

Raleigh Department of City Planning
One Exchange Plaza
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Raleigh, NC 27602
919-516-2626

www.raleighnc.gov/planning

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(Processing Fee: \$266.00 - valid until June 30, 2011 - Checks payable to the City of Raleigh.)

RALEIGH HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION

This application initiates consideration of a property for designation as a Raleigh Historic Landmark by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission (RHDC) and the Raleigh City Council. It enables evaluation of the resource to determine if it qualifies for designation. The evaluation is made by the Research Committee of the RHDC, which makes its recommendation to the full commission which in turn makes its recommendation to the City Council. Procedures for administration by the RHDC are outlined in the Raleigh City Code, Section 10-1053.

Please type if possible. Use 8-1/2" x 11" paper for supporting documentation and if additional space is needed. All materials submitted become the property of the RHDC and cannot be returned. Return completed application to the RHDC office at One Exchange Plaza, Suite 300, Raleigh or mail to:

Raleigh Historic Districts Commission
PO Box 829 Century Station
Raleigh, NC 27602

1. Name of Property (if historic name is unknown, give current name or street address):

Historic Name: The Mecca
Current Name: The Mecca

2. Location:

Street Address: 13 East Martin Street
NC PIN No.: 1703771985000
(Can be obtained from <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>)

3. Legal Owner of Property (If more than one, list primary contact):

Name: Floye Dombalis
Address: 2617 Tatton Drive
City: Raleigh State: NC Zip: 27608
Telephone No: () () - () Fax No. () () - ()
E-Mail: _____

4. Applicant/Contact Person (If other than owner):

Name: Mary Ruffin Hanbury for RHDC
Address: PO Box 6049
City: Raleigh State: NC Zip: 27628
Telephone No: (919) (828)-(1905) Fax No. () () - ()
E-Mail: maryruffin@hanburypreservation.com

5. General Data/Site Information:

Date of Construction and major additions/alterations: c 1880, 1937

Number, type, and date of construction of outbuildings: N/A

Approximate lot size or acreage: .03

Architect, builder, carpenter, and/or mason: Unknown

Original Use: unknown

Present Use: restaurant

6. Classification:

A. Category (check all that apply):

Building(s) Structure Object Site

B. Ownership

Private Public Local State Federal

C. Number of contributing and non-contributing resources on the property:

	Contributing	Noncontributing
Buildings	1	
Structures		
Objects		

D. Previous field documentation (when and by whom): HPO survey 1976; ssn WA3877

E. National Register of Historic Places Status:

Check One:

Entered <input type="checkbox"/> Date:	Nominated <input type="checkbox"/>
Determined Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Date:	Determined Not Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Date:
Nomination Not Requested <input type="checkbox"/>	Removed <input type="checkbox"/> Date:
Significant changes in integrity since listing should be noted in section 10.B. below.	

7. Reason for Request: per RFP issued by City of Raleigh.

8. Is the property income producing? Yes No

9. Are any interior spaces being included for designation? Yes No

10. Supporting Documentation (Attach to application on separate sheets. Please type or print):

A. Photographs/Slides:

At least *two sets of current exterior archival-grade photographic prints* (minimum print size 5"x7") of all facades of the building and at least one photo of all other contributing and non-contributing resources. If interior spaces of the property are being considered for designation, please include two sets of photos for these features. Prints may be created by using archival-grade black and white film photography and processing or digital photography. The minimum standard for a digital print is 5x7 at a resolution of 300 pixels per inch (ppi). This translates into a pixel dimension of 1950 x 1350. Digital images must be printed with an acceptable ink and paper combination as determined by the National Park Service Go to: <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/photopolicy/index.htm>. All photographs must be labeled with the name of the structure, address and date the photograph was taken with pencil or archival-approved photo pen. In addition to prints, all digital images should be submitted on a CD-R in TIF format. Any additional exterior or interior views and views of other structures on the property (color, black and white, or slides) will be helpful.

B. Boundary Map:

Please include a map showing the location of the property. A sketch map is acceptable, but please note street names and number. Any other structures on the property should also be shown. Please include a "North" arrow. Map should be no larger than 11" x 17". A tax map with boundaries marked is preferred, which can be found at: <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>.

C. Architectural Significance:

Describe the property, including exterior architectural features, additions, remodelings, and alterations. Also describe significant outbuildings and landscape features. If the owner is including interior features in the nomination for the purpose of design review protection; describe them in detail and note their locations. Include a statement regarding the architectural significance of the property.

D. Historic Significance:

Note any significant events, people, and/or families associated with the property. Include all major owners. Note if the property has ever been recorded during a historic building survey by the City of Raleigh or by the NC State Historic Preservation Office. If so, who and when? (See application item 6.D.) Please include a bibliography of sources. Information regarding prior designations can be found by contacting the Survey and Planning Branch of the NC State Historic Preservation Office (NCSHPO) at 919-807-6570, 919-807-6573 or at: <http://www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us/spbranch.htm>.

E. Special Significance Summary:

Include a one to two paragraph summary of those elements of the property that are integral to its historical, prehistorical, architectural, archaeological, and/or cultural importance.

C. Architectural Significance

The Mecca Restaurant at 13 East Martin Street is architecturally significant as an extant, modest commercial building dating from the nineteenth century; it is also significant for its interior fittings in the dining areas from the 1930s (on the first floor) and the 1950s (on the second).

Property description

Exterior

The Mecca Restaurant at 13 East Martin Street is a two story, two bay, brick commercial building with a parapet roof. It is laid in common bond though some areas have been reworked with newer brick. In some places paint obscures the bond pattern though unifies the appearance of various sections and types of brick. The east and west sides of the building are common walls or immediately adjacent to neighboring buildings. The building has zero lot lines.

The facade at the south has a central, single leaf entrance flanked by fixed, plate glass display windows. Below the windows are sections of decorative square gray and burgundy tiles. A panel of gray tiles, outlined with burgundy, spans the area above the door and display windows and may have replaced an earlier glazed panel. Above this panel, and partially obscured by a fixed canvas awning, is a strip of molding that mediates between the tile panel and the structural brick of the façade. The awning is affixed to the brick piers to the east and west. The entrance bay is slightly canted. At the entrance are inlaid hexagonal tiles – a field of white with the word “MECCA” set in green hex tiles. Above the awning is what appears to be a wooden header and above that is a rowlock course of bricks. The second floor has two masonry openings, each with three course rowlock arches above and wooden sills. The openings are cased in with rectangular frames. The eastern frame contains paired, twelve-light wooden casement windows and the western a twenty-four light window. Above the windows are several corbelled courses above which is a brick panel with a smaller corbelled cornice atop it. Perpendicular to the façade and affixed to it between the windows and in the panel between the corbelled courses (and presumably at the roof though not visibly from the street level) is a neon sign. The word “MECCA” is spelled horizontally in a cross bar at the top and the word “RESTAURANT” vertically centered below it.

The north exterior wall of the Mecca has a single leaf entrance to the west and above it, on the second floor, two masonry openings each with wooden headers and sills. Each opening contains paired, twelve-light, wooden casement windows. The door on the first floor has above it a transom with an interior wooden shutter, hinged along the bottom. To the east of the door is a large metal ventilation fan, servicing the kitchen that is supported on a metal shelf with brackets. East of the windows is small square grate set in the brickwork. Roofing material extends from the roof and is fastened along the wall below with a bulge along the top that suggests corbelled brickwork beneath it. There appear to be single rowlock courses above the windows and the fan may be placed within an earlier masonry opening, now enclosed. The brick surrounding the door is contemporary.

Interior

Basement

The basement is an unfinished, undivided space with exposed brick walls and exposed wooden floor joists above. It serves as storage area and contains, among other, things a large freezer. It is accessed

by a single run set of open riser stairs accessed from a single leaf door leading into the kitchen on the first floor.

First Floor

The first floor is divided between the kitchen and the serving area. The kitchen to the north has a four inch square tile floor. It has an island projecting to the north with stainless steel shelving above. The east wall has limited shelving and a large refrigerator and dumbwaiter that serves the second floor. The north wall, east of the entrance, is dominated by a commercial grade stovetop and ovens. The west wall is outfitted with stainless steel shelving and storage. Also along this wall is a single leaf entrance to the basement. The south wall is divided by the projecting island with a door to the seating area at the west and a serving window to the east.

The dining area is roughly divided into two parts with a series of seven booths along the west wall with a single run stair to the second floor beyond and a counter with nine fixed stools along the east that terminates with an additional three booths north of the counter area. The floor is set in hexagonal tiles in a repeating pattern of green white and blue tiles. The booths, wall paneling and casework at the counter are all cherry and were custom built. Each booth has wooden benches flanking a table that extends from the exterior wall and is supported by a single, centered, tapered square leg with molded brackets. The benches have an undulating screen reminiscent of a wing backed chair with a curved arm rest that has an applied wooden spiral trim. The bench sides themselves are solid to a point about an inch from floor level where they divide and are supported by two feet. Between each adjacent bench rises a squared hat/coat rack with metal hooks on three sides. Each booth is set off by cherry wall paneling with reeded, banded pilasters, like fasces, rising to Corinthian capitals that support a tablet with a central medallion within a horizontal entablature of sorts that extends to within one to two feet of the ceiling level. Each booth has at its interior a central, etched, round headed mirror in a scalloped panel frame flanked by panels with incised scalloped patterns. The flanking panels each contain a single light sconce. Those on the east wall have a medallion with a bracketed member supporting a molded metal "candle" with a bulb and a shade. Those on the west wall have a less ornate medallion with a frosted glass spherical lantern with a flue above and a pendant drop below. All booths can seat four, save for the booth immediately north of the counter which seats three with an abbreviated bench on the south to accommodate passage to and from the counter area. North of the counter, in the dining area, are two freestanding dining tables with what may be vintage Thonet chairs.

The counter is made in two sections with a red Formica top to the south and stainless steel to the north. There are nine stools with diner chair style seats, floor mounted on metal posts with a swivel along the length of the counter. Behind the counter are four bays of wall-mounted casework with similar detailing to that at the booths. There are two glassed-in cabinets flanking a mirror, all with cherry reeded banded pilasters, like fasces, rising to Corinthian capitals supporting a tablet with urns within a horizontal entablature of sorts with applied swags that ends one to two feet below the ceiling level. Below the cases are more utilitarian drawers and cabinets. There is also casework at the south end of the counter at the cash register and a lower display case below and above dual wooden cabinets said to be a humidior with a wooden dispenser for cigars below. Behind the counter toward the north end is a metal vent hood, no longer in service. The wall section at the north of the dining area, dividing the dining area from the kitchen, has casework matching that in the rest of the dining area with open shelving above a serving window which has glass and chrome panels below.

A single run stair, rising north along the western wall at the terminus of the booths, leads to the second floor. The stair has turned balusters with a rail ending in a volute newel at the first floor to the interior and a metal pipe rail affixed to the western wall.

Second Floor

At the top of the stairs is a small area that provides access to restrooms at the northeast. South of the restrooms is a small service area and further south is an upstairs dining area. The entire floor is covered in 12 inch square linoleum tiles. The ceiling is a suspended acoustical tile ceiling. The area at the top of the stairs has a cased window opening with paired, twelve-light wooden casement windows, (its matching window is within a restroom). Wooden paneling covers the partition walls dividing the restrooms from the hall. The stairwell is set off by a turned balustrade with rail which terminates at the north wall of the dining area. The dining area is entered by a single leaf, two panel door. Upon entering the dining area, the service room with a five panel door is to the east. The service room is modestly appointed with some beadboard siding, shelving, the dumbwaiter from the kitchen below and a service window with a counter on its south wall to the dining area. The second floor dining area has an exposed brick wall to the west. Along this wall is continuous green leatherette upholstered bench with a continuous upholstered tufted seatback that extends to the south and then turns to the east slightly at the front window. Small tables and what may be Thonet chairs are aligned toward the bench. The east wall has a series of similarly upholstered booths with a large circular booth that partially obstructs the window at the south end. The circular booth is serviced by a pedestal table mounted to the floor; the others by Formica topped tables resting at the wall plane and supported by a single curved metal pipe leg along the interior of the room. Along the east wall above the booths are a series of glass panels shielding the wall surface. Between the windows at the south end of the dining room is a large chase for mechanical systems. The room has domed, flush mount ceiling light fixtures.

D. Historic Significance

While the exact construction date of the building at 13 East Martin is uncertain, there was a two story building with a parapet roof on the site as early as 1884 according to Sanborn maps. City directories from 1917 forward indicate a variety of uses for the building including restaurants, clothing stores, a shoe store and a produce market. While significant as an extant early commercial building in Raleigh's downtown, its chief significance derives from its current use as the Mecca Restaurant and association with the Dombalis family.

Nicholas Dombalis immigrated to the United States from Greece in 1917. Arriving in Norfolk, Virginia, he married Helen Matinos, also of Greek extraction. Their son John was born in Norfolk in 1924. The earliest listing in a Raleigh city directory for Nick and Helen Dombalis is in 1931 when they lived at 327 West Hargett Street. Also at this address were Nicholas Bougades and his wife Anna, Helen's sister. The following year, Nick and Helen move to 403 West Hargett. At the time, there were a number of Greek families living in this area.

The first entry in Raleigh City Directory for The Mecca Luncheonette is 1930 when it was at 201 Fayetteville Street and listed under Nicholas Bougades. By 1932 the listing for The Mecca used Nick Dombalis' name. In 1937 Dombalis purchased the building at 13 East Martin from the estate of railroad magnate A. B. Andrews. The deed references a trustee and the release of liens that may suggest that a previous corporate trustee/executor the Raleigh Savings Bank and Trust may have become insolvent or that the building had been foreclosed upon. In any event, Dombalis purchased the building for \$10,000 in January and the City Directory for that year lists The Mecca at 13 East Martin, where it has operated up to the present day.

Nick Dombalis retired in 1950, and his son John managed the restaurant, though Nick remained a fixture at The Mecca. John managed The Mecca for 52 years. His son Paul and widow Floye now run the establishment and Paul's son John has convinced his family to operate in the evenings catering to a younger bar crowd, capitalizing on the increasing number of young professionals living in the downtown area.

The experience of Nick Dombalis and his journey to America and subsequent success in the restaurant business is representative of a trend of Greek entrepreneurialism in the food services industry. Yorgos A. Kourvetaris in his article *Greek American Professionals And Entrepreneurs* in the *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* traces patterns of occupations through multigenerational studies of families that came to America from Greece. "Entrepreneurs are mostly associated with the first-generation Greek immigrants, both old and new. But Greeks have been engaged in entrepreneurial activities on a smaller scale for a long time. They are heavily represented in the service industries (restaurants). We find thousands of Greek restaurateurs not only in the United States but in Canada, Australia, and other parts of the world. Generally, in big cities and small towns across the United States, Greeks became owners of small businesses.... Greeks and food service became almost synonymous." (Kourvetaris p. 112) What is not as typical is that the restaurant has both flourished remained in the same family for a third and fourth generation.

The Mecca has grown to be a true Raleigh institution. As early as 1970, Charles Craven in his profile of John Dombalis as Tarheel of the Week, noted the special place the restaurant had achieved among legislators and the business community of the capital city "Over the years, the relatively small Mecca Restaurant has been a unique gathering place for politicians and a variety of business people.

Legislators have hatched laws in the warm booths and governors have maintained strong friendships with the colorful Dombalis family.” A 2010 article in the Raleigh News and Observer reaffirms The Mecca’s importance. Staff writer Josh Shaffer noted “It’s often said that politicians haven’t conquered Raleigh until they’re on a first-name basis at The Mecca...For a politician in a government town, The Mecca serves a double role as the perfect place to press flesh with a wide swath of voters, and as a flea market full of useful tidbits. This is no recent trend. Governors dating back to Clyde R. Hoey (1937-1941) used The Mecca to gauge the state’s pulse.” Former Governor Jim Hunt is quoted later in the article “You pick up little nuggets of information...That helps you have a clear picture of what’s happening, what kind of connections you need to pursue. You shake hands with people in the booths, keep your bipartisan relationships good and, by the way, have a great meal.”

E. Special Significance Summary

The Mecca at 13 East Martin Street rises to the level of special significance for three reasons—it is an extant nineteenth century commercial building in current use with strong integrity from the 1930s and 1950s. It represents the path of entrepreneurialism for many Greek immigrants in the early twentieth century through the ownership and operation of a restaurant, which in this case reaches to a fourth generation. It is a significant meeting place for the business and political leadership of the city of Raleigh and the state of North Carolina.