

## North Main Street Extension of the Davidson Local Historic District

Excerpted and adapted from the National Register nomination for the Davidson Historic District, written by Richard L. Mattson and Frances P. Alexander in December 2008

**Common and Historical Property Names:** North Main Street Extension of the Davidson Local Historic District

**Physical Address or Location:** See attached parcel list

**Tax Parcel Identification Number (PIN):** See attached parcel list

**Current Owner(s) Name(s):** See attached parcel list

**Current Owner(s) Mailing Address(es):** See attached parcel list

### Narrative Description

The North Main Street Extension of the Davidson Local Historic District encompasses the northern portion of the historical core of Davidson, which itself developed between the antebellum period and the mid-twentieth century. Situated roughly twenty miles north of Charlotte in Mecklenburg County, the town took shape around the campus of Davidson College, a small, liberal arts college founded by the Presbyterian Church in 1837. The college campus is sited south of the proposed district extension, at the junction of north-south Main Street and east-west Concord Road, though some of the originally residential buildings in the district extension have been adapted for collegiate use. Main Street (N.C. 115) is the historic road between Charlotte and Statesville, the seat of adjoining Iredell County. The north-south Southern Railway line parallels Main Street to the west. Constructed on the eve of the Civil War, the railroad also linked Davidson with the nearby towns of Huntersville and Cornelius, to the south, and Mooresville, to the north, all of which developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as textile mill towns.

Like other towns in the region, the street plan of Davidson does not conform to a conventional grid system. The town consists of a few major thoroughfares that emerged from farm-to-market roads and numerous connecting streets, many of which follow topographical and other natural features. Mature shade trees and abundant vegetation characterize these residential streets. City blocks vary in size. The presence of the college campus and the railroad directed development during the historic period.

North Main Street began developing in the mid-nineteenth century as a residential area for Davidson College faculty. Today this tree-lined thoroughfare contains many of the town's finer nineteenth and early twentieth century residences. By the turn of the twentieth century these areas featured a number of notable Queen Anne dwellings, including the 1890s Vinson House at 519 North Main, and the 1890s Armour-Adams House at 626 North Main. Colonial Revival residences began appearing on adjacent lots in the early 1900s. Later in the 1910s and 1920s frame and brick-veneered, Craftsman-style bungalows and American Foursquare houses were built. The G.L. Lilly House at 565 North Main Street is a substantial, brick, Craftsman-style bungalow that remains well preserved.

The Delburg Cotton Mills (1908), part of the emergence of a local textile industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was constructed on the northwest side of town. It is housed in the long, one story, brick buildings with tall, segmental arched windows and low gable roofs that were typical of cotton mills built in the Piedmont during this period. While Main Street was a popular address for college professors and the town's middle class, the construction of the Delburg Mills introduced worker housing to the west side of Davidson. Typical of mill villages of the period, Watson and Armour Streets are characterized by narrow lots on which small, one-story, frame dwellings are sited. Most of these mill houses are either two-room, side-gable dwellings or hip-roofed cottages with inset porches. Some of these houses occupy relatively deep yards originally intended for gardens and livestock. Although many of these mill houses have been modified with replacement siding, porch posts, and windows, the original forms of the houses and architectural patterns of the neighborhood remain intact.

The North Main Street Extension of the Davidson Local Historic District comprises approximately 37 1/4 acres, and is that portion of the Davidson National Register District north of, and adjacent to, the current local district that continues to retain integrity. The district includes properties on either side of North Main Street, the mill buildings flanking Delburg Street between North Main Street and Watson Street, the houses on the east side of Watson Street between Delburg and Armour Streets, and the houses on the south side of Armour Street, east of Watson street. The residential area on Delburg Street west of Watson Street has been excluded as a spate of recent new construction has impaired the integrity of that area to such an extent that the contributing resources are few and scattered along the street with no strong concentration or connection to the rest of the proposed district.

The extension encompasses a substantially intact collection of historic resources reflecting the growth of the town from the antebellum era to the midtwentieth century. The district retains 44 contributing resources and 41 noncontributing resources. Of the noncontributing resources, 22 are secondary structures--garages, sheds, etc. North Main Street Extension of the Davidson Local Historic District retains its integrity of location and setting, maintaining its street system, its traditional land use patterns as well as its mature shade trees that enhance the historical ambience of the town.

The inventory for the district follows

### **ARMOUR STREET**

**House** 203 Armour Street, ca. 1978, Noncontributing Building Brick, one-story, ranch house with side gable roof and shed roofed porch. **Garage** ca. 1978 Noncontributing concrete block garage; **Shed** ca. 1978 Noncontributing frame shed. *SSN MK3743*

**Duplex** 207-209 Armour Street, ca. 1990, Noncontributing Building One story, hip roofed duplex with a front gable dormer and a porch extending across the façade. *SSN 3744*

**House** 211 Armour Street, ca. 1908, Contributing Building One story, L-plan frame dwelling with a hip roofed porch extending across the façade that is supported by original turned posts; original porch balustrade has square balusters; house has a rear ell and a small rear shed; original weatherboard siding and one-over-one windows as well as an added picture window. **Garage/Apartment Building** 211

Armour Street, ca. 1995, Noncontributing Building Two story, vinyl sided garage/apartment building built in 1995 behind the house. *SSN 3745*

**House** 213 Armour Street, ca. 1911, Contributing Building One story, single pile house with a side gable roof, two room plan, a three bay façade, and a rear shed; interior brick chimney, original weatherboard siding and six-over-six windows; the front gable, entry porch appears to have been added ca. 1950 and is supported by square wooden posts. **Garage/Apartment Building** 213 Armour Street, ca. 1998, Noncontributing Building Two story, hip roofed apartment building covered in vinyl siding; constructed in 1998 behind the house. *SSN 3746*

**House** 221 Armour Street, ca. 1911, Contributing Building One story, single pile house with a two room plan, a three bay façade, side gable roof, and a rear shed; interior brick chimney; replacement siding and replacement windows; shed roofed porch is supported by wooden posts. **Shed** ca. 2009 Noncontributing Building shed in rear yard. *SSN 3747*

**House** 225 Armour Street, 1911; Contributing Building One story, three bay house with a side gable roof, three bay façade, two room plan, and a rear ell; paired six-over-six windows, shed roofed porch supported by replacement piers. *SSN 3748*

## **DELBURG STREET**

Delburg Cotton Mills 209-210 Delburg Street

**Main Mill** 1908/ca. 1920, Contributing Building Straddling Delburg Street are the three buildings that comprised the 1908 Delburg Cotton Mills property (later the Davidson Cotton Mill). The main mill occupies much of the south side of Delburg between Watson and Jackson streets. Typical of other cotton plants built in the Piedmont during this period, the main mill is a long, rectangular building with one main level above a raised basement, a brick exterior, and a slightly gabled roof with exposed rafter tails. The long, brick walls are punctuated by tall, segmental arched window openings that now have replacement windows. In the early 1920s, a two story addition was constructed to the short west elevation to house the spinning room. Renovated in recent years for commercial use, two open stairwells and a patio have been added along the south elevation. *SSN MK1571*

**Cotton Warehouse/Dye House** 1908/ca. 1955, Noncontributing Building On the north side of Delburg stand the cotton warehouse/dye house for the mill and a small transformer house. The original warehouse was a one story, brick building with a gable roof, but a large, one story, brick building was added ca. 1955. Two wings constructed of concrete block and corrugated metal have been added to the rear (north) elevation. Only the corbelled end elevations and firewalls reflect the initial construction. In 2014-2016 the complex was adapted for use as an innovation hub/shared working space by Davidson College which involved adding a glass atrium along the west elevation. *SSN MK2838*

**Transformer House** 1908, Contributing Building Reflecting the Romanesque Revival design of the original mill, the transformer house is a two story, brick building with a square plan and pyramidal roof. Built with the original mill in 1908, this small auxiliary building also has segmental arched doors and

windows on the ground level that are capped by corbelled brick hoods. On the upper level, round arched window openings are also capped by brick hoods that rise from a corbelled brick belt course. A row of ocular openings for the electrical lines sit above the belt course. *SSN MK1572*

### **NORTH MAIN STREET**

**439 North Main Street**, 1962, Noncontributing Building Two story, side gable, brick veneered Colonial Revival building with flanking one story wings; erected as a duplex and later converted to International Studies Center. **Garage** ca. 1962 Noncontributing Building brick hipped-roof, 2-car garage converted for storage. *SSN MK2541*

### **Vacant lot at 506 N Main Street**

**Health Services Building, Davidson College** 514 North Main Street, ca. 1950, 1994, Noncontributing Building One story, red brick Period Cottage with major, 1994 rear addition, when building converted to Health Services Building for Davidson College; the large rear wing has classical elements and more than doubles the size of the original building. *SSN MK 2818*

**Faculty House / Lloyd House** 511 North Main Street, ca. 1925, Contributing Building One and one-half story, side gable, wood-shingled bungalow with engaged porch with square posts on brick piers; exposed rafters under broad eaves; large front gable dormer; replacement one-over-one windows; house built for faculty housing on the site of The Oak, an antebellum faculty residence; builder was local contractor Will Potts; occupied by numerous faculty families until 1960s, when English professor Charles Lloyd acquired the property and became long-time resident; now used as Davidson College offices. *SSN MK1591*

**Faculty House / Wood House** 518 North Main Street, ca. 1920, Contributing Building Two story, frame, front gable Craftsman dwelling; weatherboard first story and wood-shingled second story; shed roofed, front porch square posts and balusters; replacement one-over-one windows; Davidson College contracted local builder Will Potts to build this dwelling as faculty housing; first resident was Professor William W. Wood. *SSN MK3742*

**Vinson House** 519 North Main Street, 1897, Contributing Building Two story, frame Queen Anne house with high hip roof and projecting gable roofed bays with bay windows; eyebrow dormer on main elevation; wraparound porch with turned posts, turned balustrade, and decorative sawn brackets; double-door entry has sidelights and transom; dwelling built by the Vinson family soon after the death of Professor William Vinson, who taught mathematics at Davidson; residence and later served as a boarding house for college students. **Garage** ca. 1980 Noncontributing building frame, hipped-roof, 2-car garage. *SSN MK1593*

**Currie-Adams House** 525 North Main Street, ca. 1900, Contributing Building Traditional two story, single pile, three bay form with side gable roof and weatherboard siding; hip roofed porch has wood columns; later small bay window on front elevation; Violet Currie moved to Davidson around 1900 to educate her sons, one of whom, Archibald Currie became a professor at Davidson and built house at 559 N. Main;

Mrs. Currie died in 1926 and Adams, local businessman, later acquired the house and was long-time owner. **Garage** ca. 1975 Noncontributing building, frame, side gabled, 3-car garage. *SSN MK1595*

**Mary Young House** 526 North Main Street, ca. 1907, 1979, Noncontributing Building Heavily remodeled two story, boxy, hip-roofed Colonial Revival house with 1979 brick veneer over original stucco; hip roofed dormer; later denticulated cornice; modern entry portico with square posts and balusters replaced wraparound porch; sidelights and fanlight frame the entrance; six-over-six windows; local builder B.C. Deal erected this house for the Young family; served as a boarding house, with Mary Young as a longtime owner and resident. **Garage** ca. 1979 Noncontributing Building, hipped-roof, brick 2-car garage. *SSN MK1596*

**W.A. Thompson House** 532 North Main Street, ca. 1860, Contributing Building One story, frame, three bay dwelling with traditional single pile, side gable form; hip roofed porch has replacement wood columns; center entrance framed by sidelights; side-gabled porch wing to the north, cross-gabled rear ell has garage below given change in grade. Isaac Johnson erected this house for a W.A. Thompson; house served as residence for many Davidson families, and was also a boarding house and fraternity chapter house. *SSN MK1594*

**Woods-McCutchan House** 533 North Main Street, 1920, Contributing Building One and one-half story, side gable bungalow with engaged porch with square posts on brick piers; modern carport on south side; large front gable dormer; Dr. James Woods, original owner, was a physician at Davidson College; English professor James McCutchan purchased the house in 1956. *SSN MK1975*

**Davidson College Cemetery** 537 North Main Street, ca. 1840 to ca. 1950, Contributing Site Cemetery holds graves of Davidson College faculty and their families. During antebellum era, a cemetery plot was a benefit the school offered new professors. Before 1900, students who died while at school were also buried here. Lots were offered to non-faculty after 1880. Cemetery occupies a town lot roughly two acres in size; headstones illustrate traditional rectangular and arched forms as well as nationally popular designs of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including obelisks. *SSN MK2819*

**Mrs. Ferdinand Whitaker House** 544 North Main Street, ca. 1910, Contributing Building One story, double pile, weatherboard Queen Anne cottage; high hip roof on main block and projecting cross gables; wraparound porch with turned post; replacement three-over-one windows; local builder R.D. Mooney erected house for Mrs. F. Whitaker, who rented rooms. *SSN MK1598*

**Ellinwood-Robson House** 553 North Main Street, 1911, Contributing Building Two story, frame, Foursquare house with boxy form, hip roof, weatherboard siding on first floor and wood shingles on second; hip roofed dormer; hip roofed porch with classical columns wraps around south elevation and enclose front entrance at southeast corner; six-over-one windows; built for Connecticut resident May Ellinwood as a winter retreat; sold to Alice Robson in 1935; Robson was a nurse at Davidson College. *SSN MK1599*

**Faculty House / McGill House** 558 North Main Street, ca. 1920, Contributing Building Two story, double pile, front gable house with Craftsman style elements; weatherboard first story and woodshingled

second; one story, gable roofed wing on south side; hip roofed front porch with gabled entry bay; six-over-one windows; builder Will Potts constructed house for Davidson College as faculty housing; professors McGill, Porter, and Lyons were among the faculty to reside here. *SSN MK1600*

**Archibald Currie House** 559 North Main Street, ca. 1910, Contributing Building Two story, weatherboard house with restrained Queen Anne and classical elements; irregular massing with high hip roof over main block and front-facing, two story gabled wing; bay window on south side; wraparound porch has replacement square posts; later Craftsman style window sash; Professor Currie began teaching at Davidson in 1901 and was the Woodrow Wilson Professor of Economics and Political Science. **Studio** ca. 2016 Noncontributing Building, one story, frame, hipped roof building **Shed** ca. 2000 Noncontributing Building frame shed with dual gable roof and vertical board siding. *SSN MK1601*

**House** 564 North Main Street, ca. 1920, Contributing Building Two story, double pile, hip roofed Colonial Revival house with large hip roofed dormer; weatherboard siding; front porch has hip roof and classical columns; two interior brick chimneys, replacement one-over-one windows. *SSN MK1602*

**G.L. Lilly House** 565 North Main Street, ca. 1925, Contributing Building One and one-half story, brick veneered, front gable bungalow with gabled dormers on side elevations; front porch has square wood posts on brick piers; paired and three-part windows; knee braces under deep eaves; Lilly was a manager of the Davidson Ice and Fuel Company. **Cottage** ca. 1925, Contributing Building 1 story, gable-roofed building with shed-roofed addition, clad in German siding **Shed** ca. 1925, Contributing Building 1 story, front-gabled shed with German siding and a standing seam metal roof **Garage** ca. 1925, Contributing Building two-story, gable-roofed 2-car garage clad in brick with Craftsman details. *SSN MK1603*

**Avery Hobbs House** 573 North Main Street, ca. 1900, Contributing Building Two story, frame, double pile, hip roofed Colonial Revival house with projecting two story front gable wing; original façade-width porch replaced with entry porch, attached pergola, and polygonal bay; replacement vinyl siding; Hobbs was a farmer and served on the Davidson town council from 1918 to 1925; house also served as a rooming house. **Garage** ca. 1980 Noncontributing Building 1 story, side gabled, 3-car garage **Playhouse** ca. 2000 Noncontributing Structure, frame one-story play structure. *SSN MK1604*

**House** 574 North Main Street, 2002, Noncontributing Building One and one-half story, brick veneered house with Colonial Revival elements; side gable roof on main block; attached garage on north elevation. **Garage** ca. 2005 Noncontributing Building 1 story, side gabled, 1-car garage, brick veneer. *SSN MK3741*

**House** 602 North Main Street, ca. 1910, Contributing Building Two story, three bay, frame, hip roofed Colonial Revival house; replacement vinyl siding; hipped dormer on main elevation; wraparound porch with classical columns and pedimented entry bay; replacement one-over-one windows. **Swimming Pool** ca. 2004 Noncontributing Structure. *SSN MK1605*

**Harlan Helper House** 603 North Main Street, ca. 1896; remodeled ca. 1925, Contributing Building Originally a one story dwelling, this house was expanded and remodeled in 1920s to create the present one story, side gable bungalow; exposed rafters under deep eaves; center gable roofed dormer;

engaged front porch; Harlan Helper managed the Davidson College laundry in early twentieth century; his father, Hanson Helper, operated the Helper Hotel on North Main. **Garage** ca. 1907 Noncontributing Building one story frame, gable fronted, one bay garage **Shed** ca. 1925 Contributing Building frame gable-roofed garden shed clad in board and batten siding. *SSN MK1606*

**Manly Cranford House** 609 North Main Street, ca. 1890/1950, Contributing Building Traditional two story, frame, single pile, side gable house; ca. 1950 alterations include full-height porch with square posts and added brick veneer; six-over-one and one-over-one windows; entry has original bracketed transom and sidelights; later additions on side and rear elevations; Cranford was prosperous local dry goods merchant, postmaster, and town marshal; residence later served as a fraternity house. **Shed** ca. 1980 Noncontributing Building, one story, side-gabled frame shed clad in T-111 siding. *SSN MK2523*

**Lewis Schenck House** 612 North Main Street, ca. 1930, Contributing Building Two story, double pile, five bay, hip roofed Colonial Revival house with brick veneer; classical center entry has broken pediment and fluted pilasters; sunroom attached to south side; six-over-six windows. Will Potts, a local builder, designed and built this house. *SSN MK1607*

**Palmer Henderson House** 617 North Main Street, ca. 1925, Contributing Building One and one-half story, Dutch Colonial Revival dwelling; gambrel roof and two brick exterior chimneys; larger, shed roofed dormer topped by smaller eyebrow dormer; brick veneered first story and weatherboard second story; six-over-one windows; flat roofed entry porch has wooden columns; rear addition ca 2011 is a one-story, hipped-roof rear addition on a raised basement given a change in grade attached via a hyphen; Henderson operated a service station in Davidson. *SSN MK1608*

**House** 620 North Main Street, ca. 1910, Contributing Building Two story, double pile, hip roofed Colonial Revival house with brick veneer; hip roofed sleeping porch on south elevation; six-over-one windows; entry porch has denticulated cornice and replacement iron balustrade; Cloyd Potts was the builder. *SSN MK1609*

**E.A. Fry House** 623 North Main Street, ca. 1922/2018, Noncontributing Building One and one-half story, side gable bungalow with brick veneered first story; weatherboard second story replaced with shingles 2018; engaged front porch with tapered posts on brick piers; large gable roofed dormer; exposed rafters under deep eaves; replacement one-over-one windows; Fry operated a laundry and shoe repair shop. **Garage** ca. 2018 Noncontributing Building, side gabled, two-car garage with a shed dormer **Shed** ca. 2010 Noncontributing Building pre-fabricated frame side-gabled shed with double-leaf doors. *SSN MK1610*

**House** 625 North Main Street 2014 Noncontributing Building Two-story frame house; hipped roof with projecting gabled bays; wrap porch with metal hipped roof supported by paneled posts; double-leaf doors; 2/2 windows; **Garage** ca. 2014 Noncontributing building, frame, hipped roof, 2-car garage. *SSN MK3739*

**Armour-Adams House** 626 North Main Street, ca. 1900, Contributing Building One and one-half story, Queen Anne cottage with weatherboard siding; main hip roofed block has projecting cross gabled bays;

hip roofed dormer on front elevation; wraparound porch with turned posts and balusters and decorative brackets; interior brick chimneys, replacement one-over-one windows; original owner, Holt Armour, was the son of wealthy Davidson landowner and farmer Robert Armour; Holt operated a large dry goods store in Davidson; in 1919, house sold to businessman J. Hope Adams, who had moved to Davidson from York, South Carolina. **Garage** ca. 1920 Contributing Building frame, gable-fronted garage clad in German siding; metal roof with exposed rafter tails. *SSN MK1612*

**James Johnston House** 705 North Main Street, ca. 1900, Contributing Building One story, L-plan dwelling with replacement vinyl siding; turned-post wraparound porch; four-over-four windows; Johnston served as the town's only police officer until the 1910s when the police department expanded. *SSN MK1614*

**John Raymer House** 709 North Main Street, ca. 1925, Contributing Building gabled dormers; attached front porch has front gable roof and brick piers; Craftsman style six-over-one windows; clad in brick veneer with stucco on dormers and porch gable; roof has exposed rafter tails and knee brackets, gable- and shed-roofed rear additions; and side-gabled north wing; north and south projecting window bays; basketweave water table; built on the site of the old Demarcus House. Raymer was local businessman and civic leader who served on Davidson Board of Commissioners for fifteen years. **Garage** ca. 1925 Contributing Building frame, gabled-fronted garage clad in weatherboard, metal roof with exposed rafter tails **Poultry Shed** ca. 1925 Contributing Structure shed roofed shed with weatherboard on three sides and metal screening on the façade. *SSN MK1615*

#### **Vacant lot at 704 N Main Street**

**Armour-Goodrum House** 712 North Main Street, ca. 1900, Contributing Building One and one-half story, Queen Anne dwelling with weatherboard siding; main hip roofed block has projecting cross gabled bays; large gable roofed dormer on front elevation appears to be a later addition; wraparound porch with turned posts and balusters; interior brick chimneys; replacement one-over-one windows. Arthur Armour built this house and for many years it was the home of his niece, Mrs. Cloyd Goodrum. **Shed** ca. 1995 Noncontributing Building pre-fabricated, frame, gable-roofed shed *SSN MK1616*

**Cloyd Goodrum House** 717 North Main Street, ca. 1910, Noncontributing Building Heavily altered, traditional one story, side gable, single pile dwelling; replacement siding; later sunroom on south elevation; later chimney stacks at junction of main block and later rear wings; replacement paired one-over-one windows; replacement flat roofed entry porch with square posts; Goodrum operated a drugstore in Davidson. **Garage** ca. 1925 Noncontributing building Frame, fronted gabled, two-car garage, clad in German siding; bays have been partially enclosed. *SSN MK3738*

**House** 721 North Main Street, ca. 1943, Noncontributing Building One story, frame, Minimal Traditional dwelling with cross gable roof and slightly projecting center section that includes the front-facing brick chimney and main entry capped by front gable roof; later shed-roofed addition on north side; replacement windows; **Garage** ca 1950 Noncontributing Building shed-roofed, frame, 1-car garage. *SSN MK 3737*



**House/ Horton House** 722 North Main Street, ca. 1925, Contributing Building One story, brick veneered Period Cottage; side gable main block and off-set, front gable, entry porch with arched opening and brick piers leading to arched doorway; six-over-one single and paired windows; front-facing, gabled wing on north side. **Garage** ca. 1925 Contributing Building, frame, front gabled, 2-car garage with shed-roofed addition to the east. *SSN MK3740*

### **WATSON STREET**

**House** 504 Watson Street, ca. 1908, Noncontributing Building Associated with Delburg Cotton Mills, this heavily altered, frame mill house has one story, double pile hip roofed form; replacement one-over-one windows; hip roofed front porch enclosed; chimneys now gone. **Secondary** side-gabled frame dwelling, clad in vinyl siding on concrete block foundation **Shed** ca. 2000 Noncontributing Building frame, gabled fronted shed on piers. *SSN MK3755*

**House** 514 Watson Street, ca. 1921, Contributing Building Associated with Delburg Cotton Mills, this mill house has one story, double pile hip roofed form with inset corner porch bay, hipped dormer, and interior brick chimneys; replacement one-over-one windows; replacement square porch posts and metal railing. **Shed** Noncontributing Building ca. 2000 frame gable-fronted shed **Carport** ca. 1960 Noncontributing Structure, flat-roofed, open carport on metal supports. *SSN MK3754*

**House** 526 Watson Street, ca. 1921, Renovation ca. 1990, Noncontributing Building Associated with Delburg Cotton Mills, this mill house has common one story, double pile hip roofed form with inset corner porch bay and hipped dormer; large modern addition on south elevation; chimneys gone; replacement vinyl siding; replacement windows. *SSN MK3753*

**House** 532 Watson Street, ca. 1908, Contributing Building Associated with Delburg Cotton Mills, this mill house has common one story, single pile, side gable form with rear shed extension; center brick chimney; three-over-one windows; composition siding; simple, shed roofed, front porch covering southernmost two bays is a replacement; one of a row of similar side gable mill houses along Watson Street. *SSN MK3752*

**House** 536 Watson Street, ca. 1908, Contributing Building Associated with Delburg Cotton Mills, this mill house has common one story, single pile, side gable form with rear shed extension; center chimney now gone; three-over-one windows and later paired six-over-six windows; replacement asbestos siding; shed roofed porch with replacement posts; one of a row of similar side gable mill houses along Watson Street. **Shed** 536 Watson Street, ca. 1908, Contributing Building One story, one bay, side gable storage shed with standing-seam metal roof and weatherboard siding. *SSN MK3751*

**House** 540 Watson Street, ca. 1908, Noncontributing Building Associated with Delburg Cotton Mills, this mill house has common one story, single pile, side gable form with rear shed extension; interior chimney now gone; two-over-two windows and later paired six-over-six windows; replacement siding; shed roofed, front porch with turned posts replacing replacement square posts; one of a row of similar side gable mill houses along Watson Street. **Shed** ca. 1930 Noncontributing Building frame, gable-roofed shed. *SSN MK3749*

**House** 544 Watson Street, ca. 1908, Contributing Building Associated with Delburg Cotton Mills, this mill house has common one story, single pile, side gable form with rear shed extension; center brick chimney; later paired six-over-six windows; replacement siding; shed roofed, front porch with spindle balusters and turned posts; one of a row of similar side gable mill houses along Watson Street. *SSN MK3750*

## **Statement of Significance**

### **Summary**

North Main Street Extension of the Davidson Local Historic District illustrates the development of the northern section of the town of Davidson, a small college town and Piedmont railroad community, between the antebellum period and mid-twentieth century.

The extension contains notable industrial architecture and cotton-mill housing that reflects the region's textile manufacturing boom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this period, railroad towns throughout the Piedmont grew not only as marshalling points for agricultural products but also as small textile-mill centers. The expansion of railroads drew cotton mills to the region at an unprecedented rate. By World War I, over 300 mills dotted rail lines within a 100-mile radius of Charlotte in Mecklenburg County. The county's railroad towns vied for cotton mills that promised prosperity, and by 1910, Davidson, Pineville, Cornelius, and Huntersville all boasted textile mills and mill villages alongside their railroad corridors.

Architecturally, the extension contains a well-preserved array of non-mill-related housing that illustrates nationally popular styles as well as traditional house forms from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. The historic district features especially fine examples of the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman styles. Many of Davidson's notable residences in the extension were erected for college faculty, who formed a sizable professional class for this small town. As the twentieth century progressed, the college drew professors from across the nation who often opted for the latest, progressive architectural modes.

### **Development**

In 1835, the Concord (North Carolina) Presbytery established a site for a Presbyterian men's college on a high ridge in northern Mecklenburg County between the Catawba and Yadkin rivers. The rural Piedmont setting was considered to be salubrious and "at a distance from all haunts of dissipation." The presbytery acquired 469 acres from local Presbyterian planter, William Lee Davidson II, who also donated funds for the college.

When Davidson College opened in 1837, the campus contained eight brick buildings clustered near the junction of North Main Street (Statesville Road) and Concord Road, and a small college cemetery on North Main Street. The college grew during the 1850s when Maxwell Chambers of Salisbury, North Carolina, donated over \$250,000 to the college. Chambers' generous gift allowed for significant physical improvements to the campus. Just west of the campus, the college's small cemetery on North Main Street was also created in the late 1830s. The college initially gave free plots to faculty as well as

townspeople and in 1894 erected the existing iron fence around the parcel. Among those buried here is Confederate general, D.H. Hill, who taught mathematics at Davidson College and married the daughter of the school's first president, Dr. Robert Hall Morrison.

The region's gradual post-Civil War recovery in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought progress to the school and the town. The college enlarged its faculty, enrollment, and curriculum while attracting other educational facilities to the town. The success and growth of the college shaped the development of the surrounding area.

Typical of many communities in North Carolina's western Piedmont, the college and the adjacent town remained isolated until the arrival of reliable railroad service after the Civil War. The north-south Atlantic, Tennessee and Ohio Railroad joined Charlotte in Mecklenburg County with Statesville in Iredell County in 1861, passing through the small college town just west of Main Street. Confederate troops dismantled the track during the war, but the line was finally reactivated in 1874. Although the ambitiously named railroad never extended beyond Statesville, by the 1890s the line was part of the Southern Railway system that linked Davidson and Mecklenburg County to far-flung cities and markets. The railway provided the town with unprecedented economic opportunities as Davidson became a shipping point for cash crops, especially cotton, and a service center for farmers. In common with other railroad towns in the region, Davidson also attracted textile investors who constructed cotton mills and mill villages along the rail corridor.

The Delburg Cotton Mills opened in 1908 near the first mill, the Linden plant (1890). The two mills eventually merged into the Delburg-Linden Company and became the Davidson Cotton Mill in 1923. The opening of the Linden and the Delburg mills reflected the textile boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that shaped the industrial landscape of the region. While the Piedmont remained primarily rural and agrarian, new textile mills dotted the railroads lines in the small towns and the cities. Cotton mills were the principal symbol of the "New South" credo championed by civic leaders who equated urban industrial growth with progress and prosperity.

By World War I, over 300 mills were constructed within a 100-mile radius of Charlotte. By the 1920s, the Piedmont had surpassed New England as the leading textile producer in the world. In Mecklenburg County, some two dozen mills arose in and around Charlotte, and cotton mills and adjacent mill villages were established in the small railroad towns of Pineville, Huntersville, Cornelius, and Davidson.

Delburg Cotton Mills Company was organized to buy and sell cotton and wool and to manufacture yarns for clothing and other products. The corporation was authorized to produce electric power for the mill as well as to sell power to the town and to erect pole lines for the transmission of electricity. The Delburg operation prospered, employing fifty-nine workers in 1915, the year after a major physical expansion. The mill complex received another large addition in early 1920s. In 1923, the Delburg-Linden Company was acquired by a group of investors led by Martin L. Cannon, son of the founder of Cannon Mills in Kannapolis, North Carolina. The name was changed to the Davidson Cotton Mill with Cannon as president. The mill remained in operation under several different owners until the 1960s. In 1996, the mill was converted to a restaurant and professional offices and in 2016 the cotton warehouse was as well.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, population growth, commercial advancement, and college expansion all created a demand for house construction throughout Davidson. Businessmen and professors alike erected new houses around the town. Many of the largest dwellings were erected along

North Main Street and Concord Road. Professors Archibald Currie and William J. Wood built substantial, Queen Anne residences on North Main Street around the turn of the twentieth century. In the 1910s and 1920s, newly hired professors also erected dwellings on lots made available by the college along North Main. Concurrently, prosperous, local businessmen and others not directly affiliated with the college built new residences. Many shared blocks with professors' families along North Main Street. One of the town's principal entrepreneurs was Holt Armour, son of a wealthy local farmer. By 1915, Armour had opened Armour Brothers and Thompson Dry Goods on North Main Street (north of Brady's Alley) and owned a number of other buildings in the business district. He commissioned a handsome, Queen Anne house at 626 North Main and gave adjoining lots to family members. North of the college cemetery (above Armour Street) along North Main Street, businessmen Manly Cranford, Palmer Henderson, and G.I. Lilly built new houses in the early twentieth century. One of the larger residences in this section was constructed in 1912 for May Ellinwood from Connecticut, who used her Davidson home as a winter retreat.

### **Architecture/Design**

Throughout its history, the town's disproportionately large professional class of college faculty and businessmen often favored the latest in national architectural designs rather than the traditional domestic forms and conservative interpretations of national styles that characterized the other small towns of the region. Consequently, the Davidson Historic District boasts a particularly fine collection of buildings that are often sophisticated expressions of architectural styles.

Most residential development in Davidson occurred after the Civil War, fueled by the 1870s reconstruction of the railroad and the growth of the college. The latter nineteenth century witnessed growing opportunities for new types of domestic design fostered by innovative framing methods, the mass production of bricks, nails, and milled lumber, and the emergence of rail transportation. Frame and brick houses became easier, faster, and cheaper to construct. At the same time, architectural catalogs offered an unprecedented array of stylish and affordable sawn ornaments, moldings, and mantelpieces, fashioned at steam-powered factories and delivered to customers by rail. Builders' widespread use of the light balloon frame, which consisted entirely of small framing members nailed in place, coincided with the rise of the national picturesque movement.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Queen Anne style had grown in popularity in Davidson, and a collection of Queen Anne dwellings from this period remain intact in the historic district. A particularly stylish example is the Vinson House at 519 North Main Street. Set back from the street and enclosed by a wrought iron fence, the substantial, two-story, frame dwelling, erected in the 1890s, features such hallmarks of the style as a gable-on-hip roof, shingled gables, a modillioned cornice, and a wraparound porch embellished by turned posts and a decorative frieze. Also dating to the 1890s is the Armour-Adams House at 626 North Main Street. The one-story cottage has a high hip roof, decorative gables and dormers, and an ornate, wraparound porch supported by turned posts with cut-out brackets. The house was built by Holt Armour, who owned a large dry goods store in Davidson. While picturesque designs began to hold sway in Davidson by the end of the nineteenth century, traditional residential forms persisted. The two-story, rectangular Currie-Adams House at 525 North Main Street is a notable example. Built ca. 1900, the Currie-Adams House displays the symmetrical, three-bay façade, weatherboard siding, exterior brick end chimneys, side-gable roof, one-story, hip-roofed porch, and center-hall plan that characterized this popular regional house type throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The continued growth of the college and local textile mills spurred residential development in the early twentieth century. However, the flamboyance of picturesque designs gradually gave way to historical revival styles. By the early 1900s, the favorite new style along Davidson's major streets was the Colonial Revival. Its comfortable patriotic associations and familiar classical themes appealed to the families of businessmen, faculty, and landowners, who often applied Colonial Revival symbols to irregular, picturesque forms as well as adopting simpler, white-frame, cubic boxes capped by hip roofs and dormers. By World War I, more historically correct, red brick or frame, Georgian and Federal models gained popularity nationwide and remained a favorite house design in Davidson into the mid-twentieth century. The 1911 Archibald Currie House at 559 North Main Street is exemplary of the early Colonial Revival. The house features the irregular massing and wraparound porch common to the Queen Anne style. However, its restrained ornamentation and Colonial Revival motifs illustrate the reemerging national preference for classical styles. A well-preserved, later, academic version is the 1930 Stough House, originally built for Professor Lewis Schenck at 612 North Main. This handsome, two-story, red brick, Colonial Revival house has a symmetrical, five-bay façade with a central entrance comprised of a single-leaf, paneled door surmounted by a transom and framed by a broken pediment and fluted surrounds.

The most popular national expression of the trend towards architectural simplicity was the Craftsman style bungalow. Featured in new pattern books and architectural magazines that targeted the American middle and working classes, the ideal Craftsman bungalow was promoted as affordable, efficient, modern, and tasteful. Countless variations appeared, but the principal elements of the style included its low-slung form, wide porch with battered piers, broad, overhanging eaves with exposed rafters, and an abundance of windows. The finer examples often contained rustic materials, such as cobblestones for porches, chimneys, and foundations, and rough split shakes for sidings. One of the historic district's more substantial Craftsman bungalows is the 1920s G.L. Lilly House at 565 North Main Street. The brick house neatly represents the informality of the style in its low-pitched, cross gable roof, large front porch with heavy, battered piers mounted on brick pedestals, numerous windows, and deep, bracketed eaves. Smaller, but illustrative examples of 1920s, frame and brick bungalows also stand along the 500 block of Concord Road, exhibiting a variety of low-slung forms with gable or hip roofs, deep eaves, and broad porches with the battered piers and brick pedestals characteristic of the bungalow style.

While Main Street, Concord Road, and nearby side streets remained fashionable addresses for college professors and the town's middle class, the construction of the Linden and Delburg mills introduced industrial architecture and worker housing to the west side of the historic district. The cotton mill was housed in a long, one-story, brick factory building with tall, segmental-arched windows and low gable roofs that were typical of cotton mills built in the Piedmont during this period. Inside the mills, heavy timber posts and beams supported open work spaces. The mill buildings have been converted to commercial use in recent years.

Typical of mill villages throughout the region in the early twentieth century, Watson and Armour streets are lined with small, one-story, frame dwellings that conform to a few standardized types. These mill houses represent common, regional forms that were promoted by the noted Charlotte mill engineer, Daniel Augustus Tompkins, in his influential, 1899 publication, *Cotton Mill: Commercial Features*.

The historic district includes the Davidson College Cemetery on the west side of North Main Street. The cemetery occupies a town lot roughly two acres in size and contains headstones that represent traditional rectangular and arched tablets as well as nationally popular designs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries including classically pedimented markers and obelisks

**Boundary Justification**

The proposed boundary includes most of the north and northwestern areas of the National Register district that are adjacent to the current local historic district. Notable exceptions include that section of Delburg Street west of Watson Street which has suffered a significant number of tear downs and new construction, and the non-contributing apartments on the east side of Watson Street, south of the mill complex.

**Source**

National Register nomination for the Davidson Historic District, written by Richard L. Mattson and Frances P. Alexander in December 2008