953, as Lenoir Hosiery Mills, Inc. was Caldwell County's only full-fashioned hosiery mill at that time. City directories indicate that the Army and Navy Store, Melton's Sporting Goods, and M. Gaither Marsh occupied the former Lutz Hosiery Mill at 106 Boundary Street in 1953.<sup>19</sup>

O. P. Lutz began acquiring acreage near Chester, South Carolina, in the late 1940s and established Rocky Creek Farms, which became a large dairy operation. The family spent weekends and summers there until moving permanently in 1953. The Lutzes eldest daughter Mattie Mae and her husband Danny McLean operated the O. P. Lutz Furniture Company in Lenoir for a short time, but O. P. Lutz decided to close it around 1955. He then leased the storefront to Roses Department Store in 1963. After Mr. Lutz passed away in 1979, his heirs created the Lutz Family Partnership to manage his estate. They retained ownership of the 1001 West Avenue building until September 2011, renting it to tenants including Kimbrell's Department Store, who leased the property from May 1986 until September 2009.<sup>20</sup> Carolina Distillery, LLC, undertook the 2012 rehabilitation.

Dayvault's Drug Store, newly erected when the O. P. Lutz Furniture Company and Lutz Hosiery Mill opened, was another downtown landmark, providing a convenient shopping venue and eatery for almost sixty years. Efird's Department Store financed the construction of the one-story brick building at West Avenue and South Boundary Street's southeast corner, replacing the one-story frame store with a front porch that had occupied the site when the Sanborn Map Company illustrated the area in December 1927. In June 1937, Efird's leased an approximately seventeen-foot-wide and ninety-foot-deep storefront to Frank W. Dayvault and George S. Templeton for five years with the understanding that they would open a drug store in the space upon the building's projected September completion.

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<sup>19</sup> Betty Sue Lutz Wilke, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 8, 2012; Mattie Louise Blackwell Walker, Lonnie Blackwell's daughter (b. 1944), was named after O. P. Lutz's wife Mattie Mae. Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, "Limited Hosiery Operations," *The Employment Security Commission Quarterly*, Volume 11, No. 1-2, Winter-Spring 1953, page 50; Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir, NC City Directories* (Asheville, N. C.: Miller Press, 1950-1958). Two contiguous commercial buildings housed Western Carolina Electrical Supply Company (a wholesale distributor) and Home Electric Company (a repair shop) to the south. This space is now a parking lot.

<sup>20</sup> Otis Peeler Lutz was drawn to Chester, South Carolina due to the inexpensive land and eventually owned a freezer locker, a sawmill, and a Chevrolet dealership in addition to his dairy farm. Betty Sue Lutz Wilke, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 8, 2012; Otis P. Lutz, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 4, 2012; Betty Hobbs Lutz, Herbert D. Lutz Jr.'s wife, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 3, 2012; Caldwell County Deed Book 1775, page 1196; Ken Thornburg, Kimbrell's Corporate Office, Charlotte, North Carolina, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 2, 2012.

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The men, who had previously managed a Mooresville pharmacy, agreed to pay \$100 in rent each month plus three percent of their gross sales over \$25,000 each year.<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Templeton remained in Mooresville, while Mr. Dayvault, a 1929 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill pharmacy school graduate, had already relocated to Lenoir. He initially operated Crawford's Pharmacy before moving to the new West Avenue building. In addition to starting a new business, Mr. Dayvault met and married Black Creek, North Carolina, native and home economics instructor Josephine Tomlinson, who had moved to Lenoir after accepting a teaching position. The couple created a welcoming atmosphere at the drug store's lunch counter and soda fountain, which catered to downtown businesspeople at lunch and local youth after school. They encouraged the store's reputation as a gathering place, applying the adage "Take time to be friendly or you'll have time to be lonely" to a soffit that reflected on the mirrored wall above the lunch counter booths. The lunch counter offered curb service, allowing customers to call in orders and wait outside in their cars for the food to be delivered, through the mid-1940s. Mr. Dayvault's advertising slogans included "Across from the post office and just as reliable" and "Lenoir's Best Drug Dealer." He also employed the successful marketing tactic of distributing business-card-sized vouchers that could be redeemed for free drinks at the soda fountain.<sup>22</sup>

When the initial lease expired in 1942, Mr. Dayvault signed a new one with identical terms other than a ten dollar per month rent increase for a three-year period. The agreement indicates that Brawley's Jewelry Store occupied the adjacent storefront through the 1940s. The Dayvaults purchased interest in the building's ownership beginning in 1949 and acquired it outright in 1954. Mr. Dayvault remodeled the interior and replaced the storefront during this period, moving Brawley's Jewelry one storefront east in order to allow for the drugstore's expansion. After the renovation, booths lined the eastern wall, extending to the soda fountain and a telephone booth at the southeast corner. The pharmacy and an office, slightly elevated on a platform two steps above the retail floor, occupied the southwest corner.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> City directories indicate that A. M. Powell was the proprietor of a picture frame shop at that location, which had a 133 West Avenue address in 1930. It appears that the frame structure had been demolished by November 1936. Caldwell County Agreement Book 166, pp. 346-347.

<sup>22</sup> Frances Dayvault Morisey, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 14, 2012; Joanna Dayvault Jones, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 16, 2012. Rowan County native James Frank Wilson Dayvault was accustomed to the retail business as his father James Dayvault operated a general store in China Grove. Frank resided at 207 West Harper Street with his wife Josephine in 1940. The couple had two daughters, Joanna Tomlinson (b. 1940) and Frances Annette (b. 1946). Frances, like her father, graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill pharmacy school. United States Census, population schedules, 1910-1940.

<sup>23</sup> Joanna Dayvault Jones, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 16, 2012. Before the drugstore's expansion into a second storefront, the office was above the pharmacy in a cramped mezzanine space that also included a restroom.

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After Mr. Dayvault's untimely death in 1967 at the age of 60, his widow continued to assist with the drugstore's operation. Her roles over the years ranged from making sandwich fillings such as egg and tuna salad during World War II to managing the cosmetic counter, an occupation she continued after selling pharmacy and lunch counter business to Freddie H. and Harriet Moore in 1975. She retained ownership of the building until February 1995.<sup>24</sup>

Drugstore employees Frances Culbreth, Mary Evelyn Simmons, Dorine Taylor, her twin sister Lorene Davis, and Cecil Wiles worked for the Dayvaults and Freddie Moore. Frances Culbreth prepared and served breakfast, lunch, and snacks at Dayvault's for almost fifty years beginning in the early 1940s. She remembers that the counter seating and twelve booths would fill up with businessmen for lunch almost every day. School children in search of sustenance often patronized the establishment, particularly before the cafeteria was open. Their favorite "snacks" were grilled cheese sandwiches, chips, and sodas.<sup>25</sup>

As Mr. Dayvault had updated the interior in the 1960s, Mr. Moore made very few changes. During his tenure, the basement served as storage for Belk's Department Store and then as a shoe shop. He maintained Dayvault's Drug Store until 1993, when Kmart purchased the pharmacy scripts in anticipation of their completion of a new full-service facility. Another entrepreneur assumed the lunch counter business, but it was a short-lived endeavor, reflecting the declining popularity of such eateries.<sup>26</sup>

The lunch counter remained open for only a few years after the nearby Center Theater's closure. The two community gathering places, which manifested Lenoir's post-depression era resurgence and the downtown commercial district's social and economic importance, enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. The Art Moderne-style theater opened on March 3, 1941, just west of the O. P. Lutz Furniture Company, and anchored the commercial block, providing the city with a striking modern entertainment venue. Black structural glass embellished the entrance wall below the box office window, contrasting with the building's white stuccoed exterior and the marquee's neon bands. Patrons easily viewed the fourteen by nineteen-foot screen, said to be one of Western North Carolina's largest at that time, from the carefully arranged first floor and balcony seating and enjoyed the most up-to-date sound and heating and air conditioning systems. The opening celebration involved a parade featuring the Lenoir High School Band. The Wilby-Kincey theater group hired Spartanburg, South Carolina, native Dan

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<sup>24</sup> Joanna Dayvault Jones, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 16, 2012; Caldwell County Agreement Book 193, page 500 and Book 680, page 115; Caldwell County Deed Book 251, page 339; Deed Book 299, page 622; and Deed Book 584, page 519; Deed Book 1129, page 1773. The later deeds reflect Mrs. Dayvault's surname upon her marriage to C. E. Bailes

<sup>25</sup> Frances Culbreth (b. 1921), telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 15, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Freddie H. Moore, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 15, 2012.

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Austell, who had been operating Lenoir's State and Imperial Theaters for them under the auspices of Lenoir Theaters, Inc., to serve as the facility's manager.<sup>27</sup>

Euell Eugene Stafford, called "E. E.," moved to Lenoir from Lexington, North Carolina, in 1934 after being employed by Wilby-Kincey as a projectionist. He worked at the Strand and Imperial Theaters before the Center Theater opened, where he handled film projection as well as the facility's maintenance. Mr. Stafford met his wife Mary Moore at O. P. Lutz's furniture store, where she served as her brother-in-law's accountant. Their daughter Marilyn Stafford Edwards, who was a Center Theater usher as a teenager in the 1950s, recalls that movies such as "King Kong" and Cecil B. DeMille's "The Greatest Show on Earth" filled the theater to capacity. Her younger brother Edwin Stafford remembers that large crowds attended shows ranging from Saturday morning children's movie serials such as "Rocketman" to westerns starring actors Sunset Carson, Roy Rogers, Lash Larue, Fuzzy St. John, Gene Autry, Don Berry (known for his character Red Ryder), and Tommy Cook (who starred as Little Beaver in the Red Ryder series), in the 1940s and 1950s. Lash Larue often traveled to promote his films and Edwin participated in the performer's Lenoir stage show, during which Larue utilized his signature bullwhip to cut paper and pop off small Coca-Cola bottle caps. Roy Rogers and his horse Trigger were also frequent guests. Magician Harry Blackstone Sr. regaled crowds with his tricks and Morrison Costumes of Charlotte sponsored a Halloween show. The facility also housed musical performances, dances, and other community events.<sup>28</sup>

Joanna Dayvault Jones remembers that her father and the Center Theater operators collaborated to attract customers. A large wood-framed billboard under the painted sign on the Dayvault Drugstore's west elevation advertised movies showing at the Center Theater. Mr. Dayvault installed air conditioning in the drug store soon after the theater—Lenoir's first air-conditioned downtown commercial building—opened, so that patrons could also enjoy climate-controlled comfort at his lunch counter and soda fountain. Mrs. Jones had the opportunity to interact with many actors who came to eat after promoting Saturday morning stage shows. The diminutive Brooklyn native Johnny Roventini, who became a top Philip Morris Company advertising spokesman after being discovered while working at the Hotel New Yorker as a bellboy, entertained the drug store crowd by proclaiming his trademark radio message, "Call for Philip Morris," in his red and black uniform. Mrs. Jones ate lunch

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<sup>27</sup> *The Lenoir News-Topic* reported that the Center Theater's construction began in August 1940 and was completed just before the March 3, 1941, grand opening. "Most Modern Equipment and Materials Used Throughout the New Center Theatre," *The Lenoir News-Topic*, February 28, 1941, p. 1; Donald Barker, *Big Time for a Dime: A History of Silver Screens in the Catawba Valley* (North Carolina: Donald Barker, 2007), pp. 69-70.

<sup>28</sup> The Strand Theater was located above the Ballew Arcade. Edwin Stafford, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 10, 2012; Marilyn Stafford Edwards, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 11, 2012.



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with the Three Stooges, whose antics her very understanding father tolerated. Mr. Dayvault did draw the line, however, when Hopalong Cassidy attempted to bring his horse Topper into the drugstore.<sup>29</sup>

E. E. Stafford purchased the State Theater at 128 Main Street around 1951 and ran it for about five years before returning to the Center Theater as a co-manager with I. C. Holloway. He subsequently operated the no-longer-extant Avon Theater, owned by the Charlotte-based company Stewart and Everett, from 1969 until his 1979 death. Art Farmer supervised the Center Theater after Mr. Stafford's departure.<sup>30</sup> Stewart and Everett acquired the Center Theater in 1972 and sold it to the Bona family of Statesville in 1985. Historian Donald Barker asserts that the Center Theater, which closed by 1990, was one of sixteen movie houses established in Lenoir during the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup>

## Architecture Context

By the late 1930s, Lenoir entrepreneurs, although still somewhat constrained by the economic challenges the country had recently suffered, favored Art Deco and Art Moderne architecture. The styles, executed using modern building materials and construction practices, appealed to a broad audience. Art Deco, born at the 1925 Paris Exposition of Decorative and Industrial Arts, captured roaring twenties exuberance and translated well to myriad building types, from storefronts and movie theaters to skyscrapers. Popular Art Deco features include smooth stone or stuccoed walls, stylized geometric and foliate decoration, and a vertical emphasis heightened by stepped pilasters or parapets.

American buildings also reflected European design tenets in their streamlined modern forms during this period. Architects inspired by the early-twentieth-century Italian Futurist movement, which completely rejected historical precedents and celebrated the era's progress, utilized stucco, structural glass, glass block, porcelain-enameled steel, and anodized aluminum to embody a machine aesthetic. The resulting architectural style, known as Art Moderne, reflects the speed, energy, and power of automobiles, trains, steamships, and factories in buildings with horizontal massing, asymmetrical facades, curved corners, banding, and flat roofs.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.; "Call for Philip Morris," <http://www.bellhop.org/johnnyhistory.htm>, accessed in August 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Euell Stafford also helped to build what is now the Carmike Westgate Twin Cinemas in the Westgate Shopping Center on Morganton Road.

<sup>31</sup> Donald Barker, *Big Time for a Dime*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Gelernter. *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2001), 227-228; Peter Gossel and Gabriele Leuthauser. *Architecture in the Twentieth Century* (Köln, Slovenia: Taschen, 2001), 319; Antonio Sant'Elia, *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture*, <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/architecture.html>. French architect Le Corbusier also equated streamlined building appearance with modern technological advances. Sara Allaback, "Essays on Modern Architecture for the National Historic Landmark Program," Unpublished draft, April 2, 2003, page 74.

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As the 1930s came to an end, thirty-three industrial plants provided work for five thousand Lenoir residents and local manufacturers sold products throughout North America. New construction exceeded pre-depression levels by 1937, when the city issued building permits for forty-four structures valued at \$203,800. Efirid Department Store's undertaking, erecting what became Dayvault's Drug Store, was the second-largest project with a \$25,000 budget.<sup>33</sup> An article in the *News-Topic's* September 1941 Centennial edition claimed that Lenoir was the nation's "second largest furniture manufacturing city," an assertion that has not been confirmed. Regardless, downtown businesses reflected this success, with the O. P. Lutz Furniture Company, Center Theater, J. C. Penney Department Store, and Ballew Arcade among those who embraced the future by constructing streamlined modern facades.

The O. P. Lutz Furniture Company's façade distilled extravagant 1920s Art Deco ornamentation to its essence with decorative sawtooth brickwork, black structural glass storefront veneer, and large plate glass display windows intended to draw patrons to the prominent corner location. Black structural glass also embellished the entrance wall below the Center Theater's box office window, contrasting with its white stuccoed exterior and the marquee's neon bands. In addition to its architectural significance, the Center Theater was Lenoir's first air conditioned building. Edwin Stafford remembers that two concrete tunnels conveyed "washed air" from the boiler room to the lobby and auditorium.<sup>34</sup>

The J. C. Penney Department Store constructed at 908-912 West Avenue in 1941 was another trendsetting commercial building, as period newspaper articles proclaimed it to be "one of Western North Carolina's most modern department stores."<sup>35</sup> The original details of the three-story brick commercial building are now obscured by a circa 1980s metal screen over the façade's east side and bands of dark-tinted windows on its west side, but the strong vertical lines of the fluted central-and-end-panel ornamentation on the original stuccoed façade—still visible on the west side—convey the original appearance. The circa 1940 Ballew Arcade at 118 South Main Street has also been extensively remodeled, but once boasted Carrera glass lettering on an Art Moderne façade. The Center Theater thus stands as Lenoir's most intact Art Moderne-style structure.

## Center Theater Architect Erle G. Stillwell

The architects of the three commercial buildings in the expansion area are unknown, but Erle G. Stillwell's plans for the Center Theater still exist. Stillwell, a Hannibal, Missouri, native, resided in

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<sup>33</sup> Lenoir Board of Trade and *Lenoir News-Topic*, *Lenoir, North Carolina* (n.p.: 1938), 3-5, 10-11; Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir City Directory, 1937-1938* (Asheville: Commercial Service Company, 1936), 5-6

<sup>34</sup> Edwin Stafford, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 10, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> "Penney Store Here One of the Most Modern in Western North Carolina," *The Lenoir News-Topic*, November 14, 1941.

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Hendersonville, North Carolina, for much of his life, arriving in 1904 and leaving only to pursue academic studies. After completing Cornell University's two-year architecture program in 1912, he participated in a European study tour and interned with an Atlanta architect, experiences that informed his later designs. He then established a Henderson practice with Hans C. Meyer by 1913 that he continued after Meyer's departure the next year. After significant losses from real estate speculation and work shortages during the real estate crash of the 1920s and the subsequent economic depression, Stillwell's practice enjoyed a resurgence during the mid-1930s, when he designed many movie theaters and public works projects. He partnered with five other architects to create the Asheville-based firm Six Associates during World War II in order to increase their likelihood of obtaining government contracts, but also maintained his Henderson office until 1953. Stillwell joined the American Institute of Architects in 1916, became a Fellow in 1942, and served as the North Carolina Chapter's president for four terms in the 1920s and the 1940s. He also led the North Carolina Board of Architecture as president from 1942 to 1945. Stillwell continued to consult after his 1970 retirement.<sup>36</sup>

Erle Stillwell's theater commissions comprised a considerable part of his oeuvre after 1934 given his work for the Wilbey-Kincey group, which invested in and managed Paramount theaters throughout the southeast until 1949. Historians have identified approximately sixty Stillwell-designed theaters in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. The vast majority are modest in scale and Art Deco or Art Moderne in style, often employing scored stucco facades to create a streamlined geometric appearance. A few examples, such as the Classical Revival Carolina Theater in Chapel Hill, the Mediterranean Revival Carolina (later Rex) Theater in Henderson and Center Theater in Rocky Mount, manifest other architectural influences. The Sumter Opera House in South Carolina is one of his most elaborate interior designs, as the Public Works Administration funded renovations to the 1893 City Hall and Opera House to create a vibrant Art Deco theater.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> William Mitchell, *Buildings as History: The Architecture of Erle Stillwell*, ix-x; David Jackson and Charlotte V. Brown, *History of the North Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1913-1998* (Tabor City, N. C.: Atlantic Printing Company), 1998, 89, 98, 190

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-154; "Wilby, Kincey Theater Interests Sold," *Atlanta Herald-Journal*, December 4, 1949, D5.

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## 10. Geographical Data

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

1. Latitude: 35.913868 Longitude: -81.54126

## Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Lenoir Downtown Historic District Boundary Increase are indicated by the heavy dashed line on the enclosed map. Scale 1" = 100'

## Boundary Justification

The boundary includes four buildings that contribute to the Lenoir Downtown Historic District's commercial and architectural significance and are located at the 2007 district's southwest corner opposite a commercial block and the historic United States Post Office.

## Additional Documentation

### Photograph Catalog

All photographs by Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc., 3334 Nottingham Road, Winston-Salem, NC, in 2012 and 2013. Digital images located at the North Carolina Office of Archives and History Western Office in Asheville, North Carolina.

1. South side West Avenue, looking east from the Center Theater to Dayvault's Drug Store
2. West Avenue Streetscape, looking east, showing the relationship of the 2007 district to the boundary increase
3. Dayvault's Drug Store at 915 West Avenue and the Commercial Building at 122 Boundary Street, looking southeast
4. Commercial Building, 122 Boundary Street, oblique
5. O. P. Lutz Furniture Company and Lutz Hosiery Mill, 1001 West Avenue, oblique
6. Center Theater, 1011 West Avenue, façade