



Meeting Information

Location

City /County Meeting Room
905 West Avenue
Lenoir, NW 28645

Time

5:30 p.m.

Board Members

Lucy McCarl, Chairperson

Tim Scobie, Vice-Chair

Sharon Bryant

Richard Hedrick

James Bradshaw

Mac Martin

Jeff Church

Leah Hamilton

Larry Smith

Kaye Reynolds

Lenoir Planning Board

Agenda • March 25, 2019

Welcome!

We are glad you have joined us for tonight's meeting. The Lenoir Planning Board is an advisory board to City Council comprised of citizen members who voluntarily devote their time and talents to a variety of zoning and land development issues in the community. All Planning Board recommendations are subject to final action by City Council. We do not anticipate any recommendations to present to council from this meeting.

General Rules of Order

The Board is pleased to hear all non-repetitive comments. However, since a general time limit of five (5) minutes is allotted to the proponents/opponents of an issue, large groups are asked to name a spokesperson. If you wish to appear before the Board, please fill out an Appearance Request/Lobbyist Registration Form and give it to the Recording Secretary. When the Chairperson recognizes you, state your name and address and speak directly into the microphone. ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER govern the conduct of the meeting.

OPENING SESSION

- Determination of a Quorum
- Call to Order
- Consideration of February 25, 2019 Minutes

NEW BUSINESS

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

(NOTE: Staff will give a brief informational session on local landmarks prior to Board consideration of these items.)

1. Lenoir Cotton Mill-Blue Bell, Inc. Plant

Applicant: Heather Fearnbach

Owner: Blue Bell Lenoir LLC

Location: 1241 College Avenue

Initial consideration of Historic Landmark Report for Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. Plant.

Recommended Action: Forward the report to the State Historic Preservation Office for comment and review, and call for a public hearing to consider the landmark request on April 22, 2019.

2. Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station

Applicant: Heather Fearnbach

Owner: Lenoir Depot LLC

Location: 1407 College Avenue SW

Initial consideration of Historic Landmark Report for Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station.

Recommended Action: Forward the report to the State Historic Preservation Office for comment and review, and call for a public hearing to consider the landmark request on April 22, 2019.

3. J.M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory-Steele Cotton Mill-Hayes Cotton Mill

Applicant: Heather Fearnbach

Owner: James Sullivan Revocable Trust

Location: 1201 Steele Street

Initial consideration of Historic Landmark Report for J.M. Bernhardt
Planing Mill and Box Factory-Steele Cotton Mill-Hayes Cotton Mill.

Recommended Action: Forward the report to the State Historic Preservation Office for comment and review, and call for a public hearing to consider the landmark request on April 22, 2019.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Update on zoning permits issued
- Election of Officers

ADJOURNMENT

MINUTES
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
February 25, 2019
5:30 P.M.
905 WEST AVENUE

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Lucy McCarl, Jeff Church, Leah Hamilton, Mac Martin, Richard Hedrick, Kaye Reynolds, Tim Scobie, Larry Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT: James Bradshaw, Sharon Bryant

STAFF PRESENT:

Jenny Wheelock, Hannah Williams, Lauren McKinney

MINUTES:

Board Member Church moved approval of the meeting minutes of January 28, 2019 as written. Board Member Hamilton seconded the motion, which was voted upon and passed by unanimous vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. CUP #1-19 Lower Creek Drive Multi-Family

Applicant: MC Morgan & Associates, Inc

Owner: Silvio Martinat

Location: 316 Lower Creek Dr.

CUP#1-19 The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit for a 68-unit apartment complex in the R-9 and B-2 zoning districts.

Recommended Action: Staff recommends approval, subject to the conditions in the staff report, and call for public hearing at the March 19, 2019 City Council meeting.

Chairperson McCarl explained to the public in attendance the process of giving their testimony to the Board and the authority of the Planning Board and the Planning Department.

Planning Director, Jenny Wheelock gave an overview of the 68 unit multi-family development using a PowerPoint presentation and site maps which included the level of density, appearance of the site, and traffic and school impacts. Ms. Wheelock stated that the city has requested DOT do a study on congestion mitigation for US 321 and Highway 18. Staff is recommending the approval of the Conditional Use Permit with conditions in the staff report.

Mark Morgan, applicant and President of MC Morgan and Associates, Inc stated he has been in this business for 25 years with apartments being the main objective. Mr. Morgan stated he feels this community is in need of 1, 2, and 3 bedroom apartments. He explained about the two entrances to the site and the 50 ft. easement to the second entrance from Wilkesboro Boulevard.

Chairperson McCarl asked if this apartment complex will have a 24 hour site manager. Mr. Morgan replied an on-site manager will be available from 8:00am-5:00pm.

Board Member Leah Hamilton asked if this project was low income or market rate housing. Mr. Morgan replied he would take all funding available.

Reva Pennell, property owner of 220 Eastwood Park Drive SE stated she recently purchased property on Lower Creek Drive and is concerned about the traffic being dangerous backing out of the driveway.

Neena Tysinger, property owner of 311A Lower Creek Drive NE stated her concerned with the entrance of the site being directly across from her driveway and the resulting in heavy traffic.

Teresa Edmisten, property owner of 319 Lower Creek Drive NE stated she is concerned about the property values, heavy traffic, and feels this would be doubling the number of households on the street.

Jessie Price, property owner of 305 Lower Creek Drive NW stated her concerns about not having a manager present at night, the use of the clubhouse, and the added traffic.

Mark Morgan replied to Ms. Price's concern stating the clubhouse will only be open from 8:00am-5:00pm and the manager will only have the key.

Lida Martinat, representing her husband Syvio Martinat, the property owner of this project at 316 Lower Creek Drive NE, spoke of her need to sell this property due to her husband's healthcare. She believes this will not impact the traffic and this property needs to be sold. She also spoke of how her husband has does many things for others in this community and giving back and stated this property has been zoned for apartments for years.

Mac Martin asked the developer what his standards are for keeping the property up. Mark Morgan, the developer stated they take a portion of the rent and of the return to owner and place it in a reserve. They will also have a replacement and change program in place.

Chairperson Lucy McCarl closed the public session.

Board Member Scobie proposed a request for the City to amend the staff report and evaluate the Lower Creek Drive entrance to maximize safety. Board Member Hedrick seconded the motion, which was voted upon and passed unanimously.

Board Member Scobie made a motion approving the Conditional Use Permit with the staff recommendations as submitted and amended by the previous motion, and call for a Public Hearing for City Council to consider the request on March 19, 2019. Board Member Smith seconded the motion, which was voted upon and passed unanimously.

CONTINUED BUSINESS:

1. Proposed Zoning Map Amendments: B-4 Properties

Applicant: City of Lenoir

Owner: Multiple

Location: Multiple

R# 1-19: Staff is proposing a series of re-zonings to assign compatible zoning classifications to properties currently designated as B-4 on the Lenoir Zoning Map. These changes are related to ZOA#1-19, which proposes to eliminate the B-4 zoning district.

Recommended Action: Approval based on the submitted consistency statement, and call for a Public Hearing for City Council to consider the request on March 19, 2019.

A discussion occurred on the changes and recommendations for the B-4 properties from last meeting and all Board members agreed they were pleased with the amendments.

Guttorm Toverud, property owner at 108 Beall Street NW spoke and asked the difference between zoning B4 and B6. Planning Director, Jenny Wheelock explained to Mr. Toverud both are lower intensity businesses uses and explained what is and isn't allowed.

Rick Pierce representing Fairfield Chair stated they have no plans on selling the parking lot. They may repave but will go by the City landscaping requirements.

Board Member Hamilton made a motion approving the proposed elimination of the B-4 zoning district and related re-zoning of approximately 35 parcels as shown on provided maps, and call for a Public Hearing for City Council to consider the request on March 19, 2019. Board Member Church seconded the motion, which was voted upon and passed unanimously.

2. District and Use Standards Overhaul Ordinance

Applicant: City of Lenoir

Owner: N/A

Location: Citywide

ZOA#1-19: An ordinance to streamline and update uses and zoning district regulations.

Recommended Action: Approval and call for a Public Hearing for City Council to consider the request on March 19, 2019.

This item was presented by Planning Director, Jenny Wheelock using maps to show 17 projects and a density analysis to illustrate the changes in the ordinance. Using local examples, Ms. Wheelock illustrated the types of projects that could be built in each district, whether “by right” or as a conditional use.

Realtor Rita Abee represented owners for 221 Wilson Street. Ms. Abee stated this ordinance will give owners of B-6 more options.

Jenny Wheelock stated the Planning Department staff would look into creating a path for compliance for this property at a later date.

Board Member Church made a motion to approve the District and Use Standards Overhaul Ordinance, and call for a Public Hearing for City Council to consider the request on March 19, 2019. Board Member Scobie seconded the motion, which was voted upon and passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Historic Preservation Commission

Jenny Wheelock, Planning Director went over the rules of procedure and design review guidelines with the Board. Ms. Wheelock stated these need to be adopted before the Board can review cases.

Board Member Reynolds made a motion to adopt the rules of procedure and design review guidelines. Board Member Hamilton seconded the motion, which was voted upon and passed unanimously.

Board Member Richard Hedrick proposed the City Council look into changing the speed limit from 35 mph to 25 mph from Lower Creek Elementary School to Wilkesboro Boulevard.

Board Member Hedrick made a motion to City Council to evaluate to change the speed limit on Wilkesboro Boulevard to Lower Creek Elementary School from 35

mph to 25 mph. Board Member Martin seconded the motion, which was voted upon and passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

Having no other matters to bring before the Board, Chairperson McCarl adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Lucy McCarl
Chairperson

Jenny Wheelock
Planning Director

LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



**Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. Plant
1241 College Avenue
Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina**

**Prepared by:
Fearnbach History Services, Inc.
3334 Nottingham Road
Winston-Salem, NC 27104**

February 2019

Introduction

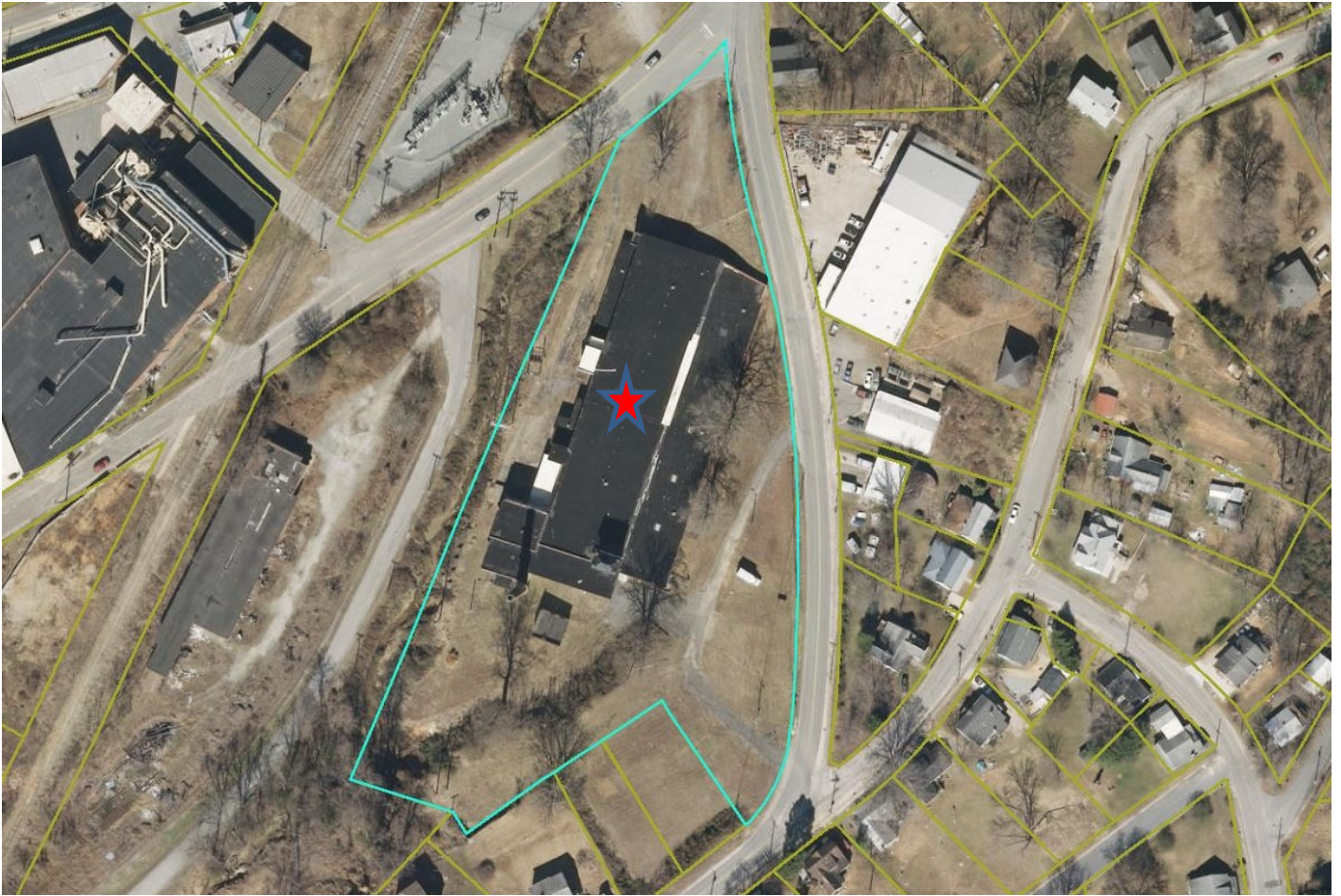
This report demonstrates that the Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. plant possesses the requisite integrity and industrial and architectural significance for local historic landmark designation. The concerns' contribution to the local economy as manufacturers, employers, consumers of goods and services, and taxpayers, were enormous. Lenoir Cotton Mill commenced production in January 1902 and doubled its capacity upon the completion of a September 1903 addition. The operation remained the largest of Caldwell County's seven textile manufacturers through the early 1920s. Lenoir Cotton Mill maintained an approximately two-hundred-person workforce through 1935, but sold the plant in January 1939. The mill served as furniture storage prior to being leased by Greensboro-headquartered work clothes manufacturer Blue Bell, Inc., as a satellite plant to fulfill contracts for military apparel and the retail market. The factory played an important role in Blue Bell, Inc.'s production. By October 1952, four hundred Lenoir employees had the ability to generate as many as 84,000 pairs of pants each week, primarily women's and girls' sportswear. The company's workforce was predominantly female, affording women the opportunity to hold a wide variety of positions in an industry other than textile manufacturing. Blue Bell, Inc. remained Caldwell County's only sizable apparel manufacturer as it utilized the Lenoir plant until 1983.

Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. is architecturally significant as the plant manifests typical early- to mid-twentieth-century industrial design. The 1902 plant and 1903 addition feature round wood column and heavy-timber post-and-beam interior structural systems. The load-bearing brick exterior walls are executed in six-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings. These elements, in conjunction with original interior features such as triple-thickness wood floors and kalamein doors, are representative of early-twentieth-century fire-resistant industrial architecture. The two-stage office tower and the eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood sash and eight-pane transoms are also important survivals. The late 1950s cutting room addition comprises a steel truss roof system and brick-veneered concrete-block exterior walls. The period of significance begins in 1902, with the original section's completion, and continues to 1967. The plant's industrial function and physical expansion after 1967 are not of exceptional significance.

The local historic landmark boundary encompasses 3.93-acre Caldwell County tax parcel number 2749559283.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Site	3
Setting	3
Description	5
Integrity Statement	14
Historical Background and Industrial Context	14
Industrial Architecture Context	21
National Register of Historic Places Status	26
Local Historic Landmark Eligibility Evaluation	26
Designation Parameters	28
Boundary Description and Justification	28
Historic Images	30
Sanborn Maps	34
Floor Plans	37



Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. indicated with a red star
Base 2014 aerial photo courtesy of <http://gis.caldwellcountync.org/maps/>

Site

The mill is rotated approximately fifteen degrees from true cardinal direction alignment. However, for the purposes of this document the following description is written as if it has true north-south orientation.

Setting

Located south of Lenoir’s commercial center, the plant that historically functioned as Lenoir Cotton Mill and Blue Bell, Inc. occupies an irregularly shaped 3.93-acre lot bounded by College Avenue to the north, Underdown Avenue to the east, small mill employee house parcels fronting Underdown Avenue to the south, and a 5.4-acre tract that contains a Carolina and North Western Railroad depot to the west. Underdown Avenue is at a higher elevation than College Avenue, resulting in terrain that slopes down to the west. A C-shaped asphalt-paved drive intersects Underdown Avenue at two points east and southeast of the mill and leads to an asphalt-paved parking area at the same lower elevation as the primary entrance at the mill’s southeast corner. East of the entrance drive, what is now a grass lawn was the upper parking lot.

A straight run of concrete steps with a central metal-pipe railing leads to the concrete sidewalk on the late 1950s addition’s south side. A brick retaining wall runs east-west on the sidewalk’s south edge. At the adjacent parking area’s southeast corner, a longer run of steps flanked by concrete retaining

walls and steel-pipe railings provides access to the upper parking lot. North of the mill, a straight run of steps with concrete retaining walls and steel-pipe railings ameliorates the change in grade. A concrete sidewalk extends to the central entrance on the 1903 addition's north elevation. A fire hydrant and water pressure valve are on the grass embankment bank south of the steps.

The asphalt-paved drive that provided access from College Avenue to the loading docks on the mill's west side has not been maintained and is overgrown with vegetation. A creek runs through the property west of the mill.



South elevation (above), October 26, 2018

Parking area and steps southeast of mill (below)

Photographs taken by Heather Fearnbach on August 15, 2016 unless otherwise noted





**Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. Plant, 1902-1903, 1927-1946, late 1950s
Southeast oblique**

Description

Exterior

The long, linear manufacturing plant's 1902 (south) section is approximately 77 feet wide by 216 feet long. The one-story-on-basement brick factory was expanded to the north in 1903 with a 136-foot-long addition. By 1913, the original mill housed the roving and carding operations, while the twisting, winding, and shipping departments occupied the north addition. The picker, engine, and boiler rooms are at the south end, separated from the manufacturing areas by brick firewalls. The engine and boiler rooms extend from the mill's southwest corner. Blue Bell, Inc. constructed the one-story, flat-roofed, late 1950s cutting room addition that spans the entire length of the 1902-1903 east elevation. The cutting department had previously been located in the 1902-1903 basement, along with the shipping and receiving departments and the cafeteria, which was beneath the offices that by then filled the picker room. A series of one- and two-story brick additions erected sometime between 1927 and 1946 and one-story concrete block, late 1950s additions project from the basement's west elevation.¹

The 1902-1903 building is characterized by a low-pitched-gable roof with rounded rafter ends that support deep eaves, five-to-one common-bond brick walls, tall segmental-arched window and door openings with two-header-course lintels, and slightly projecting wood window sills. Most eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood sash and eight-pane transoms are substantially intact, although covered with T-111 panels.

¹ Sanborn Map Company, "Lenoir, N. C.," Sheet 14, December 1927 and August 1950; "Blue Bell, Inc.," October 1946 and 1954-1955 photographs, Caldwell Heritage Museum, Lenoir; Lenoir News-Topic, *Pictorial Review of Lenoir and Caldwell County, North Carolina*, late 1950s, Caldwell Heritage Museum; Dot Land, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, April 17, 2017.



South elevation

The nine-bay-wide south elevation initially comprised eight windows and a door in the east bay that provided access into the picker room. However, the door has been removed and the opening partially infilled with brick to allow for a window's installation. A straight run of concrete steps with a metal-pipe railing leads to the basement entrance in the second bay from the south wall's west end. The picker room's east elevation is two bays deep.

At the picker room's northeast corner, a two-bay-wide and one-bay-deep brick office tower rises in two stages above the roof. Segmental-arched two-header-course lintels surmount the lower-stage windows. Corbelled sills and paired, round-arched, corbelled lintels frame the upper-stage openings. A corbelled cornice further ornaments the tower, which originally had a flat roof and a tall flat parapet with corbelled brick corners. The standing-seam-metal pyramidal hip roof that was added in the early twentieth century covers the parapet with the exception of the corners that pierce the roof.

A one-story on basement engine room and single-level boiler room extend from the mill's southwest corner. The boiler room (to the south) has a blind east elevation, a two-bay south elevation, and a three-bay west elevation. Interior access is possible from the engine room's basement as well as the exterior door on the boiler room's west elevation. A one-story shed-roofed room projects from the south elevation's center.

The engine room is four bays wide and four bays deep. The west elevation's basement fenestration now comprises (from north to south) a single-leaf entrance, a brick-enclosed window opening, and two windows covered with plywood. Segmental-arched two-header-course lintels cap the three original openings. The rectangular window opening in the second bay from the south end was a later addition. Three brick courses separate that opening from the wood lintel of the upper-level window opening above it. The upper-level window opening has been infilled with brick and is at a lower elevation than the other three eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood sash and eight-pane transoms that illuminate the main floor.



**South elevation; engine and boiler rooms at left (above)
West elevation, south section, looking southeast at engine room's north elevation (below)**



A concrete loading dock wraps around the engine room's northwest corner. A metal roll-up service door has been installed in the north elevation's west basement bay. The remaining three bays encompass a service door opening and flanking windows. However, a late 1950s shed addition extends north from the engine room's two east bays, resulting in that section of wall's treatment as an interior partition. The window and door were subsequently removed, leaving empty openings. A metal shed canopy spans the two west bays, sheltering the loading dock. Four eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood sash and eight-pane transoms pierce the north elevation's upper story.

Four two-story brick additions erected between 1927 and 1946 project from the west elevation. A one-bay-square elevator shaft rises at the building's northwest corner. A wide segmental-arched opening

pierces the upper section of the shaft's west elevation. In the thirteenth bay from the wall's north end, a one-and-one-half-story, one-bay-square stair tower rises on the north side of a two-story, three-bay-wide and two-bay-deep restroom tower. The stair tower's north elevation is blind. A large segmental-arched window opening fills much of the west elevation. A flat steel canopy shelters the concrete loading dock outside the door in the west bay of the restroom tower's south elevation. Eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood sash windows fill the remaining bays on the south elevation, the three openings on the west elevation's upper level, and the west elevation's south basement bay. The openings in the two north basement bays are covered with plywood. A square restroom tower projects from the seventh bay from the west wall's south end. High square windows light the interior.

One-story, shed-roofed, concrete-block, late 1950s additions span much of the distance between the towers. A six-bay-long addition extends north from the engine room's two east bays to the south tower. The L-shaped addition on the tower's north side has a two-bay-square south section and a single-bay-wide-and-deep north section. A twelve-bay-long addition extends north from the stair tower to the elevator shaft. Most of the fifteen-pane steel sash with six-pane lower hoppers that illuminated the additions are intact, but the majority have been covered with exterior T-111 panels.



West elevation, north section, looking southeast

The 1903 addition's north elevation originally comprised a central double-leaf door flanked by eight (four on each side) eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood sash with eight-pane transoms.² In the mid-twentieth century, Blue Bell, Inc. installed a no-longer-extant flat-roofed metal canopy above the door as well as raised signage advertising the company name, plant location, and logo. Five window openings remain; one in the westernmost bay and the others in the four east bays. Some of the original sash and transoms have been encapsulated between interior and exterior plywood and T-111 panels. The window opening in the second bay from the west end has been infilled with brick. An angled concrete sidewalk leads from the base of a straight run of concrete steps to the single-leaf steel door in the fifth bay from the east end. Metal roll-up service doors secure the two loading docks to the west, which replaced two original windows. The site's sloping grade allows enough clearance for truck beds to align with the docks. The loading area is now a grass lawn.

² "Blue Bell, Inc.," October 1946 photograph taken by Sparks Studio of Lenoir, Caldwell Heritage Museum.

The five-bay north elevation of the one-story, flat-roofed, late 1950s addition in the 1902-1903 mill's east side has a flat, terra-cotta-coping-capped parapet that is taller than the adjacent north elevation of the 1903 addition as well as the remainder of the late 1950s addition. Masons executed the brick veneer in five-to-one common bond. A flat metal canopy once surmounted the double-leaf wood door with square base panels and glazed upper sections in the west bay. The window openings in the east four bays gradually decrease in size from west to east due to the adjacent embankment. The full-height west window contains an eighteen-pane steel sash with a six-pane lower hopper. Plywood interior and exterior panels cover the shorter sash to the east.



North elevation

The late 1950s addition's east elevation primarily comprises eighteen-pane steel sash with six-pane lower hoppers. Near the wall's center, a double-leaf wood door with paired, vertical, rectangular base panels and glazed upper section allows interior access. A flat metal canopy shelters the double-leaf wood door with square base panels and glazed upper sections in the south elevation's west bay. The three central bays originally contained tall windows, but a double-leaf door has been installed in the center opening. A short, square, east opening allows access to the water pressure valve in the addition's southeast corner.

Interior

The mill's open plan and interior finishes are substantially intact. Painted brick walls; substantial wood columns, posts, and beams; wood roof decking boards; hardwood floors; and metal-clad kalamein doors characterize the 1902-1903 building. Long rows of columns and posts divide the manufacturing areas into three wide bays that accommodated sizable machinery. Round wood columns and heavy-timber beams support the floor and roof systems. Steel connecting plates secure the columns to the beams. The original floor system consists of three-inch-thick plank decking, a three-inch-thick diagonal-board middle layer, and a tongue-and-groove hardwood top layer.

The restrooms in the north tower that projects from the west elevation are simply finished with plaster walls, vinyl-composition-tile floors, painted-wood stall partition walls, and white porcelain fixtures. Fixtures and partitions have been eliminated from the south tower.

At the 1902 building's south end, a short narrow corridor leads to what was an entrance vestibule adjacent to the wood steps that provide access to the small office tower that rises in two stages above the roof. A short railing comprised of square balusters, a matching flat handrail, and a square newel post with a flat square cap secures the lower stair run. The corridor west of the stairs, which is labeled "dust house" on Sanborn maps, and the vestibule have plaster walls and ceilings and narrow hardwood floors. In the tower, brick walls, wood rafters, and wide-board roof decking have been painted. The wood frame of a dropped acoustical-tile ceiling remains. Such towers often housed factory whistles and/or water tanks that required elevation to gravity-feed sprinkler systems. In this case, a 10,000-gallon steel water tank remains in the tower's upper stage, which is only accessible from the roof.

Mid-twentieth-century frame partition walls, some sheathed with faux-wood paneling, divide the picker room into four offices, a break room, a conference room, a storage room, and restrooms. The dropped ceiling's wood frame is intact, but the acoustical tiles that were attached to it have been removed. Narrow hardwood floors are exposed in most areas, but have been covered with vinyl composition tile in one office and the conference room.

On the engine room's south elevation, a straight run of stairs enclosed with a vertical-board wall facilitates basement access. The open basement rooms are characterized by robust square heavy-timber posts and beams. In a few instances, steel columns or I-beams have replaced some of the heavy-timber posts. The poured-concrete floor provides a durable work surface. The boiler room, accessed from a door at the engine room's southwest corner, has a concrete floor and a high ceiling designed to accommodate sizable equipment. The wood rafters and wide-board roof decking are exposed.

Flat steel trusses span the distance between the 1902-1903 mill's east elevation and the one-story late 1950s east addition's concrete-block exterior wall. The rubber membrane roof rests on corrugated metal decking. Although vinyl composition tile sheathes a few floor sections, the poured concrete floor is exposed in the majority of the long open room. The one-story late 1950s additions on the west elevation also have open plans and concrete floors, but heavy-timber beams and wide-board roof decking support the low shed roofs. These areas are accessible from the basement, where windows have been removed in some 1902-1903 walls encapsulated by the additions. In other cases, portions of walls between these mill sections have been demolished to create wide openings.

Linear and pendant fluorescent lights, sprinkler system pipes, and a minimal amount of rigid metal ductwork and ventilation equipment hang from the ceilings throughout the plant. Surface-mounted metal conduit houses electrical wiring. Ceiling fans and window hoppers facilitated air circulation.



**1902-1903 mill, main floor, looking south (above), October 26, 2018
and basement, looking north (below)**





**1902 engine room, basement, looking southwest (above)
Late 1950s addition on the mill's east side, looking north (below), October 26, 2018**



Smokestack, 1902, Contributing Structure

A round, 100-foot-tall, freestanding smokestack stands next to the boiler room's southeast corner. A stepped foundation supports the tapered stack executed in six-to-one common bond. A segmental-arched, two-header-course lintel tops the clean-out door on the base's south side.

Opening room, erected between 1921 and 1927, Contributing Building

A one-story, brick, square opening room is southeast of the smokestack. The blind south and west

walls rise to flat parapets above the low shed roof, which slopes to the east. Two twenty-pane steel sash with eight-pane lower hoppers pierce the north elevation. A wide door opening on the east elevation allows interior access. The wood floor boards have been removed and the joists are in poor condition. The south elevation initially abutted a one-story frame cotton warehouse to the south. The party wall was not intended to be exposed to the elements and was stuccoed on the warehouse side. The stucco has been partially removed and the brick is spalling. By 1927, a frame platform connected the picker room at the mill's south end to the opening room and warehouse. A railroad spur line terminated west of the warehouse.



**South elevation, smokestack, and opening room (above)
Opening room, northeast oblique (below)**



Integrity Statement

Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. possesses good integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, design, materials, and workmanship. The building displays character-defining features of early- to mid-twentieth-century industrial architecture. The 1902 plant and 1903 addition retain round wood column and heavy-timber post-and-beam interior structural systems. The load-bearing brick exterior walls are executed in six-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings. These elements, in conjunction with triple-thickness wood floors and kalamein doors, are representative of early-twentieth-century fire-resistant industrial architecture. The two-stage office tower and eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood sash and eight-pane transoms are important survivals.

The late 1950s additions retain original structural systems and windows. The east cutting room addition comprises a flat steel truss roof system, brick-veneered concrete-block exterior walls, poured-concrete floors, and eighteen-pane steel sash with six-pane lower hoppers. The one-story, shed-roofed, concrete-block, late 1950s, basement-level additions on the west elevation have heavy-timber roof beams spanned by wide-board decking, poured-concrete floors, and fifteen-pane steel sash with six-pane lower hoppers. The late 1950s additions did not involve extensive modification to the 1902-1903 mill; only the creation of door openings and the removal of some window sash to facilitate interior connectivity. The upcoming rehabilitation will preserve character-defining architectural features in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's standards.

Historical Background and Industrial Context

North Carolina's early textile operations depended on waterpower, making locations along the Haw, Deep, and Catawba rivers, where slate formations create falls and rapids, ideal for manufacturing. German merchant Michael Schenck erected a sawmill, gristmill, and several ironworks in Lincoln County before hiring ironworkers Absolom Warwick and Michael Beam to construct North Carolina's first cotton mill in 1813. Only a few other entrepreneurs attempted textile production before the late 1820s, when the North Carolina legislature approved the incorporations of approximately fifteen new companies. Henry Humphreys was the first North Carolina textile mill owner to experiment with steam power, installing a system in 1828 at his Mt. Hecla Cotton Factory near Greensboro that inspired others to invest in the technology. However, it was not until the late 1830s that industrialists capitalized on the piedmont's available sites, transportation, and labor force to establish spinning mills.³

Samuel Finley Patterson, James Harper, and his nephew James Clarence Harper organized Caldwell County's first textile mill, Patterson Manufacturing Company. The 1848 plant, situated north of Lenoir on the Yadkin River, produced wool and cotton plaids and sheeting. Granite Falls Manufacturing Company, established by P. G. Moore around 1880 south of Hudson on Gun Powder Creek, was the county's earliest large-scale cotton-yarn-spinning enterprise. These and other textile mills initially relied on dams and waterwheels to power their equipment.⁴ However, steam and electric

³ Holland Thompson, *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill* (Norwood, Massachusetts: Norwood Press, 1906), 45-49; Brent D. Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1992), 4-10, 14. "Humphreys" is also spelled "Humphries" in various sources, but as period documents use "Humphreys," that spelling is repeated here.

⁴ James Harper's son Samuel Finley Harper sold his interest in the company to Elkin industrialist Thomas Gwyn in 1877. However, S. F. Harper and his son James Harper headed the successor concern, Gwynn-Harper Manufacturing Company, by the 1890s. *Lenoir Topic* (hereafter abbreviated *LT*), May 17, 1877, p. 3; Davison Publishing Company, *The Blue Book: Textile Directory: United States and Canada, 1894-5* (Davison Publishing Company, 1894), 94, 97; "Granite Falls Enterprises," *Charlotte Observer* (hereafter abbreviated *CO*), November 10, 1901, p. 3.

power availability encouraged factory movement to urban areas in close proximity to railroad lines and sizable potential employee pools.

Caldwell County residents celebrated the 1884 completion of the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad, a 110-mile freight and passenger line originating in South Carolina that stimulated commercial and industrial growth along its route. Lenoir entrepreneurs George Washington Finley Harper and Marshall M. Courtney were among those who benefited from the opportunity for more expeditious trade. G. W. F. Harper owned a general mercantile established by his father James C. Harper to serve Lenoir residents around 1845. On January 1, 1884, Harper partnered with his future son-in-law John Mathias Bernhardt and John's older brother George Lynn Bernhardt to create Harper and Bernhardt.⁵

Marshall M. Courtney and B. M. Tuttle opened a general store at Tuttle's Crossroads (now Hartland) in 1872 and expanded the operation to Lenoir in 1879. That year, the partners commissioned the construction of a no-longer-extant two-story brick commercial building that occupied a corner lot adjacent to the Central Hotel. Courtney purchased Tuttle's interest in the business in 1883 and partnered with his brother, R. G. Courtney, in the venture. Around 1888, they erected the warehouse that still stands behind the Courtney Buildings (facing Church Street) to store their inventory. Courtney Brothers sold a wide variety of merchandise, from farm equipment to medicine. On September 19, 1888, M. M. Courtney became the business's sole proprietor.⁶

The Bernhardts and Harpers were also heavily involved with railroad development. G. W. F. Harper was a principle stockholder and became in 1893 the president of the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad. He guided the concern through receivership to become the Carolina and North Western Railway in 1897. J. M. Bernhardt, while general production manager at Caldwell Land and Lumber Company (incorporated in 1892), encouraged the concern's owners to build the Caldwell and Northern Railway. He also assisted with the route's survey. Beginning in 1893, freight cars transported lumber from the small community of Collettsville, located ten miles southwest of Lenoir, to the larger municipality's industries. A passenger line extended northwest of Lenoir in phases to Wilson Creek, Mortimer, and finally to Edgemont by 1906. The Carolina and North Western Railway assumed control of the Caldwell and Northern Railway in 1905 and merged the concerns in 1910.⁷

J. M. Bernhardt's Lenoir planing mill and box factory, which commenced operating in 1896, was the town's largest manufacturing concern by 1900. In 1902, Lenoir boasted at least ten industrial enterprises, ranging from flour to lumber mills, furniture producers, and building supply companies,

⁵ Harper and Bernhardt reorganized in April 1886, adding G. W. F. Harper's son and the Bernhardts' Davidson classmate George Finley Harper as partners. "Good in a Change of Gauge," *CO*, February 11, 1902, p. 4; "John Matthias Bernhardt," alumnus file, Special Collections, E. H. Little Library, Davidson College, Charlotte, North Carolina.

⁶ *LT*, May 1879; *Lenoir News* (hereafter abbreviated *LN*), May 1, 1879, August 28, 1879, February 19, 1880, September 19, 1888; "Marshall M. Courtney," *Lenoir News-Topic* (hereafter abbreviated *LNT*), September 12, 1941, p. 4; "Courtney's Now Celebrating 75th Anniversary," *LNT*, May 23, 1947, p. 1; Hall E. Cobb, Jr., *A Brief Historical Sketch of Caldwell County & Lenoir* (Lenoir: n. p., 1922), 187; E. Carl Anderson, ed., *The Heritage of Caldwell County, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem, N. C.: Hunter Publishing Company, 1983), 143-144.

⁷ The Carolina and North Western Railway line later became a subsidiary of the Southern Railway. *LT*, June 14, 1893, p. 3; "Chester and Lenoir Railroad," *CO*, February 1, 1894, p. 2; *Statesville Record*, January 17, 1896, p. 2; "The Chester and Lenoir," *Hickory Press*, January 23, 1896, p. 2; Robert D. Walker Jr., "Can't and Never Will: Remembering the Carolina & North-Western," in Cary Franklin Poole, *A History of Railroading in Western North Carolina* (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1995), 58-61.

most of which were located along railroad lines. Downtown businesses prospered as the population increased in conjunction with industrial expansion.⁸

It was in this auspicious economic climate that Gastonia industrialist J. D. Moore approached M. M. Courtney with the idea of building Lenoir's first cotton mill. He offered to invest \$40,000 if local businessmen would match his contribution. Courtney and other community leaders met at the Bank of Lenoir on March 14, 1901, and pledged subscriptions of \$35,000 toward the endeavor. Moore and J. O. White, the superintendent of Modena Mill (Moore's Gastonia plant established in 1893), visited Lenoir the following week. They assisted with the selection of an optimal site southwest of downtown near the intersection of what is now College and Underdown Avenues and the primary Carolina and North Western Railroad line. By the end of the month, stockholders organized Lenoir Cotton Mill and elected M. M. Courtney to serve as the company's president, G. W. F. Harper its vice-president, and J. D. Moore its secretary and treasurer. These men, plus J. O. White, who would superintend the mill, and J. L. Nelson, comprised the board of directors.⁹

On April 22, 1901, Lenoir Cotton Mill paid G. F. Harper, his wife Frances C. Harper, and James H. Beall \$2,000 for three tracts encompassing approximately twenty acres. That month, the company awarded P. L. Baker and G. L. Bernhardt a contract to erect twelve employee residences and to supply windows, doors, and other wood elements for the mill. J. W. Harris and Artie Johnson finished painting the dwellings in early August, which was also when masons began laying the factory's brick walls. Journalists proclaimed that the cottages were neat, convenient, and should serve as models for those building other mill villages. The factory's metal roof was substantially complete in early December. In January 1902, contractors including Gastonia plumber A. H. Tuttle had almost finished work and equipment was being installed.¹⁰

As the endeavor prospered, the company announced in early December 1902 plans to erect an addition. At that time, mill workers utilized 3,360 spindles to spin Egyptian cotton yarn. J. W. Suddeth began expanding the building in March 1903 and completed work in September. The approximately \$70,000 136-foot-long addition doubled the plant's production capacity by allowing for a total of 6,720 spindles. A new engine powered the equipment. In 1904, 150 employees spun forty-to-seventy-gauge two and-three-ply yarn sold by the Philadelphia agency Charles J. Webb and Company. F. C. White and T. A. Wright, both from Gastonia, oversaw the mill's operation. Barney Barton Hayes managed the carding and spinning department from January 1902 until 1904, when he became the superintendent of the newly established Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company.¹¹

⁸ "Lenoir is a Very Busy Town," *CO*, November 10, 1901, p. 3; D. P. Waters, "Caldwell County, N. C.," *LT*, June 16, 1909, p. 2; North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1910), 60-61; "What is it Worth?," *Lenoir News* (hereafter abbreviated *LN*), November 21, 1916, p. 2; Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 140-141.

⁹ "A Cotton Mill Assured," *Weekly News* (hereafter abbreviated *WN*), March 15, 1901, p. 4; *WN*, March 22, 1901, p. 4; "Cotton Mill Meeting," *WN*, March 29, 1901, p. 4;

¹⁰ Caldwell County Deed Book 34, pp. 23-26; *WN*, August 2, 1901, p. 4, August 15, 1901, p. 2, December 6, 1901, p. 3, January 10, 1902, p. 3, October 31, 1902, p. 3; "Ideal Mill Cottages," *Gastonia Gazette*, August 15, 1901, p. 2; *LNT*, September 12, 1941, p. 1;

¹¹ *WN*, January 9, 1903, p. 3, March 13, 1903, p. 3; *Asheville Weekly Citizen*, December 9, 1902, p. 1; *Wilmington Messenger*, December 11, 1902, p. 6; "Lenoir Mill Doubling," *Manufacturers' Record*, September 24, 1903, p. 184; "Lenoir Cotton Mill Doubled," *Gastonia Gazette*, September 29, 1903, p. 2; *The Blue Book: Textile Directory, 1904-1905*, 136; Nell Greene and Lucy Wagner, eds. *Hudson Heritage 1905-2005* (n.p.: Wentworth Publishing Company, 2005), 407.

Lenoir Cotton Mill's administrative offices soon required more space. The company elected in March 1904 to utilize the Main Street building that formerly housed the Bank of Lenoir for this purpose. Staff occupied newly remodeled offices in June.¹²

In addition to Modena Mill and Lenoir Cotton Mill, J. D. Moore had invested in textile concerns including Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company and Dallas Cotton Mills in Gaston County, organized in 1890. Following Moore's August 1905 death, Lenoir Cotton Mill stockholders elected his son H. B. Moore to serve as the company's secretary and J. L. Nelson its treasurer. The business reported earnings of \$22,500 during the second half of 1905.¹³

Industrial ventures continued to proliferate as the decade progressed. In 1905, F. P., J. C., and William Moore commenced constructing a factory to house Moore Furniture Company, incorporated in 1906. Approximately one hundred employees fabricated case goods and tables that year. Other recently created manufacturing endeavors included Lenoir Brick and Tile, Prince Harness, Lenoir Clothing, J. H. Coffey Wagon, Lenoir Bottling, and Blue Ridge Bobbin and Handle companies. In 1908, J. M. Bernhardt, who had been supplying Moore Furniture Company with lumber, acquired majority interest in that firm and incorporated Bernhardt Manufacturing Company, which specialized in bedroom and dining room furniture.¹⁴

Investors organized two textile mills that began operating near Lenoir in 1907. Contractors erected Whitnel Cotton Mill in April 1907 on a site in Freeland, a community three miles south of the county seat. G. L. Bernhardt served as the concern's president, G. F. Harper its vice-president, and J. L. Nelson its secretary-treasurer. The company offices were in Lenoir. Globe resident F. P. Moore and Joe C. Moore, H. B. Moore, and M. G. Shearer, all of Lenoir, incorporated Moore Cotton Mill in July. J. O. White was the concern's general manager. The group acquired acreage north of Lenoir upon which a mill was soon built. Both enterprises produced cotton yarn. In 1910, Lenoir Cotton Mill remained Caldwell County's largest spinning plant, with 150 employees and 6,720 spindles. Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company housed 5,376 spindles, Whitnel Cotton Mill 5,000 spindles, and Moore Cotton Mill's 60 employees operated 3,400 spindles.¹⁵

J. L. Nelson and J. O. White continued to lead the consortium of Hudson, Lenoir, Moore, and Whitnel mills, sometimes referred to as the "Nelson group of mills." The offices consolidated in July 1920 and moved from Gastonia to Lenoir. Administrative staff included J. L. Nelson Jr., appointed that month to serve as the company's assistant treasurer and manager. M. M. Courtney remained Lenoir Cotton Mill's president until his July 1921 death, after which J. H. Beall headed the concern. In July 1922, engineers from Greenville, South Carolina-based Lockwood, Greene, and Company's Charlotte office planned the electrification of Hudson, Lenoir, Moore, and Whitnel mills as well as Steele Cotton Mill. Gastonia electricians Michael and Blevins installed the necessary wiring and equipment after Southern Power Company extended lines from Hickory.¹⁶

¹² WN, March 18, 1904, p. 3; June 24, 1904, p. 3.

¹³ *Gastonia Gazette*, April 8, 1902, p. 2; WN, March 25, 1904, p. 3, August 11, 1905, p. 3, August 18, 1905, p. 2, August 25, 1905, p. 3; January 19, 1906, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Carolina Watchman*, January 17, 1905, p. 3; "New Furniture Factory," WN, October 20, 1905, p. 3; D. Vance Price, "The Growth of Lenoir," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), March 16, 1906, p. 4; "New Charters Granted," CO, March 23, 1906, p. 1; "Several Charters Granted," CO, June 10, 1906, p. 1..

¹⁵ "Cotton Mill Officers Elected," CO, March 29, 1907, p. 2; "Cotton Mill Incorporated," *Western Sentinel* (Winston), July 25, 1907, p. 6; *The Blue Book: Textile Directory, 1910-1911*, 147.

¹⁶ "Branch Office Moved to Lenoir," LNT, July 8, 1920, p. 1; LNT, November 25, 1920, p. 27; "M. M. Courtney of Lenoir is Dead," *Winston-Salem Journal*, July 22, 1921, p. 1; "Many Contracts for Local Firm," *Charlotte News*, July 18, 1922, p.

Lenoir Cotton Mill's workforce grew slightly by 1925, when 175 employees operated 6,720 ring spindles under F. C. White's direction. The plant remained profitable, but was no longer the largest of the seven spinning concerns in Lenoir and the vicinity. Caldwell County Cotton Mill Company, incorporated in 1923, had installed 6,048 ring spindles, 3,024 twisting spindles, and 20 cards in its Hudson plant. Nelson Cotton Mill, organized in 1922, employed 140 men and women in its 6,000-spindle factory. At Steele Cotton Mill, located on College Avenue opposite Lenoir Cotton Mill, superintendent J. P. Chester managed 100 workers who spun cotton yarns on 6,020 ring spindles. Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company's 180 employees generated skeins yarns using 5,376 spindles, Whitnel Cotton Mill's 165 laborers generated peeler yarns on 6,276 spindles, and Moore Cotton Mill's 140 operatives ran 5,376 spindles.¹⁷

Lenoir Cotton Mill's administration, employee numbers, and equipment quantities remained constant between 1925 and 1930. Steele Cotton Mill was the only one of the six other local plants that experienced significant growth during this period. That company's 200 employees operated 10,056 ring spindles, 5,040 twisting spindles, and 40 cards in 1930.¹⁸

North Carolina textile mills diversified production during the early 1930s as the industry faced challenges nationwide. More efficient equipment and mechanization that transformed manufacturing operations led to mill employee layoffs. Job loss, decreased pay, and poor working conditions made unions more appealing. These factors set the stage for mill employees across the South to participate in the General Textile Strike of 1934, which closed down textile mills throughout the region. The extent of union organization in Lenoir mills is unknown. Many mill owners fired known union members and sympathizers. Union efforts were not in vain, however, as the Roosevelt administration's social and economic reform programs eventually resulted in the institution of a forty-hour work week and increased worker pay.¹⁹

Lenoir Cotton Mill navigated these challenges, operating through 1935 with the same number of employees and spindles, but closed within a few years. On January 2, 1939, the company conveyed the 4.81-acre mill tract to John M. Bernhardt's sons, George H. Bernhardt and John C. Bernhardt, who led Bernhardt Furniture Company, and Andrew S. Nelson, an automobile dealer and oil and gas distributor. Bernhardt Furniture Company initially used the property as storage.²⁰

Only three Lenoir textile manufacturers—O. P. Lutz Hosiery Mill, Moore Cotton Mill, and Steele Cotton Mill—reported production in 1939. However, as the economy began to recover, the Lenoir Board of Trade stated that the city's twelve furniture plants employed thousands of workers, and related manufacturers—makers of mirrors, veneers, and other products used by the furniture industry—provided more jobs. Lenoir had three hospitals, three residential suburbs, and a Donald Ross-designed golf course, and was said to be the state's fastest growing city since World War I. The

5; "Contract Awarded," *Winston-Salem Journal*, August 11, 1922, p. 9; "Nelson Group of Mills," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, 1923, pp. 198-199.

¹⁷ Davison Publishing Company, *Davison's Textile Blue Book: United States and Canada* (New York: Davison Publishing Company, 1925), 320.

¹⁸ *Davison's Textile Blue Book* (1930), 312.

¹⁹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones and Christopher B. Daly, *Like a Family: The Making of the Southern Cotton Mill World* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987), 202-208; Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns* (London and New York: Verso, 1995), 194-195.

²⁰ *Davison's Textile Blue Book* (1935), 251; News and Observer, *North Carolina Yearbook* (Raleigh: News and Observer, 1935), 110; *North Carolina Yearbook* (1939), 121; Caldwell County Deed Book 184, p. 19.

population numbered twelve thousand, triple that of 1920, and downtown included five hardware and furniture stores and four drug stores.²¹ By the beginning of the 1940s, thirty-three Lenoir industrial plants provided work for five thousand people and local manufacturers sold products in Canada and Mexico as well as in every state. An article in the September 1941 centennial edition of the *News-Topic* claimed that Lenoir was the nation's "second largest furniture manufacturing city." Caldwell County then contained twelve cotton mills and five hosiery mills, three of which were in Lenoir.²²

World War II brought new challenges and opportunities. Approximately 4,327 Caldwell County residents served in the military during the war, and those left behind were occupied with the effort in a variety of ways, from participating in bond drives to filling vacant positions at mills and factories that accelerated their production to meet the needs of servicemen and women. Industrial jobs rose by seventy-five percent in the South over the course of World War II, with traditionally underemployed groups such as women, African Americans, and the elderly receiving invaluable education, training, and experience. Output soared after May 1943, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Office of War Mobilization to coordinate a diverse array of support endeavors including manufacturing, scientific research, and agricultural production. Repurposing of vacant industrial complexes was commonly employed to facilitate expedited production.²³

Greensboro-headquartered work clothes manufacturer Blue Bell, Inc. benefited from this initiative. The company's administrators served on the War Production and War Labor boards and advised government agencies including the Office of Price Administration and the Quartermaster General's office. In order to fulfill contracts for military apparel and the retail market, Blue Bell, Inc. leased the former Lenoir Cotton Mill to serve as a satellite plant in 1943. At that time, the company generated approximately thirty-six million garments annually at fourteen plants in Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Virginia. Blue Bell, Inc. shifted production quotas during the war so that approximately sixty percent of its output at seven locations was clothing for the armed forces. Military commissions included white twill jackets and denim and white trousers for the U. S. Navy; and jungle suits, one-piece suits, denim pants and coats, olive-drab herringbone-patterned jackets and trousers, and regulation khaki dress pants and shirts for the U. S. Army. Marketing offices in Chicago, Greensboro, Nashville, and New York promoted the company's retail line, which comprised men's and boys' overalls, dungarees, pants, one-piece suits, shirts, coats, and jackets sold under the trade names Blue Bell, Big Ben, and Casey Jones.²⁴

Blue Bell, Inc.'s sales escalated dramatically during the post-war years, climbing from \$13,795,450 in 1943 to \$46,630,060 in 1950, when the company asserted that it remained the world's largest work clothes manufacturer. The 1947 introduction of Wrangler-brand leisure wear had been a tremendous

²¹ Lenoir Board of Trade and Lenoir News-Topic, *Lenoir, North Carolina* (n.p.: 1938), 3-5; Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir City Directory 1937-1938* (Asheville: Commercial Service Company, 1936), 5-6.

²² *Miller's Lenoir City Directory, 1943-1944*, 267; *LNT*, September 12, 1941, p. 1.

²³ Spencer B. King, Jr., *Selective Service in North Carolina in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 321; Marilyn M. Harper, et. al. *World War II and the American Home Front* (Washington, D. C.: The National Historic Landmarks Program, October 2007), 3, 13-16.

²⁴ Blue Bell, Inc., originated in 1908 as Jellico Clothing Manufacturing Company, established by J. B. McKinly and R. L. Raines in Jellico, Tennessee. The burgeoning enterprise moved to an expansive plant in Middlesboro, Kentucky in 1918 and the following year changed its name to Big Ben Manufacturing Company. On January 1, 1926, the concern purchased Greensboro-based Blue Bell Overall Company. The merged corporation utilized that name from August 1930 until 1936, when it became Blue-Bell Globe Manufacturing Company following the acquisition of its chief competitor, Globe Superior Corporation. The company reorganized as Blue Bell, Inc., in August 1943 after absorbing Baltimore-based Casey Jones, Inc. Blue Bell, Inc., "Blue Bell Annual Report, December 1, 1945-November 30, 1946," pp. 18-21; "The History of Blue Bell, Inc.," *Southern Garment Manufacturer*, August 1944; "Business Notes," *New York Times*, August 3, 1943; "Blue Bell Long World's Largest Clothing Producer," *E.S.C. Quarterly*, Summer-Fall 1952, pp. 134-136, 138.

success.²⁵ The company's growth manifested a broader trend in the apparel industry, which burgeoned nationally following the war. In North Carolina, less than forty firms reported production between 1939 and 1945, but by 1954 approximately 175 businesses operated 200 plants that generated outerwear, clothing, undergarments, accessories, and other fabricated textile products such as awnings, bags, carpets, mops, ribbons, and tarpaulins. Most were located in the Piedmont. The Employment Security Commission asserted that the state's abundant supply of female laborers, many of whom had garnered skills in textile mills that translated easily to apparel making, encouraged such endeavors. Also, worker compensation in southern states was less than that in the north, providing investors with the potential for greater profit. Still, apparel manufacturing comprised only 4.3 percent of North Carolina's total manufacturing employment in early 1954, compared with 53.8 percent in the textile industry.²⁶

The Lenoir factory played an important role in Blue Bell, Inc.'s production chain and in the local economy, as it was one of Caldwell County's chief industrial concerns and its only sizable apparel manufacturer for almost forty years.²⁷ Dot Land, who worked at the plant from 1949 until 1983, remembered that the facility afforded women the opportunity to hold a wide variety of positions in an industry other than textile manufacturing. Furniture factories, which dominated Lenoir's industrial sector, did not typically hire females to fill production jobs until the 1960s. The Blue Bell, Inc. plant was also unusual in its large number of African American and Asian employees.²⁸

By October 1952, Blue Bell, Inc.'s Lenoir factory had the capacity to fabricate as many as 84,000 pairs of pants each week, primarily women's and girls' sportswear. Superintendent Roy W. Greeson, plant manager A. L. Lomax, and industrial engineer Robert S. Hines oversaw the facility's almost four hundred employees, most of whom were women who worked in the sewing department. Men operated the cutting department, which generated piece goods for assembly, as well as the shipping and receiving department. Amenities included a cafeteria, a break room, and a medical clinic manned by a registered nurse. The company subsidized seasonal parties and parades. Employees were able to purchase discounted Blue Bell, Inc. clothing and boots in the basement store, and could select other items from catalogs.²⁹

Blue Bell, Inc.'s sales rose to \$58,073,919 in 1956 as more than two hundred wholesalers distributed popular products including Wrangler jeans to thirty thousand retail establishments throughout the nation. The company expanded many of its twenty-seven plants in seven states to meet demand. Lenoir was among them. Although Blue Bell, Inc. had updated the facility and installed new equipment prior to commencing operations at that location in March 1944, the most significant

²⁵ Blue Bell, Inc., "Blue Bell Annual Report, 1952," pp. 1-2; "Other Corporate Reports," *New York Times*, February 7, 1950.

²⁶ E. Stanhope Dunn, "North Carolina Apparel Production Shows Big Expansion," *E.S.C. Quarterly*, Summer-Fall 1954, pp. 71-72; "Many Medium, Small Sized Plants Manufacturing Apparel," *E.S.C. Quarterly*, Summer-Fall 1954, p. 74.

²⁷ North Carolina Department of Labor, Division of Statistics, *North Carolina Directory of Manufacturing Firms* (Durham: Christian Printing Company, 1956), 383-385; Manufacturers' Record, *The 50th Annual Blue Book of Southern Progress and the Southern Industrial Directory*, 1958, p. 66.

²⁸ Mrs. Land began her tenure with Blue Bell, Inc., as a sewing machine operator, became a supervisor, and subsequently oversaw the first aid, human resources, and payroll departments. Dot Land, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, April 17, 2017.

²⁹ C. T. McNary, "The Blue Bell Story," October 1952, Greensboro Historical Museum; Lenoir News-Topic, *Pictorial Review of Lenoir and Caldwell County, North Carolina*, late 1950s; Blue Bell, Inc., *The Needle Threader*, 1949, 1951, Caldwell Heritage Museum, Lenoir.

modification occurred with the construction of the sizable one-story late 1950s cutting room addition that spanned the factory's east elevation.³⁰

Blue Bell, Inc. initiated European production at a Belgium plant in 1961. Subsequent acquisitions included Red Kap, a Canadian industrial and occupational clothing manufacturer in 1964, and J. W. Carter, a western boot producer, in 1967. Blue Bell, Inc.'s Lenoir plant continued to generate sportswear through 1983. Company labels then included Wrangler, Rustler, and Maverick jeans, as well as Red Kap, Jantzen (swimwear and sportswear), Sedgefield, and Lucchese Boots.³¹

Blue Bell, Inc. adjusted each plant's production quota in response to orders for various lines. The Lenoir factory operated a single shift, which typically ran from 7:00 am to 3:30 pm, although some employees worked an additional hour of overtime. Jeans, trousers for the U. S. Navy, and Jantzen sportswear were among the items fabricated in Lenoir that were shipped to Greensboro for distribution. The Lenoir plant's cutting department also supplied the company's Taylorsville factory, located just over twenty miles to the east in Alexander County, with piece goods to be assembled in that facility.³²

Net sales jumped from \$872 million to \$1,356,640 billion in 1980, and then dropped slightly each year through 1983 in response to the economic recession during that period. Blue Bell, Inc., and VF Corporation of Pennsylvania's 1986 merger created one of the world's two largest jeans manufacturers. The company now operates an international consortium of plants in Asia, Europe, and Latin America from a Greensboro headquarters.³³

Although the Bernhardt family retained ownership of the Lenoir plant until May 2007, the title holders changed in a series of transactions. On December 1, 1944, A. S. Nelson and his wife Janice N. Nelson conveyed their one-quarter undivided interest in the former Lenoir Cotton Mill property to George H. Bernhardt. Lillian W. Bernhardt inherited her husband George H. Bernhardt's one-half undivided interest in the former mill tract when he died in 1947. Following her death on December 5, 1977, First Union National Bank, the executor of her estate, sold her interest to Caldwell Realty and Investment Company for \$75,000 on June 27, 1980. John C. Bernhardt transferred his one-half undivided interest in the parcel to JCB Properties, LLC, on November 30, 1999. After the Blue Bell, Inc. plant closed in 1983, the building functioned as a warehouse for Bernhardt Furniture Company and other local furniture manufacturers until late 2009. Caldwell Realty and Investment Company and JCB Properties, LLC, conveyed the tract to the current owner, Thump Barrel, LLC, on May 11, 2007. However, Bernhardt Furniture Company continued to lease the mill for two years. The building housed Lenoir Trade Market, a thrift store, on the main level from early 2010 until Blue Bell Lenoir LLC acquired the property in September 2018.³⁴

Industrial Architecture Context

In the first purpose-built industrial buildings erected in the United States, designers strove to accommodate machinery in a manner that allowed for efficient access to power sources as well as

³⁰ Blue Bell, Inc., "Blue Bell Annual Report, 1956," p. 14; Sanborn Map Company, "Lenoir, N. C.," Sheet 14, August 1950; C. T. McNary, "The Blue Bell Story."

³¹ Blue Bell, Inc., "Blue Bell Annual Report, 1983," pp. 30-31.; Wrangler, "Our History," <http://www.wrangler.com/about/history.html> (accessed September 2016).

³² Dot Land, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, April 17, 2017.

³³ Blue Bell, Inc., "Blue Bell Annual Report, 1983," pp. 2, 29. Wrangler, "Our History."

³⁴ John C. Bernhardt died on May 29, 2003. Caldwell County Deed Book 217, p. 101; Deed Book 748, p. 705; Deed Book 1284, p. 1064; Will Book F, p. 296; Deed Book 1640, p. 1271; Deed Book 1948, p. 2098; grave markers; Dinell Clark (mill owner), email correspondence with Heather Fearnbach, April 2017.

maximum utilization of natural light and ventilation. By the mid-nineteenth century, “slow-burn” masonry construction, with load-bearing brick walls, exposed heavy-timber framing, thick plank floors, gabled roofs, large operable windows and transoms, and metal fire doors predominated. Heavy-timber framing members that were at least twelve inches square with chamfered edges effectively slowed the progress of fire, particularly when used in combination with a floor system that encompassed three- to four-inch-thick plank decking covered with waterproof paper and topped with hardwood floors. The floor system was left exposed underneath in order to avoid the use of flammable ceiling materials and finishes. Chamfering the corners of beams, posts, and girders removed splinters that could ignite easily.³⁵

During the late nineteenth century, mill and factory design evolved from a vernacular process whereby owners worked with builders who erected edifices based on mutually understood norms to a field dominated by professionally-trained mill engineers who designed industrial buildings and supervised their construction. Standards imposed by machinery manufacturers and insurance companies also guided industrial architecture’s evolution. In order to minimize fire risk, stairwells, which could serve as conduits for fire movement between floors, were located in projecting stair towers. Brick interior walls and galvanized-sheet-metal-clad, solid-core-wood doors, known as kalamein doors, separated the mill sections where fires might start or spread rapidly. These heavy doors would automatically close in the case of a fire, as the heat would melt a soft metal link in the door’s counterweight assembly and the door would slide shut on the sloped metal track. As an additional precaution, water reservoirs and elevated water tanks supplied automatic sprinkler systems in many industrial complexes.³⁶

North Carolina industrialists benefited from the contributions of resident engineers who disseminated specifications dictating best practices in mill layout and design. Innovators in this discipline included South Carolina native Daniel A. Tompkins, sent by the Pittsburgh-based Westinghouse Engine Company to Charlotte in the early 1880s to sell and coordinate the installation of the company’s equipment in the region. Tompkins became a driving force in the southern textile industry, partnering with Charlotte grain merchant R. M. Miller in 1883 to establish the D. A. Tompkins Company, an engineering firm. The company created plans for over one hundred mills in addition to other industrial buildings.³⁷ Charlotte examples such as Ada, Alpha, and Victor Mills (all erected in 1889), Highland Park Mill No. 1’s 1891 and 1895 buildings, and the 1892 Atherton Mill are comparable to the 1902-1903 Lenoir Cotton Mill.

Thomasville, North Carolina, native Stuart Warren Cramer, who began his career with the D. A. Tompkins Company, was another highly-influential mill engineer. Cramer set up his own Charlotte firm in 1895, and by 1915 had designed almost one-third of the new mills erected in the South during that period. The 1902-1903 Lenoir Cotton Mill and Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company’s 1904 are the only Caldwell County factories that have been attributed to him at this time. In addition to preparing mill plans, Cramer equipped facilities with textile production machinery of all types, some of which he invented. His salesmen, based in Charlotte and Atlanta offices, travelled throughout the country. Cramer’s innovations in textile mill climate control garnered him international recognition, and he is credited with conceiving the term “air conditioning.” Cramer often served his clients as a business advisor as well as a designer. For example, he installed an air-conditioning system at Loray

³⁵ Sara E. Wermiel, “Heavy Timber Framing in Late-Nineteenth-Century Commercial and Industrial Buildings,” *APT Bulletin: Journal of Preservation Technology*, Volume 35, No. 1, 2004, 56.

³⁶ Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15-21; Glass, *Textile Industry*, 38.

³⁷ Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 50.

Mill in Gastonia in 1908 and became the company's president four years later. Cramer established and led the American Cotton Manufacturers Association and the National Council of American Textile Manufacturers. He invested in textile concerns including Highland Park Manufacturing Company in Charlotte and Mayes Manufacturing Company in the Gaston County community of Mayesworth, which became known as Cramerton in 1922. The mill complexes and the associated housing that Cramer designed at those and other locations featured efficient layouts that demonstrated his integrated work flow concepts.³⁸

Stuart Cramer recruited talented architects and engineers such as Richard C. Biberstein of Fredericksburg, Texas, to work in his office. Biberstein, born in 1859, attained a mechanical engineering degree from the Worcester (Massachusetts) Polytechnic Institute in 1882. He found employment at U. S. Electric Lighting Company in Newark, New Jersey, and Atlas Engine Works in Indianapolis before moving to Charlotte in 1887 to accept a draftsman position at industrialist John Wilkes's Mecklenburg Iron Works. H. S. Chadwick offered him a similar job at the Charlotte Machine Company, which manufactured mill equipment, in 1897. Biberstein remained on staff until 1902, when he became Stuart Cramer's employee, thus garnering valuable experience that prepared him to launch an independent firm specializing in mill design three years later.³⁹

During the twentieth century's first decades, architects and engineers continued to plan manufacturing complexes that were similar in appearance to earlier industrial buildings. However, new building materials, technology, and forms manifested efficiency, modernity, and economic progress. Mill and factory designers specified steel and reinforced-concrete columns, posts, and beams in conjunction with brick, concrete, terra cotta block, or tile curtain walls that provided structural bracing but did not carry any weight. Bands of steel-frame multipane windows and roof monitors provided workers with abundant light and ventilation. Steel truss roof systems spanned open interiors that accommodated sizable equipment and allowed for flexibility as manufacturing needs changed.⁴⁰

Although structural systems for some late-nineteenth-century industrial buildings included cast-iron or wrought-iron columns or steel posts and beams, high cost greatly limited the materials' use until the early twentieth century. The ability to withstand the weight and vibrations of heavy machinery without failing contributed to the popularity of structural-steel construction, as did the ease of fabricating framing systems from standard factory-generated parts. Typical elements include I-, T-, H-, and box-shaped beams and posts; round columns; reinforcing plates; and angles, which serve as braces, tension members, struts, or lintels. Steel components could be riveted together, creating strong connections, and tended to be smaller and lighter than heavy-timber or iron framing members. This allowed for wider and taller buildings with more square footage for equipment. The popularity of flat roofs and sizable roof monitors also resulted in structural-steel framing prevalence. In order to reduce oxidation

³⁸ Ibid., 107; Stuart W. Cramer, *Useful Information For Cotton Manufacturers* (Charlotte: Queen City Printing Company, 1906, 2nd ed., Vol. III.), 1169; *Charlotte Observer*, June 22, 1912, p. 10; "Mr. Cramer is made president of Loray," *Charlotte EC*, December 26, 1912, p. 6; Thomas S. Morgan, "Stuart Warren Cramer" in William Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, Vol. 1* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 455; Catherine Westergaard, "Stuart W. Cramer," *North Carolina Architects and Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000275> (accessed 2016); Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc., "Loray Mill Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2001, Section 8, pages 36-37.

³⁹ Thomas W. Hanchett, William H. Huffman, and Catherine W. Bishir, "Richard C. Biberstein," *North Carolina Architects and Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, 2009, accessed in November 2013; "Biberstein, Bowles, Meacham & Reed: Biographical/Historical Note," Biberstein, Bowles, Meacham & Reed Records (hereafter abbreviated BBMRR), J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Charlotte .

⁴⁰ Bradley, *The Works*, 144-147.

and achieve fire resistance, steel members were coated with intumescent paint; sprayed with a thin mixture of cement, sand, and water called gunite; or encased in concrete.⁴¹

Albert Kahn was one of only a few American architects who specialized in industrial building design during the early twentieth century. In many of his commissions, traditional load-bearing walls were replaced with curtain walls containing large steel-frame windows and monitor roofs provided illumination and ventilation. His office supplied factory plans to hundreds of American industrialists including automobile manufacturers Packard, Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors, as well as for international clients. At the Packard Motor Car Company Forge Shop (1910) in Detroit, Kahn used a steel structural frame to support a traveling crane mounted to the roof trusses and glass curtain walls to allow for maximum light and air circulation. He minimized the exterior walls' bay articulation by specifying narrow steel columns of about the same size as steel window sashes. Kahn's firm continued to employ bands of steel windows in conjunction with masonry or concrete screens to conceal steel structural framing in edifices such as the Industrial Works (ca. 1915) in Bay City, Michigan. The firm's design for the Dodge Half-Ton Truck Plant in Detroit, completed in 1937, was a much more sophisticated building with tall glazed curtain walls reminiscent of Walter Gropius's Bauhaus School (1926) in Dessau, Germany. Gropius's streamlined design for the 1911 Fagus Factory in Germany, which features steel-frame multipane curtain walls, was also internationally influential.⁴²

Modernist architectural principles such as simplicity, efficiency, affordability, and intrinsic material expression were inherently applicable to industrial buildings. Industrial architecture continued to reflect these tenets as the twentieth century progressed. Building materials and labor were in short supply during World War II, but when construction resumed after the war's end, steel and reinforced-concrete industrial edifices with masonry (brick, tile, or concrete) curtain walls predominated. Windows decreased in size and number in the 1960s as central air conditioning became prevalent.

Caldwell County's late-nineteenth- and early- to mid-twentieth-century textile mills

In order to take advantage of lower land prices and allow for unfettered expansion, Caldwell County industrialists often erected mills and worker housing on a town's outskirts. By 1987, when historian Vickie Mason conducted a reconnaissance-level inventory of the county's historic architecture, many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century factories had been demolished or encapsulated within later additions. The project thus documented only a few industrial buildings. It is therefore impossible to ascertain how many mills survive without additional survey.

However, examination of a small sample—Lenoir Cotton Mill, Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company (NR 2013), and J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill—reveals similar features. The late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century sections of all three plants are characterized by heavy-timber interior structural systems, load-bearing brick exterior walls, low-pitched gable roofs, segmental-arched and rectangular window openings, segmental-arched door openings, and decorative entrance, stair, and restroom towers. Large multipane windows and transoms, some of which remain, illuminated the interiors, where hardwood floors and substantial wood posts and beams prevail. Exposed rafter ends support deep eaves.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Gropius, the highly influential founder of the German design school known as the Bauhaus, which operated from 1919 until 1933, taught at Harvard's Graduate School of Design beginning in 1937. "Art: Industrial Architect," *Time*, August 8, 1938; Bradley, *The Works*, 248, 248-258.

Mid-twentieth-century manufacturing and warehouse additions at each plant exhibit a functional aesthetic in their form, massing, expressed structural systems, and open plans with fenestration dictated by interior use. Brick and concrete-block walls are cost-effective, durable, fire-resistant, and require little maintenance. Structural systems comprise steel trusses, posts, and beams, and poured-concrete foundations. These elements supported heavy equipment and minimized vibration. High ceilings and open floor plans accommodated sizable machinery. As the additions were not originally air-conditioned, large multipane steel windows provided light and ventilation.

The individuals who rendered plans for the 1896/1903 J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory have not been identified. Daniel A. Tompkins and Stuart W. Cramer are possible candidates. Cramer designed the 1902-1903 Lenoir Cotton Mill and the 1904 Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company and supplied the Hudson plant's machinery.⁴³

The one-story, two-level, brick Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company stands parallel to Main Street in Hudson. The 320-foot-long by 75-foot-wide edifice is executed in five-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings and a very low-pitched gable roof. Projecting rafter ends buttress the deep eaves. Documentary photos illustrate the original double-hung, eight-over-eight, wood-sash windows with arched eight-pane transoms. Interior brick removal from one window opening in early 2014 revealed an intact, encapsulated, original window unit, indicating that others may be extant. The distinctive three-stage entrance tower features corbelled hoods above the entrance and paired second-story windows, corbelled oculus surrounds, corbelled cornices and pilaster caps, and a crenellated parapet. Masons also executed in 1904 the matching ell at the mill's northeast corner. A tall, round smokestack rises on the ell's east end.

Twenty years later, Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company erected a rear addition, also in five-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings and a very low-pitched gable roof, on the 1904 building's east side, almost doubling the plant's size. Around 1930, a matching fourteen-bay-wide and one-bay-deep brick addition extended the façade's north end to the west. Chamfered square wood posts and substantial wood beams support the floor and roof systems in the 1904, 1924, and ca. 1930 sections. Richard C. Biberstein's firm prepared plans for the company's additions through 1934.⁴⁴ The narrow 1950s additions at the 1904 and 1924 buildings' south ends and on the 1924 building's northeast corner are sheathed with twelve-to-one common bond brick veneer. The windows in the additions were removed and the openings filled with brick in conjunction with air-conditioning system installation, which likely occurred in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill is similar, in that the 1896 plant and 1903 addition feature a round wood column and heavy-timber post-and-beam interior structural system in conjunction with load-bearing brick exterior walls executed in six-to-one common bond. Segmental-arched window and door openings embellish the building. The mill retains an open plan and painted brick walls, wood roof decking, hardwood floors, and metal-clad kalamein doors. The 1918 additions display the ongoing prevalence of heavy-timber framing with brick firewalls between combustible areas. The 1950s additions employ structural-steel framing systems typically utilized during that period.

Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. is particularly significant due to its age and architectural integrity. Like the other Caldwell County plants, the 1902 mill and 1903 addition manifest early-twentieth-

⁴³ "A Mill at Hudson, N. C.," *Manufacturers' Record*, March 24, 1904, p. 205; "Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company," Drawings, Box AD14, Roll 6, BBMR; Cramer, *Useful Information For Cotton Manufacturers*, 1169.

⁴⁴ "Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company," Project files, Box 55, Folder 38, BBMR.

century industrial design components such as round wood column and heavy-timber post-and-beam interior structural systems. The load-bearing brick exterior walls are executed in six-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings. The two-stage office tower and eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood sash and eight-pane transoms are important survivals. The late 1950s additions also retain original structural systems and windows. The east addition comprises a flat steel truss roof system, brick-veneered concrete-block exterior walls, poured-concrete floors, and eighteen-pane steel sash with six-pane lower hoppers. The one-story, shed-roofed, concrete-block, late 1950s, basement-level additions on the west elevation have heavy-timber roof beams spanned by wide-board decking, poured-concrete floors, and fifteen-pane steel sash with six-pane lower hoppers. The large windows and hoppers are notable, as many manufacturing buildings erected during and after the 1950s were windowless air-conditioned plants. The Lenoir plant's lack of central air conditioning reflects the temperate climate. Window hoppers and ceiling fans facilitated air circulation.

The 1902-1903 mill features triple-thickness wood floors and kalamein doors, which were commonly employed in fire-resistant industrial buildings. The plant's configuration also minimized fire risk. The picker, engine, and boiler rooms are at the south end, separated from the manufacturing areas by brick firewalls. The engine and boiler rooms extend from the mill's southwest corner. This approach was prudent, as evidenced by a June 1912 fire in the picker room that caused an estimated \$1,500-worth of damage, but was contained before it spread to other areas of the mill. Other fire safety features included the freestanding smokestack, an 89,200-gallon reservoir north of the engine room, a 10,000-gallon water tank in the tower at the mill's south end, and a deep well supplied the sprinkler system. Small, one-story, frame hose, valve, and pump houses facilitated the fire suppression system's operation.⁴⁵

Distance between combustible buildings and the mill was also recommended by insurance providers. A frame T-shaped platform connected the picker room to the one-story frame cotton warehouse to the south. A similar platform extended from the warehouse's west elevation toward the railroad. A one-story frame shed stood east of the warehouse. A December 19, 1916, warehouse fire resulted in an estimated \$1,200-worth of inventory loss and structural damage. North of the mill, a one-story frame cotton waste house was located adjacent to the railroad and College Avenue.⁴⁶

National Register of Historic Places Status

Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 18, 2017.

Local Historic Landmark Eligibility Evaluation

Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. is **eligible** for local historic landmark designation due to its industrial significance. *In order to possess such significance, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* The concerns' contribution to the local economy as manufacturers, employers, consumers of goods and services, and taxpayers, were enormous. Lenoir Cotton Mill commenced

⁴⁵ "Fire in Lenoir Cotton Mill," *Daily News* (Greensboro), June 20, 1912, p. 2; Sanborn Map Company, "Lenoir, N. C.," Sheet 6, December 1913.

⁴⁶ "Lenoir Cotton Mill is Damaged," *Daily Record* (Hickory), December 21, 1916, p. 3.

production in January 1902 and doubled its capacity upon the completion of a September 1903 addition. The operation remained the largest of Caldwell County's seven textile manufacturers through the early 1920s. Lenoir Cotton Mill maintained an approximately two-hundred-person workforce through 1935, but sold the plant in January 1939. The mill served as furniture storage prior to being leased by Greensboro-headquartered work clothes manufacturer Blue Bell, Inc., as a satellite plant to fulfill contracts for military apparel and the retail market. The factory played an important role in Blue Bell, Inc.'s production. By October 1952, four hundred Lenoir employees had the ability to generate as many as 84,000 pairs of pants each week, primarily women's and girls' sportswear. The company's workforce was predominantly female, affording women the opportunity to hold a wide variety of positions in an industry other than textile manufacturing. Blue Bell, Inc. remained Caldwell County's only sizable apparel manufacturer as it utilized the Lenoir plant until 1983.

The building is **not eligible** for local historic landmark designation in association with a person. *In order to possess such significance, it would have to retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* Although prominent businessmen were associated with the property, the buildings are not most closely associated with a single individual's achievements, which would be required for local historic landmark designation under this area of significance.

Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. is **eligible** for local historic landmark designation due to its architectural significance. *In order to qualify, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The plant manifests typical early- to mid-twentieth-century industrial design. Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. is architecturally significant as the plant manifests typical early- to mid-twentieth-century industrial design. The 1902 plant and 1903 addition feature round wood column and heavy-timber post-and-beam interior structural systems. The load-bearing brick exterior walls are executed in six-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings. These elements, in conjunction with original interior features such as triple-thickness wood floors and kalamein doors, are representative of early-twentieth-century fire-resistant industrial architecture. The two-stage office tower and the eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood sash and eight-pane transoms are also important survivals. The late 1950s cutting room addition comprises a steel truss roof system and brick-veneered concrete-block exterior walls. The period of significance begins in 1902, with the original section's completion, and continues to 1967. The plant's industrial function and physical expansion after 1967 are not of exceptional significance.

J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill is **not eligible** for local historic landmark designation for its potential to yield information. *In order to possess such significance, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* The structures and site have not yet contributed significant information pertaining to building technology or urban archaeology or yielded historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records. However, the plant is closely related to the surrounding environment. Information concerning environmental transformation, work

culture and worker health, as well as structural details, is often evident in the archaeological record. Archaeological remains, such as trash deposits, privies, and structural remains may be present, and could provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. No investigation has been undertaken to discover these remains, but their existence will be considered in the property's development.

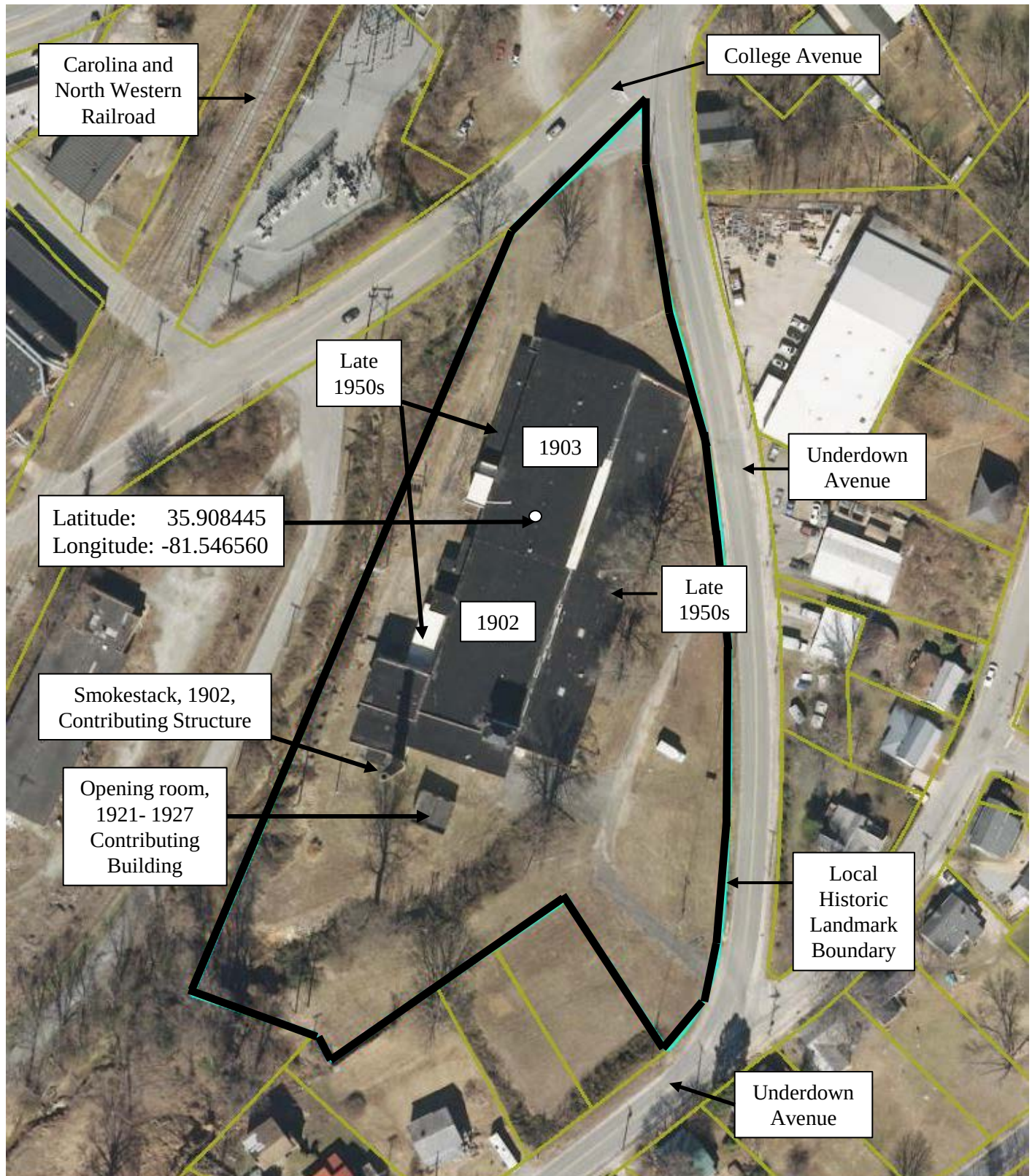
Designation Parameters

is seeking local historic landmark designation for the entire exterior and partial interior in order to recognize the property's architectural and historical significance. The building envelope and original character-defining interior features noted in the local historic landmark eligibility evaluation above should be designated.

Boundary Description and Justification

The proposed local historic landmark designation boundary consists of Caldwell County tax parcel number Caldwell County tax parcel number 2749559283 (3.93 acres), as indicated by the heavy dark lines on the following aerial view (page 29).

Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. Plant
1241 College Avenue, Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina
Local Historic Landmark Boundary Map

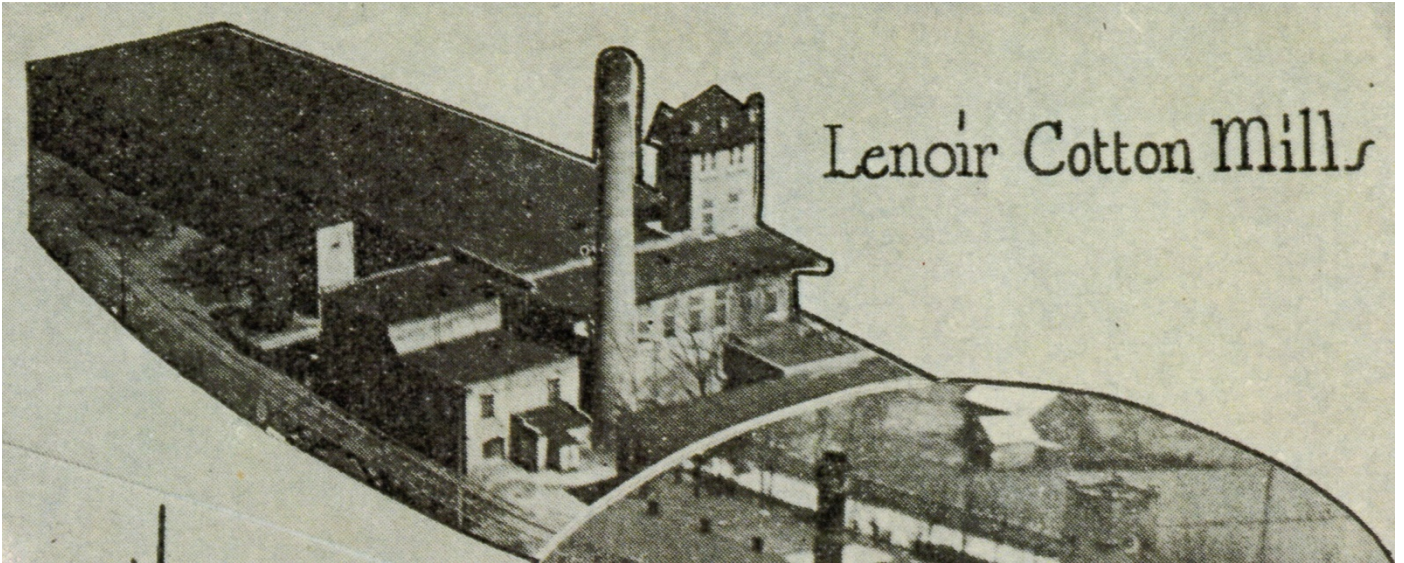


Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc. / February 2019
Base 2014 aerial photo courtesy of <http://gis.caldwellcountync.org/maps/>

Scale 1" = 100 feet



Historic Images



Lenoir Cotton Mill, southwest oblique (above)

From *Lenoir, North Carolina*, Lenoir Board of Trade and Lenoir News-Topic, 1938, p. 15

Blue Bell, Inc., northwest oblique, October 1946 (below)

Sparks Studio, Lenoir, photographer

Both images from the collection of the Caldwell Heritage Museum in Lenoir

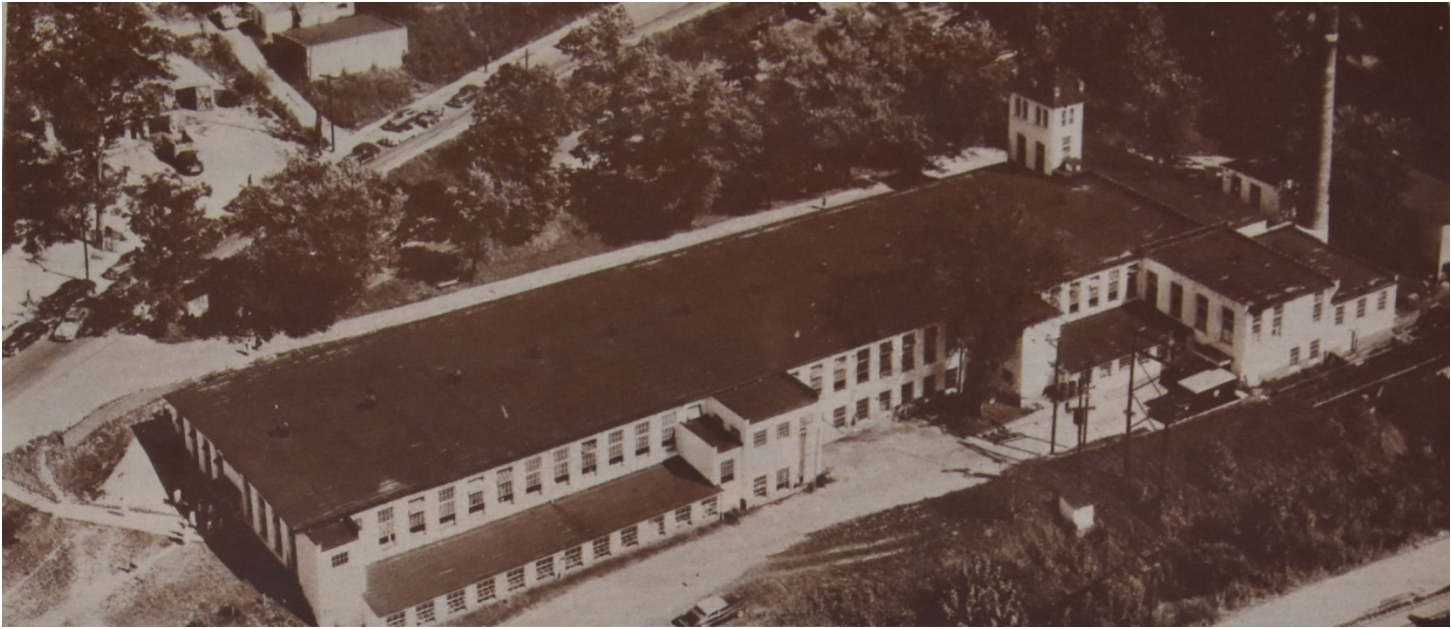




**Blue Bell, Inc., north elevation, 1903 addition, mid-1950s (above)
and February 1954 (below)**

Photographs from the collection of the Caldwell Heritage Museum in Lenoir





Blue Bell, Inc., northwest oblique

From *Pictorial Review of Lenoir and Caldwell County, North Carolina*, Lenoir News-Topic, late 1950s
Publication in the collection of the Caldwell Heritage Museum in Lenoir



The Lounge, where employees enjoy coffee breaks and snacks. Seated, left to right, Frances Huntley, Reba Shatley, Faye Hendrix. Standing, R. W. Greeson, Plant Manager, and Joe Howard, Industrial Engineer.



Sectional view of Sewing Room. Standing, l. to r., Albert Smith, Foreman of Mechanics; Norman Harden, Superintendent of Sewing; Margaret Setzer, Supervisor. Seated, Willie May Mackie.



The Cutting Room, where piece goods are cut into different sections in preparation for the Sewing Room. Left to right, Earl Wineberger, Cutter; Wayne Lackey, Foreman; Floyd Greene, Cutter; Millard Stevens, Cutter.



Shipping Department. Here orders are packed and shipped to all sections of the United States and many foreign countries. Left to right, Carl Koontz and George Rader.



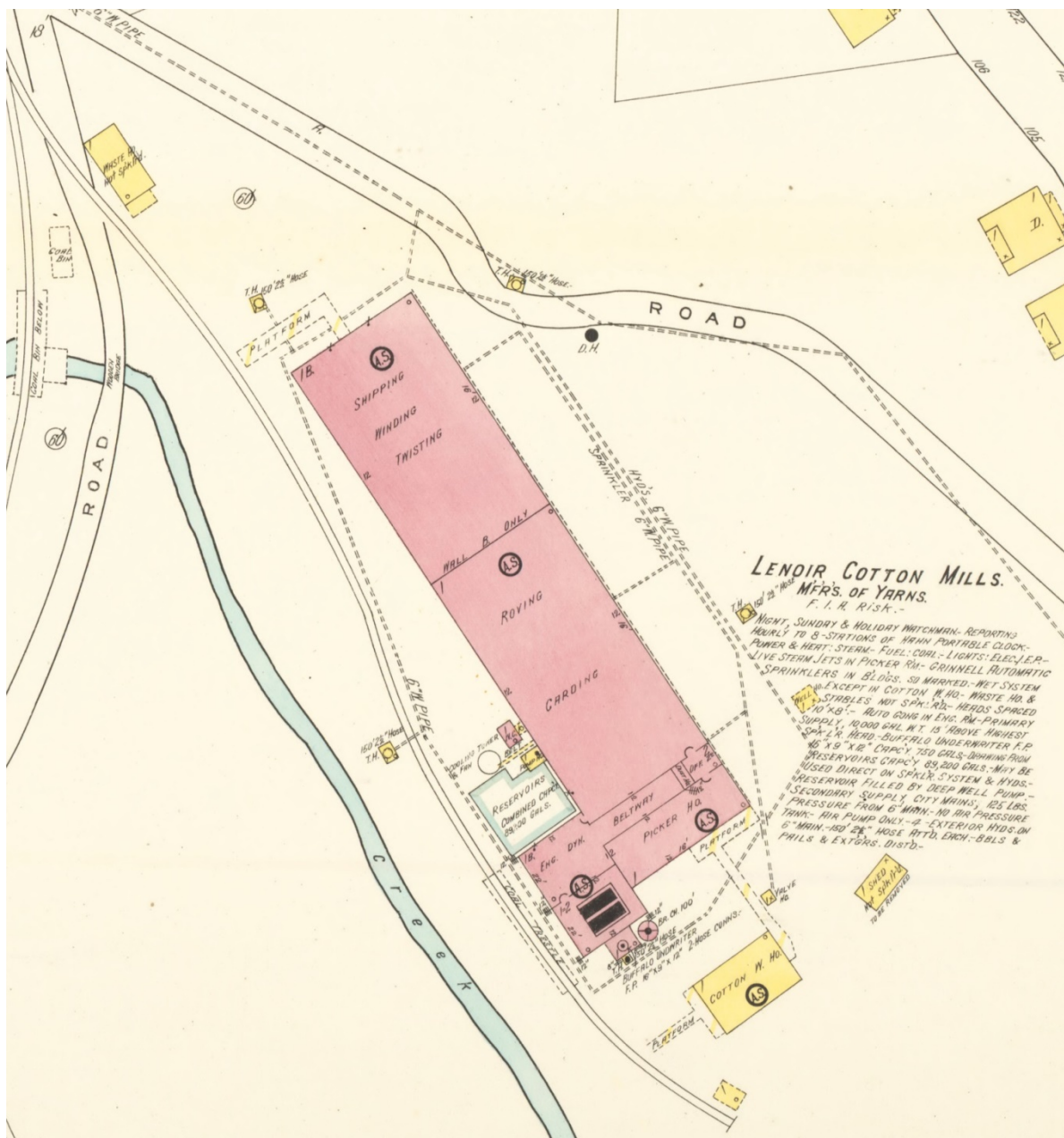
Hot, tasty, wholesome foods are prepared daily and served at reasonable prices in the modern Cafeteria.

Blue Bell, Inc., interior

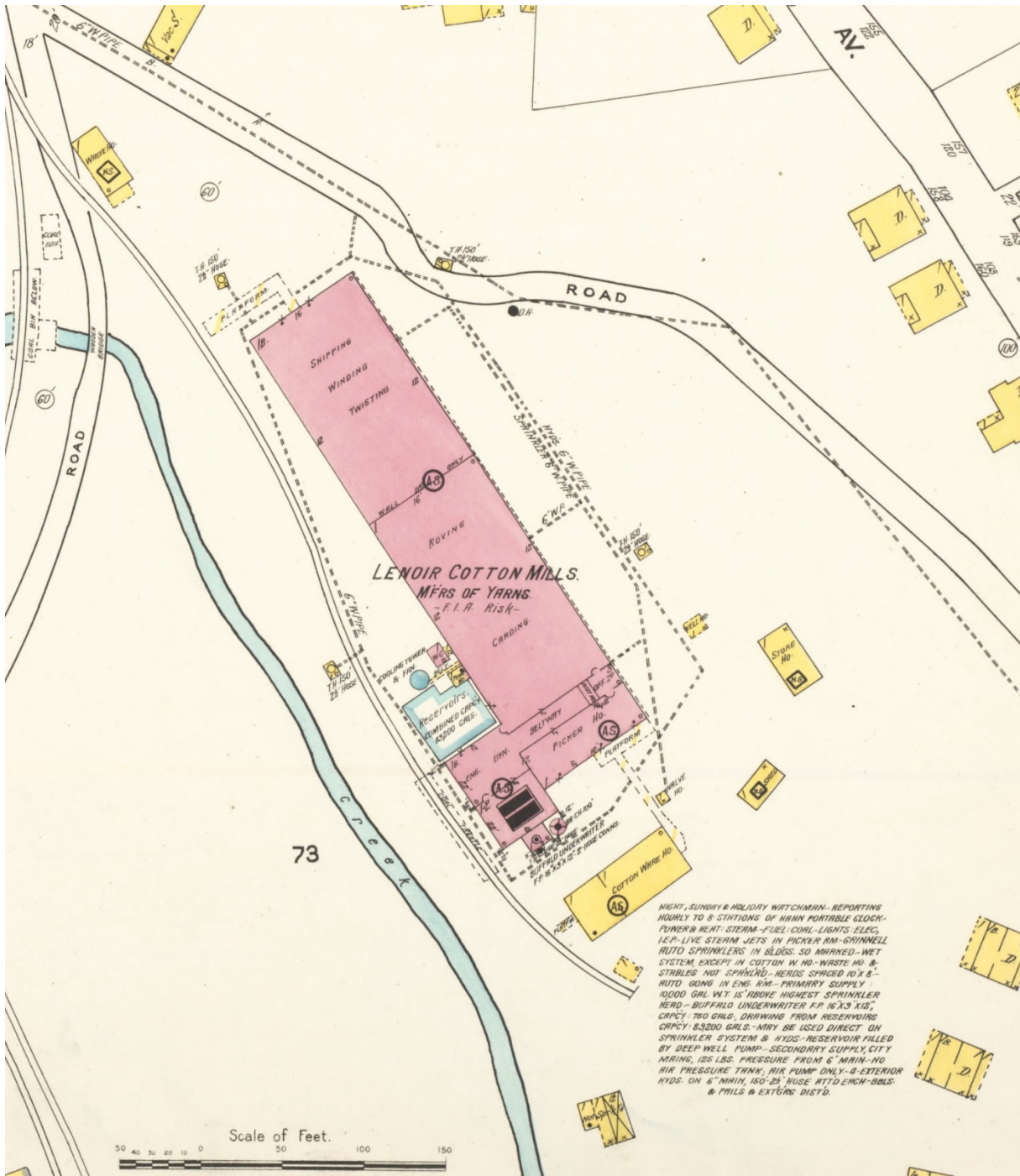
From *Pictorial Review of Lenoir and Caldwell County, North Carolina*, Lenoir News-Topic, late 1950s

Publication in the collection of the Caldwell Heritage Museum in Lenoir

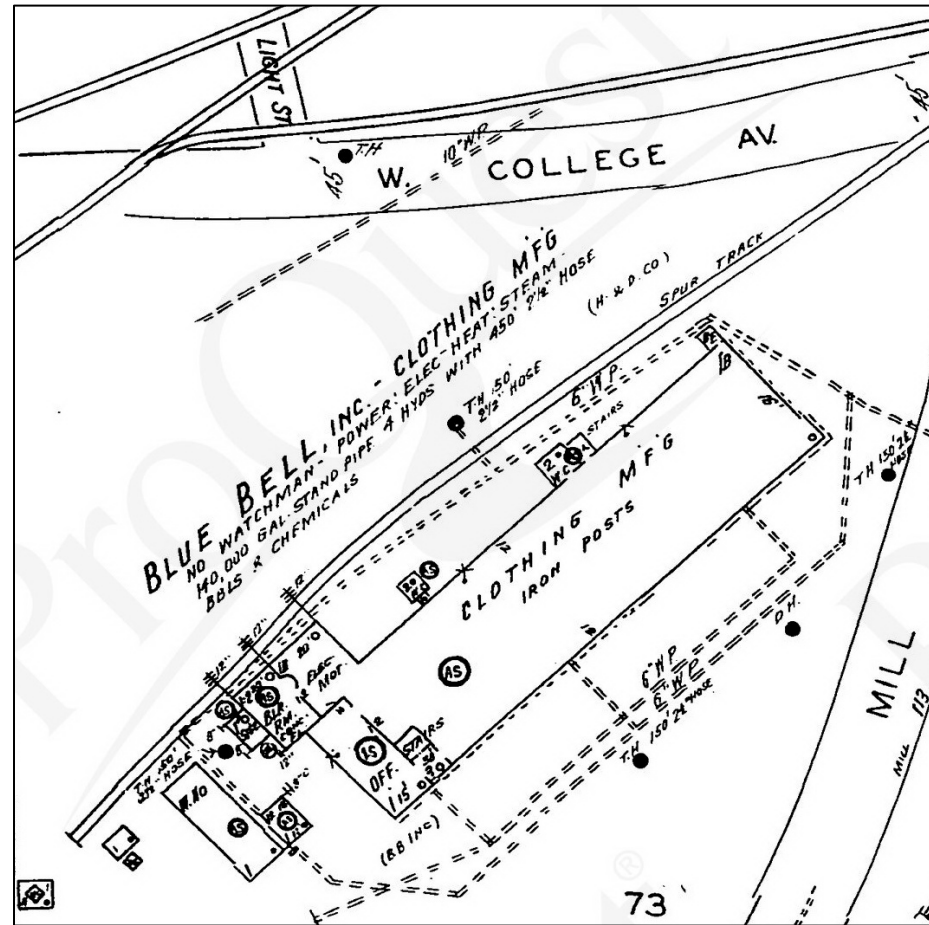
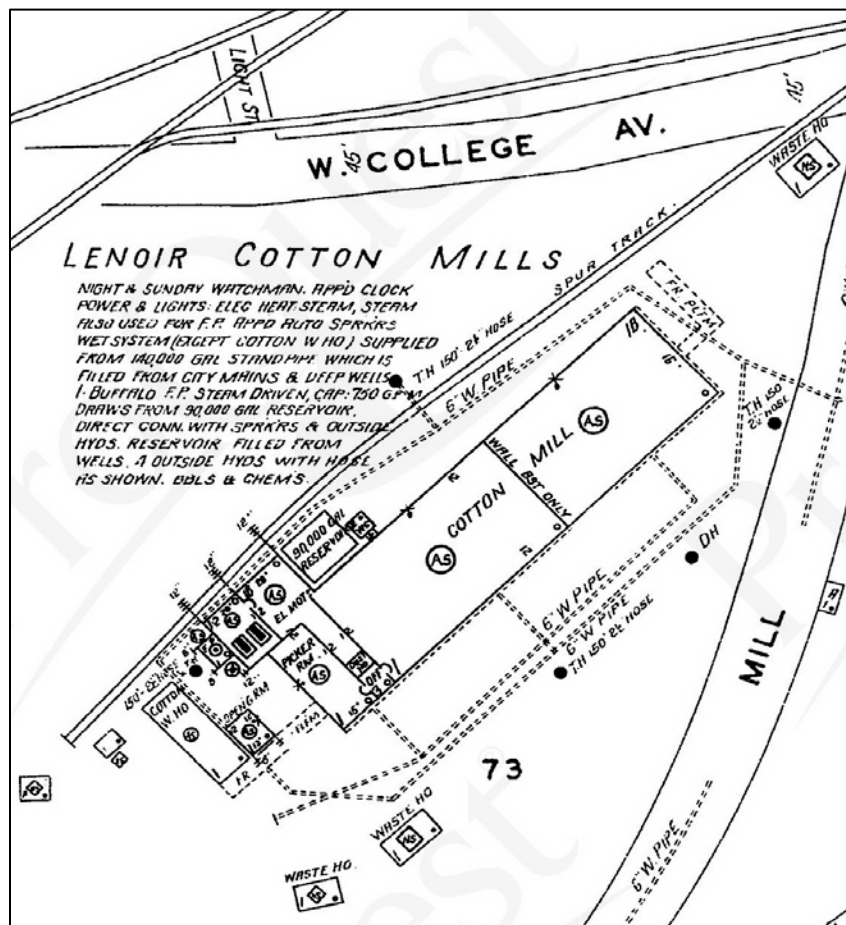
Sanborn Maps



Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Lenoir, North Carolina, Sheet 6, December 1913

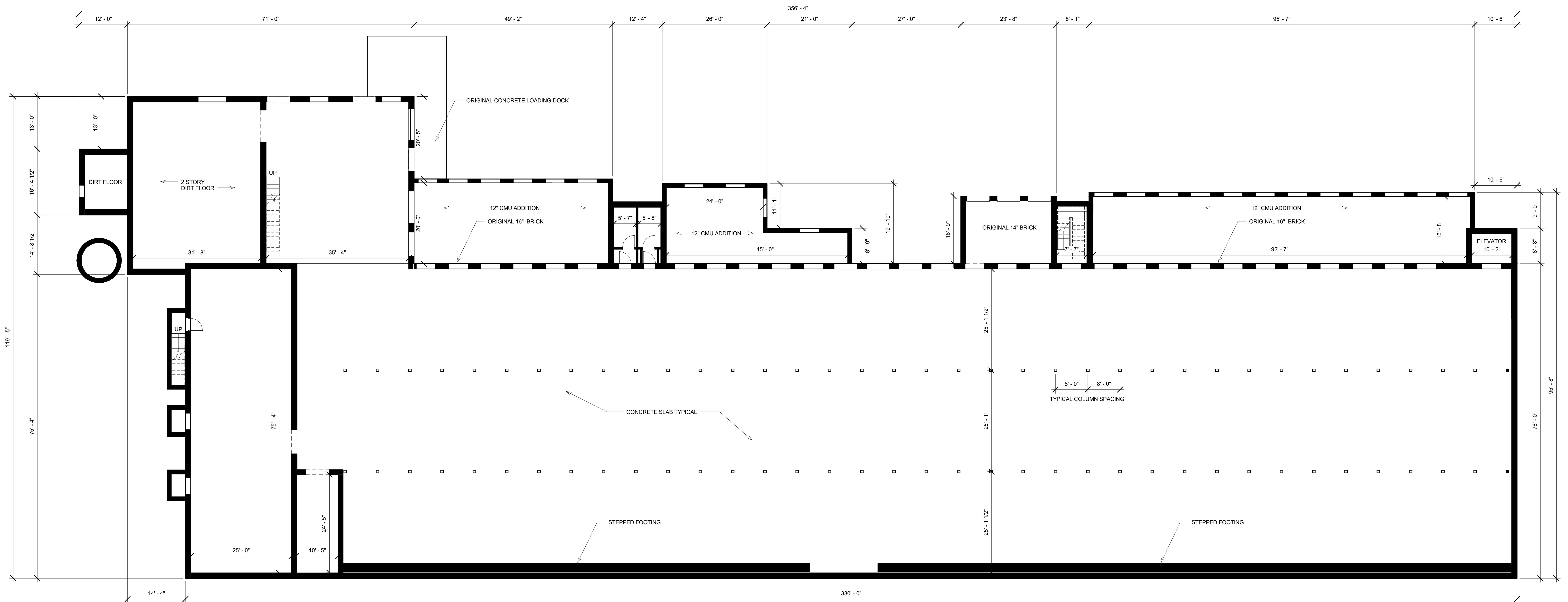


Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Lenoir, North Carolina, Sheet 11, February 1921



Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Lenoir, North Carolina, Sheet 14, December 1927 (left) and August 1950 (right)

Existing Conditions Floor Plans



① Lower Level
3/32" = 1'-0"



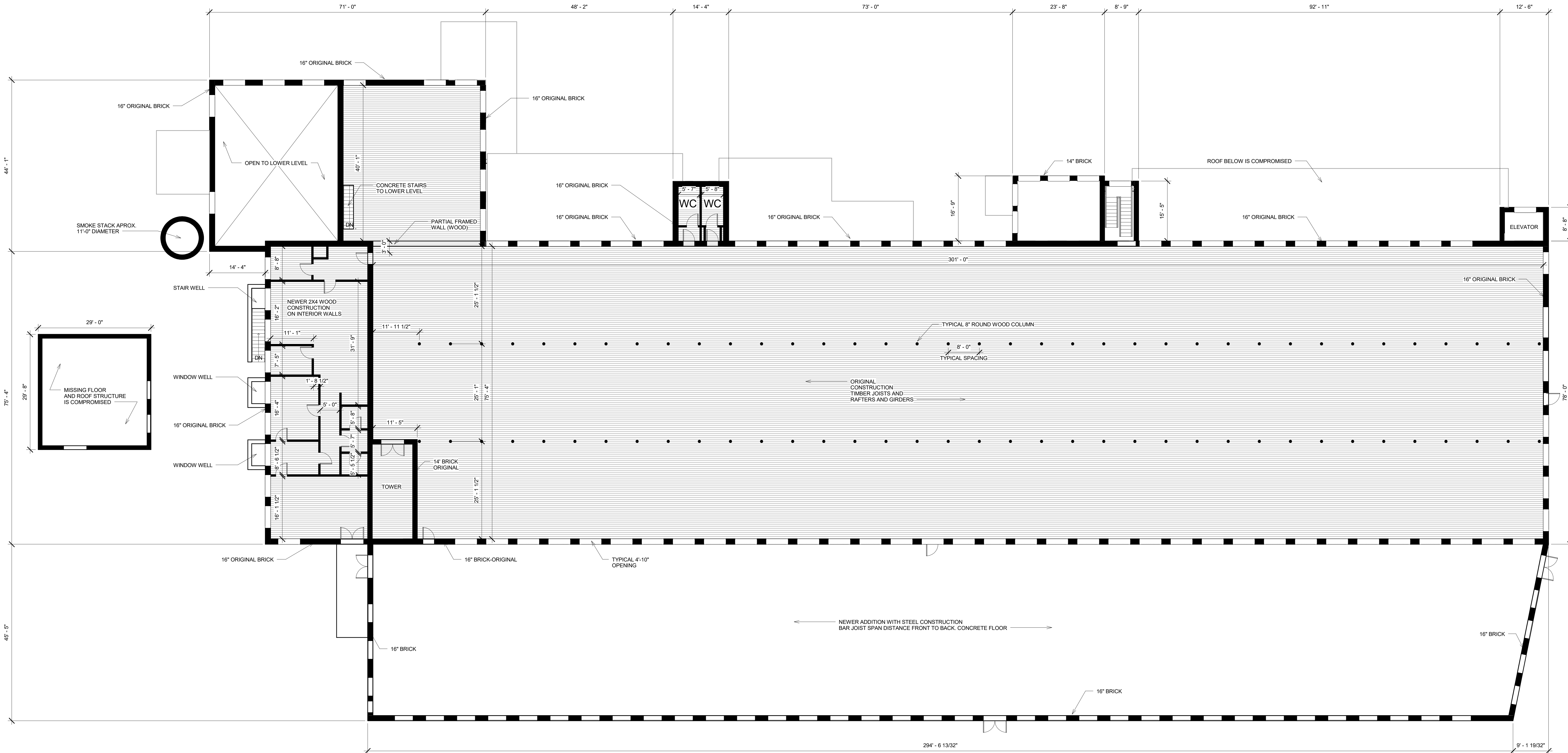
READ|THOMAS,LLC.
2108 SOUTH BLVD. UNIT #111
CHARLOTTE,NC 28203
WWW.READTHOMAS.COM

LENOIR COTTON MILL - BLUE BELL, INC. PLANT

1241 COLLEGE AVENUE,LENOIR,CALDWELL COOUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Disclaimer:
Revisions Drawn by READ|THOMAS,LLC
These as-built drawings have been prepared, in part, on the basis of
information compiled by others. They are not intended to represent in detail
the exact location, type of component nor manner of construction.
READ|THOMAS,LLC will not be responsible for any errors or omissions
which have been incorporated into the record drawings.

05/08/17



1 Main Level
3/32" = 1'-0"



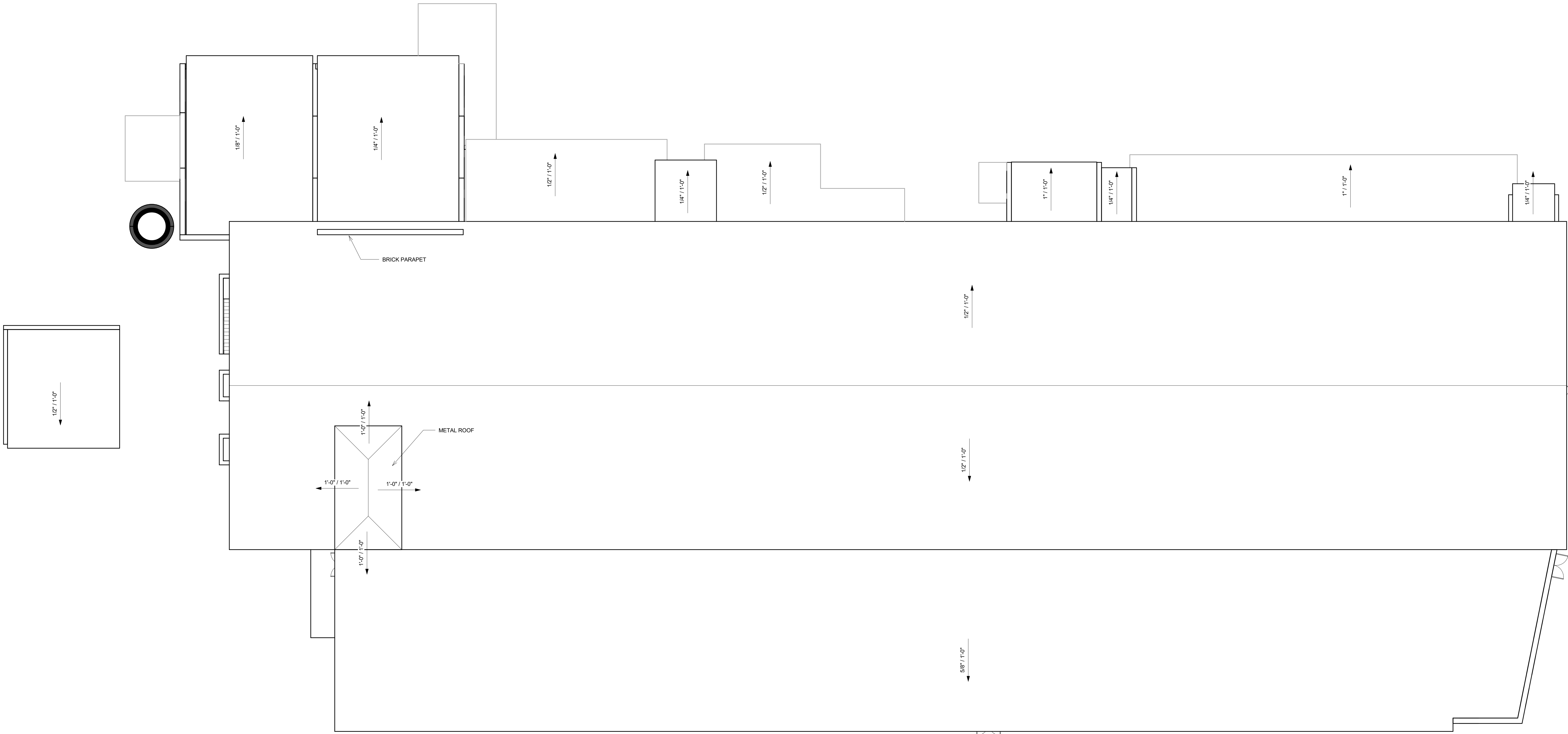
READ|THOMAS,LLC.
2108 SOUTH BLVD. UNIT #111
CHARLOTTE, NC 28203
WWW.READTHOMAS.COM

LENOIR COTTON MILL - BLUE BELL, INC. PLANT

1241 COLLEGE AVENUE,LENOIR,CALDWELL COOUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Disclaimer:
Revisions Drawn by READ|THOMAS,LLC
These as-built drawings have been prepared, in part, on the basis of
information compiled by others. They are not intended to represent in detail
the exact location, type of component nor manner of construction.
READ|THOMAS,LLC will not be responsible for any errors or omissions
which have been incorporated into the record drawings.

05/08/17



1 Roof Plan
3/32" = 1'-0"



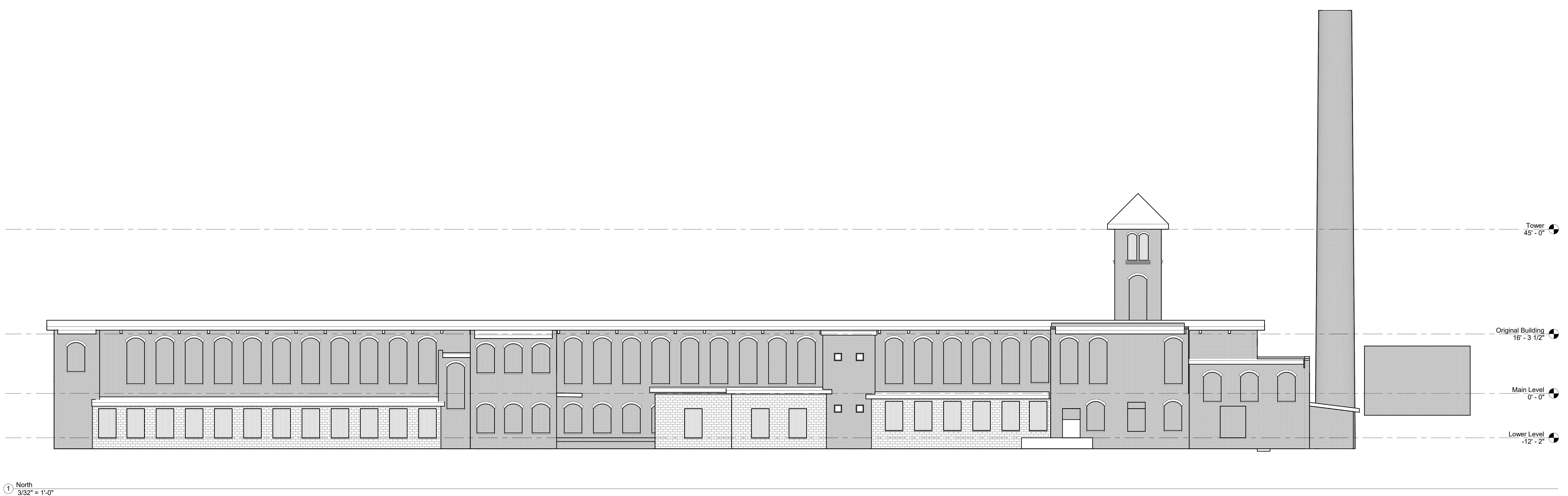
READ|THOMAS,LLC.
2108 SOUTH BLVD. UNIT #111
CHARLOTTE,NC 28203
WWW.READTHOMAS.COM

LENOIR COTTON MILL - BLUE BELL, INC. PLANT

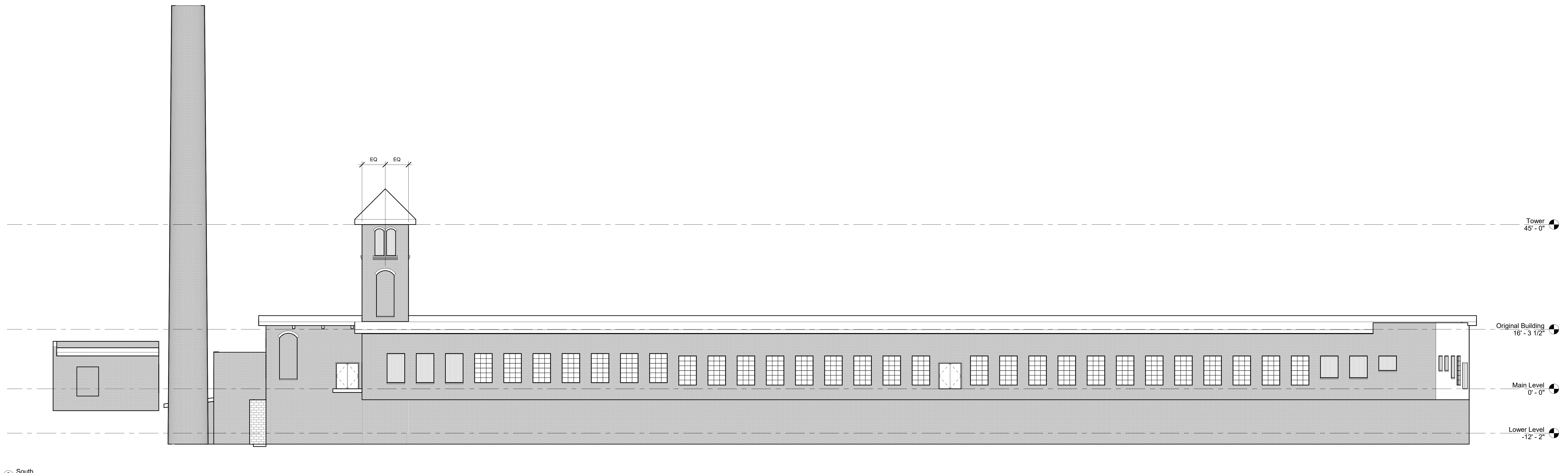
1241 COLLEGE AVENUE,LENOIR,CALDWELL COOUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Disclaimer:
Revisions Drawn by READ|THOMAS,LLC
These as-built drawings have been prepared, in part, on the basis of
information compiled by others. They are not intended to represent in detail
the exact location, type of component nor manner of construction.
READ|THOMAS,LLC will not be responsible for any errors or omissions
which have been incorporated into the record drawings.

05/08/17



① North
3/32" = 1'-0"



② South
3/32" = 1'-0"



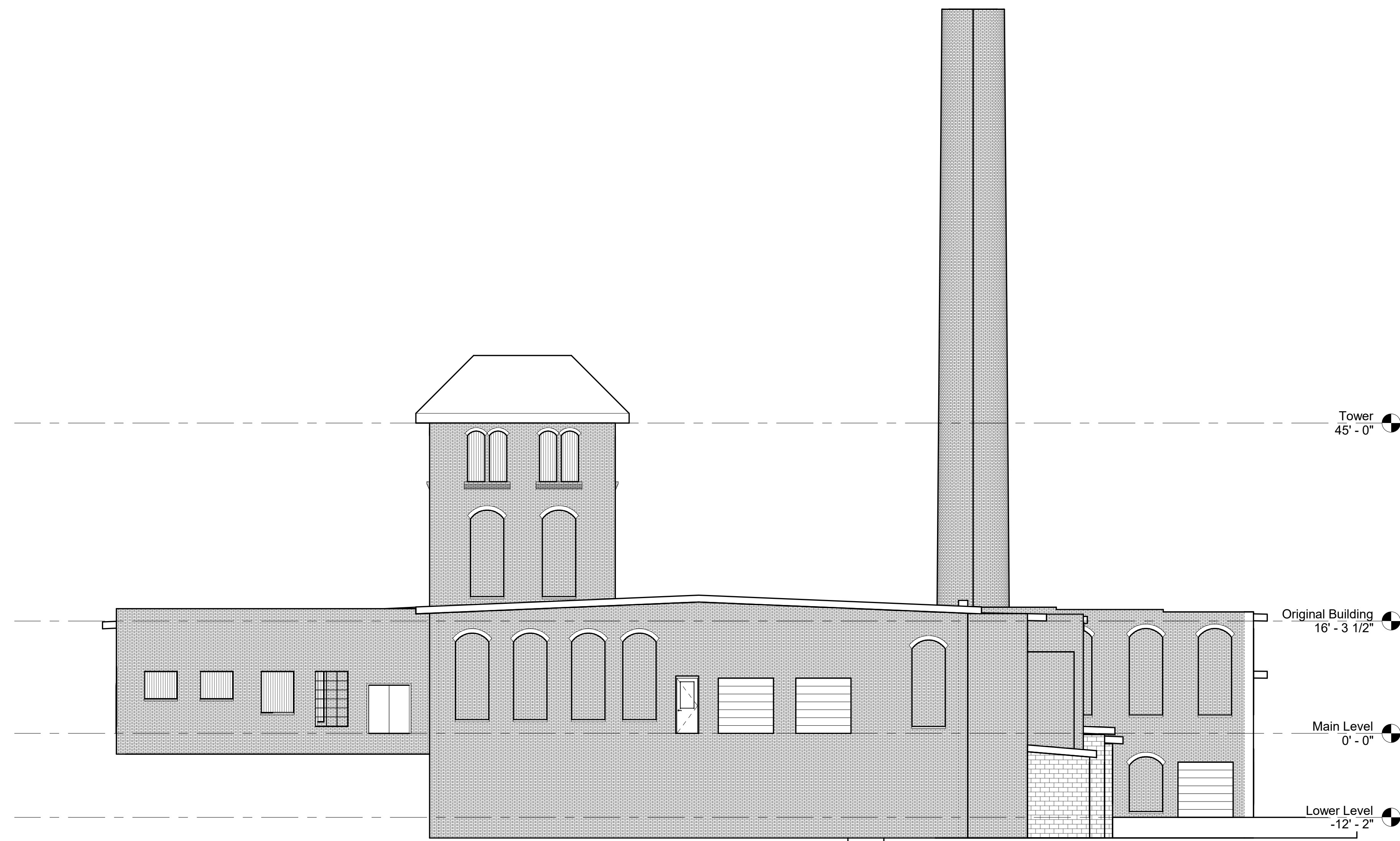
READ|THOMAS, LLC.
2108 SOUTH BLVD. UNIT #111
CHARLOTTE, NC 28203
WWW.READTHOMAS.COM

LENOIR COTTON MILL - BLUE BELL, INC. PLANT

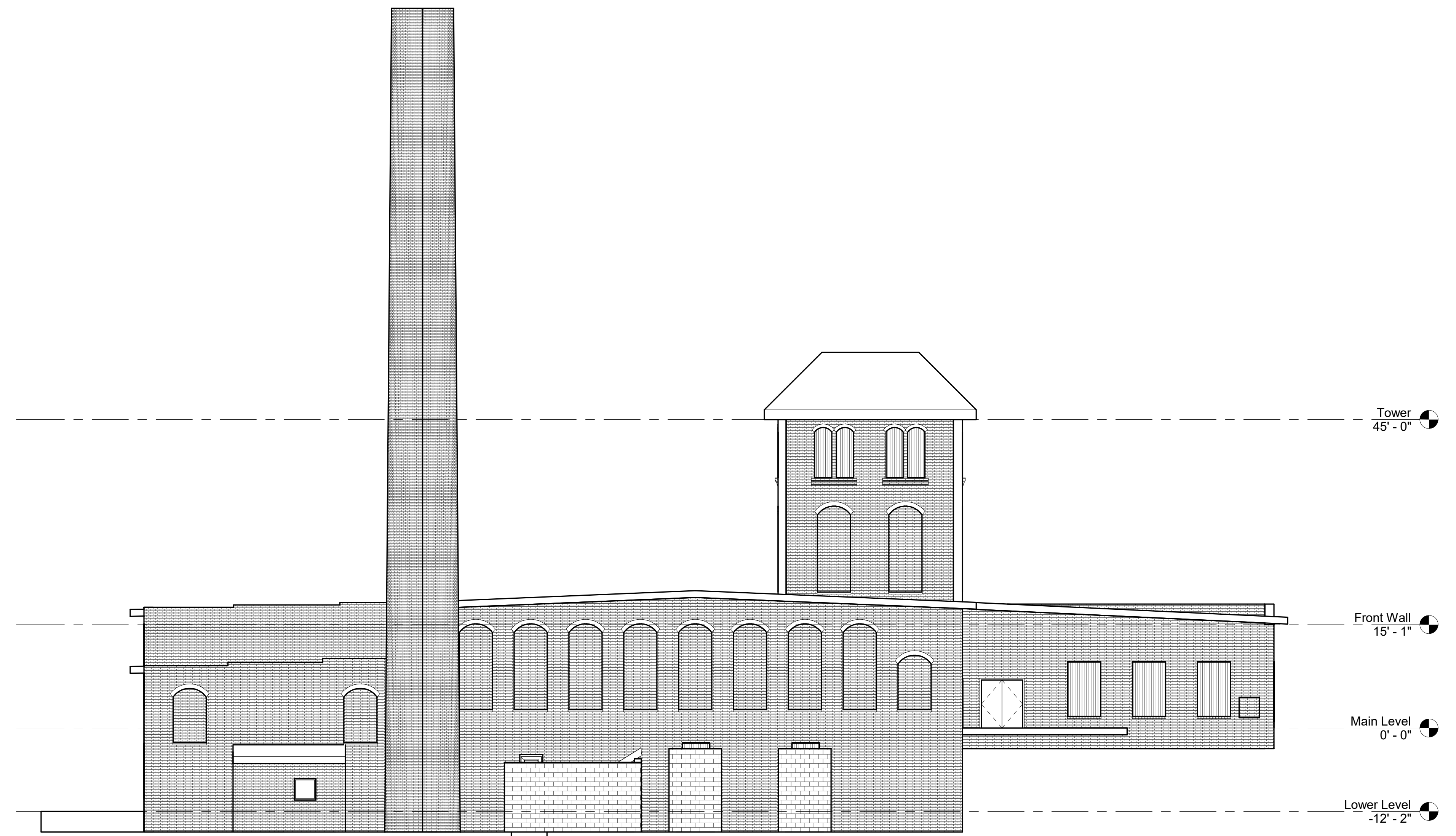
1241 COLLEGE AVENUE,LENOIR,CALDWELL COOUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Disclaimer:
Revisions Drawn by READ|THOMAS,LLC
These as-built drawings have been prepared, in part, on the basis of
information compiled by others. They are not intended to represent in detail
the exact location, type of component nor manner of construction.
READ|THOMAS,LLC will not be responsible for any errors or omissions
which have been incorporated into the record drawings.

05/08/17



① East
3/32" = 1'-0"



② West
3/32" = 1'-0"



READ|THOMAS, LLC.
2108 SOUTH BLVD. UNIT #111
CHARLOTTE, NC 28203
WWW.READTHOMAS.COM

LENOIR COTTON MILL - BLUE BELL, INC. PLANT

1241 COLLEGE AVENUE, LENOIR, CALDWELL COOUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Disclaimer:
Revisions Drawn by READ|THOMAS, LLC
These as-built drawings have been prepared, in part, on the basis of
information compiled by others. They are not intended to represent in detail
the exact location, type of component nor manner of construction.
READ|THOMAS, LLC will not be responsible for any errors or omissions
which have been incorporated into the record drawings.

05/08/17

**LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
DESIGNATION REPORT**



**CAROLINA AND NORTHWESTERN RAILWAY FREIGHT STATION
1407 College Avenue SW
Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina**

**Prepared by:
Fearnbach History Services, Inc.
3334 Nottingham Road
Winston-Salem, NC 27104**

February 2019

Introduction

This report demonstrates that the Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station at 1407 College Avenue SW in Lenoir possesses the requisite integrity and significance for local historic landmark designation. The freight station is locally significant due to its critical role in the city's industrial production and as a remarkably intact example of a Modernist mid-twentieth-century railroad depot. Lenoir's manufacturing concerns sought sites in close proximity to the railroad tracks and freight depot to enable efficient and economical raw material delivery and finished goods shipping. As production burgeoned, the spacious, fire-resistant brick, concrete, and steel station, erected in 1950 at a cost of \$125,000, provided desperately needed increased freight handling capacity. The one-story, flat-roofed Modernist design manifests the Carolina and Northwestern Railway's progressive attitude and exemplifies a functionalist approach in its form, massing, expressed structure, and open interior. The efficient floor plan encompasses a north administrative wing and a south warehouse flanked by loading docks with deep canopies and a long open shed sheltering the loading platform. The station exhibits excellent integrity, with character-defining elements including common-bond red-brick walls; a cast-stone foundation, sills, lintels, belt course, and coping; concrete floors and roof decking; and steel beams in good condition. The warehouse features a small vertical-board-sheathed office and the original freight scale. Horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash illuminate the administrative wing, while the wood-panel loading dock doors' glazed upper sections light the warehouse. The building is one of only two extant Caldwell County railroad stations.¹

The local historic landmark boundary encompasses 3.014-acre Caldwell County tax parcel number 2749545715.

¹ The other, a small, one-story, weatherboarded, gable-roofed, circa 1900 building in Hudson, is a typical rural turn-of-the-twentieth century passenger and freight depot.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Site	3
Setting	3
Description	4
Integrity Statement	10
Historical Background and Industrial Context	10
Freight Depot Architecture Context	14
National Register of Historic Places Status	16
Local Historic Landmark Eligibility Evaluation	16
Designation Parameters	17
Boundary Description and Justification	17
Sanborn Map	19
Floor Plans	20



Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station indicated with a red star

Base 2014 aerial photo courtesy of <http://gis.caldwellcountync.org/maps/>

Site

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station is rotated approximately thirty degrees from true cardinal direction alignment, paralleling the railroad track. However, for the purposes of this document the following description is written as if it has true north-south orientation.

Setting

Located south of Lenoir's commercial center, the 1950 freight station occupies an irregularly shaped approximately three-acre parcel bounded by College Avenue to the north, a vacant three-acre tract to the east and south, and the former Carolina and Northwestern Railway line, now operated by the Caldwell County Railroad Company, to the west. The station stands in close proximity to the railroad track in the lot's northwest section. Industrial buildings flank the railroad corridor west and south of the depot. The 1902-1903 Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. plant (NR 1077) is east of the vacant lot and a creek. J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill (NR 1077), erected in 1896 and expanded through the early 1950s, stands to the northeast on College Avenue's north side.

A gravel drive provides access from College Avenue to the loading docks on the freight station's east side and a gravel parking area. The topography is flat. The area surrounding the station has not been

maintained and is overgrown with vegetation. The tracks of the spur line to the east that served Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. have been removed.



Southern Railway System photograph taken for “Carolina and Northwestern Opens New Lenoir, N. C. Freight Station,” *Ties*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (May 1950), 13-15
Norfolk Southern Corporation Archives; Norfolk, Virginia



Northeast oblique

Photographs taken by Heather Fearnbach on October 24, 2018

Description

Exterior

The long, rectangular, one-story, flat-roofed, Modernist freight station encompasses a north administrative section and a large, open, south warehouse surrounded by loading docks. The fire-resistant brick, concrete, and steel structure features five-to-one common-bond red-brick walls that rise

above a smooth cast-stone foundation. Slightly projecting cast-stone sills and a cast-stone belt course surmounting the windows distinguish the north section. Cast-stone coping caps the flat parapet.

The six-bay north elevation includes a cut-away corner entrance at its east end. The original single-leaf aluminum door has three horizontal upper panes, a flat Modernist handle, and a rectangular transom. Cast-stone steps lead to the recessed door. Five large two-over-two-horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash are centered on the north elevation west of the entrance. Above the windows, the original “freight depot” sign comprised of individually mounted capital block letters remains, although the upper “Carolina and Northwestern Railway” lettering has been removed.

At the east elevation’s north end, five high two-horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash illuminate the entrance vestibule and restrooms. Aluminum-frame screens have been installed in the openings. The six-bay-long freight warehouse to the south is inset to accommodate the loading-dock entrances—six on each of the east and west elevations and one on the south elevation—that provided ample access for product transfer. The roll-up doors are intact with the exception of the north door on the west elevation, which has been removed. Most have two lower and one upper five-wood-panel rows and a five-pane section that allowed natural light to permeate the warehouse. Three taller doors (in the east and west elevations’ southernmost bays and at the south elevation’s center) have two rows of glazing. Plywood has temporarily been installed on the interior of the glazed sections to advert breakage.

The concrete and steel loading platform wraps around the entire warehouse and extends further south along the west railroad corridor, terminating with a wide concrete ramp. Steel beams and bracketed posts support the deep concrete canopies and open shed that shelter the concrete platform. A heavy-timber bumper was added to the east platform’s edge to minimize truck strike impact. The west platform has a steel edge. Steel bumpers also protect the concrete foundation at the warehouse’s southeast and southwest corners.

The north warehouse door opening on the west elevation has been filled with a single-leaf hollow-core wood door and a square window (now sans glass) surrounded with plywood. Three large two-over-two-horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash at the west elevation’s north end light the office.



Southeast oblique



Southwest oblique (above) and west elevation, north section (below)



Interior

Spatial use dictated the station's interior finishes. The north administrative wing was more finely finished, with plastered walls and plaster-on-metal-lath ceilings. However, partial roof collapse has resulted in extensive water damage in the open office that occupies most of the wing. Spalling plaster has exposed brick and cast-stone walls and reinforced-concrete roof decking. Although some brittle, square, vinyl-composition tiles remain in the office, the concrete slab floor is exposed in most areas. The long plywood service counter at the room's east end provided ample storage in its seven-section two-shelf base cabinet with flat-panel doors and matching drawers.

East of the office, a small entrance vestibule, restroom, and storage room span the east elevation, while storage and mechanical rooms and a restroom are on the office's south side. In order to permit light transference from the vestibule, the partition wall behind the office service counter encompasses a five-section textured-clear-glass window and a matching single-leaf door with a textured-glass upper section. Elsewhere, single-leaf metal doors have simple steel frames. Tall metal lockers line the vestibule's east wall. The restrooms retain three-quarter-height square-white-ceramic-tile wainscoting with black bullnose and base tiles. The patterned ceramic-tile floors comprise groups of four small rectangular white tiles bordering a central square black tile. Some original white marble slab stall partitions and white porcelain fixtures, including Art Moderne-style sinks with slender tapered pedestals, are intact.

A brick partition wall separates the administrative area from the warehouse to the south. A single-leaf metal door near the wall's east end provides egress. The robust steel beams that span the building's entire width beneath concrete roof decking allow the warehouse to have a completely open plan. The unpainted brick and cast-stone walls and poured-concrete floor are resilient and durable. Temporary steel shelving and dimensional lumber wall framing installed after 1994 were removed in 2018.

A small, square, vertical-board-sheathed, flat-roofed office projects from the north elevation's center. A single six-over-six double-hung wood sash pierces each of the east and west elevations. An eight-over-eight sash of the same type and a single-leaf door with a three-horizontal-pane upper section fill the south elevation.

The original freight scale just north of the south entrance on the warehouse's east elevation is a rare survival. Manufactured by Southern Railway's Charlotte Roadway Shops, the frame comprises a cast-iron classical cornice supported by two fluted columns spanned by a central brace. A weighbeam with a sliding poise hangs from the cornice. A cast-iron rod connects the weighbeam to a lever mounted under the central brace. A matching rod extends from the lever to weights beneath the wood-plank platform.



Office, looking east (above) and warehouse office, looking northwest (below)





Warehouse, looking south (above) and freight scale near warehouse's southeast corner (below)



Integrity Statement

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station remains on its original site and the surrounding area appears much as it did during the station's function, thus allowing for integrity of setting, feeling, and association. The building retains high integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Character-defining features including five-to-one common-bond brick and formed-concrete walls, a concrete floor and roof deck, a flat parapet with cast-stone coping, slightly projecting cast-stone sills, and a cast-stone belt course surmounting the windows are intact. Although the administrative wing's interior finishes were damaged after a portion of the roof collapsed, the floor plan and significant features such as the east partition wall with a five-section textured-clear-glass window and a matching single-leaf door with a textured-glass upper section remain. The original warehouse freight scale and office are in good condition. The upcoming rehabilitation will preserve character-defining architectural features in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's standards.

Historical Background and Industrial Context

Caldwell County residents advocated for rail service to increase connectivity to regional markets throughout the nineteenth century. However, although the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad commenced constructing a privately funded 110-mile freight and passenger line to connect its namesake communities in northwestern South Carolina and North Carolina soon after the company's 1873 creation, it was not until June 2, 1884 that citizens of Lenoir, Caldwell County's seat established in 1841, celebrated the line's completion. The railroad company erected utilitarian frame freight and passenger depots near town centers and facilitated commercial and industrial development with spur lines along its route.²

Lenoir entrepreneurs were among those who capitalized upon the opportunity for more efficient trade. Merchants including George Washington Finley Harper, Marshall M. Courtney, John Mathias Bernhardt, and George Lynn Bernhardt erected commercial buildings to serve the influx of residents and visitors. Farmers came to town to socialize, conduct business, purchase items they could not produce, and sell and ship crops and products including dried fruits, herbs, roots, cabbage, wool, and beeswax. In addition to functioning as an important agricultural market, Lenoir was promoted as a gateway to Blowing Rock and the Blue Ridge Mountains, and thus attracted a growing number of tourists.³

The Bernhardts and Harpers were also heavily involved with railroad development. G. W. F. Harper was a principle stockholder and became in 1893 the president of the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge

² Robert D. Walker, "Can't and Never Will: Remembering the Carolina & North-Western," in Cary Franklin Poole, *A History of Railroad in Western North Carolina* (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1995), 58-67; Carolina and North-Western Railway Company, *Carolina and North-Western Ry.: Home Enterprise Developed by Home Talent and Home Money* (Yorkville, S.C: L. M. Grist's Sons, Printers, 1915), 5-7, 40-43, 57.

³ G. W. F. Harper owned a general mercantile established by his father James C. Harper to serve Lenoir residents around 1845. On January 1, 1884, Harper partnered with his future son-in-law and John's older brother to create Harper and Bernhardt. Harper and Bernhardt reorganized in April 1886, adding G. W. F. Harper's son and the Bernhardts' Davidson classmate George Finley Harper as partner s. "Good in a Change of Gauge," *Charlotte Observer* (hereafter abbreviated CO), February 11, 1902, p. 4; "John Matthias Bernhardt," alumnus file, Special Collections, E. H. Little Library, Davidson College, Charlotte, North Carolina; *Lenoir Topic* (hereafter abbreviated LT), May 1879; *Lenoir News* (hereafter abbreviated LN), May 1, 1879, August 28, 1879, February 19, 1880, September 19, 1888; "Marshall M. Courtney," *Lenoir News-Topic* (hereafter abbreviated LNT), September 12, 1941, p. 4; "Courtney's Now Celebrating 75th Anniversary," LNT, May 23, 1947, p. 1; Hall E. Cobb, Jr., *A Brief Historical Sketch of Caldwell County & Lenoir* (Lenoir: n. p., 1922), 187; E. Carl Anderson, ed., *The Heritage of Caldwell County, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem, N. C.: Hunter Publishing Company, 1983), 143-144.

Railroad. He guided the concern through receivership to become the Carolina and Northwestern Railway in 1897. J. M. Bernhardt, while general production manager at Caldwell Land and Lumber Company (incorporated in 1892), encouraged the owners to build the Caldwell and Northern Railway. He also assisted with the route's survey. Beginning in 1893, freight cars transported lumber from the small community of Collettsville, located ten miles southwest of Lenoir, to the larger municipality's industries. A passenger line extended northwest of Lenoir in phases to Wilson Creek, Mortimer, and finally to Edgemont by 1906. The Carolina and Northwestern Railway assumed control of the Caldwell and Northern Railway in 1905 and merged the companies in 1910.⁴

Railroad proximity, sizable potential employee pools, and steam and electric power availability galvanized Lenoir's late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century transformation into a manufacturing center. Numerous industrial concerns including J. M. Bernhardt's Lenoir Furniture Company, which became Harper Furniture Company in 1900, commenced production in the late nineteenth century. J. M. Bernhardt's Lenoir planing mill and box factory, which began operating in 1896, was the town's largest manufacturing concern by 1900. In 1902, Lenoir boasted at least ten industrial enterprises, ranging from flour to lumber mills, furniture producers, and building supply companies, most of which were located along railroad lines. Downtown businesses prospered as the population increased in conjunction with industrial expansion.⁵ Sizable early-twentieth-century endeavors included Lenoir's first cotton mill. Gastonia industrialist J. D. Moore, M. M. Courtney, and other investors identified an optimal site southwest of the town's center near the Carolina and Northwestern Railway line. Stockholders organized Lenoir Cotton Mill in March 1901 and the factory was substantially complete in January 1902.⁶

In order to better accommodate Lenoir's steadily increasing freight and passenger traffic, Carolina and Northwestern Railway representative J. W. Fletcher Jr, announced in February 1914 that Elliot Building Company of Hickory had been engaged to remodel and enlarge the frame depot at 112 Depot Street. The existing building would house the freight department, while a sizable addition would encompass white and African American waiting rooms, a central office, and shed to shelter the loading platform. The project was completed in July 1914.⁷

The improved depot epitomized the municipality's prosperity. Farmers, merchants, industrialists, and other entrepreneurs who utilized common-carrier shipping and receiving services to sustain their businesses benefited from the large freight room and loading platforms. Passengers enjoyed clean, comfortable, and heated lounges where refreshments, tobacco products, and reading materials were available for purchase. The white and African American waiting rooms each included restrooms. In addition to meeting transportation needs, Lenoir's depot functioned as a gathering place and information hub where the station agent received and distributed news via telegraph.

Regular passenger and freight service continued through the 1920s. However, ridership declined during the 1930s in conjunction with North Carolina roadway improvements and increased automobile

⁴ *LT*, June 14, 1893, p. 3; "Chester and Lenoir Railroad," *CO*, February 1, 1894, p. 2; *Statesville Record*, January 17, 1896, p. 2; "The Chester and Lenoir," *Hickory Press*, January 23, 1896, p. 2; Walker, "Can't and Never Will," 58-61.

⁵ "Lenoir is a Very Busy Town," *CO*, November 10, 1901, p. 3; D. P. Waters, "Caldwell County, N. C.," *LT*, June 16, 1909, p. 2; North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1910), 60-61; "What is it Worth?," *Lenoir News* (hereafter abbreviated *LN*), November 21, 1916, p. 2; Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 140-141.

⁶ "A Cotton Mill Assured," *Weekly News* (hereafter abbreviated *WN*), March 15, 1901, p. 4; *WN*, March 22, 1901, p. 4; "Cotton Mill Meeting," *WN*, March 29, 1901, p. 4.

⁷ "New Depot," *Lenoir Topic*, February 14, 1913, p. 11 "Addition Made to Lenoir Depot," *Charlotte News*, June 14, 1913, p. 5.

usage. Carolina and Northwestern Railway debated terminating Sunday passenger service between Chester and Edgemont in 1931, but did not make significant schedule changes until June 1937, when passenger service ceased between Lenoir and Edgemont. Freight trains operated on that portion of the line until September 23rd, after which the tracks were removed. Prominent Lenoir residents and railroad employees were among 133 passengers from throughout the region who celebrated the line's history during the final run.⁸

Floyd C. Hanks remained the Lenoir station agent during the 1930s, followed by Perkins, Georgia native Dewey Hobson Thorne, previously a mayor of Maiden and a train dispatcher in Hickory.⁹ Freight commerce escalated as the economy began to recover from the Great Depression in the late 1930s. The Lenoir Board of Trade touted the city's textile mills, furniture plants, and allied industries—makers of mirrors, veneers, and other products—all of which primarily shipped and received goods via the railroad. Lenoir had three hospitals, three residential suburbs, and a Donald Ross-designed golf course, and was said to be the state's fastest growing city since World War I. The population numbered twelve thousand, triple that of 1920, and downtown included five hardware and furniture stores and four drug stores.¹⁰ By the beginning of the 1940s, thirty-three Lenoir industrial plants provided work for five thousand people and local manufacturers sold products in Canada and Mexico as well as in every state. An article in the September 1941 centennial edition of the *News-Topic* claimed that Lenoir was the nation's second largest furniture manufacturing city. Caldwell County then contained twelve cotton mills and five hosiery mills, three of which were in Lenoir.¹¹ The city upgraded utilities and infrastructure to serve these and other industrial operations.

World War II brought new opportunities and challenges. Although industrial production and freight traffic increased, Lenoir's tourist trade diminished near the war's end when the Carolina and Northwestern Railway cut passenger service from two trains daily to a single train in response to a 1944 Office of Defense Transportation directive. The reduction made it difficult for travelers from Lenoir to make connections in Hickory and Gastonia. The chamber of commerce protested the decreased service, fearing that war-time cutbacks would eventually result in passenger service elimination. This indeed soon transpired, as the Carolina and Northwestern Railway discontinued passenger, mail, express, and baggage service on April 12, 1947. Dewey Thorne continued to manage the depot during the 1940s.¹²

Expanded freight transport facilities became imperative as the economy boomed and industrial production proliferated during the post-war years. At Blue Bell, Inc., for example, sales climbed from \$13,795,450 in 1943 to \$46,630,060 in 1950, when the company asserted that it remained the world's

⁸ "Railway Seeks to Abandon Its Line in W. N. C.," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, July 23, 1937, p. 10; "C&NW Makes Last Run on Line to Edgemont," *LNT*, September 24, 1937, pp. 1 and 6; Poole, *A History of Railroading in Western North Carolina*, 67.

⁹ Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir, North Carolina, City Directories* (Asheville: Commercial Service Company, 1930-1941); "D. H. Thorne," *The Daily Independent* (Kannapolis), April 29, 1966, p. 5.

¹⁰ Lenoir Board of Trade and Lenoir News-Topic, *Lenoir, North Carolina* (n.p.: 1938), 3-5; *Miller's Lenoir City Directory 1937-1938*, 5-6.

¹¹ *Miller's Lenoir City Directory, 1943-1944*, 267; *LNT*, September 12, 1941, p. 1.

¹² "Is It the Beginning of the End?," *LNT*, December 22, 1944; "Entitled to Better Service," *LNT*, January 9, 1945; "C&NW Passenger, Express and Baggage Service Discontinued," *LNT*, April 15, 1947, pp. 1 and 5; Lenoir Chamber of Commerce, "A Protest Addressed to the Office of Defense Transportation in respect to the Past, Present, and Future Passenger Train Service of the Carolina and North Western Railway," 1945, 1-6, 14; *Miller's Lenoir City Directories, 1941-1950*; Matthew Bumgarner, *The Legacy of the Carolina and North Western Railway* (Hickory: Tarheel Press, 1997); Southern Railway System, "Carolina and Northwestern Opens New Lenoir, N. C. Freight Station," *Ties*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (May 1950), 14.

largest work clothes manufacturer.¹³ It is therefore not surprising that the Carolina and Northwestern Railway purchased three lots comprising about 2.5 acres in the heart of Lenoir's industrial corridor just west of the Blue Bell, Inc. plant (formerly Lenoir Cotton Mill) upon which to erect a new freight depot. Lenoir Furniture Corporation, housed in a sprawling complex to the southwest, sold the parcels in February 1949 with the understanding that the Carolina and Northwestern Railway would relocate and improve the access road on the property's west side and build a culvert to divert the creek on the east side.¹⁴ Myriad industrial concerns lined the corridor in close proximity to the freight station site. Hayes Cotton Mill was to the northwest. Fairfield Chair Company stood directly west of the station on the railroad corridor's opposite side. Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company was to the southwest and Lenoir Chair Manufacturing Company's complex spanned the railroad further south.¹⁵

Elliot Building Company of Hickory commenced construction in spring 1950, assisted by Lenoir contractors including Parlier and Tomlinson Plumbing and A. P. Causby Ready-Mix Cement companies. When completed in 1950, the Modernist Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station exemplified Southern Railway's progressive image. The spacious, fire-resistant brick, concrete, and steel building, erected at a cost of \$125,000, provided desperately needed increased freight handling capacity. The station was part of a five-year \$1,192,500 capital improvement campaign that included track, bridge, and trestle upgrades and new construction. At the April 17, 1950 dedication, Southern Railway vice-president John B. Hyde, who delivered the keynote address to an approximately four-hundred-person audience, emphasized the depot's importance to Caldwell County's twenty-six furniture factories and fifty allied industries, which altogether had approximately ten thousand employees. Lenoir lawyer James T. Pritchett functioned as master of ceremonies, introducing speakers including industrialists James E. Broyhill (president-treasurer of Lenoir Furniture Corporation and Lenoir Chair Company), Harold F. Coffey (president of Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company and Union Mirror Company), W. Clyde Sudreth (National Veneer Company president, Union Mirror Company secretary, and secretary-treasurer of Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company and Blowing Rock Furniture Company), and Emory C. McCall (Lenoir Chair Company secretary and National Veneer Company treasurer). Broyhill praised Carolina and Northwestern Railway's use of private equity rather than government subsidies to execute the improvement program. Freight station employees in attendance included agent Dewey Thorne, chief rates clerk Ed. C. Schell, bill clerk Tom Beach Jr., cashier-operator N. B. Clark, secretary Billie Greer, warehouse clerk J. M. Huntley, car clerk W. P. Marrow, and station hands H. E. Bumgarner and Walter Echols, who was the only African American in the aforementioned group.¹⁶

Dewey Thorne remained the station agent and yard master until his sudden death on April 28, 1966 at the age of sixty-eight. Adjacent industrial complexes continued to expand and utilize the station. In 1974, Ethel Chair Factory and Lenoir Mirror Company occupied plants to the west across the railroad tracks. Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company was southwest of Lexington Mirror Company. Bernhardt Manufacturing Company and Lenoir Chair Manufacturing Company complexes were further south adjacent to a spur line. Blue Bell, Inc., to the east, remained Caldwell County's only sizable apparel manufacturer as it utilized the Lenoir plant until 1983.¹⁷

¹³ Blue Bell, Inc., "Blue Bell Annual Report, 1952," pp. 1-2; "Other Corporate Reports," *New York Times*, February 7, 1950.

¹⁴ Caldwell County Deed Book 247, p. 395.

¹⁵ Norfolk Southern right-of-way map, 1974, Caldwell County Plat Book 16, p. 49.

¹⁶ Southern Railway System, "Carolina and Northwestern Opens New Lenoir, N. C. Freight Station," 13-15; "Dedication of Freight Depot Monday, 11 a. m.," *LNT*, April 15, 1950, p. 1; "400 Attend Lenoir Depot Dedication," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, April 17, 1950, p. 5; *Miller's Lenoir City Directory*, 1950.

¹⁷ Sanborn Map Company, "Lenoir," Caldwell County, August 1950, Sheets 14 and 15.

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway operated as a Southern Railway subsidiary from 1942 until Southern Railway acquired Norfolk Southern Railroad on January 1, 1974, after which it was subsumed by the larger company. Norfolk Southern was incorporated in 1980 and merged with Norfolk and Western Railroad on June 1, 1982. The Carolina and Northwestern Railway line subsequently reverted to its original name as part of the Norfolk Southern Corporation.¹⁸

Although shipping by rail declined dramatically with the rise of truck transport, local industries utilized the depot to ship and receive freight until 1994, when Norfolk Southern conveyed the seventeen-mile-long Hickory-to-Lenoir line to the Caldwell County Economic Development Commission. The Caldwell County Railroad Company, a Southeast Shortlines, Inc. subsidiary, has since operated that section of the line.¹⁹ Rail service remains an expedient and affordable means of transporting goods. Various entities subsequently leased the freight station for storage. Norfolk Southern conveyed the property to Lenoir Depot LLC on September 10, 2018. The building will be rehabilitated in conjunction with the former Lenoir Cotton Mill complex to the east.

Freight Depot Architecture Context

As railroad companies developed lines during the mid-nineteenth century, rudimentary platforms, open-sided heavy-timber-frame sheds, and small frame buildings accommodated freight and passengers. By the late nineteenth century, prospering railroad concerns began replacing these temporary structures with specialized buildings. Companies employed architects and draftsmen to render station prototypes that could be easily replicated and modified with site-specific details. Utilization of these standardized plans expedited construction and reduced cost.

Civil engineer Walter G. Berg included numerous depot plans and elevations rendered for a wide variety of railroad companies in his 1893 publication *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads*. Efficient function was paramount, but aesthetics were also important. Municipality size dictated depot scale, style, and finish. Despite regional building material variation, the plans were remarkably consistent. Berg delineates four types of depots: flag, combination, local passenger, and terminal passenger. Flag depots were simple platforms or modest buildings in rural communities where travelers and shippers signaled trains to stop by waving a flag. In small towns, combination depots with minimal architectural embellishment accommodated both freight and passenger traffic. These buildings encompassed waiting rooms, offices, restrooms, freight and baggage storage rooms, and loading platforms. In some cases, combination depots included living quarters for station agents and other railroad employees.²⁰ Densely populated cities contained multiple depots erected by competing rail lines. Freight depots were simply executed, with function dictating form and finish. Regardless of size, stations promoted a railroad company's corporate identity and served as community landmarks.

As the twentieth century progressed, freight depots executed in myriad architectural styles served North Carolina communities. The Seaboard Air Line Railway and Southern Railway companies erected hundreds of modest passenger and freight depots to serve small towns throughout the nation. Early twentieth-century stations—typically one-story, narrow, rectangular, hip- or gable-roofed, brick or frame buildings with deep bracketed eaves and large multipane double-hung windows—resembled late-nineteenth-century depots in form and plan. Most displayed minimal ornamentation, with

¹⁸ Norfolk Southern Corporation, "A Line in Time," <http://www.nscorp.com/content/nscorp/en/the-norfolk-southern-story.html> (accessed September 2018).

¹⁹ "Caldwell County Railroad," <http://www.ncrailways.org> (accessed September 2018).

²⁰ Walter G. Berg, *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1893), 246.

functionality driving the design. Stylistic influences ranged from Queen Anne to Craftsman. Textured or variegated brick walls and corbelled masonry cornices, belt courses, and water tables heightened aesthetic appeal at nominal expense. Brick veneer afforded a much greater degree of fire resistance than weatherboard siding and lowered long-term maintenance costs. Projecting window bays added dimension and enhanced visibility.

Freight depots contained scales for weighing shipments and sliding loading dock doors on multiple elevations. Open interiors accommodated baggage and freight handling. As this use did not require finished walls or ceilings, structural systems are typically completely exposed in freight rooms, as seen Lenoir. Platforms adjacent to the depot allowed for freight transfer.

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station in Lenoir, which is one of only two extant Caldwell County depots, exemplifies mid-twentieth-century Modernist freight station design.²¹ Modernist architectural principles such as simplicity, efficiency, affordability, and intrinsic material expression were inherently applicable to industrial buildings. The building displays the functionalist approach espoused by architects including Albert Kahn in its form, massing, expressed structure, and open plan. The station retains excellent integrity, with character-defining elements including common-bond red-brick walls; a cast-stone foundation, sills, lintels, belt course, and coping; steel beams; and concrete roof decking. The fire-resistant structure retains its original plan: a north administrative wing containing an office, entrance vestibule, restrooms, and storage and mechanical rooms, and a large open south freight warehouse flanked by loading docks. Fenestration is dictated by spatial use rather than symmetry. Regularly spaced horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash illuminate the administrative wing, while multi-wood-panel roll-up loading dock doors with glazed upper sections provide natural light in the warehouse. The long open concrete-and-steel shed and canopies facilitated freight transfer. The station orientation allowed direct truck access to the docks on the east elevation. The small vertical-board-sheathed warehouse office and freight scale are also important survivals.

The Old North State Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society's 2002 inventory of North Carolina railroad buildings identifies only a few mid-twentieth-century depots, all of which are austere, functionalist buildings. Examples comparable to Lenoir's Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station include the Modernist Virginia and Carolina Southern Railway freight station at 163 South Chestnut Street in Lumberton (Robeson County, Lumberton Commercial Historic District, National Register 1989), which was also erected in conjunction with the company's capital improvement campaign.²² The one-story, flat-roofed, red brick Lumberton depot is characterized by deep eaves and a cast-stone foundation. The warehouse is taller and more simply executed than the office, which features banded brick accents and oculus windows at its west end and large multipane double-hung wood-frame sash on the south elevation overlooking the railroad. A projecting window-filled bay afforded station agents an unimpeded view of the rail line.

The Southern Railway passenger and freight station in at 58 Depot Street in Marion (McDowell County) comprises an 1867 depot enlarged in 1890, 1935, and again in 1952 with a Modernist office addition at its east end.²³ Robust Craftsman brackets support the deep eaves of the red brick main block's side-gable roof. The flat-roofed 1952 addition is executed in five-to-one common-bond dark

²¹ Caldwell County's other surviving depot, a one-story, weatherboarded, gable-roofed, circa 1900 building in Hudson, now serves as a local history museum.

²² Art Peterson, Tony Reevey, and William L. Dowdy, compilers, *A Directory of North Carolina's Railroad Structures, Second Edition* (Raleigh: Old North State Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society, 2002), 174.

²³ Ibid., 118; City of Marion, "Facility Rentals," <http://marionnc.org/Marion/pages/FacilityRentals.html> (accessed December 2018).

red brick with a cast-stone foundation, window surrounds, door sills, and coping. Four-horizontal-pane steel sash with two-pane centraloppers remain on the south elevation, where a projecting bay fronts the railroad. Flat-roofed metal-edged canopies span the north and south elevations, sheltering two entrances on each wall. The City of Marion has rehabilitated the depot to serve as an event venue and offices.

National Register of Historic Places Status

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station was inventoried during Robinson and Associates, Lenoir Municipal Survey, completed in 2017 and was added to the North Carolina Study List in October 2018.

Local Historic Landmark Eligibility Evaluation

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station is **eligible** for local historic landmark designation due to its critical role in the city's industrial production. *In order to possess such significance, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* Lenoir's manufacturing concerns sought sites in close proximity to the railroad tracks and freight depot to enable efficient and economical raw material delivery and finished goods shipping. As production burgeoned, the spacious, fire-resistant brick, concrete, and steel station, erected in 1950 at a cost of \$125,000, provided desperately needed increased freight handling capacity.

The building is **not eligible** for local historic landmark designation in association with a person. *In order to possess such significance, it would have to retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* Although prominent Lenoir businessmen advocated for the depot's construction, the building is not most closely associated with a single individual's achievements, which would be required for local historic landmark designation under this area of significance.

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station is **eligible** for local historic landmark designation due to its architectural significance. *In order to qualify, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The one-story, flat-roofed Modernist design manifests the Carolina and Northwestern Railway's progressive attitude and exemplifies a functionalist approach in its form, massing, expressed structure, and open interior. The efficient floor plan encompasses a north administrative wing and a south warehouse flanked by loading docks with deep canopies and a long open shed sheltering the loading platform. The station exhibits excellent integrity, with character-defining elements including common-bond red-brick walls; a cast-stone foundation, sills, lintels, belt course, and coping; concrete floors and roof decking; and steel beams in good condition. The

warehouse features a small vertical-board-sheathed office and the original freight scale. Horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash illuminate the administrative wing, while the wood-panel loading dock doors' glazed upper sections light the warehouse. The building is one of only two extant Caldwell County railroad stations.²⁴

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station is **not eligible** for local historic landmark designation for its potential to yield information. *In order to possess such significance, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* The structure and site are unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or urban archaeology or yield historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

Designation Parameters

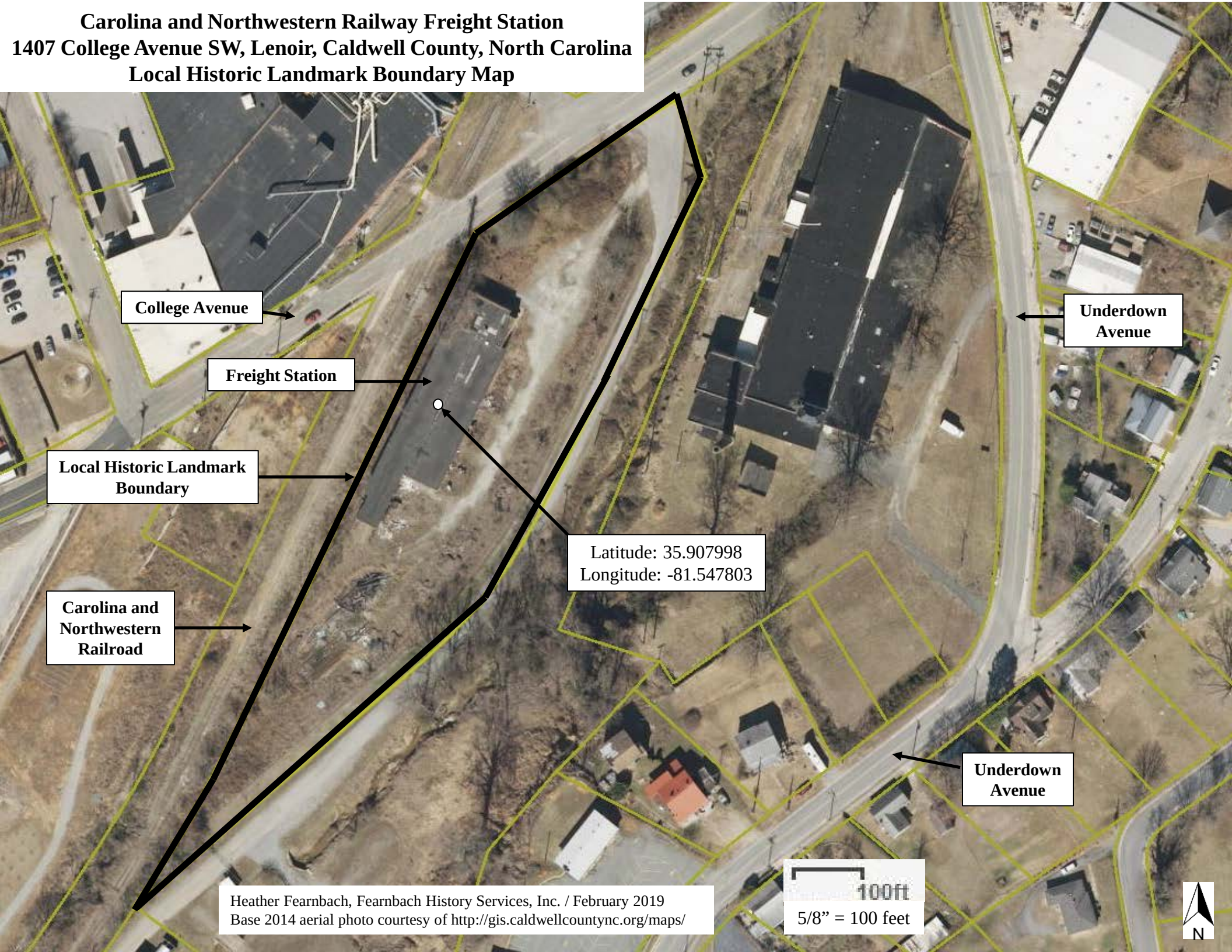
is seeking local historic landmark designation for the entire exterior and partial interior in order to recognize the property's architectural and historical significance. The building envelope and original character-defining interior features noted in the local historic landmark eligibility evaluation above should be designated.

Boundary Description and Justification

The proposed local historic landmark designation boundary consists of Caldwell County tax parcel number 2749545715 (3.014 acres), as indicated by the heavy dark lines on the following aerial view (page 18).

²⁴ The other, a small, one-story, weatherboarded, gable-roofed, circa 1900 building in Hudson, is a typical rural turn-of-the-twentieth century passenger and freight depot.

Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station
1407 College Avenue SW, Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina
Local Historic Landmark Boundary Map



College Avenue

Freight Station

Local Historic Landmark
Boundary

Carolina and
Northwestern
Railroad

Latitude: 35.907998
Longitude: -81.547803

Underdown
Avenue

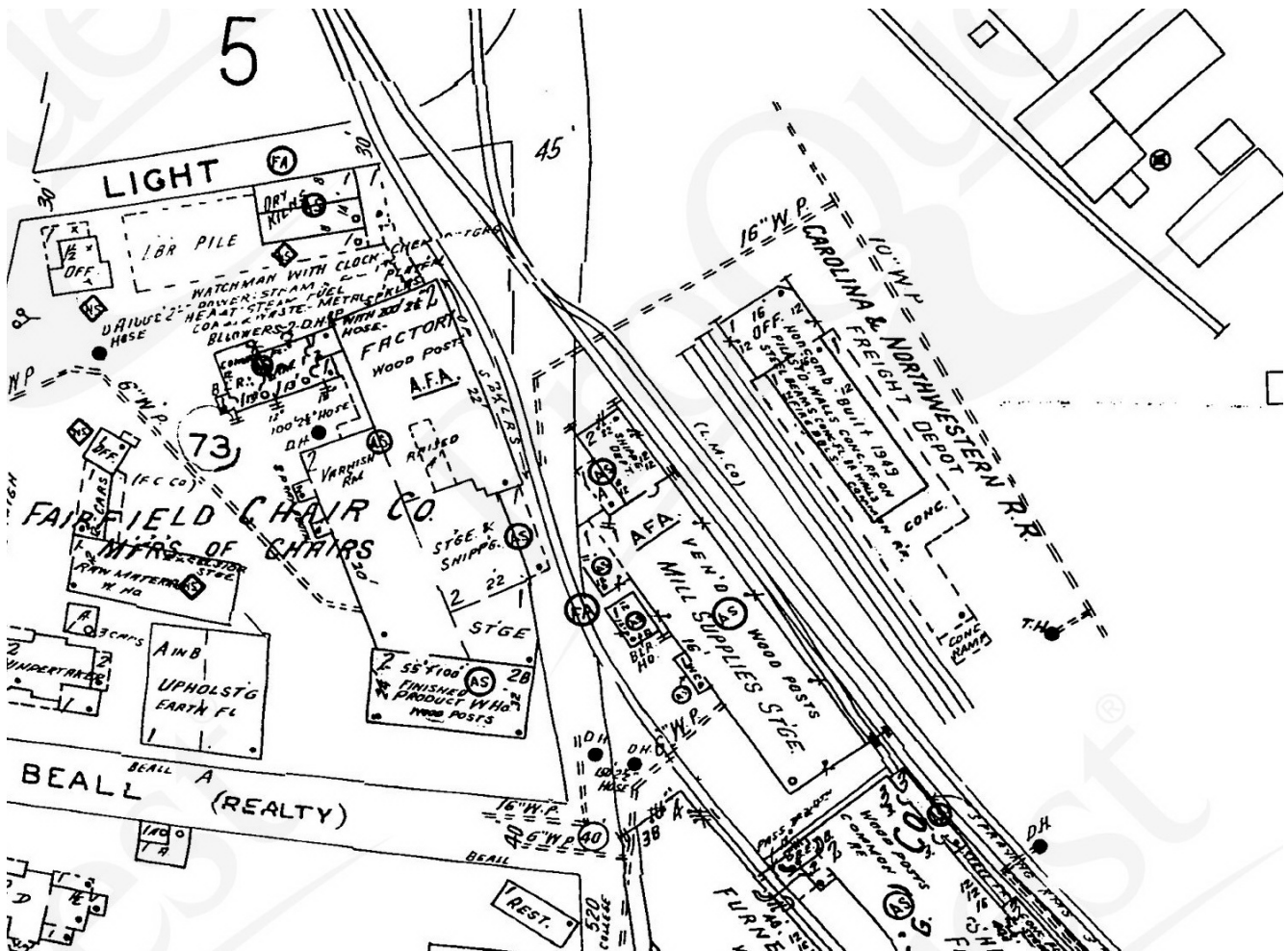
Underdown
Avenue

Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc. / February 2019
Base 2014 aerial photo courtesy of <http://gis.caldwellcountync.org/maps/>

100ft
5/8" = 100 feet



Sanborn Map

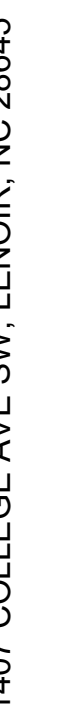


Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Lenoir, North Carolina, Sheet 15 August 1950

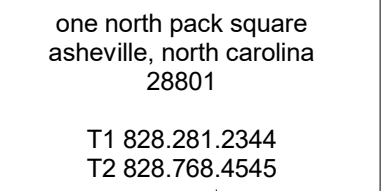
Existing Conditions Floor Plans



② Section 1
3/16" = 1'-0"

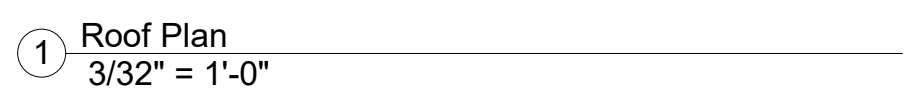


A 1.1



1407 COLLEGE AVE SW, LENOIR, NC 28645

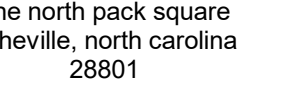
CAROLINA & NORTHWESTERN RAILWAY
FREIGHT STATION

[illegible]

Issue Date

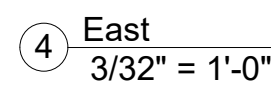
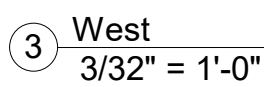
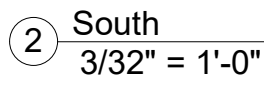
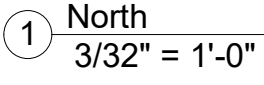
ROOF PLAN

A 1.2



CAROLINA & NORTHWESTERN RAILWAY
FREIGHT STATION

.....



Permit Submittal Date	
Issue Date	

EXISTING ELEVATIONS

A 2.0

LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



**J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory - Steele Cotton Mill –
Hayes Cotton Mill
1201 Steele Street
Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina**

**Prepared by:
Fearnbach History Services, Inc.
3334 Nottingham Road
Winston-Salem, NC 27104**

February 2019

Introduction

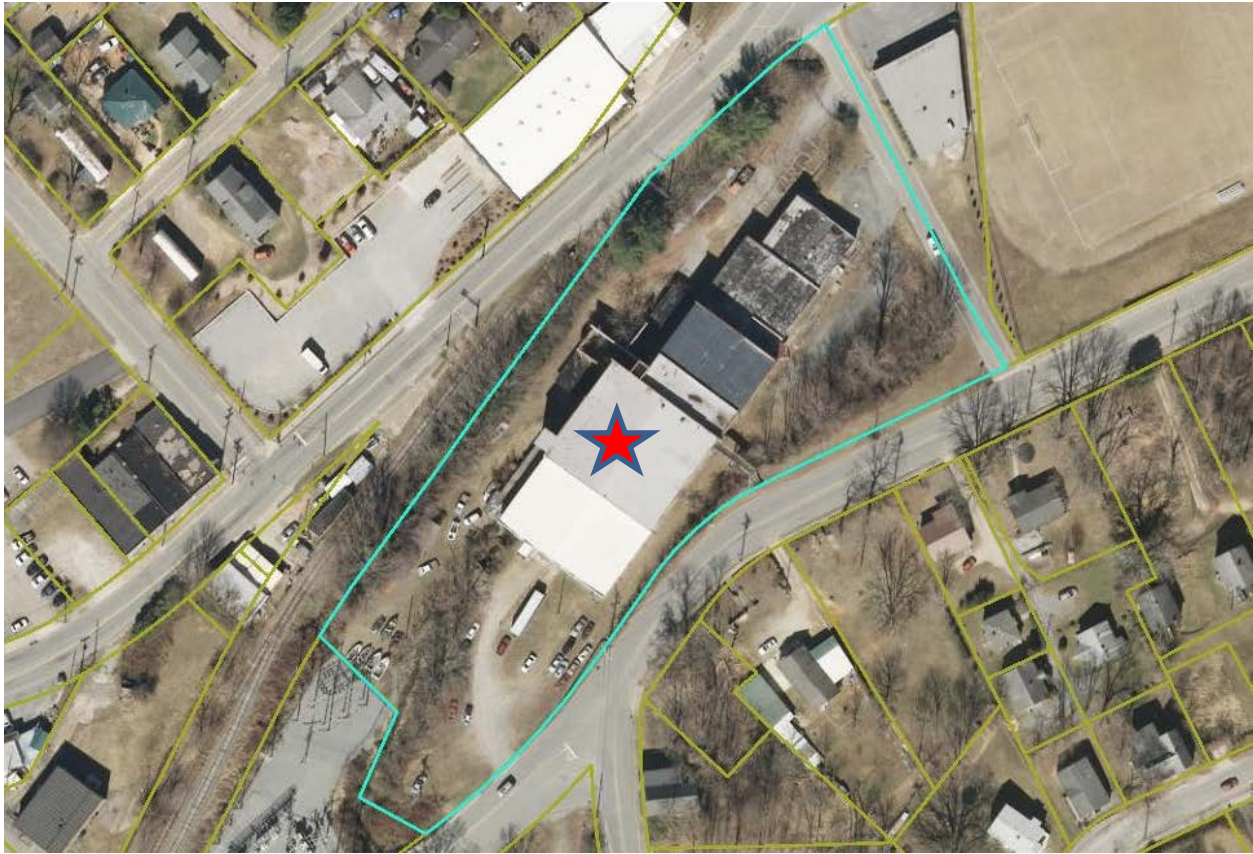
This report demonstrates that J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory - Steele Cotton Mill - Hayes Cotton Mill possesses the requisite integrity and industrial and architectural significance for local historic landmark designation. The concerns' contributions to the local economy as manufacturers, employers, consumers of local goods and services, and taxpayers, were enormous. John Mathias Bernhardt, who became one of Lenoir's leading industrialists, established the planing mill and box factory in 1896. The plant was the town's largest manufacturing enterprise by 1900, supplying hardwood and white pine dimensional lumber and boxes of all sizes to clients throughout the region. After Bernhardt sold the factory in February 1917, it briefly served as a furniture and lumber warehouse. Following expansions and equipment installation, one hundred workers commenced producing weaving and knitting yarns at Steele Cotton Mill in January 1919. New York agents marketed the company's yarns. The enterprise remained successful through 1946, when Hayes Cotton Mill purchased the plant. The concern undertook \$500,000-worth of improvements between 1946 and 1954. Machinery quantities and workforce size remained constant through 1965. Soon after, Hayes Cotton Mill moved its operation to Hudson.

J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill is architecturally significant as the plant manifests typical early- to mid-twentieth-century industrial design. The 1896/1903/1918 factory features load-bearing brick exterior walls executed in six-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings. The round wood and cast-iron column and heavy-timber post-and-beam interior structural system and triple-thickness wood floors are representative of fire-resistant early-twentieth-century industrial architecture. The 1918 addition displays the ongoing prevalence of heavy-timber framing with brick firewalls between combustible areas. The early 1950s additions employ structural-steel framing systems.

The local historic landmark boundary encompasses 3.22-acre Caldwell County tax parcel number 2749650842.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Site	3
Setting	3
Site Evolution	4
Description	6
Integrity Statement	10
Historical Background and Industrial Context	13
Industrial Architecture Context	20
National Register of Historic Places Status	23
Local Historic Landmark Eligibility Evaluation	23
Designation Parameters	24
Boundary Description and Justification	25
Historic Images	27
Sanborn Maps	29
Floor Plans	33



**J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill
indicated with a red star**

Base 2014 aerial photo courtesy of <http://gis.caldwellcountync.org/maps/>

Site

The factory is rotated approximately thirty degrees from true cardinal direction alignment. However, for the purposes of this document the following description is written as if it has true north-south orientation.

Setting

Located south of Lenoir's commercial center, the plant that historically served as J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory, Steele Cotton Mill, and Hayes Cotton Mill occupies a 3.22-acre parcel bounded by Steele Street to the northeast, College Avenue to the southeast, a Duke Power electrical substation to the southwest, and Harper Avenue and the Carolina and North Western Railroad tracks and right-of-way to the northwest. A gravel drive leads from College Avenue to the southwest basement entrance. Asphalt-paved access roads and parking areas are north, west, and east of the additions at the mill's north end.

The plant is at a lower elevation than Steele Street and College Avenue. The site's topography slopes down to the west, allowing for a partially above-grade basement. Grass embankments ameliorate the change in elevation. The almost-vertical drop on College Avenue's west side necessitated the construction of a steel-frame elevated walkway to span the distance between the embankment and the service door into the second story of the factory's east wall.



Southeast oblique

Photographs taken by Heather Fearnbach on August 15, 2016 unless otherwise noted

The bank that abuts the south elevation tapers gradually to a plateau containing a concrete-paved parking area at the southeast basement entrance and a gravel drive that terminates at the southwest basement entrance. Further west, a creek with steep banks runs through the property on the mill's northwest side and is channeled through a culvert beneath the building's west section.

Narrow swaths of grass lawn surround the mill. The areas bordering the plant have been overtaken by vines and deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs. Most of the west elevation and some of the east elevation is obscured by this overgrowth.

The area surrounding the complex is characterized by twentieth-century industrial, commercial, and residential development. Some one-story, frame, gable- and hip-roofed, early-twentieth-century mill worker houses remain east of the factory. The 1902-1903 Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. plant is located to the southeast and a circa 1950 freight depot stands to the south. The 1922 Lenoir High School and its athletic field (now Mack Cook Stadium, a city-owned soccer field) replaced the lumber yard northeast of the factory, between Steele Street and the downtown business district.

Site Evolution

The long, linear manufacturing plant was erected in phases beginning with the southeast section. The one-story-on-basement, frame 1896 factory was thirty-six feet wide and approximately three times as long. A one-story boiler room and a small one-story shavings collection room abutted the west elevation's north end. In 1903, the factory was expanded with a second story and a west addition that more than doubled its width to about one hundred feet. Load-bearing brick east and west walls were constructed and the west 1896 wall removed to create an open interior plan. The frame north elevation was sheathed with iron panels. The south elevation remained frame. The 1896 boiler room, which had been demolished to allow for the expansion, was replaced with a one-story frame boiler room that projected from the factory's northwest corner. An eighty-foot-tall, square, brick smokestack north of the boiler room was also erected in 1903.

Improvements in conjunction with the building's 1918 modification to serve as a cotton yarn spinning mill included the construction of load-bearing brick north and south walls, a one-story picker room at

the north end, an entrance tower on the south elevation, a restroom tower on the west elevation, and a one-story-on-basement cotton warehouse north of the mill. The frame 1903 boiler room was replaced with a two-room brick structure comprising a north boiler room and south engine room. Sanborn maps indicate that it only had one level, but the brick walls rise to two-story height. The freestanding 1903 smokestack remained. A second square brick smokestack was erected in 1918 at the engine room's northeast corner abutting the picker room's west wall. The 1903 smokestack and the 1918 boiler room's north room's north and west walls were demolished sometime after Hayes Cotton Mill ceased production in 1965 and before James C. Sullivan acquired the property in 1982.

A series of additions constructed between 1951 and 1954 extend from the 1896/1903/1918 plant's north and west elevations. A two-story, flat-roofed, brick-and-frame addition fills the space between the 1918 picker room and cotton warehouse to the north. The tall, one-story, brick addition west of the picker room wraps around the 1918 smokestack. On the boiler room's south side, a one-story, flat-roofed, brick addition projects from the factory's west elevation. A one-story, shed-roofed, brick and concrete block addition extends from the west wall near its south end. This addition replaced a small transformer room constructed between 1921 and 1927. Loading docks and an elevated walkway have been built to facilitate the plant's ongoing use.

The early 1950s addition that extended from the cotton warehouse's west elevation sustained damage from a roof leak and flooding that caused partial wall and roof collapse around 1990. The remaining portion of that structure was demolished in 2016. The south section of the 1896/1903/1918 building's second story was removed around 1995 after a truck backed into the south elevation and caused structural failure.¹



South elevation, looking northwest

¹ James C. Sullivan, telephone conversations with Heather Fearnbach, October 2016.

Description

Exterior

The two-story-on-basement 1896/1903/1918 building is characterized by six-to-one common-bond brick walls erected in 1903 and 1918. On the 1918 north elevation, the wall's upper section extends beyond the east and west elevations and steps up to a stepped parapet. Two- and three-header-course lintels and slightly projecting brick window sills frame tall segmental-arched window and door openings. Most multipane, double-hung, wood sash and eight-pane wood transoms were removed and the window openings enclosed with running-bond brick. The infill is flush with the wall plane. Near the top of many openings, two or four clear glass blocks allow light to permeate the interior. A few eight-pane wood transoms remain on the east, west, and south elevations.

The low-pitched-gable roof system initially included projecting rafter ends that created deep eaves. However, contractors removed the rafter ends and overhanging eaves in conjunction with a late-twentieth-century roof installation. The roof retains its original pitch, but metal coping now caps the walls and aluminum gutters and downspouts control water run-off.

The building's south section is now only one-story-on-basement due to the upper floor's circa 1995 removal. A flat roof was installed using heavy-timber beams salvaged from the original structure. A frame wall sheathed with corrugated metal siding encloses the south end of the second story's extant north section.

Historic photographs illustrate that the south elevation was twelve bays wide.² The wall's west section comprises three bays of window openings. The lower two stories of the originally three-level 1918 entrance tower project from the fourth bay. The tower walls are blind. The double-leaf, wood, first-story door with tall, six-horizontal-panel sections provides the only egress. The windows and most of the walls in the two bays east of the tower have been removed to allow for the installation of a basement service door. A sliding plywood door secures that opening. The second story may have also included a service door, but the opening has been infilled with brick around two small, rectangular, single-pane, aluminum windows.

The three south elevation bays east of the tower originally contained windows. The west basement window has been removed and the opening enlarged to create a service door supported with a steel lintel. The building's southeast corner sustained extensive damage when a truck backed into the south wall around 1995. The reconstructed walls are concrete block veneered in running-bond red brick. A roll-up metal service door and a single-leaf steel door allow first-floor access. Wood steps with wood railings rise to a wood landing adjacent to the single-leaf entrance.

Most of the west elevation is obscured by vines and other vegetation. A one-story, shed-roofed, mid-twentieth-century addition extends from the wall near its south end. Running-bond red brick sheathes the addition's south wall and a sliding door pierces its concrete-block west wall.

The three-story restroom tower near the west elevation's center is slightly taller than the mill roof. High eight-pane sash illuminate the restrooms on each level. North of the tower, an arched double-leaf horizontal-panel door facilitates basement access. To the north, at the main block's north end, a one-story, brick, early 1950s office addition with a collapsed roof extends along the boiler room's south wall.

² Photographs from 1938, circa 1959, and 1968 publications in the collection of the Caldwell Heritage Museum in Lenoir.



West elevation, south section, looking northeast

Annie Laurie McDonald, photographer, September 13, 2016

The frame 1903 boiler room was replaced in 1918 with a brick structure containing a north boiler room and south engine room. Sanborn maps indicate that it only had one level, but the brick walls rise to two-story height. The north room's north and west walls were demolished between 1965 and 1982. The remaining soft brick walls are in poor condition and the roof and floor system have collapsed. The tall arched window openings on the south elevation have been infilled with brick and concrete block. The west wall is blind. Near the north elevation's west end, the wall beneath an original arched window opening was removed to allow for a single-leaf door opening.

A one-story-on-basement twenty-five-foot-long picker room abuts the plant's north end. A two-level, flat-roofed, early 1950s addition extends north from the picker room to the opening room at the cotton warehouse's south end. The addition's north wall is brick-veneered concrete-block. On its four-bay east and west elevations, plywood panels sheath the structural steel frame around tall, paired, eighteen-pane, steel sash that illuminate the large, open, second-story room.

A one-story, shed-roofed, early 1950s warehouse projects from the two-level addition's west elevation. The warehouse has a blind brick west wall and a metal-siding-sheathed north wall with a corrugated metal sliding door. The lower section of the tall, square, 1918 smokestack that extends from the picker room's west elevation rises at the addition's southeast corner. A segmental-arched, three-header-course lintel tops the smokestack's clean-out door, which is accessed from the picker room's basement.

A tall, one-story, early 1950s warehouse addition extends from the west half of the two-level addition's north elevation. The addition has a concrete-block west wall and a brick-veneered concrete-block north wall. Small, rectangular, steel-frame clerestory windows pierce its west elevation. A double-leaf metal sliding door secures the entrance near the wall's center. The service door openings on the north elevation have been enclosed with brick and a single-leaf steel door with a glazed upper section.

The one-story-on-basement early 1950s addition that projected from tall one-story addition's north elevation and the 1918 cotton warehouse's west elevation suffered partial wall and roof collapse around 1990. The remaining portion of that structure was demolished in 2016. The cotton warehouse's west wall had been removed upon the 1950s addition's construction. The 1950s concrete-block partition wall at the basement level is intact. Portions of the upper level's frame partition wall have collapsed along with section of the roof and floor system.

The 1918 cotton warehouse's blind north wall is executed in six-to-one common bond. At its northeast corner, the wall's upper section extends beyond the east elevation, stepping up to a flat parapet. The same detail is repeated on the south wall.

The cotton warehouse comprises two storage sections and an opening room at its south end. Corrugated-metal siding sheathes the north warehouse section's east elevation above brick basement walls. A single-leaf door and a two-part wood-sash window were added in conjunction with the siding installation. Four formed-concrete steps lead to the concrete-block loading dock outside the door. Directly below the window, at the east elevation's north end, a single-leaf door with a nine-pane upper section and two flanking glass-block windows pierce the basement wall. The south warehouse section's east elevation retains vertical board sheathing and a matching sliding door. The adjacent loading dock has brick walls and a concrete floor.

The two-bay-wide brick opening room at the cotton warehouse's south end was also constructed in 1918. The tall rectangular window opening has been infilled with brick. An arched three-header-course lintel surmounts a replacement double-leaf vertical-board door.



East elevation, north section, looking southwest

The loading dock extends south along the east elevation of the two-level 1950s addition. The addition's plywood-panel-sheathed second story is cantilevered above the loading dock and supported by steel I-beams. Four bays of tall, paired, eighteen-pane, steel-frame sash with operable six-pane lower hoppers illuminate the upper level. Plywood panels enclose the wide window opening in the brick-veneered ground-floor wall. A double-leaf steel door allows egress.

At the loading dock's south terminus, a double-leaf steel door has been added on picker room's north wall near its east end. The north elevation is blind at the basement level, but three windows, now infilled with brick, lit the upper story. Rectangular, horizontal, one-over-one aluminum sash have been added in each segmental-arched window opening's upper section.

A steel-frame elevated walkway with a board floor extends from the embankment east of the plant to the service door in the north bay of the 1896/1903/1918 building's second story. A sliding door and a steel-bar security door fill the opening. As elsewhere, most east elevation windows have been removed and the openings enclosed with brick. A few eight-pane wood transoms remain. The wall's south section sustained structural damage when a truck backed into the south wall's east end around 1995. The building's southeast corner was reconstructed to one-story height with concrete block veneered in running-bond red brick.



East elevation, south section, looking southwest

Annie Laurie McDonald, photographer, September 13, 2016

Interior

The mill's open plan and interior finishes are substantially intact. The building is characterized by painted brick walls; substantial wood, cast-iron, and steel columns, posts, and beams; wood roof decking; hardwood floors; and metal-clad kalamein doors. Long rows of columns and posts divide the manufacturing areas into wide bays that accommodated sizable machinery.

Round wood columns and heavy-timber posts and beams support the 1896/1903/1918 factory's first- and second-story floor and roof systems. Steel connecting plates secure the columns to the beams. The upper levels contain four approximately twenty-five-foot-wide bays flanked by rows of round wood columns spaced at eight-foot intervals. Some heavy-timber beams have been reinforced with steel. In the basement's north section, cast-iron columns, likely installed in conjunction with the 1918 improvements, have replaced some of the heavy-timber posts. Square heavy-timber posts on tall brick plinths, square brick posts, and heavy-timber beams support the 1918 picker room. Steel I-beams and columns were used to construct post-1950 additions.

The 1896/1903/1918, and early 1950 sections retain wood floors on the upper levels. The original floor system consists of three-inch-thick plank decking, a three-inch-thick diagonal-board middle layer, and a narrow tongue-and-groove hardwood top layer. Most of the basement floor is poured concrete, but some hardwood floor boards remain, albeit in poor condition, in the 1896/1903/1918 factory's northeast section. The 1918 engine room, the one-story additions that extend from the west elevation south of the engine room, and the 1918 cotton warehouse have experienced roof and floor system collapse. The one-story early 1950s warehouse addition has a dirt floor.

The restrooms in the 1918 addition that projects from the center of the 1896/1903 plant's west elevation are simply finished with plaster walls, concrete floors, painted-wood stall partition walls, and white porcelain fixtures. Linear and pedant fluorescent lights and sprinkler system pipes hang from the ceilings throughout the plant. Surface-mounted metal conduit houses electrical wiring.

On the 1896/1903 factory's north elevation, a long, straight run of wood stairs with a vertical-board railing connected the first and second floors. The staircase collapsed in 2016. However, a straight run of wood steps secured by a wood-frame and wire-mesh enclosure facilitates basement access. Most of the original basement structure comprises robust square heavy-timber posts and beams, although some supplementary cast-iron and steel posts have been added. Mid-twentieth-century partition walls divide some outer bays and enclose restrooms, offices, workshops, and mechanical and storage rooms. The basement and later additions have open plans.

Integrity Statement

J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill possesses good integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, design, materials, and workmanship. The 1896/1903/1918 building retains character-defining features of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century industrial architecture. The load-bearing six-to-one common bond brick exterior walls with segmental-arched window and door openings were erected in 1903 and 1918. On the 1918 north elevation, the wall's upper section extends beyond the east and west elevations and steps up to a stepped parapet. This detail is replicated on the 1918 cotton warehouse's north and south elevations. The factory's round wood and cast-iron column, heavy-timber post-and-beam interior structural system, triple-thickness wood floors, and wood roof decking are intact. These elements, in conjunction with metal-clad kalamein doors and firewalls between combustible areas such are representative of fire-resistant construction practices.

Although most original window and door openings have been infilled with brick since the mid-twentieth century, some eight-pane wood transoms survive. The transoms will serve as models for the replacement sash. Brick infill will be removed and historically appropriate windows installed in conjunction with the rehabilitation. The early 1950s additions did not involve extensive modification to the 1896/1903/1918 building; only the creation of door openings to facilitate interior connectivity. The upcoming rehabilitation will preserve character-defining architectural features in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's standards.



**1896/1903 factory, basement, southeast section, looking northwest (above)
and northeast section, looking south (below)**





**1896/1903 factory, first floor, southwest section, looking south (above)
1918 picker room, upper level, looking west (below)**





1950s addition, looking west

Historical Background and Industrial Context

The 1884 completion of the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad, a 110-mile freight and passenger line originating in South Carolina, stimulated commercial and industrial growth along its route. Entrepreneurs John Mathias Bernhardt and George Washington Finley Harper were among those who capitalized on the opportunity for more expeditious trade. Bernhardt, born in 1860 on his family's farm east of Lenoir, graduated from the municipality's Finley High School in 1877. While a teenager, he worked in the store operated by James C. Harper and his son G. W. F. Harper, which had served Lenoir residents since around 1845. Bernhardt attended Davidson College between January 1883 and May 1884, but left prior to completing his course of study in order to pursue business opportunities in his hometown. On January 1, 1884, Bernhardt and his older brother George Lynn Bernhardt had become G. W. F. Harper's partners in the general mercantile. G. L. Bernhardt, as manager of the new entity, Harper and Bernhardt, required his brother's assistance. The concern reorganized in April 1886, adding G. W. F. Harper's son and the Bernhardts' Davidson classmate George Finley Harper as a partner. The family connection deepened when J. M. Bernhardt married G. W. F. Harper's daughter Ellen Douglas Harper on March 28, 1894.³

J. M. Bernhardt gained knowledge of the lumber industry from his father and while working for the Department of the Interior as a land surveyor in Oregon's Hood River Valley. Upon his return to Caldwell County, his speculative endeavors included purchasing sizable forested tracts to timber. He also invested in a Blowing Rock farm called Green Hill. In 1889, Bernhardt encouraged other community leaders to collectively establish Lenoir Furniture Company, the municipality's first furniture factory. He traveled to "northern cities" to procure the plant's equipment in April of that

³ G. W. F. Harper graduated from Davidson College in 1859. G. F. Harper attended Davidson College from September 1882 until June 1885 but did not graduate. "John Matthias Bernhardt" and "George Finley Harper," alumni files, Special Collections, E. H. Little Library, Davidson College, Charlotte, North Carolina.

year. Bernhardt served as the company's president and superintendent until November 1890, when G. F. Harper succeeded him.⁴

In December 1893, J. M. Bernhardt, G. L. Bernhardt, G. F. Harper, and G. W. F. Harper, who had operated as private banker for some time, established Lenoir's first local bank. G. W. F. Harper was the institution's president from its founding until his 1921 death. His son G. F. Harper, initially a cashier, later became vice-president, a position he retained for fifty-two years. The Bernhardts served on the Board of Directors. The concern incorporated as the Bank of Lenoir in 1904 and opened a first-floor office in the three-story, mid-nineteenth-century, brick building that housed the Harper and Bernhardt mercantile on the southwest corner of South and West Main Streets (the building is no longer extant). The bank, which boasted Lenoir's first telephone exchange in 1895, was strategically located at a prominent corner in the most heavily developed commercial block in town.⁵

The Bernhardts and Harpers were also heavily involved with local railroads. G. W. F. Harper was a principle stockholder and became in 1893 the president of the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad. He guided the concern through receivership to become the Carolina and North Western Railway in 1897. J. M. Bernhardt, while general production manager at Caldwell Land and Lumber Company, incorporated in 1892, encouraged the concern's owners—William S. Harvey, Charles N. Wire, George B. Collier, and others—to build the Caldwell and Northern Railway. He also assisted with the route's survey. Beginning in 1893, freight cars transported lumber from the small community of Collettsville, located ten miles southwest of Lenoir, to the larger municipality's industries. A passenger line extended northwest of Lenoir in phases to Wilson Creek, Mortimer, and finally to Edgemont by 1906. The Carolina and North Western Railway assumed control of the Caldwell and Northern Railway in 1905 and merged the concerns in 1910.⁶

Bernhardt established a related business in 1896, a planing mill and box factory in Lenoir. The plant utilized timber supplied by concerns including Caldwell Land and Lumber Company to mill hardwood and white pine dimensional lumber and boxes of all sizes. Bernhardt selected an optimal site for the factory, southwest of downtown near the intersection of what is now West Avenue and Harper Avenue (originally West Main Street and Spring Street) and the primary Carolina and North Western Railroad line. The rectangular, one-story-on-basement, frame building had a one-story boiler room and a small one-story shavings collection room at its northwest corner. A conveyor belt connected the shavings room to a round, brick, twelve-foot-tall sawdust incinerator northwest of the creek. Two long,

⁴ "The Firm of Harper and Bernhardt," *Lenoir Topic* (hereafter abbreviated *LT*), April 7, 1886, p. 3; J. M. Bernhardt, "Letter from Oregon," *LT*, December 19, 1888, p. 1; "Town Meeting," *LT*, March 6, 1889, p. 3; *LT*, April 10, 1889, p. 3; *LT*, September 11, 1889, p. 3; "Lenoir Furniture Factory," *LT*, January 8, 1890, p. 3; *LT*, November 19, 1890, p. 3; "Washington Letter," *LT*, April 11, 1894, p. 2; "Beloved Lenoir Citizen is Laid to Rest," *Lenoir News-Topic* (hereafter abbreviated *LNT*), March 3, 1944; "George Harper Dies in Lenoir," *Charlotte Observer* (hereafter abbreviated *CO*), March 1, 1944; John C. Bernhardt, "Mathias Alexander Bernhardt," in E. Carl Anderson, ed, *Heritage of Caldwell County, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: Hunter Publishing Company, 1983), 252-253.

⁵ Bank of Lenoir, "60th Anniversary Souvenir," May 4, 1954, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁶ The Carolina and North Western Railway line later became a subsidiary of the Southern Railway. *LT*, June 14, 1893, p. 3; "Chester and Lenoir Railroad," *CO*, February 1, 1894, p. 2; *Statesville Record*, January 17, 1896, p. 2; "The Chester and Lenoir," *Hickory Press*, January 23, 1896, p. 2; Robert D. Walker Jr., "Can't and Never Will: Remembering the Carolina & North-Western," in Cary Franklin Poole, *A History of Railroad in Western North Carolina* (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1995), 58-61; Bernhardt, "Mathias Alexander Bernhardt," 254; John Christian Bernhardt, "A History of Bernhardt Furniture Company," January 1994, pp. 3-4.

rectangular, open-sided lumber sheds south and west of the plant flanked a railroad spur that terminated at a sizable lumber yard to the east.⁷

Bernhardt's planing mill and box factory was the town's largest manufacturer by 1900. In 1902, Lenoir boasted at least ten industrial concerns, including flour and lumber mills, furniture producers, and building supply companies, most of which were located along railroad lines. Downtown businesses prospered as the population increased in conjunction with industrial expansion. G. L. Bernhardt erected a three-story brick store to house Lenoir Hardware and Furniture Company on Main Street in 1903, moving the business from the building that had served as the James Harper and Sons general store, Harper and Bernhardt, and Bernhardt Hardware and Furniture Company.⁸

In March 1899, J. M. Bernhardt reported that although the planing mill generated 35,000 feet of lumber each week, the concern was behind schedule in filling orders. He added another steam boiler to power the equipment at that time, and an additional boiler and a band saw in March 1900. By 1903, the operation required additional space. Contractors almost doubled the building's width, added a second floor, and sheathed the north wall with iron cladding and the east and west walls with brick veneer. The expansion required the removal and replacement of the 1896 boiler room. Installation of new boilers was completed in May and masons erected an eighty-foot-tall brick smokestack in August. Bernhardt estimated that the 1903 improvements cost \$9,000.⁹

Lenoir industrial concerns continued to proliferate. In 1905, F. P., J. C., and William Moore commenced constructing a factory to house Moore Furniture Company, incorporated in 1906 by stockholders including J. P. Coffey and H. T. Newland. Approximately one hundred employees fabricated case goods and tables that year. Other newly established manufacturing endeavors included Lenoir Brick and Tile, Prince Harness, Lenoir Clothing, J. H. Coffey Wagon, Lenoir Bottling, and Blue Ridge Bobbin and Handle companies. In 1908, J. M. Bernhardt, who had been supplying Moore Furniture Company with lumber, acquired majority interest in that firm and incorporated Bernhardt Manufacturing Company, which specialized in bedroom and dining room furniture.¹⁰

By 1913, Caldwell County entrepreneurs had opened seven furniture factories. T. J. Lutz operated the Hudson Chair Company, W. J. Lenoir was Caldwell Furniture Company's proprietor, G. F. Harper owned Harper Furniture Company, L. H. Tuttle Kent created Coffey Manufacturing Company, R. B. Dula founded Lenoir Chair Manufacturing Company, and O. P. Lutz managed the Moore-Stone Chair Company. Thomas Hamilton Broyhill led Lenoir Furniture Company, created in 1912 when he assumed control of Kent Furniture Company. J. M. Bernhardt, T. H. Broyhill, and other Lenoir entrepreneurs traveled throughout the country to represent their businesses at trade shows. In 1914,

⁷ "Notice," *LT*, October 12, 1892, p. 3; "Decree," *LT*, October 19, 1892, p. 2; "Pioneer Furniture Manufacturer Dies," *CO*, January 5, 1935; Sanborn Map Company, "Lenoir, N. C.," April 1902, Sheet 2; December 1913, Sheet 6.

⁸ "Gabriel's Horn," *LT*, April 26, 1899, p. 3; Sanborn Map Company, "Lenoir, N. C.," April 1902, Sheet 2; D. P. Waters, "Caldwell County, N. C.," *LT*, June 16, 1909, p. 2; North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1910), 60-61; "What is it Worth?," *Lenoir News* (hereafter abbreviated *LN*), November 21, 1916, p. 2; E. Carl Anderson, ed., *The Heritage of Caldwell County, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem, N. C.: Hunter Publishing Company, 1983), 140-141.

⁹ *LT*, March 29, 1899, p. 3, and March 20, 1900, p. 4; *Weekly News* (hereafter abbreviated *WN*), August 14, 1903, p. 3; "Lenoir's Progress," *WN*, January 8, 1904, p. 2; Sanborn Map Company, "Lenoir, N. C.," June 1907, Sheet 1.

¹⁰ *Carolina Watchman*, January 17, 1905, p. 3; "New Furniture Factory," *WN*, October 20, 1905, p. 3; D. Vance Price, "The Growth of Lenoir," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), March 16, 1906, p. 4; "New Charters Granted," *CO*, March 23, 1906, p. 1; "Several Charters Granted," *CO*, June 10, 1906, p. 1; "John M. Bernhardt," *LNT*, September 12, 1941, p. 5; Bernhardt, "A History of Bernhardt Furniture Company," 6.

Bernhardt expanded his planing operation to Boydton, Virginia, where he commissioned the construction of a mill. John S. Barlow completed the equipment installation in March.¹¹

The Lenoir planing mill and box factory stood empty for a several years before J. M. Bernhardt sold the property to T. H. Broyhill in February 1917. Bernhardt then shifted his attention to reorganizing Bernhardt Manufacturing Company to produce only chairs. Bernhardt Chair Company commenced production in October 1917 with a daily output of three hundred chairs. He served as the concern's president, B. L. Stone its vice-president and plant supervisor, and M. L. Cornwell its secretary-treasurer. The factory operated in conjunction with Ethel Chair Company, established in 1915 with B. L. Stone as president and M. L. Cornwell secretary-treasurer. Bernhardt purchased his partners' interests in Bernhardt Chair Company in 1921 and administered the business until his 1931 retirement. As the concern evolved into Bernhardt Industries, one of North Carolina's leading furniture manufacturers, it erected plants, showrooms, and corporate offices southwest of downtown.¹²

T. H. Broyhill initially used the former box factory as a furniture and lumber warehouse. However, he soon incorporated Steele Cotton Mill Company in collaboration with investors including E. F. Allen, Virgil D. Guire, and that concern occupied the plant. R. L. Steele, who had served as vice-president and a director of First National Bank of Lenoir and Lenoir Hardware and Furniture Company, functioned as the business's president and T. H. Broyhill its secretary-treasurer.¹³ In May 1918, they engaged contractors to construct a one-story-on-basement, twenty-five-foot-long picker room on the factory's north end. By August, workers had refurbished the existing building, installed new equipment, and begun erecting a one-story-on-basement cotton warehouse north of the mill.¹⁴ The warehouse has a central brick firewall and brick north and south elevations, but is otherwise frame. A long, L-shaped loading dock extended from the picker room's northeast corner along most of the warehouse's east elevation.¹⁵

Heavy rains in late October 1918 caused the creek that ran beneath the mill to overflow, resulting in partial collapse of the frame boiler room, which was soon replaced with a two-room brick boiler and engine room. The plant commenced operating on January 23, 1919, and increased production capacity in July by installing additional equipment. The mill basement housed the twisting department, the first floor the spinning and carding equipment, and the second floor served as storage. In August, the company began erecting more houses for its employees near the mill. Residents frequented the one-story frame grocery and feed store that stood at the southeast corner of College and Underdown Avenues' intersection.¹⁶

¹¹ D. P. Waters, "Caldwell County, N. C.," *LT*, June 16, 1909, p. 2; M. L. Shipman, commissioner, *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh: E. M. Uzzell & Company, 1913), 166-167; *LT*, January 3, 1913, p. 1; *LN*, February 24, 1914, p. 3, and March 31, 1914, p. 4; "Lenoir Furniture Men Attending Big Furniture Shows," *LN*, January 7, 1916, p. 1.

¹² John Mathias Bernhardt, born March 28, 1860, died on January 5, 1935. "Broyhill Buys the Bernhardt Box Factory," *LT*, February 2, 1917, p. 1; "Manufacturing Chairs at Bernhardt Factory," *LT*, October 12, 1917, p. 1; "Chair Factories," *LNT*, December 2, 1920, p. 10; "Mr. Bernhardt Buys Other Interests in Chair Company," *LNT*, March 3, 1921, p. 1; "Pioneer Furniture Manufacturer Dies," *CO*, January 5, 1935; death certificate.

¹³ D. P. Waters, "Caldwell County, N. C.," *LT*, June 16, 1909, p. 2; "First National Bank," *LN*, June 23, 1914, p. 3; "Blaze on Factory Roof Quickly Extinguished," *LT*, August 31, 1917, p. 1; "Another Big Cotton Mill Now a Certainty," *LT*, May 17, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁴ "Working on New Cotton Mill Building," *LT*, May 31, 1918, p. 1; "New Mill at Lenoir," *CO*, June 23, 1918, p. 29; "The New Cotton Mill is Almost Completed," *LT*, August 23, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁵ Sanborn Map Company, "Lenoir, N. C.," February 1921, Sheet 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; "Flood Stage in Caldwell," *LT*, November 1, 1918, p. 1; "Steele Mill Twisted First Thread Yesterday," *LT*, January 24, 1919, p. 1; "Lenoir, N. C.," *CO*, February 9, 1919, p. 26; "Steele Cotton Mill Enlarging," *LNT*, August 1, 1919, p. 5.

Subsequent plant improvements included electric power and light installation. In July 1922, engineers from Greenville, South Carolina-based Lockwood, Greene, and Company's Charlotte office planned Steele Cotton Mill's electrification, as well as that of Hudson, Lenoir, Moore, and Whitnel mills. Gastonia electricians Michael and Blevins installed the necessary wiring and equipment after Southern Power Company extended lines from Hickory.¹⁷

Steele Cotton Mill was the one of seven spinning concerns in Lenoir and the vicinity in 1925. R. L. Steele remained the company's president and T. H. Broyhill its secretary-treasurer and cotton buyer. Superintendent J. P. Chester managed 100 employees who produced 24-36-gauge weaving and knitting yarns for the plush and lace trade utilizing 6,020 ring spindles. F. A. Thompson was the purchasing agent and Stevens Yarn Company of New York the selling agent.¹⁸

At Lenoir Cotton Mill, 175 workers operated 6,720 ring spindles under F. C. White's direction. Caldwell County Cotton Mill Company, incorporated in 1923, had installed 6,048 ring spindles, 3,024 twisting spindles, and 20 cards in its Hudson plant. Nelson Cotton Mill, organized in 1922, employed 140 men and women in its 6,000-spindle factory. Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company's 180 workers generated skeins yarns using 5,376 spindles, Whitnel Cotton Mill's 165 laborers generated peeler yarns on 6,276 spindles, and Moore Cotton Mill's 140 operatives ran 5,376 spindles.¹⁹

Steele Cotton Mill was the only area plant that experienced significant growth between 1925 and 1930. Two hundred employees operated 10,056 ring spindles, 5,040 twisting spindles, and 40 cards through the Great Depression. Although many mills reduced output or permanently discontinued operations, Steele Cotton Mill Company's administration, employee numbers, and equipment quantities remained the same in 1935.²⁰

North Carolina textile mills diversified production during the early 1930s as the industry faced challenges nationwide. More efficient equipment and mechanization that transformed manufacturing operations led to mill employee layoffs. Job loss, decreased pay, and poor working conditions made unions more appealing. These factors set the stage for mill employees across the South to participate in the General Textile Strike of 1934, which closed down textile mills throughout the region. The extent of union organization in Lenoir mills is unknown. Many mill owners fired known union members and sympathizers. Union efforts were not in vain, however, as the Roosevelt administration's social and economic reform programs eventually resulted in the institution of a forty-hour work week and increased worker pay.²¹

Steele Cotton Mill Company increased production as the economy improved, adding 2,157 spindles between 1935 and 1939. Only three Lenoir textile manufacturers—O. P. Lutz Hosiery Mill, Moore Cotton Mill, and Steele Cotton Mill—reported production in 1939. However, the Lenoir Board of

¹⁷ "Many Contracts for Local Firm," *Charlotte News*, July 18, 1922, p. 5; "Contract Awarded," *Winston-Salem Journal*, August 11, 1922, p. 9.

¹⁸ Davison Publishing Company, *Davison's Textile Blue Book: United States and Canada* (New York: Davison Publishing Company, 1925), 320.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Davison Publishing Company, *Davison's Textile Blue Book: United States and Canada* (New York: Davison Publishing Company, 1925), 320; *Davison's Textile Blue Book* (1930), 312; *Davison's Textile Blue Book* (1935), 251; News and Observer, *North Carolina Yearbook* (Raleigh: News and Observer, 1935), 110.

²¹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones and Christopher B. Daly, *Like a Family: The Making of the Southern Cotton Mill World* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987), 202-208; Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns* (London and New York: Verso, 1995), 194-195.

Trade stated that the city's twelve furniture plants employed thousands of workers, and related manufacturers—makers of mirrors, veneers, and other products used by the furniture industry—provided more jobs. Lenoir had three hospitals, three residential suburbs, and a Donald Ross-designed golf course, and was said to be the state's fastest growing city since World War I. The population numbered twelve thousand, triple that of 1920, and downtown included five hardware and furniture stores and four drug stores.²²

At the beginning of the 1940s, thirty-three Lenoir industrial plants provided work for five thousand people and local manufacturers sold products in Canada and Mexico as well as in every state. An article in the September 1941 centennial edition of the *News-Topic* claimed that Lenoir was the "second largest furniture manufacturing city in [the] United States." Caldwell County then contained twelve cotton mills and five hosiery mills, three of which, including Steele Cotton Mill, were in Lenoir.²³

World War II brought new challenges and opportunities. Approximately 4,327 Caldwell County residents served in the military during the war, and those left behind were occupied with the war effort in a variety of ways, from participating in bond drives to filling vacant positions at mills and factories that accelerated their production to meet the needs of servicemen and women. Industrial jobs rose by seventy-five percent in the South over the course of World War II, with traditionally underemployed groups such as women, African Americans, and the elderly receiving invaluable education, training, and experience. Output soared after May 1943, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Office of War Mobilization to coordinate a diverse array of support endeavors including manufacturing, scientific research, and agricultural production.²⁴

President R. L. Steele, secretary T. H. Broyhill, and treasurer Sidney S. Paine continued to head Steele Cotton Mill in 1941. F. A. Thompson was the company's secretary and cotton buyer. Superintendent P. A. Carpenter managed 150 employees who produced 30-gauge, 2-ply weaving yarns utilizing 12,216 ring spindles, 6,048 twisting spindles, and 40 cards. In 1944, the plant's 225 workers operated the same amount of equipment. That year, Steele Cotton Mill, Moore Cotton Mill, and Lenoir Pad and Paper Company, a cotton batting vendor, were Lenoir's only textile manufacturing concerns. Moore Cotton Mill's 85 employees generated knitting and weaving yarns on 6,000 ring spindles, 3,200 twisting spindles, and 20 cards.²⁵

Steele Cotton Mill's administrative entity changed following the war. In April 1946, Steele Cotton Mill Company directors Barney Barton Hayes, his son Richard Barton Hayes, known as Barton, and Barton's wife Estoy Bragg Hayes orchestrated the business's dissolution and the incorporation of Hayes Cotton Mill. Barton Hayes served as the company's president, Estoy Hayes its vice-president, and New York investor Justin J. Bayer its secretary. Bayer was also one of the original stockholders.²⁶

²² *North Carolina Yearbook* (1939), 121; Lenoir Board of Trade and Lenoir News-Topic, *Lenoir, North Carolina* (n.p.: 1938), 3-5; Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir City Directory 1937-1938* (Asheville: Commercial Service Company, 1936), 5-6.

²³ *Miller's Lenoir City Directory, 1943-1944*, 267; *LNT*, September 12, 1941, p. 1.

²⁴ Spencer B. King, Jr., *Selective Service in North Carolina in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 321; Marilyn M. Harper, et. al. *World War II and the American Home Front* (Washington, D. C.: The National Historic Landmarks Program, October 2007), 3, 13-16.

²⁵ *Davison's Textile Blue Book, 1941*, 246; *Davison's Textile Blue Book, 1944*, 256;

²⁶ Caldwell County Deed Book 213, p. 353; "Entire Stock of Hayes Cotton Mill Company Now Owned By Local People," *LNT*, December 6, 1954, p. 1; Nell Greene and Lucy Wagner, eds. *Hudson Heritage 1905-2005* (n.p.: Wentworth Publishing Company, 2005), 408.

By the time of Hayes Cotton Mill's formation, B. B. Hayes had been working in the textile industry for almost sixty years. He began his career in the late 1880s at Richland Cotton Mill in Columbia, South Carolina, followed by a short stint at Clifton Cotton Mill in Clifton, South Carolina. Hayes moved to Gaston County, North Carolina, in 1891 and worked in Mt. Holly textile mills until January 1902. He then accepted a position at Lenoir Cotton Mill, where he oversaw the carding and spinning department until 1904. Hayes next relocated to Hudson as the superintendent of Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company, established that year. He subsequently assisted with the creation and management of other operations including Whitnel, Moore, Caldwell, and Nelson cotton mills. After his death on March 15, 1947, his son Barton Hayes, a 1929 Davidson College graduate who had worked in his family's businesses since the early 1930s, continued to manage Hayes Cotton Mill.²⁷

Hayes Cotton Mill, Moore Cotton Mill, and Lenoir Pad and Paper Company remained in operation in 1950, by which time greater Lenoir's population had grown to 15,106. G. W. Haas superintended Hayes Cotton Mill's 225 employees as they produced carded and combed cotton yarn, some of which was dyed on site. Moore Cotton Mill's 85 employees spun knitting and weaving yarns.²⁸

Although Sanborn maps indicate that Hayes Cotton Mill's footprint was unchanged through August 1950, a series of one-and two-story additions were subsequently constructed. Most likely date to 1951-1954, as the company spent \$500,000 on plant improvements between 1946 and 1954. That year, Barton Hayes consolidated the property's ownership locally by purchasing all outside investor stock.²⁹

Vance Lee Dearman served as assistant superintendent in early 1960s. Machinery quantities and work-force size remained constant through 1965. Soon after, Hayes Cotton Mill moved its operation to Hudson. In 1969, Hickory-based Shuford Mills acquired that business in addition to Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company, B and R Textile Corporation, Caldwell Cotton Mill Company, and Moore Cotton Mill Company.³⁰

Although much of the Lenoir plant remained vacant, businesses including Broyhill Furniture leased warehouse space. Bost Lumber Company, founded in the early twentieth century by John F. Bost Sr., used the basement for building supply storage. The company's interior design and coating department—Niederhammer's, Inc. Decorating Center—occupied the cotton warehouse's upper floor beginning around 1984. Bost Lumber Company vacated the basement circa 1990. James C. Sullivan purchased the building from J. Donald Davis Sr. and his wife Joan C. Davis on April 1, 1982. The James C. Sullivan Revocable Trust, administered by his son, retains ownership of the property.³¹

²⁷ "B. B. Hayes is Official of Cotton Mill," *LNT*, September 12, 1941, p. 7; Greene and Wagner, *Hudson Heritage*, 406-409; Frances Hayes Swanson (the daughter of Barton and Estoy Hayes), email communication with Heather Fearnbach, December 2016.

²⁸ *Davison's Textile Blue Book*, 1950, 323.

²⁹ Sanborn Map Company, "Lenoir, N. C.," August 1950, Sheet 5; "Entire Stock of Hayes Cotton Mill Company Now Owned By Local People," *LNT*, December 6, 1954, p. 1.

³⁰ *Davison's Textile Blue Book*, 1955, 262; *Davison's Textile Blue Book*, 1959, 208; *Davison's Textile Blue Book*, 1965, 3-81; *Davison's Textile Blue Book*, 1970, 271.

³¹ Bost Lumber Company experienced significant losses during the early twenty-first-century economic recession and ceased operating in 2008. "Bost Lumber Company Founded Over 30 Years Ago," *LNT*, September 12, 1941, p. 6; Caldwell County Deed Book 780, p. 234; Deed Book 1698, p. 1444; James C. Sullivan, telephone conversations with Heather Fearnbach, October 2016.

Industrial Architecture Context

In the first purpose-built industrial buildings erected in the United States, designers strove to accommodate machinery in a manner that allowed for efficient access to power sources as well as maximum utilization of natural light and ventilation. By the mid-nineteenth century, “slow-burn” masonry construction, with load-bearing brick walls, exposed heavy-timber framing, thick plank floors, gabled roofs, large operable windows and transoms, and metal fire doors predominated. Heavy-timber framing members that were at least twelve inches square with chamfered edges effectively slowed the progress of fire, particularly when used in combination with a floor system that encompassed three- to four-inch-thick plank decking covered with waterproof paper and topped with hardwood floors. The floor system was left exposed underneath in order to avoid the use of flammable ceiling materials and finishes. Chamfering the corners of beams, posts, and girders removed splinters that could ignite easily.³²

During the late nineteenth century, mill and factory design evolved from a vernacular process whereby owners worked with builders who erected edifices based on mutually understood norms to a field dominated by professionally-trained mill engineers who designed industrial buildings and supervised their construction. Standards imposed by machinery manufacturers and insurance companies also guided industrial architecture’s evolution. In order to minimize fire risk, stairwells, which could serve as conduits for fire movement between floors, were located in projecting stair towers. Brick interior walls and galvanized-sheet-metal-clad, solid-core-wood doors, known as kalamein doors, separated the mill sections where fires might start or spread rapidly. These heavy doors would automatically close in the case of a fire, as the heat would melt a soft metal link in the door’s counterweight assembly and the door would slide shut on the sloped metal track. As an additional precaution, water reservoirs and elevated water tanks supplied automatic sprinkler systems in many industrial complexes.³³

As the twentieth century dawned, architects and engineers continued to plan manufacturing complexes with function rather than aesthetics in mind. However, new building materials, technology, and forms manifested efficiency, modernity, and economic progress. Mill and factory designers began to specify steel and reinforced-concrete columns and beams in conjunction with brick, concrete, terra cotta block, or tile curtain walls that provided structural bracing but did not carry any weight. Bands of steel-frame multipane windows and roof monitors provided workers with abundant light and ventilation. Steel truss roof systems spanned open interiors that accommodated sizable equipment and allowed for flexibility as manufacturing needs changed.³⁴

Although structural systems for some late-nineteenth-century industrial buildings included cast-iron or wrought-iron columns or steel posts and beams, high cost greatly limited the materials’ use until the early twentieth century. The ability to withstand the weight and vibrations of heavy machinery without failing contributed to the popularity of structural-steel construction, as did the ease of fabricating framing systems from standard factory-generated parts. Typical elements include I-, T-, H-, and box-shaped columns and beams; round posts; and reinforcing plates, angles, and webs. Steel components could be riveted together, creating strong connections, and tended to be smaller and lighter than heavy-timber or iron framing members. This allowed for wider and taller buildings with more square footage for equipment. The popularity of flat roofs and sizable roof monitors also resulted in structural-steel

³² Sara E. Wermiel, “Heavy Timber Framing in Late-Nineteenth-Century Commercial and Industrial Buildings,” *APT Bulletin: Journal of Preservation Technology*, Volume 35, No. 1, 2004, 56.

³³ Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15-21; Glass, *Textile Industry*, 38.

³⁴ Bradley, *The Works*, 144-147.

framing prevalence. In order to reduce oxidation and achieve fire resistance, steel members were coated with intumescent paint; sprayed with a thin mixture of cement, sand, and water called gunite; or encased in concrete.³⁵

North Carolina industrialists benefited from the contributions of resident engineers who disseminated specifications dictating best practices in mill layout and design. Innovators in this discipline included South Carolina native Daniel A. Tompkins, sent by the Pittsburgh-based Westinghouse Engine Company to Charlotte in the early 1880s to sell and coordinate the installation of the company's equipment in the region. Tompkins became a driving force in the southern textile industry, partnering with Charlotte grain merchant R. M. Miller in 1883 to establish the D. A. Tompkins Company, an engineering firm. The company created plans for over one hundred mills in addition to other industrial buildings.³⁶ Charlotte examples such as Ada, Alpha, and Victor Mills (all erected in 1889), Highland Park Mill No. 1's 1891 and 1895 buildings, and the 1892 Atherton Mill are comparable to the 1896/1903 J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory.

Thomasville, North Carolina, native Stuart Warren Cramer, who began his career with the D. A. Tompkins Company, was another highly-influential mill engineer. Cramer set up his own Charlotte firm in 1895, and by 1915 had designed almost one-third of the new mills erected in the South during that period. The 1902-1903 Lenoir Cotton Mill and Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company's 1904 are the only Caldwell County factories that have been attributed to him at this time. In addition to preparing mill plans, Cramer equipped facilities with textile production machinery of all types, some of which he invented. His salesmen, based in Charlotte and Atlanta offices, travelled throughout the country. Cramer's innovations in textile mill climate control garnered him international recognition, and he is credited with conceiving the term "air conditioning." Cramer often served his clients as a business advisor as well as a designer. For example, he installed an air-conditioning system at Loray Mill in Gastonia in 1908 and became the company's president four years later. Cramer established and led the American Cotton Manufacturers Association and the National Council of American Textile Manufacturers. He invested in textile concerns including Highland Park Manufacturing Company in Charlotte and Mayes Manufacturing Company in the Gaston County community of Mayesworth, which became known as Cramerton in 1922. The mill complexes and the associated housing that Cramer designed at those and other locations featured efficient layouts that demonstrated his integrated work flow concepts.³⁷

Stuart Cramer recruited talented architects and engineers such as Richard C. Biberstein of Fredericksburg, Texas, to work in his office. Biberstein, born in 1859, attained a mechanical engineering degree from the Worcester (Massachusetts) Polytechnic Institute in 1882. He found employment at U. S. Electric Lighting Company in Newark, New Jersey, and Atlas Engine Works in Indianapolis before moving to Charlotte in 1887 to accept a draftsman position at industrialist John Wilkes's Mecklenburg Iron Works. H. S. Chadwick offered him a similar job at the Charlotte Machine Company, which manufactured mill equipment, in 1897. Biberstein remained on staff until

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 50.

³⁷ Ibid., 107; Stuart W. Cramer, *Useful Information For Cotton Manufacturers* (Charlotte: Queen City Printing Company, 1906, 2nd ed., Vol. III.), 1169; *Charlotte Observer*, June 22, 1912, p. 10; "Mr. Cramer is made president of Loray," *Charlotte EC*, December 26, 1912, p. 6; Thomas S. Morgan, "Stuart Warren Cramer" in William Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, Vol. 1* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 455; Catherine Westergaard, "Stuart W. Cramer," *North Carolina Architects and Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000275> (accessed 2016); Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc., "Loray Mill Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2001, Section 8, pages 36-37.

1902, when he became Stuart Cramer's employee, thus garnering valuable experience that prepared him to launch an independent firm specializing in mill design three years later.³⁸

Caldwell County's late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century textile mills

In order to take advantage of lower land prices and allow for unfettered expansion, Caldwell County industrialists often erected mills and worker housing on a town's outskirts. By 1987, when historian Vickie Mason conducted a reconnaissance-level inventory of the county's historic architecture, many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century factories had been demolished or encapsulated within later additions. The project thus documented only a few industrial buildings. It is therefore impossible to ascertain how many mills survive without additional survey.

However, examination of a small sample—Lenoir Cotton Mill, Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company (NR 2013), and J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill—reveals similar features. All are characterized by heavy-timber interior structural systems, load-bearing brick exterior walls, low-pitched gable roofs, segmental-arched and rectangular window openings, segmental-arched door openings, and decorative entrance, stair, and restroom towers. Large multipane windows and transoms, some of which remain, illuminated the interiors, where hardwood floors and substantial wood posts and beams prevail. Exposed rafter ends support deep eaves.

The individuals who rendered plans for the 1896/1903 J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory have not been identified. Daniel A. Tompkins and Stuart W. Cramer are possible candidates. Cramer designed the 1902-1903 Lenoir Cotton Mill and the 1904 Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company and supplied the Hudson plant's machinery.³⁹

The one-story, two-level, brick Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company stands parallel to Main Street in Hudson. The 320-foot-long by 75-foot-wide edifice is executed in five-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings and a very low-pitched gable roof. Projecting rafter ends buttress the deep eaves. Documentary photos illustrate the original double-hung, eight-over-eight, wood-sash windows with arched eight-pane transoms. Interior brick removal from one window opening in early 2014 revealed an intact, encapsulated, original window unit, indicating that others may be extant. The distinctive three-stage entrance tower features corbelled hoods above the entrance and paired second-story windows, corbelled oculus surrounds, corbelled cornices and pilaster caps, and a crenellated parapet. Masons also executed in 1904 the matching ell at the mill's northeast corner. A tall, round smokestack rises on the ell's east end.

Twenty years later, Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company erected a rear addition, also in five-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings and a very low-pitched gable roof, on the 1904 building's east side, almost doubling the plant's size. Around 1930, a matching fourteen-bay-wide and one-bay-deep brick addition extended the façade's north end to the west. Chamfered square wood posts and substantial wood beams support the floor and roof systems in the 1904, 1924,

³⁸ Thomas W. Hanchett, William H. Huffman, and Catherine W. Bishir, "Richard C. Biberstein," *North Carolina Architects and Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, 2009, accessed in November 2013; "Biberstein, Bowles, Meacham & Reed: Biographical/Historical Note," Biberstein, Bowles, Meacham & Reed Records (hereafter abbreviated BBMRR), J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Charlotte .

³⁹ "A Mill at Hudson, N. C.," *Manufacturers' Record*, March 24, 1904, p. 205; "Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company," Drawings, Box AD14, Roll 6, BBMRR; Cramer, *Useful Information For Cotton Manufacturers*, 1169.

and circa 1930 sections. Richard C. Biberstein's firm prepared plans for the company's additions through 1934.⁴⁰

Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. is significant due to its age and architectural integrity. Like the other Caldwell County plants, the 1902 mill and 1903 addition manifest early-twentieth-century industrial design components such as round wood column and heavy-timber post-and-beam interior structural systems. The load-bearing brick exterior walls are executed in six-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings. The two-stage pyramidal-hip-roofed office tower is an important survival. Original interior features such as double-thickness wood floors and kalamein doors were commonly employed in fire-resistant industrial buildings.

J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill is similar in that the 1896 plant and 1903 addition feature a round wood column and heavy-timber post-and-beam interior structural system in conjunction with load-bearing brick exterior walls executed in six-to-one common bond. Segmental-arched window and door openings embellish the building. The mill retains an open plan and painted brick walls, wood roof decking, hardwood floors, and metal-clad kalamein doors.

The plant's configuration also minimized fire risk. Improvements in conjunction with the building's 1918 modification to serve as a cotton yarn spinning mill included the construction of a one-story picker room at the north end, an entrance tower on the south elevation, a restroom tower on the west elevation, an enlarged boiler room, and a one-story-on-basement cotton warehouse north of the mill. The 1918 additions display the ongoing prevalence of heavy-timber framing with brick firewalls between combustible areas.

National Register of Historic Places Status

J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 18, 2017.

Local Historic Landmark Eligibility Evaluation

J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill is **eligible** for local historic landmark designation due to its industrial significance. *In order to possess such significance, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* The concerns' contributions to the local economy as manufacturers, employers, consumers of local goods and services, and taxpayers, were enormous. John Mathias Bernhardt, who became one of Lenoir's leading industrialists, established the planing mill and box factory in 1896. The plant was the town's largest manufacturing enterprise by 1900, supplying hardwood and white pine dimensional lumber and boxes of all sizes to clients throughout the region. After Bernhardt sold the factory in February 1917, it briefly served as a furniture and lumber warehouse. Following expansions and equipment installation, one hundred workers commenced producing weaving and knitting yarns at Steele Cotton Mill in January 1919. New York agents marketed the company's yarns. The enterprise remained successful through 1946,

⁴⁰ "Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company," Project files, Box 55, Folder 38, BBMRR.

when Hayes Cotton Mill purchased the plant. The concern undertook \$500,000-worth of improvements between 1946 and 1954. Machinery quantities and workforce size remained constant through 1965. Soon after, Hayes Cotton Mill moved its operation to Hudson.

The building is **not eligible** for local historic landmark designation in association with a person. *In order to possess such significance, it would have to retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* Although prominent businessmen were associated with the property, the buildings are not most closely associated with a single individual's achievements, which would be required for local historic landmark designation under this area of significance.

J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill is **eligible** for local historic landmark designation due to its architectural significance. *In order to qualify, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The plant manifests typical early- to mid-twentieth-century industrial design. The 1896/1903/1918 factory features load-bearing brick exterior walls executed in six-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings. The round wood and cast-iron column and heavy-timber post-and-beam interior structural system and triple-thickness wood floors are representative of fire-resistant early-twentieth-century industrial architecture. The 1918 addition displays the ongoing prevalence of heavy-timber framing with brick firewalls between combustible areas. The early 1950s additions employ structural-steel framing systems. The period of significance begins in 1896, with the original factory's completion, and continues to 1965. The plant's function and physical expansion after 1965 are not of exceptional significance.

J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill is **not eligible** for local historic landmark designation for its potential to yield information. *In order to possess such significance, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* The structures and site have not yet contributed significant information pertaining to building technology or urban archaeology or yielded historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records. However, the plant is closely related to the surrounding environment. Information concerning environmental transformation, work culture and worker health, as well as structural details, is often evident in the archaeological record. Archaeological remains, such as trash deposits, privies, and structural remains may be present, and could provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. No investigation has been undertaken to discover these remains, but their existence will be considered in the property's development.

Designation Parameters

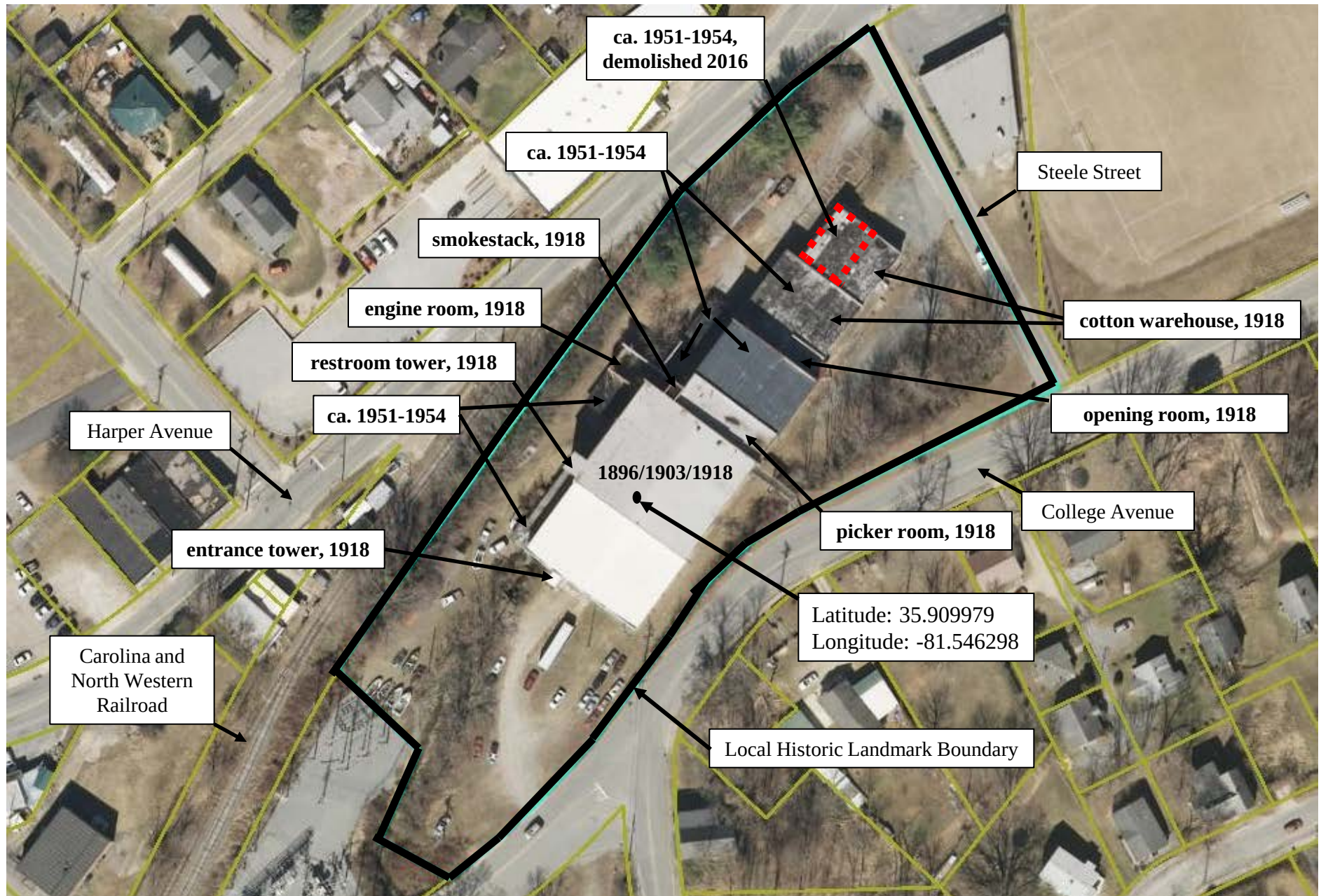
is seeking local historic landmark designation for the entire exterior and partial interior in order to recognize the property's architectural and historical significance. The building envelope and original

character-defining interior features noted in the local historic landmark eligibility evaluation above should be designated.

Boundary Description and Justification

The proposed local historic landmark designation boundary consists of Caldwell County tax parcel number 2749650842 (3.22 acres), as indicated by the heavy dark lines on the following aerial view (page 26).

J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill
1201 Steele Street, Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina, Local Historic Landmark Boundary Map



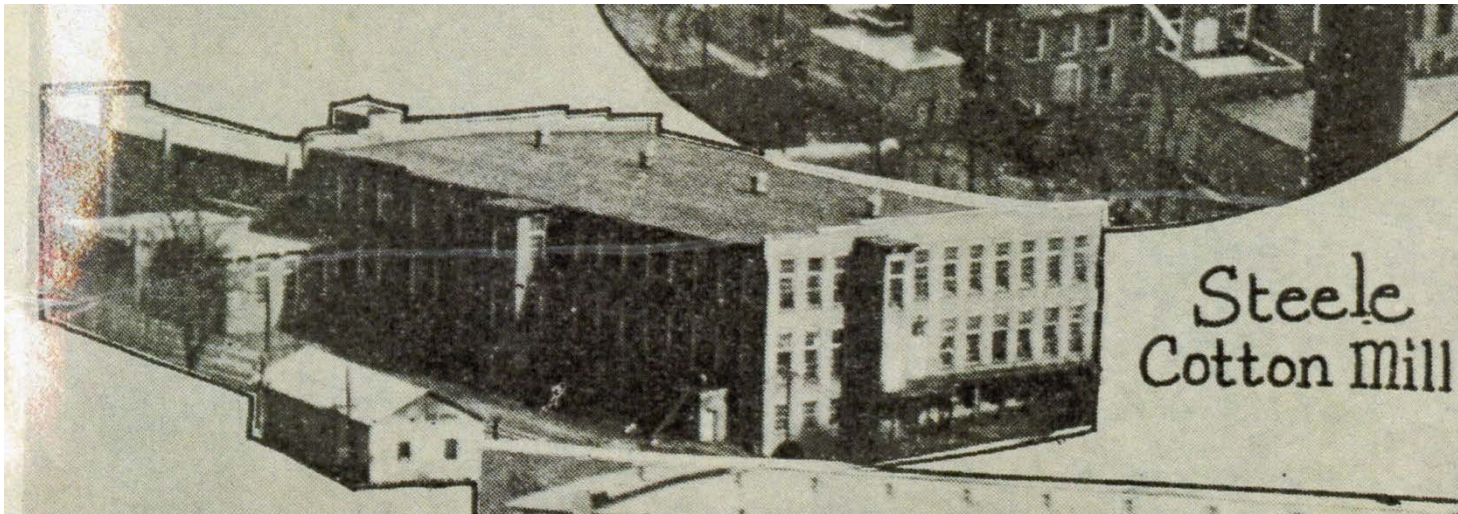
Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc. / February 2019

Base 2014 aerial photo courtesy of <http://gis.caldwellcountync.org/maps/>

Scale 1" = 100 feet

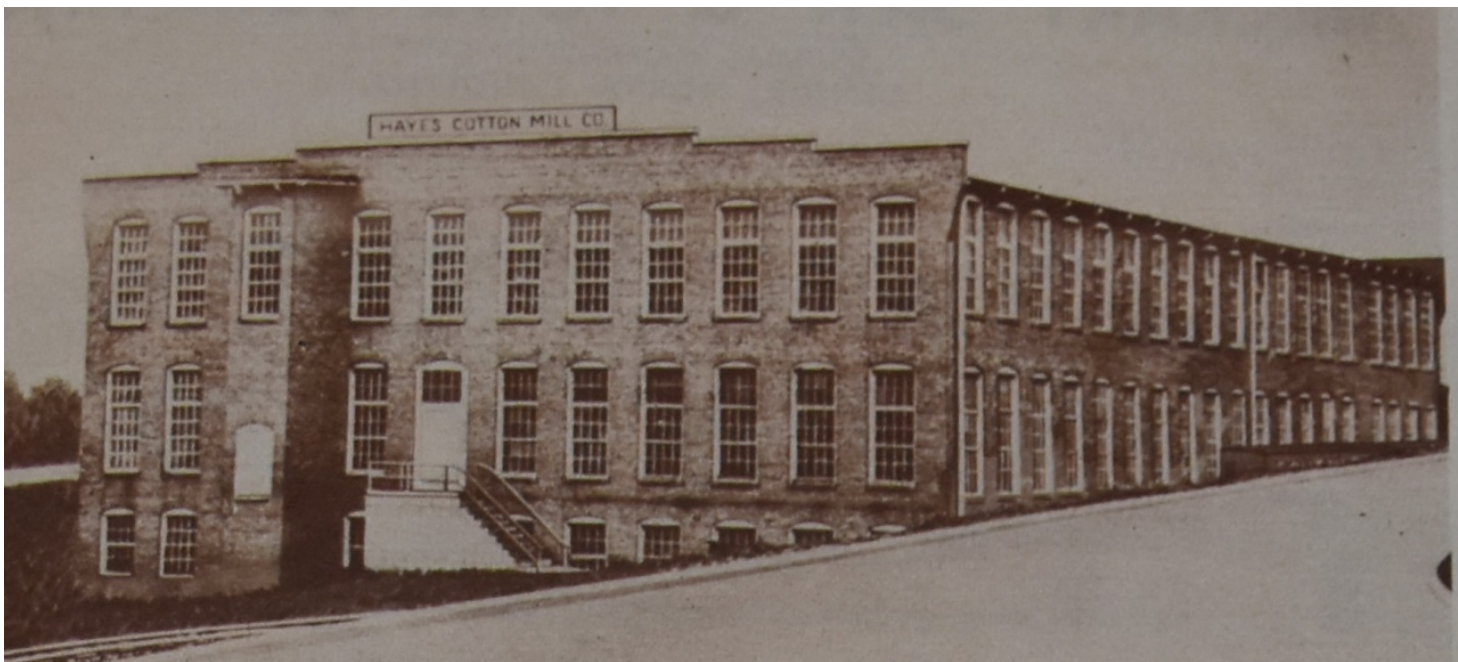


Historic Images



Steele Cotton Mill, southwest oblique

From *Lenoir, North Carolina*, Lenoir Board of Trade and Lenoir News-Topic, 1938, p. 15
Publication in the collection of the Caldwell Heritage Museum in Lenoir



Hayes Cotton Mill, southeast oblique

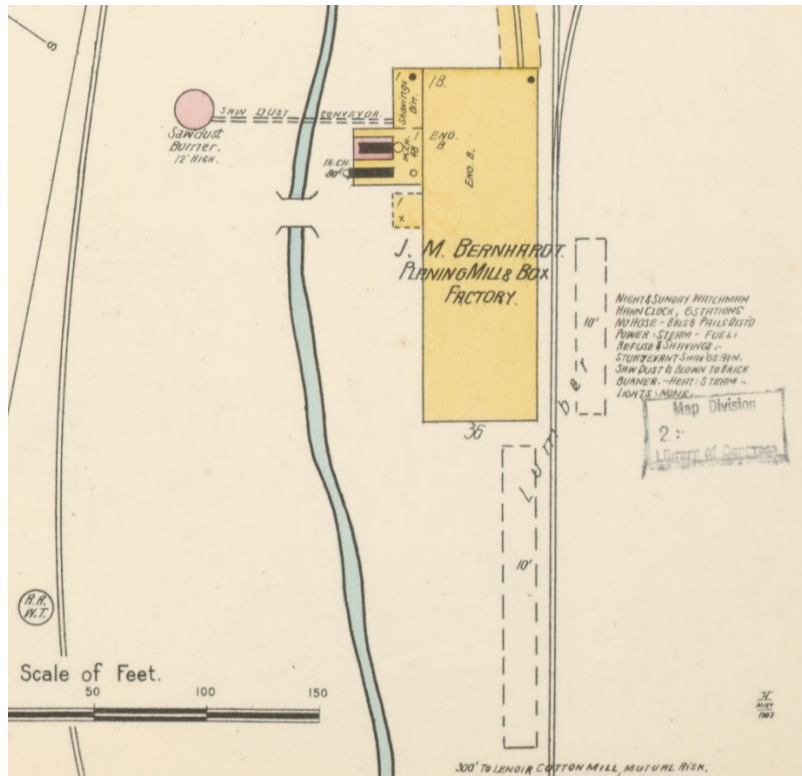
From *Pictorial Review of Lenoir and Caldwell County, North Carolina*, Lenoir News-Topic, circa 1959, publication in the collection of the Caldwell Heritage Museum in Lenoir



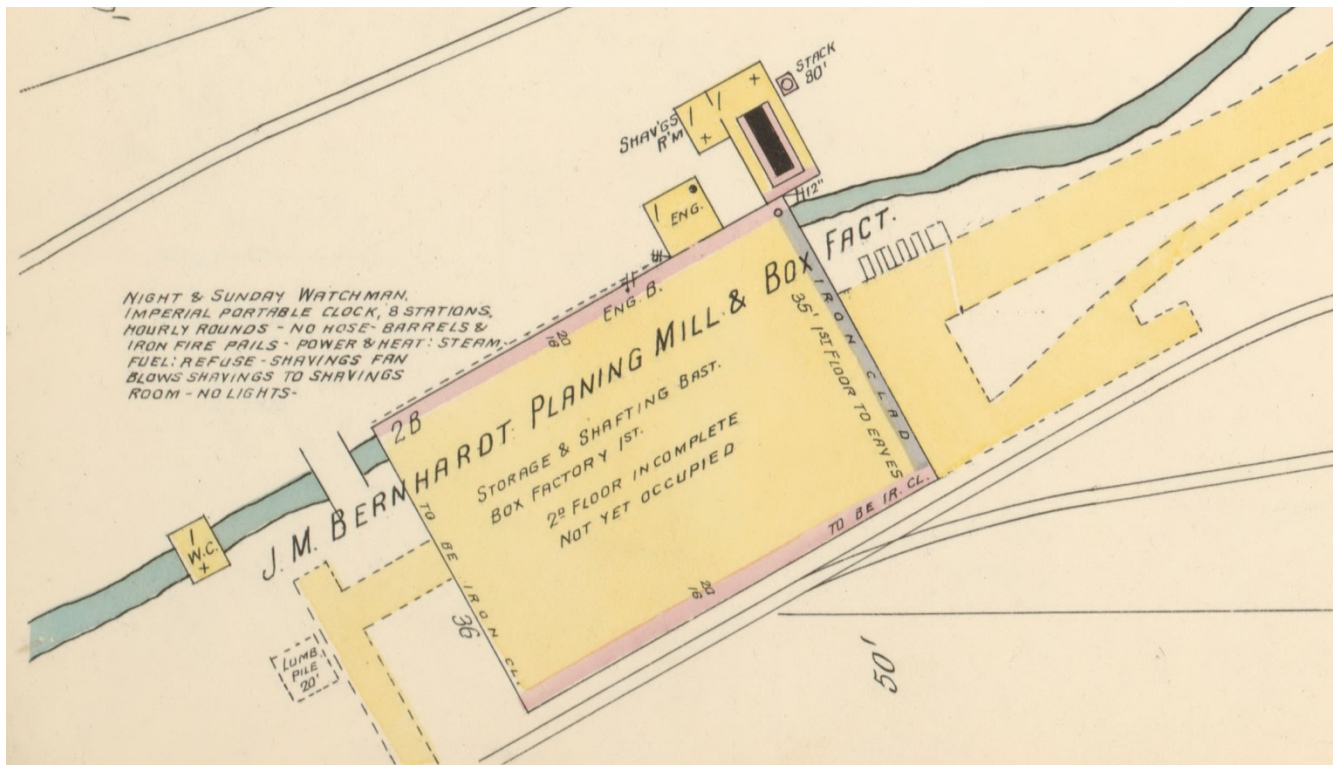
Hayes Cotton Mill, southeast oblique

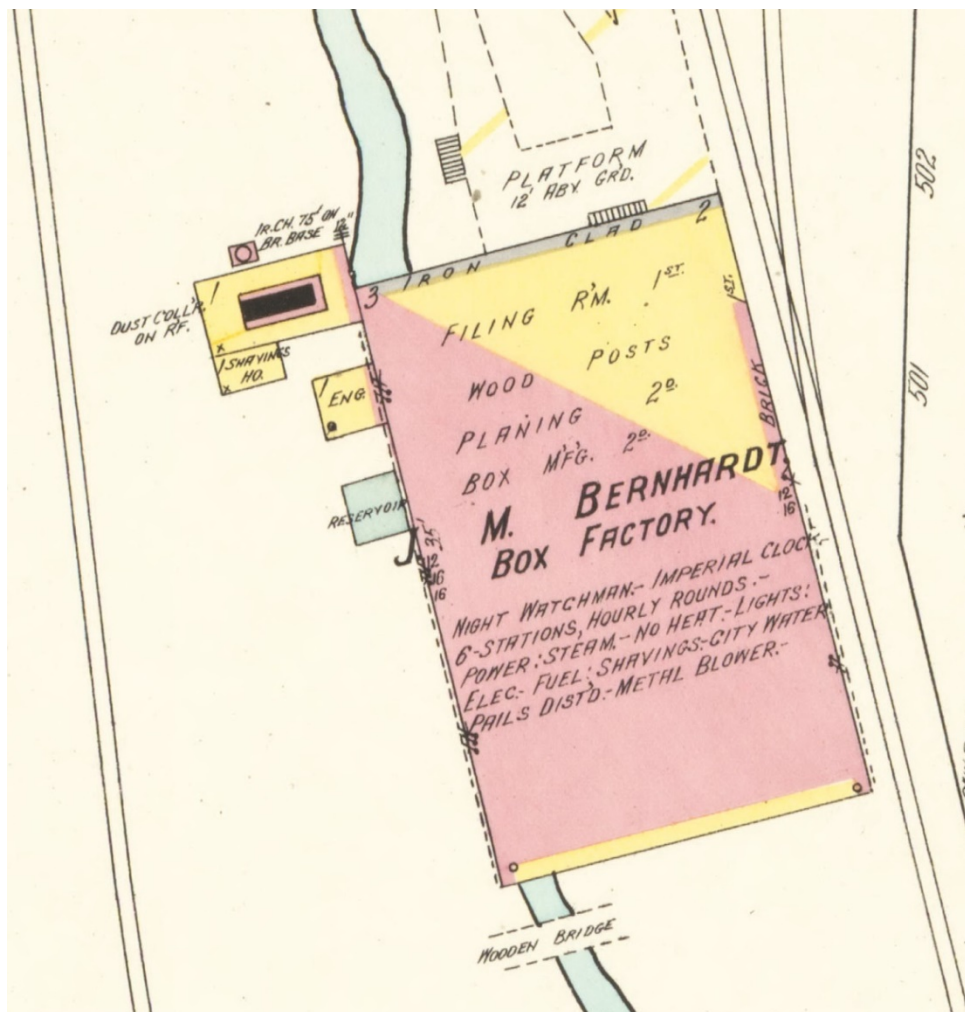
Image from advertisement in *Lenoir News-Topic*, February 29, 1968, p. F-9
Newspaper in the collection of the Caldwell Heritage Museum in Lenoir

Sanborn Maps

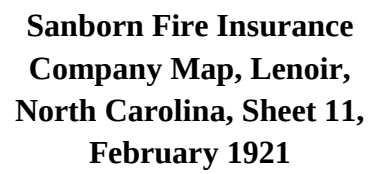


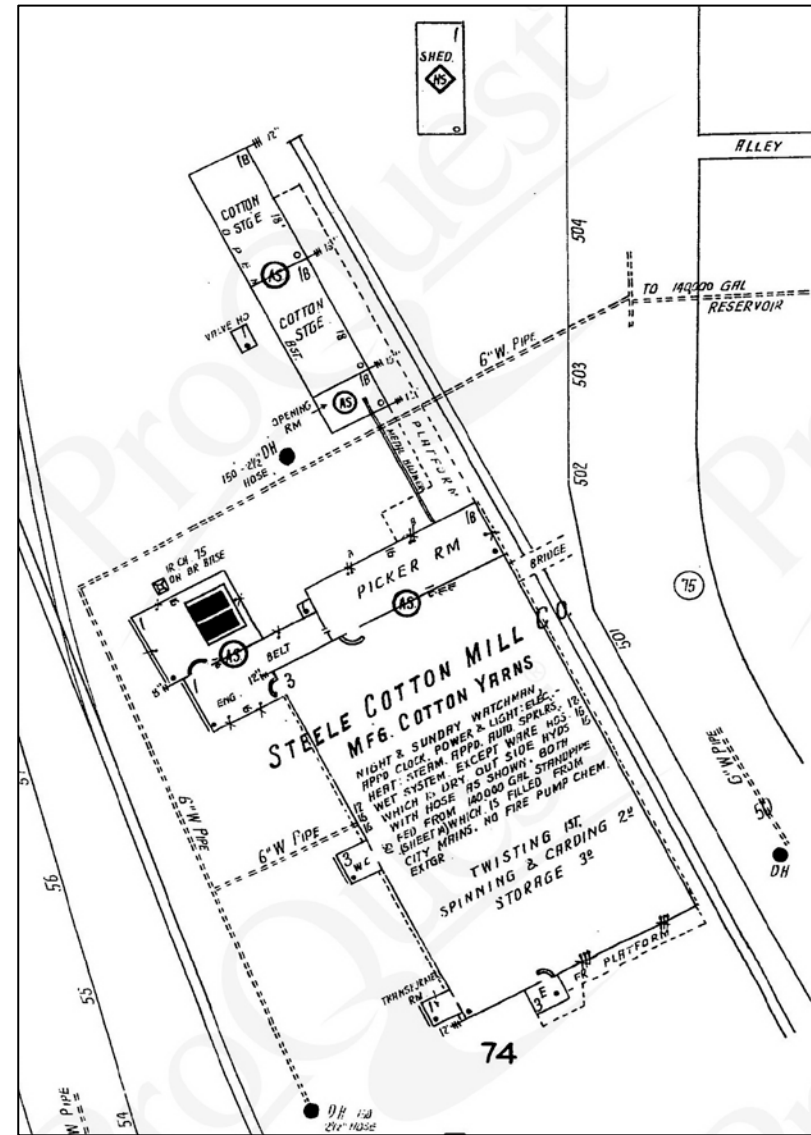
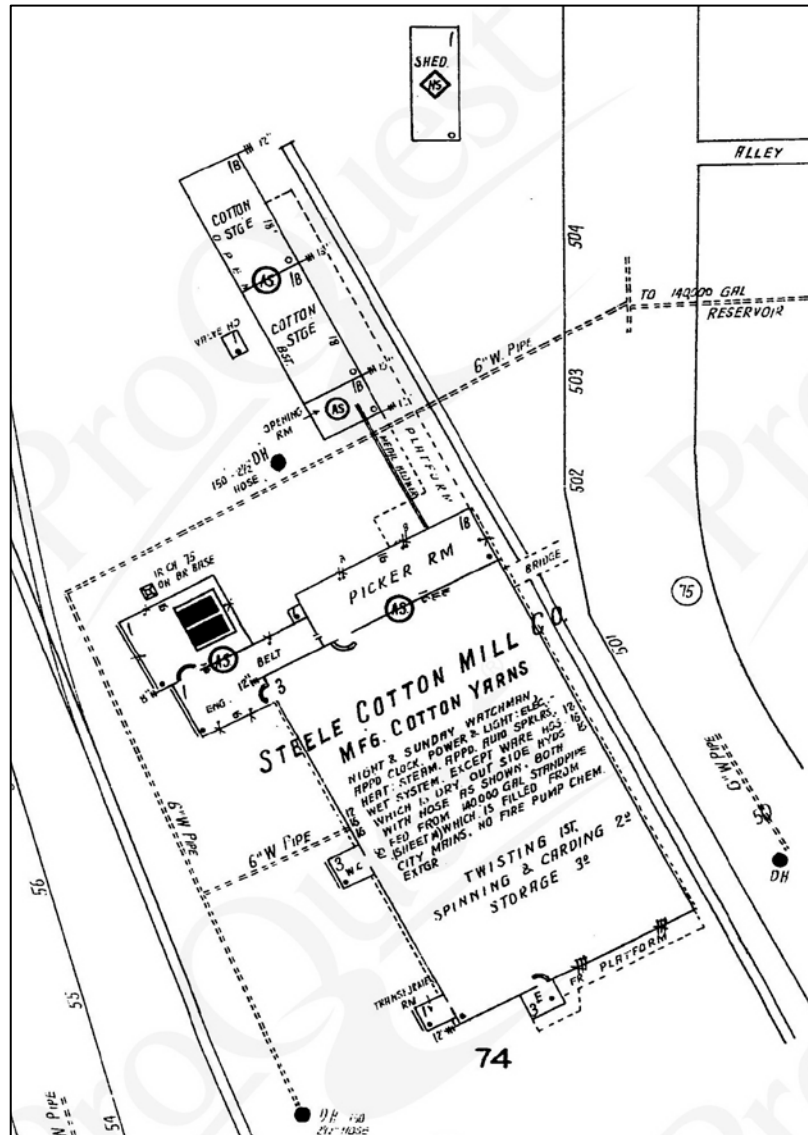
Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Lenoir, North Carolina, Sheet 2, April 1902 (above) and Sheet 1, June 1907 (below)





Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Lenoir, North Carolina, Sheet 6, December 1913





Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Lenoir, North Carolina, Sheet 5, December 1927 (left) and August 1950 (right)

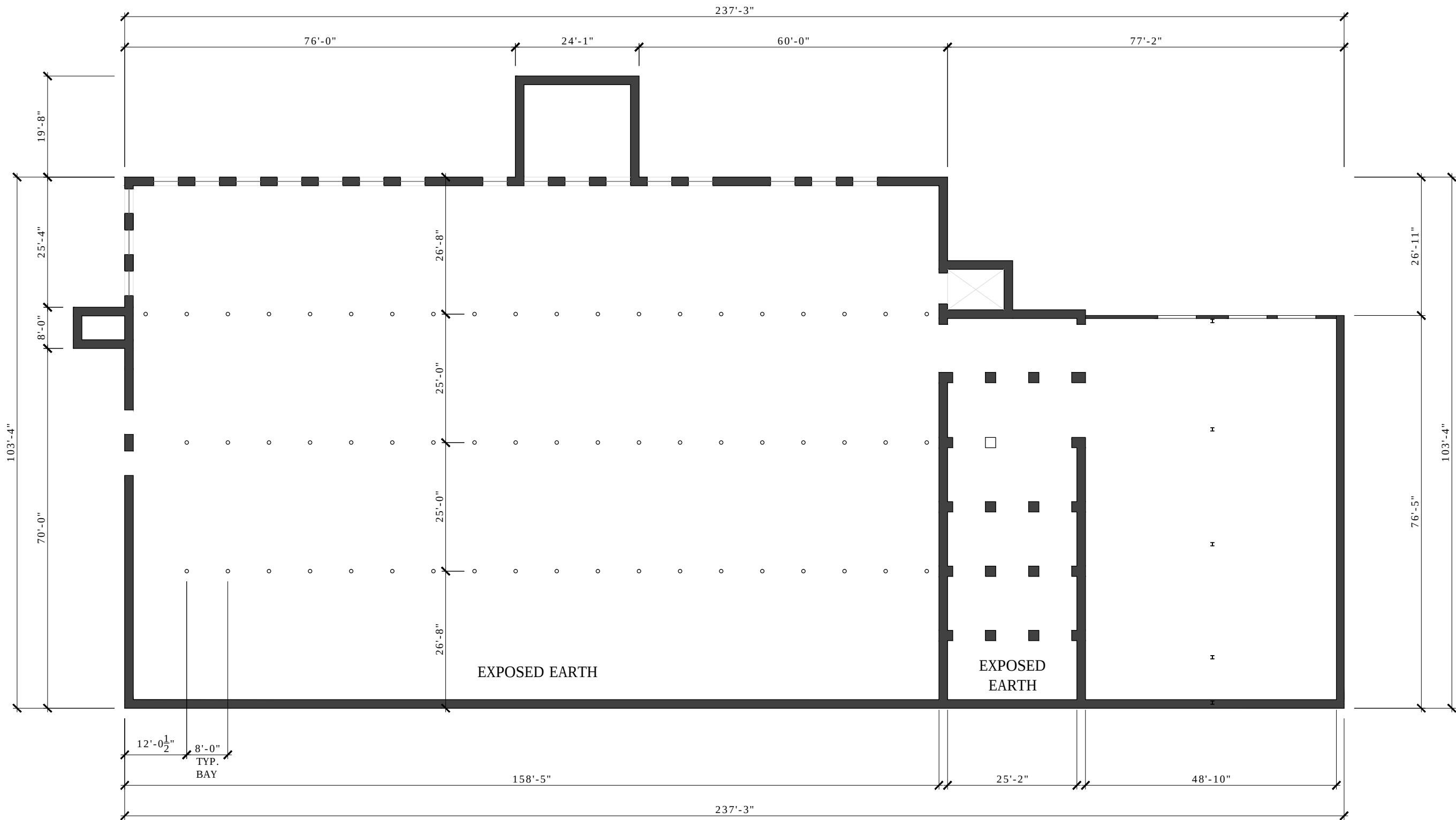
Existing Conditions Floor Plans



J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill

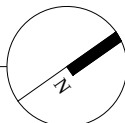
1201 Steele Street, Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina

*See 2014 aerial for 1950s office, 1918 boiler room, 1950s warehouses, and 1918 cotton warehouse photograph annotations



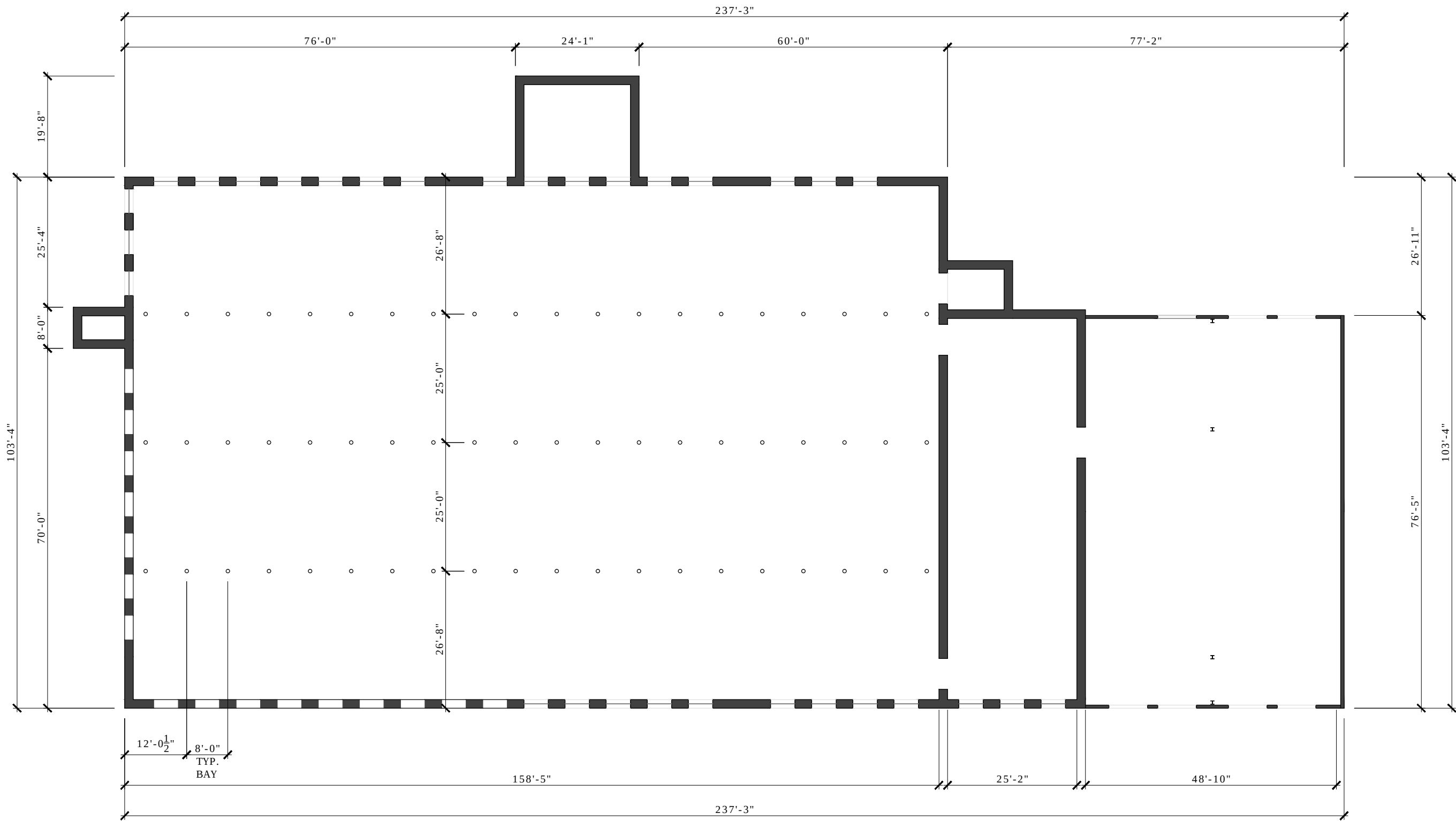
1 LEVEL 1 PLAN- AS BUILT

1" = 20'



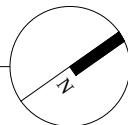


J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill
1201 Steele Street, Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina



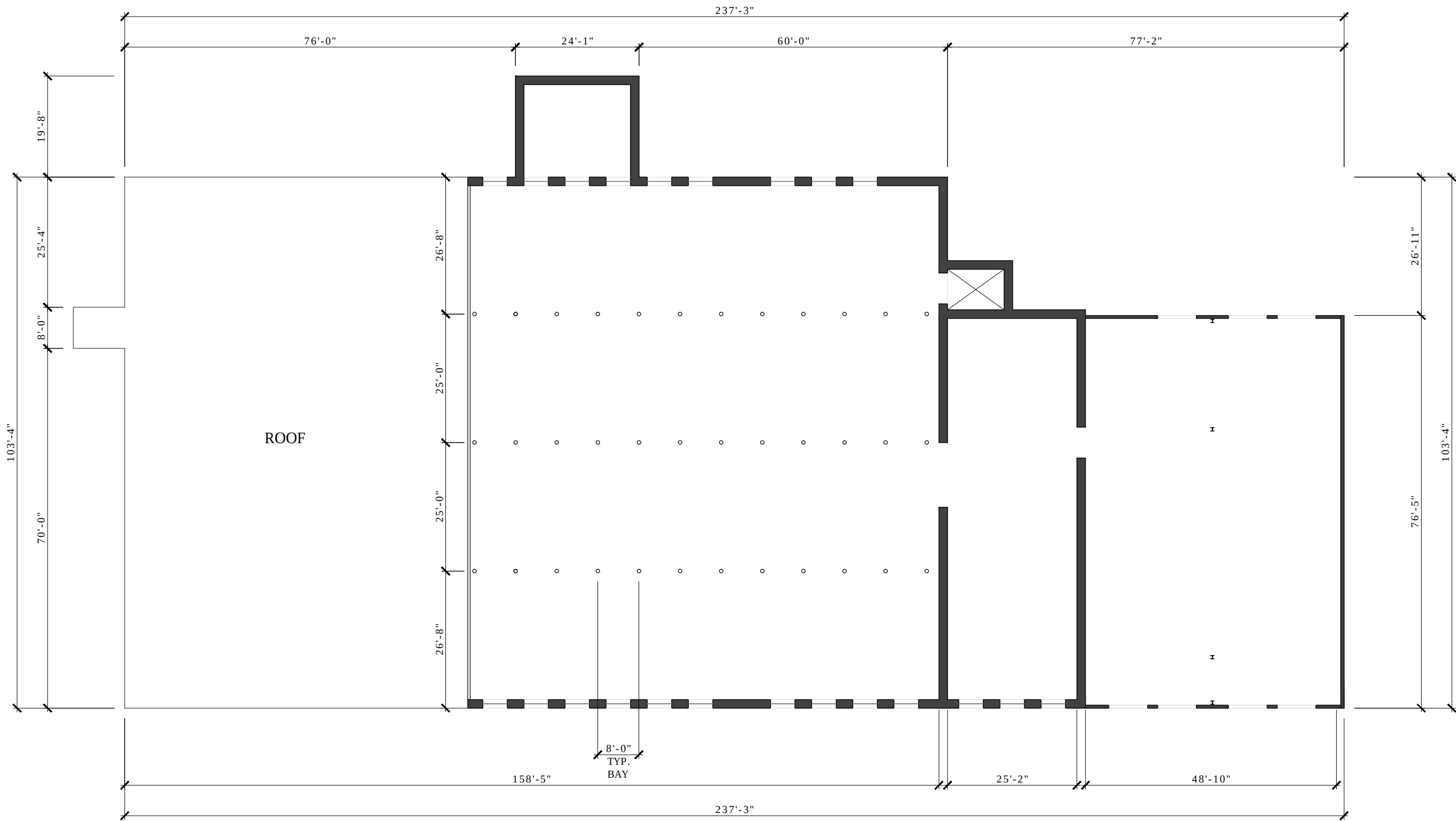
1 LEVEL 2 PLAN- AS BUILT

1" = 20'





J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill – Hayes Cotton Mill
1201 Steele Street, Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina



1 LEVEL 3 PLAN- AS BUILT
1" = 20'

Permit Number	Project Name	Address	NC PIN
ZP 17-19	Hernandez Use N Main St	407 N Main St	2749785630
ZP 18-19	Crestline Pl Acc Bldg	114 Crestline Pl	2850206717
ZP 19-19	UNC Behav Health	407 Mulberry St SW	2749956426
ZP 20-19	308 Beall St NW-Deck	308 Beall St NW	2749467614
ZP 21-19	418 Powell Circle-roof or	418 Powell Circle	2850505699
ZP 22-19	CCC porch addition	439 Virginia Street SW	2749422919

Date Issued	Date Expired	County Permit	Full Size Plans?
2/22/2019	8/22/2019		
2/27/2019	8/27/2019	2019-000314	
2/27/2019	8/27/2019		
2/28/2019	8/28/2019	2019-000319	
3/1/2019	9/1/2019		
3/6/2019	9/6/2019		