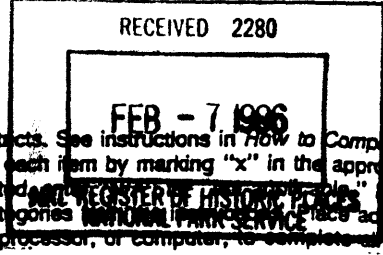


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# 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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories for National Park Service archaeological resources. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name FLY MANUFACTURING COMPANY BUILDING

other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 204 SOUTH MAIN STREET N/A not for publication

city or town SHELBYVILLE N/A vicinity

state TENNESSEE code TN county BEDFORD code 003 zip code 37160

### 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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert L. Harper 1/31/96  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

DEPUTY STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER, TENNESSEE HISTORICAL  
State of Federal agency and bureau COMMISSION

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Edson A. Beall 3/7/96  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: MANUFACTURING FACILITY

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY INDUSTRIAL

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other GLASS; STEEL; WOOD

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

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

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

Property is: N/A

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

CA. 1927-1946

Significant Dates

CA. 1927

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

RANEY, COL. JOHN MORGAN

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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:

MTSU, CENTER FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

FLY MFG. CO. BLDG.  
Name of Property

BEDFORD CO., TN  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property APPROXIMATELY 1.0 ACRE

SHELBYVILLE 79 NW

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1   6	5   48   8   40	39   2   63   50
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title BRIAN R. EADES

organization CENTER FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION date 16 NOVEMBER 1995

street & number BOX 80, MTSU telephone (615) 898-2947

city or town MURFREESBORO state TN zip code 37132

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**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.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name BEDFORD COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL c/o Diane Helton

street & number P.O. BOX 762 telephone (615) 684-8026

city or town SHELBYVILLE state TN zip code 37160

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

VII. DESCRIPTION

The Fly Manufacturing Company Building is located at 204 South Main Street in Shelbyville, Bedford County, Tennessee. Built in 1927 by a local contractor, Col. John Morgan Raney, this building is of common bond brick construction with a raised concrete basement. The roof consists of a metal truss and tongue and groove wood decking covered by a saturated felt-type roofing paper. The building has an addition that was added to the rear of the structure in 1938 by Col. Raney. This building exhibits a strong degree of architectural integrity due to its single symmetrical facade and rectangular plan that is typical of early twentieth century industrial buildings.

The east/main facade consists of two floors and a basement. The first and second story each consist of twelve bays, grouped in sets of three openings. The basement consists of two sets of windows and two single windows. All windows are six over nine awning-style windows. Each of these window bays rest on separate plain slip concrete sills. The first story consists of steps at each end bay that lead to the building's two front entrances. Each door is topped by a three light transom and a bracketed hipped roof canopy. The two canopies covered in asphalt shingles have exposed rafter beams. The remaining bays consist of ten six over nine windows resting on separate concrete, plain slip sills. The fenestration on the raised basement is composed of two sets of three windows, each flanked by a single window. Along the cornice are thirty-nine square brick projections. Centered above the brick projections is an inset limestone marker which reads, "1927 FLY MFG. CO." The parapet is flat above the three end bays and then rises to form a pedimented coping.

The north facade of the structure contains sixteen bays on the second floor. Each of these bays consist of paired

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

windows with each window unit containing fifteen window panes. The upper portion of these windows are louvered while the bottom portion is fixed. Each of these paired window units rests on concrete, plain slip sills. The first floor has evidence of sixteen bays but the bays on the north side of the facade have been sealed at an undetermined date. When viewing the building from a northeastern perspective, the first two bays are of the same construction as those found on the second floor of this facade. However, the third bay has been partially covered with circa 1940s glass block and the fourth bay has been totally covered with this glass block material. The following five bays are consistent with the pattern found in the second floor. The tenth bay is a doorway with steps leading up to it. The historic entry consists of two large, wooden, doors with four lights in the upper portion. The lower half of the doors is constructed of diagonal boards measuring approximately 1-1/2". Evidence of the 1938 addition is highly noticeable just beyond these doors. The next two bays contain windows identical to those in the second story while the thirteenth bay has been partially sealed with bricks at an undetermined date. The fourteenth and fifteenth bays have been sealed in with bricks and the sixteenth bay consists of a large, hinged, steel door. Still viewing the north facade from a northeastern direction, the first bay of the concrete foundation has been sealed with a large sheet of tin. The remaining eight bays consist of sets of ventilation windows. The concrete foundation ends at the paired doors and a brick foundation extends along the remainder of the north facade.

The west facade of the building dates to 1938 and consists of a roofline that is flat above the first two bays of fixed windows on either side of the facade and then rises to form a pedimented coping. Centered above the brick projection is a ventilation grill which rests on a plain, slip sill. The second story contains six bays which are divided into one six over nine window, a pair of six over nine windows, two

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

pairs of six over nine windows, one pair of six over nine windows, and a final pair of six over nine windows. The first floor contains evidence of this same format but the first two bays have been covered with brick at an undetermined date. Located above and between the two sealed bays and the loading dock door is a sealed bay which is not consistent with either the first or second floors. There is a large historic door with a canopy and a concrete foundation situated off-center with the building. There are three remaining paired windows evenly spaced throughout the remainder of the facade.

The south facade's second story contains seventeen bays. When viewing the facade from a southeastern approach, the first three bays are paired window units with fixed bottom portions and louvered top portions. Each separate unit contains fifteen lights. This pattern is also consistent with the next three bays. Then, there is a single window unit containing fifteen lights. The remaining ten bays are paired window units with each unit containing fifteen lights. The first bay from the southeastern corner contains a small air conditioning unit. The first floor of the south facade follows the same pattern as the second floor. The foundation contains fourteen bays. From the southeastern corner, the first bay is a loading door that is recessed into the concrete foundation. Beyond the door are thirteen bays, each consisting of pairs of six over six window units. Some of these bays contain a combination of ventilation shafts and window units while others serve strictly as windows. In the center of the foundation is a cast iron, hinged opening of undetermined function situated approximately 2' from the ground level. When facing this opening, there is a ventilation shaft directly west. There is a tall brick chimney that extends from this facade that is topped with a white chimney cap. A small aluminum conical-shaped flue extends from the center of the cap.

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

The interior of the building is vacant except for a few miscellaneous stored items in the rear of the first floor.

The following descriptions correspond to the enclosed set of floor plans.

The 34' x 64' room on the first floor located in the southwestern portion of the building consists of linoleum flooring, five wooden vertical supports, and three open bays running along the southern brick wall. This was used as a sewing room. Modern wood panelling and two doorways adorn the northern wall of this room.

The hallway is 6'8" long with 2-1/2" boards running diagonally across the floor. The hallway originates at the top of a ramp leading from the main room. The hallway contains 2-1/2" high baseboards.

The 16' x 13' room in the extreme northwest corner of the first floor also has 2 1/2" floorboards. This room has an exposed beam ceiling with a metal rolling door in the north wall. This room was used as a receiving room to bring textile supplies into the building. The eastern wall is sheetrocked while the western wall is brick with two sealed bays.

The 16' x 12'6" room is located east of the corner room just mentioned. This room was the "First Aid Room" and has linoleum floors, modern wood panelling on all four walls, and evidence of a modern dropped ceiling.

Due east of this room is a 12' x 21' room that served as the mens restroom. This room contains an exposed beam ceiling, a particle board floor, and plastic wall covering on all four walls. Modern restroom doors and other various fixtures of recent manufacture are scattered about the room.



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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

Due east of this room is a 24' x 24' ladies restroom. This room has an exposed beam ceiling, modern particle board floor, and plastic wall covering. Exposed pipes and modern plumbing fixtures litter the floor.

The main room (70' x 108') also has 2 1/2" floorboards with an exposed beam ceiling. This room was used as a stockroom and finished products were kept here. The north and south walls are brick with seven bays on the north wall and nine bays on the south wall. There are wooden support posts in rows of 9, 8, and 8, respectively. There is a double door located on the north wall with 1" boarding running diagonally in the bottom panels while the top portion contains four lights in each door. The baseboards along all four walls are 5-1/2."

The southeastern corner contains an original wooden staircase. Due north of this staircase are three offices and a historic room with modern wood panelling. There is also an original staircase located in the southwestern portion of this room adjacent to the historic elevator shaft.

The first historic office with modern wood panelling measures 10' x 14'. This room contains 3" baseboards and wood panelling on the west, north, and south walls, three windows on the south wall, two windows and a central door on the west wall, and a central door on the north wall. There are two windows on the east brick wall. The floor is linoleum and there is a deteriorated dropped ceiling.

Going in a northern direction, the second historic office is 11' x 14'. The west, south, and north walls are covered in modern wood panelling. The south wall has one window and one central door with a 4-7/8" wooden door frame. Four windows occupy the west wall while two windows and a central door are situated on the north wall. The east wall is of

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

brick and has two windows. This office also has a dropped ceiling.

The main historic office in the northeastern corner of the first floor measures 24' x 14'. There is one window in the brick north wall. The brick east wall has two windows and a door leading to the exterior with a 4-3/8" wooden door frame. The west wall contains two small windows and one door in the southwestern corner. The south wall has a central doorway with a 4-7/8" door frame. This office contains linoleum flooring and a dropped ceiling.

Directly west of this office is another room that is entirely sealed with modern wood panelling.

The second floor contains a large room in the eastern portion measuring 122' x 70' with 2-1/2" diagonal floorboards. Pants were pieced together in this room. The ceiling is constructed of exposed wooden beams. For added structural support, there is a series of steel trusses running in an east to west direction immediately under this ceiling, but not resting on the actual beams. All the walls are of brick construction with 5-1/2" baseboards. The north wall contains ten windows while the south wall contains eight windows. The east wall has twelve windows while the west wall contains a central freight elevator and two door openings. A staircase is located in the southeastern corner of the eastern room. There is a small office here with the same type of flooring and baseboards. The walls here are of modern wood panelling.

There is a bathroom in the southwestern corner of this large room with linoleum flooring and an exposed beam ceiling. The north, west, and east walls of the bathroom are plastic while the south wall is brick with a single window. The historic elevator shaft is centrally located along the western wall of the 122' x 70' room and immediately south of this elevator shaft is a historic stairway.

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The western room measures 63' x 70'. This room was used to manufacture overalls. The floor is composed of 2-1/2" floorboards running diagonally and the ceiling is an exposed wooden beam type with a steel truss running in an east to west direction just below the ceiling, but not resting on the actual beams. The east wall is of wood construction while the north, west, and south walls are brick. The north and west wall each have six windows. The west wall contains a central fan situated above the fourth window. The south wall has three windows.

The basement has two large rooms and a small boiler room. The east room measures 70' x 122' and has 28 vertical wooden support posts. 500/600 pound unfinished bales of cloth were stored in this room. The south wall contains the boiler room as well as eight windows that serve as ventilation units. The east wall has eight ventilation windows and a historic wooden staircase. The north wall has nine ventilation windows and the extreme eastern unit has been covered with a sheet of aluminum. The west wall has a ramp followed by a freight elevator shaft and a historic staircase just south of the elevator shaft. The west wall is concrete and the entire room rests upon a poured concrete slab foundation with an exposed beam ceiling.

The boiler room is situated on the south wall of the eastern room. It measures 10' x 50' and contains a large industrial modern boiler. The floor consists of a poured concrete slab while all four walls are concrete block.

The west room measures 70' x 65' and contains fifteen vertical support posts. Patterns for various apparel items were cut out here and then sent upstairs. The north, south, and west walls are of brick construction while the east wall is of concrete construction. The north wall is underground, thus it has no windows. The west wall contains two sealed windows in the northern section with a central loading dock door followed by three more windows. The south wall has six

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

windows. The flooring is a poured concrete slab with an exposed beam ceiling. There is a loading door located in the far southwestern corner of the room.

Directly north of the Fly Manufacturing Company Building is a parking lot that was used for Fly's employees. North of this lot and across McGrew Street lies the historic Shelbyville Post Office (constructed in 1915), which is now the Argie Cooper Public Library. Situated directly behind the library and northwest of the Fly Manufacturing Company Building is the Knox Pitts Hardware Store. South and southwest of the Fly Manufacturing Company Building lies a county-operated electricity station enclosed in a chain link fence and topped with barbed wire. Main Street runs along the east facade of the Fly Building and directly across Main Street is another abandoned parking lot.

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN.

VIII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Fly Manufacturing Company Building, located at 204 South Main Street, in Shelbyville, Bedford County, Tennessee, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A because of local significance in the twentieth century industrial history of Bedford County. Constructed in 1927, this industrial building employed hundreds of workers from the communities of Shelbyville, Wartrace, and Unionville. The Fly Manufacturing Company Building is also eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C due to its early-twentieth century industrial architectural style.

The New South emerged from the flames and injustices of Reconstruction as an economic force dependent on both agriculture and industry. The late nineteenth and early-twentieth century was very harsh to the agricultural South due to the plague of the boll weevil, the 1890s depression, and the Great Depression of the 1930s. During this tumultuous time, many farms went bankrupt and rural people flocked to urban areas to begin a new life. Cities became highly populated industrial meccas due to the enticement of better income and steady employment. This abundance of cheap labor gave manufacturers incentive to produce goods in the South. Furthermore, a failing agricultural industry led the South "to be squeezed to the point where the purchasing power of the people did not provide an adequate market for those of the rest of the country."<sup>1</sup> Yet, due to agricultural failures and a subsequent increase in cheap labor, cotton textile industries continued to survive during these barren times. According to an April 1934 U.S. Census Report, the Fly Manufacturing Company was considered a "thriving business, paying code wages, and had satisfied employees."<sup>2</sup>

The New South's transformation came as the cotton textile, iron, steel and lumber industries realized the importance of

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

the railroad and expanded their operations accordingly. This economic expansion provided relief to unemployed agricultural workers.

In the 1880s, industrialization began to appear throughout the Southern states. Coupled with this new industry was an abundant labor supply due to crop failure and a lack of available work. Furthermore, with increased accessibility to the railroad, mills could locate in low-cotton producing areas and have the raw material shipped in from more prosperous agricultural communities. As a result, mill towns arose in cities and towns, thus:

furnishing every facility of life--work and wages, homes, churches, schools, stores. All was received with gratitude as became families which had endured life at a minimum. Long hours, small pay, work of children day or night were taken as a matter of course.<sup>3</sup>

This trend became widespread from 1880 to 1890 as a great migration from rural farms to manufacturing centers occurred throughout the Southern region of the country. In 1890, 475,019 persons were employed in manufacturing industries in the South. By 1920, this number had increased to 1,659,039 out of 8,809,814 jobs in the agricultural, industrial, transportation, professional, and domestic fields.<sup>4</sup>

In the early-twentieth century, manufacturing jobs had produced a high rate of employment in the South. Yet, the poverty rate was overwhelming. The primary cause for the high poverty rate was the existence of low wages. Mill owners could get away with paying low wages to their workers because:

low standards of living for several generations had thus accustomed a large proportion of the Southern whites to rates of pay for services or products which

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

were wholly out of accord with those obtained in regions where industrialization had become more rapid and widespread.<sup>5</sup>

For the black man, the situation was even worse. In the 1930s, a common white assumption, as stated in a 1930 book, was that "there was nothing in the experiences of the Negro which would impel him on the attainment of freedom to maintain a decent standard of living--still less to strive for a better standard."<sup>6</sup> This was hardly the case. Eager to improve their economic means, blacks usually strived for whatever type of industrial employment they could receive since it typically paid better than work in the fields. When hired at Fly, blacks were often given janitorial jobs with little to no room for advancement. However, they often received the same amount of pay as white millhands. In 1928, the average hourly wage rate for white and black cotton textile workers in the South was \$0.31. For local blacks in Shelbyville, this was an acceptable wage compared to many other employment opportunities.

Child labor was another factor that contributed to the low cost of cotton manufacturing in the South. According to a 1938 U.S. Emergency Council Study, 108 out of every 1,000 children between 10 and 15 years old were employed in the South, compared to 47 out of every 1,000 children of these ages in the country as a whole.<sup>7</sup> This high juvenile employment rate had serious repercussions on a child's life in the South. By working so often, the child obviously did not attend school and therefore was denied an education. This lack of education snowballed into a lack of skills, which often led children to be trapped in a mill job for the remainder of their lives. Women were also targets for exploitation by the mill leadership. While often working the same amount of time as their fellow male employees, women were usually paid less wages.

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

Some workers sought a change from these dismal conditions. A new vocabulary was entering the country's factories and mills. It would include the terms "unions", "labor relations", and "strikes". After World War II, workers became conscious of their importance to the textile industry and began to organize and demonstrate to improve their labor conditions. By the late 1920s, approaches were made to the American Federation of Labor and the United Textile Workers of America. Cries for better hours and wages were raised and too often these cries fell on employers' deaf ears. In 1928, Elizabethtown, Tennessee experienced a major textile strike. 5,000 parading strikers successfully demonstrated for an open shop agreement (membership in the union not forbidden to workers) and concessions in wages.<sup>8</sup> The success of this strike led to similar demonstrations in Greenville, South Carolina; Gastonia, North Carolina; and Lexington, Kentucky. In all three cases, the workers won important concessions--fair pay and reasonable working hours.

Shelbyville's early twentieth century industrial development mirrored these national and regional trends in working conditions. At this time, the city had a large industrial economy that attracted hundreds of local citizens as well as residents of surrounding areas. The town's population "increased by two-thirds between 1920 and 1930 with industrial development."<sup>9</sup> Industries that began operations in Shelbyville during the 1920s and 1930s include the Musgrave Pencil Company, the Empire Pencil Company, and Shelbyville Mills, Inc. Shelbyville Mills, Inc., a cotton weaving operation, had the distinction of being the largest employer in the city at one time. This outfit was purchased by the U.S. Rubber Company (later renamed Uniroyal) in 1933 and continued textile production in the form of tire cording and other related products.<sup>10</sup> Partly as a result of the development of Shelbyville Mills, several company housing structures were built on the Duck River south of Shelbyville. These houses, built in the 1920s and 1930s,



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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

share similar architectural features that suggest they were built according to a standard prescribed by company policy.

Joel Orval Fly, the founder of the Fly Manufacturing Company, began his career in the textile industry managing an overall factory for J.S. Reeves and Company in Clarksville, Tennessee. In 1914, Fly moved to Shelbyville and the following year established the Fly Manufacturing Company in a pre-Civil War frame warehouse located on the northeast corner of Depot and Jefferson Streets. At this time, he had eighteen to twenty employees. In August 1916, this building was destroyed by fire and Fly lost a large amount of machinery and materials. Unhindered by this setback, Fly moved his headquarters into a newly constructed building owned by Mr. Ray B. Jean. The Jean Building was located on the south side of Depot Street and in later years was replaced by the People's National Bank. Fly continued his operations in the Jean Building for the next twelve years, producing thousands of pairs of overalls. In December of 1924, he founded a second apparel-producing company in Shelbyville--the Eureka Pants Manufacturing Company.<sup>11</sup> This company prospered in Shelbyville for several years, but eventually it too closed and the historic building, located on Madison Street, was razed.

Due to the large amount of business, the Fly Manufacturing Company needed more space than was available at the Jean Building. In 1925, Fly purchased a lot on South Main Street for \$5,000. The Shelbyville Gazette reported that:

the Insurance and Real Estate agents, H.B. Cowan and Co., have sold to Mr. J.O. Fly for W.J. McGill, the large old brick residence nearly opposite the Main Street Church of Christ. It is one of the old landmarks of the town and it was built before the War Between The States. It has always been used as a residence. It fronts 100

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

feet on Main Street and runs back 150 feet. The building now on the lot will be torn down and in its place will be erected a modern factory building to house Fly's Overalls factory.<sup>12</sup>

Fly commissioned a local general contractor, Colonel John Morgan Raney, to construct the building which was to be "75 x 125 feet fronting on South Main Street . . . two stories high with a basement under all. It will be one of the largest buildings in town and . . . will be equipped with every modern convenience . . ."<sup>13</sup>

By August of 1927, construction of the new building was completed and the Fly Manufacturing Company resumed the process of sewing and piecing together overalls. The following year, Fly added a shirt manufacturing department to the operations at the new building.<sup>14</sup> He hired seventy-five new employees to operate this new department. In addition to selling finished goods (shirts and overalls) to large outfits such as Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward, Fly also sold his overalls to stores in the immediate vicinity. Due to this increased production, Fly commissioned Colonel Raney to build a brick, steel, and concrete addition on the rear of the existing building in 1938. The Shelbyville Gazette reported that this expansion was "made necessary when the company sold its McMinnville plant, recently, the present building not being large enough to care for the increasing business. The new space will be used for the manufacture of overalls and shirts."<sup>15</sup>

The Fly Manufacturing Company employed workers from Shelbyville, Wartrace, and Unionville--thus providing many jobs during the Great Depression. Employees from these neighboring communities would "come in and board in Shelbyville" all week and then go back home on Friday afternoon.<sup>16</sup> Large corporations such as Montgomery Ward, Sears Roebuck, and J.C. Penney gave Fly contracts. Through

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

these contracts, Fly was able to keep many people employed throughout the Great Depression. The company would purchase raw materials from gins in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia.<sup>17</sup>

While most companies were laying off employees during the Depression, Fly's business was able to hold on to its employees by staggering their schedules so that all the workers could take home some cash at the end of the week. Margaret Elam was hired by Fly on April 1, 1933. During her first 40 hour week, she made a total of \$0.75. She remembered that "we needed a job and Fly gave us a job. He was such a fine fellow that he would let us work three days a week to give us a paycheck that week."<sup>18</sup> Her sister, Dean Pickle, began working for the Fly Manufacturing Company in 1930. She recalled that when the National Relief Administration was organized in 1934, employees at the Fly made \$12.00 a week. Twelve cents was taken out and the workers would take home \$11.88. Mrs. Pickle said that during the Depression, "Mr. Fly would just work us maybe every other week, or maybe just every other day, or maybe just two to three days a week in order to hold his hands because if he had not done that they would have scattered."<sup>19</sup>

Fly expected his employees to work for their money. Bob Beavers was 16 years old when he was hired in 1932 as a bundle boy. Bundle boys were required to carry a bundle of pants 48 pair deep to the girls in the sewing room. There, the girls would install the pockets. Mr. Beavers said that "you had to work like the dickens in the factory because Old Man Fly said if you didn't work, there was a man standing there on the outside waiting for your job . . . and there was in those days."<sup>20</sup>

Unions had made their way to southern factories and mills by the 1930s. However, Fly vehemently opposed unions and would quickly fire union-minded workers before their ideas spread

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

to the rest of the work force. Bob Beavers, who had become a foreman, was called into Fly's office one day and accused of letting two employees, a man and his wife, get union-minded. Mr. Beavers told Fly's son (known as Snook):

Snook, I never bucked you all for nothing and if you want them fired, do it yourself, because I am not, and if you all want to fire me for saying that, go ahead, I don't care!<sup>21</sup>

Fly did fire the couple, but Bob was able to keep his job. Fly then proceeded to contact every manufacturer in Shelbyville and informed them that this couple was union-minded. By taking these measures, manufacturers were able to keep unions out of their factories. Six months passed and:

that guy come to me and he says, "Bob, I cannot find a job in Shelbyville. My wife cannot find one. Everybody says they filled up." I said, "I tell you what, you and your wife come back to work in the morning." I put them back on the payroll and there never was a word said.<sup>22</sup>

This was not the only time that the union tried to organize at the Fly. Margaret Elam recalls that "we never did go union, but the union tried. If the union was going to pay more, Fly would always come up to it."<sup>23</sup> This quote is a good indication of how apprehensive Fly was of an organized labor force. An organized labor force could strike in the midst of a large contract and Fly would certainly lose that bid. Furthermore, by losing the contract, the Fly Manufacturing Company would lose its credibility with Montgomery Ward or Sears Roebuck and thus lose a large amount of business. If this occurred often enough, it could lead to bankruptcy and the manufacturing company's demise.

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Ironically, Fly indirectly encouraged unions through his treatment of the workers. Fly was paternalistic in some ways, but he sometimes treated employees harshly in order to accomplish his goals. For example, before the passage of the overtime law in the 1930s, Fly "would tell us we've got to work Saturday morning to save the contract. We'd have to get up and go to work on Saturday. They just really didn't have much feeling for the working hands."<sup>24</sup> Due to the company's small town, family-like atmosphere, Fly was able to maintain a certain amount of loyalty among his workers. In doing so, he prevented the emergence of a union at his factory. Shelbyville, like most southern communities at this time, had deeply religious beliefs. Union organizers had little success in some parts of the South due to the Southerners' belief in fundamental religion.<sup>25</sup> Most workers accepted suffering as a part of life. Against this submissiveness, unions had little chance of success. Furthermore, in small southern towns, the politicians were largely dependent on the factories to provide the citizens with jobs. Local industries often paid all or part of politicians' and police chiefs' salaries. There is no evidence of this occurring in Shelbyville, but, for obvious reasons, these records would be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. However, organizers in Shelbyville were still persistent as late as the 1970s. Margaret Brown, a former Fly employee, recalls that "back before I retired in the 70s, they had some ladies that tried to organize a union there. Of course, it went before a vote but it didn't come in."<sup>26</sup> Mrs. Brown was employed as a supervisor at the Fly. Her statement hints at a self-assured attitude on the part of the management that the union would never become a part of the Fly and it never did.

Sadly, working conditions at the Fly were similar to those found throughout the country in the 1930s and today. In the summer the heat was oppressive and during the winter, the building was difficult to heat due to its high ceilings and

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

spacious rooms. Mrs. Beavers recalled that the Fly Building "didn't have air conditioning then (late-1930s to early-1940s). I've seen it so hot up there you couldn't hardly live."<sup>27</sup>

The unbearable heat forced the workers to take primitive measures to cool themselves. One effective method was to attach pieces of cardboard to turbines located under the large sewing machines. As the turbines would rotate, the cardboard would create a breeze. While reminiscing of these times, Mrs. Beavers said with conviction, "I know we worked awful hard and I'd hate to have to do it again."<sup>28</sup> These harsh working conditions contributed to disagreements between employees and occasionally fights would break out on the factory floor. Margaret Brown remembered one lady who became extremely agitated with a fellow female worker who was spreading around some gossip about her. She approached the raconteur one morning and "just took her fist and started hitting her and she knocked her down on the floor and she just sit right down astride of her and beat the fire out of her."<sup>29</sup>

All things considered, in the context of the industrial environment of Shelbyville, the Fly was an adequate place to work. There was room for advancement within the company and this would mean more income for the promoted workers. For example, Bob Beavers began working there in 1932 as a bundle boy. He then became a mechanic. By the time he left the company in 1958, he was the foreman for an entire department. Margaret Brown also advanced within the company. She started working at the Fly in 1939 and by the time she retired in the 1970s, she was the head supervisor for the sewing department. Bob Beavers, however, feels no allegiance or pride toward the Fly. He bitterly recalls that:

at the time I didn't know any better . . . .  
I stayed with him (Fly) for 26 years. But

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

after I left, I wished that I had left the first day on, because there was no future there for me. I gave him the best part of my life for nothing, absolutely nothing.<sup>30</sup>

Margaret Brown, however, enjoyed her experience there as did Lois Claxton, Margaret Elam, and Dean Pickle.

As an outsider, it is difficult to ascertain the employee-employer relations of the Fly Manufacturing Company.

Perhaps Mrs. Beavers summed it up best when she said with a harsh tone:

every one of them Flys' is dead now and they know they made all that money and paid us so little. They just got by with whatever they could pay you. They didn't have any pension plan, no nothing. When you quit, you quit. All these laws came in and they still didn't have any pension plan for their employees.<sup>31</sup>

During World War II, hundreds of textile mills across the nation were commissioned by the Federal government to produce goods for the war effort. The Fly Manufacturing Company, with its abundant work force and huge sewing machines, produced pants, jackets, and fatigues for the U.S. Army.

Although Fly died in 1960, the Fly Manufacturing Company continued to operate as an independent outfit until the early 1970s. Yet, as the popularity of overalls and related items decreased, the company fell on hard times. In 1972, the Fly Manufacturing Company was bought by Bayly Corporation, a Denver-based garment manufacturing company who was looking for a southeastern distributing center. Under Bayly, the Fly Manufacturing Company prospered as an apparel manufacturer until 1980. At this time, a large

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

stockholding fight within Bayly led to the separation of the Fly Manufacturing Company from Bayly. Shortly afterwards, the Fly Manufacturing Company was renamed Woodway Corporation and continued the production of garments in the original building. In 1984, Woodway Corporation announced they were going to close as a result of a tremendous decline in business. In Spring of 1985, Woodway Corporation ceased operations in the Fly Manufacturing Company Building and all of the apparel manufacturing machinery was removed from the historic structure at this time.<sup>32</sup>

The Fly Manufacturing Company Building is now owned by the Shelbyville Arts Council who plan to use the structure as a local museum/arts center.

Although some of the smaller support buildings associated with the main Fly Manufacturing Company Building have been razed, the extant building and property still maintain a great degree of historic integrity. The Fly Manufacturing Company Building serves as an example of the birth and vitality of large-scale industry in Shelbyville and throughout the state of Tennessee. This building was a part of the thriving industrial economy that permeated the South in the 1920s. It then survived the hard times brought about by the Great Depression and prospered with the rejuvenation of Tennessee's economy during and after World War II. Ironically, many of the early manufacturing structures that transformed the Southern rural and urban landscape during the early part of this century have been demolished in the name of progress. The fact that the Fly Manufacturing Company Building still stands bears mute testimony to this building's importance in Shelbyville's history and is therefore eligible for listing under criteria A and C on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Fly Manufacturing Company Building is also significant because it possesses a distinct architectural style that is representative of industrial buildings constructed in the



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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

early-twentieth century. The Fly Manufacturing Company Building consists of a single symmetrical facade and rectangular plan. The building is supported by a steel frame with common bond brick walls. Long rows of steel-framed windows provided air and natural light for the employees.

The builder, Colonel John Morgan Raney, utilized several early-twentieth century fire preventive techniques. For example, the boiler room was housed in the basement in a separate room composed entirely of brick and concrete. This method of construction would effectively prevent a fire from spreading throughout the factory. The brick and steel construction of the building also served as a fire preventive measure. Finally, the heavy vertical wooden support timbers and flooring facilitated slow burning or charring in case of fire. The Fly Manufacturing Company Building was obviously not built in a high style fashion. Instead, the building's architecture is significant under criterion C for its practicality in a factory environment and exemplifies innovative early-twentieth century fire preventive techniques.

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

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17. Margaret Brown, Interview By Author, 10 November 1994, Shelbyville, TN.

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28. Ibid.

29. Margaret Brown.

30. Bob Beavers.

31. Bonnie Beavers.

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

X. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property corresponds with the attached map which marks the boundaries of city block H, lots 15 and 16 of the property tax map 89H for Shelbyville, Bedford County, Tennessee.

Boundary Justification

The nominated boundaries of approximately 1.0 acre contains the extant historic property associated with the Fly Manufacturing Company Building.



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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

PHOTOGRAPHS

Fly Manufacturing Building  
Shelbyville, Bedford Co., TN

PHOTOS BY: Brian Russell Eades  
108 City View Drive  
Murfreesboro, TN 37130

NEGATIVES: Tennessee Historical Commission  
2941 Lebanon Road  
Nashville, TN 37243

DATE: November 1995

East facade, facing west  
1 of 24

East facade, facing west  
2 of 24

South elevation, facing northeast  
3 of 24

South elevation, facing northeast  
4 of 24

North elevation, facing southeast  
5 of 24

West elevation, facing east  
6 of 24

North elevation, detail of doorway, facing south  
7 of 24

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

Main office (24' x 14'), first floor, facing north  
8 of 24

Main office (24' x 14'), first floor, facing north  
9 of 24

Stock room, first floor, facing northeast  
10 of 24

Stock room, first floor, facing northwest  
11 of 24

Stock room, first floor, facing southeast  
12 of 24

Stock room, first floor, facing east  
13 of 24

Stock room, first floor, facing east  
14 of 24

Stock room, first floor, facing northwest  
15 of 24

Stock room, first floor, facing northeast  
16 of 24

Stock room, first floor, facing east  
17 of 24

Hallway (16' x 13'), first floor, facing north  
18 of 24

Hallway (16' x 13'), first floor, facing northwest  
19 of 24

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Fly Manufacturing Company Building, Bedford Co., TN

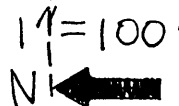
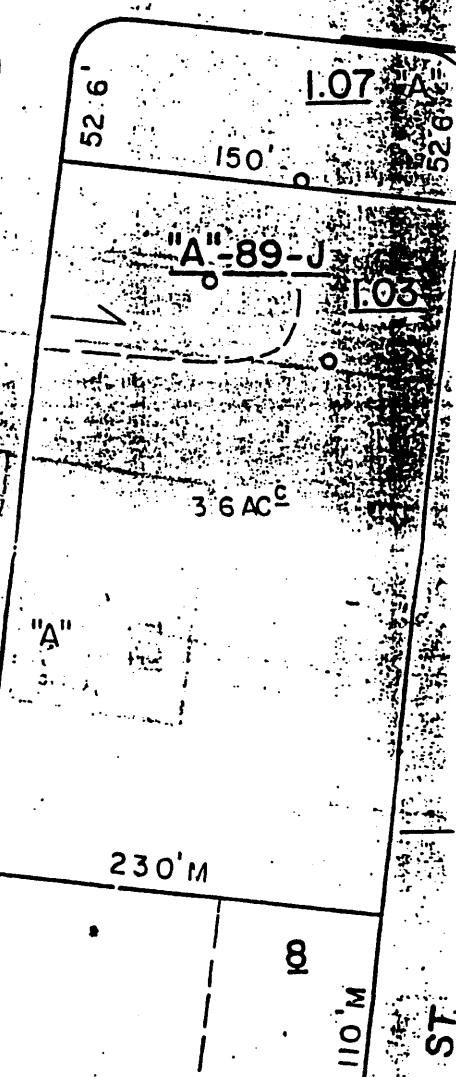
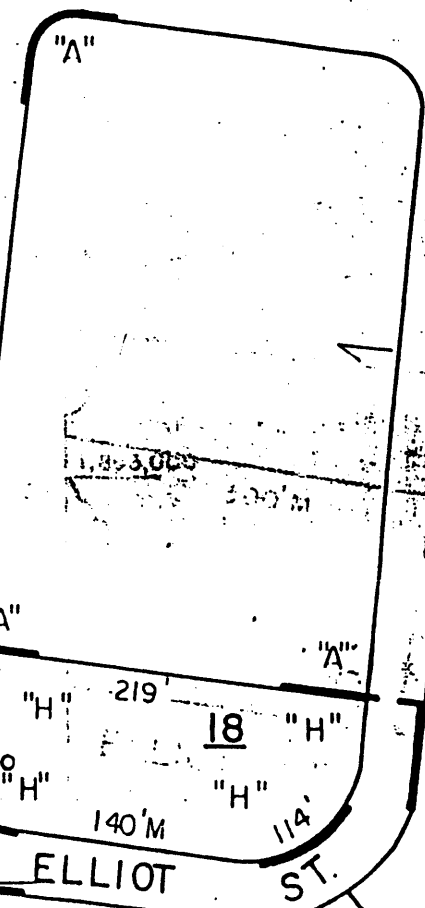
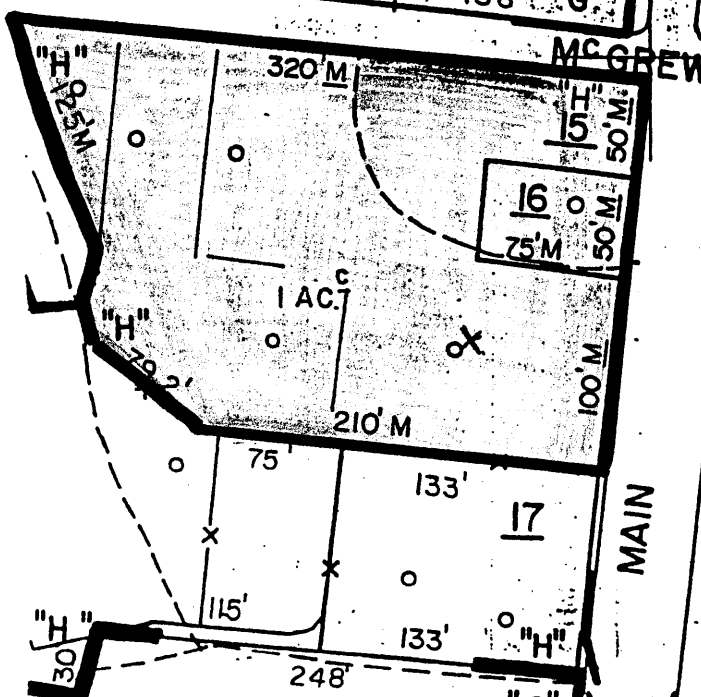
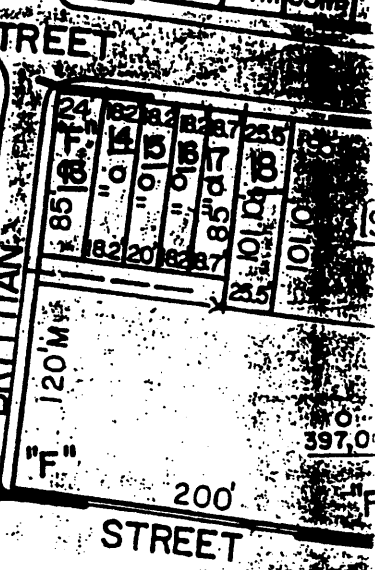
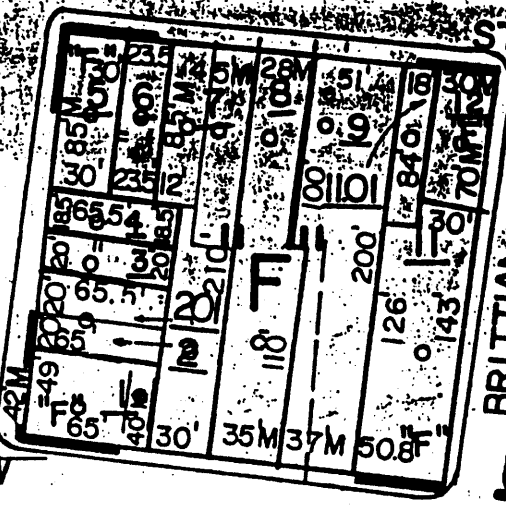
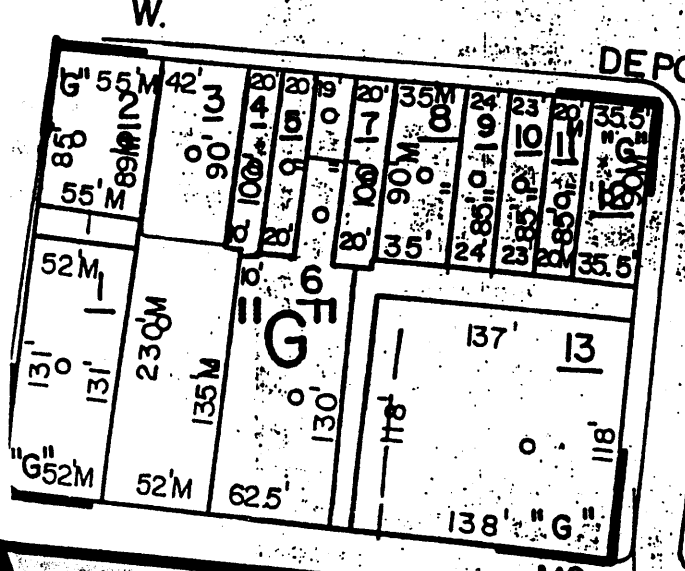
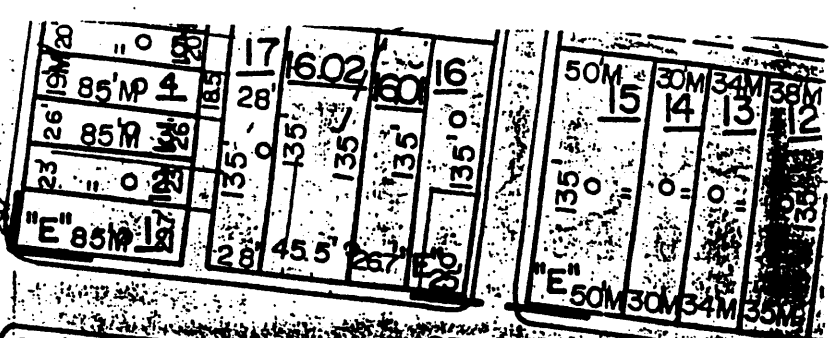
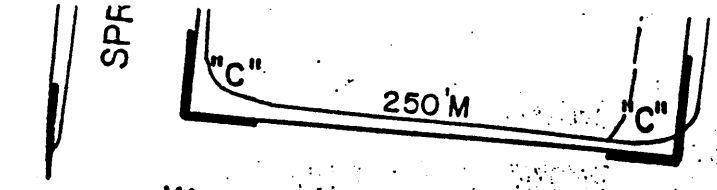
Ladies restroom (24' x 24'), first floor, facing northeast  
20 of 24

Sewing Room (34' x 64'), first floor, facing northeast  
21 of 24

Sewing Room (34' x 64'), first floor, facing southeast  
22 of 24

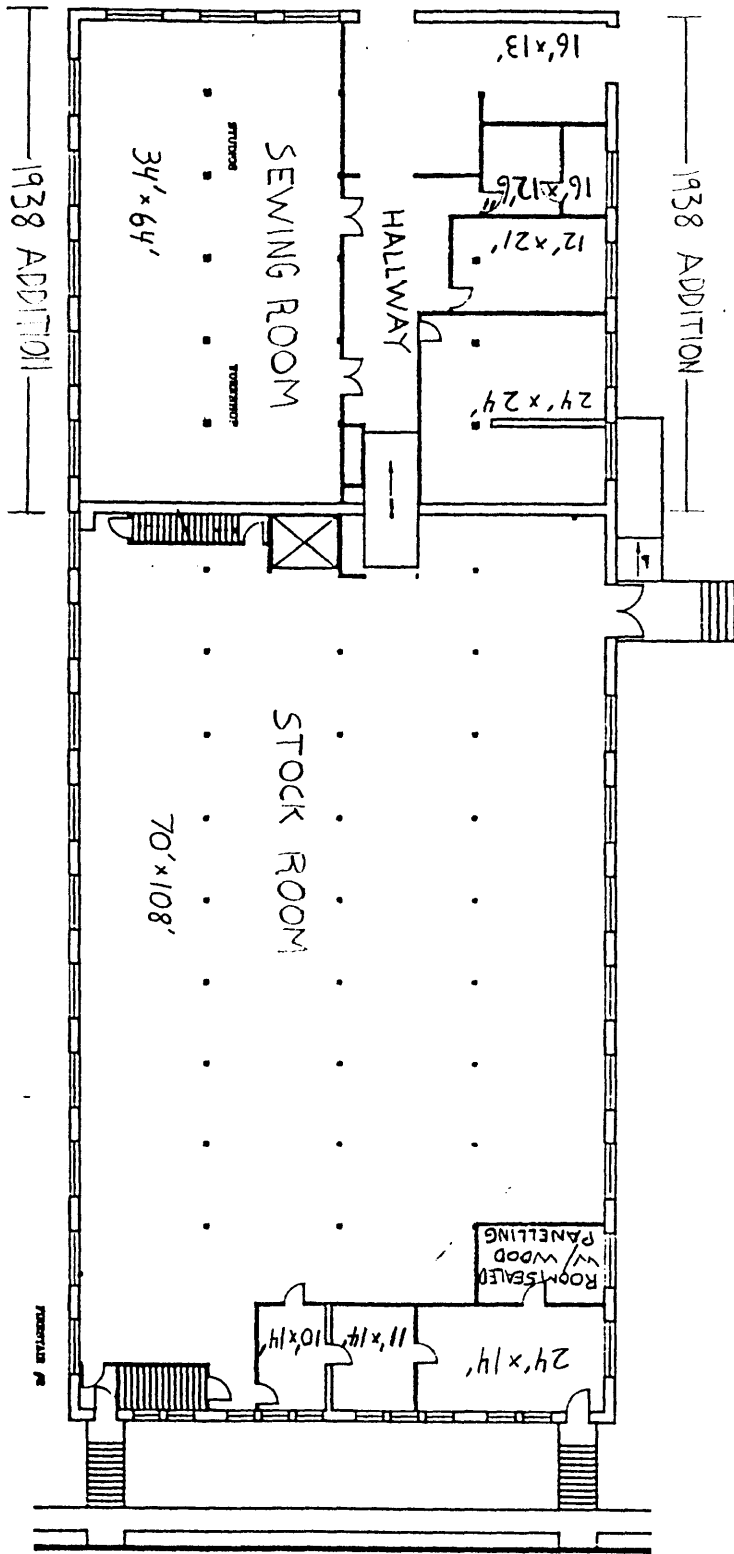
Sewing Room (34' x 64'), first floor, facing southeast  
23 of 24

Piece work room (122' x 70'), second floor, facing northwest  
24 of 24



U.R.A. COMPANY BUILDING  
 BEDFORD CO TN

Fly Manufacturing Company Building  
Bedford Co. TN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

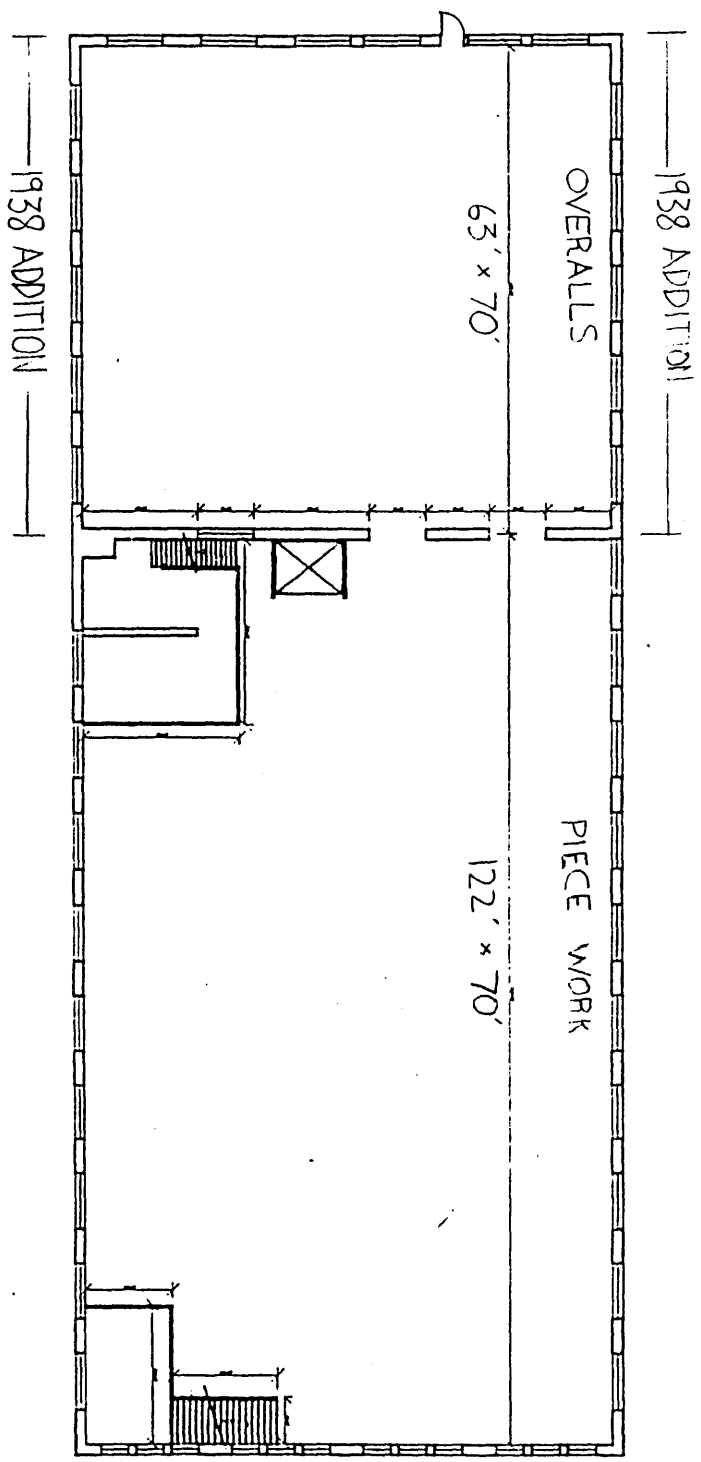
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OLD FLY BUILDING

ARCHITECTS & BUILDERS INC.

SOUTH MAIN SPRETTVILLE TENNESSEE 37100

816-606-4074  
810 SOUTH MAIN SPRETTVILLE TENNESSEE 37100



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Fly Manufacturing Company Building  
 Bedford Co. TN

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION
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OLD FLY BUILDING

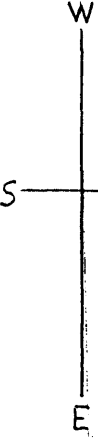
ARCHITECTS & BUILDERS INC.

210 SOUTH BLVD. MEMPHIS TENNESSEE 37103

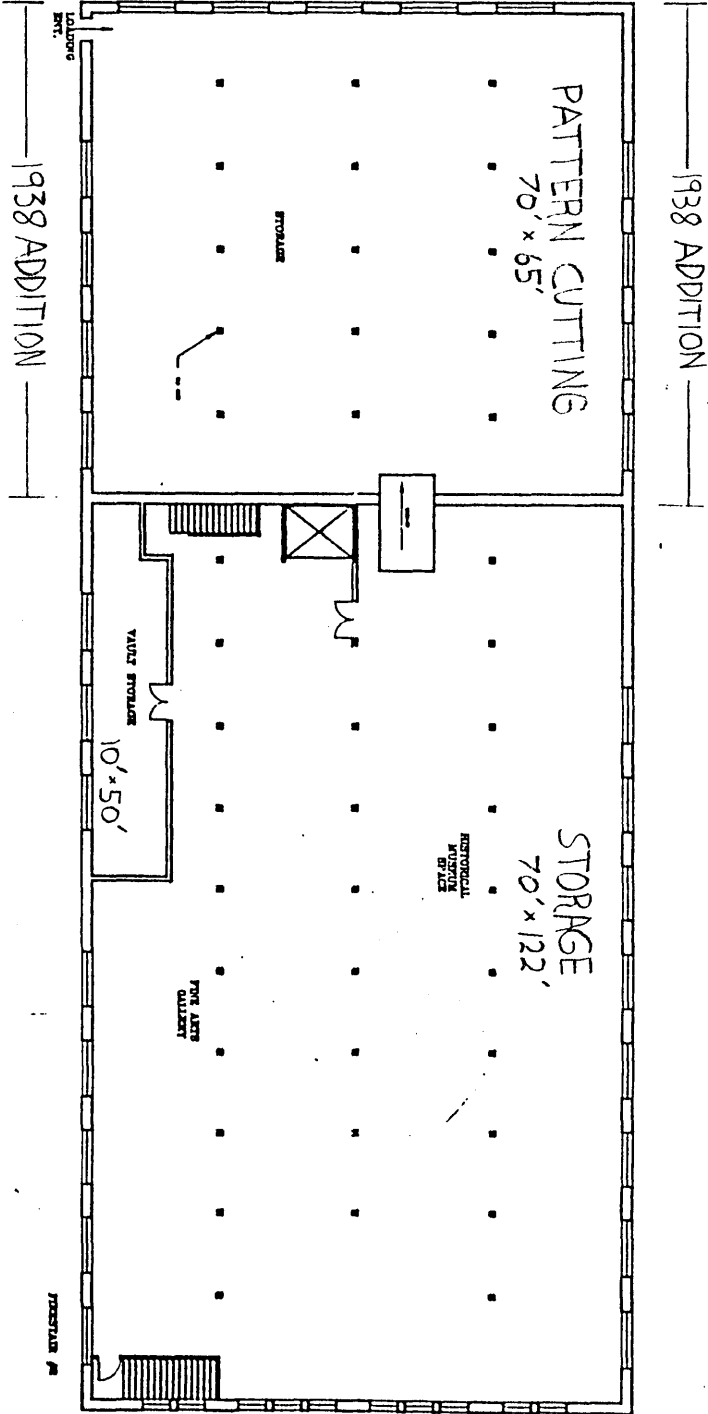
210 SOUTH BLVD. MEMPHIS TENNESSEE 37103

615-266-4078

Fly Manufacturing Company Building  
Bedford Co. TN



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



NO.	REVISIONS	DATE
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2		
3		

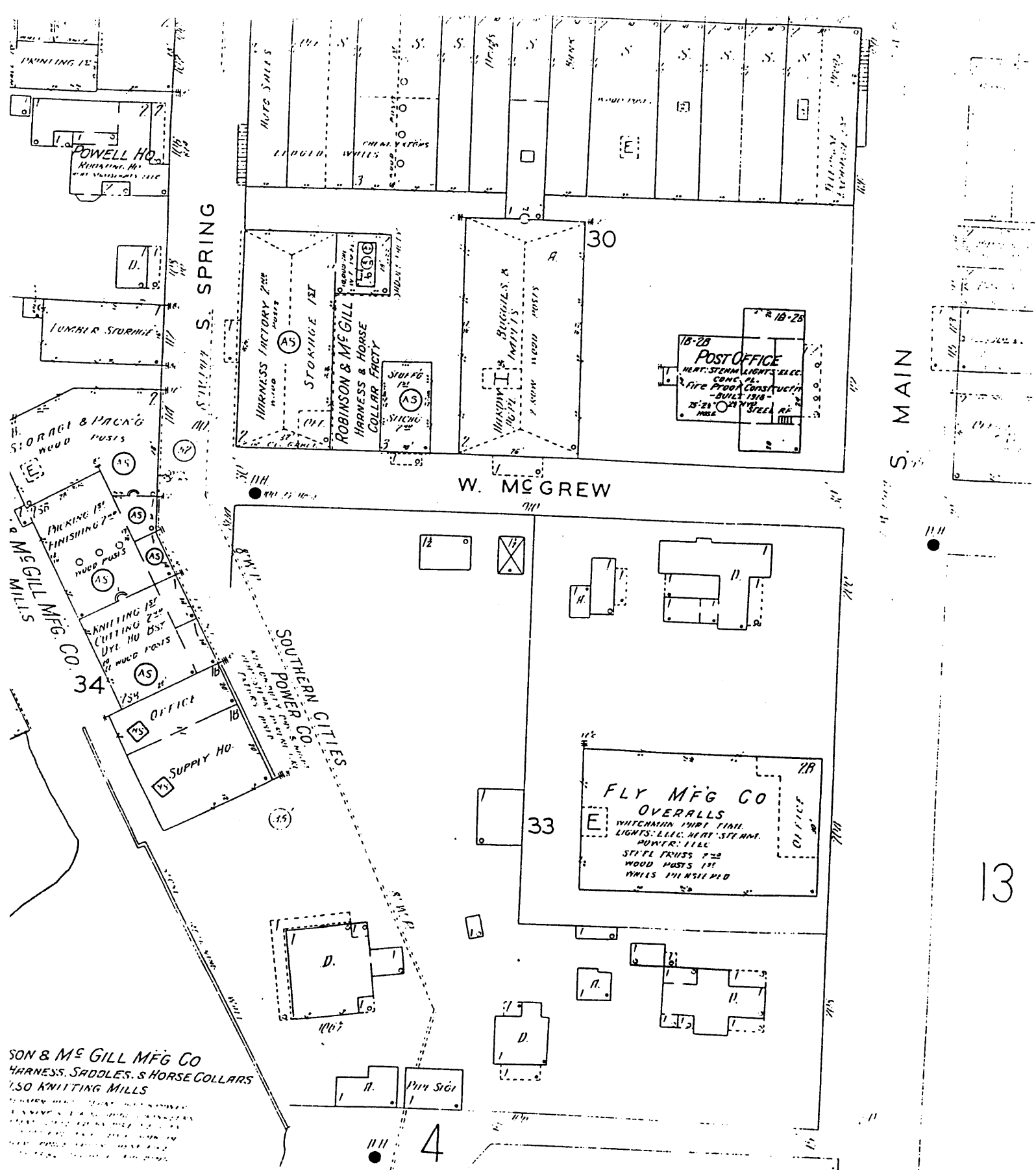
OLD FLY BUILDING

ARCHITECTS & BUILDERS INC.

SOUTH MAIN      BRIDLEVILLE      TENNESSEE 37100

210 SOUTH MAIN      BRIDLEVILLE      TENNESSEE 37100

615-686-4076



Fly Manufacturing Company Building  
 Bedford Co. + N  
 Sanborn - Perris Map  
 1929 / updated to 1950