1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Thrift Depot of the Piedmont and Northern Railroad Company is located at 8030 Old Mt. Holly Road, in the western section of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

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

CSX Real Property, Inc.
301 West Bay Street, Suite 800
Jacksonville, FL 32202

3. Representative photographs of the property:

4. A map depicting the location of the property:
5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent deed to this property is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1065 at page 467. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is: 055-021-02.

6. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains an architectural description of the property prepared by Thomas W. Hanchett, architectural historian.

7. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. William H. Huffman, Ph.D.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-399.4:

a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance: The Historic Properties Commission judges that the property known as the Thrift Depot of the Piedmont and Northern Railroad Company does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: (1) the Thrift Depot is the only P&N station that survives in Mecklenburg County; (2) Hook and Rogers, an architectural firm of seminal influence in the history of the built environment of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, designed the structure; (3) James B. Duke, president of the Southern Power Company, played an important part in the establishment of the Piedmont and Northern Railroad Company; and (4) the Piedmont and Northern Railroad contributed significantly to the industrial development of Mecklenburg County and neighboring Gaston County.
b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association: The Commission contends that the attached statement of architectural significance prepared by Thomas W. Hanchett, architectural historian, demonstrates that the Thrift Depot of the Piedmont and Northern Railroad Station 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 "historic property." The current tax value of the 3.91 acres of land is $255,500.

Date of preparation of this report: October 5, 1982. (Revised October, 2009)

Prepared by:

Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
2100 Randolph Road
Charlotte, N.C. 28207

Telephone: 734/376-9115

Architectural Evaluation

by Thomas W. Hanchett

The Piedmont and Northern Railway Station just outside Charlotte, North Carolina, at Thrift is a well preserved example of an early twentieth century train station. Charles Christian Hook, a
leading Charlotte architect, designed it and its sister stations along the line. The structure at Thrift is the last remaining P & N station in Mecklenburg County.

Hook's 1911 design combines simple forms with careful detailing to give the Thrift station a look of functionalism and dignity. Like many small American stations in the period, it is a long, narrow building parallel to the railroad track with the large freight room at one end and the smaller passenger waiting area at the other. In between is the stationmaster's office, its brick bay window jutting out to give a view up and down the track.

C.C. Hook topped this customary form with a red "Spanish" tile roof whose wide eaves are carried on heavy wooden paired brackets, a motif borrowed from the Spanish Colonial style which was popular when the station was built. Three cross-gabled attic vents are perched on the ridgeline of the roof.
The brick walls of the building are almost devoid of decoration, as are the tall double-hung windows with their simple concrete sills and lintels. Instead of applied ornament, the architect used the materials themselves to give visual interest to the structure. The main body of the walls is of yellow brick laid in an unusual running bond, the joints of one course not centered under the middle of the bricks above. Below the window sills, the brick changes to red and the walls thicken to give the building an added feeling of solidity. These red brick are rounded at the openings and the corners of the building to provide further interest. Another indication of Hook's thoughtful detailing is a cast concrete bench built into the east end of the station along Old Mount Holly Road, designed for passengers meeting trains when the waiting room was closed or crowded.

Hook used the design motifs and materials seen in the Thrift station in all his P & N buildings, including the large freight station that stood until 1980 in downtown Charlotte. In each case the natural colors of the building materials, red roof tile, brown wood, yellow brick, and red brick, gave the structures their color. The architect used carefully functional forms for the structures, but gave them a quiet elegance through attention to detail.
Former P&N Depot, located in Piedmont, S.C.

Today the Thrift station is much as the architect designed it. The previous tenant's cluster of asphalt storage tanks at the west end of the structure appears to have been installed with little modification to the building itself.

Because of the Thrift station's high quality of architectural design, because it is the work of an important local architect, C.C. Hook, and because it is the last structure associated with the Piedmont and Northern railroad surviving in Mecklenburg County, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission recommends that the Piedmont and Northern station at Thrift be designated a local historic property.

**Historical Overview**

*Dr. William H. Huffman*

The Piedmont and Northern Railway was first proposed in 1909 by William States Lee, vice-president of Southern Power and Utilities Co., as an "electrically powered interurban railway system linking the major cities of the Piedmont Carolinas."\(^1\) Southern's president, James B. Duke, ultimately accepted the proposal, and, two years later, in 1911, the first issue of P. & N. stock quietly sold out, and grading for the line began in Charlotte in April of that year.\(^2\) Since Southern already had the power monopoly and owned the Charlotte Electric Railway (which ran the city's streetcar system) as well as the streetcar lines in other cities to be served, the P. & N. was seen as a natural outgrowth of their existing business. It would also serve to promote growth in the Piedmont, which was a major goal of James "Buck" Duke.
The plan called for two lines in the initial stage: a twenty-one-mile route linking Charlotte and Gastonia, and one in South Carolina connecting Greenwood to Spartanburg, a distance of ninety-eight miles. The final link (which was never completed because of a successful challenge brought before the ICC by the Southern Railway) was to join Gastonia and Spartanburg, thus completing the network. The system was to be anchored in Charlotte by a freight depot on the west side of Mint Street between 2nd and 3rd, and a passenger station on the same street between 3rd and 4th. The freight depot was completed by February, 1912, at a cost of about $30,000. It measured 60' x 240', with two stories and a basement at one end, which housed the department heads, dispatcher and other operating personnel.
In April, 1911, construction began on the first leg of the northern section of the system, stretching from Charlotte to Mr. Holly. About that same time, the contract for the architectural designs for the stations was given to the firm of Hook and Rogers. In an interview for the Charlotte Observer's "Interurban Section" of July 25, 1911, the principal architect, C. C. Hook, observed that construction in Charlotte was booming to the extent that few contractors had requested his plans to use for bidding, a sure sign of prosperity, since so many of them were busy with other jobs. Charles Christian Hook (1870-1938), the prime architect of the stations, was an architect of seminal influence in the evolution of Charlotte's built environment. He designed a number of houses in Dilworth for the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, as well as many important structures in the area, which included, not incidentally, James B. Duke's mansion and the old Charlotte City Hall.

There were seven stations along the eleven-mile run from Charlotte to Mt. Holly, which were styled "embryo metropolises of the later part of this century, if you please," by the enthusiastic Charlotte Observer in 1912. They were located in order from Charlotte to Mt. Holly, as follows: Lakewood, Hoskins (near the amusement park), Pinoca (a corrupted acronym for Piedmont & Northern Co. - primarily a rail yard and connecting point with the Seaboard Air Line Railway), Toddville, Paw Creek (later Thrift), Rhyne, Beattie, and Mt. Holly. All were designed by Hook and Rogers to be similar in style, with the only variation being the size according to the importance or the stop. They had a base of red brick, upon which were the yellow brick walls topped by roofs of red tile. The smaller depots, including the one at Thrift, combined the freight and passenger stations under one roof.

In September, 1911, the contract for the first stations to be built was awarded to J. A. Jones, whose bid was the best of several submitted. On April 3rd of the following year, the P. & N. began service on the Charlotte - Mt. Holly run with eight trains each way daily, which took about 35 minutes one way. Tickets were available from Blake's Drug Store on the Square or the Mint.
Street depot for 20 cents per one-way. On the first trip from Charlotte to Mt. Holly on the single standard interurban electric train car were fifty some dignitaries and invited guests, which included William S. Lee, the "father" of the road and later president of the P. & N.; Zebulon V. Taylor, president of the Charlotte Electric Railway; and representatives of the Charlotte newspapers.11

The railroad prospered because the interurban was designed to interchange freight cars with steam railroads; area industrial investors in the company shipped on the line as often as possible; and the industrial development program established by Duke in the sales department added to the profitable freight business.12 Through World War I, the Twenties, the Great Depression and World War II, the Piedmont and Northern remained profitable, primarily due to the carrying of freight. With the widespread ownership of automobiles, starting in the 1920's, passenger business began to fall; this was a decline which continued (except during the Depression when fares were drastically reduced to encourage ridership) until it ceased altogether in 1951.13 A year earlier, along with dropping the passenger service, the P. & N. board also decided to convert to diesel locomotion, since it was no longer economically feasible to keep up or replace the electric lines. The conversion was completed over the next several years.14 In 1969, the P. & N. merged with the Seaboard Coast Line, and thus the company formally ended business on July 1st, sixty years after its conception.15 In December, 1969, about six months after merging with the P. & N.; Seaboard discontinued use of the Thrift depot as a railroad station, no doubt in part due to the prior closing of the Kendall Mill close by.16

The station at Thrift, which is still basically intact, helped serve the nearby Thrift, later Kendall Textile Mill, and the Paw Creek community. After passenger service was discontinued in 1951, part of the station and property to the east of it were leased to the Emulsified Asphalt Refining Co., who used the depot as a storage and shipping facility. A few years later, the Koppers Company took over Emulsified, which in turn relinquished the facility to Koch Asphalt Co. about 1976 under a long-term lease from Seaboard Coast Lines. The property is currently not being used and is overgrown.

As a reminder of an earlier prosperous era in Charlotte-Mecklenburg's transportation history, the P. & N. Railroad station at Thrift deserves historical recognition.
NOTES

3 Ibid., p. 12.
5 Fetters and Swanson, p. 15.
6 *Charlotte Observer*, July 25, 1911, Interurban Section.
10 *Charlotte Evening Chronicle*, Sept. 21, 1911, p. 6.
12 Fetters and Swanson, p. 27.
13 Ibid., pp. 34ff; and p. 127.
14 Ibid., pp. 127-130.
15 Ibid., p. 145.
16 Interviews with Benjamin Franklin Bowen, Seaboard Coast Lines, the last station agent at Thrift, 28 Aug. 1981; Tom Lynch, Assistant Vice President and & Sales Manager, Seaboard Coast Lines, 27 August 1981; Dennis Helms, Koch Asphalt Co., 26 August 1981.
The Piedmont and Northern Railway Station just outside Charlotte in the Paw Creek Community is a well preserved example of an early twentieth century train station. Charles Christian Hook, a leading Charlotte architect, designed it and its sister stations along the line.

The Piedmont and Northern Railway was first proposed in 1909 by William States Lee, vice-president of Southern Power and Utilities Co., as an "electrically powered interurban railway system linking the major cities of the Piedmont Carolinas." There were seven stations along the eleven-mile run from Charlotte to Mt. Holly. Only three of the distinctive stations survive, and the Thrift Depot is the only P&N station that survives in Mecklenburg County. Hook's 1911 design combines simple forms with careful detailing to give the Thrift station a look of functionalism and dignity.

On April 3, 1912, the P & N began service on the Charlotte - Mt. Holly run with eight trains each way daily, which took about 35 minutes one way. Tickets were available from Blake's Drug Store on the Square or the Mint Street depot for 20 cents per one-way. On the first trip from Charlotte to Mt. Holly were fifty some dignitaries and invited guests, which included William S. Lee, the "father" of the road and later president of the P & N; Zebulon V. Taylor, president of the Charlotte Electric Railway; and representatives of the Charlotte newspapers.

Through World War I, the 1920s, the Great Depression and World War II, the Piedmont and Northern remained profitable, primarily due to the carrying of freight. With the widespread ownership of automobiles passenger business began to fall and was discontinued in 1951.
Above Photograph taken in 2004, courtesy of John Jones.
Below Photographs taken in July, 2000