

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Saratoga Victory Mill / Standard-Coosa-Thatcher Mill

and/or common Guntersville Mill

2. Location

street & number 1821 Gunter Avenue NA not for publication

city, town Guntersville NA vicinity of congressional district 4

state Alabama code 01 county Marshall code 095

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Standard-Coosa-Thatcher Company, Mr. Joe Thatcher

street & number P. O. Box 791

city, town Chattanooga NA vicinity of state Tennessee 37401

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Office

street & number Marshall County Courthouse

city, town Guntersville state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970 - present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Construction of the Gunter'sville Mill was begun in 1928 by Saratoga Victory Mills of New York to produce cotton linings. As originally built, the complex consisted of a two-story brick mill, a parallel row of single-story cotton warehouses, and several accessory utility structures. The mill continued in operation, under a variety of owners, until 1982 although the finished product has varied. During that time there were several small additions to the mill building, and the warehouse area was expanded; however, these alterations were on the rear of the complex so that the street facade survives in close to original condition. The mill was located at the extreme south end of Gunter'sville, and the mill property was situated between the main street of the town and a branch of the Tennessee River. Although certain alterations and modernizations have taken place in the course of daily business, the Gunter'sville Mill still demonstrates the characteristics of a small, southern textile operation at the start of the Depression.

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At present the Gunter'sville Mill complex is composed of a two-story brick mill, a parallel row of warehouses, an elevated water tank, a small brick boiler house, an office house, and several smaller accessory structures.

The 1928 mill building is approximately 400 feet long, and the long front facade faces directly onto Highway 431; the south side (minus a later addition) measures almost 150 feet, while the north side continues into an ell and is 185 feet deep, giving the building a total of 140,000 square feet. The exterior walls are of solid brick construction, with the mortar tinted to match the red brick, and are designed to create a framework of spandrels and pilasters for the large multipaned windows. The roof with its six foot high monitor is hidden behind a parapet which is capped by a simple contrasting molding. A square brick elevator tower is located on the south end of the mill and projects slightly above the roofline.

At the center of the west (front) facade, the wall is broken by a projecting brick stair tower which serves as the formal entrance and provides access to both mill floors. A masonry string course visually separates the two levels of the tower and is repeated at the top where a flat gable and recessed panels offer the one touch of non-functional design.

The mill windows are multipaned, six lights across by seven lights high, and set in metal sashes having an operative panel of eight panes. The glass is tinted blue, and the sashes are recessed one header depth from the exterior wall surface. Concrete sills span most of the distance between pilasters and provide a horizontal motif to balance the strong vertical emphasis of the repeated pilasters. The windows are no longer functional having been filled on the inside with insulation and plywood to increase the efficiency of the modern mechanical systems. The foundations are not visible but apparently are of brick.

The north end wall of the mill was rebuilt of concrete block sometime prior to 1968 because the original brick construction (which apparently was only a veneer) had buckled. Three additions along the rear (east) wall have obscured the original design except at the top of the wall, but it was a repeat of the design of the front facade. The most southern of the additions was built prior to 1950 and was used for storage. The other two additions, also of brick, were constructed in 1969 and house air conditioning and washer equipment.

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On the interior, the mill consists of two enormous rooms, one on each floor. The interior framing originally was composed of a system of wooden posts and beams; however, the wooden posts were not wrapped and after years of being hit by carts, they had become structurally unsound. Traditionally mills had been constructed with timber framing which was adequate to support the weight and forces produced by the slower machines used in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; but with the introduction of high speed power looms within the last half century, most older mills had to be reinforced in order to safely employ these modern textile machines. Consequently the wooden support system in the Guntersville Mill was replaced, circa 1960, with metal posts and steel beams.

Much of the original maple flooring was replaced during the last decade with new maple flooring. The ceilings are painted wood planking. The monitor is still intact to light the second level although the first floor receives no natural light because the windows have all been closed. All of the textile machinery has been removed.

As built, the one-story warehouse consisted of five storage bays with a sixth section used as a combination waste/opening room. Its design and materials closely followed the standards for cotton storage facilities that were set by the insurance industry, which specified brick firewalls between each bay and on the ends and a front wall of wood or tin that could be easily torn away in the event of fire. The sixth bay was enlarged in 1966 to double its size and provide a connection with the northern ell of the mill structure. Many of the original timber support posts survive in the warehouse. A concrete loading platform runs across the rear.

Other structures on the property include an elevated 75,000 gallon water tank, a small one-story brick bungalow (1951) which served as the front office, a 150,000 gallon reservoir, a one-story boiler house, and a power substation. One small concrete block structure and a two-story metal building of undeterminate function are also present in the rear yard.

At the extreme rear of the block facing onto Railroad Avenue are five, one-story frame houses that were built by Saratoga Victory Mills to house operatives. Neither these nor the other remaining mill houses are included in this nomination as they were sold off to individuals in 1958 and no longer form part of the mill holdings.

Despite the described alterations carried out during the last twenty-five years to make continued operation of the mill financially feasible, the Guntersville Mill complex continues to exhibit historical integrity based on its extant front facade, interior spaces, and retention of accessory structures. In fact, it has experienced far fewer modifications than the majority of mills that have continued to function into the 1980s. Specifically the Guntersville Mill possesses integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association.

8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | |

Specific dates 1928

Builder/Architect Robert and Company

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion A: Industry. The founding of the Guntersville Mill in 1928 is representative of the broad pattern of history which saw northern textile mills move to the south during the 1920s. This mass relocation--which had major implications for the present and future development of the south--was prompted by post-World War I profits in the textile industry combined with increased demands by northern factory workers and a decline in southern agriculture which created a large potential pool of low-wage laborers in the south. The transferral of textile manufacturing to the south during this decade was typified by the location of these new mills near small rural towns, the construction of factory housing by the mill owners, the absence of labor unions, the presence of exceedingly low wages and long hours, and the continued domination of southern industry by northern capital and control. The establishment and operation of the Guntersville Mill illustrates this pattern in all its particulars.

Criterion C: Architecture. The Guntersville Mill is architecturally significant for incorporating those features that distinguished southern textile mill construction and design during the 1920s, among them a rectangular plan, multistory brick construction, daylight walls and roof monitor, and timber framing. The later modifications have been dictated by advances in the textile industry, including the introduction of high speed looms and modern mechanical systems for control of the interior environment. Although Saratoga Victory Mills foresaw an expansion of the mill structure (which would account for the brick veneer construction of the end walls), this never became reality so the Guntersville Mill retains its original size, facade appearance, and general character.

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Saratoga Victory Mills of Delaware, the builder and original owner of the Guntersville Mill, had been in operation as a cotton textile mill in Victory (Saratoga County) New York, since 1873 under the name of Victory Manufacturing Company. The first mill in Victory apparently was built early in the century with additions constructed in 1846, 1860 and 1919. In 1928 when the company decided to move south, it incorporated in Delaware as Saratoga Victory Mills. The Guntersville Advertiser reported that both firms were branches of the American Manufacturing Company with Saratoga Victory Mills being set up to run the new southern mills. The announcement that the Victory Manufacturing Company would move its operations to Alabama prompted the Glenn Falls (N.Y.) Post Star to editorialize on the wretched conditions in southern mills and to bemoan the loss of yet another northern industry.

"The plan in the South is to offer cheap labor unprotected by labor laws.... The mills are operated by poor whites, whose condition in life is little above that of the negro, which in states such as Alabama has hardly advanced beyond the slavery period."

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 7.3

Quadrangle name Guntersville

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UMT References

| | | | |
|---|-------|-------------|-----------------|
| A | 1 1 6 | 5 6 3 5 4 0 | 3 7 9 9 8 1 5 0 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| B | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| C | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| D | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

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| E | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| F | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| G | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| H | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

Verbal boundary description and justification The property is bounded on the northwest by Gunter Avenue (613'), on the northeast by May Street (554'), on the southeast by an alley (557'), and on the southwest by First Street (545').

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | NA | code | county | code |
|-------|----|------|--------|------|
|-------|----|------|--------|------|

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Linda Bayer / Planner, and Ellen Mertins, Alabama Historical Commission

organization Huntsville Planning Department date 23 December 1983

street & number P. O. Box 308 telephone 205-532-7353 & 205 261-3184

city or town Huntsville state Alabama

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *[Signature]*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date March 7, 1983

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| For HCRS use only | |
| I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register | |
| <i>[Signature]</i> | Entered in the National Register |
| Keeper of the National Register | date <u>4/12/84</u> |
| Attest: | date |
| Chief of Registration | |

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"By allowing its working classes to be kept twelve and fourteen hours a day at the spinning jenny, employed at a starvation wage...unprotected by unions or factory laws, the south is enjoying a certain prosperity, while grasses grow in the streets of old New England mill towns. Few of the latter were ever what might be called the flower of industrial civilization. What will be the net contribution to American life when workers are maintained at an even lower level?"

The Manufacturers Record picked up this challenge and answered that "the ignorance of this utterance is more conspicuous than even the venom" and then proceeded to argue that a great number of northern investments are moving south because of the region's remarkable assets. This was an argument that took place repeatedly during the 1920s as more and more northern manufacturing companies moved south to take advantage of these assets which were, of course, the availability of cheap labor, the absence of unions, and a minimum of state labor laws regulating mill operation. Another factor contributing to this mass migration was the post-war prosperity of the mills which permitted them to abandon outmoded mills and rebuild new, modern plants in the south while allowing them to escape a recalcitrant work force in the north. However, the publically stated reasons for the influx of textile firms into the south, and those specifically cited by Victory Manufacturing Company, were proximity to raw cotton, cheap power, an ample supply of intelligent native white labor, a mild climate, and low taxes.

In fact, Victory Manufacturing Company sold their water power to Niagra Power & Light and their plant to a paper company and abandoned Victory, New York in 1928. The mill complex still stands today, vacant except for the 1919 portion which is occupied by a manufacturer of specialty packaging.

In the summer of 1928 Saratoga Victory Mills purchased a 65-acre tract in Guntersville and a 45-acre tract in Albertville, Alabama, and immediately began construction of two mills, the one in Guntersville to produce combed cotton linings while the other was to manufacture carded goods.

The mills were designed and engineered by Robert and Company of Atlanta, a firm that provided architectural and engineering services for industrial projects, particularly textile mills. A contract was let for grading the site including a railroad siding which was extended by the NC & St L Railroad to serve the mill. The city water system also was extended to the mill property, which was split by the city limits.

In September 1928 three carloads of machinery arrived for the mill, although construction had been delayed by a shortage of common labor; to finish work on the mill, laborers had to be imported from Atlanta. The following January arrangements were made to start operation and the general manager, Frank Lynch, who would oversee operations at both the Guntersville and Albertville mills, had arrived and made his residence in Gadsden. The company announced it would construct fifty cottages for operatives, and by 1930, forty-six houses had been built near the mill.

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Little has been learned of the day-to-day operation of the mill; however, the official records reveal a rather unstable history. The mill holdings were decreased to half their original size by the forced sale in 1937 of thirty-two acres to the Tennessee Valley Authority; this land is now under the waters of Big Spring Creek. In 1944 Saratoga Victory Mills (the Delaware corporation) sold both mills, all remaining land, and all plants, facilities, houses, warehouses, tracks, boilers and tanks to Saratoga Victory Mills, an Alabama corporation established the previous month with Francis Lynch of Gadsden, as agent, holding 248 of the 1,000 shares. Although the other two incorporators were also listed as residing in Gadsden, this firm was also controlled by northern capital. The common practice was to place local men in the public positions while the major stockholders remained quietly in the background--and in the north. When Saratoga Victory Mills of Alabama was dissolved in 1950, it was, in fact, a wholly owned subsidiary of M. Lowenstein & Sons of New York City.

This sale marked the first of many changes of ownership for the Guntersville Mill. Just five years later (1949) both mills were sold to J. R. Abney and his son of Anderson, S.C., who had incorporated as Julia Cade Mills and so renamed their new holdings. For a few months the mills were controlled by southern interests; but in 1950, the Guntersville Mill was sold to Lakeside Mills, an Alabama corporation whose major stockholder held all but two shares and resided in New York. At this time the Guntersville Mill was employing 400 hands and running 22,000 spindles and 600 Draper looms. Lakeside operated the mill for seven years before it was purchased by the William Barrell Company of Georgia which resold it within four months but without the housing; the forty-six houses were sold to individual owners the following month and ceased to be associated with the mill property. The new owner of the mill was an Alabama man who had also acquired ownership of the Albertville Mill. After many transfers of mortgages and deeds, the two mills finally became the property of the Standard-Coosa-Thatcher Company of Chattanooga which operated the Guntersville Mill to produce nylon and polyester carpet yarns. After Standard-Coosa-Thatcher closed down the mill in 1982, it remained vacant until early 1984 when negotiations were begun for the purchase of the mill by the City of Guntersville. The Albertville Mill is still being run as a textile mill by Standard-Coosa-Thatcher.

Guntersville, Alabama was typical of the sites chosen by northern textile firms when relocating in the south. In 1930 it was a small county seat, located on the Tennessee River, with a population of 3,500 persons. The town was served by the NC St L Railway whose tracks ran along the shore with sidings extended to serve the town's industries which consisted of three cotton gins, two warehouse companies, two lumber companies, an ice and coal company, and a manufacturer of wood splint baskets. The major crops of the area were strawberries and cotton; a chicken hatchery was also opened in 1929. When Saratoga Victory Mills located at the south end of town, it became the major employer, a situation specifically sought by mills because it allowed them to pressure the town for favorable tax breaks and utility rates. Small towns were also considered ideal because the mill employees were frequently rural persons who, it was believed, made a better transition to factory work in the rural setting of a small town than in that of a city. In fact the majority of Alabama's cotton mills were located in small, rural towns such as Guntersville and Albertville.

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The design of the Guntersville Mill is typical of southern mill design during the early years of the twentieth century. Because of the expense of grading a large level site, mills were often constructed on rough sites leaving more exposure on some sides than on others. This can be seen at the Guntersville Mill where the land drops down in the rear with the warehouse sited at a lower elevation. Multistory mills were standard because they required preparation of a smaller site and because mill machinery and operation favored such an arrangement. Mill managers found it most convenient to divide the space required for the spinning, winding, warping, carding, picking, slashing, weaving and cloth departments among several floors connected by an elevator.

The mills of this period were still of the "daylight" variety, usually having narrow structural pilasters of brick separating huge expanses of glass, which often accounted for 80 percent of the wall surface. The roof monitor was incorporated to increase natural daylight and ventilation on the top floor. These large expanses of glass subsequently became a detriment when multiple shift operation became common and when air conditioning equipment was installed later in the century. As a result, those early mills that continued in textile operation have almost all had their windows and monitors sealed off. The Guntersville Mill is exceptional in that the windows were blocked from the interior, rather than being bricked over, thereby leaving the facade intact. Furthermore, the monitor has not been removed or closed simply because the owners found it too expensive.

The introduction of high speed textile machinery had an impact on mill construction as well. Timber-framed structural systems had been adequate to carry the loads of slow-running machinery, but they were not sturdy enough for the new high speed models. Consequently as older mills converted to modern equipment, it was necessary to strengthen floors and brace walls to handle the greater weight loads and vibrations they produced. The Guntersville Mill experienced this modernization during the 1960s when the wooden posts (which already had been severely weakened) and beams were replaced with structural steel supports.

Advances in earth-moving equipment, humidification and air conditioning, and fluorescent lighting have made obsolete the construction of mills as typified by the Guntersville Mill. Today's structures are large, single-story complexes without windows, constructed of steel and concrete. The prototypes of these mills first appeared in the south in the mid-1940s, thereby signaling the end of the era of the red brick, towered textile mill.

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The Guntersville Advertiser and Democrat for 1928 and 1929.

Marshall County, Alabama, Probate Court Records.

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Letter of June 15, 1983 from Raymond W. Smith.

Violet B. Dunn, ed. Saratoga County Heritage. (Saratoga Springs, 1974).

Jan Johnstone. Saratoga County Communities: An Historical Perspective. (Clifton Park, 1980).

GUNTERSVILLE MILL
Guntersville, Alabama

Gunter Avenue (Highway 431)

