

SURVEY AND RESEARCH REPORT
ON THE
CAROLINA TRANSFER AND STORAGE BUILDING



1. Name and location of the property. The property known as the Carolina Transfer and Storage Building is located at 1230 West Morehead Street in Charlotte, North Carolina. UTM Coordinates: 17 512562E 3898260N

2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner of the property.

The present owners of the property are:

suite # name

102 Edward Lee Harris

104 West End Development Associates LLC

106 Fergusson Nye LLC

108 Team Lighting LLC

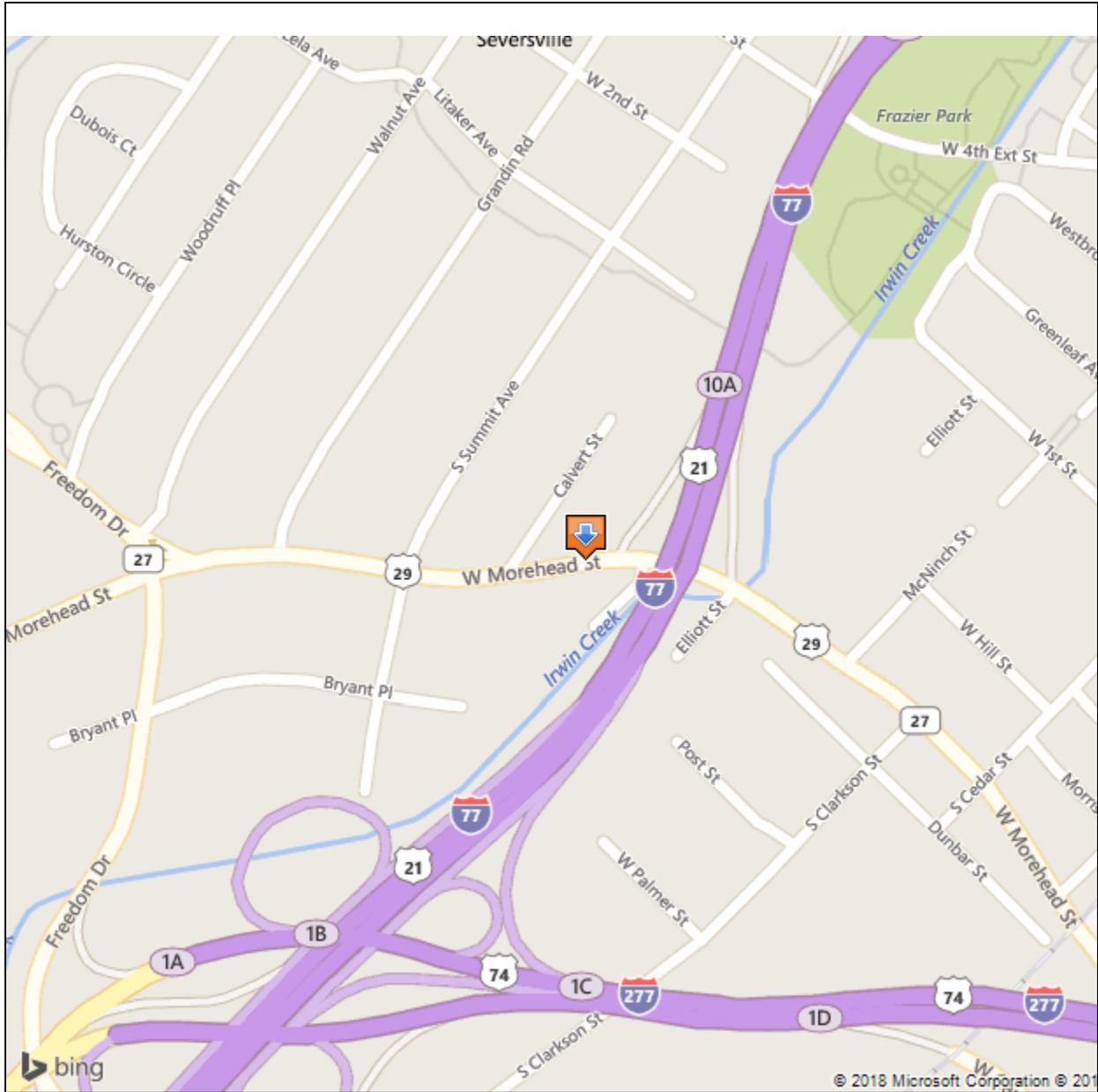
110 Eubert Wesley McLeod Jr.

112 Eubert Wesley McLeod Jr.
114 Patricia A. Ganster
116 Robert Trevor Williams
202 Edith R. Saxton
204 Neighboring Concepts LLC
206 B & P Holdings LLC
208 Thomas Investments LLC
210 Neighboring Concepts LLC
212 Gary N. Wirth
214 DRG Properties LLC
302 Thomas Michael Todd
304 West End Development Associates LLC
306 Off Third Properties LLC
308 Bobby M. Morrison
312 West End Development Associates LLC
402 Keith Properties Inc.
404 Twelve Thirty W. Morehead LLC
406 Wilhelm Hedrich

The mailing address for each of the above owners is 1230 W. Morehead St., suite # ____, Charlotte, North Carolina, 28208.

3. Representative photographs of the property. This report contains representative black and white photographs of the property. Color slides are available at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission office.

4. Maps depicting the location of the property. This report contains two maps depicting the location of the property.



5. Current deed book reference to the property. The most recent deeds to this property are recorded in the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office:

unit # tax parcel # Deed Book/Page

102 733-244-25 11244 / 767

104 733-244-26 11298 / 917

106 733-244-47 11148 / 353

108 733-244-27 11156 / 399

110 733-244-28 11175 / 968

112 733-244-29 11175 / 968

114 733-244-30 11305 / 440

116 733-244-31 11210 / 536

202 733-244-32 11220 / 401

204 733-244-33 11306 / 680

206 733-244-34 12126 / 328

208 733-244-35 11240 / 152

210 733-244-36 11306 / 697

212 733-244-37 11152 / 220

214 733-244-38 10983 / 176

302 733-244-39 12744 / 001

304 733-244-40 11298 / 917

306 733-244-41 10958 / 082

308 733-244-42 11494 / 822

312 733-244-43 11298 / 917

402 733-244-44 10972 / 382

404 733-244-45 10928 / 225

406 733-244-46 11163 / 157

6. A brief historical sketch of the property. This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property.

7. A brief architectural description of the property. This report contains a brief architectural description of the property.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets criteria for designation set forth in N. C. G. S. 160A-400.5.

a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance. The Commission judges that the property known as the Carolina Transfer and Storage Building does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1) The four-story fireproof warehouse was built in 1926 using the state-of-the-art "flat-slab" construction method. This technique uses concrete slab floors supported by distinctive mushroom columns. The configuration allowed for a more open floor plan without sacrificing strength--particularly desirable for a storage facility. The concrete and brick elements were left exposed, and thus the construction method is clearly reflected in the design of the building. The Carolina Transfer and Storage building is a good, intact example of a flat-slab warehouse building from the 1920s.

2) The Carolina Transfer and Storage building reflects the boom years of

the 1920s in Charlotte and the consequent need for businesses of every kind to meet the demands of the new economy. It was one of the first to be erected on West Morehead Street west of the Southern Railway tracks--an area that quickly developed into a commercial and light industrial corridor. Carolina Transfer and Storage was a family business that supported four generations of Wilkinson family members.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association. The Commission contends that the physical and architectural description which is included in this report demonstrates that the Carolina Transfer and Storage Building meets this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem tax appraisal. The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a designated "historic landmark." The current appraised values are as follows:

unit # land building total value

102 \$ 70,000 \$ 134,800 \$ 204,800

104 70,000 82,730 152,730

106 75,000 112,260 186,260

108 75,000 250,510 325,510

110 75,000 244,380 319,380

112 60,000 52,860 112,860

114 75,000 187,070 262,070

116 78,000 308,310 386,310

202 75,000 159,640 234,640

204 80,000 396,900 476,900

206 60,000 65,010 125,010

208 75,000 250,510 325,510

210 75,000 202,890 277,890

212 75,000 86,590 161,590

214 75,000 259,850 334,850

302 75,000 152,490 227,490

304 85,000 615,450 700,450

unit # land building total value

306 \$ 75,000 \$ 250,510 \$ 325,510

308 75,000 203,570 278,570

312 75,000 83,890 158,890

402 75,000 152,490 227,490

404 85,000 373,220 458,220

406 80,000 378,280 458,280

The property is zoned URC.

Date of preparation of this report: January 7, 2002

Prepared by:

Mary Beth Gatza

428 N. Laurel Avenue, #7

Charlotte, NC 28204

(704) 331 9660

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Carolina Transfer and Storage building is historically and architecturally significant to Charlotte. The four-story, all-masonry warehouse was built in 1927 using state-of-the-art warehouse design concepts. It was constructed using the "flat-slab" technique, which consists of continuous concrete slab floors supported by mushroom columns. This method was particularly well-suited for storage facilities because it allowed for a more open floor plan without sacrificing weight capacity. The construction method is evident in the design of the Carolina Transfer and Storage building. The concrete frame, slabs and columns were all left exposed, though the wall surfaces were infilled with brick (exterior) and terra cotta (interior). Having this new, modern, fireproof building enabled the company to expand its business.

Carolina Transfer and Storage was founded in 1922 by three brothers--Fabius A., John L. and W. D. Wilkinson. The company was wholly family-owned and operated, and over the years employed four generations of the Wilkinson family (as well as some non-related workers). The building was one of the first to be erected on West Morehead Street west of the Southern Railway tracks (beyond Mint Street), which quickly developed into a commercial and light industrial corridor. It reflected Charlotte's growth in population and economic activity, and the consequent need for businesses of every variety to meet the demands of the new economy.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Overall economic and demographic trends favored the business climate in Charlotte during the 1920s. The United States census counted 46,388 people living in Charlotte at the beginning of the decade, and 82,675 people in 1930--an increase of seventy-eight percent, or 36,287 people.¹ According to data collected by Miller Press (publishers of the annual city directory), about 6,000 of the new residents arrived between 1926 and 1927 ²--just as Carolina Transfer and Storage was expanding its facilities. Drawing on information from the Standard Statistics Company of New York, an April 1928 newspaper article declared that "the volume of business in Charlotte for the month was reported to be 80 percent above the average for 1920-1924."³ Undeniably, an increase in people and businesses in the area provided a larger customer base for the transfer and storage industry in Charlotte. In 1920, there were seven such companies

listed in the city directory under the heading "transfer." By 1930, there were eighteen companies listed.⁴

The location on West Morehead Street was within the city limits in the mid-1920s, although it had not yet been fully developed. The nearby neighborhood of Wesley Heights, located just north of this area, had opened in 1921.⁵ When it was built in 1927, Carolina Transfer and Storage was the last (westernmost) building on West Morehead Street. The only neighbors were a small commercial structure across the street and a similar warehouse, the Union Storage and Warehouse Company, two blocks to the east. West Morehead Street developed steadily over the next few decades, filling in and pushing westward to its junction with Wilkinson Boulevard.⁶ The West Morehead Street location had the advantage of being close to the city and convenient to the newly-opened Wilkinson Boulevard,⁷ North Carolina's first state highway. Additionally, the site was equipped with a Piedmont and Northern Interurban Railway spur line, so freight arriving by rail could be handled easily. The P & N, as it was informally referred to, was a light rail system between Charlotte and the textile mills of Gaston County to the west.

Carolina Transfer and Storage was a local company owned and operated by members of the Wilkinson family. W. H. Wilkinson (1847-1928) brought his wife, Marya Caldwell (1852-1928) and children to the Paw Creek section of Mecklenburg County from Catawba County around 1890.⁸ After reaching adulthood, all five of their sons relocated to Charlotte.⁹ In 1922, three sons, Fabius A. (1877-1945), William D. (1879-1946) and John L. (1886-1952) joined together to establish Carolina Transfer and Storage Company.¹⁰

The first president of the company was William D. Wilkinson. He was married to Ida Lenora Saine in Paw Creek on April 25, 1906, and they moved to Charlotte shortly thereafter. In 1908 he was working as manager and treasurer for the Carolina Realty Company. By 1916, he was serving as president of that company and had also branched out into the insurance business, forming the firm of Wilkinson and Lee with a partner, B. P. Lee. That was a short-lived business, but by 1922, he and his brothers had established Carolina Transfer and Storage Company. William D. Wilkinson served as president from 1922 through the early 1930s, when he moved to Columbia, South Carolina. He died there in 1946, survived by his wife, Lenora and son, William D. Wilkinson, Jr.¹¹

John L. Wilkinson first appeared in the Charlotte city directory in 1907 (the same year his brother W. D was first listed). A year later, in 1908, he married Louise M. Bradley (1889-1951). He worked for a time with J. W. W. Sons Company, but became secretary of the Cochran and Ross livery stable by 1918. In addition to stabling horses, Cochran and Ross provided transfer, moving, packing and storage services around this time. Perhaps his exposure to the business convinced John that profits could be made, though motor trucks were fast replacing horse-drawn wagons. John served as vice-president of Carolina Transfer and Storage from its founding in 1922 until his brother stepped down in 1934. At that time, John assumed the role of president, a post which he held until 1950 when his health failed. John was undeniably active in business and civic affairs. His obituary lists his many activities, including memberships in the Charlotte Traffic and Transportation Club, the Charlotte Executives Club and the American Trucking Association (board of directors). He served as Charlotte City Councilman (1935-1941) and Mayor Pro Tem and was chairman of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce transportation

committee. Additionally, he was president of the National Furniture Warehouse Association, Allied Van Lines, and North Carolina Motor Carriers Association. John died in 1952, survived by a two daughters and a son, John L. Wilkinson, Jr. His son and two sons-in-law all had long careers at Carolina Transfer and Storage.**12**

Fabius A. Wilkinson joined his younger brothers in forming the Carolina Transfer and Storage Company in 1922. Apparently he did not move to Charlotte that early, but probably remained a county resident through the late 1920s. He was a vice-president in the family business through 1934, after which time he served as treasurer. He died in 1945. His two sons, Clyde L. and William E., both worked for Carolina Transfer and Storage.**13**

The second generation of Wilkinsons to run the family business included children of four of the five original brothers.**14** Brothers Augustus M. "Gus" (1872-1957) and Mack R. (1896-1918) did not work for the company, but their sons did. In all, the second generation included: Ray S. and Adrian M. (sons of Gus), Clyde L. "Dick" and W. E. (sons of Fabius), John L. Jr. (son of John L.), E. R. Brietz and F. H. McNeely (sons-in-law of John L.), and Mack R. and Charles R. (sons of Mack R.).**15** Some had brief tenures and entry-level jobs, while others had long careers and high positions.

The third generation of Wilkinsons to work in the company included two family members.**16** Robert W. was Adrian's son (and Gus's grandson), while and W. E., Jr. was W. E.'s son (and Fabius's grandson).**17** Robert W.'s son, Robert L., also worked for the company briefly in the mid-1950s, thus representing the fourth generation of Wilkinsons at Carolina Transfer and Storage.**18**

Carolina Transfer and Storage was a success from the start. They were located downtown initially, and apparently recognized the need for a new modern warehouse building a mere four years after establishing the business. The Charlotte News announced in 1926 that "what is believed to be the largest single contract for moving ever executed in Charlotte was signed Friday afternoon by John L. Wilkinson, of the Carolina Transfer and Storage Company, and...Southern Railway Lines" for relocating the Southern Railway offices. The lot on West Morehead Street was purchased in September 1926, and just two weeks later, they applied for a building permit. The plan was drawn by an engineer, G. T. Barnes. The building was constructed quickly, and was open for business by early February 1927.**19** The "flat-slab" construction method was state-of-the-art for warehouses during the early-twentieth century, and the new facilities allowed the company to offer expanded services. In 1924, their city directory entry said simply, "hauling, moving and packing." But in 1927, after the new building opened, they boasted "transfer, hauling, moving, packing and bonded warehouse." Thus, the building enabled storage to become a significant component of the business. The all-masonry building was hailed as being fireproof--a feature that would constitute a competitive advantage in the storage business. In fact, they touted the fact that the place was both bonded (insured) and fireproof directly on the building. The West Morehead Street facade was originally a blank wall which was painted with a full-sized advertisement for the company. Along with the telephone number (#609), it read:

"CAROLINA TRANSFER & STORAGE CO.

MOVING--PACKING--STORING

Bonded FIRE-PROOF Warehouse"**20**

In time, the advertisement would change, and a 1948 photograph shows that the size of the advertisement had grown to accommodate a picture of a delivery truck, but still included the words "BONDED FIREPROOF WAREHOUSE."**21** By that time, Carolina Transfer and Storage had become affiliated with Allied Van Lines, a national company.**22**

Over the decades, the principals of the Carolina Transfer and Storage Company aged and died off. The business dwindled and finally closed sometime during the 1970s. The property was renovated and converted to office suites with individual ownership (office condos) in 1999. The Carolina Transfer and Storage building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Setting

The Carolina Transfer and Storage Building is located on the north side of West Morehead Street, in the 1200 block, about a mile from the center of Charlotte. This section of West Morehead Street contains primarily commercial and light industrial structures dating from the middle decades of the twentieth century. Morehead Street, which runs generally northwest to southeast, curves to the west in this section. It intersects the side streets here at an angle, and thus the Carolina Transfer and Storage Building lot is an irregular polygon shape. The Morehead Street side of the otherwise rectangular lot slants at an angle of about fifty degrees. The building occupies the front half (approximately) of the lot, and the rear (north) portion of the lot is paved and used for parking. The main facade (south elevation) abuts West Morehead Street, the west elevation stands along Calvert Street, the north elevation opens up to the parking lot, and the east elevation is next to the driveway and parking lot. Beyond the lot lines, commercial and light industrial buildings line West Morehead and Calvert Streets, and the I-77 off-ramp borders the property on the east side.

Description

The Carolina Transfer and Storage Building is a four-story all-masonry warehouse building constructed in 1926 (photo #1). The building's footprint conforms to the shape of the lot and is therefore an irregular polygon--that is, a rectangle with one side deeply slanted at an angle of about a fifty-degrees. The building materials are reinforced concrete, brick and terra cotta tiles. Thus, the building was constructed to be fireproof, which was an important quality for safeguarding the contents stored inside.

The construction method used in the Carolina Transfer and Storage Building is called the "flat-slab" technique. The framing is made entirely of poured, reinforced concrete. The floors are

continuous thin slabs of concrete resting on round columns. The columns are flared at the top, thus enlarging the surface area which supports the weight above it (photo #8). This distinctive shape is called a "mushroom" column and is particular to this method of construction. For further stabilization, a square concrete pad, called a "drop panel" lies between the column and the slab. With this method, only the slab itself separates the floors--the floor of one level is the ceiling of the level below.

The flat-slab construction method was developed simultaneously by Swiss and American engineers in the first decade of the twentieth century. Robert Maillart (1872-1940), is credited for inventing the method around 1900, although his first flat-slab building (the Beschellschaft Company warehouse in Zurich, Switzerland) wasn't built until 1910.²³ Meanwhile, in America, Claude A. P. Turner filed a patent for the technique in 1908.²⁴ The primary benefit of the system is that it eliminates the need for beams and girders to support the floors, thereby saving space and materials. Also, compared to earlier methods, it supports a greater amount of weight while allowing for a more open interior.²⁵ This is an obvious advantage for a warehouse building.

The flat-slab construction method is reflected in the design of the Carolina Transfer and Storage Building. The horizontal and vertical components (slabs and columns) of the concrete frame are visible on the exterior of the building. The spaces between them are filled in with terra cotta tiles (on the interior) and brick (on the exterior), and pierced by industrial steel sash windows. The concrete pilasters on three sides (north, west and south) have simple molded capitals (photo #5). The shortest side of the building is the east elevation--it has only four bays (photo #1). The main facade (the south, or Morehead Street side) has a shallow stepped parapet concealing the building's flat roof (photo #6). There is a double-door entrance in the center of this seven-bay facade. A similar door is located on the north elevation, which also has seven bays (photo #2, #3). On the north elevation, six of the bays are fenestrated, with original industrial steel sash windows. The seventh (westernmost) bay is solid, and in fact protrudes higher than the rest of the building. It holds the elevator shaft and stairwell.

Alterations

Originally, only the north and south sides of the building were fenestrated. There were no windows on the east and west sides, probably reflecting that the need for wall space on the interior was greater than the need for illumination. The south side directly abutted a spur line of the Piedmont and Northern Railway. This elevation was solid above the first story, and had three recessed truck bays on the ground floor. While fine for a warehouse, this arrangement was not as suitable for modern uses. When the building was converted to office space in 1999, the ground floor was filled in with large, multi-paned windows, and the upper stories were pierced with windows that closely resemble the original windows. Likewise, the west elevation was fitted with new windows. Except for the window openings, no other original material has been removed. The integrity of the structure is good.

On the interior, as befitting a warehouse, the building was originally one large open space. New walls and doors were added in the process of subdividing the building for office space. The old freight elevator was replaced by a bank of two modern elevators for safety and convenience. A

hallway now runs off of the elevator lobby, through the center of the building, angling off to the left and branching off to the right, accessing the various office suites. There are presently twenty-three office suites ranging from 775 to over 6,000 square feet in size. All of the original wall surfaces and mushroom columns were left exposed and unchanged. Mechanical systems (HVAC and electrical) were run along the ceiling and are also exposed--hiding them would have required that a drop ceiling be added, which would have concealed the concrete slab construction.

- ¹ LeGette Blythe and Charles R. Brockmann, Hornet's Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), p. 449; Thomas W. Hanchett, Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 2.
- ² The Charlotte News, 16 April 1927, p. 11.
- ³ The Charlotte Observer, 21 April 1928, p. 11.
- ⁴ Charlotte City Directories, 1920 and 1930.
- ⁵ Gatza, Mary Beth, "Wesley Heights Historic District," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (1995), p. 7-2.
- ⁶ Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1927; Sanborn Map Company, "Insurance Maps of Charlotte, North Carolina," 1929 and 1951.
- ⁷ Wilkinson Boulevard was named after W. C. Wilkinson, who was not a member of this family.
- ⁸ The Charlotte Observer, 20 April 1928, p. 1; Moore's Chapel Methodist Church, cemetery roster (electronic record found at www.cmstory.org); United States Census, North Carolina, Catawba County, 1880 (soundex).
- ⁹ Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1902; The sons are: Augustus M. Wilkinson (1872-1957), Fabius A. Wilkinson (1877-1945), William D. Wilkinson (1879-1946), John L. Wilkinson (1886-1952) and Mack R. Wilkinson (1896-1918).
- ¹⁰ Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1922.
- ¹¹ Mecklenburg County Marriage License, 23 April 1906; Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1907; United States Census, North Carolina, Mecklenburg County, 1900 and 1910; The Charlotte Observer, 7 April 1946, p. B-2;
- ¹² Mecklenburg County Marriage License, 15 August 1908; Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1907; United States Census, North Carolina, Mecklenburg County, 1910 and 1920; Blythe and Brockmann, Hornet's Nest, p. 452; The Charlotte Observer, 25 June 1952, p. 16-B.
- ¹³ Mecklenburg County Marriage License, 6 November 1901; Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1921; United States Census, North Carolina, Mecklenburg County, 1900; The Charlotte Observer, 14 January 1945, sec. 2, p. 4.
- ¹⁴ Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1921.
- ¹⁵ Ray (1920-1996) was a driver in the mid-1940s; Adrian was a driver in the mid-1950s; Dick (1904-1960) was assistant manager around 1930 and secretary from the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s; W. E. (1904-1990) retired

after forty-five years with the company, first as warehouse manager and later as president; John was vice-president in the mid-1940s through the mid-1960s and was president in the early 1970s; E. R. Brietz was treasurer from the mid-1940s through the early 1970s; F. H. McNeely was secretary from the mid-1940s through the early 1970s; Mack retired after forty-one years, rising from clerk to warehouse manager; Charles worked there from the mid-1940s through the mid-1950s.

¹⁶. Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1921.

¹⁷. Robert W. was and was employed as a driver and warehouseman from around 1930 through the mid-1960s; W. E. Jr. was vice-president in the 1960s.

¹⁸. Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1921; The Charlotte Observer, 2 July 1976, p. 21-A.

¹⁹. Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1921; The Charlotte News, 9 October 1926, p. 12, 6 February 1927, p. 7-C; Charlotte Building Standards Department, Building Permit #7193, 5 October 1926.

²⁰. The Charlotte News, 6 February 1927, p. 7-C.

²¹. Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, "*Charlotte, North Carolina: Focal Point of the Carolinas*," booklet, c. 1948. On file in the Carolina room at the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

²². Charlotte City Directories, various years after 1927.

²³. Carl W. Condit, American Building: Materials and Techniques From the Beginning of the Colonial Settlements to the Present. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 243; Aly Ahmed Raafat, Reinforced Concrete in Architecture. (New York: Reinhold, 1958.), pp. 75-76; John Fleming, Hugh Honour and Nikolaus Pevsner, A Dictionary of Architecture. (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 183-84.

²⁴. Condit, American Building, p. 243; Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc. "*(Former) Carolina Transfer and Storage Building*." Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (1998), p. 8-2.

²⁵. Condit, American Building, p. 243; Charles Merrick Gay, John W. MacGuire and Harry Parker, Materials and Methods of Architectural Construction, 3rd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958), pp. 598-601.