

Landmark Designation Report for the



Renfrow Commercial Properties Matthews, North Carolina

Prepared by:
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Table of Contents

General Information.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Statement of Significance	4
Integrity Statement.....	4
Maps.....	6
Historical Background.....	7
Thomas Jefferson Renfrow	7
Renfrow Hardware Store and Commercial Properties	11
Eugene McDowell “Dow” Renfrow	17
Shifting from Cotton to Gardening	21
Chain of Title	24
Architectural Description	25
Ca. 1900 Frame Building	27
Ca. 1920 Gin Operator’s Residence	33
Ca. 1950 Commercial Building.....	37
Former Cotton Gin and Seed Warehouse Lot.....	41
Bibliography.....	44

Supporting Documentation:

Renfrow Commercial Properties Site Plan, January 26, 2022

Tax Maps: 21501416 (0.921 acres), 21501304 (0.406 acres), 21501303 (0.206 acres),
and 21501417 (0.038 acres)

Statement of Support of Designation from Property Owner

General Information

Historic Names of Property:	Renfrow Commercial Properties
Address of Property:	156 North Trade Street, 106 North Trade Street, 125 East John Street Matthews, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
PIN:	21501416 (0.921 acres), 21501304 (0.406 acres), 21501303 (0.206 acres), and 21501417 (0.038 acres)
Deed Book & Page:	Mecklenburg County Deed Book 27880, Page 560
Amount of Land/Acreage to be Designated:	1.571 acres
Ad Valorem Tax Value:	The 2022 assessed real estate value of the parcels comprising the Renfrow Commercial Properties, including land and building value, is \$1,638,000.
Recommendation for Designation:	The property owner is pursuing exterior designation only of three contributing structures on the properties—the ca. 1900 frame building, the ca. 1920 gin operator’s house, and the ca. 1950 brick commercial building.
Name/Address of Current Property Owner:	PCM Holdings LLC P. O. Box 67 Matthews, NC 28106

Abstract

Statement of Significance

The Renfrow Commercial Properties are historically significant for their association with the history of the cotton economy in Matthews, North Carolina, including the contributions of the Renfrow family to the growth of that economy during the first half of the twentieth century. Adjacent to the Renfrow Hardware Store (itself a designated local historic landmark as one of the earliest stores in the Matthews area still operating in its original form), the Renfrow Commercial Properties consist of four parcels of land in downtown Matthews on North Trade Street and East John Street. Those parcels contain three contributing structures—a ca. 1892 frame commercial building on North Trade Street whose past use as the local post office made it integral to the town's development; a ca. 1950 brick commercial building on North Trade Street which served as a machine shop supporting the cotton gin, as well as the subsequent location for several other commercial ventures; and a ca. 1920 frame building on Cotton Gin Alley where farmers waited for their cotton to be ginned and later residence of the gin operator—and several non-contributing structures. Along with the family's hardware store, the contributing structures provided a central hub of retail and service options for the town and area farmers, demonstrating the entrepreneurial savvy of the Renfrow family. The cotton gin and a seed warehouse were located on the parcel across Cotton Gin Alley from the hardware store but are no longer extant. Despite the absence of those buildings, the size of those remaining empty parcels in the heart of downtown Matthews convey the one-time significance of cotton to the local economy and, combined with the extant gin-related operational support structures, the operational scale developed by the Renfrow family to service that agricultural industry. The three contributing structures also evidence the efforts of the Renfrow family who, like many mid-twentieth century businesses, faced the stark financial reality of a declining cotton economy. Demonstrating their business acuity, the Renfrows began renting space within those remaining structures to a variety of retail, professional, and restaurant concerns, converting those once primarily agricultural and manufacturing buildings into what now comprises the thriving commercial heart of downtown Matthews. The Renfrow Commercial Properties constitute the only collection of commercial buildings integral to the cotton cultivation economy of the early twentieth century that remains within the small towns of Mecklenburg County.

Integrity Statement

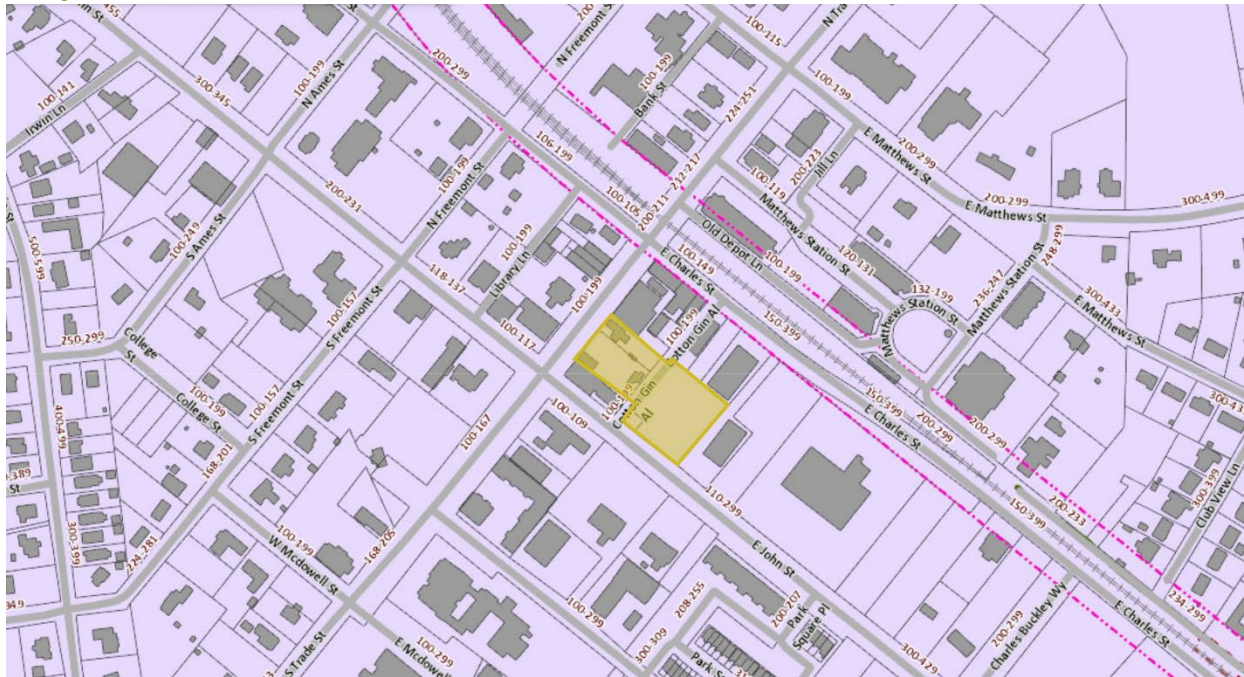
Location

The contributing structures of the Renfrow Commercial Properties retain a high degree of integrity of location. The ca. 1892 frame commercial building was moved by T. J. Renfrow from its original site of construction on the left side of the Renfrow Hardware Store to its current location on the right side of the store in the early 1900s.

The ca. 1950 commercial building and ca. 1920 frame building both remain at their original site of construction in close proximity to the original location of the Renfrow family's cotton gin.

Design	The contributing structures of the Renfrow Commercial Properties retain the elements which convey the physical form and style of their original construction and use.
Setting	The Renfrow Commercial Properties retain a high degree of integrity of their setting within the historic downtown core of Matthews, demonstrating the significance of cotton and agriculture to the town's history with that central location. The properties continue to be utilized for agricultural uses, as the Downtown Matthews Farmers Market is hosted on the site. Although of more recent vintage, the fence and entranceway for the Farmer's Market contribute to the setting, providing a constant reminder of the town's longstanding agricultural tradition and underscoring its historic smalltown appeal.
Materials	The contributing structures of the Renfrow Commercial Properties retain most if not all of the materials, including exterior cladding and roofing, of their original construction.
Workmanship	The Renfrow Commercial Properties retain a high degree of integrity of elements of the workmanship of late 19th and early 20th century construction practices in the small towns of Mecklenburg County.
Feeling	The Renfrow Commercial Properties convey the feeling of the properties during their use during the early 20th century. Although the integrity of that feeling is somewhat compromised by the loss of the seed warehouse and cotton gin, the remaining gin-related operational support structures and sizable empty parcels (prominently located in the heart of downtown Matthews and marked by the Downtown Matthews Farmers Market entryway as a going agricultural concern perpetuating the town's century-old agrarian tradition) stand as a constant reminder of the historical scale and significance of cotton and agriculture to the earlier economic era. With the former post office, the properties convey the century-old small-town feeling of rural Mecklenburg County.
Association	The Renfrow Commercial Properties are historically significant for their association with both the early 20th century cotton cultivation economy of Mecklenburg County and the Renfrow family, which was integral in the growth of the town of Matthews, the business and commercial transitions necessitated by the mid-20th century decline of that cotton economy, and the Renfrow family who contributed significantly to the growth of the cotton economy and then weathered the economic upheavals of that industry's decline with their entrepreneurial adaptive uses of those properties, all of which were integral in the growth and history of the town of Matthews.

Maps



Source: POLARIS



Source: POLARIS

Historical Background

Cotton and Mecklenburg County

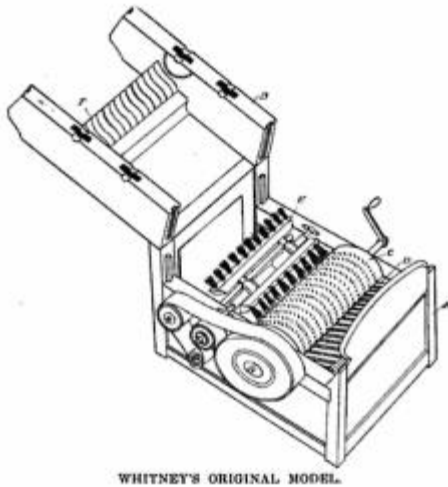


Figure 1 A sketch of the original cotton gin patented by Eli Whitney in 1793. From Tompkins, 94.

As with much of the southern United States, cotton was the primary cash crop. Mecklenburg County was not settled until the 1740s, and settlers relied upon subsistence farming rather than cash crops. Following the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1793, however, farmers increasingly included cotton in their crop rotations. Cotton production in the United States exploded—in 1793, exports totaled 487,000 pounds, and a decade later had increased to over 41 million pounds. By 1850 Mecklenburg County was the third-leading producer of cotton in the state.¹

The cotton gin brought industrialized production to cotton farming and the agricultural south. By 1802 over 2,000 “saws,” the mechanism in the gin by which seed was separated from the cotton fiber, were in use in Mecklenburg County. Early cotton gins were small enough for individual plantations to house. Local manufacturing magnate Daniel A. Tompkins describes the typical gin in his history of Mecklenburg County,

This first cotton gin was a primitive affair, being nothing more extensive than a box about three feet long, two feet high, and two feet wide. Inside the box was the simple machinery that separated the seed from the lint about five times as fast as it could be done by hand. The principal feature of Whitney's original model was a wooden cylinder carrying annular rows of wire spikes [...] which consisted of shaft carrying collars separating circular saws, which passed through narrow spaces between ribs, through which the seed could not pass.²

Many plantations had their own gin as well as other raw material processors. An advertisement in the Charlotte *Miners' and Farmers' Journal* in 1831 offered a three-

¹ North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Handbook of North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton, 1893), 218.

² Daniel A. Tompkins, *History of Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte, Volume 1* (Charlotte, NC: Observer Printing House, 1903), 96. While Whitney invented the cotton gin, Hodgen Holmes improved the machine by replacing Whitney's seed separator, a wire-spiked roller, with a saw mechanism.

hundred-acre plantation along Sugar Creek with “an excellent Mill Seat, good Saw-Mill and Cotton Gin.”³

As the cultivation of cotton increased in Mecklenburg County, the number of enslaved persons also increased. By 1850 seventeen planters, who enslaved more than thirty persons and employed an overseer, were counted, and that number rose to thirty at the eve of the Civil War. Planters in Morning Star, Crab Orchard, and Providence Townships, which would later utilize the Renfrow gin to process their cotton, included Alexander, Ardrey, Grier, Kirkpatrick, Morris, Patterson, and Wallace.⁴

Following the war, the average size of Mecklenburg County farms shrank to approximately 100 acres as the large plantations of the antebellum period were unsustainable without the unpaid labor of slaves. Land continued to be concentrated among white owners, and scarcity of money resulted in newly freed Blacks and poor whites entering into crop-based farm tenancy. Academic Rosser H. Taylor described the emergent economic system,

With the return of peace, the farm lands of the State were further depleted, the labor supply was uncertain, money scarce, and credit difficult to obtain. With small capital, and in the case of tenant farmers, none, the people must continue the farm regardless of unfavorable conditions. In order to obtain supplies from the time-merchant while the crop was in the making, farmers were required to grow cash crops which required fertilization. Wornout lands would not produce without manure and there was little capital and opportunity for clearing fresh lands.⁵

Cotton and grain were the primary crops; while livestock contributed to the income of a farm, most animals were utilized for crop production. The introduction of Peruvian guano as a fertilizer led to a drastic increase in cotton growth, from 6,112 bales ginned in Mecklenburg County in 1860 to 19,129 bales in 1880. Farmers would have had agreements with tenants, who helped their landlord produce his own crop while managing their own. This system remained in place well into the twentieth century.⁶

³ *Miners' and Farmers' Journal*, February 10, 1831.

⁴ Richard Mattson and William Huffman, Historic and Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (July 1990), E6.

⁵ Rosser H. Taylor, “Early Practices in State, Fertilizer Sale and Use,” *ESC Quarterly* 7, No. 2 (Spring 1949), 55.

⁶ Mattson and Huffman, E10-E12.



Figure 2 Farmer taking cotton to market. From Daniel A. Tompkins, Cotton and Cotton Mills (Charlotte, NC: published by the author, 1901), 41.

The increase in cotton production occurred alongside the industrialization of cotton processing and textile manufacturing. The Charlotte Cotton Mill opened in 1881, and the next year Tompkins arrived; he would become the city's biggest booster for the development of textile mills and the growth of the industrialized New South. Railroad construction, which had halted during the war, resumed, and the numerous lines crisscrossing the country aided in the economic growth of Mecklenburg County. Matthews was one such town which was established along the Carolina Central Railroad.⁷ The number of cotton gins within the county also increased. These were typically located in the rural communities of the county, conveniently located to the farms which produced the fluffy staple. An 1880 letter in the *Charlotte Democrat* noted, "Five years ago there was not a steam gin in all the neighborhood. Now there are thirteen within ten miles."⁸ With the introduction of steam gins and mills, large-scale cotton processing replaced singular farm gins and mills. As Tompkins noted, "A good steam ginnery came to be as much a standard property as a mill for grinding corn or flour. Whoever could attract the most public custom, gin the cheapest, and give the best satisfaction, as to appearance of lint produced out of the same quality of cotton, could make the most money."⁹ This was the state of Mecklenburg County when Thomas Jefferson Renfrow located here in the late nineteenth century.

⁷ Mattson and Huffman, E14.

⁸ "New York Correspondence of the Democrat," *Charlotte Democrat*, October 15, 1880.

⁹ Daniel A. Tompkins, *Cotton and Cotton Mills* (Charlotte, NC: published by the author, 1901), 67.

Thomas Jefferson Renfrow

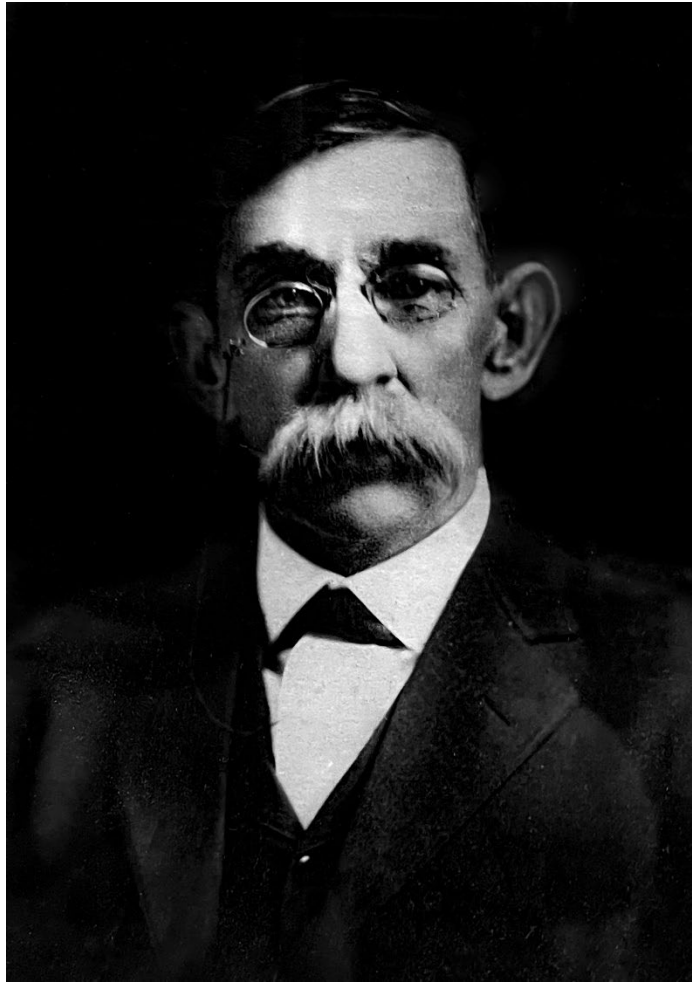


Figure 3 Undated photograph of Thomas Jefferson Renfrow. From Renfrow Hardware Store archives.

Thomas Jefferson Renfrow, the patriarch of the Renfrow family of Matthews, was born in Davidson County, North Carolina, on July 6, 1847. His father William Renfrow died in 1853 when he was crushed by a falling tree. His mother Catharine Greer Renfrow, widowed with two small children, remarried to James Robertson in 1854. A mining engineer by trade who had emigrated from Scotland. Robertson reportedly worked in California before coming to North Carolina. Thomas married Mary Kirkman in 1868 in Davidson County. While he was listed as a farm laborer according to the 1870 U. S. Census, Thomas would follow his stepfather into the mining industry. In 1880 the Baltimore and North Carolina Gold and Copper Company reopened the Rea mine, about eight miles southeast of Charlotte and two miles from the town of Matthews. They hired Robertson, who was overseeing the operations of the Gardner Hill gold and copper mine in Guilford County, to be superintendent. Thomas also came to work at the Rea mine. When Robertson left to oversee the Hamilton mine near Wadesboro, Thomas succeeded him as the superintendent

of the Rea mine. The position carried the title of Captain, and Thomas was known as Capt. Renfrow the remainder of his life.¹⁰

However, the post-Civil War mining boom was fleeting. As the *Charlotte News* later described the Rea mine, “There was no Golconda, merely a little mine that ran its day and was forgotten.”¹¹ Capt. Renfrow left the mining industry to focus on agriculture and other business interests in the Matthews area. In 1884 he purchased 212 acres of farmland near the Harkey family off what is today Matthews-Mint Hill Road. Capt. Renfrow became a leader in the local Farmers’ Alliance, elected as chairman of the Morning Star Township organization in 1887 and president of the Mecklenburg County chapter two years later.¹²

Renfrow Hardware Store and Commercial Properties

The history of Matthews extends back to 1825, when John Miles Fullwood was appointed postmaster of the Stumptown area. His home served as the post office, stagecoach stop, and general store. However, the development of a town truly began after the Civil War. Wylie Noles chose what was now known as Fullwood for a sawmill, as the surrounding land was being cleared for cotton fields. Settlement increased, with early residents of Fullwood including the Reid and Funderburk families. In 1874 the Central Carolina Railroad completed a section connecting Fullwood with their line from Wilmington into Tennessee. The community was renamed Matthews Station after the railroad’s director and was chartered as a town in 1879. Streets and lots were platted, and the following year the U. S. Census recorded 191 residents.¹³

Commercial activity increased in Matthews, drawn by the railroad and its location between Charlotte and Monroe. Joseph T. Barrett established a mercantile business with Joseph McLaughlin of Charlotte around 1880. Several years later, Barrett partnered with Julius S. Grier to open a store at the corner of Trade Street and West John Street. The oldest extant commercial structure today in Matthews is the Heath & Reid General Store, built in 1888 of bricks made on site. Owned by Everard J. Heath and Edward S. Reid, the business offered wholesale and retail merchandise as well as banking services and cotton buying.¹⁴

¹⁰ “Map of the Central Piedmont Region of North Carolina and South Carolina, Showing Location of Mines and Prospects,” in Bruce Roberts, *Carolina Gold Rush* (Charlotte: McNally and Loftin, 1972), 76; “A New Mining Company Goes to Work,” *Charlotte Observer*, July 13, 1880; “The Latest Boom,” *Charlotte Observer*, May 28, 1881; “Big Strike of Copper,” *Charlotte Observer*, May 16, 1882; “Baltimore and North Carolina Mine,” *Charlotte Observer*, March 9, 1883; “Meeting of Mining Stockholders,” *Charlotte Observer*, October 31, 1883.

¹¹ “Captain Renfrow,” *Charlotte News*, November 22, 1935.

¹² Mecklenburg County Deed Book 40, Page 40; “Farmers’ Meeting,” *Charlotte Democrat*, January 21, 1887; “New Officers,” *Mecklenburg Times*, July 12, 1889.

¹³ Paula Hartill Lester, *Discover Matthews: From Cotton to Corporate* (Charlotte: Herff Jones Publishing Company, 2000), 5-7.

¹⁴ Lester, 9-10.

Around this time, Capt. Renfrow entered into the Matthews business community. He partnered with Ellison J. Funderburk and John. W. Phillips, who was married to Funderburk's niece, in industrial enterprises including flour and grist mills, a planning mill, and a cotton gin. Funderburk purchased the mills, which had been established by Daniel M. Fesperman in the 1880s, just after Fesperman's death in May 1888.¹⁵ By the late nineteenth century, cotton processing shifted from slower animal-driven machines to steam-powered ones, which allowed for increased production. Cotton gins also were concentrated with other raw material processing, such as corn or lumber. An 1880 letter in the *Charlotte Democrat* noted, "Five years ago there was not a steam gin in all the neighborhood. Now there are thirteen within ten miles."¹⁶ With the introduction of steam gins and mills, large-scale cotton processing replaced the singular farm gins and mills prevalent before the Civil War. These cotton gins were built in rural towns like Matthews, which had railroad depots for easy transport of the ginned fiber to mills.

In 1891 Capt. Renfrow joined Heath & Reid, which had grown to become what the *Mecklenburg Times* described as "that mammoth establishment."¹⁷ This may have been due to a decline in cotton prices, as prominent county farmers reduced their planted acreage in the 1892 growing season—he dropped from 85 acres of cotton to 60 acres. Additionally, just a few years earlier, the mills he co-owned with Funderburk and Phillips had burned. The uninsured properties and equipment (which included a 20-horsepower return flue boiler, 15-horsepower Erie City engine, a sawmill with 48" saw, 50-saw Hall cotton gin, a Boss cotton press, a 36" corn mill, and a 20" Franklin planing machine) valued at over \$4,000. Despite these setbacks, he expanded his business interests, with plans to construct a brick cotton mill in 1893 and recorded as owning a lumber mill in 1898.¹⁸ Capt. Renfrow established a general store on Trade Street near Heath & Reid in 1900, the same year the Rea mine ceased operation. Renfrow & Co., which included sons George and John in the enterprise, became a hub of business activity in Matthews. Capt. Renfrow purchased the frame building between his store and the Heath & Reid store, and it was moved to the other side of the Renfrow store to serve as the post office. Postmaster Jacob W. Flowe added living quarters to the back of the building. Behind the store was the workshop of Joseph Starnes, who manufactured wagons.¹⁹

¹⁵ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 42, Page 354; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 51, Page 539; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 63, Page 402.

¹⁶ "New York Correspondence of the Democrat," *Charlotte Democrat*, October 15, 1880.

¹⁷ "Matthews Notes," *Mecklenburg Times*, October 4, 1889.

¹⁸ "Valuable Machinery FOR SALE," *Charlotte Democrat*, September 10, 1886; "A Word in Season," *Charlotte Democrat*, February 26, 1892; "Local Items," *Mecklenburg Times*, September 21, 1893; "Matthews Items," *Charlotte Observer*, May 9, 1893; *Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: Guy V. Barnes, Printer to the Council of State, 1899), 171.

¹⁹ Lester, 16-17.

The Renfrow holdings expanded in 1906, when Capt. Renfrow constructed a new cotton gin behind the store on the site of the former Fesperman Mill. Operating under the auspices of the Matthews Manufacturing Co., which was chartered that year to “operate cotton mills, cotton gins and manufacturing enterprise of various kinds,” the enterprise included among its organizers E. J. Heath and J. M. Barrett.²⁰ The gin, which was to have three 70-saw Loomis gins, was projected to be ready for operation on September 1 as the cotton harvest was underway. The *Charlotte News* reported, “Five big gins are operated by Funderburk Bros. on Church street, while the Matthews Manufacturing Co. on South Main street have a new and up-to-date ginnery and are busy late and early.”²¹



Figure 4 Mule-drawn wagons are lined up in Charlotte, waiting to have their cotton ginned. A similar scene would have played out in Matthews. "Cotton Is King," <https://www.cmstory.org/exhibits/turn-20th-century-life-charlotte-1900-1910-looking-back-charlotte/cotton-king>.

Farmers from southern Mecklenburg County and nearby Union County would come to Matthews to sell their cotton. Mule-drawn wagons piled with cotton lined either side of Trade Street starting around the beginning of September. The wagons held approximately 1,500 pounds of seed cotton of which about 500 pounds was cotton fiber. Cotton farmers would pay their ginning fees by selling about three-quarters of their seed to the gins, with

²⁰ *Cotton*, Vol. 23, No. 5 (August 15, 1906), 18.

²¹ "Matthews News," *Charlotte News*, September 25, 1906.

the remainder returned to the farmer for next year's crop. The ginning season would last through the end of the year, making for a busy time in Matthews and the Renfrow store as farmers made a majority of their purchases with their earnings.²² A 1916 chattel mortgage in possession of the Renfrow Hardware Store provides one example of the arrangement between tenant, farmer, and supplier. Black tenants Frank Houston and Manuel Miller entered into an agreement with the store in March for a \$60.00 credit account for supplies for their crops, which they were growing on the property of white farmers John Porter and S. R. McKee. Their collateral was a six-year-old bay mare. The loan, payable on October 1, was recorded as fulfilled.²³

The process of ginning cotton was similar in all cotton-growing regions. The cotton harvesting season began in August and usually ended in December. Mule-drawn wagons brought loose cotton, which consisted of the bolls with the seed and some stems attached, to the gin. At the Renfrow gin, the wagon would pull under the covered pull-through where a platform scale would weigh the wagon, mules, and cotton—the weight of the wagon and mules would be determined after the cotton was removed. A duct pipe hanging from above would be over the wagon. The loose cotton would be suctioned into the pipe, which ran into the interior of the gin house, and was heated to dry the dew-wetted fiber for better processing. The suction system would deposit the cotton into a separator, which would then deposit the cotton into the gin stands, machines that separated the seed from cotton lint with saw-toothed rollers. The gin stands were located in the west side of the gin interior. Seed would be fed along a conveyor track into the seed house located east of the cotton gin. The cotton lint would be blown into the condenser through the wires to form batts. The batts would then be placed in the bale press to be compacted into five-hundred-pound bales. After being secured with steel tape and either jute or burlap bagging, the bale was lifted using a pulley system out of the gin into waiting wagons for transport to warehouses.²⁴

In the 1910s the Matthews business community began to shift to its second generation of ownership. E. J. Heath died in 1912, and E. J. Funderburk passed four years later. Capt. Renfrow brought his sons into the business. George Vernon Renfrow was an early partner with his father, though he moved to North Wilkesboro to establish his own store. Eugene McDowell “Dow” Renfrow and John Robertson Renfrow then joined their father in the store

²² Karen Gerhardt Britton, *Bale O' Cotton: The Mechanical Art of Cotton Ginning* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 80-82.

²³ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 347, Page 258. The lien and mortgage on file with the county has H. B. Hood & Co. as the mortgage holder, but the copy in possession of Renfrow Hardware Store has Hood marked out and T. J. Renfrow & Sons written in its place.

²⁴ Interview with Rod and Miriam Whisnant, July 31, 2015; Britton, 62-73; James R. Lewis, “Texas Gin House Architecture: A Survey and Case Study of the Cotton Gin as a Historic Building Type” (thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1987), 70-72.

and gin, now known as Renfrow & Sons. With his sons taking on more of the management, Capt. Renfrow was able to expand his political activities. He has run for county commission previously and served on the Matthews board of commissioners as well as a stint as mayor. In 1909 Capt. Renfrow was appointed to the State Prison Board, on which he served four years. He then ran for the state assembly and was elected in 1917 for a two-year term. His committee assignments reflected his many facets of experience—corporations, mines and mining, and penal institutions, among others.²⁵

The business interests of the Renfrows expanded beyond the cotton economy. Sections of the Renfrow store building were rented to other local businesses. James Yandell, Sr., opened a furniture and casket store and operated a hearse service starting in 1920 before moving to West John Street. A Chevrolet dealership was operated for a period of time by George Renfrow in the right side of the store building. The post office had relocated to larger facilities, and the ca. 1892 frame building housed a grocery store owned by a Mr. Harkey; a retail business of the Champion family, who lived in the attached residence at its rear, from 1923 to 1932; and a general store ran by Albert Boyle, who was known for his selection of quality knives.²⁶

However, the 1920s were less successful for the Renfrow commercial enterprises. The boll weevil was first reported in Mecklenburg County in September 1921 on farms in Providence and Sharon Townships—farmers from the former area came to Matthews to gin their cotton. Cotton prices plummeted during the decade from a high of 38 cents per pound in 1919 to eleven cents per pound in 1926. Many farmers had difficulty paying their ginning fees; the decrease in prices at times resulted in a loss to the gin or store. The Renfrow gin felt this pinch, and in 1927 they borrowed \$8,000 from Southern Cotton Oil Company. All but \$2,000 was repaid by 1931, but the Renfrows defaulted on the loan. Cotton prices were approaching their eventual bottom of five cents per pound that year, and gins across the state were forced to close—12% of North Carolina cotton gins ceased operation from 1934 to 1938.²⁷

To make matters worse, tragedy struck the Renfrow family repeatedly during these hard years. Mary Kirkman Renfrow died in August 1934 at the age of 88 of heart disease. The health of Capt. Renfrow declined, and son Dow served as a proxy at county school board meetings. A bout of pneumonia proved fatal, and Thomas Jefferson Renfrow died on

²⁵ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 547, Page 485; R. D. W. Conner, comp., *North Carolina Manual, 1919* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company), 451; *The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* (Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1911), 329.

²⁶ Lester, 15-17.

²⁷ *Charlotte News*, September 7, 1921; Britton, 90, 96; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 678, Page 81; G. S. Meloy, "Some Economic Aspects of Present Cotton-Gin Emplacements," (presentation, Conference of State Cotton Gin Engineers, Stoneville, MS, April 8-10, 1940), 5.

November 20, 1935, at his residence. Son George, who had moved back to Matthews, died just a month later.



Figure 5 Eugene McDowell "Dow" Renfrow and Henry Renfrow Massey seated in front of Renfrow Hardware Store in August 1961. From Renfrow Hardware Store archives.

In 1936, as Capt. Renfrow's estate was being settled, the gin was put up for public sale. It was purchased by Henry Renfrow Massey, son of Mamie Renfrow Massey and nephew of Dow and John, with a high bid of \$2,060. Henry was a graduate of Matthews High School and Wake Forest College, and he had joined the family business a few years earlier. He promptly deeded the gin to his uncle, who repaid the purchase price.²⁸ Renfrow & Sons store and gin had been largely operated by Dow and John for many years, though John's involvement decreased once he was elected county registrar of deeds in 1922. In his will, Capt. Renfrow had granted his one-third interest in the store and Matthews Manufacturing

²⁸ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 834, Page 215; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 876, Page 293; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 895, Page 144.

Co. to his sons. John sold his part to Dow in 1940, who operated the company along with Henry, who was the gin's cotton buyer.²⁹

Eugene McDowell "Dow" Renfrow



Figure 6 Eugene McDowell "Dow" Renfrow, ca. 1910s. From Renfrow Hardware Store archives.

Eugene McDowell Renfrow, known colloquially as Dow, was born November 19, 1885, in Matthews. At this time, his father was transitioning from mining to farming and had recently purchased the 212-acre Fesperman farm near the town. Dow was educated at schools in Matthews and Wingate. He lived in Charlotte for a time, working in sales for Long-Tate Clothing Co. in 1907 and Southern Bell Telephone & Telegraph Co. in 1908, before moving back to Matthews. While he was involved with Renfrow & Sons, Dow primarily worked as a traveling salesman for American Agricultural Company. In 1925 he married Annie Lou McMillan, daughter of Dr. B. F. McMillan. They settled in a house on John Street and had one son, Franklin McMillan Renfrow born in 1933. After his father's death in

²⁹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1012, Page 215; Mecklenburg County Will Book Y, Page 567.

1935 and his brother transferring his interest in the Renfrow enterprises to him in 1940, Dow became owner of what was now known as E. M. Renfrow Company.³⁰



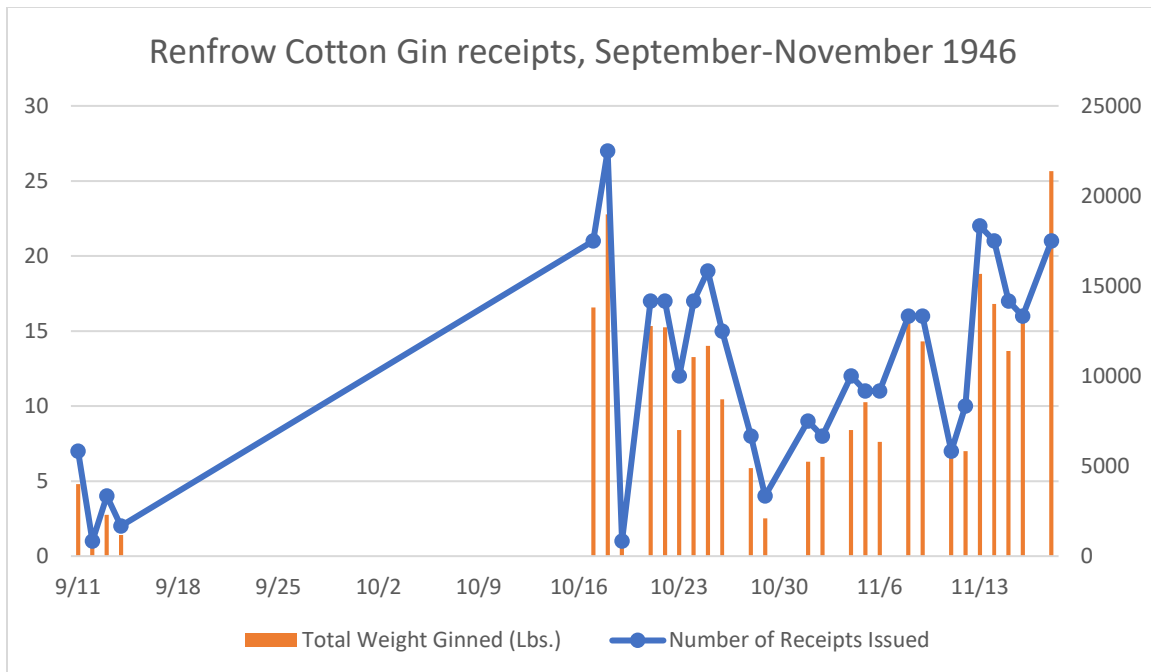
Figure 7 Neal Helms changes a light bulb in the cotton gin. From Renfrow Hardware Store archives.

Dow and his nephew Henry Massey operated the store and gin along with several other employees. Vern Preston “Pop” Helms worked for the Renfrows for over thirty years; his son Neal Reid Helms began helping out when he was a teenager in 1941. Neal eventually became the gin operator, though as he recounted in 1968, “I didn’t know a doggone thing about ginning cotton. All I did was try to keep the heat down.”³¹ But he caught on quickly and was brought on full-time by Dow and Henry. During the cotton harvest season in the fall, when wagons and trucks were lined up to have their cotton ginned and operations went well into the night, Neal lived in the small frame house on Cotton Gin Alley which had previously been used as a waiting area for the farmers. Gin receipt books in the Renfrow Hardware Store show that the Renfrow gin was kept busy. In early September 1946, only a few bales a day were processed. But by mid-October, dozens of bales were weighed, graded, and packed each day for the next month.³²

³⁰ “Matthews Loses Prominent Leader,” *Charlotte News*, December 5, 1963; Robeson County Marriage Book 1922-1930, Page 271.

³¹ Joe Flanders, “Around Mecklenburg: Two Matthews Tycoons Add a Restaurant,” *Charlotte News*, February 8, 1968.

³² E. M. Renfrow Cotton Gin Receipt Books, from Renfrow Hardware Store Archives.



The Renfrow gin receipts provide insight into the continuation of tenant farming, which was largely concentrated among Black tenants and white landowners, in Mecklenburg County after World War II. The Stitt family of Providence Township were longtime members of the community and were among the founders of Jonesville AME Zion Church in 1884. They were also tenant farmers, though they were likely permanent residents as they appeared in consecutive U. S. Censuses in the same area with the same neighbors. During the 1946 cotton season, several Stitt family members appear on cotton receipts at the Renfrow gin. Brothers Will Stitt (1901-1986) and Marcell Stitt (1911-1974) were tenants on the farm of Thomas M. Short, a large white landowner in Providence Township after whom Tom Short Road is named. The Stitts brothers took cotton to the Renfrow gin twice that season, in September and later in November. Each brother brought in one bale from their crop on September 11, 1946, receiving approximately \$200.00 each. Tom Short also brought in a bale that day, netting \$220.94 including the sale of seed. The Short farm had a second harvest two months later. Marcell ginned two bales on November 8 and another two bales on November 15, in which the nearly \$600.00 were split between himself and Tom Short. The same arrangement is reflected in the ginning receipt of Will on November 11, in which two bales of cotton paid out \$343.51, half to tenant and half to landlord.³³

Once the cotton had been processed, the farmers' accounts would be settled. Any money paid for the cotton, after what was owed to the store was deducted, was usually by check. Renfrow had a revolving credit account with the Bank of Matthews, in which the amount paid out to farmers was backed by the warehouse receipts for the cotton. The short-term

³³ E. M. Renfrow Cotton Gin Receipt Books, from Renfrow Hardware Store Archives.

loans were repayable after the cotton had been sold to mills. For instance, on October 15, 1946, Renfrow was to repay the bank \$5,100 plus 6% interest, with collateral being the value of 34 bales of cotton in a Union County warehouse, in four days. Another promissory note from that season, dated December 12, was for \$20,000, with receipts on 175 bales of cotton the collateral. The Renfrow gin sold the ginned cotton to area mills, such as Cannon Mills in Kannapolis, or to bonded warehouses in Charlotte or Monroe which then sold the cotton out-of-state. The seed was sold to Southern Cotton Oil Company or other entities for production into cooking oil or fertilizer.³⁴

However, times were changing as cotton farming shifted from small farms to larger mechanized farms owned by companies. The chief problem facing the Renfrow commercial enterprises, as well as the town of Matthews, was the shift away from cotton agriculture. Dow was elected mayor of Matthews in 1943. Though he only served one term, he advocated for a diversification of industry in the town—as the owner and operator of a mercantile establishment and cotton gin and a farmer himself, Dow knew all too well the decline in cotton farming would impact rural communities like Matthews.³⁵

Dow added to the Renfrow commercial properties with the purchase of the shaded lot adjacent to the ca. 1900 frame building in 1942.³⁶ He constructed a brick store on the property around 1950. Its basement, which opened onto the alley by the cotton gin, housed the machine and repair shop for the facility. The Trade Street storefront was rented to various small businesses, including the real estate office of J. Frank Sustare, law office of his brother Beverly T. Sustare, and Dean Insurance Agency. The frame building continued to house various small businesses and their families. Pop's Grill opened in the early 1960s, operated by Reecie Helms, wife of Vern who worked at the Renfrow store and gin. The family lived in the back residence with their eleven children. Reecie had previously managed Kurt's Grill on West John Street. When it closed, she purchased most of the kitchen equipment—except for the dishwasher, which would not fit in the Renfrow building, and so they used disposable plates.³⁷

Operation of the Renfrow store and gin also shifted to a new generation. Frank McMillan Renfrow, the only child of Dow and Annie, joined the business in 1957. He had just graduated from Davidson College with degrees in economics and business. As Frank later said, running the family store was part of his plan:

I planned to come back here after school. For one thing there is no pressure. I live a couple of blocks down the street, and I can walk to lunch if I want to. My cousin

³⁴ Bank of Matthews promissory notes, from Renfrow Hardware Store Archives.

³⁵ "Railroad Shaped, Named New Town," *Southeast News*, November 10, 1975.

³⁶ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1097, Page 4.

³⁷ Lester, 17.

Henry Massey (co-proprietor) and I have it worked out so that we can get away whenever we want to.³⁸

Eugene McDowell Renfrow died from lung cancer on December 4, 1963, at Charlotte Memorial Hospital. Frank took ownership of the Renfrow enterprises, which he operated with Henry until his retirement in 1970.³⁹

Shifting from Cotton to Gardening

Judging by local newspaper coverage, the 1960 growing season signaled the approaching end of cotton farming in Mecklenburg County. That year, there was about 3,500 acres of cotton planted in the county, 500 less than in 1959. In August a boll weevil infestation was destroying cotton crops. Said Cornelius farmer J. Wilson Alexander of the condition of his 70 acres of planted fields, "I'd say at least one-third of my crop is infested with boll weevil and boll worm. I can't remember it being this bad except back in 1951." An airplane had sprayed the previous day of August 18, but he said, "I'm having as much trouble with the boll worm as I am with the weevil. You can't get to the boll worm with poison." He had replanted his cotton crop three times already—"The weevil will leave a mature stand and hunt a young crop like mine. That's another thing that's making this season so tough." Combined with the repeated spraying of pesticides, he said, "that gets expensive."⁴⁰

Prosperous farmers like Alexander were able to diversify their financial interests to counter the shrinking cotton market. He opened a logging and sawmill operation and was a shareholder of The Farmers Company gin and farm supply store at Cornelius.

Comparatively, tenant farmers lacked the funds to better their situation in a similar manner, except to leave for jobs in Charlotte and other towns and cities. Will Stitt left cotton farming in the 1950s; he moved to Charlotte and took a job with the city water department.⁴¹ The children of tenant farmers found more opportunity through education at the Rosenwald schools at Matthews, Murkland, Jonesville, and Ben Salem. After graduation, many left for jobs in cities rather than remain in the hard life of tenant farming.

⁴² Said white owner-operator William Monroe "Buster" Boyd, a southern Mecklenburg County in 1957, "These youngsters just don't go for farm work. As soon as they reach manhood they're off to town for industry or public works. That leaves the farmers of today with nothing but kids and old people to do the work."⁴³

³⁸ "Renfrow's Store: Things of the Past," *Charlotte News*, December 4, 1970.

³⁹ Lester, 16.

⁴⁰ "Weevils Take Heavy Toll of Mecklenburg's Cotton," *Charlotte News*, August 19, 1960.

⁴¹ "Council Honors 5 City Employees for Service," *Charlotte Observer*, December 20, 1966.

⁴² A list of Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina may be found at https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/NC_Rosenwald_Schools.pdf.

⁴³ "Sharecropping Dying," *Charlotte Observer*, July 29, 1957.

The Renfrow gin operated into the 1960s when cotton ginning around the state was in decline. Between 1956 and 1958, the number of active gins in the state decreased from 373 to 312, a precipitous drop from 1930 when cotton gins in North Carolina numbered over 1,200. By 1962, a report by the North Carolina Extension Service recorded only five gins in Mecklenburg County—Renfrow in Matthews; Croft, 10 miles north of Charlotte on NC-115; The Farmers Company in Cornelius; J. M. Little gin on NC-27 at Midland; and the Miller Brothers gin at Pineville.⁴⁴



Figure 8 Renfrow Cotton Gin, ca. 1970s-1980s. From Renfrow Hardware Store archives.

In 1967 Frank Renfrow elected not to operate the gin. The Little gin burned in June 1966, leaving only four gins in Mecklenburg County. The gins at Cornelius and Matthews stood idle while operations continued at Pineville and Croft. Frank estimated that it was the first time in about 50 years that his gin had not operated. This would mark the end of the cotton economy in Matthews.⁴⁵ While the cotton gin was gone, the hardware store and its associated commercial properties continued to operate. David Blackley joined Frank as co-owner in the 1980s, and the Renfrow Hardware Store became known as “taking a trip back in time to the pre-Depression era.”⁴⁶ Sales shifted from livestock feed to fertilizer and birdseed for suburbanites.

⁴⁴ W. Glenn Tussey and M. Elton Thigpen, “Costs of Ginning Cotton in North Carolina,” North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State College, 1958), 1; N. C. Extension Service and Cotton Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, Active Cotton Gins – North Carolina and Virginia (1962), 26.

⁴⁵ Lester, 57; “Only 2 Local Cotton Gins to Operate,” *Charlotte News*, September 20, 1967.

⁴⁶ “In Renfrow’s General Store, You Step Back into the Past,” *Charlotte Observer*, July 15, 1971.



Figure 9 Aerial photograph of the Renfrow Commercial Properties taken in the mid-1980s. Visible are the Renfrow Hardware Store (center), ca. 1892 frame building (to its right), the empty lot which is now home to the Matthews Farmers Market, and ca. 1950 brick commercial building. Cotton Gin Alley is unpaved, and the cotton gin and seed warehouse still stand. Photo by Skyvisions Aerial Photography. Renfrow Hardware Store archives.

The cotton gin stood unused, and by the 1980s it was deemed a public hazard by Mecklenburg County. Historic preservation was a hot topic of conversation in Matthews, and there were discussions around having the gin preserved as a historic landmark. Frank and the Town of Matthews were seeking a solution to saving the gin and its machinery, which was rusted but intact. A group from Gaston County expressed interest in buying the gin equipment for exhibit in Gastonia. But later that year, any consideration of preserving the gin was ended by Hurricane Hugo, which irreparably damaged the structure and destroyed the seed warehouse.⁴⁷

The demolition of the Renfrow cotton gin left few remnants of the cash crop which once dominated Mecklenburg County. The Miller Brothers gin in Pineville had operated until around 1980 but was demolished not long after its shuttering. While the cotton gin at Croft had also closed in the mid-1960s, the ca. 1949 structure had been renovated into a hardware store by 1989; however, it was gone by 1998. The last remaining cotton gin in

⁴⁷ "A Piece of the Past," *Charlotte Observer*, July 6, 1988; "Suddenly, Old Gin Is 'In' as Rivals Vie for It," *Charlotte Observer*, January 8, 1989.

Mecklenburg County was located in Cornelius. While the structure was recommended for local landmark designation in 2015 by the Historic Landmarks Commission, no action was taken by the Town of Cornelius, and the cotton gin was demolished in 2020. Today, no cotton gins remain in Mecklenburg County.

The Renfrow Commercial Properties, however, continued to evolve. In 1992 the grassy lot between the frame building and brick storefront became home to the Matthews Farmers Market, continuing the close ties between Renfrow and agriculture. Frank Renfrow died in 2010, and David Blackley continues to operate the store today.

Chain of Title

Former Cotton Gin and Seed Warehouse Lot – 21501416 and 21501417

Ca. 1900 Frame Building – 21501303

Ca. 1950 Brick Building – 21501304

Grantor	Grantee	Date	Deed Book/Page	Notes
David P. Blackley, Individually and as Executor of the Estate of Franklin McMillan Renfrow, joined by his wife, Mary Elizabeth Blackley	PCM Holdings, LLC	11/29/2012	27880/560	21501416 (Tract 1), 21501417 (Tract 2), 21501304 (Tract 18), and 21501303 (Tract 19)
The Bank of Matthews	E. M. Renfrow	6/26/1942	1097/4	21501303
Henry Massey	E. M. Renfrow and wife Annie Lou Renfrow	6/12/1936	895/144	21501416 and 21501417
E. J. Heath and wife	Matthews Manufacturing Company	3/19/1907	222/179	21501416 and 21501417
E. J. Funderburk and wife ____ Funderburk and T. J. Renfrow and wife M. A. Renfrow	Matthews Manufacturing Company	10/29/1906	222/177	21501304, 21501416, and 21501417

Architectural Description

The Renfrow Commercial Properties are located in the heart of downtown Matthews near the intersection of Trade and John Streets. They are comprised of four parcels sited along North Trade Street and East John Street. The parcels on North Trade Street slope toward Cotton Gin Alley, with a steep drop from the sidewalk on the main street. The empty lot at Cotton Gin Alley and East John Street is largely flat with a gentle slope toward the rear of the property.

The downtown area of Matthews is well-preserved. A portion of the Renfrow Commercial Properties, namely the ca. 1900 frame building, are located within the Matthews Commercial Historic District, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. The adjacent Renfrow Hardware Store was designated a Mecklenburg County Historic Landmark in 1991.



*Renfrow Commercial Properties looking east.
Source: MeckScope*

There are three contributing structures on the Renfrow Commercial Properties—a ca. 1900 frame building with a residential addition at rear that was moved to its location after T. J. Renfrow established his store; a ca. 1950 brick commercial building; and a ca. 1920 frame house that served as the cotton gin operator's residence and is now utilized by the Matthews Community Farmers Market.



Looking north along North Trade Street from farmers market entrance toward ca. 1900 frame building and Renfrow Hardware Store.



Looking south along North Trade Street from farmers market entrance toward ca. 1950 commercial building.

Ca. 1900 Frame Building

Located immediately next door to the Renfrow Hardware Store is a ca. 1900 frame building that was the first structure incorporated into the Renfrow Commercial Properties. It was built likely just before 1900 and was moved from one side of the Renfrow store to its current location not long after Capt. Renfrow established his business. It first served as the town post office, and postmaster Jacob Flowe constructed a residence off its back. These two sections, the commercial and residential sections, are clearly delineated by their massing and position.



The frame building remains largely unchanged from the period of its construction. The structure is one story in height and is built of wood frame. It is sheathed in clapboard siding on all elevations except the front, which has vertical siding filled in between the fenestration. The roof is gabled with tin panels. Its front elevation faces North Trade Street and is one bay wide. The false front has clapboard siding with a small sign. There are two original large 4-over-4 wood sash windows flanking the half-light double doors with two-light transom above. The exterior wood at the fascia and below the windows is deteriorated.



The front entrance to the residential portion is a cross-gabled extension off the west elevation of the commercial section. It is one bay wide with a hip-roofed screened porch with plywood infill panels in poor condition. Also visible on the west elevation of the commercial section is a single 4-over-4 wood wash window. The brick piers which comprise the foundation of the building are visible at this elevation. The west elevation of the residential portion is one bay wide damaged 6-over-6 wood sash windows widely spaced.



The rear elevation of the residential portion is gabled extending from the cross-gabled portion of the residence. It is two bays wide, with the west bay having the shed-roofed porch with weatherboard siding below the screened upper section. A deteriorated two-panel wood door is approached by a cast concrete stoop. The second bay has a single 6-over-6 wood sash window with screen stapled over the opening. The gable end has eave returns.





The east elevation of the ca. 1900 frame building best shows the relationship of the original commercial section with the residential addition. It is three bays wide, with the rear two bays being the cross-gabled and gabled extension of the residential addition. The front bay has a 6-over-6 wood sash window at the rear of the elevation, and there is a wall-mount air conditioning unit high in the wall near the middle of the bay. The second bay is the cross-gabled portion of the residential addition, which features a single 6-over-6 wood sash window and eave returns. The rear bay has two 6-over-6 wood sash windows flanking metal panels, ostensibly a repair to the exterior sheathing.

Ca. 1920 Gin Operator's Residence

Located at the rear of what is now the Matthews Community Farmers Market lot is the gin operator's residence. Built ca. 1920, the one-story frame structure has two cross-gabled sections and built upon brick piers.



The front cross-gabled section faces toward North Trade Street and the farmers market. It is two bays wide. The first bay at left has a single solid door. The second bay serves as the primary entrance, with two 6-over-6 wood sash windows and vertical-panel shutters flanking a spaced pair of French doors with decorative screen doors. A sign on the roof above the doors identifies the building as the Community House for the farmers market.



The west elevation of the structure is one bay wide with a 6-over-6 wood sash window covered with a wood panel.



The rear elevation of the gin operator's residence faces Cotton Gin Alley and the former cotton lot. It is three bays wide. The two side-gabled portions of the structure are visible from this elevation. There are two shed-roofed storage rooms at the left side of this section, one with a single solid panel door with x-bracing, and a pair of wide solid panel doors with x-bracing. The brick pier foundation is clearly visible at this elevation. The right bay of the structure, which is sheathed in corrugated metal paneling, has a single 6-panel solid door with CMU stoop. A brick chimney is visible off-center in the peak of the roof in the right bay.



The east elevation of the gin operator's residence is two bays wide, one bay deep, and shows the second cross-gabled section of this structure. The side-gabled first bay is one bay wide and one bay deep and has corrugated metal siding. It has a centered 6-over-6 wood sash window with storm window over it in both bays. The second bay has an opening which formerly had a wood sash window, but now has a wood infill panel with wall-mount air conditioning unit in the top sash. This bay has board-and-batten siding.

Ca. 1950 Commercial Building

The ca. 1950 commercial building is constructed of CMU with brick at its front elevation. It is two stories in height, with the upper level accessible from North Trade Street and the lower level opening onto Cotton Gin Alley. It has a flat roof with low parapet stepped at side elevations and capped with standing-seam metal trim.



The front elevation of the ca. 1950 commercial building is one bay wide. It has a single storefront door set back with two flanking storefront windows on angled brick knee walls. A fabric awning extends the length of the storefront opening.



The east elevation provides the best view of building's relationship to the site topography, which steeply slopes from the North Trade Street streetscape to the farmers market lot. This elevation is three bays wide, each bay composed of a stepped portion of the parapet. The center bay has a solid panel door with metal awing above. A mural has been painted on the right bay.



The rear elevation is two stories in height and opens to Cotton Gin Alley. It is three bays wide, with three windows of differing size, pane configuration, and heading height evenly spaced in the upstairs portion. The ground level of this elevation has a pair of half-light two-panel doors at right and a filled-in window opening with metal awning above.



The west elevation shows how close the ca. 1950 commercial building is to the adjacent building, with a narrow alley between the two structures. There is a CMU chimney near the rear elevation.

Former Cotton Gin and Seed Warehouse Lot



Looking east from the corner of Cotton Gin Alley and East John Street. The gin was located perpendicular to the alley with the seed warehouse beyond.



Looking north from the south corner of the lot at East John Street. The gin operator's residence and farmers market lot is visible at left.



Looking west from the east corner of the lot.

Bibliography

Selected Newspaper Articles:

Charlotte News.

"Matthews Loses Prominent Leader," December 5, 1963.

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"Renfrow's Store: Things of the Past," December 4, 1970.

Charlotte Observer.

"A New Mining Company Goes to Work," July 13, 1880.

"A Piece of the Past," July 6, 1988.

"Suddenly, Old Gin Is 'In' as Rivals Vie for It," January 8, 1989.

Southeast News.

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Britton, Karen Gerhardt. *Bale O' Cotton: The Mechanical Art of Cotton Ginning*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1992.

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Information for HLC Survey Meeting

Renfrow's Commercial Properties

Mecklenburg County

Matthews, NC

January 26, 2022



2633 Laburnum Avenue, Charlotte, NC 28205 704.377.8036 tel. www.barbaralanearchitecture.com

Description

Mr. David Blackley, the Owner of Renfrow's Hardware Store is requesting an expansion to the current local Historic Landmark designation (HLC). The Store, located in the town of Matthews-Mecklenburg County, was started in 1900 by Thomas Jefferson Renfrow. The Property and Hardware Store is a Local Historic Landmark designated by HLC in 1991. In addition, the Property, Hardware Store and Wood Frame building are part of a National Register Historic District. Please see the attached site plan for details and the following information:

- Red Border- HLC Designated local landmark.
- Purple Border- National Register Historic District.
- Green Border- Historic property and buildings to be added to Renfrow's Hardware Store designation.

The properties and buildings to be added to the Hardware Store designation have been owned and operated as part of the Renfrow's Store since the turn of the 19th century. The requested designation expansion includes the following Contributing historic items:

- Shop/Commercial Building fronting Trade Street.
- Wood Frame Building fronting Trade Street.
- Original Cotton Gin Mill Operator Residence. The mill was located on the Vacant Property across the Cotton Gin Alley access drive.
- Vacant Property Across Cotton Gin Alley. The area is currently used by the Mathews Farmers' Market for its Saturday operations.

All of the above are part of the Renfrow Commercial Property and are currently used by the Store and have been since the Store's beginnings.

Mr. Blackley would like to add the items listed so that the Renfrow's Historic Commercial Property is kept intact and protected from future public and private development in the Town Center. He is also invested in the preservation of the Farmer's Market in this location. He understands how important the Farmers' Market is to the Community and Town Center.

Mr. Blackley has a large archive of historic materials that go back to the founding of the Store. He would like to have on public display in the future as part of the preservation of this important commercial property.





Trade Street View: Renfrow's Hardware and Adjacent Properties



Trade Street View: Farmers' Market



Trade Street View: Renfrow's Hardware and Greenhouse



Farmers' Market: Interior



Cotton Gin Alley View: Renfrow's Hardware and Adjacent Properties



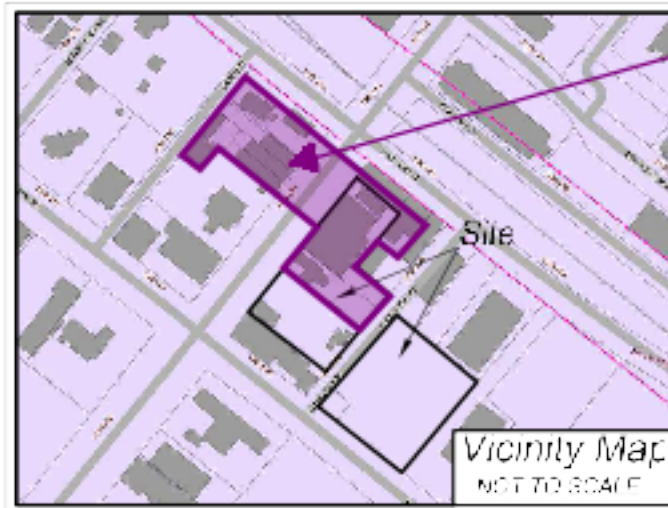
Cotton Gin Alley View: Vacant Property



Edge of South Property Line View: Vacant Property



East John Street View: Vacant Property



NATIONAL REGISTER
HISTORIC DISTRICT AREA

NATIONAL REGISTER
HISTORIC DISTRICT
EXTENDS NORTH TO
INCLUDE THE
PROPERTIES ACROSS
TRADE STREET- SEE
VICINITY MAP

HLC DESIGNATED
AREA

Shop/Commercial
Building-Built
@1950

Wood-Frame
Building-Built
@1900

Cotton Gin
Operator
Residence-Built
@1920

NATIONAL
REGISTER HISTORIC
DISTRICT

AREA AND BUILDINGS TO BE
DESIGNATED BY HLC

Vacant Property

RENFROW'S COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

January 26, 2022

Lane Architecture, Inc.

SURVEYORS CERTIFICATION



THE PCM HOLDINGS, LLC
PROPERTY
MATTHEWS, MECKLENBURG CO., N.C.
FOR THE RECORD OF
DAVID BLACKLEY

PHYSICAL SURVEY



C-1.0

MECKLENBURG COUNTY, North Carolina
POLARIS 3G PARCEL OWNERSHIP AND GIS SUMMARY

Date Printed: 09/19/2022

Identity		Ownership	
Parcel ID	GIS ID	Owner Name	Mailing Address
21501303	21501303	PCM HOLDINGS LLC	PO BOX 67 MATTHEWS NC 28106
Property Characteristics		Deed Reference(s) and Sale Price	
Legal desc	NA	Deed	Sale Date
Land Area	0.206 GIS Calc. Acres		Sale Price
Fire District	MATTHEWS	27880-560	12/06/2012
Special District	FIRE SERVICE E		
Account Type	NC CORP	Site Location	
Municipality	MATTHEWS	ETJ Area	Matthews
Property Use	COMMERCIAL	Charlotte Historic District	No
		Charlotte 6/30/2011 Annexation Area	No
Zoning		Census Tract #	58.34
Contact appropriate Planning Department or see Map.		Post Construction District	
Water Quality Buffer		Jurisdiction	Matthews
Parcel Inside Water Quality Buffer	No	District	Catawba
FEMA and Community Floodplain		Stream Watershed Districts	
FEMA Panel#	3710458000K	Stream Watershed Name	FOUR MILE
FEMA Panel Date	02/19/2014		
FEMA Flood Zone	OUT:VIEW FEMA FLOODPLAIN TO VERIFY		
Community Flood Zone	OUT:VIEW COMMUNITY FLOODPLAIN TO VERIFY		
Situation Addresses Tied to Parcel			
156 N TRADE ST MATTHEWS			



12/12/2014 from Mecklenburg County

MECKLENBURG COUNTY, North Carolina
POLARIS 3G PARCEL OWNERSHIP AND GIS SUMMARY

Date Printed: 09/19/2022

Identity	
Parcel ID	GIS ID
21501304	21501304
Property Characteristics	
Legal desc	NA
Land Area	0.406 GIS Calc. Acres
Fire District	MATTHEWS
Special District	FIRE SERVICE E
Account Type	NC CORP
Municipality	MATTHEWS
Property Use	COMMERCIAL
Zoning	
Contact appropriate Planning Department or see Map.	
Water Quality Buffer	
Parcel Inside Water Quality Buffer	No
FEMA and Community Floodplain	
FEMA Panel#	3710458000K
FEMA Panel Date	02/19/2014
FEMA Flood Zone	OUT:VIEW FEMA FLOODPLAIN TO VERIFY
Community Flood Zone	OUT:VIEW COMMUNITY FLOODPLAIN TO VERIFY
Sitius Addresses Tied to Parcel	
105 N TRADE ST MATTHEWS	
106 N TRADE ST MATTHEWS	

Ownership		
Owner Name	Mailing Address	
PCM HOLDINGS LLC	PO BOX 67 MATTHEWS NC 28106	
Deed Reference(s) and Sale Price		
Deed	Sale Date	Sale Price
27880-560	12/06/2012	
Site Location		
ETJ Area		Matthews
Charlotte Historic District		No
Charlotte 6/30/2011 Annexation Area		No
Census Tract #		58.34
Post Construction District		
Jurisdiction	Matthews	
District	Catawba	
Stream Watershed Districts		
Stream Watershed Name	FOUR MILE	



12/12/2014 from Mecklenburg County

MECKLENBURG COUNTY, North Carolina
POLARIS 3G PARCEL OWNERSHIP AND GIS SUMMARY

Date Printed: 09/19/2022

Identity		Ownership	
Parcel ID	GIS ID	Owner Name	Mailing Address
21501416	21501416	PCM HOLDINGS LLC	PO BOX 67 MATTHEWS NC 28106
Property Characteristics		Deed Reference(s) and Sale Price	
Legal desc	TR 2 U/M	Deed	Sale Date Sale Price
Land Area	0.921 GIS Calc. Acres	27880-560	12/06/2012
Fire District	MATTHEWS	00895-144	01/01/1975 \$0.00
Special District	FIRE SERVICE E		
Account Type	NC CORP	Site Location	
Municipality	MATTHEWS	ETJ Area	Matthews
Property Use	COMMERCIAL	Charlotte Historic District	No
Zoning		Charlotte 6/30/2011 Annexation Area	No
Contact appropriate Planning Department or see Map.		Census Tract #	58.34
Water Quality Buffer		Post Construction District	
Parcel Inside Water Quality Buffer	No	Jurisdiction	Matthews
FEMA and Community Floodplain		District	Catawba
FEMA Panel#	3710458000K	Stream Watershed Districts	
FEMA Panel Date	02/19/2014	Stream Watershed Name	FOUR MILE
FEMA Flood Zone	OUT:VIEW FEMA FLOODPLAIN TO VERIFY		
Community Flood Zone	OUT:VIEW COMMUNITY FLOODPLAIN TO VERIFY		
Situs Addresses Tied to Parcel			
125 E JOHN ST MATTHEWS			

MECKLENBURG COUNTY, North Carolina
POLARIS 3G PARCEL OWNERSHIP AND GIS SUMMARY

Date Printed: 09/19/2022

Identity		Ownership	
Parcel ID	GIS ID	Owner Name	Mailing Address
21501417	21501417	PCM HOLDINGS LLC	PO BOX 67 MATTHEWS NC 28106
Property Characteristics		Deed Reference(s) and Sale Price	
Legal desc	NA	Deed	Sale Date Sale Price
Land Area	0.038 GIS Calc. Acres	27880-560	12/06/2012
Fire District	MATTHEWS	04319-217	07/10/1980 \$2,500.00
Special District	FIRE SERVICE E		
Account Type	NC CORP		
Municipality	MATTHEWS		
Property Use	COMMERCIAL		
Zoning		Site Location	
Contact appropriate Planning Department or see Map.		ETJ Area	Matthews
		Charlotte Historic District	No
		Charlotte 6/30/2011 Annexation Area	No
		Census Tract #	58.34
Water Quality Buffer		Post Construction District	
Parcel Inside Water Quality Buffer	No	Jurisdiction	Matthews
		District	Catawba
FEMA and Community Floodplain		Stream Watershed Districts	
FEMA Panel#	3710458000K	Stream Watershed Name	FOUR MILE
FEMA Panel Date	02/19/2014		
FEMA Flood Zone	OUT:VIEW FEMA FLOODPLAIN TO VERIFY		
Community Flood Zone	OUT:VIEW COMMUNITY FLOODPLAIN TO VERIFY		
Situs Addresses Tied to Parcel			
E JOHN ST MATTHEWS			