

## The Funderburk Brothers Buildings



*This report was written on May 29, 1991*

**1. Name and location of the property:** The Funderburk Brothers Buildings are located on North Trade Street, Matthews, in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

**2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner of the property:** The owner of the property is:

Mr. Nick J. Miller

1816 Reverdy Lane

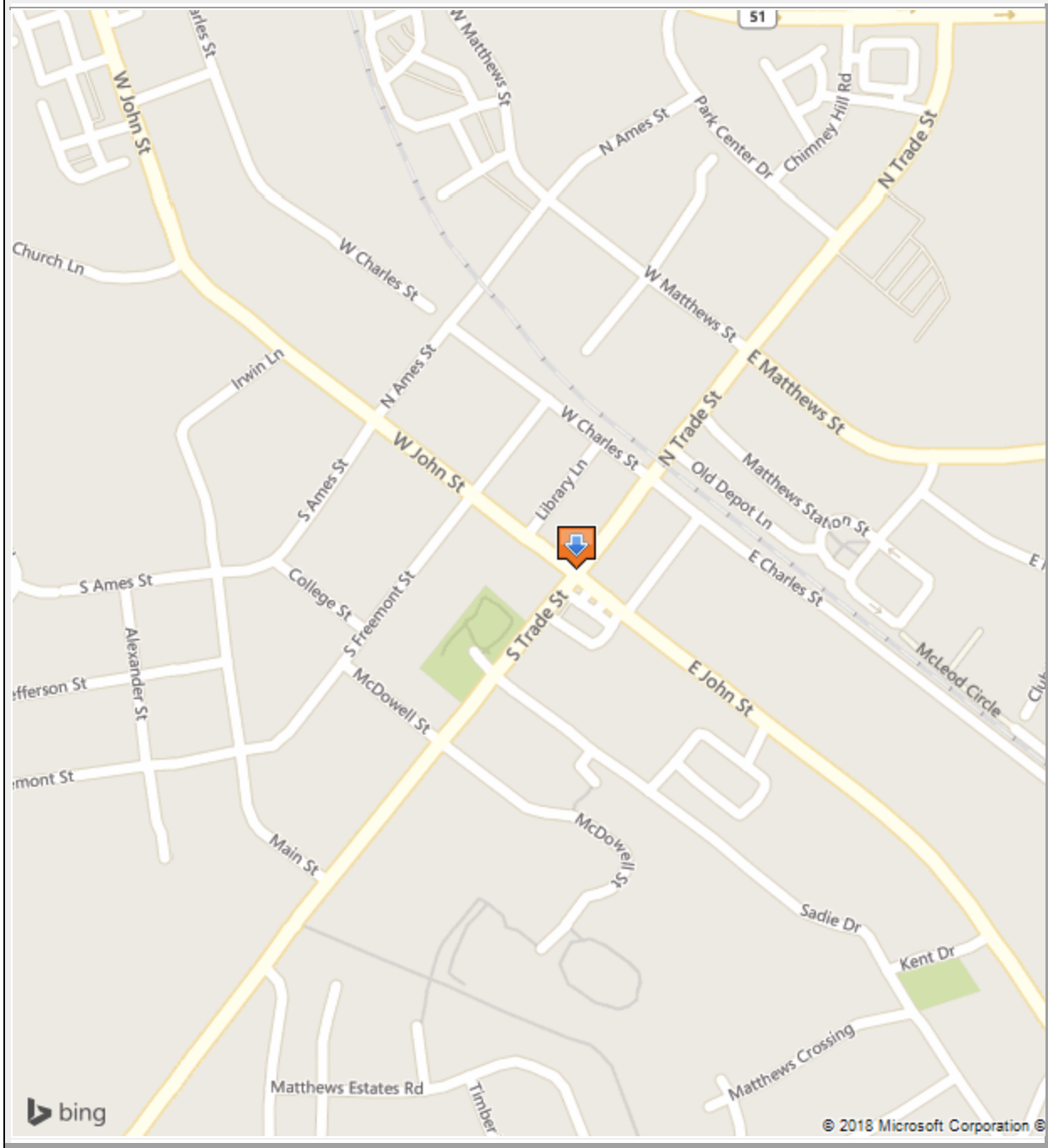
Matthews, North Carolina 28105

Telephone: (704) 844-4480

Tax Parcel Numbers: 192-262-06

**3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the property.

**4. A map depicting the location of the property:** This report contains maps which depict the location of the property.



Click on the map to browse

**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The most recent deed to Tax Parcel Number 192-62-06 is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 5824 at page 921.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Ms. Ruth Little-Stokes and Ms. Nora M. Black.

**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 for cultural importance:** The Commission judges that the property known as the Funderburk Brothers Buildings does possess special significance in terms of Matthews and Mecklenburg County. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

- 1) the surviving elements of the Funderburk Brothers Buildings are an essential component of the historic streetscape of North Trade Street;
- 2) the surviving elements of the Funderburk Brothers Buildings are the only physical remnants of the contribution made by the Funderburk family to the commercial development of Matthews, North Carolina;
- 3) the building at 159 North Trade Street is the original ca. 1878-1898 building erected by Ellison James Funderburk;
- 4) the building at 157 North Trade Street is the first addition constructed ca. 1901 by Benjamin DeWitt Funderburk as a dry goods store; and
- 5) the surviving elements of the Funderburk Brothers Buildings bear testimony to the type of commercial vernacular architecture that was predominant in the small towns of Mecklenburg County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association:** The Commission contends that the architectural description by Ms. Ruth Little-Stokes and Ms. Nora M. Black included in this report demonstrates that the surviving elements of the Funderburk Brothers Buildings meet 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 following values cover the entire Tax Parcel and all improvements; tax deferral for the historic portion of the property will be determined later by the Mecklenburg County Tax Office. The current appraised value of the

improvements is \$329,060. The current appraised value of Tax Parcel 192-262-06 is \$315,000. The total appraised value of the property is \$644,060. The property is zoned UBD.

**Date of Preparation of this Report:** 29 May 1991

**Prepared by:** Dr. Dan L. Morrill  
in conjunction with Ms. Nora M. Black  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission  
1225 South Caldwell Street, Box D  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28203

Telephone 704/376-9115

### *Historical Overview*

*Originally Prepared on 22 February 1978  
Dr. Dan L. Morrill*

A revolutionary event in the economic and social life of the farm families of eastern Mecklenburg, County occurred in 1874. The Central Carolina Railroad Company erected a depot near the stagecoach stop and post office operated by Mr. John M. Fullwood. Situated approximately midway between Monroe and Charlotte, the facility was named "Matthews" in honor of Mr. Watson Matthews, a member of the Board of Directors of the Central Carolina Railroad. <sup>1</sup>

The Matthews Depot quickly became the focal point of economic activity in eastern Mecklenburg County. The farmers of the surrounding countryside would travel there to obtain supplies and merchandise, both for their own use and for purposes of stocking small general stores which they operated for the benefit of the hired hands on their own and nearby farms. The most intensive phase of business activity happened each fall, when cotton, the principal cash crop of the region, was sold and prepared for shipment to distant markets. Illustrative of the economic importance of the depot is the fact that it served five passenger trains and eight freight trains daily. <sup>2</sup>

By the late 1870's the merchants and other businessmen who had established enterprises in the immediate vicinity of the Matthews Depot constituted a settlement which contained approximately two hundred people. In 1879 they secured a charter of incorporation from the legislature of North Carolina, creating the Town of Matthews and empowering the citizens thereof to exercise their authority as residents of an incorporated municipality. <sup>3</sup>

Among the prominent farmers of the Morning Star section of Mecklenburg County was Ellison James Funderburk. Born on July 1, 1836, Mr. Funderburk was reared near the Lynches River in Chesterfield County, South Carolina. He had migrated to Mecklenburg County soon after the end of the Civil War, a conflict in which he had served as a soldier for the Confederate States of America. He remained a resourceful and enterprising entrepreneur until his death on March 14, 1916. Mr. Funderburk and his wife, Selia Anne Williams Funderburk (1838-1927), had eleven children (five boys and six girls). In 1878 Mr. Funderburk acquired the first parcel of land which he was to own in the Town of Matthews. <sup>4</sup> *The Charlotte Observer* of March 15, 1916, reported that he moved to Matthews "during its early days" and that he prospered there.

The reputation that E. J. Funderburk had established in Matthews was carried on by three of his sons, Benjamin DeWitt Funderburk, Thomas Lee Funderburk, and Ellison Albertus Morgan Funderburk. Of the three, B. D. Funderburk was to become the most prominent. Born in Chesterfield County, South Carolina on May 12, 1868, B. D. Funderburk came to Mecklenburg County with his family soon thereafter. <sup>6</sup> He married Sallie Faulkner Funderburk on July 11, 1895. <sup>7</sup> His wife, also a native of South Carolina, had been reared near Matthews by her aunt, Jane K. Reid, wife of Amzi G. Reid <sup>8</sup>

On November 22, 1898, B. D. Funderburk acquired the building which presently houses the antique shop on North Trade Street in Matthews, North Carolina. <sup>9</sup> It had been erected by his father sometime between 1878 and 1898, most probably in the latter part of that period. <sup>10</sup> It is reasonable to assume that Mr. Funderburk had used the building as a general merchandise store and that his son continued that practice. On May 13, 1901, B. D. Funderburk purchased the lot adjacent to the original store building, on which he constructed the more elaborate building which served as dry goods store for many years and which currently houses the Matthews Emporium. <sup>11</sup>

The next expansion of Mr. Funderburk's facilities occurred in 1909, when a two-story brick structure was erected. This edifice contained the newly-established Bank of Matthews, a general merchandise store, and apartments on the second floor. <sup>12</sup> Soon thereafter the original general store was converted into a barber shop. <sup>13</sup> The complex of buildings also contained a livery stable which was probably erected sometime after 1901. Two brick structures, also most likely constructed in the early years of the twentieth century, occupied the rear of the property. The older of the two served as a blacksmith shop, while the other was used for a variety of purposes including a grist mill and a woodworking shop. The Funderburk Cotton Gin, which stood on the north side of the railroad, is no longer extant. <sup>14</sup>

Thomas Lee Funderburk was closely associated with his brother in launching this aggregate of business enterprises in Matthews, North Carolina. He met a tragic death on December 12, 1940, when he succumbed to injuries which resulted from "being run over" by his own wagon earlier in the day. <sup>15</sup> The third brother, Ellison Albertus Morgan Funderburk, was a cashier for the Bank of Matthews until his death on May 31, 1937. <sup>16</sup> But, as stated above, Benjamin DeWitt Funderburk was the most prominent of the three. *The Charlotte Observer* of October 6, 1954, reported that Mr. Funderburk had been a member of the Board of Directors of the Bank of Matthews from 1909 until his death the previous day. He was even more widely known for his

many years of service on the Mecklenburg County Board of Education, having served three terms, 1909- 1913, 1915 -1927 and 1935-1949. <sup>17</sup>

B. D. Funderburk and Sallie Faulkner Funderburk, the latter surviving until March 14, 1963, had three children who attained adulthood. All were to become intimately involved in the operation of the Funderburk enterprises in Matthews. Louie Lummis Funderburk, born September 5, 1901, operated the general merchandise and dry goods store until his death on January 15, 1945. <sup>18</sup> Janie Louise Funderburk, wife of Boyce S. Plaxco, returned to Matthews soon thereafter from Glen Alpine, North Carolina. She and her husband assumed the responsibility which had been performed by her deceased brother. Mr. Plaxco, son of Robert N. and Sara Couser Plaxco of York County, South Carolina, died on January 11, 1973. <sup>19</sup> Mrs. Plaxco expired soon thereafter, on May 27, 1973. <sup>20</sup> Their untimely deaths led to the closing of the general merchandise store and the dry goods store.

Lee Edward Funderburk, born January 10, 1899, continued to serve as President of the Bank of Matthews, a position he had assumed in 1926. His wife, Betty Morrah Funderburk of Troy, South Carolina, was a devoted teacher in the public schools of Mecklenburg County for over thirty years. Mr. and Mrs. Funderburk occupy positions of great affection and regard among the citizens of Matthews. They continue to reside in the Funderburk home on West Charles Street, Mr. Funderburk recently having retired and having sold the bank to the Branch Banking and Trust Company of Wilson. <sup>21</sup>

The Funderburk Brothers Buildings have experienced considerable change in the twentieth century. Two major fires have occurred on the property, one in 1913 and another in 1958. The first destroyed all but portion of the livery stable and a two-story frame house which occupied the vacant lot which is now situated between the livery stable and the bank. <sup>22</sup> On the afternoon of May 11, 1958, a fire destroyed the second floor of the building which housed the bank and general merchandise store. <sup>23</sup> Moreover, a new front was placed on the livery stable sometime before 1950. The rooms at the front of the stable have been used for a variety of purposes over the years. In the early 1970's the grist mill and the blacksmith shop were converted for a brief time into a gift shop. They are presently used for storage, as is the livery stable. <sup>24</sup>

### **Addendum to Historical Sketch: Funderburk Brothers Building**

*Prepared on 29 May 1991  
by Dr. Dan L. Merrill*

In 1978, major portions of the Funderburk complex were destroyed to make way for a new building and parking lot constructed by Branch Banking and Trust Company. Specifically, the livery stable and the building erected in 1909, containing the Bank of Matthews and later Branch Banking and Trust Company, the general merchandise store, and apartments, were sacrificed. The only portions of the Funderburk complex which remain are the original store building erected by E. J. Funderburk, the building constructed by B. D. Funderburk in 1901, and the two brick structures (the blacksmith shop and the grist mill) at the rear of the property.

The tenants of the various buildings have changed since 1973, and Mr. L. E. Funderburk has died. His widow, Betty Morrah Funderburk continues to reside in the Funderburk home on West Charles Street in Mathews.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *The Southeast News* (November 10,1975), pp. 1-24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Guy B. Funderburk, *Funderburk History And Heritage* (Salem, WV, Pageland, SC: 1967, pp. 329-331. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 59, Page 357.

<sup>5</sup> *Charlotte Observer* (March 15, 1916) p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Charlotte Observer* (October 6, 1954) p. 1B.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Funderburk.

<sup>8</sup> Mecklenburg County Will Book L, Page 57.

<sup>9</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 144, Page 10.

<sup>10</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 9, Page 357. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 144, Page 40.

<sup>11</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 15G, Page 545.

<sup>12</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 756, Page 51.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Funderburk.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Miss Mary Louise Phillips. Interview with Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Funderburk.

<sup>15</sup> *Charlotte News* (December 13, 1940),p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> *Charlotte Observer* (June 1, 1937), Sec. 1, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Charlotte Observer* (October 6, 1954), p. 1 B.

<sup>18</sup> *Charlotte Observer* (January 29, 1945), Sec. B, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Charlotte News* (January 12, 1973) p. 8A.

<sup>20</sup> *Charlotte News* (May 28, 1973), p. 8A.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Funderburk.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> *Charlotte Observer* (May 12, 1958), p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Funderburk.

### *Architectural Sketch*

*Originally Prepared on 22 February 1978  
by Ms. Ruth Little-Stokes*

The Funderburk Brothers Mercantile Complex, built between ca. 1898 and 1910, occupies most of one block of the two-block business district on Trade Street in Matthews, a late nineteenth century railroad town in southeastern Mecklenburg County. The complex consists of the original store built ca. 1898, a dry goods store, a general store and bank, livery stable, blacksmith shop and grist mill, built before ca. 1910. This commercial district represents the most significant survival of a self-sufficient Victorian mercantile operation in Mecklenburg County. It is highlighted on the exterior by the fascinating construction of the blacksmith shop and grist mill, and on the interior by the remarkably well-preserved early twentieth century banking room. The buildings have been occupied by variety of commercial functions in recent years, but have suffered little alteration. The major changes are the removal of the second story of the general store and bank building as the result of a 1958 fire, and the remodeling of the livery stable facade ca. 1940 and the rebuilding of the stable in 1918.

The original Funderburk Store is the smallest structure in the complex and has the most modest design. The one-story rectangular brick structure has a three-bay wide street front containing a center double door with a transom and flanking sash windows. The brick facade is laid in one-to-five bond, the openings have flat brick arches, and the sash are early wooden replacements. The storefront is devoid of ornament, and architectural interest resides in the contrast with the slightly newer storefronts of the remainder of the complex, which are traditional Victorian commercial storefronts with recessed doors and display windows, forerunners of modern plate glass storefronts. The small windows and flush entrance of the ca. 1898 store represent a



transitional stage between domestic and commercial design. The flat roof is concealed by the brick parapet, which has a brick corbel cornice apparently added when the adjacent dry goods store was built, for the cornice extends across both buildings. The rear elevation has a center door and flanking windows, but the diagonal batten door and two-over-two sash windows have molded surrounds and segmental-arched heads. The interior has an ornate pressed tin ceiling of coffered design and plaster walls. In the early twentieth century it served as a barber shop and showers are still in place in the rear.

The dry goods store, a one-story rectangular brick building which abuts the original store to the north, has a typical turn-of-the-century storefront, with a recessed double glazed and paneled door with a transom, flanking wooden display windows, and a wooden bracketed cornice. The main facade has bondless brick veneer, with a paneled frieze bearing the painted sign "Funderburk Brothers" and a brick corbel cornice. The only changes are the alteration of the window dados and the recent louvered metal transom. The interior, with a wooden floor, narrow beaded board ceiling sheathing, and side walls lined with built-in displays shelves with molded cornices, which are probably original, is remarkably unaltered.

The general store and bank, housed in the one story, rectangular brick building adjacent to the dry goods store, has two identical storefronts which are quite similar to that of the dry goods store. The same changes have occurred to these storefronts. In addition, the brick parapet wall above the storefronts is a replacement necessitated by the 1958 fire, which destroyed the original second story of the building. In the center bay of the bondless brick veneer facade is the entrance to the former upper floor, a replacement door with the original segmental-arched brick surround with keystone. The exposed side (south) wall of the building has short windows with arched brick surrounds identical to the second story entrance. The rear elevation has two double doors with alternating two-over-two sash windows. The large open interior space has a concrete floor and is supported by two rows of heavy chamfered wooden posts. Metal tie rods with crude six-point star heads are visible in the rear walls of this building and the dry goods store, and may have been made in the Funderburk Blacksmith Shop. In the rear (northwest) corner, on a wooden platform, is an office, separated from the display area by a wooden and iron railing. The early twentieth century office furniture is still in place, as is a section of the display shelves, similar to those in the dry goods store.

The banking room, a small room partitioned off in the front (southeast) corner, is the most significant interior space in the Funderburk Complex, for it retains elaborate early twentieth century banking appointments. The tellers' cage, which extends along the north wall and across the rear of the room as an office partition, is of walnut, with paneled dado and window area with fluted pilasters and ornate wrought-iron grillwork. The vault, located in the rear behind the tellers' cage, has a classical door of heavy cast iron, with fluted Corinthian pilasters and a broken pediment which enframes a lion's head bracket and fluted urn. The pressed tin ceiling, consisting of coffers and cove cornice with acanthus corner blocks, is imprinted with a rich variety of classical motifs.

The livery stable, separated from the bank and general store building by a vacant lot, is a rectangular one-story brick building five bays wide and six bays deep set gable-end to the street. The brick is laid in one-to-five bond, the windows have wooden sash, metal grills, and

segmental arches, and the low gable roof is covered with seamed tin. In the center of the front and rear gable ends is wide segmental-arched door with wooden gate. The street front, remodeled ca. 1940, is covered with dark red brick veneer and has a stepped parapet which conceals the roof. Centered over the stable entrance is a casement window, and on each side of the entrance is door and window with small glass panes. The gable end of the rear elevation is covered with lapped siding, and a small wooden shed addition covers the northwest corner. In each front corner is a small partitioned office. One of these housed the public library in the 1940's. The remainder of the interior has been converted to warehouse, and has a dirt floor and heavy circular-sawn timber framework with an open truss roof. Metal tie rods serve as partial support for the triangular trusses. The side walls are lined with wooden platforms.

The fifth building in the complex abuts the narrow alley which parallels Trade Street to the west. This one and one-half story brick building, apparently constructed in several stages, is the most architecturally interesting structure in the group. The apparently oldest stage is a rectangular two-bay wide, four-bay deep structure laid in one-to-five bond. Brick pilasters flank each opening, a peculiar feature because they terminate just above the top of each door and window. The six-over-six sash windows have molded surrounds identical to those of the oldest store, and segmental-arched brick labels. The south wall of this section has identical sash windows, indicating that the south section of the building which conceals this wall is an addition. This section is of nearly identical construction and must have been added few years later. It has a wide double batten door in the east gable end a latticework brick ventilator above the door, six-over-six wooden sash, the same brick pilaster treatment and a parallel gable roof. These south sections of the building are said to have been built as a grist mill. A north wing, set about ten feet from the south section, is linked by a gable roof, which forms a covered passageway between the two sections. This rectangular structure, one bay wide and two bays long, extends lengthwise along the alley. Its construction is nearly identical to the south addition, and it may have been built simultaneously. This north wing is said to have functioned a blacksmith shop. Along the east flank of the wing is a wooden shed addition.

### **Addendum to Architectural Sketch: Funderburk Brothers Building**

*Prepared on 29 May 1991  
by Ms. Nora M. Black*

The four surviving elements of the Funderburk Brothers Mercantile complex, built between ca. 1898 and 1910 are on the northwest side of North Trade Street in Matthews. The property is approximately two-hundred feet west of the intersection of North Trade Street with the Seaboard Airline Railroad tracks.

The original Funderburk Store, built by Ellison James Funderburk between 1878 and 1898, is one of the surviving elements. The building, located at 159 North Trade Street, is occupied by "A Basket Instead." The brick facade has changed little since the turn of the century. As mentioned by Little-Stokes, a brick corbel cornice unites the facade with that of the neighboring 1901 dry goods store facade. The windows and doorway are protected by a striped canvas

awning. The double door, painted blue with white trim has a stone threshold. The interior has retained its ornate pressed tin ceiling through various tenants.

The second surviving element is the dry goods store built in 1901 by Benjamin Dewitt Funderburk. It is located at 157 North Trade Street, adjacent to the original store. The current occupant has covered the "Funderburk Bros." sign (mentioned by Little-Stokes) with a blue panel bearing the name "Gardner's Cottage" and a decorative emblem. The recessed entry with its double doors, sports a small decorative picket fence. The louvered metal transom has been covered (or replaced) with a piece of plywood painted white. Hinges for the screen doors common to this type of entry remain. The wooden floors, narrow beaded ceiling sheathing, and built-in display shelves remain intact. Even the low wooden stools, perched on iron pedestals, seem to await the arrival of ladies eager to thumb through pattern books and finger soft fabrics as in days past.

The 1901 dry goods store received a south wall of new brick in 1978. The wall covers the side of the building that was connected to the bank, general merchandise store, and apartments which were demolished. The unpainted brick wall has a parapet that steps down from the height of the street facade toward the rear of the building. The flat wall is broken near the rear of the building by a window with an arched head. The window, surrounded by corbel bricks contains two rectangular double-hung 8/8 sash. The half-oval head is infilled with vertical white siding. The bottom half of the window currently contains air conditioning units.

The rear elevations of both buildings remain much as described by Little-Stokes. A shed canopy protects the rear door of the original Funderburk building. The rear elevation of the 1901 dry goods store has a shed canopy that extends the width of the building. The painted words "Dry Goods Clothing and Gro," though much faded, are still visible just above that canopy.

Both the grist mill and the blacksmith shop remain as described by Little-Stokes. The buildings have been unused for some time as evidenced by the disrepair of the roof.

The route of Highway 51 through the center of Matthews altered the streetscape of that small town; however, the completion of the bypass will remove much of the noise and congestion that make it difficult and unpleasant for pedestrians to move between the various stores on North Trade Street. Unlike enclosed malls, the future North Trade Street could allow shoppers to enjoy sunshine and fresh air with ample parking at the front door of stores. The Town of Matthews is challenged now with protecting the role of its commercial district in the changing retail climate.