

## **History of the Wachovia/First Union Bank Site**

*By Anonymous Citizens of Mount Holly, ca. 1991*

The Charlotte Observer of August 5, 1991 had an article about earlier buildings on the First Union Bank site. If the article is to go into the city's Archives, some older citizens think there is other information which might be added.

The frame building is the first they can remember on the corner of the lot. Along its front on Main Street there was a porch reached by a short flight of steps. A good picture of this building was published in the Mt. Holly News in recent years. Mr. Joe Harris, whose barber shop was in the building, and several other men are in the picture. Mr. W. B. Rutledge, an early mayor of Mt. Holly, was a planter and an educator but not a lawyer. As a Justice of the Peace, he conducted a recorder's court in this building. He also helped local people with legal matters. Older citizens of Mt. Holly have deeds and other official documents which bear his signature. The two-story brick building which replaced the frame building was built in the early 1920's by Mr. N. B. Kendrick of Cherryville. Mr. Kendrick owned Kendrick Brick and Tile Co. here, which was operated by his sons.

Facing Main Street in the first floor of this building were a bank, the first Massey-Clark Hardware Store, and the J. D. Hobbs Clothing Store. An entry from East Central Avenue led to the lobby for the Juliette Hotel, which occupied all of the second floor. Mr. Hobbs was Mr. Kendrick's son-in-law. It is believed Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs were the first operators of the hotel. Mr. Kendrick named the hotel Juliette for his wife. Mr. O. M. Vernon next owned the building, later selling it to First Union.

The Central Hotel stood on the south side of the corner lot building. There is a good postal card picture of this hotel in the town's Archives room. We do not know for sure who built the hotel, but we are certain Mrs. C. L. Hutchison operated it for up to some time after 1900. Her son, Mr. C. E. Hutchison, founded and developed the American -Efird chain of textile mills. In an era when travel was by train and by horse-drawn vehicles, every small town needed a hotel to provide accommodations for travellers and salesmen and for local single men who were permanent guests.

Kendrick lived at the Central before his marriage. After automobiles came into wide use in the early 1920's, the Central Hotel was divided into apartments. These apartments were first residences for young couples like Mr. and Mrs. O. E. Massey and Mrs. and Mrs. Frank L. Rankin until they built their homes.

Mt. Holly had two other hotels. The Lentz family operated one on E. Charlotte Avenue across from the Seaboard and P. & N. Stations. That building has been torn down. The second floor of the Farrar building on N. Main Street was built for a hotel. We remember the large dining room which is now divided into office spaces. We don't know, but we don't think this hotel was operated after the Farrar interests bought the building.

None of us can remember the year the Central Hotel was torn down. It was probably the year Massey-Clark Co. built its own store on the site. The Observer article gave the year as 1923, but we feel sure that was instead the year Massey-Clark Co. opened in the Kendrick Building. We all remember the first Massey building, which burned, had the sign Massey-Clarke cross the front of the building. So Mr. H. C. Clark sold his interests to the Massey family after the building was erected. Maybe younger citizens can clarify these later events.

Since it was not mentioned in the Observer article, we have not dealt with the frame house which stood between the first corner building and the Central Hotel. Someone did recall that Mr. and Mrs. Ed Davenport lived there about 1910 or a few years later.