

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received MAR 11 1985
date entered APR 11 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Cullman "Downtown" Commercial Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Roughly between 4th Ave. SE; 5th St. SE; 1st Ave. SE; NA not for publication
2nd St. SE

city, town Cullman NA vicinity of Congressional District 4

state Alabama code 01 county Cullman code 043

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cullman County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Cullman state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

National Register of Historic Places - Stiefelmeyer's - 12-22-83
title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Cullman "Downtown" Historic District has historically been the city's commercial center. The district contains two complete city blocks and sections of other blocks for a total of approximately 11 acres. The district is located roughly between 4th Avenue SE & 5th Street SE.

There are 58 buildings within the district. 51 or 88% contribute to the character of the district; 7 or 12% do not contribute to the character of the district. Of the 58 buildings in the district, all are of commercial or business use with the exception of the First United Methodist Church (#3), the Old Federal Building (#19), and the Masonic Lodge (#15).

The district is divided into two sections by the 1910-1914 L & N Railroad cut. Prior to the cut, the railroad tracks ran at street level parallel to 1st Avenue SE and 1st Avenue SW with the L & N Depot located on 1st Avenue SE between 3rd Street SE and 4th Street SE. The tracks were lowered thirty feet below street level in order to halt the traffic stoppage through downtown, and the old L & N Depot was removed and replaced by a new depot several blocks from the downtown area.

After the cut was completed, several parks were placed along the railroad right-of-way and these were later taken over as parking lots. A section of one park with oak plantings is located facing 1st Avenue SE across from the German Bank Building (#51) and the Cullman Ice Factory (#52). Within this park area is located the Weiss Cottage (#54) reportedly Cullman's oldest surviving building (1873). It was removed from its original site and placed in the park during the Bi-Centennial of 1976 for use as a museum.

The majority of the early commercial buildings found within the district were of wooden construction. Stiefelmeyers (#22) with its Italianate influence is the last remaining wooden commercial building in the downtown district and is representative of the type buildings which formed the early commercial area.

The architecture found within the district reflects commercial styles in vogue during the late 19th century and early 20th century. These styles include Italianate as represented by Stiefelmeyers (#22) and Eastlake is reflected in the Cullman Ice Factory, the most outstanding and least altered example of Victorian brickwork found in the district.

The Peoples Drug Store Building (#28), the Fischer Building (#10), the Old Fire Department Building (#9) and the Deere Paint Store Building (#7) are examples of the early commercial style as found in Cullman. The brick rectilinearity, varigated abstract surface patterns worked out in brick and generally "streamlined" reflect the influence of the Chicago School of commercial design as it had made its way into Alabama in the early 20th century and had become increasingly vernacularized. Excellent early 20th century examples of Neo-Classicism are found in the German Bank Building (#51) and the Old Federal Building (#19). Another building of note is the Esther Opera House (#40). This building, altered very little since its construction around 1908, is the foremost example of the use of precast concrete block found in the district. Other buildings within the district reflect a strictly utilitarian interpretation in design and indicate no pretense to style.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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The Gothic-style First United Methodist Church (#3) was constructed by the most important builder in the commercial district, W. A. Schlosser. Built from 1923 thru 1924 of native sandstone, the building was, at the time of its construction, the largest and most expensive building project (between \$60,000 - \$75,000) in Cullman's history.

Except for Stiefelmeyers (#22) the buildings are constructed of brick, with one utilizing precast concrete block and one utilizing stone. The buildings which do not contribute to the character of the district are all of brick construction and are not 50 years of age, or buildings that have been extremely altered.

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CULLMAN "DOWNTOWN" COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT - CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES:

1. Griffin-Imbusch Building (218-220 3rd Ave. SE) 1902; two-story brick commercial building built for J. R. Griffin; 1st movie theatre in Cullman was upstairs; skating rink downstairs; first high school was upstairs 1908.
2. & 2A. J. R. Griffin Building (300-312 3rd St. SE) 1912; 2-story, brick, good example of early 20th c. Commercial Brick.
3. First United Methodist Church (324 3rd Ave. SE) 1924; built by W. A. Schlosser, stone, Gothic.
4. Fuller Brothers Ford Dealership Building (317-323 3rd Ave. SE) 1911; 2-story brick.
5. Fuller Brothers Ford Dealership Building (317-323 3rd Ave. SE) 1911; 1-story brick.
6. Commercial Building (313 3rd Ave. SE) c. 1925; 1-story brick, stepped parapet, gable roof, garage door on left.
7. Deere Paint Store Building (311-3rd Ave. SE) 1913; 2-story brick; variegated brick treatment using red brick and highlighting details with fire or yellow brick, string courses, pseudo-brick corbeling.
8. Old Automobile Garage and Repair Building (307 3rd Ave. SE) c. 1920; one-story, Brick Commercial building.
9. Old Fire Department Building (305 3rd Ave. SE) 1913; two-story; alternating red and yellow brick. Commercial Brick.
10. Fischer Building (301-309 3rd Ave. SE) 1911; two-story Commercial Brick; built for Oscar Fischer, undertakers upstairs, converted to drug store in 1922.
11. Thompson Furniture Building (214-216 3rd St. SE) c. 1911; two-story brick.
- 17.A-D. Parker Building (300,302,304,308,312 2nd Ave. SE) 1902; two-story brick, constructed as one building with four shops with different facades, built for Harry Parker.
- 18.A-B. Fuller Building (209-211 3rd St. SE) c. 1920; one-story Commercial Brick.
19. Old Federal Building (222 2nd St. SE) 1913-1914; two-story brick, good example of early 20th c., Neo-classicism.
20. Commercial Building (216 2nd St. SE) c. 1920; 2-story, Commercial Brick.

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21. Commercial Building (214 2nd St. SE) c. 1920; 2-story, Commercial Brick.
22. Stiefelmeyer's (208 1st Avenue SE) 1892; 2-story wood with brick rear wall, Italianate, National Register property.
23. Stiefelmeyer Addition (208 1st Ave. SE) 1915; 1-story Brick Commercial building.
24. Stiefelmeyer Addition (212 1st Ave. SE) 1922; 1-story Brick Commercial building.
25. Stiefelmeyer Addition (212-220 1st Ave. SE) 1922, 1-story Brick Commercial building.
26. "City Bakery" Building (222 1st Ave. SE) 1922, 2-story Brick Commercial, built for A. J. Veighl's "City Bakery" by C. A. Stiefelmeyer, upstairs doctors' offices.
27. Stiefelmeyer Building (224 1st Ave. SE) 1922, 2-story brick originally restaurant with residence upstairs.
28. Peoples Drug Store Building (328 1st Ave. SE) 1918, 2-story brick, drugstore 1st floor, 2nd floor - doctors' offices and infirmary, Commercial Brick.
29. Hawk Building (324 1st Ave. SE) c. 1931, 2-story Brick Commercial building.
30. Leigeber Building (318, 320 1st Ave. SE) 1920; 1-story Brick Commercial building, large awning covers facade.
31. Old Peoples Drug Store Building (314 1st Ave. SE) c. 1900; 2-story brick commercial building; 3-bay front, high brick parapet, stepped at sides and articulated at front by a series of paired dripped corbels. Segmentally arched windows with original 2/2 sashes.
32. Leigeber Building (306-312 1st Ave. SE) c. 1915; 2-story brick commercial building, built for John Leigeber, upper floor accentuated by pair of brick string courses beneath 2nd floor window openings, street level bays have glass brick transoms (c. 1940).
33. Hanlin Building Addition (304 1st Ave. SE) c. 1915; 1-story brick commercial building; parapet with drip corbelling, lower floor altered.
34. Hanlin Building Addition (302 1st Ave. SE) c. 1915; 1-story brick commercial building; paneled brick parapet.
35. Hanlin Building (300 1st Ave. SE) 1907; 2-story commercial building, 7-bay front, lower story altered, upper story segmentally arched windows, surmounted by continuous string courses. Brick parapet is articulated by brick corbelling.
37. Vick Shoe Shop Building (112-114 3rd St. SE) c. 1928; 1-story red brick commercial building.
38. New Thompson Bros. Furniture Building (116-122 3rd St. SE) 1921, 2-story brick commercial building,

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39. Commercial Building (307-309 2nd Ave. SE) 1919; 1-story Brick Commercial building, originally occupied by Coca-Cola Bottling Works.
40. Esther Opera House (311-313 2nd Ave. SE) 1908; originally contained concrete cistern, outstanding example of precast concrete block in commercial use, little altered.
41. Commercial Building (123 4th St. SE) c. 1905; 1-story.
42. Commercial Building (119-121 4th St. SE) c. 1905; cast iron store front, stamped metal cornice, 2-story Brick Commercial building.
43. Commercial Building (117 4th St. SE) c. 1905; 1-story brick.
44. Kreitlein Building (115 4th St. SE) 1936; 2-story brick. Good example of 1930 commercial architecture in Cullman area. Back wall, all remaining of 1904 building; three walls frame; torn down in 1936 and replaced by brick.
45. Tennessee Valley Bank Building (111 4th St. SE) c. 1930; 2-story brick, Colonial Revival.
46. Eddleman Building (200-204 4th St. SE) c. 1920; 1-story brick.
- 46A. Graf Building (208 4th St. SE) c. 1921; 1-story brick.
48. Old Chero-Cola Bottling Co. Building (400 block 2nd Ave. SE) c. 1920.
50. Old Restaurant Building (110 4th Ave. SE) c. 1910; 2-story brick.
51. German Bank Building (100-108 4th St. SE) c. 1901-1905; Neo-Renaissance turn-of-the-century Neo-classicism with belfrey, truncated entrance, ornamental post.
52. Cullman Ice Factory (414 1st Ave. SE) 1894; 2-story brick, outstanding Eastlake detail in lintels and least altered, late Victorian example, decorative brickwork, parapet cast metal cornice and patterned brickwork.
53. "Locker Plant" (400 1st Ave. SE) 1939; good example of late 1930's commercial architecture in area.
54. Weiss House (402 1st Ave. SE) 1873; purported to be oldest house in Cullman, moved to present location in 1976 for use as museum and park, built by L & N RR in 1873, bought by Dr. Aldo Weiss in 1875. Originally at 206 6th Ave. SE.

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CULLMAN "DOWNTOWN" COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT - NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES:

12. Heritage Hair Styles (206-200 3rd St. SE) c. 1940; 1-story brick commercial building.
13. Hair Cutters Building (209 4th St. SE) c. 1920; 1-story brick commercial building, extremely altered.
14. Fuller Building (324 2nd Ave. SE) c. 1940.
15. Cullman Masonic Lodge (320 2nd Ave. SE) 1948.
16. Parker Bank Building (314 2nd Ave. SE) 1884; 1-story brick commercial building, heavily altered.
36. St. John Attorney Building (108 3rd St. SE) 1940; 1-story brick law office.
- 41A. Commercial Building (315 2nd Ave. SE) 1930; 1-story commercial building, heavily altered.
47. Bargain Town Building (114 4th St. SE) c. 1950.
49. Commercial Building (112 4th St. SE) 1948.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1881-1939 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion C - Architecture

The Cullman "Downtown" Historic District is significant as an excellent representative of late 19th and early 20th century small town commercial architecture found in Alabama. The styles exhibited within the district include Italianate, Eastlake, Neo-Classicism and Commercial-Brick with some Chicago School influence and commercial buildings with no pretense at style. The architecture found within the district reflects the local interpretations of these architectural styles and serves to reflect the development of the downtown as a commercial area from the 1880's thru the 1930's.

Criterion A - Commerce and Transportation

The Cullman "Downtown" Commercial Historic District is significant through its association with the Louisville & Nashville Railroad in North Alabama. The district was developed on land sold to Col. John G. Cullman by the railroad for the purpose of creating a settlement which was to be the nucleus for a market needed by the company for its newly acquired South & North Alabama Rail-line. The town grew to become the commercial and agricultural center of the area. The L & N also played another role in the development of the commercial district through a 1915 Interstate Commerce Commission ruling concerning the high freight rates charged to Cullman commercial shippers. This ruling against the L & N in favor of the "Cullman Commercial Club" opened the way for the town to become a major shipping point for agricultural and manufactured goods for the area, which in turn created an increase in capital for investment and development in the downtown commercial district.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 11 acres

Quadrangle name Cullman, Ala.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	5	1	4	7	9	0	3	7	8	1	5	8	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

1	6	5	1	4	8	6	0	3	7	8	1	4	4	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

1	6	5	1	4	7	1	0	3	7	8	1	2	5	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

1	6	5	1	4	6	7	0	3	7	8	1	2	3	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

E

1	6	5	1	4	6	2	0	3	7	8	1	2	3	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

F

1	6	5	1	4	6	0	0	3	7	8	1	2	9	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

G

1	6	5	1	4	5	2	0	3	7	8	1	5	3	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

H

1	6	5	1	4	5	6	0	3	7	8	1	5	6	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Bailey

organization Alabama Historical Commission

date November 14, 1984

street & number 725 Monroe Street

telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery

state Alabama

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date February 27, 1985

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date

4-11-85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Cullman "Downtown" Commercial Historic District

The city of Cullman was founded in 1873 by Col. John Gottfried Cullman, a Bavarian immigrant, on land sold to him by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. The L & N having recently acquired the North and South Alabama Railroad which ran from Decatur, Alabama to Montgomery, recognized the need for settlements along the sparsely populated line as a way of creating new shipping markets. With this in mind, the company was more than willing to accept Col. Cullman's terms.

After moving the first families into the wilderness area that would soon be a bustling town and beginning the construction of dwellings, the next progression in growth was the construction of commercial buildings. Because of an abundant supply of wood on hand, these early commercial buildings were constructed of lumber. The use of this highly combustible material would cause the loss of many of these early commercial buildings to fire.

By the 1880s the town of Cullman was beginning to lose much of its frontier image. During the 1880s many of Cullman's oldest existing brick commercial structures were constructed on the west side of the L & N tracks. The Richter Hotel and Saloon (#61) was built across from the old L & N depot for William Richter in 1881, utilizing handmade brick, as a hotel and eating establishment for rail travelers. Also constructed during the 1880s was the Max Schmidt Bakery and Meat Market, a two-story brick building located next to the Richter Hotel.

The highly combustible material utilized in the construction of the early commercial buildings rendered them vulnerable to fire. Several of these early wooden commercial buildings were destroyed by fire, an example being the original C. A. Stiefelmeyer Storehouse building. This two-story, false front, frame building was destroyed in 1892. Mr. Stiefelmeyer replaced this building the same year with the present wood frame commercial building located on the corner of 2nd Street SE and 1st Avenue SE. The Stiefelmeyer building is the last surviving wooden commercial structure in downtown Cullman.

After the turn of the century, Cullman continued to replace many of its frame commercial buildings or constructed buildings on lots that had no previous development. Three major buildings of note were the Parker Building (17, A-D) the German Bank Building (#51) and the Esther Opera House (#40). The Parker Building was constructed in 1902 for Harry Parker by W. A. Schlosser as one building containing four shops each with its own facade. The German Bank Building was constructed in 1907 by Schlosser as the headquarters for the German Bank of Cullman. The Esther Opera House was constructed around 1907 and contained an ice skating rink on the first floor and opera house on the second. This building was shortly after converted to commercial purposes.

By 1910 while the town's commercial area was growing, it was experiencing a lack of growth in sidewalks and street paving. Several editorials concerning the lack of sidewalks in the commercial area appeared in the Cullman Democrat during the first half of 1910 with the most scathing coming on June 23, 1910.

"One of the best and most valuable ads a town can have is her paving. A man who has money to invest hesitates when he sees no attention paid to sidewalks. Cullman has made rapid strides in many respects..., but in the way of sidewalks she is making slow progress. In a portion of our town...the sidewalk

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Cullman "Downtown" Commercial Historic District

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is a primitive dirt affair with a luxuriant growth of weeds on either side and at one point which is slightly inclined, a lot of brickbats and cobble stones...have tumbled down in any old fashion until a regular pitfall has been formed and the pedestrian is fortunate to escape with unbroken bones. We have walked over this place for seven years, trudged along uncomplainingly but a recent tumble did much to convince us that the time where patience ceases to be a virtue...Let us wake up and do something. Good paving will add to the value of our property and what is of greater importance to the piety of our citizens."

Shortly after this appeared, the city of Cullman appropriated funds for new sections of sidewalks and street paving.

Also, on June 23, 1910 the Federal Government announced the appropriation of \$50,000 for a new Post Office and Federal Office Building for Cullman (#19). To the city of Cullman this signaled that the town's rapid growth had not gone unnoticed. According to the Cullman Democrat:

"Cullman may not be in the city class, but it is the biggest town in the state. The appropriation of \$50,000 by Congress to erect a public building here demonstrates to the outside world that Cullman is one of the leading towns in Alabama. Bessemer and Tuscaloosa are the smallest towns in the state now having Federal buildings... A town known throughout several states for its thrift, its white citizenship, honest energetic... three banks, forty factories and the largest and best mercantile establishments north of Birmingham, must continue its marvelous growth. The census of 1910 will show increases of over 100% in 10 years; this will be the best advertisement, and it will go all over the world."

1910 marks the beginning of a major phase of construction within the Cullman "downtown" district. By far the most important builder-contractor in Cullman during this phase was W. A. Schlosser. Schlosser was a general contractor/builder and was builder of the majority of brick bungalow-style dwellings and most of the downtown brick commercial buildings. By 1910 he had been a resident of Cullman for thirty-four years and would contribute to the growth of its commercial district for at least the next twenty years.

Fire continued to threaten many of the commercial buildings, brick or frame. On October 13, 1910 it was reported that "A Dangerous Blaze" had severely damaged the Hanlin Building (#35) destroying the second floor studio of B. B. Hower, and slightly damaging the Pressing and Cleaning shop of John Vick and the law offices of Emil Alrich and M. F. Parker. The report declared "If the fire had not been gotten under control... the Peoples Drug Store (#31)... and E. T. Thompson's Department Store would have been greatly endangered."

January 1912 witnessed a two-week period in which four fires destroyed two commercial buildings, including the original Allison Drug Store building and the county courthouse. In an ironic twist the Allison building (#56) which replaced its predecessor was also damaged by fire on May 10, 1923, which destroyed the woodwork, doors and store glass. The vulnerability of Cullman's commercial buildings to fire was not officially addressed until high insurance rates forced the city to pass a series of ordinances in October 1923 which provided for fire limits, restricted construction materials, equipment and sizes of buildings plus ordinances that provided for general fire safety including inspections of buildings by fire marshalls.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Cullman "Downtown" Commercial Historic District

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The progress of modern living was also evident during October 1912 as the Fuller Brothers moved into their new Ford automobile showroom (#4 & 5) on the corner of 4th St. SE and 3rd Ave. SE.

The rapid growth of the city and its commercial district was reported in an editorial in the October 10, 1912 Cullman Democrat:

"No, Cullman is not on a boom; it is simply a continuance of a steady and substantial growth which has marked the history of the little city for the past 10 years. Five stone and brick business houses... have been erected during the period amounting to many thousands of dollars in value and not the end in sight... 1912 may be perhaps considered the banner year of the decade for at a low estimate, contractors have received \$150,000 for structures erected within the city limits during the past 12 months ... (and) \$50,000 has been spent by the city for paving streets."

A major issue of the commercial owners of Cullman during this period was the discriminatory freight rates charged to Cullman shippers by the Louisville and Nashville. These rates, declared the shippers and businessmen, caused the loss of thousands of dollars per year that could be better invested into the commercial area. This dispute came to a climax in May 1915 as the Cullman Commercial Club filed a case against the L & N before the Interstate Commerce Commission. On May 20 the Cullman Democrat reported the outcome of the case as "The Greatest Victory Won By Cullman. We have just received the Interstate Commerce Commission's decision in the last case of the Cullman Commercial Club vs. the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, wherein the rates from the Ohio River crossing points were attacked, likewise the rates from New Orleans to Cullman. The relief prayed for was that Cullman should have the Birmingham rate south and the Decatur rate north. It means a savings of at least \$100,000 a year to Cullman and will double our fair city over the next five years... this has been the only drawback to Cullman's growth, the excessive and discriminatory freight rates; now this is a thing of the past, watch us grow."

As predicted in the report the growth of the commercial area began to accelerate to a rapid pace. Col. C. A. Stiefelmeyer, whose establishment was still located in its frame building on First Ave. SE, contracted W. A. Schlosser to begin work in May 1915 on a new brick addition (#23) and also planned for three more brick extensions onto this one.

During mid-1915 the Cullman Commercial Club initiated a "trade at home" campaign. This campaign was an effort to attract local citizens to "make Cullman better" by purchasing local goods at local establishments and to keep money in the town which could be invested in the downtown commercial area.

Also during mid-1915 the merchants became involved in a nationwide "clean up and paint" campaign. The focus of the campaign "involves the renovation of the interiors of buildings as well as yards, streets and alleys... useless and unsightly buildings torn down." The Cullman newspapers, for the period, reported periodically on the campaign's efforts made within the business and residential community.

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Cullman "Downtown" Commercial Historic District

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Prior to the closing of the public school year in May 1915, there was concern within the community over the safety of the Esther Opera House (#40) as the building was to be used for the public school's closing exercise. The building was inspected by W. A. Schlosser who found it to be "safe for a full house."

The United States' involvement in World War I served to limit construction within the district as the citizens of Cullman, the majority of which were German immigrants or of German decent, turned full attention to the war effort. The major construction project during the War was the building of the new home for the Peoples Drug Store (#28). Built by W. A. Schlosser and completed in December 1918, the building became the new home for the Peoples Drug Store in January 1919. The first floor was designed specifically as a drug store while the second floor was arranged as offices for doctors, dentists and attorneys.

In the months following the close of World War I, building activity again started at a more rapid pace than before. In June 1919 Carl Buford and Herschel Thompson began work on a "large modern business house" which would later be the home for Thompson Brothers Variety Store, and G. W. Ponder and W. O. Kelly remodeled the interior of their store and added a new store front with large plate glass display windows.

A 1919 article by Frank Willis Barnett, associate editor of the Birmingham Age-Herald, described the city as follows:

"Now I made a bad start in calling it a little city, for it covers more territory than nearly any town I know of... if it gets built up, big Birmingham will have to reach out and grab some more neighboring villages or she will be out distanced... I had heard all my life of a town being split open by the railroad, but never so well done as in the case of the Louisville and Nashville, which literally carves its way right through the center of the city... Some of the department stores are really marvels of well kept establishments, and some do credit to the Magic City, and you know we boast of our windows and window dressing... Keep your eye on our neighbor to the north; it's coming into the limelight."

The 1920s were a continuation of the growth of Cullman's commercial district. However, the central commercial district had to clean up from a tornado which hit the downtown area on the night of March 20, 1922. The storm heavily damaged the Cullman Ice Factory, crushing the front plate commercial glass windows, damaged the roof and ripped away the front porch. Other buildings within the area were also damaged, some heavily, by the storm.

In April 1922 C. A. Stiefelmeyer completed a new two-story brick building for A. J. Veighl's City Bakery (#26). The second floor was constructed especially as offices for Doctors J. C. Martin and R. B. Dodson and contained X-ray equipment, an operating room, an infirmary and special care facility. During the same month L. L. Eddleman's brick building (#46), under construction for use as a tin shop on the corner of Second Avenue SE and Fourth Street SE, was nearing completion. In July 1922 the building under construction for Mike Wagner and Otto Richter was also nearing completion. This building housed the Cullman Printing Company and was built with the necessities for a printing firm such as extra lighting and room for further expansion. Also in July C. A. Stiefelmeyer's planned brick extensions (#24 & #25) which adjoined his earlier brick extension on First Avenue SE were almost completed.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Cullman "Downtown" Commercial Historic District

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On August 9, 1923 the cornerstone for the First United Methodist Church, the largest and most expensive building project in Cullman's history up to that time, was laid on the location of the old church at Third Avenue SE and Fourth Street SE. The building was constructed by W. A. Schlosser, who had just returned to Cullman after working for two years in the Florence-Sheffield areas.

The 1930s saw limited expansion within the district. The most notable projects during the decade were the construction of the new Kreitlein Building and the expansion of the Cullman Ice Factory. The original Kreitlein Building was a commercial structure built by Frederick Kreitlein and his son, Leonard, in 1904. In 1936 this building was torn down, with the exception of a brick wall at the rear, and replaced with a brick building (#44). In 1939 the Cullman Ice Factory expanded its operation with the construction of a new "locker plant" (#53) located next door to the original Ice Factory Building.

There were several commercial buildings constructed in the district area during the 1940s and 1950s, the most notable located on the corner of Fourth Street SE and Second Avenue SE (#47).

During the 1960s and 70s several of the buildings received aluminum facades or awnings; however, these only covered the existing exteriors and did not alter the original buildings.

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25. "Allison Drug Store Badly Damaged by Fire This Morning" - Cullman Tribune May 10, 1923.
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