

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill

Lincolnton, Lincoln County, LN0416, Listed 4/14/2022

Nomination by Jason Harpe and Annie McDonald, Richard Grubb & Associates

Photographs by Jason Harpe and Annie McDonald, February 2019 and November 2021



Facing south from the intersection of Bonview Avenue and North Government Street. Showing the northeast corner of the mill and, specifically, the two-story 1947 addition (right) to the two-story 1920 mill (left) and the circa 1947 water tank.



Facing west from the southeast corner of the property. Showing the south elevation of the 1947 addition.

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Black Ox - Duplan Corporation Mill

other names/site number Williams Cotton Mills, Riddle Company, Excell Manufacturing Company, Hudson Hosiery Mill

2. Location

street & number 215 Bonview Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Lincolnton N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Lincoln code 109 zip code 28092

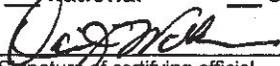
3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local


Signature of certifying official

3/1/22
Date

North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
 (Check only **one** box)

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	Buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	2	objects
3	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions)

Industry/Processing/Extraction
Manufacturing facility
Warehouse

Vacant/Not In Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

foundation: Brick, concrete
 walls: Brick
Concrete
 roof: Tar, Synthetic membrane
 other: Steel (windows/doors)

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY

The Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill is located at 215 Bonview Avenue, two blocks north of downtown Lincolnton in a largely residential neighborhood characterized by one- and two-story dwellings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The mill is a utilitarian industrial building that displays no stylistic features or ornament on the exterior or interior. The earliest portion of the building is a two-story load-bearing brick cotton mill constructed by the Williams Cotton Company in 1920 near the northeast corner of the parcel. Circa 1929, the Excell Manufacturing Company expanded the building to the south with a one-story brick addition. In 1947, the building's square footage doubled when, under the ownership of the Duplan Corporation, the facility was expanded with three load-bearing concrete block additions to serve as a rayon processing plant according to plans developed by the architecture and engineering firm Lacy, Atherton, Wilson & Davis, which was based in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. A one-story load-bearing concrete block addition with a partially finished basement level was added to the west and south elevations of the existing resource. A two-story concrete block addition was built across the north elevation and a small one-story addition was constructed on the east elevation of the 1920 mill. The last sections of the complex to be constructed were a one-story addition given over to shipping and office space at the northwest corner of the building, and a small one-story addition on the west elevation of the 1947 addition. Both were built in 1955 according to plans by the Bahnsen Company, a Winston-Salem-based engineering and manufacturing firm. The mill remains in fair condition. Within the past five years, deterioration of and around the three-foot-tall monitor on the roof of the 1920 mill caused the monitor and surrounding roof to collapse through the second story and onto the first, exposing the interior of the 1920 mill to the elements. The interiors of the circa 1929, 1947 and 1955 additions remain largely intact and reflect the property's evolution and functional change from a cotton mill to one that produced synthetic materials.

The 3.85-acre site also features a two-story steel water tank and one-story concrete block pump house, both of which were erected circa 1947 and are contributing resources on the property, as well as a non-contributing air handling unit added circa 1980. Foundations of three structures that are no longer extant (two circa 1947 cooling towers on the east and west sides of the building as well as the foundation of a 1955 power station to the south of the plant) remain on the site but are incidental and not counted. Overall, the property contains two contributing buildings (mill and pump house), one contributing structure (water tower), and one non-contributing object (air handling unit) on a 3.85-acre parcel bordered on the north by Bonview Avenue, on the east by North Government Street, on the south by properties facing south on the north side of West Pine Street, and on the west by North High Street. Overall, the property retains sufficient integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling to communicate its historic significance under Criterion A.

Resource List (described in detail below)

Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill (1920, c. 1929, 1947, c. 1955), contributing building
Water Tank (1947), contributing structure
Pump House (1947), contributing building
Two (2) Air handling Units (c. 1980), non-contributing objects

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NOTE: The following detailed description is keyed to the nomination photos and the attached “Site Plan and Building Evolution,” with alphabetical labels for the contributing buildings, structure, and objects as well as numerical labels for the sections of the mill.

Narrative Description

SETTING AND SITE

The Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill is located in a predominantly residential area two blocks northwest of Lincolnton’s City Hall, fire department, and the Lincoln County Courthouse in downtown Lincolnton. One-story frame houses with front- and side-gabled roofs built for mill workers in the early twentieth century line North High Street and Bonview Avenue to the west of the mill. To the north of the mill, across Bonview Avenue, are gravel-covered parking lots that historically served as employee parking for the mill from the 1950s into the 1990s. Farther north of the mill is a post-World War II neighborhood filled primarily with one-story Minimal Traditional-style dwellings. The First Wesleyan Church, a brick edifice constructed in 1959, is situated north of the mill, on the east side of Government Street at its intersection with Bonview Avenue. East of the mill lie several one- and two-story frame dwellings that date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To the south of the mill, on the northwest corner of Government Street and West Pine Street, is a circa 1950 former warehouse of brick and concrete block that is heavily altered and which now houses a fabric store. A narrow, unnamed waterway flows underneath the property from the east side to the northwest corner, where it passes through a culvert under Bonview Avenue and continues as an open stream toward Clarks Creek. Though not visible on the property, its presence under the mill bears mentioning due to the historic significance of water in the rayon manufacturing process.

Today, the mill building is situated roughly in the middle of a rectangular lot that descends sharply from Government Street on the east before the grade changes to a gentle slope that descends to North High Street on the west side of the property. To the north, and defining the northern edge of the property, is Bonview Avenue, from which the property gradually slopes downward to the south. A chain-link fence topped by barbed wire encircles the property along the parcel lines, except on the north side of the property in front of the circa 1955 addition. Except for the level area around the 1955 addition, which is gravel-covered, most of the property around the building is grassy and overgrown.

Situated a short distance from and roughly centered on the east elevation of the original 1920 section of the mill is the circa 1947 metal water tower. A short distance to the south of the water tower is a one-story, one-bay-square building that houses equipment related to pumping water from the water tower into the mill. The property also includes the foundations of three resources that are no longer extant. On the east and west sides of the mill, and situated close to the building, are the poured concrete foundations of two cooling towers that were installed in 1947 during the mill’s expansion by the Duplan Corporation. The footprint of both foundations is long and rectangular, and each features a raised concrete perimeter with a lower pad at the center. To the south of the mill and close to the southeast corner of the building is the poured concrete slab that previously served as the base for a power station installed by Duke Energy in 1955. No other remnants of the power station are extant.

A. BLACK OX – DUPLAN CORPORATION MILL (1920, c. 1929, 1947, c. 1955) CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

Because of the mill’s complex evolution, the exterior and interior of the Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill is presented here chronologically by construction date, beginning with the exterior and interior of the 1920 mill, followed by the circa 1929 addition, the 1947 additions, and the 1955 additions. Only the visible portions of

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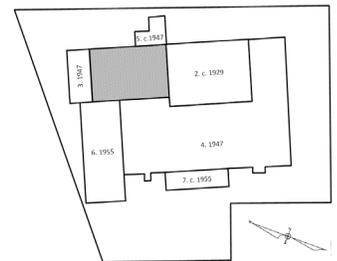
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exterior elevations of each section will be described in detail. In addition to being keyed to the attached “Site Plan and Building Evolution” submitted with the registration form, each building section described below is also indicated on the accompanying thumbnail image by grey shading. As illustrated on the attached maps and plans, and as indicated in the thumbnail images, the mill is not oriented toward true north, but is instead rotated a few degrees off of true north. For the simplicity of the description, however, it will be described as though it is oriented to true north.

1. 1920 Black Ox Mill Constructed by the Williams Cotton Company

Exterior

As constructed by the Williams Cotton Company in 1920, the Black Ox Mill is a two-story building of load-bearing brick masonry on a raised brick foundation (see **Figure 2**, in Section 8, Page 22). The building is roughly 78 feet wide by 115 feet long and featured a very shallow-pitched gable roof that appeared almost flat. The roof was built up with a combination of insulation and graveled tar over metal sheathing. The three-foot-high monitor collapsed between 2019 and 2020, pulling down much of the rest of the roof over this portion of the building. Only the east elevation, which is 14 bays wide and faces Government Street, is fully visible. When constructed, the large windows on the first and second stories featured segmental-arched openings filled with triple-hung, 12-over-12-over-8 sash with concrete sills. Circa 1947, the first story window openings were filled with brick and the second story windows were squared off and the sash replaced with 16-light industrial metal sash (**Photos 1-4**).



The south elevation of the 1920 mill is only visible on the second story, for the first story is obscured by the 1929 addition. On the second story, eight of the nine window bays, which originally featured double-hung, 12-over-8 sash within segmental-arched openings with concrete sills, have been filled with 18-light steel sash in squared-off openings. A small one-bay-square addition projects from the south elevation at the sixth bay from the east. It is constructed of concrete block and, like the alterations to the windows, is presumed to date to the 1947 changes introduced by the Duplan Corporation.

The west elevation of the 1920 mill is only visible on the second story, for the first story is obscured by the 1947 addition. Above the 1955 addition, the second story of the 1920 building's west elevation features a single twelve-light steel sash window on the north end. To the south of that window is a one-story, one-bay-square brick addition with blind walls and a flat roof that houses an elevator. To the south of the elevator shaft, and slightly receded behind the shaft, is a single 8-light steel sash window. To the south of that window, and above the one-story addition constructed in 1947, the second story of the 1920 building features an area of exposed, unpainted brick with three brick-infilled openings capped by three-tier segmental rowlock brick arches. The central opening is slightly wider than the flanking openings. This area was originally covered by a two-story canted bay that contained a narrow elevator shaft at the center with restrooms to either side. This feature was removed upon construction of the 1947 additions. To the south of this group of segmental-arched openings is another addition that projects from the west elevation of the 1920 section. This 1947 addition, built of cement block, is only revealed on the exterior at the second story above the one-story addition constructed in 1947. This addition houses restrooms on the second story as well as a stairwell between the first and second floors of the 1920 mill.

The north elevation of the 1920 mill was removed with the construction of the north addition in 1947.

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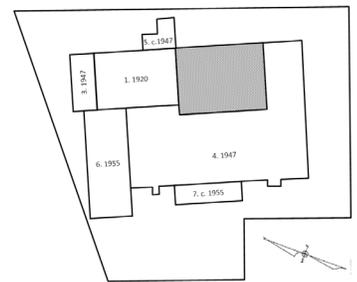
Interior

Water infiltration at the monitor led to extensive deterioration of the roof and, ultimately, the collapse of the monitor and roof of the mill through the second story onto the first floor below, with no ceiling or floor joists, decking, or structural supports remaining. The wood sheathing of the first floor remains, as does the original brick finish of the east, south, and west walls of this portion of the building. Each floor was 8,970 square feet in area, for a total square footage of 17,940 in this portion of the mill. While occupied by the Duplan Corporation, the first floor was used by the carding department and the second floor by the spinning department. The basement below the 1920 mill is an unexcavated crawl space (**Photo 12**).

2. Circa 1929 Addition Constructed by the Excell Manufacturing Company

Exterior

When constructed, the east and west walls were brick to the level of the window sills, above which they were frame and filled with 12 pairs of 28-light industrial metal sash, each of which incorporated an operable 8-light awning window near the base. The south wall was frame and clad in weatherboard with smaller, individual window openings filled with triple-hung sash (see **Figure 3**, in Section 8, Page 24). The exterior of the one-story circa 1929 addition is now visible only on the east elevation (**Photo 4**), with the two-story 1920 mill attached to the north elevation and the one-story 1947 addition extending from the south elevation and wrapping around the west elevation. The windows of the east elevation were removed and the exterior finished with brick laid in common bond.¹ The roof of this section is very slightly pitched, and the monitor that projected six feet above the ridgeline was removed between 1947 and 1951. The roof is covered with a synthetic membrane over insulation board.



Interior

The interior of the circa 1929 addition retains some characteristics from its circa 1929 construction as well as features dating to the mid-twentieth century after the Duplan Corporation converted the plant to rayon production (**Photo 14**). The interior retains its open plan, with an area that is 90 feet wide by 126 feet long and 11,340 total square feet with its original wood floor. Two rows of six slender steel posts support the shallow-pitched gable roof, which features a mixture of heavy timber framing from circa 1929 and steel trusses dating to the 1940s, the latter of which was likely installed when the monitor was removed. The roof decking is wood sheathing over the heavy timber on the east and west sides of the roof that slope away from the center section where the monitor was located. In place of the monitor, lightweight steel trusses below corrugated metal fill the space at the center of the addition. The north interior wall of the circa 1929 addition is the brick exterior wall of the 1920 section. The east wall is the exterior wall that was later rebuilt with brick. The frame south wall and brick-and-frame west wall that enclosed the circa 1929 addition were replaced with concrete block in 1947 upon construction of the one-story addition. A small, square concrete block office is situated in the southwest corner of this section, and a freight elevator is on the west wall. While occupied by the Duplan Corporation, this area was given over to the winding department. The basement below the 1929 addition is an unexcavated crawl space.

¹ It is presently unknown when this change occurred. It is unlikely to have occurred in 1947, for the wall would likely have been replaced with concrete block at the time the concrete block additions were under construction. It is possible that it occurred at the same time the monitor was removed and the roof framing stabilized with steel trusses. If so, it occurred between 1947 and 1951, during Duplan's ownership of the property. It is also possible that this change to the east elevation of the 1929 addition occurred in the 1960s or 1970s, when the property was owned by Hudson Hosiery Mills or Chadbourn, Inc.

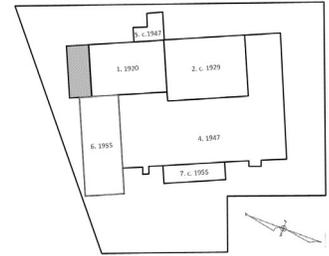
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3. 1947 Addition Constructed by the Duplan Corporation

Exterior

In 1947, the Duplan Corporation constructed a two-story addition on the north elevation of the 1920 mill (**Photo 1**). To do so, they removed the north wall of the original building to create a continuous floor plate between the two sections. The addition, of load-bearing concrete block on a raised, poured concrete foundation, is nine bays wide by four bays deep with a roof that continued the slight pitch of the 1920 section with a built-up finish of insulation covered by graveled tar. The damage to the roof of the 1920 section of the mill extends over this addition, and the roof here has partially collapsed.



The first story of the north elevation features a central loading dock with metal rollup door positioned approximately four feet above grade. To the east were three roughly square window openings historically filled with industrial metal sash. Three similar windows were located to the west of the loading dock. These openings were filled with concrete block in the 1950s. The second story of the north elevation is pierced by nine equally spaced window openings filled with 18-light steel sash windows with cast concrete sills.

The east elevation, facing North Government Street, historically featured four window openings on the first story that were filled with concrete block in the 1950s. At the north end of the second story, the first bay is given over to a single-leaf steel door that opens onto a steel fire escape composed of two straight flights of stairs that rise to the north along the east wall with landings at the first and second stories. This door was an expansion, in the late 1950s or later, of an original 18-light steel sash window. The other three bays on the second story of the east elevation feature window openings filled with 18-light steel sash windows.

On the west elevation, a portion of the first story is visible due to the setback of the one-story 1955 addition (section 6, below). Here, the west elevation of the 1947 addition is blank. On the second story of the 1947 addition are four equally spaced window openings filled with 18-light industrial steel sash windows.

Interior

The interior of this addition has been impacted by the deterioration and collapsed roof over the 1920 mill (**Photo 13**). That this section was framed with steel posts, second floor joists, and roof supports has enabled it to withstand the worst of the damage thus far, though it has been exposed to the elements and thus suffered substantial deterioration. The first floor of this addition housed shipping functions and was primarily an open space punctuated only by the steel posts. Projecting from the north wall of the first floor is a small one-bay-square office sheathed in wood paneling with a window in the south-facing wall. At the center of the southern edge of this addition, near where it joins the 1920 mill, is a large scale for weighing products. The second story features a wood floor, now partially collapsed, visible from below but was otherwise inaccessible. Plans for the building indicate that it was simply an extension of the open production space of the 1920 building.

Architectural plans from the mid-twentieth century reveal that the east half of this basement was historically unexcavated, while the west half, which was roughly square in footprint, was finished and may have served as an office. Two doors are at the corner of this section and the circa 1955 concrete block and brick veneered section at the northwest corner.

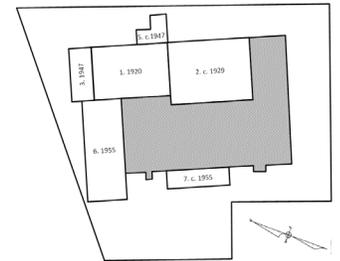
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4. 1947 Addition Constructed by the Duplan Corporation

Exterior

The one-story addition, constructed in 1947, covers the south elevation of the circa 1929 addition and the west walls of both 1920s sections, presented the most significant change to the building's function and appearance. More than doubling the mill's square footage, this 1947 section was erected to expand the Duplan Corporation's production of rayon at the facility. Though only one story tall, it rests on a poured concrete foundation with a finished basement level that is partially exposed due to a slight decline in the grade elevation on the south and west ends of the property. The addition is of load-bearing concrete block with a flat roof that is built up with insulation covered by graveled tar.



The east elevation of this addition continues the east elevation of the circa 1929 addition to the south for three structural bays distinguished by concrete block pilasters that equally divide the elevation (**Photo 5**). The recessed concrete block panels that span the area between the pilasters feature cornice-level corbeling. The northern bay features a slightly off-center double-leaf, paneled, steel pedestrian door that opens onto a steel deck. To the north of this door, in the recessed panel of the first story, are ghost lines where an original 27-light steel sash window was located and which is now infilled with concrete block. The deck onto which the door opens features a tubular-steel railing on the east side and a short flight of steps that descend to the north. A second flight of stairs that descend to the south is slightly longer due to the change in grade elevation at the south end of the building. This second set of stairs leads to the basement level of the center bay, which is accessed through a double-leaf, paneled, steel pedestrian door beside a rectangular window opening with a cast concrete sill that has been infilled with concrete block. Above the basement level of the center bay, the recessed panel of the first story reveals the ghost lines where an original pair of 27-light steel sash windows shared an opening that illuminated the interior. This opening is now infilled with concrete block. The southern bay is blind, with no openings or ghost lines of infilled openings. A buff-colored brick chimney that vents a cast iron furnace rises along the south end of the east elevation and projects above the roofline by a full story.

The south elevation of this addition is 12 bays wide, with the bays defined by concrete block pilasters (**Photo 6**). The recessed concrete block panels of each bay feature cornice-level corbeling. Each bay of the first story featured pairs of 27-light steel sash windows within shared openings that have been infilled with concrete block. The eastern three bays at the exposed basement level all featured pairs of 8-light steel sash windows. The fourth bay from the east was blind and, following that, the bays had alternating pairs of 8-light steel sash window. All of the window openings on the south elevation have been filled in with concrete blocks.

The west elevation of the one-story 1947 addition was originally fourteen bays long, with the bays defined by concrete block pilasters (see **Figure 4**, in Section 8, Page 28). For the purpose of clarity in this description, these bays will be numbered from right to left, with the first bay being on the south end of the west elevation (on the observer's right-hand side) and bay 14 being on the north end of the elevation (the observer's left-hand side). The recessed concrete block panels of each bay feature cornice-level corbelling. When constructed, the southern-most bay featured a pair of 27-light steel sash windows within a shared opening on the first floor. These window openings have been infilled with concrete block. There were no windows in the basement level. An identical pair of 27-light steel sash windows within a shared opening occupied the adjacent bay to the north. At the basement level of this bay were a pair of 8-light steel sash windows. All of these openings have been filled with concrete block. A nearly full-height stair tower with a shallow-pitched shed roof projects roughly seven feet from the third bay from the south. Its only opening is a single-leaf steel door at ground level on the

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west elevation which opens onto a poured concrete stoop with a tubular steel railing on the west and south sides with a set of two concrete steps that descend to the north. The next eleven bays to the north were historically blind at the first story except for rectangular vents near the roof line in bays 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 13. Pairs of 8-light steel sash originally occupied the basement level of bays 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 14. A one-story, one-bay-square concrete block extension projects from the basement level of the bay 12. The south elevation of this projection contains a single 8-light steel sash window now infilled with concrete block, while the north elevation features a single-leaf, four-panel steel door that opens onto a short flight of steel steps. Bays 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 are not covered by the 1955 addition described in building section #7 below (**Photos 7 and 9**).

Near the center of the roof, where the 1920 and circa 1929 sections meet at the one-story 1947 addition, there is a one-story air conditioning room that was constructed in 1947 with the rest of the addition. Of wood frame construction, this one-story-tall mechanical housing was sheathed in diagonal wood boards with an exterior cladding of corrugated sheet metal.

Interior

The first story of this expansive addition features wood floorboards over the reinforced, poured concrete floor. In this area, steel posts support steel I-beams and a ceiling sheathed in corrugated metal sheeting. A small one-room concrete block office occupies the southeast corner of this section, and a metal door and metal sliding doors on this section's east wall open to the circa 1929 and 1947 sections. Restrooms are also located on the east wall, and an opening near the middle of the wall provides access to a stairway that rises to the second floor of the 1920 section and the roofs of each section of the building. Visible on the east wall near the northeast corner is a portion of the original brick wall and the infilled arched windows of the 1920 section. On the north wall is a metal roll-up door leading to the circa 1955 addition; a metal door with single sidelight for the hallway connecting this section to offices in the circa 1955 addition; and a pair of metal doors that open to the stairwell to the basement. At the south end of the first floor, the southwest corner was given over to the slasher function, while the central section was for beamers. Creels occupied the southeast corner. The large open space to the west of the 1920 and 1929 section was for draper looms (**Photos 15-17**).

In the basement, which was used for production, large, square concrete posts with wooden caps support a ceiling made of reinforced poured concrete with a waffle-pattern (**Photo 18**). Half of this section's posts and walls are painted blue, and the other half is painted yellow. Along the west wall of this section are two small mechanical rooms, and a two-story section that holds larger and older mechanical equipment. Farther down the west wall, near the southwest corner, is a pair of wooden doors that open to a two-story stairwell; a concrete block office; and seven concrete block restroom stalls attached to the office. Also visible near the southwest corner of this section are some of the metal windows that date to 1947. These windows are painted yellow on the interior and have been infilled with concrete block on the exterior. While occupied by the Duplan Corporation, the rooms in the southwest of the basement were used as laboratory space. Other portions of the basement were given over to locker rooms and a classroom, while most of the area was for production space.

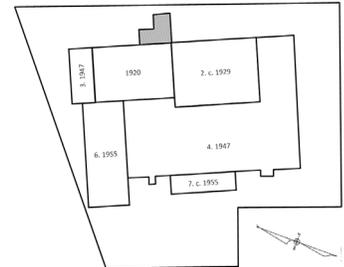
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5. 1947 Addition Constructed by the Duplan Corporation

Exterior

Projecting east from the south end of the 1920 building is a one-story addition of load-bearing concrete block on a poured concrete foundation. The addition features an L-shaped footprint with a flat roof built up with insulation and graveled tar. The north, east, and south walls of the addition feature large, louvered metal vents. On the north elevation of the L-shaped extension to the east is a set of double-leaf steel doors with a louvered, metal vent in the east (left) door.



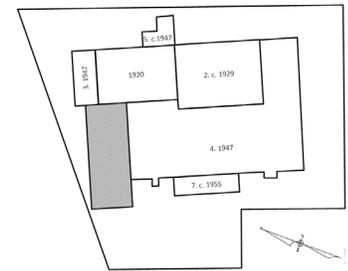
Interior

The interior features exposed concrete block walls and housed mechanical equipment.

6. 1955 Addition Constructed by the Duplan Corporation

Exterior

This one-story addition sits on a raised finished basement and features a poured concrete foundation with red-brick-veneered walls laid in common bond below a flat roof. The roof, which is not visible from the right-of-way, is built up with a layer of graveled tar over insulation that, presumably, covers the decking. At the east end of the north elevation are two steel-and-glass doors that provide access to the basement, and the door to the east is sheltered by a flat, cantilevered, concrete-and-metal hood. Near the center of this elevation, a wide metal roll-up door opens into the basement level and, west of the roll-up door is a single-leaf glass-and-wood door sheltered by a gabled good faced with cedar shake shingles and supported by simple brackets. Just east of this door is a window with a concrete sill that has been infilled with a metal, louvered panel and screen. An additional glass-and-wood door opens into the basement level at the northwest corner. Above the basement level, the first story features rectangular louvered metal vents (**Photo 11**).



The west elevation of this addition features three metal roll-up doors with the central door taller than the flanking doors. All three doors are sheltered by cantilevered metal awnings supported by cables (**Photo 10**).

The south elevation of this addition features two window openings at the basement level that have been infilled with brick above concrete sills. In the first story there are two rectangular louvered metal vents with concrete sills.

Interior

The first floor of this section is characterized by a large, open space with three roll-up doors on the west wall. Steel posts support steel I-beams and a ceiling that is covered with corrugated metal. A metal roll-up door on the south wall accesses the one-story addition constructed in 1947. A freight elevator with metal doors and enclosed with brick is located in the southeast corner of this section.

The basement of this section is primarily open. Square concrete posts support the concrete floor above. A small, framed office is located in the southeast corner, and the west wall has offices, a conference room, and a storage room. One section of the offices has concrete floors covered with linoleum tiles, walls sheathed in wood paneling, and a dropped ceiling of acoustic tiles. Adjoining this set of offices on the west is a large, open

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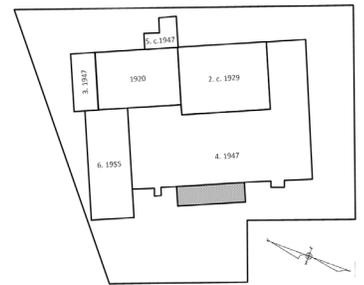
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room with four more offices lining the south wall and a metal-and-glass door at the room's northwest corner that opens to the exterior. Adjoining these offices is a room with a wood door labeled "Conference Room." This room has concrete floors covered with linoleum tile and concrete block walls and concrete ceiling. This addition was constructed to expand the shipping functions that were previously housed on the first floor of the two-story 1947 addition to the 1920 mill. The basement was designed to hold additional offices for the Duplan Corporation's plant managers (**Photo 19**).

7. 1955 Addition Constructed by the Duplan Corporation

Exterior

This addition features a poured concrete foundation and red-brick-veneered walls laid in common bond (**Photos 9 and 10**). The north half of this addition is one story tall and roughly aligned with the basement level of the 1947 addition to which it is attached. The south half of this addition is as tall as the 1947 section, so the flat roof of this addition has a stepped profile and a built-up finish. The north wall of the lower section features a metal roll-up door at grade beside a small, rectangular, louvered metal vent. The north wall of the taller section features four narrow, louvered metal vents that are grouped together at the center of the elevation. The west elevation features a single, small, louvered metal vent in each of the north and south halves of the addition. A wide steel vent pierces the upper section of the south elevation. This addition was constructed to house additional air conditioning units.



Interior

The interior was inaccessible at the time the property was recorded.

B. WATER TANK, c. 1947, CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE

To the east of the 1920 section of the mill is situated a cylindrical 100,000-gallon steel water tank capped by a domical roof (**Photos 1 and 2**). The tank rises slightly above the level of the second story eave line of the building. Not visible to the observer, but illustrated on the October 1947 plans developed by the firm Lacy, Atherton, Wilson & Davis, is the crushed stone base on which the water tank rests. Below grade, water pipes lead from the tank to the adjacent pump house.

C. PUMP HOUSE, c. 1947, CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

Exterior

Designed by the firm Lacy, Atherton, Wilson & Davis and situated to the south of and abutting the water tank is a one-story, 15-foot-square pump house constructed circa 1947—roughly concurrent with or slightly after the Duplan Corporation expanded the mill (**Photo 2**). The building features a poured concrete slab foundation supporting a load-bearing concrete block structural system with a very shallow-pitched shed roof that slopes down to the north toward the water tank. The building is surrounded on all four sides by grass that grows up to the building, with no curbing, walkways, or other hardscape leading between the pump house and mill or water tower. The pump house has been painted white.

Entry to the pump house is gained by a single-leaf door set within a square-edged wood surround on the east end of the south elevation. The door is steel with a six-light window in the top half and an 8 inch by 14 inch louvered vent at the base. Plywood now covers the upper two-thirds of the door. To the west of the door is a low, poured concrete extension that is 6 feet 4 inches, rises 18 inches from the ground, and projects from the south elevation by

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3 feet 6 inches. It features a sloping, metal-clad roof and was designed to house a 65-gallon gasoline drum within sand fill. A 2 inch galvanized fill pipe projects from the drum through the roof of the extension. Also projecting from the roof of the extension, behind the fill pipe and rising along the south elevation of the pump house is a vent pipe that terminates just above the building's roof line. Projecting from the south elevation of the pump house beside the vent pipe is another pipe, terminating beside the first, whose presence and use are not indicated on the plans but which likely vented interior equipment. The south elevation displays no other features or finishes. The east elevation of the pump house is distinguished by two large window openings with cast concrete lintels and sills. The original 8-light steel sash windows were removed, likely after 1961, and the openings have been filled in with concrete block. The north elevation abuts the water tower and is blank. The west elevation features a pair of infilled window openings identical to those of the east elevation.

Interior

The interior of the pump house (**Photo 20**) is one large open room with a poured concrete floor with a raised poured concrete pad roughly 3 feet by 6 feet in the north half of the building. According to the plans, this raised floor area was designed to support a Ford Mercury engine "complete with trimmings for driving a 750 G.P.M. approved centrifugal fire pump and approved fuel system." While the engine and pump are gone the system of pipes used to draw water from the tank remains in place. Otherwise, the pump house interior features exposed concrete block walls painted light grey to the top of the window sills and pale green above. The paint has faded over time and appears to be original. Unfinished wood planks comprise the ceiling.

D. TWO AIR HANDLING UNITS, c. 1980, NON-CONTRIBUTING OBJECTS

Situated to the east of the circa 1929 addition are two freestanding air handling units. Each unit is slightly shorter than the height of the first story, and both are metal. The first is located at the north end of the circa 1929 addition and immediately south of the L-shaped addition constructed in 1947 (**Photo 4**). It rests on the extant poured concrete foundation of the non-extant cooling tower described in the Site/Setting section above. The second air handling unit is located at the south end of the circa 1929 addition (**Photo 5**). This unit is freestanding, but its ducts pierce the east wall of the mill.

INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

The Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill retains sufficient integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling to its Period of Significance of 1920 to 1957 to merit listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its local significance to the industrial history of Lincolnton and Lincoln County.

Location and Setting

The property retains a high degree of integrity of location and setting. It is situated on its original parcel, with no buildings or structures relocated from or to the property. The surrounding neighborhood retains a majority of its original one- and two-story dwellings in all directions from the mill. A couple of non-residential buildings have been constructed nearby. The First Wesleyan Church, located east of the mill on the southeast corner of Bonview Avenue and North Government Street, was built after the Period of Significance in 1959. This building does not jeopardize integrity of setting, for its use is tangential to the overwhelmingly residential use of the surrounding properties. To the south of the mill is a mid-1950s commercial building whose presence is an extension of the commercial downtown just a couple blocks south of the mill.

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Design, Materials, and Workmanship

Overall, the Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill and associated resources retain sufficient integrity of design, materials, and workmanship to the Period of Significance. The mill exterior clearly illustrates the building's four main phases of construction, 1920, circa 1929, 1947, and 1955, which represent the three primary periods of ownership under the Williams Cotton Company (1918-1922), the Excell Manufacturing Company (1922-1944), and the Duplan Corporation (1944-1961). The Duplan Corporation completed alterations to the 1920 and circa 1929 sections of the building, but these alterations do not jeopardize the property's integrity of design, materials, or workmanship because the property's significance extends to 1957, when the company ceased manufacturing activity at the plant. While the 1940s alterations to the 1920s sections impacted their original design, the property's significance does not lie in its 1920s cotton mill architecture. Instead, its significance is derived from its industrial association and continuity of use as a textile plant through the mid-twentieth century, and particularly in its evolution from cotton textile production to the manufacture of rayon.

It must be acknowledged that the roof of the 1920 Black Ox Mill has collapsed through the second floor onto the first floor, with no ceiling or floor joists, decking, or structural supports remaining (**Photo 12**). The 1920 building is 78 feet wide by 115 feet long, and each floor was 8,970 square feet in area, for a total square footage of 17,940 in this portion of the mill while the building was intact. This damage extends into the 1947 addition to the north elevation of the Black Ox Mill (**Photo 13**). However, in this section, the steel framing and some of the second floor and roof decking remains intact. While some debris is scattered across the first story of the 1947 addition, the overall configuration of this space and much of the first floor finishes remain intact and observable. Despite this deterioration and damage, which necessitates extensive debris removal, the 1920 section retains its exterior walls and 1947 steel sash windows on the first and second stories, so that the building's volumetric qualities remain observable on the exterior. An engineering assessment performed in September 2021 advised that temporary bracing of the load-bearing masonry exterior walls of this section would facilitate removal of the roof and floor structure and, ultimately, the retention of the exterior envelope for future re-use.² Thus, when perceived from the outside, the three main periods of construction still communicate the building's evolution over time and significance from the period 1920 to 1957. The damage to the interior and loss of interior features and finishes in the 1920 section is undeniably significant. Yet, the building's use as a cotton textile plant is still embodied by the circa 1929 addition constructed by the Excell Manufacturing Company, which followed similar design principles in construction of the one-story extension to the two-story mill. This addition is 90 feet wide by 126 feet long and 11,340 square feet in area. Like the original building, it featured brick exterior walls and a gabled roof supported by heavy timber beams below wood decking. The large open interior space, punctuated only by the narrow cylindrical steel columns, would have accommodated the mill's equipment. Although the exterior is reflective of the mid-century alterations, with only the altered or overbuilt east wall visible, the interior retains the open plan of the production floor, wood floor material, steel columns, heavy timber framing, and roof decking. In the 1940s, the heavily glazed east and west elevations were filled in with brick on the building's conversion to rayon production.

The two-story 1947 addition to the north elevation of the 1920 mill retains its original steel sash windows. Although the windows have been infilled in the one-story 1947 additions, the walls still display the rhythmic repetition of pilasters and corbeled block above level of the window lintels. On the interior, the 1947 additions generally retain a high degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship.

The engineering assessment documented that, aside from the area where the roof collapsed, the building is in good condition.³

² Daniel R. Hill, P.E. Letter to Deanna Hodges (22 September 2021), np.

³ Ibid.

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Association and Feeling

While the property is no longer in industrial use, which diminishes the integrity of association, it retains very strong integrity of feeling by maintaining its overall size, scale, and massing; a majority of its exterior design, materials, and workmanship to the Period of Significance of 1920-1957; and the retention of two significant ancillary resources in the water tank and pump house. Further reinforcing the property's integrity of feeling and, to some degree, association is its relationship to the setting—particularly the surrounding residential neighborhood in which many of the plant's workers would have lived.

STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

The Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological deposits, such as structural remains of the original factory, teement houses, and waste house, subsurface infrastructural features such as wells and cisterns, and debris that accumulated during operation for the mill, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the property. Information concerning worker health, nutrition, quality of life, environmental transformations during industrial development, and the effects of technological change on work culture and daily life, as well as details of construction processes and the operation of the mill can be obtained from the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the property. At this time, no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1920 - 1957

Significant Dates

1922, ca. 1929, 1944, 1947, 1955, 1956

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lacy, Atherton, Wilson & Davis, architects & engineers for the 1947 expansion and systems
Bahnsen Company, engineers for the 1955 systems upgrades

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

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SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located in Lincolnton, Lincoln County, North Carolina, the Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill played a significant role in the local textile industry from its 1920 origin as one of Lincoln County's many cotton mills through the mid-twentieth century, a period in which the mill's size doubled upon its conversion to rayon production. Known as the Black Ox Mill over multiple phases of ownership into the 1940s,⁴ the earliest portion of the plant was constructed in 1920 by D.C. Williams, who took advantage of the explosive demand for textiles during World War I, a ready labor force in the heavily rural county, and abundant raw materials to establish the Williams Cotton Company. Textile market volatility resulted in the 1922 sale of the property to the Excell Manufacturing Company, which was organized by several prominent Lincolnton industrialists, including members of the locally prominent Childs family. Excell not only spun cotton, but also wove bedspreads in the facility, requiring greater square footage that prompted the construction of a large one-story addition circa 1929. Defaulting on its debts in the late 1930s, the Excell Manufacturing Company became the property of the Childs family, who ultimately sold the Black Ox Mill to the Pennsylvania-based Duplan Corporation in 1944. Duplan's acquisition of the Black Ox Mill enabled the company to increase production of rayon thread, which was critical to the manufacture of finished goods, including hosiery and, during World War II, the production of military textiles such as parachutes. Duplan used the plant for three years before significantly expanding the building in 1947 with an addition that more than doubled the production space. The firm of Lacy, Atherton, Wilson, and Davis, based in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, developed the architectural and engineering plans for the expansion. Labor disputes at its northern plants led the Duplan Corporation to relocate to Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1953, from which it continued to operate the Lincolnton plant. In the mid-1950s, Duplan again enlarged the building, constructing an addition to house management offices and an expanded shipping department, and also upgraded some of the systems according to engineering plans by the Winson-Salem-based firm the Bahnson Company. A reorganization of the company's production and distribution in the summer of 1956 led to the closure of the Lincolnton facility in 1957. In 1961, Duplan sold the property to Hudson Hosiery Mills, which used the plant until 1969, when it was then transferred to hosiery producer Chadbourn, Inc. The property has been vacant for more than 20 years.

Like most counties in the Piedmont region, textile manufacturing was a dominant industry in Lincoln County from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s. Most of the county's textile mills are gone, with many demolished during the late 1900s and early 2000s. Of all the mills constructed in Lincoln County beginning in the early nineteenth century, only fifteen survived into to the late twentieth century. The Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill is one of only eight mills that remain extant in Lincoln County, and one of only three in the county seat of Lincolnton. The Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill embodies the evolution of the textile industry from the production of cotton to rayon and other synthetics as well as the changing nature of corporate business practices in response to the volatile economic and labor market from the early 1900s through the third quarter of the twentieth century. The Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Industry for its significant association with the industrial development of Lincolnton and Lincoln County, North Carolina. The property's Period of Significance begins in 1920, the construction date of the oldest portion of the mill, which was first erected as a cotton mill. It ends in 1957, when the Duplan Corporation shifted its production of rayon to other plants and closed the Lincolnton mill. While the Hudson Hosiery Mill operated the plant from 1961 to 1969, followed by Chadbourn, Inc. until 1981, the period from 1961 to 1981 is not considered historically significant, for it coincides with a general decline in textile manufacturing across the Piedmont region of North Carolina.

⁴ While the Black Ox - Duplan Mill has had many formal names throughout its history, several are no longer recognized locally. The historic name of the nominated property is hyphenated and begins with the familiar moniker used by Lincolntonians prior to the 1940s, which is followed by the formal name of the property's longest owner, the Duplan Corporation, which significantly expanded the building's footprint and square footage while converting its use from cotton spinning and weaving in the 1920s and 1930s to the production of synthetics. This name best embodies the property's historic use and associations.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

NOTE: The historical background, property history, and discussion of the industrial context of Lincolnton and Lincoln County are interwoven throughout the following narrative.

Creation of Lincoln County and Its First 100 Years of Industrial History, 1779-1880

Formed in 1779, Lincoln County initially enveloped part or all of the counties of Gaston, Catawba, and Cleveland, which were created in the mid-nineteenth century.⁵ Ultimately, the long, narrow county encompassed 307 square miles, with Lincolnton, the seat of government, at the center. Lincoln County's topography is marked by gently rolling foothills across which wind several substantial waterways. The Catawba River delineated the county's eastern boundary,⁶ while the western boundary lay close to and/or crossed several smaller waterways, including Glenn Creek, Little Creek, and Buffalo Creek. Marking the western quarter of the county is Indian Creek, a substantial waterway that flows south from its headwaters near the Catawba County line before feeding into the South Fork Catawba River.⁷ The South Fork Catawba River bisects the county north-to-south, passing to the west of the county seat of Lincolnton, before its confluence with the Catawba River at Lake Wylie, on the border between Gaston and Mecklenburg Counties. These abundant water resources stimulated settlement across the county. Fueled by waterpower, industry developed early in Lincoln County's history. Yet most of the mills or factories operating in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were for the production of paper, furniture, flour, or iron.⁸

Michael Schenk's construction of a cotton-spinning mill on McDaniel's Spring near Lincolnton circa 1813 marked the textile industry's introduction in North Carolina.⁹ After a devastating flood in early 1816 that almost completely destroyed the mill and dam, Schenk and his new business partner, Absalom Warlick, hired Michael Beam in April of that year to build a larger machine on a portion of Warlick's property one mile east of Lincolnton and below the location of the original mill. The new enterprise was named the Schenk-Warlick Mill.¹⁰

Between 1818 and 1819, Michael Schenk, Dr. James Bivens, and Lincolnton merchant Col. John Hoke erected an even larger mill on the South Fork Catawba River, two miles south of Lincolnton. This enterprise, the Lincoln Cotton Mills, produced cotton yarn. On August 19, 1831, the mill operated twelve looms and 1,280 spindles, and by 1840 represented an investment of \$18,000, employed 84 persons, and manufactured products with a value of \$21,373. The Lincoln Cotton Mills operated until it was destroyed by fire in 1863.¹¹

⁵ Catherine Bishir and Michael Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 463.

⁶ Lake Norman, formed by the 1963 impoundment of the Catawba River by construction of Cowans Ford Dam by Duke Energy, now substantially forms the county's eastern boundary. From the county's founding through the Period of Significance of the nominated property, the eastern boundary was defined by the Catawba River.

⁷ Though historically known as the South Fork of the Catawba River, "of the" has fallen out of use, and it is now simply known as the South Fork Catawba River.

⁸ William L. Sherrill, *Annals of Lincoln County, North Carolina: Containing Interesting and Authentic Facts of Lincoln County History Through the Years 1749 to 1937* (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1993), 441-449.

⁹ With construction of this mill, Schenk is attributed with building the first textile plant south of the Potomac River.

¹⁰ Maurice York, "An Economic and Social History of Lincoln County," from *Our Enduring Past: A Survey of 235 Years of Life and Architecture in Lincoln County, North Carolina* (Lincolnton: Lincoln County Historic Properties Commission, 1987), 255; See also Private Collections, Michael Schenk Paper, PC905, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh; see also Alfred Nixon, "History of Lincoln County," *North Carolina Booklet IX* (January 1910), 168; see also Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, third edition, 1973), 318.

¹¹ Marvin Brown, *Our Enduring Past, A Survey of 235 Years of Life and Architecture in Lincoln County, North Carolina* (Lincolnton: Lincoln County Historic Properties Commission, 1987), 46.

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Around 1850, Andrew Motz and E.S. Barrett built the Laurel Hill Cotton Factory one mile west of Lincolnton near the confluence of the South Fork River and Clarks Creek. About 1858, Col. John F. Phifer and Col. R.W. Allison, cousins from Concord, North Carolina, purchased the property and operated it as the Ivy Shoals Cotton Mill until, under new ownership, it was renamed the Elm Grove Cotton Mills by the beginning of the twentieth century.¹²

The success of these mills, along with other industrial enterprises, did not protect Lincolnton from a declining economy and lack of investments in new manufacturing ventures between the 1850s and the 1870s. The “iron boom” having played out, Lincoln County’s economy was bleak in the wake of the Civil War. During reconstruction, the impoverished county saw more residents leave for better prospects elsewhere. By 1880, fewer than 800 residents lived in Lincolnton.¹³ Although three textile mills were operating by 1872, Lincoln nevertheless lagged behind nearby Gaston County. In the 1840s and 1850s, Gaston County began to emerge as a major textile center, with Woodlawn Cotton Mills, Stowe’s Cotton Mills, and the Mt. Island Cotton Mills all operating in 1872.¹⁴ Although North Carolina’s textile industry began in Lincoln County in the 1810s, with what appeared to be consistent, progressive expansion through the mid-nineteenth century, the county remained overwhelmingly agricultural through the 1870s.¹⁵ None of the mills constructed in Lincoln County during this period are extant.¹⁶

Daniel Efrid Rhyne and Growth of the Textile Industry in Lincolnton and Lincoln County, 1880-1920

A primary factor in the development and growth of the textile industry across Lincoln County during the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the influence of Gaston County native and industrialist Daniel Efrid Rhyne. Born in neighboring Gaston County in 1852, Rhyne was only 24 years old when he built the Mount Holly Cotton Mill in 1876, followed by the Tuckaseegee Mill in 1883, both of which were in Gaston County. Rhyne operated both mills in partnership with his brother, Abel Rhyne, before relocating to Lincolnton in 1887.¹⁷ In that year, Rhyne partnered with James Alonzo Abernethy to convert a facility two miles south of Lincolnton used by the Confederate government as a laboratory for the production of medicines during the Civil War. Aptly named the Laboratory Cotton Mills (extant, NR-listed 2003, #03001273), the operation boasted 2,000 spindles and manufactured long-staple cotton yarn.¹⁸ By 1890, Laboratory Cotton Mills had expanded to 5,000 spindles, 125 employees, and a small mill village to house the company’s expanding labor force.¹⁹

In 1895, Rhyne built the Lincoln Cotton Mill, known in Lincoln County as Southside Mill,²⁰ with 7,000 spindles and 125 employees. Similar to his plant at Laboratory, the Lincoln Cotton Mill used the South Fork Catawba River to power the mill and manufacture long-staple cotton yarn. Three or four years later, Rhyne, with his nephews Ed Love and Robert Love, and A.M. Price, increased his textile interests by building a third plant, Daniel Manufacturing Company, about one mile from the courthouse in Lincolnton, to spin fine yarn from combed sea-island cotton. Rather than use Lincoln County’s natural resources, the mill drew water from city water mains to

¹² Sherrill, 245.

¹³ “New Hosiery Plant Opening: Lincoln County Celebrates End of 5-Year-Old Disaster,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 22 December 1961.

¹⁴ Levi Branson, ed., *The North Carolina Business Directory, 1872* (Raleigh, North Carolina: J.A. Jones, 1872), 100.

¹⁵ York, 270-271.

¹⁶ Sherrill, 443.

¹⁷ “Daniel E. Rhyne Dies At Age Of 81,” *The News and Observer*, 25 February 1933; see also Frank Cauble, *Biography of Daniel E. Rhyne*, 1994, 24-25.

¹⁸ The Laboratory Cotton Mill is located at 848 South Fork Road, south of Lincolnton.

¹⁹ Brown, 46.

²⁰ The Lincoln Cotton Mill, at 539 Charlottes Lane, was a different plant from the earlier Lincoln Cotton Mills. Both the Lincoln Cotton Mill and Lincoln Cotton Mills are gone.

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supply power to this facility.²¹ This production of a fine-grade of yarn was atypical for these early mills in the region, for it required a more skilled labor force than the production of coarser grades. Such a skilled labor force had not yet fully developed in Piedmont North Carolina by the turn of the twentieth century.²²

After Rhyne sold his interest in the Daniel Manufacturing Company, he partnered with James Alonzo Abernethy and started the Wampum Mill (gone)²³ and Indian Creek Mill.²⁴ He also became associated with the Rhodes Manufacturing Company, located south of Lincolnton, started by William Rhodes of Lincolnton, by purchasing interest in the company and changing the name to Rhodes-Rhyne Weaving Company (extant).²⁵ This plant was located about one mile from Laboratory and manufactured bedspreads. His manufacturing interests expanded to include four mills in Cherryville, Gaston County; eight mills in Belmont, Gaston County, and one mill in Henry River, Burke County, North Carolina.²⁶

Others followed Rhyne's lead in the construction of textile mills in Lincoln County, and the 1890s saw an industrial boom in the area, with twelve mills in operation by 1900.²⁷ In 1896, members of the Mauney family and Dr. W.R. Crouse built the Long Shoals Cotton Mill (gone)²⁸ on the site of the former Lincoln Paper Mill.²⁹ Located on the South Fork Catawba River, the mill first used waterpower to produce coarse cotton yarn, later converting to steam, diesel, and electric power. In the 1890s, Captain Joseph Graham Morrison built the Mariposa Mill (gone)³⁰ in southeastern Lincoln County's Lowesville community.³¹ In 1906, the Eureka Manufacturing Company (extant, NR-listed 2013, #13000934) began production of coarse cotton yarn in an existing two-story brick building constructed as a foundry and machine shop in downtown Lincolnton, less than 300 yards west of the Wampum Mill.³² In 1907, the Rhodes family built the Rhodes Manufacturing Company Cotton Mill three miles south of downtown Lincolnton. Thorne and David Clark purchased the company before 1919, and renamed it Massapoag.³³ Around 1909, James Lee Love and his brother, Edgar Love, established the Saxony Spinning Company's combed and Sea Island Cotton yarn mill (extant) in Lincolnton.³⁴ In 1918, Robert C. Boger and Alfred Crawford, textile

²¹ Jason L. Harpe, "Eureka Manufacturing Company Cotton Mill," National Register of Historic Places nomination. 2013, Section 8, Page 12 (<https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr.gov/nr/LN0413.pdf>).

²² Holland Thompson, *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill: A Study of the Industrial Transition in North Carolina* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906), 151.

²³ The Wampum Mill was located at 412 South Flint Street in Lincolnton and is no longer extant.

²⁴ The location of the Indian Creek Mill is not absolutely certain at this time. A textile mill near Indian Creek at the intersection of Indian Creek Road and Kawai Road south of Lincolnton may be the side of the plant started by Rhyne and Abernethy, but the building's exterior suggests that it was entirely constructed in the mid-20th century. It is possible that an earlier mill lies at the core of the complex.

²⁵ The Rhodes-Rhyne Mill is located at 1436 Roseland Drive.

²⁶ Cauble, 19.

²⁷ York, 19.

²⁸ The Long Shoals Cotton Mill was located at 3234 Long Shoals Road.

²⁹ "Long Shoals Cotton Mill Built in 1896 By Father of Present Owner," *Lincoln County News*, 7 October 1935.

³⁰ The Mariposa Mill was located on Mariposa Road in southeast Lincoln County.

³¹ Joyce J. Handsel and Sarah H. Grissop, *Echoes and Shadows of Two Centuries, 1750-1950: A Collection of Interesting Tidbits Relating to the History of Stanley, North Carolina* (Stanley, N.C.: Stanley, North Carolina Historical Association, 1999), 384; see also "Local Department," *Lincoln Courier*, 22 February 1889.

³² Jason Harpe, "Eureka Manufacturing Company Cotton Mill," National Register nomination (on file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office), <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/nr/LN0413.pdf>.

³³ Thorn Clark moved to Lincolnton in 1919 or 1920. He was the treasurer and manager of the firm Anderson Mills, Inc. The company operated the mill as Anderson Mills, and the date they changed the name to Massapoag Mill is not known. "A New Citizen for Lincolnton," *The Lincoln County News*, 9 October 1919.

³⁴ "Mrs. W.W. Glenn's Brother and Co-Builder of Saxony Mill Dead," *Lincoln County News*, May 11, 1950. The Saxony Spinning Company is located at 564 South Grove Street southwest of Lincolnton in Lincoln County.

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manufacturers from Philadelphia, established Boger and Crawford Spinning Mills (gone)³⁵ in the unincorporated community of Goodsonville, three miles east of Lincolnton.³⁶

The nominated property was first developed for industrial use in 1880, when B.H. Sumner and George L. Phifer constructed a woolen mill on the site. That enterprise lasted only a few years due to a decline in sheep husbandry in the area, which reduced the local wool supply. Eight years later, the Willow Brook Manufacturing Company, which was organized for the manufacture of cotton and woolen yarns and goods, acquired the property previously occupied by Sumner and Phifer's woolen mill.³⁷ This one-and-a-half-acre parcel, identified as Lot #43, was sold for \$6,000.^{38,39} On August 1, 1888, Jacob H. Bisaner sold to the Willow Brook Manufacturing Company another two acres for \$100.⁴⁰ On April 22, 1888, the officers instructed the building committee to "build an iron building for the cotton mill."⁴¹

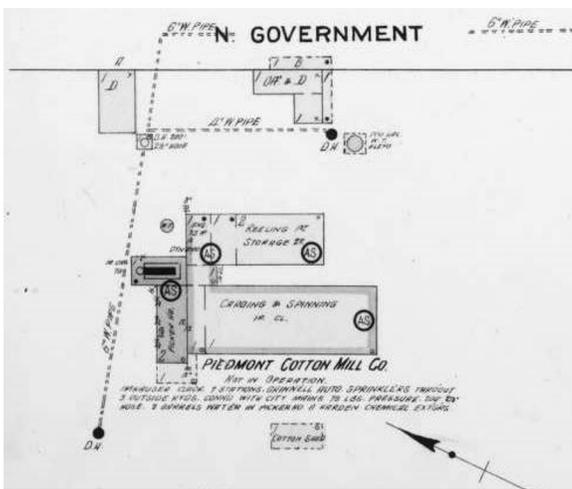


Figure 1. 1906 Sanborn Map of Lincolnton, showing the Piedmont Cotton Mill, which operated in the 1888 building constructed by the Willow Brook Manufacturing Company. This was the mill subsequently operated by the Rolin Manufacturing Company during the period that the property acquired the name Black Ox Mill.

In December 1891, Willow Brook Manufacturing Company sold the property to another textile enterprise, though it is not clear if the new owner operated the mill, because the property sold again less than a year later.⁴² For the next ten years, the Dellma Cotton and Woolen Mill operated the mill until it sold the property to the Mauney family of Kings Mountain in 1902.⁴³ Although the Mauney family were prominent textile manufacturers in the southern Piedmont, they did not actually operate the facility. Instead, in February 1903, they sold the property to the Piedmont Cotton Mills, which produced coarser grades of cotton in skeins and cones (**Figure 1**).⁴⁴ In 1912, the Piedmont Manufacturing Company changed its name to the Rolin Manufacturing Company, which continued to operate the mill for the next six years.⁴⁵

It was during the Rolin Manufacturing Company's ownership that the property acquired the name "Black Ox Mill." On 16 July 1916, remnants from two tropical storms led to a devastating flood that took many lives and destroyed property across western North Carolina. The Mariposa Mill was inundated with 40 inches of water and sand in the first story, while the power plant at the Southside

³⁵ Boger and Crawford Spinning Mills was situated at 2130 East Main Street. The mill was demolished and a distribution warehouse for the Ingles grocery store chain was constructed on the property between 2014 and 2016.

³⁶ Jason L. Harpe, *Images of America: Lincoln County, North Carolina* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 48.

³⁷ "Local Department," *The Lincoln Courier*, 16 November 1888; see also Sherrill, 444.

³⁸ The building is shown on the 1890 Sanborn Map for Lincolnton.

³⁹ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 60, Page 442.

⁴⁰ Idem, Deed Book 61, page 37.

⁴¹ Ledger, Willow Brook Manufacturing Company, March 3, 1888—January 14, 1892. Lincoln County Historical Association, Lincolnton, North Carolina. No photos of the Willow Brook Manufacturing Company mill building are currently known to exist.

⁴² "Sale of the Willow Brook Cotton Mills," *The Lincoln Courier*, 18 December 1891.

⁴³ The mill building is shown as Dellma Cotton and Woolen Mill on the 1896 and 1906 Sanborn Maps for Lincolnton.

⁴⁴ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 86, Page 490; see also "Piedmont Cotton Mills Company," *The Lincoln County News*, 8 October 1909.

⁴⁵ "Piedmont Mill To Start Soon," *The Lincoln County News*, 20 February 1912.

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mill was washed away. The Elm Grove, Laboratory, and Long Shoals mills were also damaged in the flood. The *Lincoln County News* reported that the Black Ox Mill, which drew water from Lincolnton's public water system and was not inundated in the flood, had production delayed by only one day.⁴⁶

Despite the Flood of 1916, the late 1910s saw explosive growth in textile manufacturing in response to the demands of World War I. Plants that had previously employed only one shift expanded two or more shifts of workers to meet the production needs of the war effort. Yet even during this period of growth and prosperity in textile manufacturing, the industry, generally, was not particularly prosperous.⁴⁷ It nevertheless represented a significant investment in Piedmont North Carolina, where hundreds, if not thousands of workers were employed in the industry.

In 1918, the Rolin Manufacturing Company sold the Black Ox Mill property to D.C. Williams for \$40,000. Williams had served as secretary of the Rudisill Manufacturing Company and Superintendent of the Saxony Spinning Mill before beginning his own venture, the Williams Cotton Mills, which operated 2,500 spindles.⁴⁸ For the next two years, the Williams Cotton Mill continued to operate in the facility constructed by the Willow Brook Manufacturing Company in 1888 and later known as the Black Ox Mill.

Industrial Growth Gives Way to the Great Depression and War Effort, 1920-1944

From humble beginnings in the early nineteenth century in Lincoln County, the textile industry grew to include factories that focused on spinning, weaving, knitting, and finishing. With Charlotte growing to become the textile manufacturing hub of the South, the industry exploded across the state, and especially in Piedmont North Carolina in the 1920s, driven in large part by the continued conflict of World War I.⁴⁹ In addition to its status as a region rich in natural resources, the Piedmont's abundant water supply meant cheap, convenient electric power that allowed mill operators to "put practically all of their capital in productive equipment and to enlarge their plans as their means would permit without the inconvenience and larger cost that would have been entailed in enlarging an individual steam plant."⁵⁰ An even more important factor in the growth of the textile industry across the region was the perceived suitability of the labor force.⁵¹ During the 1920s, the textile industry reoriented around the ready availability of Southern labor, raw materials such as cotton, and hydroelectric power in the Piedmont region. By 1928, the textile industry employed 20,000 people across twenty North Carolina counties.⁵² The industrial growth fueled economic prosperity for some, but following World War I, the industry became increasingly unstable as market demand declined following the war.

Although many—if not most—of the textile plants constructed across Lincoln County during the last decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth remained in operation through the mid-1900s, many of these mills experienced substantial organizational, operational, and physical changes as the industry shifted through the 1920s toward more "scientific" approaches to management. Some mills changed ownership, or at least

⁴⁶; see also "Flood News Lincoln and Other Sections," *The Lincoln County News*, 24 March 1916; see also "Flood Damage in Lincoln County," *The News and Observer*, 20 July 1916. The name "Black Ox Mill" reportedly derived from the fact that a large black ox drew the cart carrying the wood used to fire the mill's boilers.

⁴⁷ United States Congress, House Committee on Labor, "Hearing: To Rehabilitate and Stabilize Labor Conditions in the Textile Industry of the United States" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1936), 66 (<https://books.google.com>).

⁴⁸ "Rolin Mfg. Co. Changes Ownership," *The Lincoln County News*, August 1, 1918.

⁴⁹ United States Congress, House Committee on Labor, "Hearing: To Rehabilitate and Stabilize Labor Conditions in the Textile Industry of the United States" 66.

⁵⁰ "Charlotte Center Of The Vast Textile Industry Of The South," *The Charlotte Observer*, 25 September 1924

⁵¹ Ibid; see also "Four Hundred Textile Plants Enter New Year," *The Charlotte Observer*, 1 January 1928.

⁵² "Western Carolina Textile Industries Prosperous," *Charlotte Sunday Observer*, 15 April 1928.

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management, while continuing production as before. Still others shifted production within the textile industry or expanded existing production. Changes to or expansion of operations sometimes required expansion of the mill buildings to accommodate additional machinery or new production departments. The Ivy Shoals Cotton Mill, later renamed the Elm Grove Cotton Mill (extant),⁵³ continued to operate through the early twentieth century. In 1939, Edgar Love and William Lentz acquired the property and operated the mill as the Crown Converting Company.⁵⁴ Boger and Crawford Spinning Mills continued to operate through this period and was expanded by additions in 1928 and 1938. Although it changed ownership many times during the first half of the twentieth century, the Mariposa Mill, begun in 1890, continued to operate until the 1950s. By 1920, the Wampum Mills were operating 15,000 spindles to produce combed and corded yarn when J.A. and R.S. Abernethy retired from the company and turned it over to a new management team. Plans for the facility's enlargement were soon under way.⁵⁵

The region—and Lincoln County—also saw the construction of new mills during this period. In 1920, Edgar Love partnered with other family members, B.P. Caldwell of Cliffside, Rutherford County, and Robert McLean of Gastonia, on the construction of two mill buildings on property adjoining the lands of the Saxony Spinning Company approximately two miles southwest of Lincolnton. These mills, Love Spinning Mill Company⁵⁶ and Melville No. 2 (extant),⁵⁷ made fine carded yarns and coarse combed yarns, respectively.⁵⁸ The mill buildings were later purchased by Carolina Mills.

The Black Ox Mill, under the ownership of D.C. Williams, followed this trend of organizational, operational, and physical change that continued through the second decade of the twentieth century. After two years of production, Williams welcomed his brother, W.N. Williams to the company in January 1920. W.N. Williams had thirty years' experience in textile manufacturing with Daniel E. Rhyne at his mills at Southside and Laboratory. Over the next twelve months, the Williams brothers demolished the 1888 building and erected a new brick mill (**Figure 2**), which expanded the room available for machinery, leading to an increase in the number of spindles from 2,700 to 4,000.⁵⁹ The new mill was typical of textile manufacturing facilities of the first quarter of the twentieth century. The two-story building was constructed of load-bearing brick masonry on a raised basement. Fourteen bays of large, segmental-arched window openings filled with triple-hung, 8-over-8-over-8-light sash on the first story and 12-over-12-over-8-light sash on the second story created a consistent rhythm along the east and west elevations. The north and south elevations were each nine bays wide. The shallow-pitched gable roof, which sloped down to the east and west, was capped with a three-foot-tall roof monitor whose low walls were glazed with windows below a very shallow-pitched gable. A two-story-tall elevator tower projected from the west elevation, covering four of the



Figure 2. This view of the two-story Black Ox Mill shows the west elevation to the left and the south elevation to the right, rising above the ca. 1929 one-story addition to the far right. The small shed-roofed wing at the far left was removed in 1947.

⁵³ The Ivy Shoals-Elm Grove Cotton Mill is located at 535 Elm Grove Road near Lincolnton.

⁵⁴ Brown, 142; see also George Phifer to Stephen Smith, 7 August 1892, Edward W. Phifer Collection, North Carolina Office of Archives and History; and "Lentz and Associates Purchases Elm Grove Mill Property," *The Lincoln County News*, November 16, 1939.

⁵⁵ "Change In Wampum Mill Management," *The Lincoln County News*, 16 February 1920.

⁵⁶ The location and status of the Love Spinning Mill Company are not presently known.

⁵⁷ The Melville plant is located at 569 South Grove Street Extension, south of Lincolnton.

⁵⁸ "Two New Mills for Lincolnton," *Lincoln County News*, June 24, 1920.

⁵⁹ "Williams Cotton Mills Operating In New Brick Building," *The Lincoln County News*, 10 January 1921.

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window bays. The elevator was located within a central shaft with restrooms that filled the space around it within the tower. These features—load-bearing brick construction, numerous windows to fill the interior space with abundant natural light, and a roof monitor—were all highly characteristic of textile mill construction during this period.

D.C. Williams was heavily indebted from his purchase of the Black Ox Mill. In 1918 and again in 1921, he borrowed heavily from Philadelphia industrialist John N. Tracy of The Riddle Company. In 1921, following construction of the new Black Ox Mill, Williams borrowed from the Childs family of Lincolnton. In each case, Williams offered the Black Ox Mill property as collateral on the obligation.⁶⁰ Despite running two full-time shifts, Williams defaulted on the payments. Though the reason for the company's dire financial straits is not known, it is reasonable to conclude that its pattern of borrowing, when balanced against production and profits, followed a consistent theme within the textile industry at the time. In June 1922, the building and all of its equipment was sold at auction.⁶¹

John N. Tracy was the highest bidder when he offered \$50,000 for the Black Ox Mill at a public auction on the Courthouse steps on 20 June 1922. Tracy held the property for only a few months before selling it to the Excell Manufacturing Company for \$55,000. Excell Manufacturing was a conglomerate of several Lincolnton industrialists. Among them were members of the locally prominent Childs family, including Charles E. Childs and his youngest son, Frederick Sherwood Childs, who had previously loaned money to Williams Cotton Mills.⁶² Unlike the earlier Williams Cotton Mills, which produced cotton yarn, the Excell Manufacturing Company made bedspreads from "scratch." The company produced and dyed its own yarn and operated a weaving room.⁶³ The November 1922 issue of the industry journal *Textile World*, expressly stating that the plant was "known locally as the Black Ox," indicated that Excell was "overhauling" the mill and adding new machinery after an unspecified period of idleness.⁶⁴ By March 1923, the Excell Manufacturing Company was operating 3,500 spindles.⁶⁵

Other mills in the county operated more spindles, thus producing more yarn. In the early 1920s, Wampum Mills led the textile industry in Lincoln County with 14,000 spindles. Boger and Crawford followed closely in second place with 11,000 spindles. Elm Grove and the Lincolnton Cotton Mills each operated 8,000. A few others followed, and Excell was near the bottom of the list, just above Eureka Cotton Mills, which operated 1,350 spindles.⁶⁶ But the lower number of spindles was not necessarily a negative factor, for Excell's business model was based on more than yarn production. Instead, as a mill that produced a finished product, the company's facility could not be given entirely over to spinning.

Excell's expanded operation eventually required additional production space, necessitating the construction of a large addition to the Black Ox Mill circa 1929 that doubled the plant's footprint (**Figure 3**, next page). Though only one story tall on a raised basement, the addition was of a larger scale than the original 1920 mill, so that the

⁶⁰ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 127, pages 153-157; see also idem, Deed Book 133, pages 488-492; idem, Deed Book 135, pages 15-19; idem, Deed Book 135, pages 27-28; and idem, Deed Book 135, pages 178-183.

⁶¹ Ibid; see also "Trustee Sale of Real Estate," *The Lincoln County News*, 18 May 1922; see also Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 127, page 153; see also idem, Deed Book 133, page 288; idem, Deed Book 135, page 15; see also "Mills at Lincolnton Are Sold At Auction," *The Charlotte Observer*, 21 June 1922.

⁶² "Lincolnton Capitalists Purchase Williams Mill," *The Gastonia Gazette*, 5 October 1922; see also Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 139, pages 13-22.

⁶³ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 139, pages 13-22; see also "Excell Mfg. Co. Begins Operation Soon," *The Lincoln County News*, 6 November 1922.

⁶⁴ "Mill Notes," *Textile World*, Volume 62, No. 21, 18 November 1922, 81 (<https://books.google.com>); see also "Overhaul Black ox Mills Under New Ownership," *The Charlotte Observer*, 8 November 1922.

⁶⁵ "Special Writer Visits Lincolnton," *The Lincoln County News*, 26 February 1923.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

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building's eave line met the earlier mill above the sill line of the second story. The east elevation of the new construction was flush with that of the 1920 building, while the west elevation projected 12 feet. The east and west elevations were brick to the level of the window sills. Above the sill line, the walls were framed and fully glazed with twelve pairs of 28-light industrial metal sash, each of which incorporated an operable 8-light awning window near the base. The south elevation was clad in wood siding and featured nine equally spaced openings, eight of which were filled with multi-light industrial metal sash, along the wall. A single historic photograph of the building suggests that the western-most opening contained a door below a small shed-roofed porch with a fixed 6-light metal window above. Like the 1920 mill, the shallow-pitched roof of the addition featured a monitor to allow for increased light and ventilation. The addition's monitor was taller—at six feet—and featured even more glazing, with 20 operable 8-light metal sash above a fixed 4-light sash with no solid wall in between them. The monitor was set back from the south elevation of the 1920 building and flush with the south elevation of the addition. By 1933, the Excell Manufacturing Company was operating 6,048 spindles, and, by autumn 1934, 6,400—a significant increase over its production capacity ten years earlier.⁶⁷



Figure 3. Black Ox Mill, circa 1945. This image, facing roughly northeast, shows the circa 1929 addition constructed by the Excell Manufacturing Company (foreground) to the south elevation of the 1920 mill erected by the Williams Cotton Company (background).

The 1930s saw greater activity within the labor movement in response to increasingly difficult working conditions, longer hours, low wages, and management practice called the “stretch out,” in which some workers experienced increased workloads while others employees were let go.⁶⁸ On Monday, September 3rd—the Labor Day holiday—10,000 people participated in the first Labor Day parade in Gastonia, when hundreds of mill workers went on strike at the culmination of industry-wide labor protests across the eastern United States.⁶⁹ Later known as the General Textile Strike of 1934, the walkout shuttered 200 mills across North and South Carolina. In Mecklenburg County, nine mills were closed while only four remained open through the strike. Only eight of the 104 textile plants in Gaston County were open on Labor Day. Many of those that ceased production during the strike did so by management’s choice, announcing plans to remain closed until after the Labor Day holiday.⁷⁰ On Monday, September 3, 1934, when seven of Lincoln County’s textile plants failed to open amidst industry-wide labor strikes for shorter work days and favorable wage adjustments, only four of Excell’s 85 employees failed to report to work. The Black Ox Mill was one of only four plants in the county that opened on Labor Day.⁷¹ While early reports noted that the strike was largely peaceful, the week following the Labor Day holiday saw increasing unrest. Two days later, 500 striking workers from Gaston County converged on the Long Shoals Cotton Mill in Lincoln County, disrupting the work of non-striking employees and accosting the plant’s machinist. As a result, the Long Shoals Cotton Mill closed for the day, leaving the Excell Manufacturing Company in Lincoln County as the only textile plant in Lincoln County in operation on September 5th. However, the unrest at Long Shoals caused Excell’s management to

⁶⁷ Sherrill, 443; see also “McLaurine Asserts State Leads Way As Mills Make Inroads,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 16 September 1934.

⁶⁸ Janet Irons, *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 7.

⁶⁹ B.J. Davis, “Walking Out: The Great Textile Strike of 1934,” NCPedia (2010), n.p., electronic document, <https://www.ncpedia.org/textiles/strike-1934>, accessed 18 November 2021.

⁷⁰ “60,000 Carolina Mill Works Idle,” *The Charlotte News*, 3 September 1934.

⁷¹ “Some Lincoln County Mills Operating; Others Standing as Workers Quit,” *The Charlotte News*, 3 September 1934.

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plan for closure on September 6th.⁷² The next day, all 104 mills in Gaston County had closed, as had the mills in Lincoln County.⁷³ Although the Excell plant remained closed through the second week of the general strike, textile manufacturers made steady progress against the labor movement. By mid-September 1934, many plants in Lincoln County had reopened. The Excell Manufacturing Company joined Boger & Crawford, Carter Mills #1, Indian Creek Mills, Lincoln Cotton Mills, Lincoln Thread, Long Shoals, Massapoag Mills, Mellville Mills, Merco Mills, Rhodes-Rhyne Mills, and Rudisill Spinning Mills in opening on September 16th.⁷⁴ By late September, the strike was generally perceived to have been a significant failure within the labor movement across the south.⁷⁵

Decline and instability characterized the U.S. textile market in the early to mid-1930s. According to Congress, “such effects upon interstate and foreign commerce in textile products have been caused directly and primarily by the instability of wage rates and other labor costs in the production of said products, by excessive competition in lowering such wage rates and other labor costs, by over-expansion and excess capacity of the productive equipment in the industry, and by denial of the rights of employees to organize and bargain collectively.”⁷⁶ It is not presently clear how the Excell Manufacturing Company represented this trend, but in 1935, it was one of three mills in Lincoln County to be found non-compliant with guidelines established by the federal Textile Labor Relations Board.⁷⁷ Likely due to a combination of factors, such as overextended financial obligations, the volatility of the textile market, and labor disputes, the Excell Manufacturing Company went into receivership in the late 1930s.⁷⁸ Although the company failed, with some of its real estate sold to satisfy debts, it appears as though the Childs family, who were among Excell’s organizers and managers, retained ownership of the mill property, itself.⁷⁹

Following the closure of the Excell Manufacturing Company, Frederick Childs and other members of the family who retained ownership of the Black Ox Mill leased a portion of the property to Southern Mills. The agreement detailed the specific portion of the building to be leased as “the first floor of the two story end of the former Excell Mfg. Co. Mill Building which was formally known and used by the above firm as Card Room together with adjoining rooms known as opening and pickers rooms and in addition there to the boiler room and such equipment as is now situated there in, in addition to these above identified sections of the mill building, that section of wood frame warehouse south of brick fire wall known as wastehouse [sic].” The lease agreement, which also included all furniture, machinery, and equipment, was for the period of 1 September 1940 to 31 August 1941 at the rate of \$50 per month. The lease included a separate stipulation for rental of the second floor area “formerly known as spinning room” for a 24-month period for \$2,000 in equal monthly payments.⁸⁰

In July 1941, Frederick Childs died of a heart attack at 42 years old.⁸¹ Two months later, his wife, Maude, serving as executrix of his estate, joined the family in renewing the lease with Southern Mills. The terms, though, had changed

⁷² “Strikers Invade Mill,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 5 September 1934.

⁷³ Davis, n.p.

⁷⁴ “McLaurine Asserts State Leads Way As Mills Make Inroads,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 16 September 1934.

⁷⁵ Davis, n.p.

⁷⁶ United States Congress, House Committee on Labor, “Hearing: To Rehabilitate and Stabilize Labor Conditions in the Textile Industry of the United States,” 1.

⁷⁷ The other two companies were Carter Mills and Glenn Manufacturing.

⁷⁸ “Sell 2 Plants At Lincolnton,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 5 March 1938. According to historian Janet Irons, in *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 154-155, some mills closed entirely following the strike. Additional research might reveal a more complete picture of the impact of the strike on the Excell Manufacturing Company.

⁷⁹ Real estate records do not tell the entire story of the property at this time. A judgement in Superior Court in 1939 influenced or mandated the sale of property. It is possible, if not likely, that part of the judgement included the Childs family retaining the mill property.

⁸⁰ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 220, pages 171-172.

⁸¹ “Lincolnton Man Passes,” *The Charlotte News*, 17 July 1941.

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from the prior year. According to the new agreement, the premises included “the mill building of the former Excel Manufacturing Company, the building known as the office building in connection therewith, and the two houses situated on the east side of, and in front of, said mill building, and the building in the rear on the west side, known as the waste warehouse.”⁸² Furthermore, the rental period was for two years, beginning on 1 September 1941 and ending on 31 August 1943, at the rate of \$175 per month.⁸³

Roughly six months after renewing its lease on the Black Ox Mill, Southern Mills entered into a contract with the firm of Belding Heminway Company, a textile manufacturer headquartered in Connecticut. An initial agreement on 5 March 1942 was renegotiated on March 17th, outlining the terms of the arrangement between the two firms. The contract specified that Belding Heminway would incorporate a new company in North Carolina, purchase the inventory and production equipment of Southern Mills, and take over its lease on the Black Ox Mill.⁸⁴ To that end, officers of Belding Heminway incorporated the Summit Yarn Company on 18 March 1942.⁸⁵ On March 19th, Southern Mills and Summit Yarn executed their agreement for the sublease of the property and sale of inventory.⁸⁶ For their part, Belding Heminway agreed to pay Southern Mills \$85,000 and provide 25 percent stock in the new firm, which, unbeknownst to the management of Southern Mills, was created with exactly the same officers as the parent company. In August of that year, Belding Heminway acquired 75 percent of the interest in Summit Yarn.⁸⁷ In late 1942 or early 1943, Southern Mills sued Belding Heminway for breach of contract in a case that was ultimately argued before the North Carolina Supreme Court.⁸⁸

Concurrent with corporate lawsuits between Southern, Summit, and Belding Heminway was an unfolding drama within the Childs family that culminated in the late 1944 sale of the Black Ox Mill by order of Lincoln County Superior Court Judge J.C. Rudisill. The order, dated October 19th, mandated the private sale of the property. Over the next six weeks, the Duplan Corporation offered \$30,000 for the property. The deed, executed on 26 December 1944, indicated that the property included “a mill building, warehouse, office building and two tenement houses.”⁸⁹

Silks, Synthetics, and Stability, 1944-1957

Jean L. Duplan had founded the Duplan Silk Company in France in the mid- to late nineteenth century. The firm produced and exported silk to the United States until the United States Congress passed the Dingley Tariff Act in 1897, which significantly raised tariffs on imported goods such as spices, tobacco, iron and steel, and other

⁸² The office and two houses are no longer extant.

⁸³ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 220, pages 236-237.

⁸⁴ North Carolina Supreme Court, North Carolina Reports Vol. 223, *Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of North Carolina, Spring Term, 1943, Fall Term 1943*. Case No. 305 and 306. Southern Mills, Inc. v. Summit Yarn Company and Belding Heminway Company (filed 20 October 1943), 482 (<https://books.google.com>); see also Phillips v. Belding Heminway Co., 50 F. Supp. 1015 (S.D.N.Y. 1943) <https://casetext.com/case/phillips-v-belding-heminway-co>, np.

⁸⁵ Thad Eure, *Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of North Carolina for the Fiscal Biennium July 1, 1940-June 30, 1942*, 34 (<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collection/p249901coll22/id/34581/>).

⁸⁶ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 220, pages 435-436; see also idem, Deed Book 220, pages 447-448.

⁸⁷ “Textile Mill News,” *Textile World*, Vol. 92, Issue 8 (August 1942), 138 (https://archive.org/details/sim/textile-world_1942-08_09_8).

⁸⁸ North Carolina Supreme Court, 480.

⁸⁹ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 231, pages 513-514. There is an anomaly in the archival record, for the real estate transaction is clearly dated 1944, while the 26 December 1943 article “Events In Textile Industry” in *The Charlotte Observer* states that the Duplan Corporation had recently purchased the plant from the Summit Yarn Company, roughly one year prior to execution of the deed. The article states that the plant was being operated by Belding Heminway and had been “formerly owned by the Childs interests.” Real state records clearly show that the property was still in the possession of the Childs family at the time the article was published. It is possible that Duplan acquired the lease from Belding Heminway or leased the mill outright from the Childs family. If the real estate records document some, but not all, corporate leases, then this is a plausible explanation for the discrepancy.

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materials. The legislation effectively halted Duplan's exports to the United States, driving the company to establish a North American presence in 1898. With corporate offices in New York City, Duplan erected its main plant, a five-story brick edifice, in Hazelton, Pennsylvania. The American demand for silk in the early twentieth century drove Duplan's growth. Eventually, the Hazelton mill occupied 558,000 square feet across 23.8 acres.⁹⁰ In 1911, the company expanded from silk manufacturing to synthetics.⁹¹

Originally called "artificial silk," rayon was an innovation within the textile industry during the mid-nineteenth century. Invented in France in 1846, it was made using chemical and mechanical methods, rather than by physical manipulation of a natural resource like cotton, wool, or silk. The process, initially developed by Count Hilaire de Chardonnet, used solvents to convert the cellulose fibers of cotton to a viscous solution that was then extruded to form rayon yarn. Well established in Europe, rayon production began in the United States in 1910. The earliest rayon fabrics were delicate and easily ruined by wear and improper laundering. Improvements in the industry led to increased variety in its application and use, especially in the production of ladies' hosiery and other garments and even fabric for commercial and industrial use, such as yacht sails.⁹²

"What are the prospects for the future of the rayon industry? Contrary to the belief expressed in textile circles a few years ago that the saturation point in the use of rayon was about to be reached, it is apparent that, though a record was established last year in the domestic consumption of rayon, this record will be surpassed during the present year, indicating that we have not yet reached the peak. With the production 25 per cent greater than last year, with imports about 50 per cent larger than they were during the first seven months of last year, and with no indication of abnormal stocks on hand, there can be little doubt that prospects for the immediate future are bright.... With the quality of the fiber being constantly improved and its utility and versatility being increased, further growth of the industry is inevitable. It is therefore, the general belief of well-informed observers that the industry is still in its infancy and that while the rate of growth may be somewhat less in future years than it is at present, rayon is bound to play an increasingly important part in the textile industry."⁹³

By 1929, rayon had become a significant material in the textile industry—if not generally, at least in North Carolina's Piedmont region. At that time, mills in the region used 72 percent of the rayon consumed in the South. The *Charlotte Observer* aptly attributed this statistic to the prominent position held by "hosiery mills, underwear manufacture, and the making of fancies and fine goods" by mills in the Piedmont.⁹⁴

Following Jean Duplan's 1921 sale of the company to American investors, the Duplan Corporation began "throwing" yarns, or processing yarn for weaving and hosiery knitting.⁹⁵ According to *The Lincoln County News* in 1948, "it is now the largest commission throwster in the world, and prepares yarns for many famous brands of women's hosiery."⁹⁶ In November 1948, the board of directors of the Duplan Corporation, with other members and guests from their New York office, visited their Lincolnton plant, and they "voiced approval of the conditions

⁹⁰ "Duplan: How the city wooed a giant," *Standard-Speaker*, 3 March 1996.

⁹¹ "Duplan Corp. Opens Headquarters In City," *The Charlotte News*, 29 January 1954.

⁹² "Rayon's Place In Industry," *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 October 1929; see also "Duplan Corp. Opens Headquarters In City," *The Charlotte News*, 29 January 1954.

⁹³ "Rayon's Place In Industry," *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 October 1929.

⁹⁴ "Bulk Of Rayon In Piedmont," *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 October 1929.

⁹⁵ "Duplan: How the city wooed a giant," *Standard-Speaker*, 3 March 1996.

⁹⁶ "Duplan to Celebrate Fiftieth Anniversary," *The Lincoln County News*, 4 March 1948.

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existing at the plant, especially since it is the only spun yarn plant in the Duplan Corporation.”⁹⁷ It is during Duplan’s ownership that the mill doubled in size.

The Duplan Corporation organized its North Carolina operation in Winston-Salem in 1942, building a nylon processing plant in the city that year.⁹⁸ Prompted by a wage dispute, 1,500 employees at Duplan’s Hazelton plant went on strike in March, 1943, halting production of parachutes for the U.S. Army.⁹⁹ During the spring of 1944, 2,250 members of the Textile Workers Union (CIO) were on strike at plants in Pennsylvania, including Duplan’s silk plant at Hazelton. The U.S. War Labor Board ordered those on strike to return to work to continue manufacturing for the war effort.¹⁰⁰ It was later that year that the Duplan Corporation purchased the Black Ox Mill in Lincolnton and, in 1945, constructed a second plant in Forsyth County at the intersection of Mineral Springs Road and Walker Road in Winston-Salem with the intention of expanding its yarn-throwing operations through an increased workforce that would more than double the plant’s output.¹⁰¹ In February 1946, the Duplan Corporation reported that profits for the previous six-month period, which ended 30 November 1944, had significantly increased to \$430,180 from \$366,046 for the same period in 1944.¹⁰²

During the summer of 1947, Duplan significantly enlarged the Lincolnton plant. To the west and south elevations of the 1920 and 1929 buildings, the company added a one-story addition of concrete block with a flat roof and multi-light steel sash windows. At the same time, a two-story addition was appended onto the north elevation of the 1920 building to increase square footage of the production space there. The expansion plans were developed by the architecture and engineering firm of Lacy, Atherton, Wilson and Davis, which was based in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The firm also designed the facility’s electrical, mechanical, and plumbing systems, including plans for the water tank and adjacent pump house erected to the east of the 1920 mill. The load-bearing concrete block additions, which rested on poured concrete foundations, diverged from the textile mill designs of 20 years earlier. Rather than employ roof monitors for ventilation, the new construction incorporated air conditioning units on the roof. Yet the building still featured large steel sash windows to take advantage of natural lighting. The overall character of the new construction reflected the austerity often displayed by post-World War II industrial design (Figure 4).



Figure 4. View northeast of the one-story addition constructed by the Duplan Corporation in 1947. The two-story section of the Black Ox Mill is visible in the background behind the rooftop air conditioning unit, which the monitor of the circa 1929 addition is visible in the upper right of the image..

⁹⁷ “Duplan Directors Visit Lincolnton,” *The Gastonia Gazette*, 6 November 1948.

⁹⁸ “Land Is Purchased For New Nylon Plant,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 October 1945.

⁹⁹ “Strike Halts Army Parachutes,” *Statesville Daily Record*, 31 March 1943.

¹⁰⁰ “Events In Textile Industry,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 21 May 1944.

¹⁰¹ “Land Is Purchased For New Nylon Plant,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 October 1945; see also “Nylon Processing Plant Is Planned,” *The Charlotte News*, 20 October 1945; see also “Duplan Corp. Opens Headquarter In City,” *The Charlotte News*, 29 January 1954. It is not presently known if this new plan near Winston-Salem in Forsyth County is extant. Walker Road does not appear in current maps of the city. Old Walkertown Road and New Walkertown Road are located north of downtown Winston-Salem, with Old Walkertown Road closer to the Mineral Springs area. Given the local significance of the Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill in Lincolnton and Lincoln County, the presence or lack thereof of this mill in Winston-Salem does not bear on the significance and eligibility of the subject property.

¹⁰² “Earnings,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 2 February 1946.

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In October 1947, the Duplan Corporation acquired the Cleveland Silk Mills property in Cleveland, Tennessee, with the intention of expanding the small plant.¹⁰³ This expansion of the company's holdings coincided with its expansion of the Lincolnton plant, suggesting a positive economic outlook in the years following World War II. Construction of the addition at Duplan's mill in Lincolnton was completed early in 1948.¹⁰⁴ This expansion was a significant event in the company's operations, for the Lincolnton plant was the only facility across all of the company's mills that spun rayon.¹⁰⁵ In February 1950, the corporation announced plans to construct a large weaving and throwing plant for nylon and rayon on a 14-acre site near Burnsville, North Carolina. By that time, Duplan had constructed 12 plants, with three in Canada, four in Pennsylvania, one in Tennessee, one in Virginia. In North Carolina, the company had two mills in Winston-Salem and one in Lincolnton.¹⁰⁶

The company never explicitly stated that its expansion in the southern U.S. in the 1940s was part of a larger plan to shut down its operations in Pennsylvania. However, after Duplan reduced the Hazelton, Pennsylvania, plant to a skeletal workforce in 1953 and moved its headquarters to Charlotte, the company saw increased profits. Its sales in 1953 were roughly 10 percent lower than the prior year, in part because of the two-month strike at its Pennsylvania plants. Another factor affecting its 1953 earnings was the cost of relocation, itself, since all of the looms and throwing machinery had to be transported to the plants in Lincolnton and Burnsville, North Carolina, and Grottoes, Virginia. The costs of transportation and the work stoppage during the transition impacted the company's bottom line, but it anticipated a quick recovery in 1954, not least of all because of the lower manufacturing costs in the South due to the region's reduced wages.¹⁰⁷

By all appearances, by late 1954, the company held a positive outlook for its future in Lincolnton. In February 1955, Duplan leased space on the Lincolnton property to Duke Power Company for the purpose of "installing, operating, and maintaining thereon its electrical apparatus and other property and transmitting electricity to and distributing electricity from same."¹⁰⁸ The following month, the Duplan Corporation engaged the Winston-Salem-based engineering and manufacturing firm Bahnsen Company to develop new plans for some of the facility's systems. It was also at this time that Duplan enlarged the plant by constructing another one-story addition housing offices and a shipping/loading dock. However Duplan's prospects started to shift by August 1955. It was then that Duplan, citing several years' worth of declining demand in dress fabrics, announced plans to sell its weaving plant in Grottoes as well as the plant in Burnsville, which it had constructed only five years earlier.¹⁰⁹

After a period of relative stability in the industry, generally, and in Lincolnton, specifically, the small town was again upended by the changing winds of the textile market. A February 1956 article in *The Charlotte News* announced "Great waves of buying in finished and unfinished cotton textiles lately began to spread over this industry, which dominates the Carolina economy. This buying has involved tremendous volumes of print cloth for deliveries extending through next December and strengthened prices of cotton."¹¹⁰ Concurrent with "unfilled orders averaging three months of output at current capacity production" at cotton mills in the southern Piedmont, mills producing synthetic threads and fabrics such as rayon, acetate and nylon were the "only segment of the textile industry which is experiencing an appreciable lag in demand."¹¹¹ This decline in demand was a likely factor in the Duplan Corporation's organizational and operational restructuring during the spring and summer of 1956.

¹⁰³ "Duplan Buys Mill," *The Charlotte Observer*, 17 October 1947.

¹⁰⁴ "Local Contractor Says Construction Prices Will BE Same In Three Years," *The Gastonia Gazette*, 5 January 1948.

¹⁰⁵ "Duplan Directors Visit Lincolnton," *The Gastonia Gazette*, 6 November 1948.

¹⁰⁶ "\$1 Million Textile Plant To Be Built," *The Charlotte Observer*, 27 February 1950.

¹⁰⁷ "Duplan Operations Show Improvement Over 1952," *The Charlotte News*, 7 January 1954.

¹⁰⁸ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 301, page 516.

¹⁰⁹ "Duplan To Sell Textile Plants," *The Gastonia Gazette*, 20 August 1955.

¹¹⁰ "Boom Trend Seen In Textile Trade," *The Charlotte News*, 9 February 1956.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

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By early June 1956, Duplan Corporation executives dismissed several supervising staff at the Lincolnton plant. Weeks later, it announced plans to wind down production at the facility as it anticipated closing the operation. The announcement to the roughly 200 employees at the plant was made in late June of that year, when the company explained that the plant would close once the current supply of yarn had run out, which was anticipated to take several months. At that point, the machinery would be moved to other mills in the company's portfolio. With many of the employees having ten years' or more tenure, the plant had reached an annual payroll of roughly \$500,000.¹¹² The reason given by the Company's President, George Friedlander, for the plant's closure was the desire to consolidate yarn throwing within the firm's operations. He explained that once machinery had been relocated, the building—enlarged less than ten years earlier, with the most recent addition constructed the preceding year—would be sold.¹¹³ *The Gastonia Gazette* reported on June 21, 1956:

The Duplan plant has been one of the most important in Lincoln County, with some employees coming from miles around to work on one of the three daily shifts maintained by the plant," and "the plant always has been regarded in the upper pay brackets and many employees have been with the company 10 years or more."¹¹⁴

The Sunset of an Industry, 1957-present

That it was situated in the middle of several heavily industrial counties put Lincoln County at a regional disadvantage during the third quarter of the twentieth century. Lincoln was "caught in the vacuum" of industrial competition from nearby Catawba, Burke, Cleveland, Gaston, and Mecklenburg Counties, with one account musing that "exporting people" was one of its main activities. With 80 percent of the county considered rural, a significant number of working adults commuted away from the county for work, particularly to Shelby, Gastonia, and Charlotte. Hospitals and schools found it difficult to recruit and retain staff.¹¹⁵

Duplan's closure of the Lincolnton plant coincided with the Massapoag Corporation's shuttering of its plant in the town, leaving more than 750 people out of work in the once-booming community. Through the Chamber of Commerce, the business community responded proactively to this loss. Donations from over 200 firms totaled \$16,000, which was used toward employment of industrial recruiter Allison D. Allison. One year after he started work, the Gibbs underwear plant employed 150 people at its new operation in Lincolnton. Several other plants followed, including Consolidated Knitting, Myer Mills, and the Sherman Textile Company. During this period, Spurgeon Hosiery Corporation doubled its workforce from 60 to 125 employees.¹¹⁶

Prior to the sale of the property to Hudson Hosiery in 1961, the Duplan Corporation was using it as a warehouse and also rented space in the plant to other businesses. In January 1960, the company leased a portion of the first floor to Georgetown Galleries. In March of that year, Duplan leased part of the basement to the Crown Converting Company.¹¹⁷

The Duplan Corporation continued to operate its plants in Winston-Salem, and, in August 1962, was ordered by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to hold a new union election because a trial examiner had determined that

¹¹² "Duplan Plant To Move From Lincolnton," *The Gastonia Gazette*, 21 June 1956.

¹¹³ "Duplan to Close Here, Building Up For Sale," *The Lincoln County News*, 21 July 1956; see also "Duplan Plant To Move From Lincolnton," *The Gastonia Gazette*, 21 June 1956.

¹¹⁴ "Lincolnton News," *The Gastonia Gazette*, 22 June 1956..

¹¹⁵ "New Hosiery Plant Opening: Lincoln County Celebrates End of 5-Year Old Disaster," 22 December 1961.

¹¹⁶ "Faith In Future Pays Big Dividends For Lincolnton," *The Charlotte Observer*, 8 July 1960.

¹¹⁷ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 379, page 48.

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the company interfered with a union vote in May 1962.¹¹⁸ In that election, Duplan workers voted heavily against representation by the Textile Workers Union of America.¹¹⁹ Three months later, the NLRB trial examiner recommended that the NLRB order the company to stop interfering with employees' union activities. Specifically, he recommended that Duplan "stop questioning employees about their union membership and activities; stop threatening to close the plant if the workers unionize; stop threatening to discharge persons who participate in union activities; stop threatening to inform other prospective employers of an employee's union activities; stop requesting employees' help to work against the union, and stop attempting to influence employees not to testify at a proceeding before the NLRB."¹²⁰

In late 1961, Hudson Hosiery sold its 185,000-square-foot plant and 15 acres on Monroe Road in Oakhurst, near Charlotte, to Americale Industries, a New England-based textile conglomeration. The company had another plant in Charlotte on North Brevard Street, where it employed 400 people. Another 400 employees worked for Hudson Hosiery at its factory in Shelby, Cleveland County. The sale of the Oakhurst Plant coincided with the company's acquisition of Duplan's 135,000-square-foot facility in Lincolnton, which they anticipated would employ 200 people—the same size workforce that worked at the Oakhurst plant. The company had considered other sites in Shelby and in Clover, in nearby York County, South Carolina, but ultimately settled on the Duplan plant in Lincolnton.¹²¹ The company planned to use the facility for seaming, looping, and throwing.¹²²

Hudson Hosiery's operations in Lincolnton included throwing, seaming, looping, inspecting, and mending departments.¹²³ Hudson employed 400 people at their North Brevard Street plant and 200 people at their Oakhurst Plant, both in Charlotte; and 400 people at their Shelby plant.¹²⁴ Its opening in Lincolnton, where the company employed 200 people, helped bring an end to what one reporter called a "five-year disaster," which referred to the 1956 loss of the Duplan Corporation and the burning of the Long Shoals Mill, which together increased Lincolnton's unemployment, leaving nearly 1,000 jobless.¹²⁵ Hudson Hosiery remained in operation in Lincolnton until 1969, and from 1969 to 1977, the mill was operated by Chadbourn, Inc., which produced women's hosiery. Chadbourn changed its name to Stanwood Corporation in 1975 to identify more with the men's apparel industry. Stanwood had such divisions as Chadbourn Industries, Carwood Manufacturing Co., Standard Knitting Mills, and Taylor Sportswear. The Stanwood Corporation sold the property to Spancospun, Inc., on December 31, 1981.¹²⁶ Spanco Industries, Inc, merged with Spancospun, Inc., and sold the mill property of Unifi Manufacturing on November 2, 1999.¹²⁷ Unifi Manufacturing, Inc., sold the mill property to Capitol Funds, Inc., on November 2, 1999.¹²⁸ Sparty Holdings, Inc. is the current owner.

Postscript: The State of Lincoln County's Textile Mills in 2021

Not all of the mills constructed in Lincoln County from the early nineteenth century to present can be accounted for. Those lost in the 1800s have little documentation enabling accurate identification of their locations. Fifteen

¹¹⁸ "NLRB Examiner Asks Re-Election," *The Charlotte Observer*, 7 August 1962.

¹¹⁹ "Union Election," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, 7 August 1962.

¹²⁰ "NLRB Cracks Down On Firm," *The Charlotte News*, 19 November 1962.

¹²¹ "Hudson Plans A Branch Unit In Lincolnton," *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 December 1961.

¹²² "Hudson Hosiery Sells Oakhurst Plant," *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 December 1961.

¹²³ "Hudson Hosiery Buys Duplan Plant," *The Lincoln County News*, 18 December 1961.

¹²⁴ "Hudson Plans A Branch Unit In Lincolnton," *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 December 1961.

¹²⁵ "New Hosiery Plant Opening: Lincoln County Celebrates End of 5-Year-Old Disaster," *The Charlotte Observer*, 22 December 1961.

¹²⁶ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 585, Page 141.

¹²⁷ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 1143, Page 658.

¹²⁸ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 1143, Page 660.

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mills constructed across Lincoln County have been positively identified through architectural survey since 1969. Textile mills in Lincoln County that have been documented and are known to be lost include the Roseland Cotton Mill on Lyn Well Road in the unincorporated community of Roseland, the Massapoag Mill at 407 Massapoag Road in the Lincolnton vicinity, the Long Shoals Cotton Mill at 3234 Long Shoals Road in the unincorporated community of Long Shoals, the Mariposa Mill on Mariposa Road in the unincorporated community of Mariposa, and the Southside Cotton Mill at 539 Charlottes Lane in the unincorporated community of Southside. Within Lincolnton, non-extant mills include the Wampum Mill at 412 South Flint Street, the Boger and Crawford Mill at 2130 East Main Street, and the Elm Grove Cotton Mill at 535 Elm Grove Road.

Six surveyed textile mills across Lincoln County outside of the town of Lincolnton remain extant. These are the Rhodes-Rhyne Mill at 1436 Roseland Drive near the unincorporated community of Roseland, the Melville Cotton Mill at 569 South Grove Street Extension near Lincolnton, the Saxony Spinning Mill at 564 South Grove Street Extension near Lincolnton, the Elm Grove Cotton Mill at 535 Elm Grove Road near Lincolnton, and the Laboratory Cotton Mill at 848 South Fork Road in the unincorporated community of Laboratory. The Laboratory Mill was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 as a contributing resource within the Laboratory Historic District. More recently, it was the subject of a tax credit-advantaged rehabilitation project that converted the building into an event venue.

Like the Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, the other five mills aside from Laboratory continued to operate into the late twentieth century. All were used for cotton spinning and/or weaving and, like the Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, all feature additions dating from the post-World War II period through the 1960s. None of the earliest parts of the Saxony Spinning Mill appear to be visible on the exterior, for the entire building was enveloped in blocky, windowless brick-veneered additions after World War II, with the most recent addition apparently constructed in the 1970s or early 1980s on the northeast side of the building. A one-story, weatherboard clad cotton warehouse with a brick-veneered addition remains extant at the Saxony Spinning Mills. Across the road, the Melville Cotton Mill is in a similar state. The original mill is a one-story, weatherboard-clad building that has been wrapped on two sides with large brick-veneered additions constructed from the 1950s, perhaps through the 1970s. While the early mill remains exposed and visible at the back of the building, its footprint has increased roughly six-fold by the late-twentieth-century additions between the original building and the road, which obscure a view of the early portion of the building. The Elm Grove Cotton Mill appears to have been completely wrapped in metal sheathing in the late twentieth century. The Rhodes-Rhyne Mill is among the most intact of Lincoln County's extant textile mills, but has also received additions in the second half of the twentieth century. The tall, load-bearing brick masonry mill sits on a raised basement. The east and north elevations of this building are visible, as is the east end of the south elevation. Most of the south elevation and the west elevation have been wrapped by a large one-story brick-veneered addition whose architectural details, including steel industrial sash windows, suggest a construction date in the 1940s.

Aside from the Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, two textile mills in Lincolnton remain extant. These are the Daniel Cotton Mill at 311 Motz Avenue, and the Eureka Cotton Manufacturing Company at 414 East Water Street. The Eureka cotton mill was individually National Register-listed in 2013 under Criterion A in the area of industry. While the Eureka mill appears to remain individually eligible for listing in the National Register, the Daniel Cotton Mill has been substantially altered on the north elevation by the early 2000s construction of a large addition or very extensive alterations to the historic building such that it now has a contemporary appearance.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): LN416

Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill
Name of Property

Lincoln County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.85 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum, if other than WGS

1	<u>35.473147</u>	<u>-81.260341</u>	3	<u></u>	<u></u>
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	<u></u>	<u></u>	4	<u></u>	<u></u>
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The National Register boundary of the Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill is illustrated by the heavy black line on the accompanying “National Register of Historic Places Boundary Map,” created by Annie Laurie McDonald on 16 November 2021, using the online GIS tax parcel viewer at <https://arcgisserver.lincolncounty.org/taxparcelviewer>. The boundary encompasses 3.85 acres of tax parcel #0602 (PIN# 3623740792). The nominated property is bordered on the north by Bonview Avenue, on the east by North Government Street, on the south by the rear property lines of parcels on the north side of West Pine Street, and on the east by North High Street. The nominated property includes all of the tax parcel south of Bonview Avenue but does not include two additional sections of the tax parcel that lie north of Bonview Avenue across from Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill. Included on the 3.85 acres being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places are the Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, constructed over four primary phases in 1920, circa 1929, 1947, and 1955 (contributing building); a steel water tank added to the property circa 1947 (contributing structure); a one-story pump house constructed circa 1947 (contributing building); and two air handling units installed circa 1980 (non-contributing objects).

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries encompass 3.85 acres, which includes all of the intact acreage and buildings historically associated with the textile operations at the Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill during the Period of Significance of 1920-1957. The residual 1.072 acres of the tax parcel that lie north of Bonview Avenue and outside the boundaries of the nominated property contain only graveled employee parking lots and were never developed for production-related activity during the Period of Significance. As parking lots, they are not considered character-defining features that contribute to the property’s historic industrial significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Annie Laurie McDonald, Senior Architectural Historian and Jason L. Harpe, Public Historian</u>				
organization	<u>Richard Grubb & Associates</u>	date	<u>24 November 2021</u>		
street & number	<u>525 Wait Avenue</u>	telephone	<u>540.454.3163</u>		
city or town	<u>Wake Forest</u>	state	<u>NC</u>	zip code	<u>27587</u>
e-mail	<u>amcdonald@rgaincorporated.com</u>				

Black Ox - Duplan Corporation Mill
Name of Property

Lincoln County, North Carolina
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill

City or Vicinity: Lincolnton

County: Lincoln County **State:** North Carolina

Photographer: Jason L. Harpe, unless otherwise noted below

Date Photographed: February 2019, unless otherwise noted below

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Photo 1 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing south from the intersection of Bonview Avenue and North Government Street. Showing the northeast corner of the mill and, specifically, the two-story 1947 addition (right) to the two-story 1920 mill (left) and the circa 1947 water tank.

Photo 2 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing northwest from the east side of the property. Showing the east elevation of the two-story 1920 mill, the circa 1947 pump house (center) and the circa 1947 water tank (right). To the left is the edge of the circa 1947 addition to the east side of the 1920 mill.

Photo 3 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing southwest from east side of the property. Showing the one-story 1947 addition (center) to the east side of the two-story 1920 mill (right).

Photo 4 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing northwest from the east side of the property. Showing the two-story 1920 mill (center), and the one-story circa 1929 addition (left). In the foreground is the foundation of a non-extant cooling tower, which now supports a circa 1980 air handling unit. Behind the unit is the one-story circa 1947 addition to the east side of the 1920 mill.

Photo 5 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing northwest from the southeast corner of the property. Showing the one-story 1947 addition (left) to the south end of the circa 1929 addition and the two circa 1980 air handling units.

Black Ox - Duplan Corporation Mill
Name of Property

Lincoln County, North Carolina
County and State

Photo 6 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing west from the southeast corner of the property. Showing the south elevation of the 1947 addition.

Photo 7 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing southeast from the west side of the property. Showing the south end of the west elevation of the 1947 addition. In the foreground is the foundation of a non-extant cooling tower.

Photo 8 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing north from the west side of the property. Showing the circa 1955 addition to the west side of the 1947 addition.

Photo 9 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing south from the west side of the property. Showing the circa 1955 addition to the west side of the 1947 addition.

Photo 10 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing east from the intersection of Bonview Avenue and North High Street. Showing the 1955 shipping department addition to the north side of the 1947 addition and west side of the two-story section.

Photo 11 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing south from Bonview Avenue. Showing the 1955 shipping department addition at the northwest corner of the building.

Photo 12 of 20. Interior of the 1920 Black Ox Mill (section 1), facing south, showing the collapsed roof of the two-story building. Photograph by Annie Laurie McDonald, 15 November 2021.

Photo 13 of 20. Interior of the two-story addition to the north side of the 1920 Black Ox Mill (section 3), facing west, showing exposed brick walls, steel framing, ceiling and floor finishes, and steel windows. Photograph by Annie Laurie McDonald, 15 November 2021.

Photo 14 of 20. Interior of the circa 1929 addition to the Black Ox Mill (section 2), facing northeast, showing steel columns, heavy timber roof framing supplemented with steel trusses added circa 1947, and the open floor plan.

Photo 15 of 20. First floor of the one-story 1947 addition by the Duplan Corporation (section 4), facing south.

Photo 16 of 20. First floor of the one-story 1947 addition by the Duplan Corporation (section 4), facing southeast.

Photo 17 of 20. First floor of the one-story 1947 addition by the Duplan Corporation (section 4), facing east toward the 1920 Black Ox Mill (section 1).

Photo 18 of 20. Basement of the one-story 1947 addition by the Duplan Corporation (section 4), facing south.

Photo 19 of 20. Basement of the 1955 Shipping Department addition by the Duplan Corporation (section 6), facing north.

Photo 20 of 20. Interior of the circa 1947 pump house, showing platform that held the engine and pump and infilled window openings on the west elevation, facing northwest.



Photo 1 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing south from the intersection of Bonview Avenue and North Government Street. Showing the northeast corner of the mill and, specifically, the two-story 1947 addition (right) to the two-story 1920 mill (left) and the circa 1947 water tank.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, 215 Bonview Avenue, Lincolnton, Lincoln County, North Carolina

National Register Photos



Photo 2 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing northwest from the east side of the property. Showing the east elevation of the two-story 1920 mill, the circa 1947 pump house (center) and the circa 1947 water tank (right). To the left is the edge of the circa 1947 addition to the east side of the 1920 mill.



Photo 3 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing southwest from east side of the property. Showing the one-story 1947 addition (center) to the east side of the two-story 1920 mill (right).



Photo 4 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing northwest from the east side of the property. Showing the two-story 1920 mill (center), and the one-story circa 1929 addition (left). In the foreground is the foundation of a non-extant cooling tower, which now supports a circa 1980 air handling unit. Behind the unit is the one-story circa 1947 addition to the east side of the 1920 mill.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, 215 Bonview Avenue, Lincolnton, Lincoln County, North Carolina

National Register Photos



Photo 5 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing northwest from the southeast corner of the property. Showing the one-story 1947 addition (left) to the south end of the circa 1929 addition and the two circa 1980 air handling units.



Photo 6 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing west from the southeast corner of the property. Showing the south elevation of the 1947 addition.



Photo 7 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing southeast from the west side of the property. Showing the south end of the west elevation of the 1947 addition. In the foreground is the foundation of a non-extant cooling tower.



Photo 9 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing north from the west side of the property. Showing the circa 1955 addition to the west side of the 1947 addition.



Photo 9 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing south from the west side of the property. Showing the circa 1955 addition to the west side of the 1947 addition.



Photo 10 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing east from the intersection of Bonview Avenue and North High Street. Showing the 1955 shipping department addition to the north side of the 1947 addition and west side of the two-story section.



Photo 11 of 20. Black Ox – Duplan Corporation Mill, facing south from Bonview Avenue. Showing the 1955 shipping department addition.



Photo 12 of 20. Interior of the 1920 Black Ox Mill (section 1), facing south, showing the collapsed roof of the two-story building.



Photo 13 of 20. Interior of the two-story addition to the north side of the 1920 Black Ox Mill (section 3), facing west, showing exposed brick walls, steel framing, ceiling and floor finishes, and steel windows.



Photo 14 of 20. Interior of the circa 1929 addition to the Black Ox Mill (section 2), facing northeast, showing steel columns, heavy timber roof framing supplemented with steel trusses added circa 1947, and the open floor plan.



Photo 15 of 20. First floor of the one-story 1947 addition by the Duplan Corporation (section 4), facing south.



Photo 16 of 20. First floor of the one-story 1947 addition by the Duplan Corporation (section 4), facing southeast.



Photo 17 of 20. First floor of the one-story 1947 addition by the Duplan Corporation (section 4), facing east toward the 1920 Black Ox Mill (section 1).



Photo 18 of 20. Basement of the one-story 1947 addition by the Duplan Corporation (section 4), facing south.

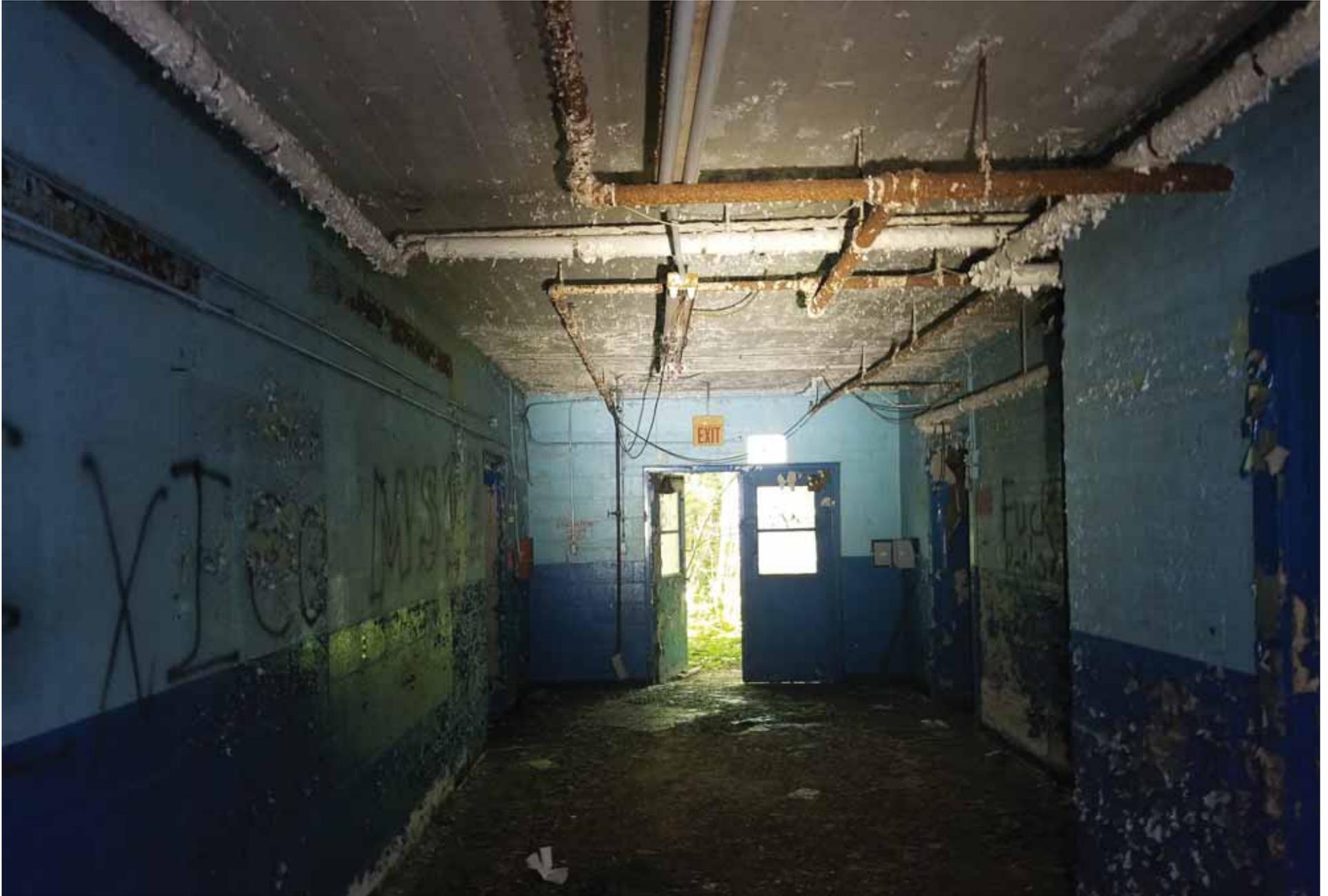
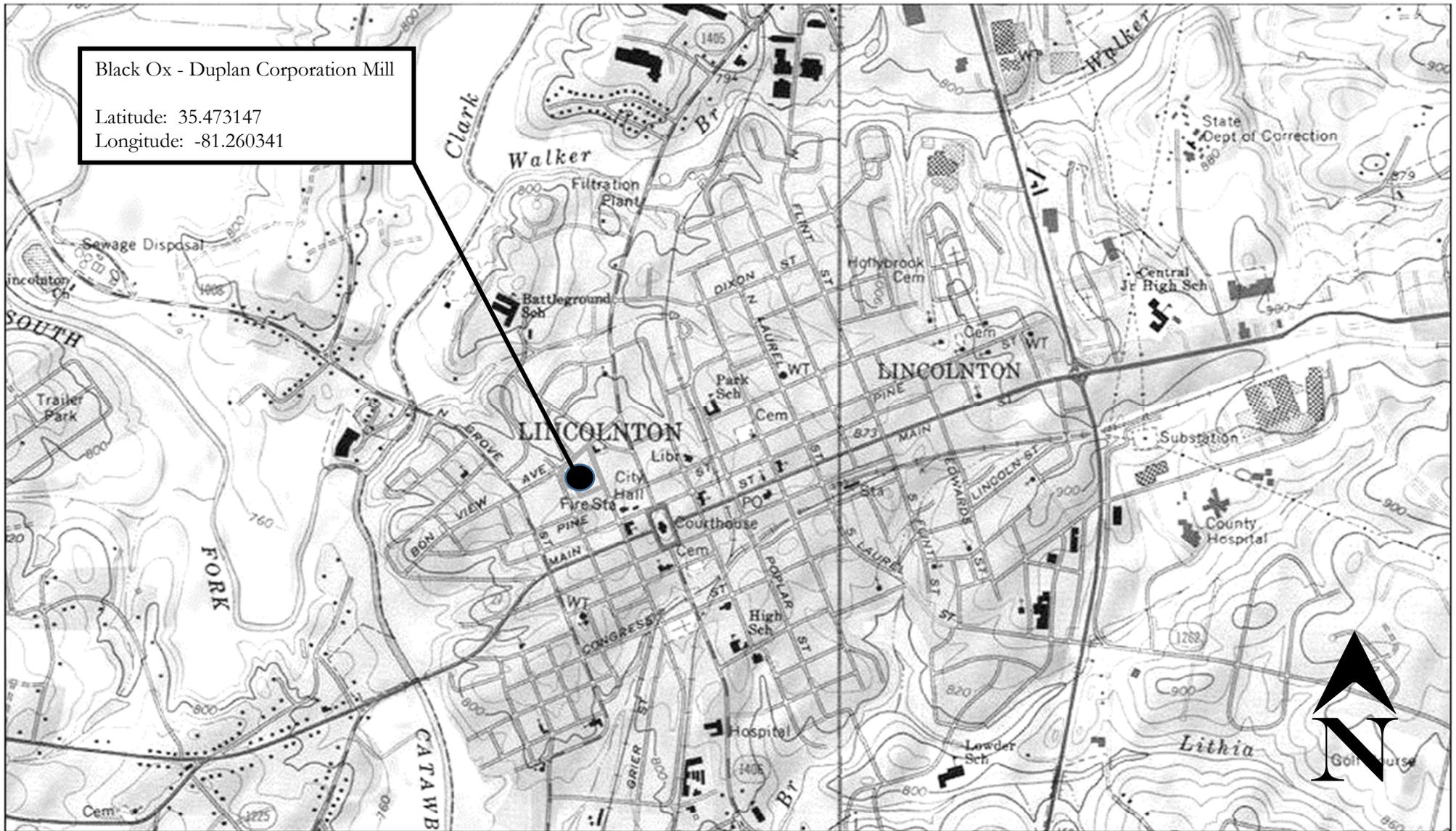


Photo 19 of 20. Basement of the 1955 Shipping Department addition by the Duplan Corporation (section 6), facing north.



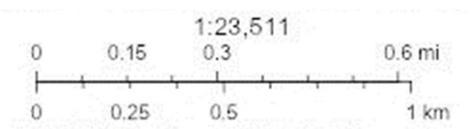
Photo 20 of 20. Interior of the circa 1947 pump house, showing platform that held the engine and pump and infilled window openings on the west elevation, facing northwest.



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
LOCATION MAP**

Black Ox - Duplan Corporation Mill
215 Bonview Avenue
Lincolnton, Lincoln County, North Carolina

Map created by Annie Laurie McDonald, Richard Grubb & Associates
16 November 2021



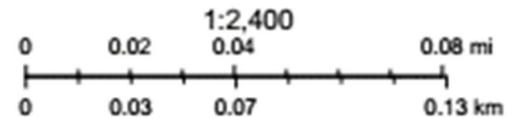


**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
BOUNDARY MAP**

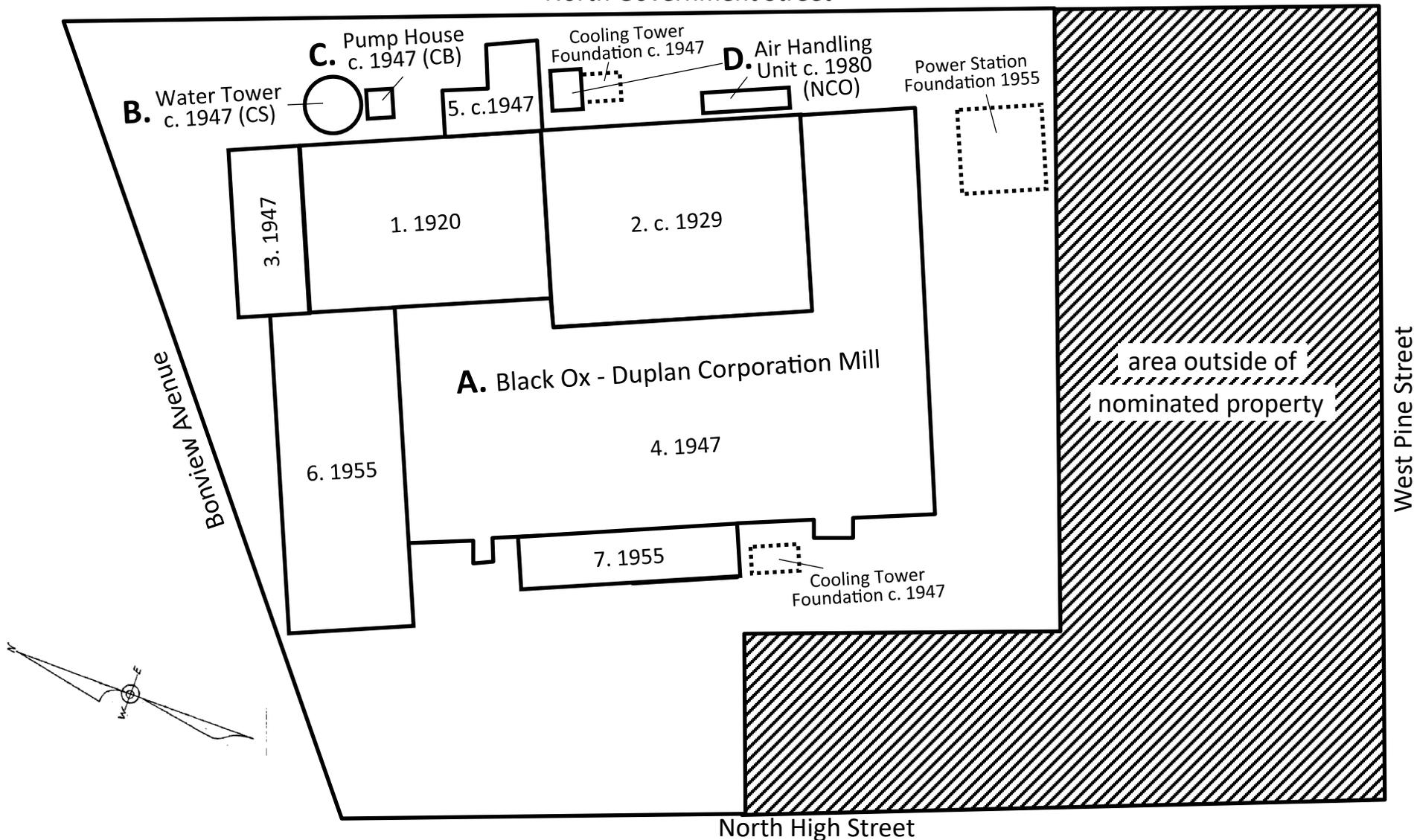
Source of basemap: Lincoln County GIS

Black Ox - Duplan Corporation Mill
215 Bonview Avenue
Lincolnton, Lincoln County, North Carolina

Map created by Annie Laurie McDonald, Richard Grubb & Associates
16 November 2021



North Government Street



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
SITE PLAN AND BUILDING EVOLUTION**

Black Ox -Duplan Corporation Mill

215 Bonview Avenue
Lincolnton, Lincoln County, North Carolina

Plan created by Annie Laurie McDonald, Richard Grubb & Associates
16 November 2021

(not to scale)

- A. —Building/Structure/Object corresponding to Sec. 7 inventory
- 1. 1920 —Mill section and date corresponding to Sec. 7 inventory
- CB —Contributing Building
- CS —Contributing Structure
- NCO —Non-Contributing Object
-  —Resources separately described in Section 7
-  —Foundations described within the site/setting in Section 7



11/16/2021, 8:21:48 PM

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
KEY TO EXTERIOR PHOTOS**

Black Ox -Duplan Corporation Mill
215 Bonview Avenue
Lincolnton, Lincoln County, North Carolina

Photo key created by Annie Laurie McDonald, Richard Grubb & Associates
15 January 2022

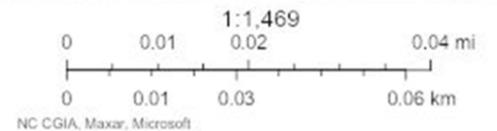
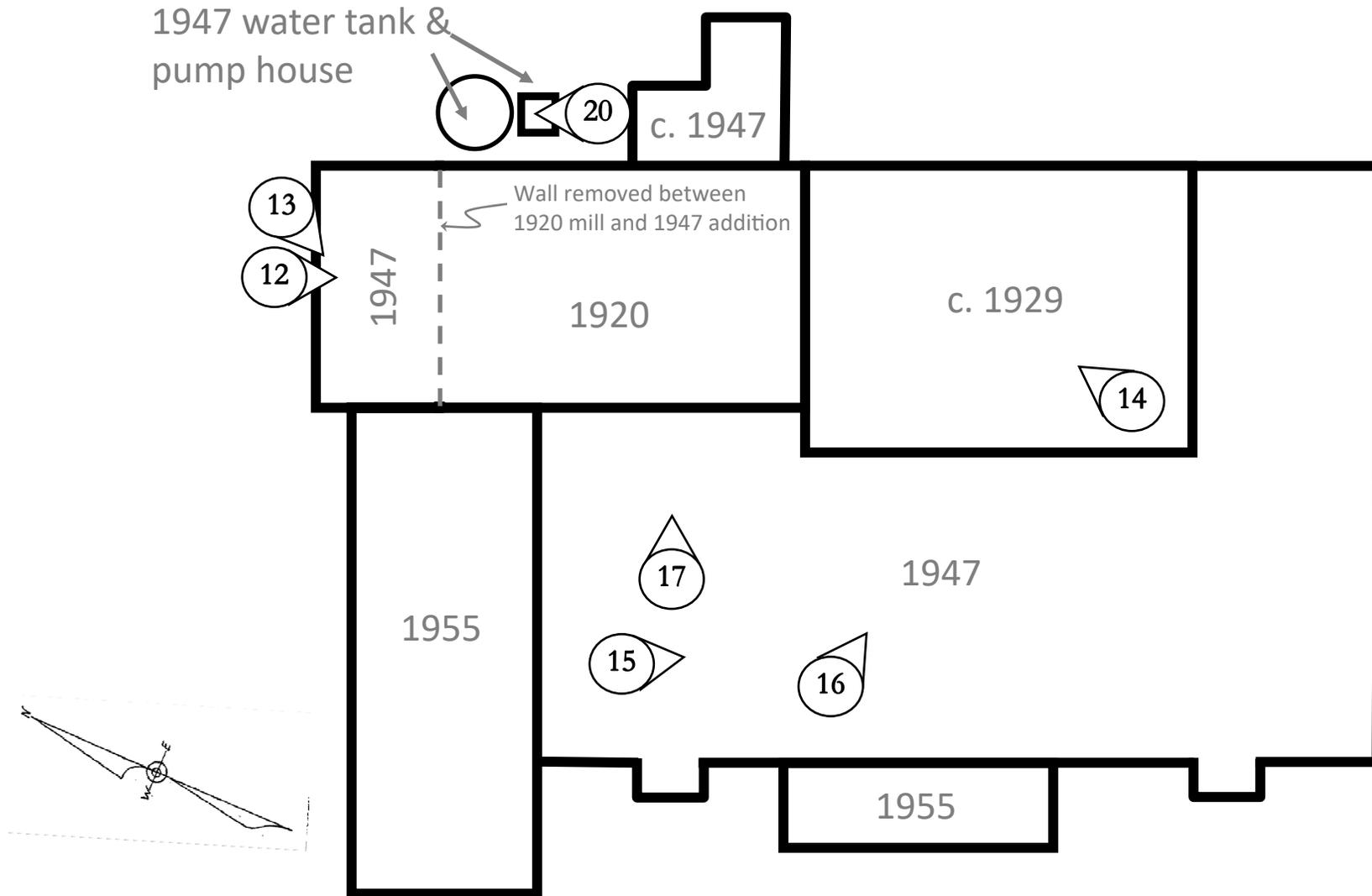


Photo number and direction, keyed to the Section 7 inventory on pages 5 through 12 and the list of photos on pages 39 and 40 of the National Register of Historic Places registration form.



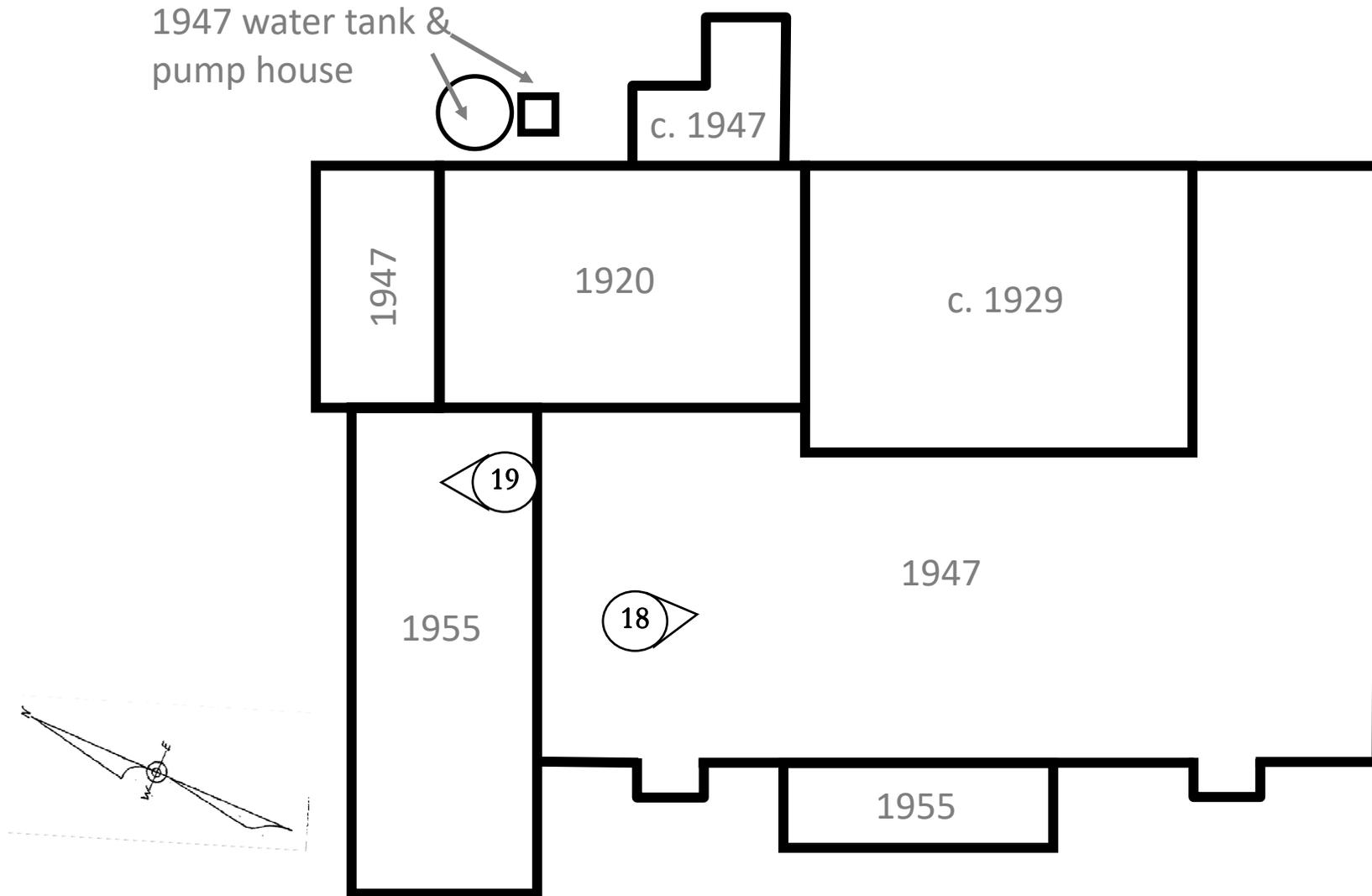
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
KEY TO INTERIOR PHOTOS—FIRST FLOOR & PUMP HOUSE**

Black Ox -Duplan Corporation Mill
215 Bonview Avenue
Lincolnton, Lincoln County, North Carolina

Photo key created by Annie Laurie McDonald, Richard Grubb & Associates
15 January 2022



Photo number and direction, keyed to the Section 7 inventory on pages 5 through 12 and the list of photos on pages 39 and 40 of the National Register of Historic Places registration form.



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
KEY TO INTERIOR PHOTOS—BASEMENT**

Black Ox -Duplan Corporation Mill
215 Bonview Avenue
Lincolnton, Lincoln County, North Carolina

Photo key created by Annie Laurie McDonald, Richard Grubb & Associates
15 January 2022



Photo number and direction, keyed to the Section 7 inventory on pages 5 through 12 and the list of photos on pages 39 and 40 of the National Register of Historic Places registration form.