

**NORTH CAROLINA CANDY COMPANY (URS survey #7B)
Northwest corner of South Railroad Avenue and East 3rd Avenue**

History

The North Carolina Candy Company erected a factory on this site between 1919, when the company was founded, and 1923, when it first appears on a Sanborn map (Tate 2008). According to a brief account in the *Lexington Dispatch* of March 23, 1949, which looked back 20 years, the company was sufficiently successful to survive a fire in 1928: “North Carolina Candy Company, burned out last December, reopens in its modern new factory built on the site of the old one. J.L. Young is president and associated with him are E.F. Ebelein and C.J. Owen.” Another account indicates that the “modern new factory” was not entirely new, referring to “repairing of the building,” rather than new construction (*Lexington Dispatch*, October 11, 1928). The company slightly enlarged the new factory’s footprint, extending it to the north onto the site of a former city barn. It also replaced a one-story wing at the west of the factory with a smaller single-story wing. The dimensions of the factory on the 1923 and 1929 Sanborn maps, coupled with marks on the south parapet wall, strongly suggest that the company retained most of the east, south, and west walls, but pushed out to the north and further expanded the factory up. Most notably, the new building had a steel truss roof containing a central clerestory window over the factory floor (Figure 56). The Sanborn map is sufficiently detailed to show the location of six round candy kettles at the west side of the factory. The 1948 updated Sanborn map depicts the building unchanged, but for the removal of its kettles. By that date it was used as a dairy products and cold storage warehouse. Not long after the drawing of that map, it was acquired by the Dixie Furniture Company. Lexington Home Brands utilized the building as a finishing plant. It has been vacant since no later than 2003, when the factory complex shut down (*Furniture Today*, August 24, 2003).

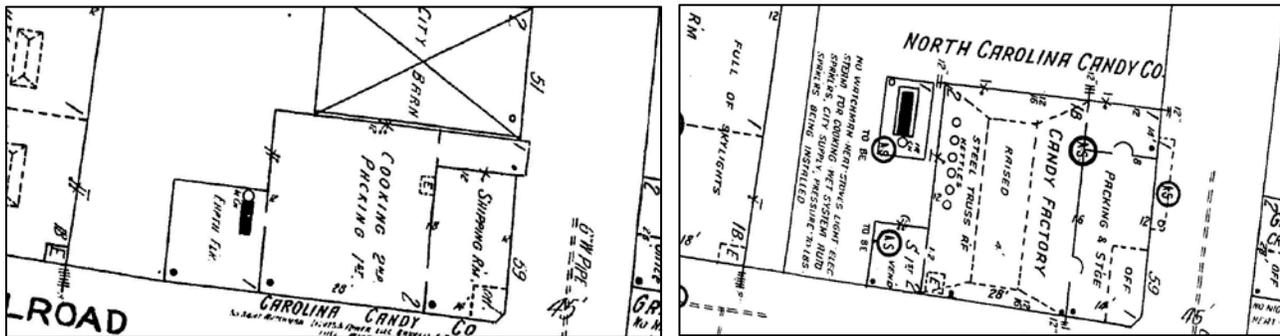


Figure 56: 1923 Sanborn map at left and 1929 map at right; newspaper accounts, partitions, and physical evidence indicate that the company retained much of the east, south, and west walls following the 1928 fire

The Carolina Candy Company, the name included on the 1923 Sanborn, and the North Carolina Candy Company, the name on the Sanborn map of 1929, were the same entity. The North Carolina Candy Company had been founded by Edward F. Ebelein, Sr. (1873-1945) and others in 1919 (Tate 2008; FindAGrave website). According to his granddaughter, Jeanne Leonard, Ebelein had learned how to make candy in Baltimore about 1890 and moved to Lexington to join two local investors in starting the company (*Charleston Post and Courier*, January 3, 2005). During the Great Depression, the company went bankrupt and Ebelein moved to Puerto Rico to help an ice cream company extend its reach into candy. When he returned to North Carolina, he re-acquired the company equipment and brands and started a new business called the Piedmont Candy Company. When Ebelein died in 1945, his sons, Edward, Jr. and Robert, continued to operate the factory with their mother, Louise Findling Ebelein (1887-1956). In 1987 they sold the business to Doug Reid, whose son, Chris, has been the company’s president since 1993. The business, which has remained in Lexington, continues to produce two longtime North Carolina Candy Company products, Red Bird brand soft peppermint puffs and sticks (Tate 2008; *Charleston Post and Courier*, January 3, 2005; FindAGrave website; Piedmont Candy Company website) (Figure 57).



Figure 57: Modern box of Red Bird soft peppermint sticks (source: Piedmont Candy Company website)

Jeanne Leonard, Leigh Foster, and Beth Dean—granddaughters of Edward Ebelein, Sr., and sisters—continue to sell Piedmont Candy Company peppermints and other sweets from The Candy Factory, a store at 15 North Main Street near the Davidson County courthouse, according to the Candy Factory website. The store occupies the front of the former Piedmont Candy Company factory building that succeeded the factory under assessment.

Next to nothing has been written on the history of candy manufacturing in North Carolina. A table compiled by the North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing in 1919-1920—contemporaneously with the establishment of the North Carolina Candy Company—identifies 28 companies that produced “Confections” in the state. These included businesses that manufactured confections, candy, peanut candy, and candy or confections plus ice cream. They were located in 19 cities: Asheboro, Asheville, Burlington, Charlotte, Concord, Durham, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Henderson, High Point, Lexington, Lumberton, Raleigh, Rocky Mount, Salisbury, Wilmington, Wilson, and Winston-Salem. Internet searches identified addresses for six of these including the North Carolina Candy Company and an additional one, the Piedmont Candy Kitchen in Winston-Salem (Table 5):

NORTH CAROLINA CANDY COMPANIES		
Name	Location	Building Status
Crescent Candy Company	416 N. Front St., Wilmington	No longer extant
Gate City Candy Company,	331 S. Elm St., Greensboro	No longer extant
Henderson Candy Kitchen	121 S. Garnett St., Henderson	Likely no longer extant
North Carolina Candy Company	59 E. 3rd Ave., Lexington	Extant
Peerless Candy Company	137 Main St., Winston-Salem	No longer extant
Piedmont Candy Kitchen	527-533 N. Trade St., Winston-Salem	Extant
A.D. Royster & Company	207 Fayetteville St., Raleigh	Extant

Table 5: Early twentieth-century North Carolina candy companies with identified addresses

Only two early buildings erected as candy factories in the state have been identified: the former North Carolina Candy Company building in Lexington and the former A.D. Royster & Company or Royster’s Candy Store in Raleigh. The Royster enterprise was started as a candy shop by a Union soldier named Wierner after the Civil War. Brothers A.D. and V.C. Royster bought the business at 207 Fayetteville Street in 1873 and replaced the store with the current two-story masonry building about 1910 (Figure 58, at left). It is a contributing building to the National Register-listed Fayetteville Street Historic District (Raleigh City Museum Staff 2008; de Miranda and Martin 2007). (The Piedmont Candy Company in Winston-Salem moved into a ca.1907 commercial block at 527-533 North Trade Street (a contributing building to the National Register-listed Downtown North Historic District) after 1917 (Phillips 2002).)

A photograph of the three-story, masonry Crescent Candy Company building in Wilmington survives, but the building does not (Figure 58, at right). A photograph depicts the interior of the E. Warren & Son Candy and Ice Cream Manufacturers, also in Wilmington, but where the building was located and whether it survives could not be determined (Figure 59).

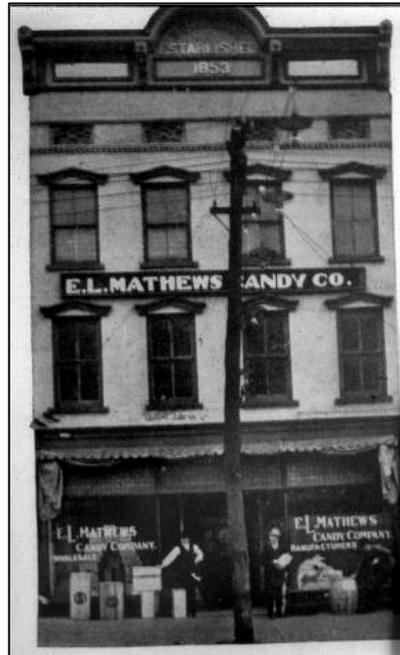


Figure 58: Former A.D. Royster & Company candy store, 207 Fayetteville Street, Raleigh, at left (source: Raleigh Historic Development Commission website); undated photograph of E.L. Mathews Candy Company building at 416 North Front Street, Wilmington, at right (source: New Hanover County Public Library Digital Archives)



Figure 59: Undated photograph of interior of E. Warren & Son Candy and Ice Cream Manufacturers, Wilmington (source: New Hanover County Public Library Digital Archives)

Description

The main body of the two-story brick North Carolina Candy Company factory building, erected in 1928 utilizing parts of earlier walls, remains largely intact (Figure 60-Figure 65). Its south-facing (Railroad Street) elevation retains its segmental-arched bays. While these have been bricked over at the first story, all but two at the second story remain open and continue to hold their original or early sash. The original, one-story, brick wing at the block's east is also in place. (Why its brick is a different shade than that of the main factory is not clear, but it is pictured on the 1928 Sanborn map as part of the new factory. Perhaps its walls had not survived the 1928 fire.) It has been altered more than the main block through the filling in or replacement of its bays, but it retains its angled corner entryway and a raised soldier course of bricks just beneath its flat roof. The uppermost portion of the main block, which is notable for its parapet front on Railroad Street and a long clerestory window, dates from between 1923 and 1928. (The brickwork of the original lower parapet roof, which apparently survived the fire, is still visible.) The windows and metal framework of the clerestory appear to be an intact feature dating from 1928. The one-story wing at the main block's west elevation also dates from 1928, although its bays have been filled or altered.

Recommendation and Boundaries

The former North Carolina Candy Company Factory building is a largely intact and rare example of an early twentieth-century candy factory in North Carolina. Its period of significance is its dates of construction, ca.1919-1928. Although many of its bays have been bricked in, it retains its brickwork, the arches of its bays, and a steel-truss-supported clerestory window that appears to retain its original glass. It therefore has sufficient integrity of all seven National Register elements of integrity to support National Register listing under Criterion A for its association with early twentieth-century candy manufacturing in Lexington, and perhaps North Carolina, and under Criterion C as an excellent example of industrial architecture during the time in Lexington. The resource's National Register boundaries are recommended as those of its historic footprint and the small amount of land to its west and north with which it was historically associated. This excludes the later buildings to the immediate west and north that were not associated with its historic significance. This boundary takes in less than one-acre of the building's current lot—Parcel Number 11078000F0009 / Pin ID 6725-02-75-9984—which covers 18 acres and is owned by the City of Lexington (Figure 66).

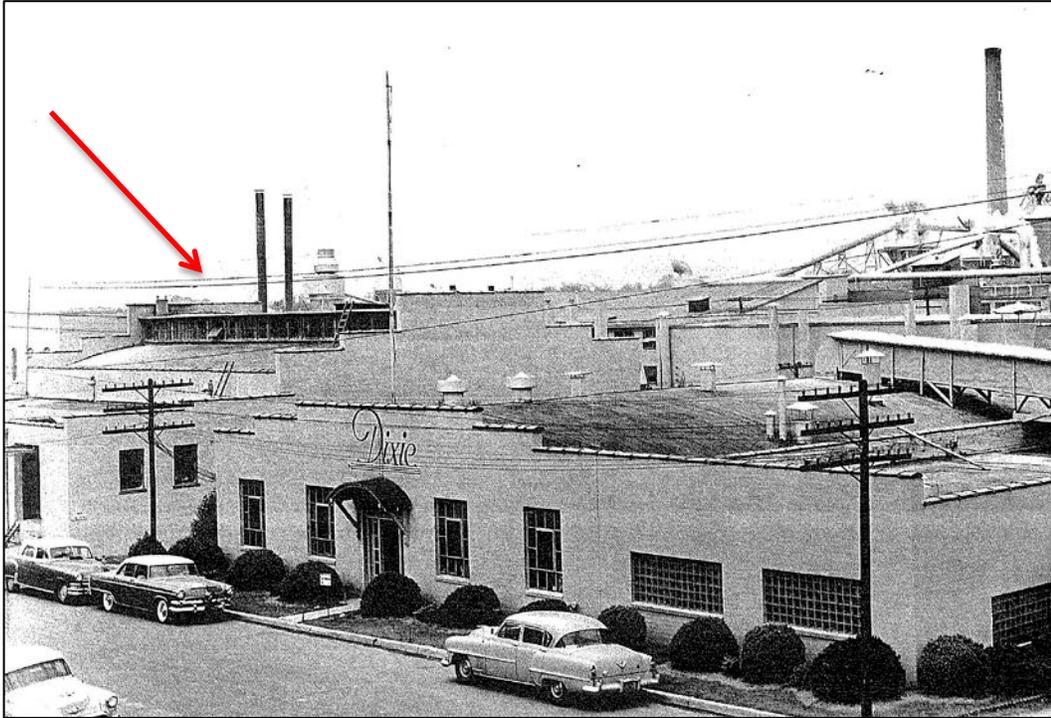


Figure 60: Clerestory window atop former North Carolina Candy Company building at center left (red arrow) with stacks of Elk/United Furniture Company immediately behind, ca. mid-1950s (source: Davidson County Historical Museum, image P 01.58.3a)



Figure 61: Modern view of Figure 60



Figure 62: South front and east side elevations of North Carolina Candy Company



Figure 63: South front elevation of North Carolina Candy Company



Figure 64: South front elevation of North Carolina Candy Company

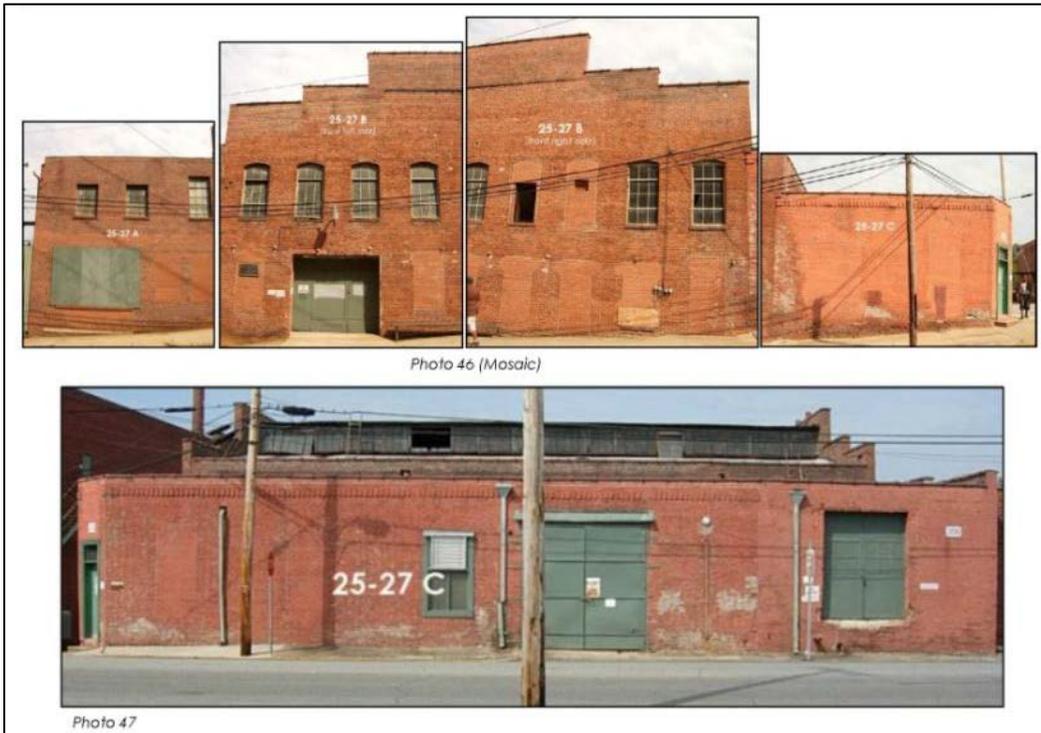


Figure 65: Composite image of south front elevation of North Carolina Candy Company at top and view of east side elevation at bottom (source: Lexington Redevelopment Commission 2010)



Figure 66: Proposed National Register boundaries of North Carolina Candy Company marked in blue (source: Davidson County, with lines added)