

South of Catawba

1 **Brick Row** was once the bustling center of Cornelius. Located between the railroad tracks and Main Street, just about where Catawba Avenue crosses the railroad tracks today, Brick Row was once home to Robinson's Jewelry and Watch & Clock Repair, a shoe repair shop, two barber shops, a dime store, Cornelius' first post office, a pool hall, George Sweet's cleaners, Cornelius Café, Ed Sherrill's watch repair and J.B. Reading Insurance. After falling into disrepair, brick row was burned to the ground in 1961.



The "Tree of Knowledge" was a large Oak tree that was the local gathering spot for sharing news. It was conveniently located between the 2 mills on the southwestern corner of Catawba Avenue @ Main Street.



3 **Cornelius Elementary School**—the school's origins can be traced back to 1885 when it was located near Mt. Zion United Methodist Church (right photo).

In 1917 the school moved to Catawba Avenue (below).



By the early 1920's a gym was built & by the early 1930s there was a total of 5 buildings. Only 1 of these 5 buildings remain today—the "Ag Building" (School St. near Willow St.).



A **cotton gin** (above right) was built just north of the Gem Yarn Mill and still stands today. It is set back off Catawba Avenue southeast of Potts Barber shop. Cotton farmers would take their cotton laden horse drawn wagons to the gin, often lining up along what is now Catawba Avenue awaiting their turn.

To the left of the gin was a **cotton warehouse** (above left), which no longer exists.

The Farmer's Company, a Ralston Purina dealership, ground feed there (which was sold out of the Ralston Purina plant in Charlotte) and sold seeds, tires and other supplies needed to run a farm. It had shareholders and paid dividends yearly.



21348 Catawba Avenue

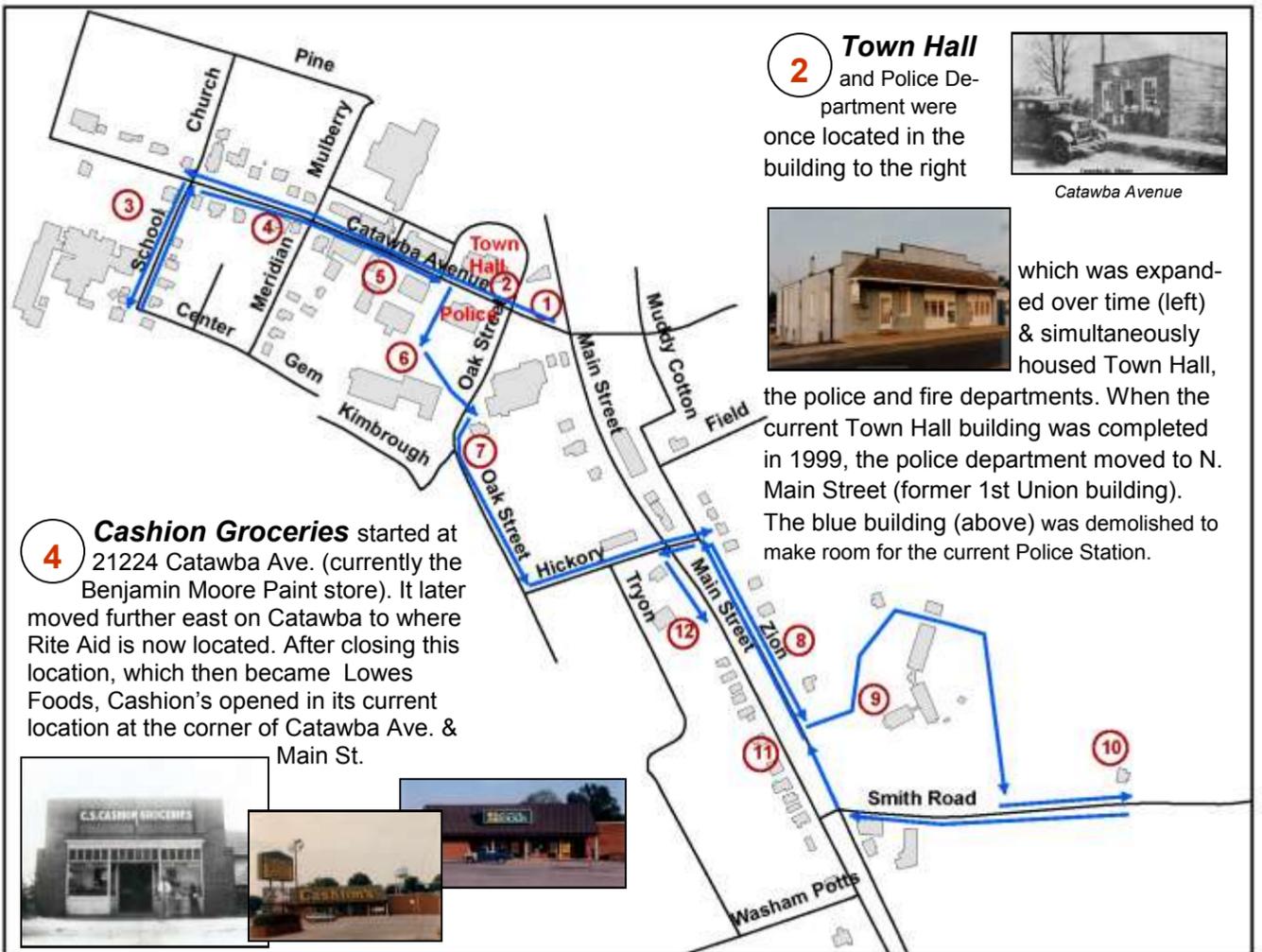
6 The **Gem Yarn Mill**, ca. 1905, is the only remaining mill in the Town of Cornelius. It was incorporated in 1907 and closed in 1962.

When it opened, the mill employed 45 people. During the peak years (1941—1946) the mill employed 150 people.

The Board of Directors included many well known members of the community: F.C. Sherrill, J.B. Cornelius, T.S. Williamson, P.A. Stough and R.J. Stough.



19725 Oak Street



4 **Cashion Groceries** started at 21224 Catawba Ave. (currently the Benjamin Moore Paint store). It later moved further east on Catawba to where Rite Aid is now located. After closing this location, which then became Lowes Foods, Cashion's opened in its current location at the corner of Catawba Ave. & Main St.



7 The **Stough-Long House**, ca. 1901, was once located on the front of the property facing S. Main Street and was owned by W.E. Long, (Mayor 1927-1934) owner of Long's Gas Station which was on the east side of Main Street.



Oak Street behind Rite Aid

8 R.J. Stough, a prominent Cornelius resident and co-owner of the Cornelius Cotton Mill and Bank of Cornelius, built this home in 1900.



19718 Zion

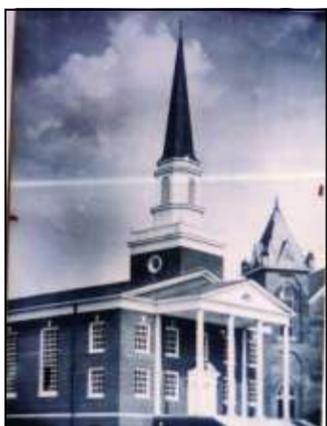
9 Organized in 1827, **Mt. Zion United Methodist Church** is one of the oldest churches in the Town of Cornelius.

In 1835, the congregation moved to its current location at the corner of Smith Road and Zion Street.



During the Civil War, the church grounds served as a Confederate muster site and later as the location of Confederate veterans reunions.

In 2009, the Historic Preservation Commission recognized Mt. Zion for its historical importance to the development of the Town of Cornelius.



2 **Town Hall** and Police Department were once located in the building to the right



Catawba Avenue



which was expanded over time (left) & simultaneously housed Town Hall, the police and fire departments. When the current Town Hall building was completed in 1999, the police department moved to N. Main Street (former 1st Union building). The blue building (above) was demolished to make room for the current Police Station.

10 The **Hoyle House**, a locally designated landmark, was built in 1918 for the family of Mt. Zion's pastor – Enoch Hoyle, who died while serving as pastor.



11511 Smith Road

11 The former **Mt. Zion United Methodist Church Parsonage** was the first local historic landmark designation in Cornelius.



19631 S. Main Street

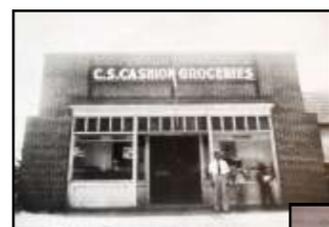
12 The expanded **Firestation Station #1** on S. Main Street incorporates the old fire department building, which serves as the station's training room, offices & kitchen and was completed in 2008. This photo shows the town's first fire truck in front of Twinboro Motors on S. Main Street (Wiseman Auto Sales today).



19829 South Main Street

OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST

Town of Cornelius South of Catawba Walking Tour



Historic Preservation Commission

What We Miss



The Cornelius Train Depot was located where the CATS computer parking lot is now on N. Main Street. The depot was demolished in 1955.

Places to Gather



The mills in town often built housing for their workers and charged rent based on the number of rooms in the house (the workers) used. The houses were usually 2 bedroom houses, with a kitchen area in the rear of the house. The houses were made of shingles that shared a community well for water. Many of these houses were located on Meridian Street and no longer exist.

Shops Along Zion Street



The Reading family started **New Method Laundry** in 1917. Back then, the laundry was picked up by young Winifred Reading and her father by horse and wagon.



For recreation, many residents of Cornelius saw movies at the **Star Theatre** (which was to the left of New Method Laundry in the red brick building). This was a segregated theater that allowed white people to enter through the front door & be seated on the 1st floor; others had to enter through an external stairway to be seated on the 2nd floor. The stairway has been removed but you can see where the door was once located on the 2nd floor (south side of bldg.). Built in 1935, various businesses have occupied the theater & building to the north through the years including an antique shop owned by the Mayhew family.

What the area looks like today:



Smithville



With the end of the Civil War, a community began to grow—Smithville. Due to the generosity and compassion of Jacob Smith, a farmer and owner of the Smith Store who was married to a descendent of the Potts family, black farmers and laborers were able to acquire land on the western side of town. This allowed many the opportunity to stay in Cornelius if they chose to do so.

The Smithville Community is home to a former Rosenwald School (pictured above). The school was built in the early 1920's under the Rosenwald School Program, a program established to improve education for African Americans in the south. Booker T. Washington conceived the idea of a "hands-on self-help" approach to education which he called "industrial education" and teamed up with Julius Rosenwald, CEO of Sears, Roebuck and Company to build rural schools for the black community.

Approximately 5,350 such schoolhouses were built across 15 southern states. North Carolina had the majority of the structures with more than 800 schools, 26 in Mecklenburg County alone. The large number of Rosenwald schools in Mecklenburg County is attributable to the County being a large cotton-growing region which remained strongly rural, despite the growth of the City of Charlotte at that time.

Lake Norman

The damming of the Catawba River created Lake Norman and was as influential as the cotton industry to the Town's development and growth. In 1963 Duke Power created Lake Norman which provided the area with recreational opportunities and a source of hydroelectric power. The formation of Lake Norman also provided the area with choice lakeside property.

Cornelius continues to combine a small town atmosphere with grand homes along the shoreline of Lake Norman. The citizens can enjoy an array of recreational activities while only being minutes from the urban center of Charlotte which allow citizens to maintain a high quality of life.

Location

Located just a few miles north of Charlotte, NC, Cornelius is accessible by Interstate 77, N.C. 115, Hwy. 21 and Hwy. 73/West Catawba Avenue.

From Interstate 77, take exit 28 eastbound to reach Historic Cornelius.

Town of Cornelius
21445 Catawba Avenue
P.O. Box 399
Cornelius, NC 28031
(704) 896-2461
<http://www.cornelius.org/>

Birth of Cornelius

The Town of Cornelius, the second youngest of Mecklenburg County's six incorporated towns, was founded in 1893 and incorporated in 1905. When incorporated, the town was a rural mill village with significant agricultural ties.

The history of the Town has been traced back to a dispute over cotton weighing. In the late 1800's, two thriving cotton firms located in Davidson disagreed on whether an official town cotton weigher should be appointed. After a heated election was held and legislation enacted, a town cotton weigher was hired and the firm which opposed the appointment decided to relocate much of its operations just south of the Davidson town limits.



Frequently after heavy rains, the road connecting Davidson and Cornelius would become impassible. The hill leading into Davidson would become so muddy that many cotton farmers found it safer and more convenient to conduct their business just south of Davidson. The success of the cotton purchasing business inspired the owners to construct a cotton mill where raw cotton could be converted into cloth. The owners of the cotton firm lacked the money to build a cotton mill and turned to Joseph B. Cornelius (1833-1914) for financial backing.

The Town was named 'Cornelius' in honor of J.B. Cornelius.