

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

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.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Lee Paper Company Mill Complex

Other names/site number: Simpson-Lee Paper Company, Simpson Paper Company, and Fox River Paper Company

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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

## 2. Location

Street & number: 300 W. Highway Street

City or town: Vicksburg State: Michigan County: Kalamazoo

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this x 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 x 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 X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A \_\_\_ B x C \_\_\_ D

<u>Brian Conway</u>	<u>6/16/16</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>MI SHPO</u>	
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

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**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:)

Jon Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

8-11-16  
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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	objects
<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Slow Burning Construction/Mill Construction

Other: Load Bearing Masonry Construction

Other: Steel Framing and Roof Truss Construction

Other: Reinforced Concrete Construction

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Concrete, Steel, Wood, Asphalt, and Glass

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Lee Paper Company Mill complex occupies thirty acres situated south of Sunset Lake, along the western bank of Portage Creek. The mill complex is located just southwest of the commercial downtown of Vicksburg, Michigan. The complex's buildings include a range of two- to five-story historic industrial brick buildings, some modified, intermingled with several concrete block and steel buildings. The complex consists of structures dating from 1904 to c. 1990 with the greater part having been built during the original construction of the mill in 1904. Piecemeal modifications and additions were constructed during the decades subsequent to the complex's original 1904 construction; however, the physical form of architect/engineer Daniel J. Albertson's original 1904 mill remains prominent. The complex has significance due to the impact of the paper industry on the regional economy and because of the design and slow-burning mill construction techniques exhibited by the historic brick buildings. The Lee Paper Company was unusual within the Kalamazoo Valley paper industry in that it operated as a "rag mill," converting remnants from cotton and textile production into fine paper. The mill in Vicksburg added the "rag mill" dimension to the dynamic and prosperous paper mill industry in the Kalamazoo Valley, and eventually expanded to have one of the most diverse product lines among Kalamazoo paper producers. The solid masonry walls and heavy timber frame construction of the original mill buildings, as well as the compartmentalization of interior spaces into separate "buildings" indicates a conscious effort from the beginning for fire protection and safety. Although the majority of the historic buildings remain, some have been modified in such a manner that their historic integrity has been compromised. Overall, the mill complex remains generally in fair condition with localized areas in need of repair due to neglect, arson and exposure to the elements.

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## **Narrative Description**

### Natural and Man-made Elements

Over the more than one hundred years since its original 1904 construction, the Lee Paper Company mill complex has continued to visually dominate the village of Vicksburg, MI. The original 1904 mill complex occupied a thirty-acre site.<sup>1</sup> The original property boundary overlaps three present day parcels (see Site Plan). Portage Creek forms the property's eastern border, separating it from a residential area. The property's southern border adjoins a cemetery and residential areas along West Highway Street. West of the property are wetlands and agricultural areas. Historically the paper mill used the western wetland area for wastewater discharge. North of the property are wetlands, a separately owned commercial property, and a mill pond. The property is accessed via two entry points: one oblique major drive from the south off of West Highway Street, and one from the north off West Washington Street. Paved roads and paths still exist on the property. The historic rail spurs that once accessed the site from the south no longer remain, but the paved roads and land forms (former railroad berms) in this area generally reflect where those spurs were once located. Originally the mill was powered by coal-fired steam engines. The coal was stored on site, in the central "courtyard" portion of the property. In the 1970s, well after the period of significance, the mill switched from coal to fuel oil.

### Architectural Styles and Relationships

The buildings of the Lee Paper Company Mill complex are consolidated in the center of the site west of Portage Creek. The oldest buildings mostly feature low gable roofs, load-bearing brick walls, and slow-burning timber frame construction. Some buildings utilize reinforced concrete and contemporary concrete (block) and steel warehouse construction. The oldest buildings, those of the slow-burning mill construction variety, typify the best in industrial architecture of the Midwest around the turn of the late 19<sup>th</sup> into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The growing utilization of this kind of construction was strongly promoted by the insurance companies through their assessments of risk and rates, but the industrial aesthetic embodied in these buildings resulted from Daniel J. Albertson's own preferences as seen clearly in the recognizable brick corbelling, patterns of fenestration, symmetrical facades and asymmetrical site design he employed. These buildings were constructed in 1904, and even though some of them have been modified or are partially hidden behind more recently constructed concrete and steel warehouse structures, those that are visible exhibit similar architectural characteristics and are harmonious in both style and materials. The 1904 buildings have low-sloping gabled roofs resting on timber posts beneath the ridges and are supported by kingpost-design timber trusses with metal tension members. Some of the low gable-roof buildings have steel truss supports. All the older buildings' roofs have solid wood planking and black asphalt roofing, while the thick, load-bearing cream-colored brick walls are accented horizontally with corbelling along the roofline. The original buildings were fenestrated with large multi-light wood windows in jack arch brick openings with concrete sills. Almost all of the original fenestration remains evident, but many windows have now been filled in with brick, plywood or metal. Also, many window openings have also been subsequently converted to accommodate doors when needed. The surviving historic windows are double-hung 12-over-12 or 16-over-16 windows or short single sash ones with 16 lights. The foundations are

<sup>1</sup> "Vicksburg Historical Society – Lee Paper Company." Vicksburg Historical Society. December 14, 2015. [http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History\\_Index/Lee\\_Paper.htm](http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History_Index/Lee_Paper.htm)

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of concrete, and the interiors are open and spacious with structural supports placed at regular intervals. The majority of the buildings have wooden timber structural systems; others use steel or a combination of wood and steel (as seen in some of the original timber roof trusses with metal tie rod tension members running to central timber kingposts), and still others have various types of concrete supports in place. The design and construction types for the original buildings were very specific to the paper-making processes that took place within: slow-burning construction for the “dry areas” and concrete construction for the “wet areas.” The contemporary concrete and steel warehouse structures are boxlike in form with flat roofs faced in corrugated steel siding or brick veneer, supported by a steel frame and concrete block structure, and resting on concrete foundations. These walls have very few openings, if any, and the only natural light that permeates the structures comes through rectangular window openings filled with glass block.

### General Character and Qualities of the Complex

The general character of the site is industrial, setting it apart from the surrounding residential neighborhoods to the south and east, the wetland and agricultural areas to the west and north, and the commercial district to the northeast. There are no buildings of residential, commercial, or any other type included in the nominated property. All of the buildings within the complex were constructed exclusively for use in the operations of the paper mill. The mill buildings are concentrated at the center of the site. Historically the two- to five-story mill complex consisted of a U-shaped plan with a “courtyard” to the south. Several large one- and two-story additions were subsequently built on the west side of the original mill, thus extending the building footprint laterally. Several one- and two-story additions were also built on the north side of the original mill, extending the building footprint toward West Washington Street. However, since most of these additions are significantly shorter than the original buildings, the historic form remains largely visible.

The mill property is relatively flat with large areas of pavement adjacent to the mill buildings. An overgrown “courtyard” occupies the center of the mill complex. The southern portion of the property is more open, with clusters of trees along West Highway Street. Vegetation and denser tree coverage run along the eastern border of the site at Portage Creek.

### Development, Descriptions and General Condition of Buildings

This site, like many other manufacturing sites, shows the progression of the industry as it developed over time and how changes were made to incorporate emerging technology and advances in the field. Therefore, several of the buildings have been modified and added onto in an ad hoc fashion, resulting in an array of contrasting building materials juxtaposed with one another. A significant distinction of this mill is that the majority of the construction occurred in 1904 with development of the original mill complex. Gradual renovation and expansion took place in subsequent decades leading up to the early 1990s. Since mill operations came to an end in 2001, the majority of the property has sat vacant. Abandonment has taken its toll on the property, as signs of vandalism and an episode of arson are evident. The following section discusses in detail each era of development, the function of the mill at that time, and the current conditions of the remaining buildings.

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### Original 1904 Mill

By 1900 the engineering of wood frame mill buildings in the industrial Northeast was commonly utilizing a form of construction known as “slow-burning mill construction” that relied heavily on the use of load-bearing masonry walls and thick heavy timbers and planking. In this type of construction these materials were used in such a way that, even when charred, the building’s timbers and flooring would tend to retain their structural integrity for a longer time and inhibit fire or water sprayed on the fire on one floor from spreading to others, thus minimizing damage to the structure itself and materials and product on adjacent floors. By the early 1900s these advances in construction were making their debut in the paper factories of the Kalamazoo Valley and other places in the Midwest thanks to the work of architect/engineer Daniel J. Albertson. Following the 1903 incorporation of the Lee Paper Company, Albertson prepared plans “largely under the direction of George E. Bardeen, whose thirty-five years’ experience in the paper business eminently qualifie[d] him for this work, and he assure[d] his associates that they [would] have one of the finest mills in the West. In the construction of the buildings every modern idea [was] followed, and the latest improved machinery and electrical equipment used throughout.”<sup>2</sup>

Construction began in 1904 with plans to “be in operation about June 1905”<sup>3</sup> (see Diagram A). The contract to construct the mill specified that the buildings were to be of brick and up to five stories high, with reinforced concrete floors in all “wet” parts of the mill as opposed to the wood floors in the “dry lofts.” Construction started at the storage areas in the lower East Wing floors and eventually looped around to the Machine Room and West Wing lofts. Trenches for the foundation were dug in April of 1904. The Machine Room was one of the last phases of the construction, with steel roof trusses erected in November 1904. Hardwood floors were laid in the upper levels of the mill in the same month, and with that the main buildings were completed.

As reported from the *Vicksburg Commercial*, “The mammoth paper mill being erected at Vicksburg covers six acres of ground, is fireproof, and is located on a 30-acre tract of land reached by sidetracks from the Grand Trunk and G.R. & I. railroads.”<sup>4</sup> The original mill consisted of a U-shaped plan with an East Wing (Buildings A-E, two- and five-stories, 72’x512’) along the western bank of Portage Creek, and a West Wing (Building H, two-stories, 72’x104’; Buildings I and J, five-stories, 52’x242’-4”). It is important to note that these wings were not comprised of separate buildings, but were rather compartmentalized interior spaces/sections based on production functions. Creating these individual sections, separated by brick fire walls, provided an extra measure of fire protection.

A two-story, 216’x70’, Machine Room (Building G) ran perpendicular to the East and West Wings at the northern end. The Machine Room had a full concrete basement below to

<sup>2</sup> The Paper Mill and Wood Pulp News, “A Million Dollar Mill.” July 11, 1903, page 21. November 17, 2015. <https://books.google.com/books?id=mgpZAAAAYAAJ&pg=RA1-PA21&lpg=RA1PA21&dq=Elbert+S+Roos,+railway+supply+company&source=bl&ots=aZs4IEPLSh&sig=FtXBEPTVLv5J3vJU2IZjxzAA8I&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CCUQ6AEwAmoVChMI18jiw62YyQIVIE-ICh1zqwhg#v=onepage&q=Vicksburg&f=false>

<sup>3</sup> *Insurance Map of Vicksburg, Michigan* (New York: Sanborn and Co.) 1904.

<sup>4</sup> “Vicksburg Historical Society – Lee Paper Company.” Vicksburg Historical Society. December 14, 2015. [http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History\\_Index/Lee\\_Paper.htm](http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History_Index/Lee_Paper.htm)

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accommodate the shafting and tanks necessary to operate the machinery above. The top level of the Machine Room had six 8'x16' sawtooth skylights at the west end that faced north. A two-story, 128'x48' Engine Room (Building K, parallel to and south of the Machine Room) and a one-story, 52'x128' Boiler Room (Building L, perpendicular to the Engine Room) were cradled in the "courtyard" created by the three main building sections and produced steam to power and heat the mill. The Boiler Room "contain[ed] six 400 horse-power boilers."<sup>5</sup> Along the west face of the Boiler Room was a 13'x128' Coal Storage building. According to the Sanborn maps of 1904, the prominent 200' tall brick smokestack was located to the west of the Boiler Room; however, the 1910 Sanborn maps and photographs c. 1910 show the smokestack located to the east of the Boiler Room. The 50,000-gallon water tower elevated approximately 100' was located to the east of the Boiler Room.<sup>6</sup>

According to the Sanborn maps of 1904, three rail spurs entered the property from the south.<sup>7</sup> Two rail spurs ran directly adjacent to the East Wing, one on the inside of the "courtyard" alongside the west-facing wall of those buildings, and the other alongside the east-facing wall. An 8'x136' platform (at Buildings A and B) ran alongside the west-facing wall, an 8'x264' platform (at Buildings A-D) and an 8'x48' platform (at Building F) ran alongside the east-facing wall. The siding on the inside of the "courtyard" supplied coal to the buildings, and the more easterly siding was used to bring rags into the mill. Rags, which were generally sourced from the east coast and southern states, were unloaded from rail cars and freighted to the upper level Rag Rooms for threshing (Building A), sorting (Building B), and cutting and dusting (Building C). The nine 8'x16' sawtooth skylights above the Rag Rooms (Building B) on the roof of the East Wing still exist, and are one of the most prominent design features of the building. These skylights were not only an aesthetic feature, but more importantly served the paper-making process. The skylights provided additional light for the workers sorting through the rag material. They run down the center of the roof, and similar to those at the Machine Room, faced north. It was here that mill workers, primarily women, would sort through textile materials, removing button and other non-textile materials from the rag shipments.

Next, the rags were sent into the adjacent room (Building D) where they were "cooked": water, chemicals and heat were combined to break down the cleaned stock into bleached rough pulp. Rag material was allowed to stew for about one week in liquids before entering the beating process. This mixture was then sent down to the washing and beating machines (in Building E), where it was washed to rinse off the chemicals and beaten until the fiber structure of the material was broken down into a refined pulp. This pulp material would sit in large drainers to allow the liquid to be extracted from the fiber. Pulp storage was located in the adjacent room (Building F). The drained material was then loaded into handcars by laborers using pitchforks to lift the heavy material, and was then transported to the Machine Room (Building G) to be processed by machines that represented the best papermaking technology of the time. The material was processed through a series of fine screens that separated any remaining debris from the clean pulp, which was next deposited onto a belt of finely woven brass screens feeding into the rollers of the 200 foot long x 118" wide paper ("writing") machines (the May 31, 1904, *Vicksburg*

<sup>5</sup> Detroit News, "The Thriving Town of Vicksburg, Michigan." June 30, 1904, page 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Insurance Map of Vicksburg, Michigan* (New York: Sanborn and Co.) 1904 and 1910.

<sup>7</sup> *Insurance Map of Vicksburg, Michigan* (New York: Sanborn and Co.) 1904.



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*Commercial* reported the company having just contracted with Black & Clawson, of Hamilton, Ohio, for the construction of these two machines, which was expected to take six months). Here the wet pulp was pressed into paper by a series of brass rollers and press felts, and it continued on to be dried over the large iron cylinders of the steam-heated dryer. Next, the material went through the calendar (Building H), which was composed of a series of smooth and immensely heavy rollers that pressed and polished the paper. “The directors of the Lee Paper Co. closed a contract with Norwood Engine Co. of Florence, MA for two more paper machines, a super-calendar and sheet-calendar machine.”<sup>8</sup> Lastly, the new pristine stock was loaded upon a reel to be drawn off through the cutter and divided into sheets that were bundled in the finished store room (Buildings I and J), from which they would be packaged and shipped to their destination. For shipping purposes, the third rail spur ran alongside the west-facing wall of the West Wing, with an 8’x88’ platform (at Buildings I and J) alongside this same wall. This fine quality paper would become the primary product of the Vicksburg Lee Paper Company mill.

Of the original 1904 mill complex, all but one building remain today. The one-story Boiler Room in the “courtyard” was demolished in the late 1970s when the mill stopped using coal and moved to fuel oil. It was also around this time that the brick smokestack was removed. The remaining buildings have undergone modifications over the years.

- In c. 1953 significant structural renovations were made in Building D. The original first floor concrete structure was replaced with a new cast-in-place floor structure (concrete slab and steel columns supporting the floor above). The original concrete structure of the partial basement level was removed and replaced with cast-in-place columns.
- In 1945 a two-story addition was built on the north side of Building F. The original north basement wall remains; however, the north wall on the first floor was removed during the 1945 modification. This addition has concrete construction at the basement and steel roof trusses above. An effort was made on the exterior of the addition to complement the architectural elements of the 1904 structure – brick walls, regularly spaced window openings and horizontal brick corbelling along the roofline. These details are similar to but not an exact match – the brick is a different color (red/orange) and the window openings are basic rectangles, not arched at the top. Also at this time, all new concrete floors were constructed within Building F, and a level was added between the basement and the first floor. The columns were replaced with concrete, and subsequently reinforced with steel.
- The roof of Building G was modified c. early 1920s, with areas at the center raised 8 ft. The saw-tooth skylights were also removed at this time. At an unknown time the original wood floor on the west end of this building was removed and replaced with a metal pan and concrete floor system.
- Building K was modified in c. 1953, and presumably about the same time Building D was also renovated. Both buildings have steel floor beams. The first floor’s slow-burning wood construction was replaced with a concrete floor slab and structure, and a mezzanine floor was added 11 ft. above the first floor level. Also, a new smokestack was added to Building K (date unknown).

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<sup>8</sup> The Vicksburg Commercial, 50th Anniversary Edition, “1904 Was the Year of Construction for Lee Paper Co. Mill – Events at Time of Building Were Dramatic.” May 31, 1955.

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- A two-story addition was built on the north side of Building H in 1948. This addition has concrete construction at the basement and steel roof trusses above. Some effort was made on the exterior of the addition to complement the architectural elements of the 1904 structure; however, like the addition to Building F, the brick is a different color and the openings are basic rectangles.
- The basement level floors of Buildings I and J were raised 16 inches higher than the original concrete floor (date unknown).

The historic rail spurs that once accessed the site from the south no longer remain; however, the paved roads and land forms (former raised railroad grades) in this area generally reflect where those spurs were formerly located.

### **Modifications: 1910s – 1930s**

The three decades after the original 1904 mill construction saw renovations mostly related to changes in production workflow and technology. The configuration of the original twelve brick buildings remained the same. The majority of the renovations were located within the center portion of the mill complex, in and around the “courtyard” (see Diagram B and C).

Between 1911 and 1920 “equipment was continually upgraded with a new cyper-callendar, a dryer, a 64” Seybold paper trimmer and a Wandel rotary screen to replace their flat plate screens. The plank loading dock on the west side of the shipping room was replaced with a cement dock and a few years later the boiler house was overhauled and new coal handling equipment was installed.”<sup>9</sup> Sometime between 1921 and 1930 the paper mill “upgraded its paper trimmer to an 84” Seybold model and rebuilt a brick wall smashed out by an errant box car.”<sup>10</sup> The paper mill continued improving its equipment during the 1930s. “In 1933, a new 30,000 gallon boiler was installed and three flat cars were required to deliver the new 800 kW generator for the boiler house. In 1936, a new coal conveyor and silo were added. Always innovative, they installed a moisture generator on No. 1 machine. These devices had been in use for textile mills but this was the first time a moisturizer had been applied to paper manufacturing.”<sup>11</sup>

Three new small structures were built on the east, north and west sides of Building K, infilling the narrow spaces between it and Buildings E, G and I. The elevated connection between Buildings K and E (Building 9) housed a belt conveyor system at the second floor level. The connection between Buildings K and G (Building 10a) provided a direct circulation route connecting the multiple floor levels. The connection between Building K and I was originally a steam tunnel. Subsequently, c. 1939, a small building (Building 11) was constructed in this location.

Shown on the Sanborn maps from 1910 is a fourth rail spur adjacent to the coal storage alongside the west-facing wall of the Boiler Room.<sup>12</sup> According to the 1925 Sanborn maps, a Coal

<sup>9</sup> *Schneider, Dr. Arle. A Tale of One Village: Vicksburg, Michigan, 1831-2000. Vicksburg: Vicksburg Historical Society, 2004, page 156.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid., page 213.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid., page 243.*

<sup>12</sup> *Insurance Map of Vicksburg, Michigan (New York: Sanborn and Co.) 1904 and 1910.*

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Unloading platform was constructed at the end of this fourth rail spur.<sup>13</sup> Very little of the structures constructed during this time period remain, as subsequent modifications were made in these same areas of the mill complex.

### **Modernization Efforts: 1940s and 1950s**

The year 1943 marks the beginning of many modernization efforts, which included changes to the production methods and product types, resulting in major changes at Lee Paper Company. Government contracts for products needed for the war effort began to take over the majority of the production schedule, changing the former identity of the mill as a “rag mill” to one that produced many diversified products. “Eighty-percent of the mill’s production was directed at the war effort during World War II. The post-war era brought a boom in business and major plant expansions. By this time the emphasis was on producing paper from wood pulp rather than rags....”<sup>14</sup> During World War II “Lee Paper Company was deemed an “Essential Industry” with an excess of 80% of its production directed to the war effort. Products included vital blueprint, photobase, drafting, drawing, check and other technical grades of paper.”<sup>15</sup> New technology and research was required to refine these new processes and new products, and this shift for the future changed the identity of the mill from being exclusively a “rag mill” to include many other forms of raw and synthetic materials in production. Major changes in the machine room led to many new products. “In 1943 the two paper machines, now 43 years old, were shut down for two weeks while the new Fourdriniers were installed, plus increased drying facilities and general modernizing. This increased production to 12,500 tons per year, and the product line was expanded to include Teton Cover and Felt.”<sup>16</sup>

Modernization efforts are also visible in the new construction of this period. The northern end of the “courtyard” was filled in with modifications of Buildings 9, 10a and 11, thus creating more interior space as well as a more contiguous structure (see Diagram D). Primary construction methods used by this time no longer utilized the slow-burning timber mill construction of the Albertson era; rather, economical concrete block and brick structures were built. Some effort was made on the exterior of these new buildings to complement the architectural elements of the 1904 structure with the use of cream-colored brick; however, the window openings are basic horizontal rectangles, and there are vertical pilasters. Building 9 had multiple subsequent modifications in 1943 and 1954, leaving very little of the pre-1943 construction remaining today. A two-story, red-colored brick exterior addition was built on the south side of Building 9 in 1954. The large rectangular window openings are vertically oriented and filled with glass block. Building 10a was also modified multiple times (1947; additional dates unknown). Similarly, Building 11 has been subsequently modified. The current configuration of Building 11 shows no evidence of the early-constructed steam tunnel nor the 1939 structure. The historic integrity of these three structures has been seriously compromised.

<sup>13</sup> *Insurance Map of Vicksburg, Michigan* (New York: Sanborn and Co.) 1925.

<sup>14</sup> “Vicksburg Historical Society – Lee Paper Company.” Vicksburg Historical Society. December 14, 2015. [http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History\\_Index/Lee\\_Paper.htm](http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History_Index/Lee_Paper.htm)

<sup>15</sup> Molineaux, Grace & Special Writers. *Water Over the Dam: Vicksburg Then and Now*. Vicksburg: Vicksburg Historical Society, 1972, page 189.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

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Significant building modifications and expansion occurred during the mid-1940s to 1950s to accommodate the evolving product line. A two-story addition (Building 6) was built on the north side of Building F in 1945. It appears that brick material from the original north wall of Building F was reused to construct the new north wall of Building 6. Subsequently, Building 6a was constructed in 1955 on the north side of Building 6. Building 6a is a two-story steel structure with a brick veneer exterior. The roof plane is continuous across these two structures. Building 18 was constructed in 1955 along the east side of Building 6a, thus expanding the northeast portion of the mill. Building 18 was a flat-roof concrete structure with very few openings, none of which were windows. The rail spur that once ran along the east face of the original East Wing terminated in/at the south side of Building 18. A fire, determined to be arson, occurred in Building 18 in August 2012. Building 6 was significantly damaged by this fire, and only ruins of Buildings 18 and 6a remain.

A two-story addition (Building 15) was built on the north side of Building H in 1948. Construction began in 1950 for the New Machine Room (Building 7), which encloses the space between Buildings F/6 and H/15, and was completed in 1951. The No. 3 paper machine was up there and running by August 13, 1951. Five years later, the No. 4 paper machine was acquired and installed there; it started producing paper on July 31, 1956. Building 7 is a two-story steel frame structure, with a reinforced concrete basement and red-colored brick veneer exterior north wall. The window openings on the north side are basic horizontal rectangles filled with glass block. Building 10a captures the narrow space between the historic Buildings G and K. Building 16, a concrete and steel structure, was built alongside the west face of Buildings H and 15, mimicking its form and north elevation. These physical modifications to the mill complex created an even more contiguous structure.

### **Modernization/Expansion after 1958**

Gradual expansion continued following the 1958 end of the period of significance, with one-story additions constructed on the northwest portion of the property. Building 17, a concrete and steel structure, was built in 1959 alongside the west face of Buildings I and J. This structure has several loading dock openings for truck trailers. The rail spur that once ran along the west face of the original West Wing terminated in/at the south side of Building 17. A former fire protection plan document shows a small structure (Building 17a), built 1966, along the northwest side of Building 17b. Nothing now remains of this structure. Building 17b was constructed in 1969. Unlike the other structures built as part of the contiguous mill complex, this structure is a pre-engineered metal building with a gable roof. Building 21, a concrete block structure with steel roof trusses, was built in 1989 alongside the west face of Building 16. This expansive flat-roof building has a brick veneer exterior and regularly spaced rectangular window openings on the north elevation mimicking those of Building 16.

These later building modifications and additions, with the exception of Building 17, are in fair condition, but many of them conceal or detract from the historic nature of the paper mill complex. Building 17 has recently experienced major roof damage. Physically, relatively little has changed at the plant since c. 1990.

### **Buildings/Resources**

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(Refer to Diagram E, page 43, for map with building numbers. Building numbers are based on archive drawings of the original 1904 mill complex, Sanborn maps, and Fox River Paper Company site plan.)

Contributing Buildings as they exist today

*(Square Footage figures based on Inside of exterior wall.)*

**Rag Room (Threshers) – Building A (Photo 20, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 47)**

Built in 1904. Three floors, plus basement and partial basement, brick and slow-burning type construction.

Heights:

Basement, partial basement, floors one and two: 7'-8" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor three: 12' @ spring point/17' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 72'x48'. 15,688 Total SF.

**Rag Room (Sorting) – Building B (Photo 20, 25, 29, 30, 31, 48, 49)**

Built in 1904. Three floors, plus basement and partial basement, brick and slow-burning type construction. Sawtooth skylights remain.

Heights:

Basement, partial basement, floors one and two: 7'-8" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor three: 12' @ spring point/17' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 72'x88'. 29,723 Total SF.

**Rag Room (Cutters/Dusters) – Building C (Photo 20, 25, 30, 31)**

Built in 1904. Two floors, plus basement and partial basement, brick and slow-burning type construction.

Heights:

Basement, partial basement, and floor two: 7'-8" floor-to-underside of floor/roof above.

Floor one: 15'-8" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 72'x56'. 15,031 Total SF.

**Rag Room (Pickers/Boilers) – Building D (Photo 20, 25, 30, 31, 50)**

Built in 1904. In 1953, original wood floor was removed and replaced with cast-in-place concrete floor with concrete-encased steel beams. Two floors, plus basement and partial basement, brick and slow-burning type construction on top floor, concrete construction on lower floors.

Heights:

Basement: 9' floor-to-underside of floor above.

Partial basement: 7' floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 15'-8" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor three: 12' @ spring point/17' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 72'x72'. 19,483 Total SF.

**Beaters/Washers – Building E (Photo 30, 31, 51)**

Built in 1904. One floor, plus basement with catwalks, brick, and concrete basement structure and floor slabs.

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Heights:

Basement: 17' floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 19' @ spring point/23' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 72'x192'. 26,627 Total SF.

**Pulp Storage – Building F (Photo 30)**

Built in 1904. One floor, plus basement, original brick and slow-burning type construction. Modified in 1945 to accommodate new adjacent construction. Original brick North wall was removed to accommodate Building 6. Original floors removed and replaced with concrete floors. A level was added between the basement and the first floor. Original columns were replaced with concrete and subsequently reinforced with steel. Original Building F is still of high historic integrity, but is in poor condition. Original window openings have been filled in.

Heights:

Basement: 17'-4" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 15' @ spring point/20' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 72'x56'. 7,728 Total SF.

**Building 6**

Built in 1945. One floor, plus basement. Construction was concrete basement structure, steel roof trusses and brick exterior walls. It appears that brick from the original North wall of Building F was reused to construct the new North wall of Building 6. The North end of this building was significantly damaged by fire in 2012. The West wall of Building 6 was significantly modified to accommodate Building 7. Although the original floors and East exterior wall (with some fire damage) still remain, the structure of Building 6 is substantially compromised.

Heights:

Basement: 17'-4" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 15' @ spring point/20' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 72'x52'. 10,890 Total SF.

**Machine Room – Building G (Photo 22, 59, 66)**

Built in 1904. One floor, plus basement, brick and slow-burning type construction. Sawtooth skylights were removed c. 1920. Concrete basement structure and floor slabs. Original wood floor on the West end was removed and replaced with a metal pan and concrete floor system (date unknown).

Heights:

Basement: varies 14'-2" or 17'-8" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 19'-9" @ spring point/24' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 216'x70'. 29,232 Total SF.

**Machine Shop/Calenders/Cutters – Building H (Photo 20, 21, 22, 58, 59, 60)**

Built in 1904. One floor, plus basement, original brick and slow-burning type construction. Modified in 1948 to accommodate new adjacent construction. Original brick North wall was removed to accommodate Building 15.

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Heights:

Basement: 14' floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 19'-9" @ spring point/24' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 72'x104'. 15,499 Total SF.

**Building 15 (Photo 41, 57, 58)**

Built in 1948. One floor, plus basement. Construction was concrete basement structure, steel roof trusses and brick exterior walls. The East wall of Building 15 was significantly modified (removed) to accommodate Building 7.

Heights:

Basement: 14' floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 19'-9" @ spring point/24' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 72'x80'-5". 9,543 Total SF.

**Dry Loft – Building I (Photo 20, 21, 22, 45, 61, 68)**

Built in 1904. Four floors, plus basement, brick and slow-burning type construction.

Heights:

Basement: 12' floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 14'-8" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor two and three: 12'-8" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor four: 13'-6" @ spring point/16'-9" @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 52'x82'-4". 19,429 Total SF.

**Dry Loft – Building J (Photo 20, 21, 22, 29, 45, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68)**

Built in 1904. Four floors, plus basement, brick and slow-burning type construction.

Heights:

Basement: 12' floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 14'-8" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor two and three: 12'-8" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor four: 13'-6" @ spring point/16'-9" @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 52'x160'. 38,328 Total SF.

**Engine Room – Building K (Photo 21, 22, 23, 66)**

Built in 1904, floor modified in 1953. One floor, plus basement, brick and slow-burning type construction. Original first floor slow-burning construction was replaced with a concrete floor slab and structure. A mezzanine floor was added above the first floor level. A new smokestack was added to the building, too (date unknown).

Heights:

Basement: 9'-2" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 22' @ spring point/24'-10" @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 128'x48'. 11,250 Total SF.

**Building 7 (Photo 41, 42, 53, 54, 55, 56)**

Built 1950. One floor, plus basement, modern reinforced concrete and steel frame construction with brick veneer exterior.

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Heights:

Basement: 13'-8" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 22' @ north section, 28-8" @ spring point/32' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 216'x114'-5". 48,990 Total SF.

**Building 16 (Photo 41, 42).**

Built 1955. One floor, plus basement, modern concrete and steel construction.

Heights:

Basement: 14' floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 19'-9" @ spring point/24' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 72'-4"x209'-8". 30,475 Total SF.

Non-Contributing Buildings

**Building 6a (Photo 41, 42, 52)**

Built 1955. One floor, plus basement, modern steel and masonry unit construction with brick veneer exterior. Building 6 was significantly damaged by fire in 2012. The structure of Building 6a is significantly compromised.

Heights:

Basement: 17'-4" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 15' @ spring point/20' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 71'x92'. 13,230 Total SF.

**Building 9 (Photo 23, 24, 67)**

Built c. 1910s/1920s, modified c. 1943 and c. 1954. One floor, plus basement, brick and wood construction. No evidence of c. 1910s/1920s structure exists. Building was not solidly built with its own structure; rather, it is merely an enclosure of space borrowing walls from adjacent original mill buildings. This significantly modified structure compromises the integrity of the adjacent original mill buildings.

Heights:

Basement: 11'-10" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 10' floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 33'-4"x89'. 6,291 Total SF.

**Building 10a (Photo 66)**

Built c. 1910/1920s, modified 1947 (additional dates unknown). Structure was not a true building; rather, a single-slope metal roof enclosure, borrowing walls from adjacent primary mill buildings. This significantly modified structure compromises the integrity of the adjacent original mill buildings.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 9'x varies. 2,048 Total SF.

**Building 11 (Photo 21, 22, 23)**

Built c. 1910s/1920s, modified 1939 and later (additional dates unknown). One floor, plus basement, concrete, wood and steel construction with brick exterior. Roof has been



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replaced with modern materials, and numerous steel columns have replaced original timber columns in basement. Conventional wood framing material with modern sizes are evident today. No evidence of c. 1910s/1920s structure exists. Building was not solidly built with its own structure; rather, it is merely an enclosure of space borrowing walls from adjacent primary mill buildings. This significantly modified structure compromises the integrity of the adjacent original mill buildings.

Heights:

Basement: 11'-10" floor-to-underside of floor above.

Floor one: 10' floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 56'x57'. 6,200 Total SF.

**Building 17 (Photo 21, 44, 45, 46, 68, 69, 70)**

Built 1959. One floor, plus mezzanine, modern concrete and steel construction.

Height: 24'-4" floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 173'-6"x162'-4". 28,603 Total SF.

**Building 17b (Photo 44, 70)**

Built 1969. One floor, pre-engineered metal building.

Height: 24'-4" @ spring point/29' @ peak, floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 55'-2"x162'-4". 8,904 Total SF.

**Building 18 (Photo 41)**

Built 1955. One floor, plus basement, modern concrete construction. Building 18 was significantly damaged by fire in 2012. Only ruins remain today.

Height: Unknown. Building significantly damaged by fire in 2012. Photographs show height a few feet shorter than Building 6a.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 95'x95'-8". 15,860 Total SF.

**Building 21 (Photo 41, 42, 43, 71, 72)**

Built 1989. One floor, plus mezzanine, modern steel and masonry unit construction with brick veneer exterior.

Height: 34'-39' (slope), floor-to-underside of roof above.

Approx. overall building dimensions: 196'-8"x207'-10". 60,464 Total SF.

**Storage Barn/Maintenance Garage – Building 22 (Photo 26)**

Outbuilding (date unknown). Two one-story modern construction pole barn structures, each with a gable roof, with flat roof connection between the two barns along the north-south axis. Metal siding.

**Sludge Handling Building – Building 23 (Photo 30, 32)**

Outbuilding (date unknown). Two-story modern concrete block and steel frame construction, partial metal siding. Flat roof.

**West Clarifying Shed – Building 24 (Photo 35)**

Outbuilding (date unknown). Modern precast concrete shed. Flat roof.

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**East Clarifying Shed – Building 25 (Photo 36)**

Outbuilding (date unknown). Modern precast concrete shed. Flat roof.

**Waste Water Process Building – Building 26 (Photo 37)**

Outbuilding (date unknown). One-story modern concrete block and steel frame construction, partial metal siding. Gable roof.

**Fire Suppression Building – Building 27 (Photo 38)**

Outbuilding (date unknown). One-story modern concrete block construction with partial brick exterior. Flat roof.

**Bridge Organics Co. (Photo 39, 40)**

**(Originally Simpson Lee Paper Co. Research & Development Center)**

Built c. 1959. One-story modern concrete block construction with partial brick exterior. Flat roof.

*Non-Contributing Objects*

**Brick Gate Posts (Photo 40)**

Built c. 1959, along with the Simpson Lee Paper Co. Research & Development Center. Two brick gate posts, located at North Entrance, approximately 28" x 28" in ground dimensions and approximately 8' tall. Limestone caps and bases.

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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

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

- 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.)

ARCHITECTURE

ENGINEERING

INDUSTRY

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Period of Significance**

1904-1958  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1904 – construction of original mill

1958 – last full year of the company as an independent locally based enterprise  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Daniel J. Albertson

Charles A. Moses Company  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Lee Paper Company Mill Complex meets National Register Criterion A as one of few surviving paper mill complexes left in the Kalamazoo area that was a major paper manufacturing center from the later nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries. Only a few of the region's many mills still in use as recently as 2001 now remain standing. For much of its history the mill was Vicksburg's leading employer. The complex meets Criterion C for containing a number of buildings that, designed by architect and engineer Daniel J. Albertson of Kalamazoo, exemplify the timber frame, gable-roof brick mill buildings that, utilizing slow-burning mill construction, Albertson introduced to the Kalamazoo Valley paper industry at the end of the nineteenth century. Albertson made a career for himself in the valley designing timber frame masonry buildings for the paper industry, but few of his buildings remain standing. The 1904 Lee Paper mill buildings form the most intact complex of timber-frame brick paper mill buildings in the Kalamazoo Valley area. The 1904 east and west side mill buildings – the east side Rag Room and Beaters/Washers wing (Buildings A-E) and west side Dry Loft wing (Buildings I-J) stand

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without peer for size among the valley's gable-roof brick paper mill buildings. The Period of Significance of the Lee Paper Company Mill Complex begins with the construction of the original mill complex in 1904 and ends in 1958, the last full year before the company entered into a new period of its history by merging with the Simpson Timber Company of Everett, Washington, this being the first in a number of subsequent mergers and acquisitions by which the Lee Paper Company lost its separate existence and local ownership and the Vicksburg plant became part of a much larger national corporate structure. Until then the company had local ownership and a community orientation. Owners prided themselves on the facilities and amenities that they provided for the benefit of local employees. The profits from the mill stayed in the area, supporting the local economy.

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

### **Criterion A**

#### Kalamazoo Valley Paper Industry

The Kalamazoo Valley has been known for the production of a multitude of products over the last 150 years including pharmaceuticals, Gibson guitars, Checker cabs – and paper. According to the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, by 1925, with twenty-five mills operating, six days a week, at 900 tons a day, the Kalamazoo Valley, centered in Kalamazoo, was producing more book paper than any other place in the world. It was around this time that Kalamazoo began calling itself ‘the Paper City,’ a title it would claim for decades to follow.<sup>17</sup>

The first paper mill in the region, the Kalamazoo Paper Company, located on Portage Creek in Kalamazoo, was established in 1866 by Kalamazoo investors, who brought in Benjamin F. Lyon, an experienced paper mill operator from Fitchburg, MA.<sup>18</sup> Although this mill was at first not a financial success, it provided a training ground for the region's paper makers through the years to follow. Lyon brought in Samuel A. Gibson, another experienced paper man from Fitchburg, as bookkeeper in 1867. When the original mill burned in 1872 and Lyon then built a new mill at Plainwell, fifteen miles north, Gibson took charge of the rebuilt Kalamazoo Paper Company mill and made a success of it. Under his mentorship, young men such as Noah Bryant, John F. King, and George E. Bardeen – later key figures in the valley's paper industry – cut their teeth here and went on to found their own paper companies in the years to follow. Bryant, who was born in London, worked for the Kalamazoo Paper Company and later for Bardeen before founding the Bryant Paper Company, the second mill in Kalamazoo itself, in 1895. John F. King, who was associated with Gibson, Bardeen, and Bryant, established two more significant Kalamazoo mills, the King Paper Company in 1901 and a second firm, the Rex Paper Company, in 1915.

George E. Bardeen also came from Fitchburg, where his widowed mother had married Samuel A. Gibson before the move to Michigan. In Michigan Bardeen initially worked as a clerk for the

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<sup>17</sup> *Kalamazoo Gazette*, “Pioneers of the Kalamazoo Valley Paper Industry,” October 18, 1925.

<sup>18</sup> Marvin, Abijah Perkins. *History of Worcester county, Massachusetts, embracing a comprehensive history of the county from its first settlement to the present time with a history and description of its cities and towns.* Vol. II. Boston: O. F. Jewett and Company, 1879, page 488.

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Kalamazoo Paper Company. In 1887 he established the Bardeen Paper Company at Otsego, located a few miles northwest of Plainwell. Bardeen placed a second mill at Otsego in operation in 1891 and a third by 1899.

From 1900 to 1925, not one year passed without major contributions being made in the field. In 1904 the Lee Paper Company in Vicksburg added an unusual dimension to the dynamic and prosperous paper mill industry. The Lee Paper Company was one of the only mills in the Kalamazoo Valley that operated as a “rag mill,” converting remnants from cotton and textile production into fine, high-quality paper. By 1925 the Kalamazoo Valley area from Plainwell and Otsego on the north to Vicksburg on the south was home to a total of twenty-five mills devoted to the manufacture of paper of all kinds from book, ledger, letter and parchment to waxed paper and, in addition, numerous auxiliary enterprises that supplied raw materials to or otherwise served the industry or that produced products from the paper such as paper labels, envelopes, cartons and playing cards.

The paper industry thrived in this area due to a combination of factors. First and foremost was the entrepreneurial savvy and knowledge of paper manufacturing processes brought from New England by pioneering men such as Benjamin F. Lyon and Samuel A. Gibson. The valley provided abundant raw materials, and the growing railroad network provided easy access to the nearby markets, particularly Chicago but also Detroit and other Midwest cities, and a thoroughfare for the import of supplies. The area’s relatively underutilized rivers and creeks provided adequate supplies of clean water for the paper-making process. Finally, a steady stream of immigrants into the Kalamazoo region provided a ready labor pool that allowed the industry to develop rapidly toward the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

By the 1950s the paper business had transitioned from a successfully developing industry into one striving for efficiency and peak productivity. Mills were growing at a rapid pace, each year employing more workers. Wages paid by the industry steadily increased, and the quality and quantity of products continued to rise. A report by the W. E. Upjohn Institute entitled *The Position of the Paper Industry in the Economy of Kalamazoo County, Michigan, 1954* concluded, “Yet so deeply is the paper industry imbedded in the Kalamazoo area that in 1954 approximately 32 percent of the combined sales of all manufacturing, distributive, and service industries and 24 percent of total personal incomes in Kalamazoo County came directly or indirectly through its activities. Through its effectiveness in the use of the natural and human resources of the area, together with its extensive use of national and world markets, the paper industry touches the lives of almost all of us.”<sup>19</sup> The Kalamazoo Valley remained a major player with ten of the nation’s top fifty firms still located there in 1969.

But through the 1960s and 70s, another side of the industry came to light as the effects of decades of production took their toll on the waterways through the Kalamazoo Valley. The public began to focus less on the industry’s levels of production and more on the pollution it was causing. Public outcry led to state regulations that forced the industry to limit how much waste

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<sup>19</sup> Smith, Harold T. *The Position of the Paper Making Industry in the Economy of Kalamazoo County, Michigan, 1954*. Kalamazoo: W. E. Upjohn Institute for Community Research, 1958.

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they could release into the water.<sup>20</sup> Michigan was not alone in this fight; the environmental movement was growing as the nation became increasingly aware of the negative effects of industrial pollution. This acknowledgement was in part the result of publicity surrounding episodes such as the Love Canal tragedy of the 1970s. In Niagara Falls, NY, a local industry's waste dump was sold and later constructed upon, only to leach harmful contaminants into the surrounding neighborhood over the next twenty-five years. This event and other similar events led to Federal regulations such as the Clean Water Act of 1972, which controlled how much waste could be released into the waterways, and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980 that created a mechanism to punish polluters financially and hold industries liable to clean up their manufacturing sites even after they no longer owned the property.<sup>21</sup> There is no doubt that these new environmental laws and regulations, paired with a new public opinion of the industry, had an adverse effect on paper manufacturing's bottom line, and by the 1990s, many paper companies were struggling to survive in a quickly expanding global marketplace. By the dawn of the twenty-first century, most of the mills that had employed thousands of people throughout the valley had already closed their doors. Today only a few of the historic Kalamazoo Valley paper mill complexes remain standing, located at Parchment and Plainwell along with Vicksburg.

Recent years have brought a new interest in the former paper mill sites due to advancements in environmental law and the technology involved in brownfield redevelopment paired with state tax incentives. The sites that were once viewed as a liability are now seen for their potential opportunities. Local governments have spent millions of dollars demolishing old mills, and plans have been presented for new uses for the land while state and federal regulatory agencies have begun environmental cleanup along the eighty-mile corridor of the Kalamazoo River, currently deemed a Superfund site. Although the Kalamazoo Valley no longer produces much paper, the paper-making legacy will not be completely lost; instead, it will be preserved as the sites are repurposed for the future.

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### Vicksburg

The Village of Vicksburg was named after John Vickers, an early settler who came from Ohio to make his home in a southwest Michigan locale known as Gourdneck Prairie. Prior to settling in what would become Vicksburg, Vickers helped to build a small mill at Rocky Creek, which would become the first grist mill in Kalamazoo County.<sup>22</sup> Vickers owned and operated the mill a short time before selling his interests to Col. Abiel Fellows in the fall of 1830. Vickers later settled on what was then a Potawatomi reservation but was soon after opened to white settlement. It was prairie land spotted with bountiful woodlands and interconnected by many streams and waterways. Vickers found what he considered an ideal location, where "the stream backed up a little to the north, where with a little damming he could get a big enough waterhead

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<sup>20</sup> Dempsey, Dave. *Ruin & Recovery, Michigan's Rise as a Conservation Leader*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001, page 148.

<sup>21</sup> Beck, Eckardt C. The Love Canal Tragedy. <http://www.epa.gov/history/topics/lovecanal/01.htm>

<sup>22</sup> *History of Kalamazoo County, Michigan: Its Prominent Men and Pioneers*. Philadelphia: Everts & Abbott, 1880.

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to carry him through the longest dry spell.”<sup>23</sup> Vickers’ new mill is thought to have been located in what is now Clark Park – directly west of today’s downtown Vicksburg and northeast of the Lee Paper Company mill. Here Portage Creek “spilled eight feet into a gulch on its southward course.”<sup>24</sup>

In 1834 Vickers partnered with men from Schoolcraft to build a “good workman-like saw mill” to be finished by June 1, 1835.<sup>25</sup> He also built a blockhouse adjacent to the mill that measured 24 x30 feet and was two stories high. A community grew around Vickers’ mill as other families began to settle nearby. A Brady post office, named for Brady Township, in which the Vicksburg site was located, was established in 1837. Vickers evidently platted a village of Vicksburg on his property sometime before 1843, but never registered the plat with the register of deeds so that there is no record today. Following Vickers’ death, in 1849 the property owners established a new plat for a village of Brady encompassing what was likely a larger area than the original plat. The community went through two other names prior to 1871, when it was incorporated as a village. The day after the incorporation the village’s name was changed back to Vicksburg.<sup>26</sup>

On August 14, 1870, the *Kalamazoo Daily Gazette* reported the completion of the Grand Rapids & Indiana Railway (G.R. & I.) “north from Sturgis through Brady, Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids, up to Paris in Mecosta County”<sup>27</sup> (it was eventually extended north to the Straits of Mackinac). This was one of the most critical moments in the village’s history, allowing for trains to supply the growing number of commercial establishments, to increase general travel to and from the village, and to bolster the amount of local manufactured goods going outbound. A second line, the Peninsular Railway (soon absorbed into the Grand Trunk), was completed through Vicksburg in 1872, providing an east-west connection between Canada (and points east) and Chicago via Port Huron and Battle Creek, Michigan. “By 1876, three trains were going through town daily, one westward and two eastward. This rail crossing of a north-south railroad (G.R. & I.) with an east-west railroad (Grand Trunk) was a milestone in Vicksburg’s history.”<sup>28</sup>

### Lee Paper Company

George E. Bardeen’s interest in Vicksburg as a possible paper mill location dated back to 1898 when he had sent a man to investigate the water supply. In April 1903 Bardeen, with Fred Lee of Dowagiac, William Howard of Kalamazoo, and Charles Seitz of Detroit, met with citizens at Vicksburg’s opera house to explain their proposal. The investors proposed to build a \$400,000 paper mill, and sought water rights, right of way for railroad sidings, and a \$16,000 “bonus” grant to help with start-up costs. With enthusiastic support from the village, the plant’s development soon moved forward.

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<sup>23</sup> Molineaux, Grace & Special Writers. *Water Over the Dam: Vicksburg Then and Now*. Vicksburg: Vicksburg Historical Society, 1972.

<sup>24</sup> Schneider, Dr. Arle. *A Tale of One Village: Vicksburg, Michigan, 1831-2000*. Vicksburg: Vicksburg Historical Society, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Romig, Walter, *Michigan Place Names*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986, page 573.

<sup>27</sup> Schneider, Dr. Arle. *A Tale of One Village: Vicksburg, Michigan, 1831-2000*. Vicksburg: Vicksburg Historical Society, 2004.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



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The *Detroit News* reported, "There were two considerations which led to the location at Vicksburg of the Lee Paper Co.'s plant. One of these was the splendid railroad facilities, which are unexcelled by those of any town in Lower Michigan, and the second, the quality of water. An analysis of the water showed that it was "soft and pure, of the best possible sort for the manufacture of high grade paper."<sup>29</sup> Rail capabilities fueled the construction of the mill, with many building materials and later machinery delivered via rail to the site being quantified in terms of "carloads." The Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad (G.R. & I.) built the siding and tracks into the mill property, which included building a bridge across the creek south of downtown. The Union Station in Vicksburg was constructed in 1904 near the crossing of the GR&I and Grand Trunk lines (the depot now serves as the Depot Museum as part of the Vicksburg Historic Village and contains inside more than 150,000 historical and genealogical items in its collection).<sup>30</sup>

On July 6, 1903, "incorporation papers of the Lee Paper Company, a million-dollar concern, organized mainly by business men of Kalamazoo and Otsego, were filed with the Secretary of State."<sup>31</sup> The largest original investor in the Lee Paper Company, its president and namesake, was Chicago-born Dowagiac industrialist, Frederick Lee. Lee was head of the Round Oak Stove Co., and described as "one of the most influential and progressive men in the stove industry of the United States."<sup>32</sup> The original Board of Directors also included:

George E. Bardeen, Otsego, Vice-President of Lee Paper Co., also president of the Bardeen Paper Co., part owner of three mills in Otsego, some of which became part of the Mac Sim Bar group of paper mills. Bardeen was also a state politician, president of the Michigan Manufacturers Association, and was a director in eighteen other companies in Detroit, Kalamazoo and Chicago, "besides having large interests in many other concerns."<sup>33</sup>

Archie B. Gardner, Second Vice President, Lee Paper Co., also assistant manager at the Round Oak Stove Co., Dowagiac.

Elbert S. Roos, Treasurer, Lee Paper Co., who was also treasurer of the railway supply company; vice-president of the Kalamazoo Corset Co., the ice company, and the box company of Kalamazoo, and a stockholder in the King and Bardeen paper companies.

Norman Bardeen, Otsego; Secretary of the Lee Paper Co. and manager at the Bardeen mills.

<sup>29</sup> *Detroit News*, "The Thriving Town of Vicksburg, Michigan." June 30, 1904, page 10.

<sup>30</sup> "Vicksburg Historical Society – Lee Paper Company." Vicksburg Historical Society. December 14, 2015. [http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History\\_Index/Lee\\_Paper.htm](http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History_Index/Lee_Paper.htm)

<sup>31</sup> The Paper Mill and Wood Pulp News, "A Million Dollar Mill." July 11, 1903, page 21. November 17, 2015. <https://books.google.com/books?id=mgpZAAAAYAAJ&pg=RA1-PA21&lpg=RA1PA21&dq=Elbert+S+Roos,+railway+supply+company&source=bl&ots=aZs4IEPLSh&sig=FtXBEPTVLv5J3vJU2IZjxzAA8I&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CCUQ6AEwAmoVChMI18jiw62YyQIVIE-ICH1zqwhg#v=onepage&q=Vicksburg&f=false>

<sup>32</sup> *Detroit News*, "The Thriving Town of Vicksburg, Michigan." June 30, 1904, page 10.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

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William G. Howard, Kalamazoo, General Counsel, Lee Paper Co.; vice president of the Home Savings Bank of Kalamazoo and also an “officer and stockholder in many other successful enterprises there, and one of the best known lawyers in the state.”<sup>34</sup>

Charles S. Seitz, first manager at Lee Paper Co., and also former manager of the Michigan Telephone Co., Detroit, Michigan.

Construction of the mill began in April 1904. The *Detroit News* covered the massive project regularly. An article, *The Thriving Town of Vicksburg, Mich.*, in the June 30, 1904, issue of the paper (pg. 10), included the following:

Just recently, the Lee Paper Co. has located there, and is building one of the largest loft dried paper mills in the United States. With this and other thriving industries already there and others which are to come, Vicksburg promises shortly to become one of the best and most important manufacturing centers in western Michigan. It is situated in Kalamazoo county about twelve miles south of Kalamazoo, almost in the center of what is known as Gourdneck Prairie, which is from a farming standpoint, the garden spot of Michigan. There are, in this district more farms and of a finer quality than in any other section of the state, and this is what has always made Vicksburg the smartest and brightest town in the county, outside of the city of Kalamazoo itself. The town is one of the oldest in that part of the state.

The plant is being erected in the southwest section of the town where the company owns about thirty-five acres of land, over which run tracks and sidings of both the Grand Trunk and the Grand Rapids & Indiana railroads.

Solid cement foundations have already been completed under the immense buildings and the walls of cream-colored brick are now being erected. These buildings will occupy a vast area of ground forming almost a solid rectangle, the long side of which, 582 feet in length, will be marked by one great building, seventy-two feet deep and two and five stories in height. This will be taken up with the rag room, threshers, bleachers, beaters and washers, where the stock for the making of the paper will be received, sorted, cleansed and otherwise prepared for the making of the paper.

Across the end of the rectangle will extend the machine room, 216 feet long and seventy-two feet wide. Here the paper will be produced and it will then be taken through the adjoining building on the third side of the rectangle, 316 feet long by seventy-two feet wide, and five stories high, where will be located the sheet calenders and lofts for drying and finishing and shipping of the factory product. The engine room will be 176 feet by 36 feet and will contain six engines and sixty motors.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

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The boiler house, which is to be 52 feet by 72 feet, will contain six 400 horse-power boilers. The chimney will be 200 feet high and ten feet across on the inside. There will likewise be a large coal storage building. Concrete floors and steel construction will be used, so that there will be no danger from dampness. A complete sprinkler system will be installed and, together with the construction of the building, has already been contracted for. This company is capitalized at \$1,000,000 and has a back of it some of the most prominent business men of Michigan and surrounding states.

Built at a time when materials are lower in cost than they have been for years, and with the well known business energy and integrity of the directors, the company's success is assured at the outset. It will produce the finest grades of writing paper and will be the largest concern of its kind in the country. The mill will employ more than 400 people, a large number of whom will be stockholders in the company. It will be completely built by the first of next year and will be in active operation within a year from the present time. This will mean that the population of Vicksburg, now about 2,000 will be almost doubled by a year from now. It also means that every branch of life in Vicksburg will receive an impetus, that trade will be stimulated, that there will be a better market for farm products and the staples of life, that some of the most progressive men of the United States will ever after have a lively interest in the welfare and upbuilding of the town.

Work at the site began early in April 1904. The April 15 *Vicksburg Commercial* reported that "The Company is undecided, as yet, whether to use red or white brick in the construction of the plant." They soon selected "white," or light-hued brick similar to that used in most of the area's paper mills. A note in the July 24 *Commercial* reported that "Several cars of brick have been received from Grand Rapids," presumably the source of all the brick used. Another brief in the June 28 paper stated that the mill's construction would require an "estimated 400 carloads of brick," or 3-5 million brick. On May 17 the company contracted with the Charles A. Moses Company of Chicago for construction of the mill buildings. Moses, the *Commercial* stated in its May 17 story, was a "well known paper mill contractor, having completed, with others, the new Kalamazoo mill last year."

Also noteworthy figures in relation to the mill's construction and early operation were W. H. Goodenough and Daniel J. Albertson. As reported by the *Vicksburg Commercial*, "The superintendent of the mills is W. H. Goodenough, who is one of the most expert paper manufacturers in the country and who has for the past eleven years been superintendent of the American Writing Paper Co.'s mills at De Pere, Wis. Mr. Goodenough came to Vicksburg after thoroughly looking over the ground, expressing the conviction that, with railroad facilities the quality of water and the class of factory which is being built, the company would manufacture a better line of paper at less cost than any of the mills being operated. Daniel J. Albertson, engineer and architect of the company has had a wide experience in the erection of paper mills, and has been ably assisted by Charles Goodenough, who has had a splendid technical training as an engineer and who will be his father's assistant in operating the mill when completed. N. F. Johnson of Jackson, Mich., is in charge of the construction of the Lee Mill."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

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The mill's construction resulted in a population boom in Vicksburg. Many of the laborers who built the mill, and later the workers in the mill, relocated to the area. Every structure that could be converted into living quarters was used to help meet the demand for housing that the mill created. "In 1900, Vicksburg had a population of 972; in 1905, the first year of the company's existence the population had risen to 1212, whereas the population in neighboring Schoolcraft had fallen from 859 to 826 during the same period. ... As the mill grew, so did the community, never experiencing periods of sudden mushrooming growth due to the irresponsible over-expansion which plagued some industrial concerns."<sup>36</sup>

In February 1905 Superintendent Goodenough fired up the steam operated heating plant and on March 3, 1905, Goodenough and Master Seitz first blew the whistle, which would signal the start of the production day for years to come. The whistle was ten inches in diameter and three feet long, and the same type of whistle used on ocean steamers. It could be heard at a distance of fifteen miles. The large billowing smokestack chimney was visible from neighboring towns and villages. The *Vicksburg Commercial* noted another milestone on April 11, 1905, when, "The first wheel turned Tuesday afternoon when Superintendent Goodenough opened the throttle and started the 300 horsepower tandem compound Allis-Chalmers Corliss engine, which is directly connected to a 200 Kilowatt Northern Electric Co. generator, which will furnish the light and current for the motors throughout the plant when in operation." The first paper was made on May 31, 1905.

When the mill opened in 1905 it was operating on two paper machines (No. 1 and No. 2). Machines in the machine room were labeled numerically (this nomenclature continued with the equipment housed in the new machine room (No. 3, 1951, and No. 4, 1956)). The original "Machine No. 2" received a rave review in the *Vicksburg Commercial* when it was first put into operation: "Something wonderful recently happened when Machine No. 2 at the Lee Paper Mills started up, it being run 50 hours continuously without stopping. It is seldom that a new paper machine, so complicated and extensive, can be run long without adjusting, but No. 2 outdone the record as given above."<sup>37</sup>

"Number Two" as it was commonly called had a wooden frame and wooden gears connected by leather drive belts and could produce paper at a then astonishing rate of 600 feet per minute. This is a little less impressive by modern day standards as today's machines produce on average approximately 6000 feet per minute. Machine No. 2 remained in service at the mill until the company halted production and eventually closed in 2001. It was the last machine of its kind in operation in North America and is thought to have been shipped to Argentina at the end of its life at the Vicksburg mill.<sup>38</sup>

The company struggled financially during its early years, but "In 1911 Norman Bardeen who had been first bookkeeper and later salesman was made general manager to replace O.H. Briggs and

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<sup>36</sup> *The Vicksburg Commercial, 50th Anniversary Edition*, "1904 Was the Year of Construction for Lee Paper Co. Mill – Events at Time of Building Were Dramatic." May 31, 1955.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> DeYoung, D., Jackson, H. and Moore, T. (2015, November). Personal interview.

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things took a definite turn for the better. By 1915 the notes signed by the directors personally had been paid and by 1919, after and helped by, the business boom of World War I, all old obligations except the mortgage of \$300,000 had been retired. Unfortunately, the depression of 1920-21 ended this period of prosperity and in the next several years things again went badly. The depression of 1921 was severe. The mill ran 45% of normal and the loss resulting was the heaviest ever experienced.”<sup>39</sup>

Poor business conditions continued through 1923. “The demand for Rag Bonds and Rag Blue Print lagged behind the mill's production capacity, and the Papeterie and Stationery Department was unprofitable, so in 1926 the company started production of sulphite papers such as offset, bonds, and ledgers. This proved successful and operations were moderately profitable through 1930.”<sup>40</sup>

“The depression years of 1931-33 nearly spelled disaster for the mill. There were times when a day's production depended on what orders arrived in the morning mail. The 25-year old equipment needed repair or replacement but there was little or no cash, and slight business to provide it. ... The crisis came in 1932 when the boilers failed to pass standards set by the insurance company. It appeared the mill might shut down, but credit was somehow arranged and the mill continued to operate.”<sup>41</sup>

“Under Manager Norman Bardeen, the mill managed to operate throughout the Great Depression, though hours were cut and the available work was spread around so that as many employees as possible could take home a paycheck, however small.”<sup>42</sup>

“The Recovery Act of 1933 brought some relief and business gradually recovered in the next three years. Norman Bardeen Sr. died in 1936, and his son Maxwell Bardeen assumed the position of president and general manager, with his assistant manager Byron Bishop. This heralded a 25-year expansion program that was unparalleled in the Fine Writing Paper division of the industry. The first major step was to install electrical manufacturing equipment, thus eliminating line shafts, jack shafts, and rope-and-belt drives. The cost was so great that purchases were confined to “used” motors, turbine and generator.”<sup>43</sup>

In 1943, in the midst of World War II, government contracts for products needed for the war effort began to take over the majority of the production schedule, changing the identity of the mill as a rag mill to one of many diversified products. In the President's Letter from February 1943 in the *Lee Paper Company News*, Maxwell Bardeen wrote, “It is inevitable that 1943 will bring difficult problems, but, realizing the full gravity of the situation, we can still look forward

<sup>39</sup> *The Vicksburg Commercial, 50th Anniversary Edition*, “History Reveals Many Economic Changes in 50 Years at Lee.” Yates, Dr. Stanley, May 31, 1955.

<sup>40</sup> Molineaux, Grace & Special Writers. *Water Over the Dam: Vicksburg Then and Now*. Vicksburg: Vicksburg Historical Society, 1972, page 188-189

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> “Vicksburg Historical Society – Lee Paper Company.” Vicksburg Historical Society. December 14, 2015. [http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History\\_Index/Lee\\_Paper.htm](http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History_Index/Lee_Paper.htm)

<sup>43</sup> Molineaux, Grace & Special Writers. *Water Over the Dam: Vicksburg Then and Now*. Vicksburg: Vicksburg Historical Society, 1972, page 188.

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to the months to come with a degree of tempered optimism. First, it was heartening to have the War Manpower Commission clearly state that the Paper Industry is essential. This, plus the knowledge that our own individual production is highly essential, gives us strong protection in the conversion of Industry to total War [production]. ... The questionable factor is that of raw materials. We have taken very careful precautions to assure ourselves of a reserve of raw materials. ... Pulp is now under strict allocation and the Paper Industry as a whole faces a 25% curtailment in 1943 but the character of our production is such that this curtailment has and will have little effect on our operation.”<sup>44</sup> In the fall of 1943, the company issued another update regarding the status of raw materials, especially wood pulp. “The nation’s supply of wood pulp is still very short. ... Strenuous efforts are being made in Washington to step up production and the results should begin to be felt by November. In the meantime, because of the essentiality of our products and the character of our operation, our position on pulp is good and we are being allocated a sufficient quantity (supplemented by rags and waste papers) to maintain our operations.”<sup>45</sup>

Beginning with World War II, cotton and textile rags were no longer the primary source material in the paper-making process. In the early post-war period during the 1940s and 1950s manufactured fibers such as nylon and polyester became more common in textiles. These synthetic materials, as opposed to cotton, were not ideal for the paper-making process. They had a tendency to melt on the machinery and gummed up the works, causing strong consideration for the integration of wood pulp. The change to wood pulp did not dramatically alter the machinery used; however, it did change the products and process in terms of what chemicals and solvents were used to break down wood versus cotton.<sup>46</sup>

Although wood pulp was viewed as a material that “liberated” mills from a dependency on rag mill production, the Lee Paper Company, from its inception, was unusual in that it operated fully as a “rag mill,” converting remnants from cotton and textile production into fine, high quality paper in comparison to other local products (tissue, parchment, etc.).

Founded by a group of investors that included George Bardeen, a leading figure in the paper industry that was at the end of the nineteenth century and through much of the twentieth a key industry in the Kalamazoo Valley region, Lee Paper formed an important component of the valley’s paper industry and was by far the largest employer in Vicksburg. The period of significance for the mill complex begins with the plant’s initial construction in 1904 and ends in 1958, the last full year the company maintained its own distinct corporate existence and before it entered into a series of mergers.

#### Events Following the 1958 End of the Period of Significance

In 1959 the Lee Paper Company entered into a first merger with Simpson Timber Company. This resulted in a new company name, the Simpson Lee Paper Company, and resulted in adding wood fiber to the production process. As reported in 1959, “Plans for merging two of the nation’s pioneer paper manufacturing firms, Simpson Paper Company of Everett, Washington and Lee

<sup>44</sup> *Lee Paper Company News*, volume 2, number 2 (February 1943): 1.

<sup>45</sup> *Lee Paper Company News*, volume 2, number 9 (September 1943): 1.

<sup>46</sup> DeYoung, D. (2015, December 14). Personal interview.

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Paper Company of Vicksburg, Michigan were announced today by Thos. F. Gleed, president of Simpson Timber Company, and Maxwell D. Bardeen, president of Lee Paper Company.”<sup>47</sup> The new company had the following officers: William G. Reed, chairman; Maxwell Bardeen, president; Norman Bardeen Jr., vice president; Albert Christian, vice president and secretary; Robert Boyle, vice president and mill manager; and K. A. Warren, treasurer.<sup>48</sup> Shortly after the merger came expansion into east and west coast markets in 1960.

“In an effort to reach west coast markets, ground was broken April 11, 1960 for a new \$9,000,000 paper mill at Ripon, California, to manufacture the same grades of paper made in Vicksburg. Gordon Moore was named resident engineer, and a number of experienced people were transferred from Vicksburg to staff the new facility. Production began October 9, 1961, with capacity of 20,000 tons per year.”<sup>49</sup>

In 1960 “Directors announced a joint venture with Felix Schoeller Jr., Paper Company of Osnabruck Germany, to build a new, one-machine paper mill in Pulaski, New York, to produce Photographic Paper. The project was estimated at \$10,000,000. Gordon Moore was again resident engineer, and the mill started on schedule October 5, 1963, with machinery designed and built in Germany. Once more experienced people from the mill were transferred to fill key positions.

In the years that followed the ownership and property name continued to change. The Simpson Lee Paper Company was absorbed into the Simpson Paper Company in 1971, and that firm in 1996 became part of the Fox River Paper Company in 1996. These mergers brought together larger companies such as the Lee Schoeller Paper Company and the Kimberly Clark Corporation.

The mill operated under the name Fox River Paper Company until it closed its doors on March 1, 2001. After 2001 the mill property was acquired first by the “Fertile Prairie Farm Partnership” and later by “The Mill of South County, LLC.”

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### Significance and Impact of the Bardeen Family

The Bardeen family stands out in historical record and included some of the most notable and influential individuals in the continued operation and success of the mill. Like many Vicksburg families, their contributions to the mill were multi-generational with father Norman, and sons Maxwell and Norman Jr. all playing significant roles in its success.

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<sup>47</sup> *Shelton-Mason County Journal*, “Simpson, Lee Paper Plants Merger Slated.” August 6, 1959. November 9, 2015. <http://smc.stparchive.com/Archive/SMC/SMC08061959P01.php>

<sup>48</sup> Molineaux, Grace & Special Writers. *Water Over the Dam: Vicksburg Then and Now*. Vicksburg: Vicksburg Historical Society, 1972, page 190.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, page 191.

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In 1905 it was reported that, “At the last meeting of the directors of the Lee Paper Company, Secretary Norman Bardeen was elected General Manager of the mills. This is a good move, as Mr. Bardeen is thoroughly competent and efficient.”<sup>50</sup>

The mill construction was a huge financial undertaking, which ended up costing more than anticipated. By 1909 Lee Paper Company had acquired an estimated \$600,000 in debt. In 1911 Norman Bardeen took over management of Lee Paper Company. He is credited with ushering the company through to better financial times and the first truly profitable era of the mill.

Norman Bardeen put in twenty-five years of service at the mill before his untimely death in an automobile accident on Portage Road in 1936. Norman Bardeen, Jr. continued the Bardeen legacy by serving the company both as vice-president and sales manager in years to follow.

Maxwell Bardeen went to Yale and returned to Vicksburg after his studies to work at the Lee Paper Company. His first job was in testing stock and paper, and he was eventually promoted to superintendent. Following his father’s death in 1936, Maxwell Bardeen was elected general manager by the Board of Directors.

By 1919 Maxwell Bardeen had managed to oversee the repayment of all debts and back interest, leaving only a \$300,000 mortgage on the books. Maxwell Bardeen is generally characterized as a fastidious financial manager, charismatic salesman and a truly dedicated humanitarian. He is largely credited for buoying up the company and community through some of its toughest economic times, including the years of the Great Depression.

An account by local newspaper editor Meredith Clark states, “Bardeen was the humanitarian who implemented the idea of a foundation to help the retired employees of Lee Paper Company, when he was President of the mill in 1943. As a world traveler, top salesman and business manager, Bardeen served as an example of an enlightened industrialist and public servant.”<sup>51</sup>

In 1943 the Vicksburg Foundation was formed with a \$19,500 donation from the Lee Paper Company. The foundation’s funds were to provide emergency, charity and pension funds to Lee Paper Company employees prior to the advent of a labor union, Local 13120 District 50, United Mine Workers of America, which first met in Vicksburg in 1946.

Bardeen became a trustee of the Vicksburg Foundation and his community activism had positive effects even outside of the Lee Paper Company. According to the Foundation’s current president, Bill Oswalt, “Max was passionate about education and, early in his tenure on the board, the foundation began providing scholarship funds to Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College to be made available for those students pursuing a degree in paper technology. It wasn’t

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<sup>50</sup> *The Vicksburg Commercial, 50th Anniversary Edition*, “1904 Was the Year of Construction for Lee Paper Co. Mill – Events at Time of Building Were Dramatic.” May 31, 1955.

<sup>51</sup> “Max Bardeen’s Story.” The Vicksburg Foundation. December 14, 2015. <http://vicksburgfoundation.org/max-bardeen/>



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long before the parameters changed to offering the scholarship funding to any Vicksburg student regardless of their vocation pursuit.”<sup>52</sup>

In 1968 Maxwell Bardeen retired from the mill after forty-two years of service, including his thirty-two years as president. As reported by the *Vicksburg Commercial*, “Lee Paper Company changed during his tenure from a two-machine company producing 5,000 tons annually, to an eight-machine company producing 125,000 tons per year, with annual sales of \$50,000,000, and employing 1,800 people.”

In one tribute to Maxwell Bardeen, the Vicksburg Foundation states, “One man’s impact upon a community can be hard to quantify, unless his name is Maxwell Bardeen.”<sup>53</sup> That sentiment is echoed in countless accounts from many community members who were touched by Bardeen’s life work.

Bardeen died in 1994 and is buried in the Vicksburg cemetery. The Vicksburg Foundation continues to have a profound impact on the community today, supporting many local initiatives and noble causes.

#### Contributions of Polish Community Members

Extremely important to the history of mill was the large number of workers of Polish ancestry who formed a substantial component of the company’s work force. A number of Polish workers from Chicago and elsewhere responded to the company’s initial advertisements for workers, and the community, non-existent prior to the paper company’s establishment, continued to grow.<sup>54</sup> The company provided several houses near the plant for some of the earliest Polish workers, and made arrangements to help incoming Polish families both feel at home in Vicksburg and assimilate to their new surroundings. In November 1905 the company began providing literacy “night school” classes where Polish workers could learn to read and write English. The company very quickly realized the need for a Catholic church in Vicksburg, and the manager, Mr. Seitz, made contact with St. Augustine Church in Kalamazoo. As a result a Vicksburg Catholic mission was established in December 1904. Services were held at the mill until February 1906 when a new St. Edward Church was dedicated. As reported by the *Vicksburg Commercial*, “In spite of inclement weather, the attendance was large. It required seven rail-road coaches to accommodate visitors from Grand Rapids, Hilliards, and Kalamazoo. The sermon in Polish was delivered by Father Krakowsky of Grand Rapids; the English oration by the Right Reverend Bishop [Bishop Foley of Detroit].”<sup>55</sup>

Living and working conditions were such that it was often the case that Polish mill workers would save money to fund transportation for their relatives to move to Vicksburg and join them in their new community. Polish workers generally lived in the area located south of the southern

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> “Vicksburg Historical Society – Lee Paper Company.” Vicksburg Historical Society. December 14, 2015. [http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History\\_Index/Lee\\_Paper.htm](http://www.vicksburghistory.org/History_Index/Lee_Paper.htm)

<sup>55</sup> Molineaux, Grace & Special Writers. *Water Over the Dam: Vicksburg Then and Now*. Vicksburg: Vicksburg Historical Society, 1972.

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perimeter of the mill property (now Highway Street) and west of Portage Creek, commonly referred to as "Pollock Town" at the time.

### Impact on the Community

While the Lee Paper Co. was known to produce some of the finest paper in the country, the community that was built in and around the mill was arguably its finest product.

As the largest employer in the area, the mill provided the largest contribution to the local tax base for nearly a century and was the primary source of livelihood for community members. The mill was indeed a workplace, but culturally provided so much more than just employment. It was the hub for many community events, festivals, sports teams, and holiday celebrations.

Wages were considered fair, even in tough times, and sometimes generous during booming years when healthier returns were available for distribution amongst the hundreds of employees. Livable wages were often a deep concern for Lee Paper Co. and management was often responsive to the financial needs of its workers.

It is interesting that the mill was largely responsible for the local housing boom and also, as noted in the *Vicksburg Commercial* excerpt below, had a huge effect on living expenses as mill wages would set the going rate for housing costs. Female workers in particular could find very competitive wages in comparison to the going rate for women laborers at the time.

"We are informed that the Lee Paper Company needs from 50 to 100 girls and women in their rag room in order to work both machines and operate the mill as it should be. Here is a good chance for all spare women help in town and country to secure winter jobs at good wages.... The lady operatives at the mill cannot earn wages enough to pay more than \$3 per week for board while they have to pay from \$3.50 to \$4, and are charged in some instances as high as \$5 per week. This should not be. No more than fair price should be charged as the mill cannot run unless it has sufficient help, and that help cannot be secured at high prices for board and rooms."

In 1942 the company started their company newsletter known as the *Lee News*. The paper was primarily written as a way to connect workers at home with their co-workers who went off to war. Among the servicemen who came back from the war to again work at the mill were Henry Pochron, Ward Heikes, Gordon Moore, Joe Rapacz, Stanley Penar, William Penar, Joe Frakes, Rob Ryder, Lynn Shearer, Joe Semenczuk, Alwx Grubka, Dale Smith, Karl Stuck, Russel Gerould, Carl Dorbin, and Jack Noel."<sup>56</sup>

During the war a number of employees at or past retirement stayed in service at the mill until soldiers returned home. "During the war 60 employees entered the armed services and many oldtimers voluntarily spent extra years 'in the harness'. Those who had worked 35 years but remained on the job till the boys came home included Dick Knox, Bert Heffner, Jimmie Nimmo, Byron Bishop, Bert Schick, Harry Bowersox, George Gembis, Willow Comstock, Dan Daniels, Irv Austin, Burl Tiffany, Clarence Jeffries, Vince and Anna Penar, Mike and Sophia Semenczak,

<sup>56</sup> Molineaux, Grace & Special Writers. *Water Over the Dam: Vicksburg Then and Now*. Vicksburg: Vicksburg Historical Society, 1972, page 189.

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Augusta Greer, and Inez Peachy. Among the servicemen who came back from the war to work many years at the mill were Henry Pochron, Ward Heikes, Gordon Moore, Joe Rapacz, Stanley Penar, William Penar, Joe Frakes, Rob Ryder, Lynn Shearer, Joe Semenczuk, Alwx Grubka, Dale Smith, Karl Stuck, Russel Gerould, Carl Dorbin, and Jack Noel.”<sup>57</sup>

In 1943, group health insurance went into effect, costing mill workers,”50 cents a week per married couple, and provided \$5.00 per day hospital benefits.”<sup>58</sup>

The Lee Paper Company and its leadership built and maintained a reputation as fair employers, creating many opportunities for the people who built and worked in the mill, along with a long list of community investments that increased opportunities and improved the quality of life for many Vicksburg families over many generations.

### Criterion C

#### Daniel (Dan) J. Albertson, Architect and Engineer

The timber frame brick mill buildings of the Michigan Paper Company exemplify the work of the architect, Daniel J. Albertson, who played an important role as the designer/architect of over thirty mills in Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Canada.<sup>59</sup> His incorporation of the slow-burning construction techniques of the East Coast mills into the paper factories of the Kalamazoo Valley was his unique contribution to the region’s industrial architecture of the early twentieth century. His legacy is distinctly portrayed in the Lee Paper Company’s mill complex, which now stands as one of the valley’s only remaining intact examples of this time.

His grandfather, also named Daniel Albertson, born of Dutch ancestry in Dutchess County, New York, in 1806, married Maria Peters, of Spanish descent, who was born in New York in December 1805. They migrated to Michigan in 1856 and settled in Climax Township near Kalamazoo. They were farmers and introduced thoroughbred shorthorn cattle and merino sheep to the county. The Albertsons were Quakers by religion.<sup>60</sup>

They had four sons and one daughter. One of their sons, John Albertson, was born in Dutchess County on November 3, 1830, and migrated to Kalamazoo along with the family in 1856. He assisted the family with farming in Climax, until he chose to study law with Governor E. Throop and Joseph Miller Jr. He eventually gave this venture up to follow his other interests in mathematics and engineering, which led him into surveying. He assisted in the laying out of the line of the Allegan and Grand Rapids Railroad.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> *Kalamazoo Gazette*, “Dan J. Albertson Dies in Seattle, Designed 30 or More Paper Mills in the United States and Canada,” October 9, 1931.

<sup>60</sup> Chapman Brothers. *Portrait and biographical record of Kalamazoo, Allegan and Van Buren counties, Michigan: containing biographical sketches of prominent and representative citizens, together with biographies of all the governors of the state and of the presidents of the United States*. Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1892, page 1122-1123.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

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John Albertson lived with his bride, Annette (Tift) Albertson, a Kalamazoo native, whom he married in 1858, on an eighty-acre farm in Cooper Township north of Kalamazoo. He fathered two children, Daniel J. Albertson in 1865 and Ida, who died in infancy. Daniel was born in a log cabin, which was still standing at the time of his death in 1931.<sup>62</sup>

Daniel attended local public schools and did not attend college, but he had natural talent in the sciences. His father provided early training in surveying that was supplemented by the teaching of Frank Hodgeman, a local, college-educated surveyor-engineer.

Although as an adult he lived on a farm, Daniel spent very little time farming. While in his twenties, he became involved in surveying in the local area, and by the early 1890s he had surveyed and platted hundreds of acres around Kalamazoo. He often served as an arbitrator in land and boundary disputes due to his reputation for thoroughness and his impartiality. He even ran for County Surveyor in 1898 but was narrowly defeated.

In private practice as architect, surveyor and engineer beginning in 1890, he was considered one of the foremost civil engineers in the state by 1892. Apparently self-taught in the science of engineering/architecture through books, magazines, and correspondence courses, which were available at the time, he specialized in the construction of mill buildings, their power plants, and hydro-electric power plants. There was no evidence that he ever visited the mills in the Northeast, yet the slow-burning construction techniques commonly used there became his signature contribution to the Kalamazoo Valley.

In addition to the structures in Vicksburg, Albertson is also credited as the architect/engineer of over thirty mills throughout the Kalamazoo Valley, Indiana, Wisconsin and Canada. The other mills attributed to him (mostly from a list in his obituary) located in the Kalamazoo valley are those of the following companies:

- Michigan Paper Co., Plainwell (1887)
- Wolverine (Botsford) Paper Co., Kalamazoo (1892)
- Bryant Paper Company, Kalamazoo (1895)
- King Paper Company, Kalamazoo (1901-02)
- Imperial Coating Company, Kalamazoo (1901)
- Monarch Paper Company, Kalamazoo (1906)
- Mac Sim Bar Mill, Otsego (1906)
- Milham Division of Bryant Paper Company (1910-11)
- Rex Paper Company, Kalamazoo (1915)
- Kalamazoo Vegetable Parchment Company, Parchment (1918)
- Wolverine Paper Company, Plainwell
- Eddy Paper Company, White Pigeon

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

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Dan Albertson's office was originally located in the old Post Office Building and later in the Hanselman Building in downtown Kalamazoo, Michigan. He later also had an architectural office in Toronto, Canada, specializing in the design of paper mills and power plants.

On Sept 5, 1899, he married Pearl L. Carver. Dan and Pearl Albertson had one child who died in infancy or to a miscarriage. After 1912 they moved from their farm in Cooper Township to Locust Street in Kalamazoo. Later, they moved to 612 Academy Street, also in Kalamazoo.<sup>63</sup> His 1931 obituary notes that he "left Kalamazoo about seven years ago and has resided the main portion of the time in Seattle" since then. He died in Seattle on October 9, 1931, at the age of 66. His ashes were to be buried in the East Cooper Cemetery.<sup>64</sup>

Albertson was not only a well regarded surveyor, architect, and engineer; he was also an excellent photographer, and he documented all his buildings while they were under construction. Over 1,500 of his old glass negatives were found in the horse barn of his nephew, Chester Carver, and put on public display in 1981 in an exhibit on the Kalamazoo Paper Industry at the Kalamazoo Museum.<sup>65</sup> These are now the property of the Kalamazoo Public Library.

#### Architectural and Engineering Significance (Slow-Burning Construction)

Since Albertson was never formally educated in the art and science of architecture and engineering, all that he knew was self-taught or learned through experience. By the early 1900s, if not before, he was utilizing the slow-burning construction techniques promoted by the Factory Mutual Fire Insurance Companies of New England to bring mill construction to the safest condition possible while allowing for adequate light, air, and ventilation at the lowest cost per square foot.<sup>66</sup>

According to *A Dictionary of Architecture and Building*, by Russell Sturgis, Slow-Burning Construction refers to "any construction designed to diminish as far as possible the facility of ignition, and to hinder the spread of fire, while consisting entirely or in large part of combustible materials."<sup>67</sup> The older generations of mills were constructed of wood, often including much in the way of small dimension timbers and planking that, when ignited, caught fire like tinder, almost always causing complete destruction through the fire and resulting structural collapse. Products and raw materials not lost to the fire were typically damaged beyond repair by the water used to quench the blaze. In contrast, the slow-burning method was concerned with making the "mill strong enough to withstand any ordinary stress, even after its timbers are partially burned; to make the floor so tight and strong that when a fire starts in one story, the water poured on it to quench the flame will not run through and ruin goods on the floor below; to avoid any corners, pockets, or flues where a fire could get started without being immediately discovered; and above all, to provide a building where every part is easily accessible and a fire can be extinguished at

<sup>63</sup> Ross H. Collier Collection, Kalamazoo Public Library.

<sup>64</sup> *Kalamazoo Gazette*, "Dan J. Albertson Dies in Seattle, Designed 30 or More Paper Mills in the United States and Canada," October 9, 1931.

<sup>65</sup> Pyle, David K. Bryant Paper Mill National Register Nomination. Lansing: Bureau of History, 1981, page 6.

<sup>66</sup> Insurance Engineering Experiment Station. Report No. V. *Slow Burning or Mill Construction*. Boston: Boston Manufacturers Mutual Fire Insurance Co., 1902, Preface.

<sup>67</sup> Sturgis, Russell. *A Dictionary of Architecture and Building*. London: Macmillan & Co., 1902, page 530.

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close quarters without flooding the entire structure,” according to an International Correspondence School (I.C.S.) pamphlet from 1906.<sup>68</sup>

“Slow-burning mill construction” involved using timber columns typically one foot square or larger supporting wooden floor beams of similar size, the only exception being the top-floor posts, which had only to support the roof structure – these top-floor posts were typically of smaller dimension. The flooring was to be laid directly on the massive floor beams, without any small-dimension joists between, and was to consist of at least a three-inch thick subflooring of tightly fitted together (with interlocking edges) planks topped by one-inch finish flooring running in direction diagonal to the subflooring, the two layers separated by several layers of tar paper or, better, a layer of sheet metal or concrete – the purpose being to make them as watertight as possible so that water poured on one floor to fight a fire would not soak through to the floors below. The undersides of the flooring and beams were to be left exposed, and no frame partitions allowed anywhere, so that there would be no places where fire could burn without being quickly detected.<sup>69</sup> The 1904 original parts of the Lee Paper Company Mill for the most part display wooden interior construction of this type (whether tar paper or other separation between the subfloor and finished flooring is present is unclear).

Though the growing adoption of slow-burning mill construction was driven by the insurance industry through rate-setting based on its views on risks associated with types of businesses and construction, the architectural character of the resulting buildings remained very much in the hands of the architects and engineers who designed the buildings. Daniel Albertson single-handedly shaped the industrial aesthetic of the Kalamazoo Valley’s paper mills. His hand is seen clearly in the recognizable brick corbelling, patterns of fenestration, symmetrical facades and asymmetrical site design he employed.

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<sup>68</sup> Brooks, Christopher Perkins. *Mill Engineering*, I.C.S (International Correspondence Schools) Reference Library. Vol 178 Scranton: International Textbook Company, 1906, Sec. 87, 55.

<sup>69</sup> Bradley, Betsy Hunter. *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1999, 127-30; Stilgoe, John R. *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, 25-28.







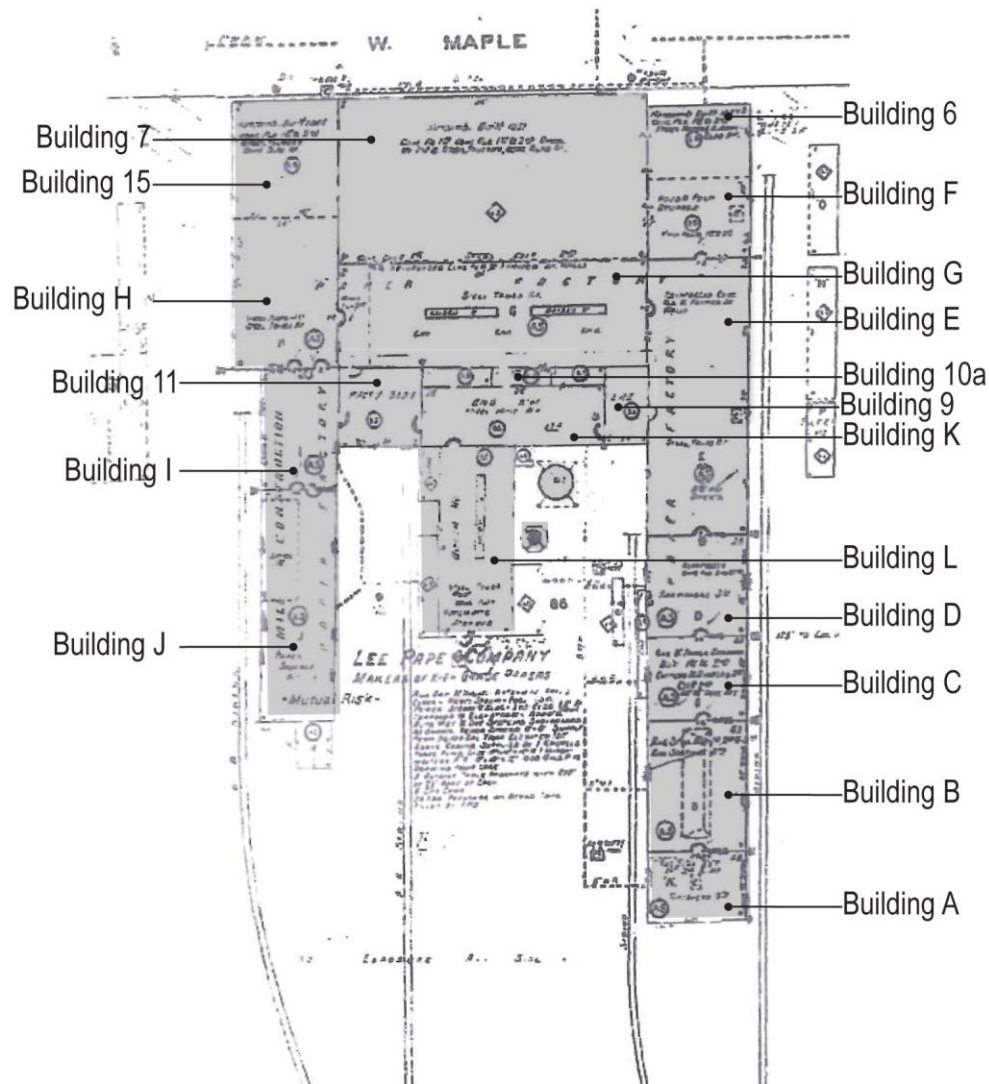


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### Diagram D: 1951 Modifications

A detail from the Sanborn map of 1951





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Ross H. Collier Collection (genealogical information)

Vicksburg Historical Society Depot Museum  
Lee Paper Company (photograph collection)  
Lee Paper Company News (company newsletter collection)

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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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University

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Other

Name of repository: Vicksburg Historical Society Depot Museum

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property approximately 30 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.118717 | Longitude: -85.539690 |
| 2. Latitude: 42.118699 | Longitude: -85.536132 |
| 3. Latitude: 42.114294 | Longitude: -85.537122 |
| 4. Latitude: 42.114273 | Longitude: -85.539612 |

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The proposed historic district boundary overlaps three present day parcels (Parcel ID Numbers 14-13-470-036, 14-13-470-038 and 14-13-470-041).

The proposed historic district is bound at the south by West Highway Street (South Line, Southwest ¼, Section 13, T 04 S., R 11 W.) The district is bound at the west by the eastern edge of the Schoolcraft Township Cemetery. This edge/line (¼ Line, Section 13, T 04 S., R 11 W.) is projected north to the westerly extension of the south line of Washington Street. The district is bound at the north by the south line of Washington Street, including its westerly and easterly extensions. The district is bound at the east by the intermediate traverse line along the length of Portage Creek.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries were selected as they represent the extent of the historic paper mill property and the surviving historic buildings formally associated with the operations of the paper mill that occupied the site. Buildings within these boundaries date from the period of significance of the site, and define the area where the papermaking workflow occurred.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jessica Green Quijano, Associate AIA  
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e-mail jessica.quijano@hopkinsburns.com  
telephone: 734-424-3344  
date: January 08, 2015

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)



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## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Lee Paper Company Mill Complex

City or Vicinity: Vicksburg, Michigan

County: Kalamazoo

State: Michigan

Photographer: Varies – see log entries below

Date Photographed: Varies – see log entries below

### Photo 1 of 72.

Photographer: unknown (1904 Vicksburg Wolverine Crank Newspaper, Special Historic Edition reprinted by the Vicksburg Historical Society, 1972)

Date Photographed: c. 1904 (illustration)

Aerial view of the entire mill complex, looking southwest. This image shows the original saw-tooth skylights on the roofs of Buildings D and G (since removed), and the brick smokestack on the west side of Building L (incorrect location; smokestack was constructed on the east side).

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0001

### Photo 2 of 72.

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1904

Exterior view of original mill complex, looking southwest, shortly after construction.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0002

### Photo 3 of 72.

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1910s/1920s

Exterior view of original mill complex from southeast corner. Rail spurs flanking East Wing visible; raised platform on east side and railroad berm on west side.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0003

### Photo 4 of 72.

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Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1920s/early 1930s

Exterior view of the "courtyard", looking northeast. The coal conveyer system has not been constructed yet (1936), the roof of Building G has been modified (saw-tooth skylights removed and raised monitor built), and the original steam tunnel structure (Building 11) is visible.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0004

**Photo 5 of 72.**

Photographer: Talbert Abrams A-B-C Airline Corp.

Date Photographed: c. 1920s – c. 1930s

Aerial view of the entire mill complex, looking southwest. This image shows the modifications done to the roof of Building G and Building L, and the smokestack in the correct location (east side of Building L). Also visible are the employee boarding houses along West Highway Street.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0005

**Photo 6 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1939-1943

Aerial view of the entire mill complex, looking southeast. Original north elevation still visible; Buildings 6, 7 and 15 have not been constructed yet. In the north corners of the "courtyard," Building 11 is visible on right and the elevated conveyer enclosure (Building 9) is visible on left.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0006

**Photo 7 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: unknown

Exterior view of east elevation of the East Wing, looking south, showing employees loading bales of rags on the conveyer to the second floor.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0007

**Photo 8 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1945

Exterior view showing construction of Building 6.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0008

**Photo 9 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1948-1949

Exterior view of north elevation of mill complex, showing Building Additions 6 and 15 before Building 7 was constructed.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0009

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**Photo 10 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: early 1951

Exterior view of north elevation of mill complex, showing the steel frame construction of Building 7, flanked by Building Additions 6 and 15.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0010

**Photo 11 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: mid 1950s

Aerial view of the entire mill complex, looking east.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0011

**Photo 12 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1955

Aerial view of the entire mill complex, looking north at the "courtyard." Buildings 6, 7, 15 and 16 have been constructed, and Buildings 6a and 18 are under construction. Building 11 is visible on left and Building 9 (modified) is visible on right.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0012

**Photo 13 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1955

Exterior view showing pulp additions Building 18 (foreground) and Building 6a (far right).

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0013

**Photo 14 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: 1957

View of "courtyard" from south, showing removal of coal conveyer.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0014

**Photo 15 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: mid 1970s

Aerial view of the entire mill complex, looking northwest. Courtyard modifications visible, as well as Building 17a (no longer exists). Building 21 has not been constructed yet.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0015

**Photo 16 of 72.**

Photographer: Daniel J. Albertson (presumed)

Date Photographed: 1904

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Interior view of Building G showing installation of paper machines No. 1 and No. 2 by Black & Clawson Co. of Hamilton, Ohio.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0016

**Photo 17 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: 1918

Interior view of original beater room (Building E).

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0017

**Photo 18 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1920

Interior view of finishing room (Building J), first level.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0018

**Photo 19 of 72.**

Photographer: unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1951

Interior view of Building 7 with new 1710-130" Fine Papers Fourdrinier Machine (paper machine No. 3), looking southwest.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0019

**Photo 20 of 72.**

Photographer: Eugene C. Hopkins

Date Photographed: July 27, 2015

View of mill complex, looking north from southeast, original East and West Wings prominently featured.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0020

**Photo 21 of 72.**

Photographer: Eugene C. Hopkins

Date Photographed: July 27, 2015

View of mill complex, looking north at Building J flanked by Buildings 11 and K (right) and Building 17 (left, behind trees).

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0021

**Photo 22 of 72.**

Photographer: Tamara Burns

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

View of mill complex, looking northwest from "courtyard", original West Wing prominently featured.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0022

**Photo 23 of 72.**

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Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: December 08, 2015

View of north elevation of "courtyard" showing Building 11, Building K, the modern smokestack and Building 9 (left to right).

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0023

**Photo 24 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: December 08, 2015

View of Building 9, looking northeast from "courtyard."

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0024

**Photo 25 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams

Date Photographed: February 15, 2016

View of west elevation of east Wing looking northeast.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0025

**Photo 26 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams

Date Photographed: February 15, 2016

View of Building 22, looking south.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0026

**Photo 27 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: December 08, 2015

View of south elevation of Building A.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0027

**Photo 28 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: December 08, 2015

View of east elevation of Building A, south end.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0028

**Photo 29 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams

Date Photographed: February 15, 2016

View of southeast ends of original East and West Wings.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0029

**Photo 30 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams

Date Photographed: February 15, 2016

Lee Paper Company Mill Complex  
Name of Property

Kalamazoo County, MI  
County and State

View of east elevation of East Wing looking northwest. Steel gantry and Building 23 also shown.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0030

**Photo 31 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: December 08, 2015

View of east elevation of East Wing showing Buildings A-E and steel gantry.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0031

**Photo 32 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams

Date Photographed: February 15, 2016

View of Building 23, looking south.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0032

**Photo 33 of 72.**

Photographer: Sue Moore

Date Photographed: May 7, 2014

View looking east at Portage Creek and residential area beyond.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0033

**Photo 34 of 72.**

Photographer: Sue Moore

Date Photographed: May 7, 2014

View looking east at Portage Creek and residential area beyond.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0034

**Photo 35 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams

Date Photographed: February 15, 2016

View of Building 24, looking southwest.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0035

**Photo 36 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams

Date Photographed: February 15, 2016

View of Building 25, looking southeast.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0036

**Photo 37 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams

Date Photographed: February 15, 2016

View of Building 26, looking northeast.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0037

Lee Paper Company Mill Complex  
Name of Property

Kalamazoo County, MI  
County and State

**Photo 38 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams  
Date Photographed: February 15, 2016  
View of Building 27, looking northeast.  
MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0038

**Photo 39 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams  
Date Photographed: February 15, 2016  
View of Bridge Organics Co. building from Washington Street, looking southwest.  
MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0039

**Photo 40 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones  
Date Photographed: December 09, 2015  
View looking south at the north entry gate off of Washington Street. Bridge Organics Co. building visible (former Research and Development Building for the Simpson Lee Paper Company).  
MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0040

**Photo 41 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams  
Date Photographed: February 15, 2016  
View of north elevation of mill complex looking southwest.  
MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0041

**Photo 42 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams  
Date Photographed: February 15, 2016  
View of north elevation of mill complex looking southeast.  
MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0042

**Photo 43 of 72.**

Photographer: Steven Adams  
Date Photographed: February 15, 2016  
View of Building 21, looking northeast.  
MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0043

**Photo 44 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones  
Date Photographed: December 29, 2015  
View of south elevation of Building 17b and 17, west end.  
MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0044

Lee Paper Company Mill Complex

Name of Property

Kalamazoo County, MI

County and State

**Photo 45 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: December 08, 2015

View of south elevation of Building 17, east end, and west elevation of Buildings I and J.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0045

**Photo 46 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: December 08, 2015

Detail view of south elevation of Building 17, east end, showing rolling steel door for former rail spur and train car(s).

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0046

**Photo 47 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building A, level two, looking southwest at the original slow-burning heavy timber frame construction with cast post caps, and wood floor (typical of both Buildings A and B).

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0047

**Photo 48 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building B, top level, looking southwest at the original slow-burning heavy timber frame construction with steel rods and cast struts, and wood floor (typical of both Buildings A, B and C). Saw-tooth skylights in Building B only.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0048

**Photo 49 of 72.**

Photographer: Eugene C. Hopkins

Date Photographed: July 27, 2015

Interior view of Building B, top level, looking north at the original saw-tooth skylights that provided natural light for the workers who sorted and cleaned the incoming rag material.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0049

**Photo 50 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building D, top level, looking north at the original slow-burning heavy timber frame construction with steel rods, cast struts and post caps, and wood floor, as well as some modern construction partition walls.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0050

**Photo 51 of 72.**



Lee Paper Company Mill Complex

Name of Property

Kalamazoo County, MI

County and State

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building E, top level, looking north at the original steel roof trusses and concrete floor, where the beaters and washers were located.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0051

**Photo 52 of 72.**

Photographer: Sue Moore

Date Photographed: May 7, 2014

View looking north through the damaged structure of Building 6a.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0052

**Photo 53 of 72.**

Photographer: Sue Moore

Date Photographed: August 12, 2014

Interior view of Building 7, top level, looking east. Original exterior north brick wall of Building G on right. Paper machine No. 3 and No. 4 were housed here.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0053

**Photo 54 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building 7, basement level looking east, through floor opening, at roof framing above.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0054

**Photo 55 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building 7, top level, looking northeast at steel frame separating the two areas of this level.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0055

**Photo 56 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building 7, top level, looking east. North exterior wall with modern glass block window openings on left.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0056

**Photo 57 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building 15, top level looking at the exterior north wall with modern rectangular window openings. The modern roof construction is also visible.

Lee Paper Company Mill Complex  
Name of Property

Kalamazoo County, MI  
County and State

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0057

**Photo 58 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building 15, top level looking at the underside of the roof deck above, showing the change of construction methods between original Building H (on right) and modern addition Building 15 (on left). Beyond, looking east, is Building 7.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0058

**Photo 59 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building G (on left) and Building H (on right), top level, looking south.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0059

**Photo 60 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building H (Machine Shop/Calenders/Cutters), top level looking south at the original steel roof trusses and wood floor.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0060

**Photo 61 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building I (Dry Loft), top level looking north at the original slow-burning heavy timber frame construction with steel rods and cast struts, and wood floor.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0061

**Photo 62 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: December 09, 2015

Interior view of Building J, basement level looking south.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0062

**Photo 63 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: December 09, 2015

Interior view of Building J, first level looking north.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0063

**Photo 64 of 72.**

Photographer: Tamara Burns

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Lee Paper Company Mill Complex  
Name of Property

Kalamazoo County, MI  
County and State

Interior view of Building J, level one. Modern construction partition walls and dropped ceiling visible.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0064

**Photo 65 of 72.**

Photographer: Sue Moore

Date Photographed: August 12, 2014

Interior view of Building J (Dry Loft, Finishing Room), top level looking south at the original slow-burning heavy timber frame construction with steel rods and cast struts, and wood floor.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0065

**Photo 66 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building 10a, top level, looking east. Building K on right, and Building G on left.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0066

**Photo 67 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building 9, looking south at modern glass block window openings and steel roof structure.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0067

**Photo 68 of 72.**

Photographer: Sue Moore

Date Photographed: May 7, 2014

Interior view of Building 17 looking south at opening for former rail spur and train car(s). Original exterior west brick wall of Buildings I and J on left.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0068

**Photo 69 of 72.**

Photographer: Sue Moore

Date Photographed: May 7, 2014

View through hole in roof of Building 17, looking north at Buildings 21 and 16.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0069

**Photo 70 of 72.**

Photographer: Sue Moore

Date Photographed: May 7, 2014

Interior view of Building 17 looking west at interior of Buildings 17b, a pre-engineered metal structure.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0070

Lee Paper Company Mill Complex  
Name of Property

Kalamazoo County, MI  
County and State

**Photo 71 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

Interior view of Building 21, beneath mezzanine level, looking southwest.

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0071

**Photo 72 of 72.**

Photographer: Gregory A. Jones

Date Photographed: August 18, 2015

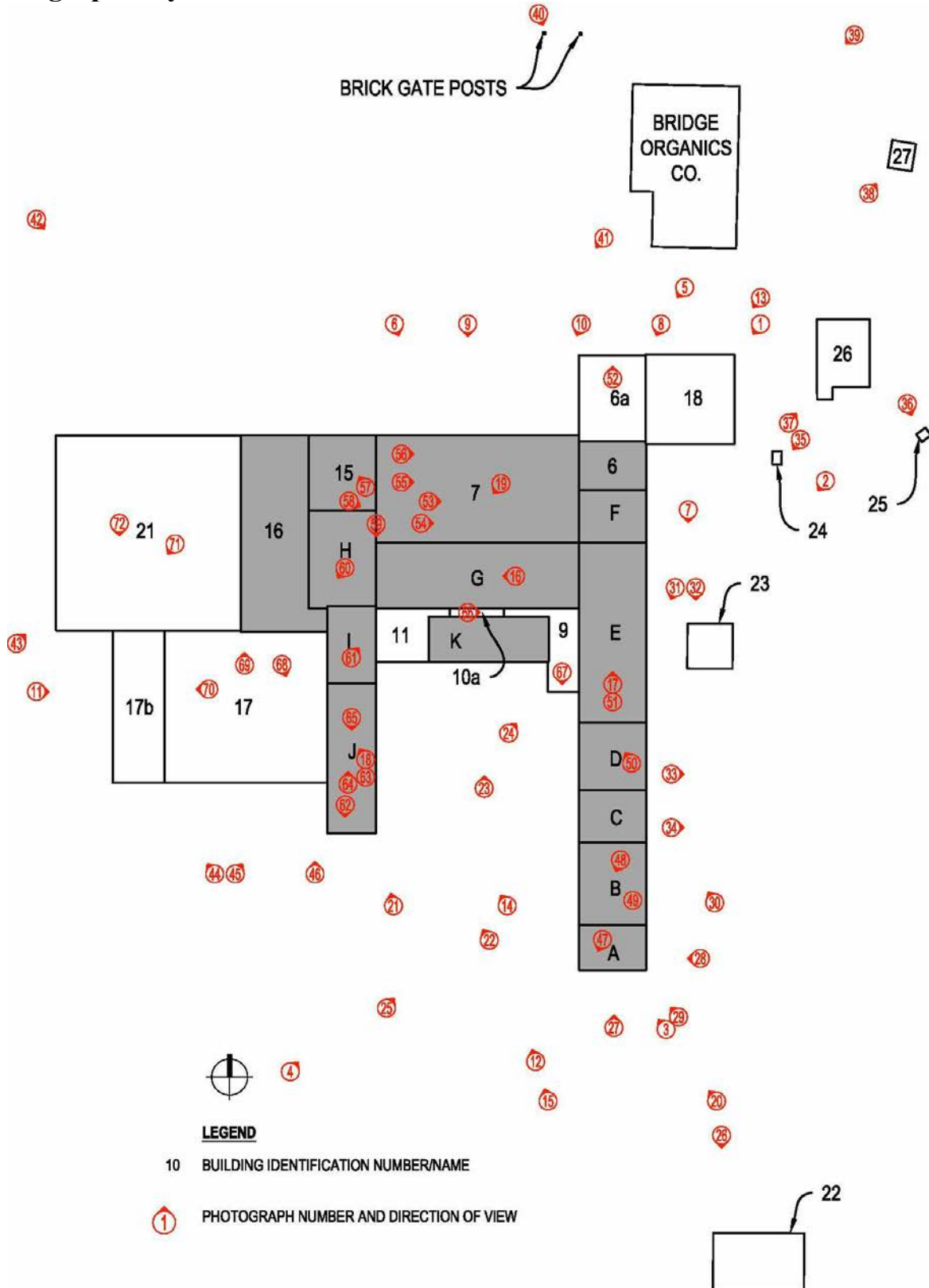
Interior view of Building 21 looking at south wall, and series of loading dock openings in west wall (on right).

MI\_Kalamazoo\_LeePaperCompanyMillComplex\_0072

Lee Paper Company Mill Complex  
 Name of Property

Kalamazoo County, MI  
 County and State

**Photograph Key:**



Lee Paper Company Mill Complex

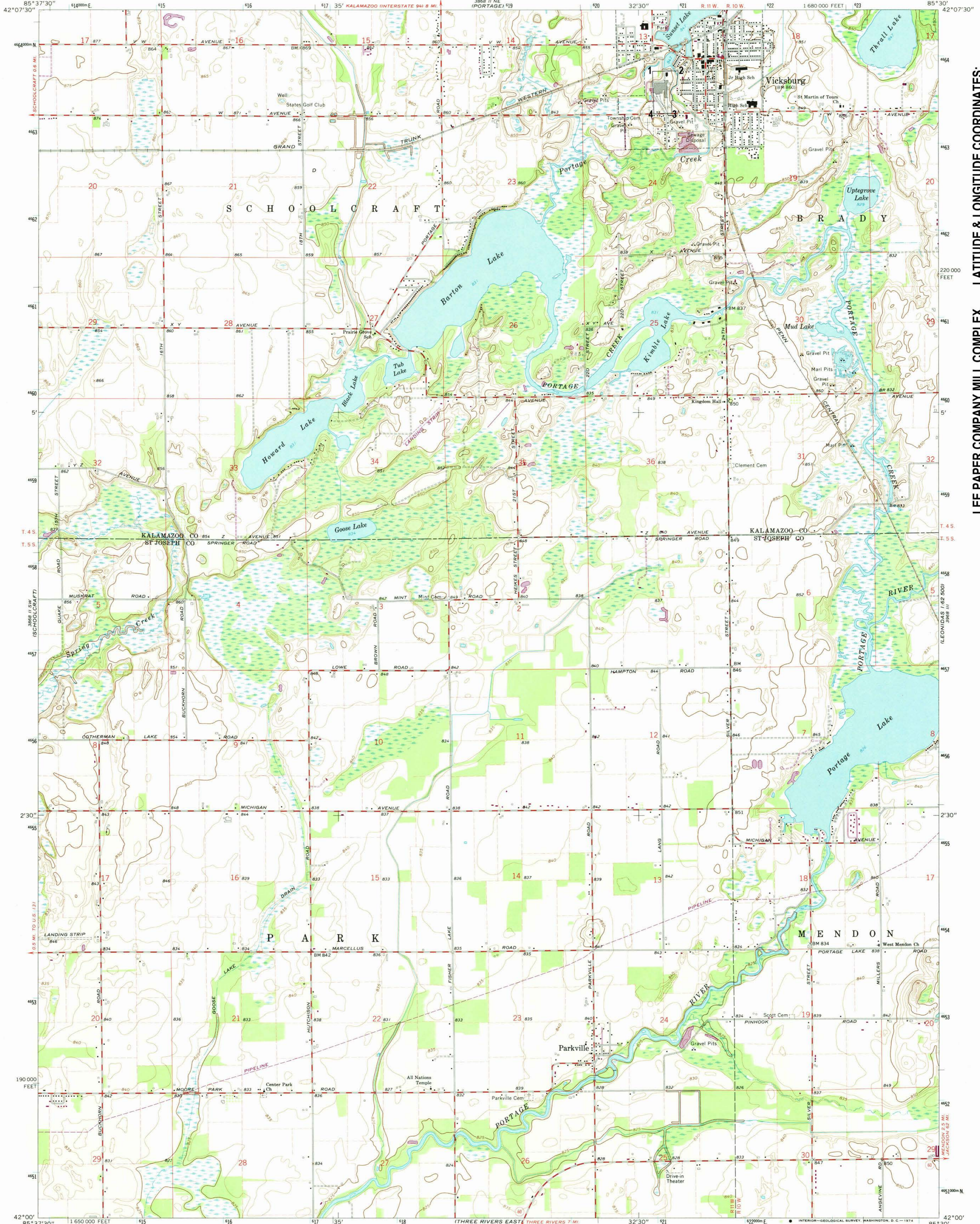
Kalamazoo County, MI

Name of Property

County and State

**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.460 et seq.).

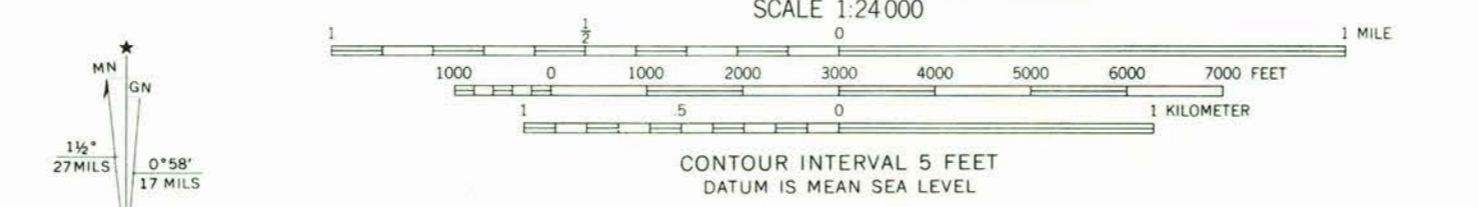
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



LATITUDE & LONGITUDE COORDINATES:  
 (1) 42.118717, -85.539690  
 (2) 42.118699, -85.536132  
 (3) 42.114294, -85.537122  
 (4) 42.114273, -85.539612

LEE PAPER COMPANY MILL COMPLEX  
 VICKSBURG, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MI

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey in cooperation with State of Michigan agencies  
 Control by USGS and USC&GS  
 Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1965-66. Field checked 1967  
 Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
 10,000-foot grid based on Michigan coordinate system, south zone  
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 16, shown in blue  
 Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked  
 Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1973. This information not field checked

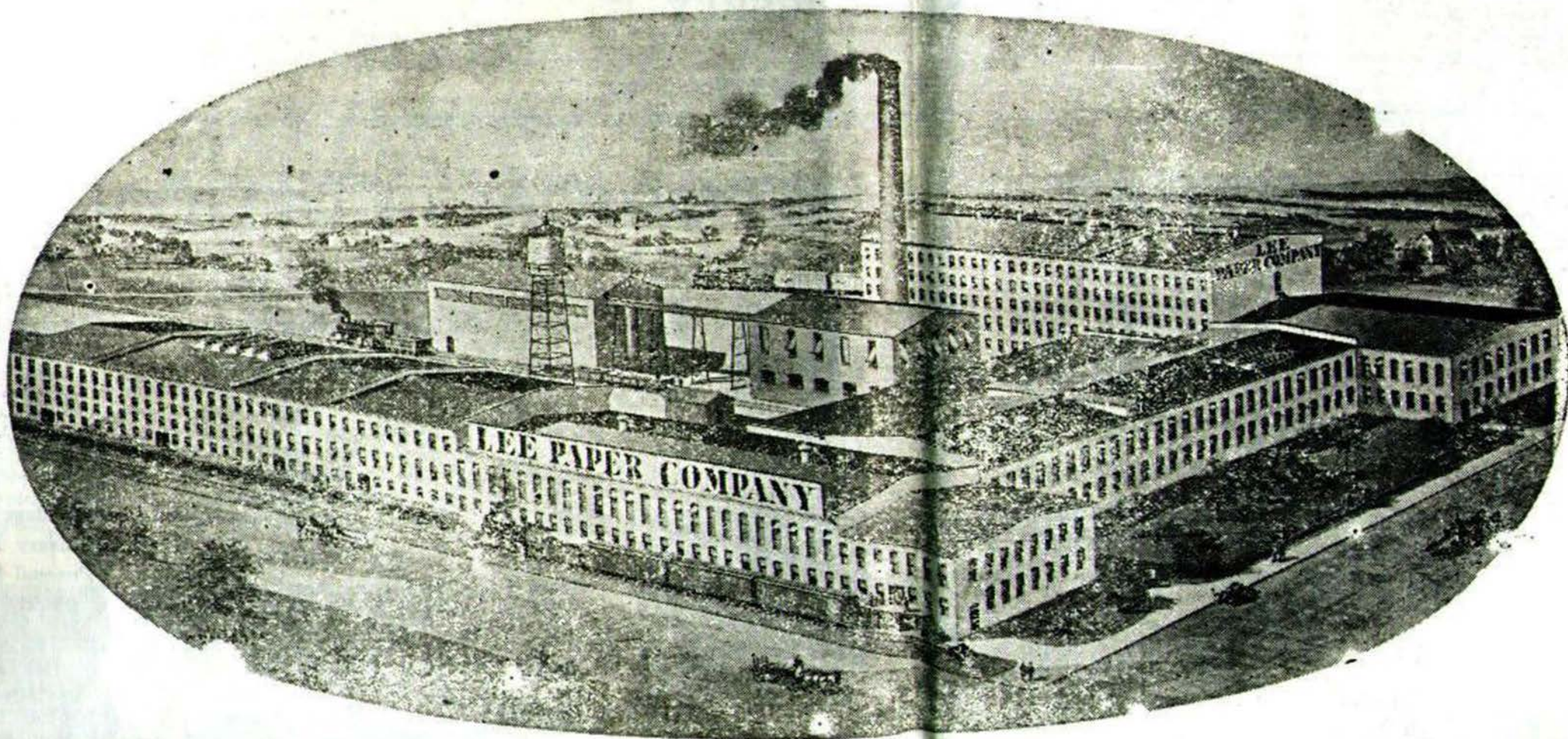


ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
 Medium-duty ——— Light-duty ———  
 Unimproved dirt ———  
 State Route ○



AUG 13 1974  
 USGS  
 Historical File  
 Topographic Division  
 VICKSBURG, MICH.  
 N4200-W8530/7.5  
 1967  
 PHOTOREVISED 1973  
 AMS 3888 II SE-SERIES 7862

# THE LEE PAPER COMPANY



MICHIGAN'S LARGEST PAPER MILL

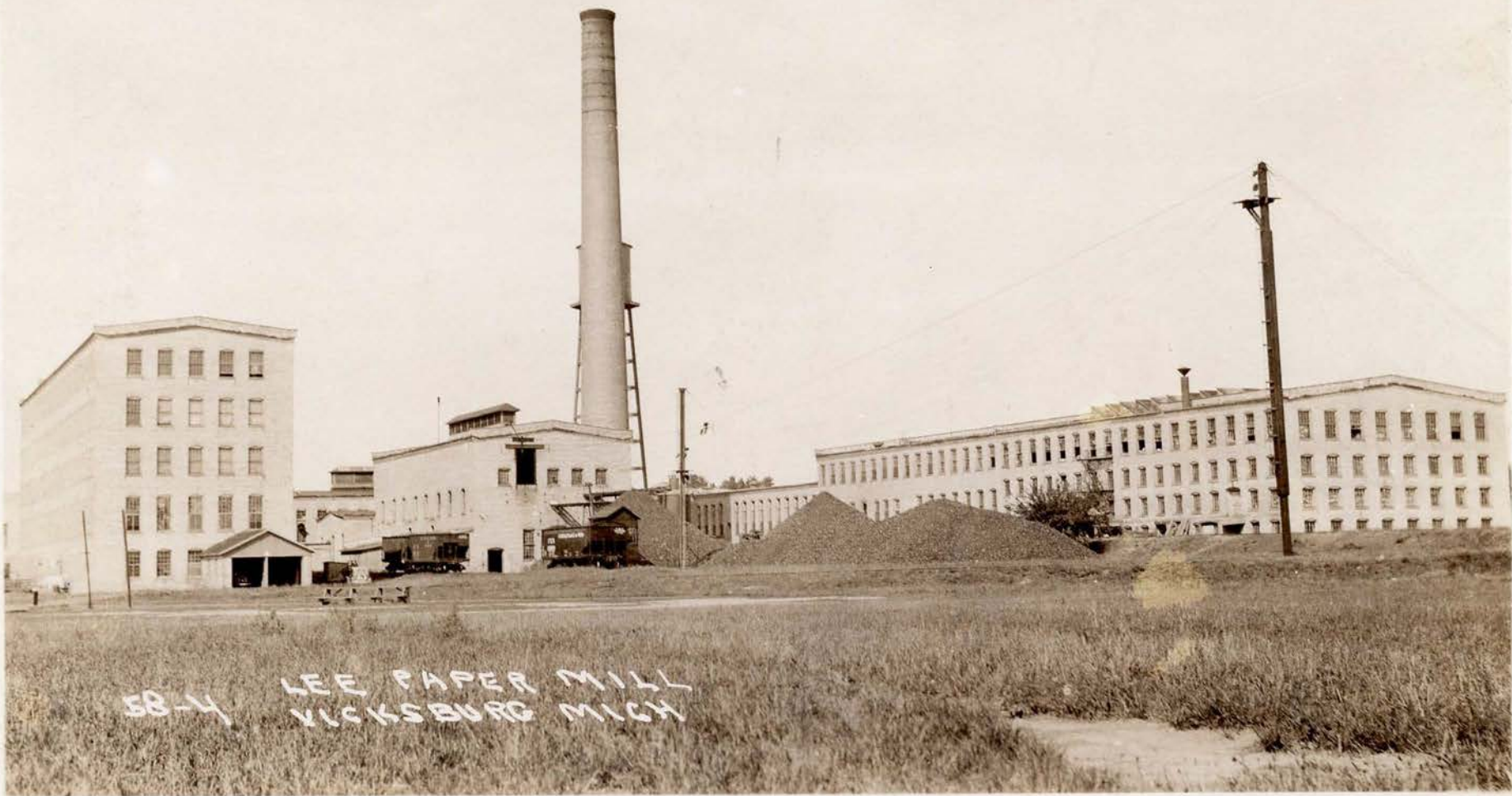






LEE PAPER Co.

VICKSBURG MISSISSIPPI

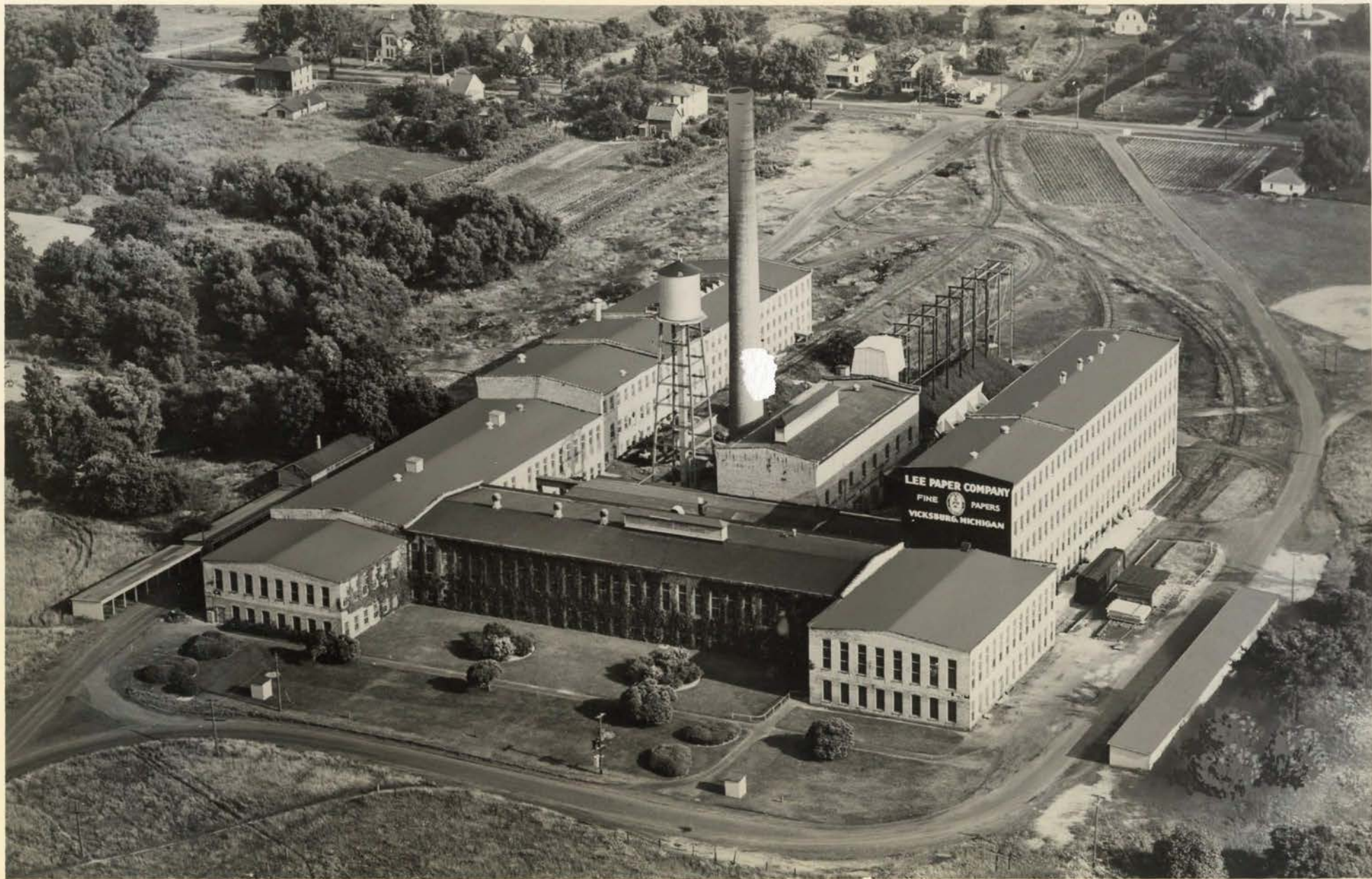


58-4 LEE PAPER MILL  
VICKSBURG MICH

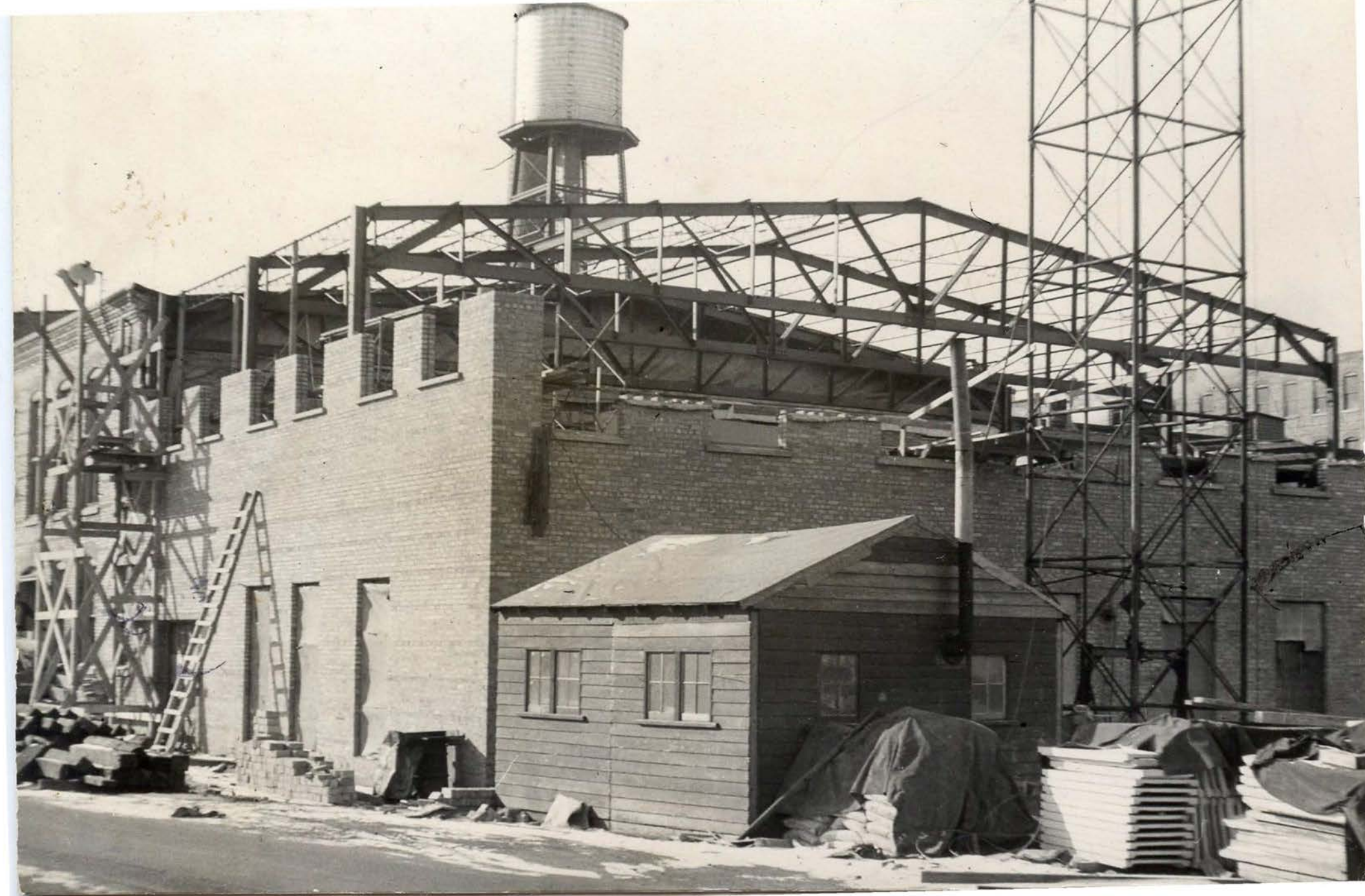


9199 A-B-C

Calbert Abrams  
A-B-C AIRLINE CORP.  
LANSING, MICH.







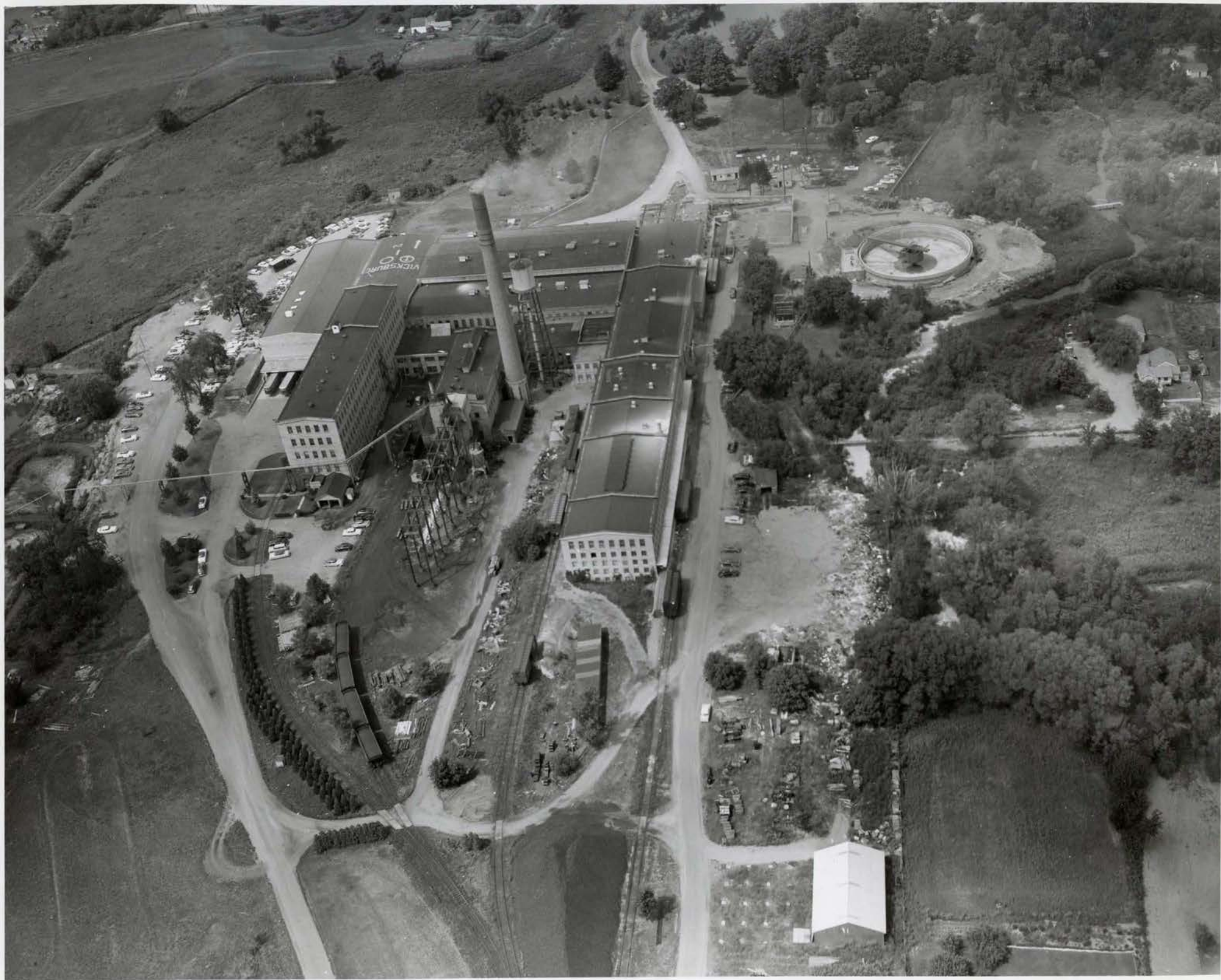






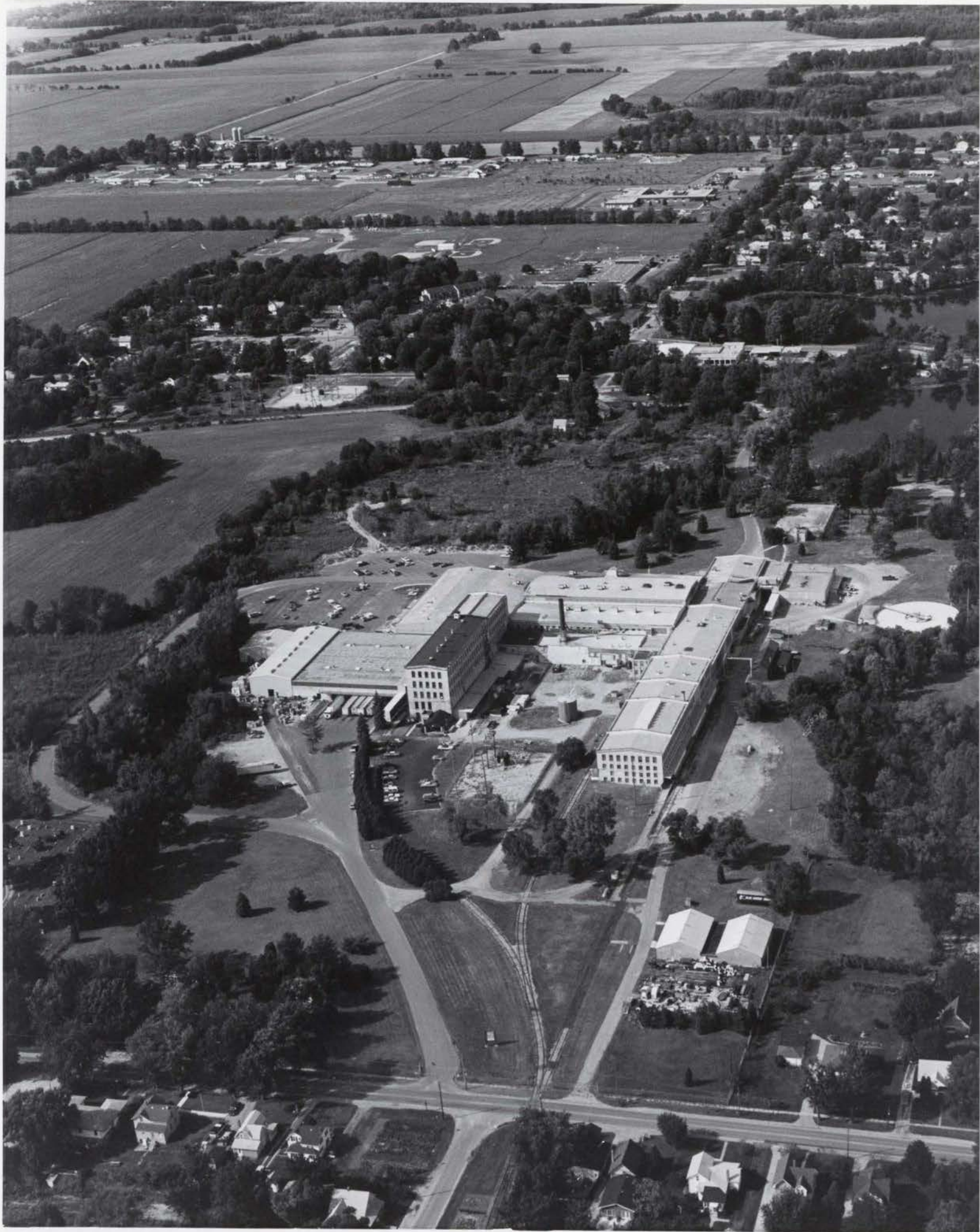


← 2 col crops marked →









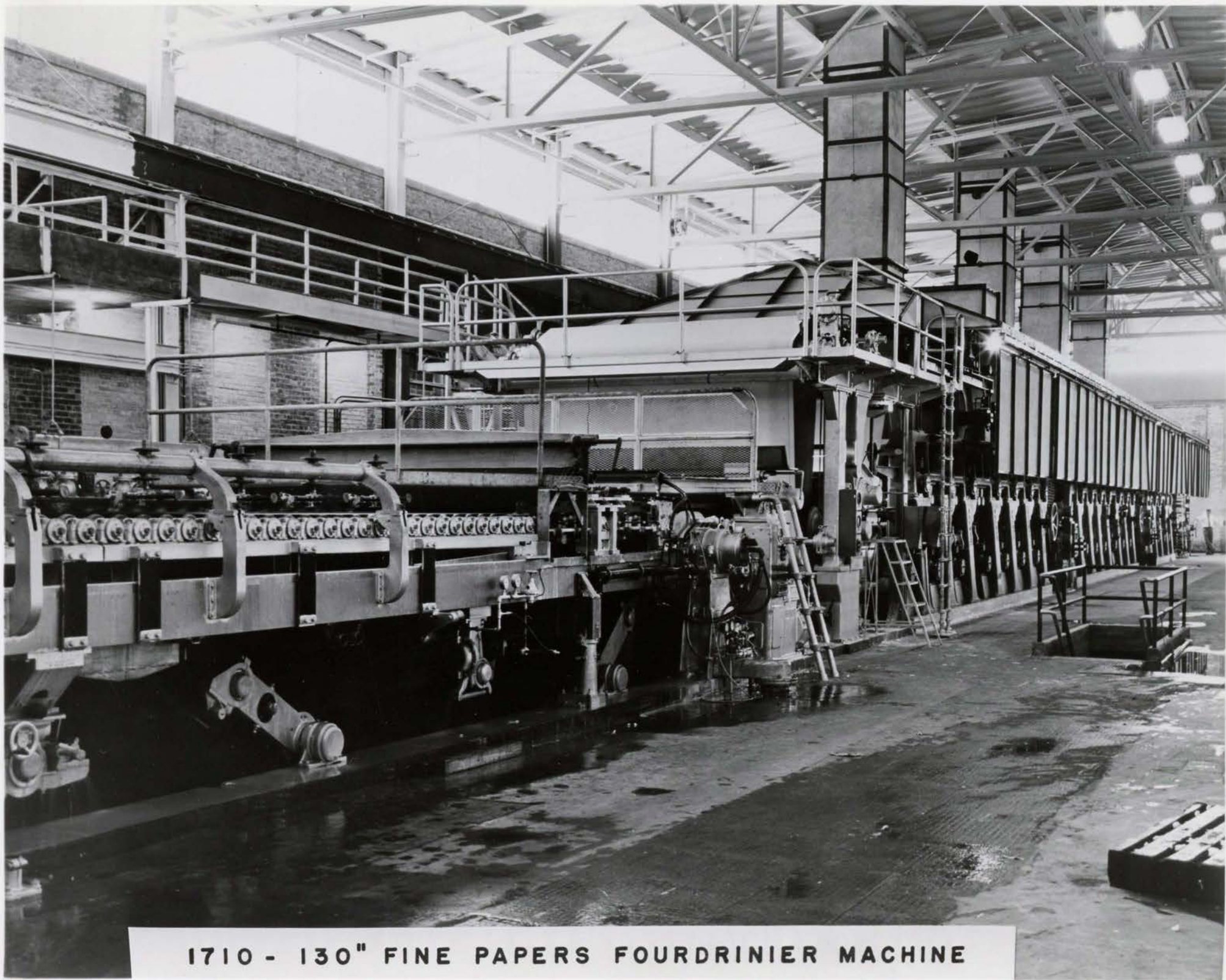


1904









1710 - 130" FINE PAPERS FOURDRINIER MACHINE















































Bridging  
Organics Co.











































CAUTION  
PROPERTY OF  
THE COMPANY

CAUTION LINE DO NOT CROSS

CAUTION LINE DO NOT CROSS

CAUTION LINE DO NOT CROSS

CAUTION LINE DO NOT CROSS





STOP

No











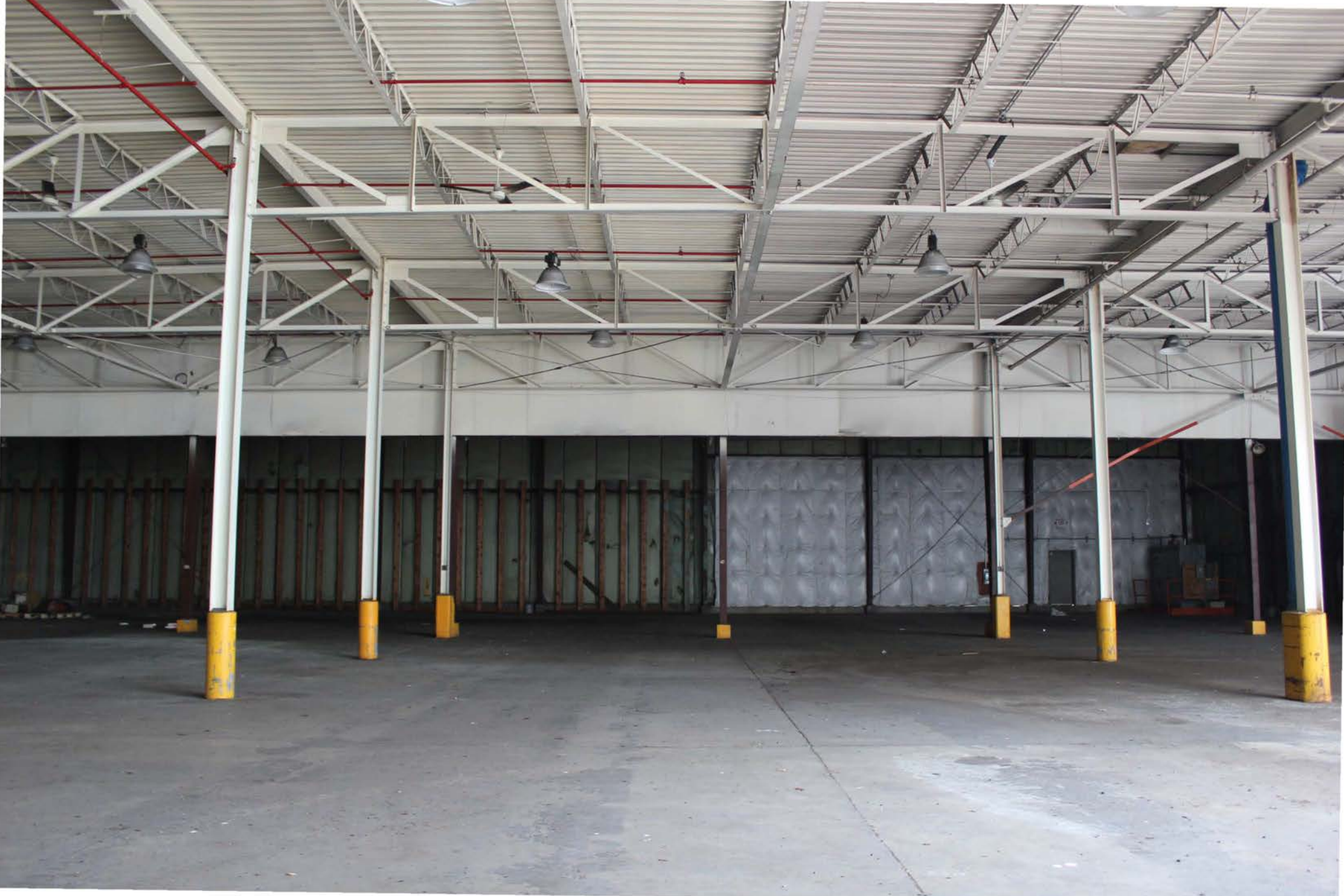




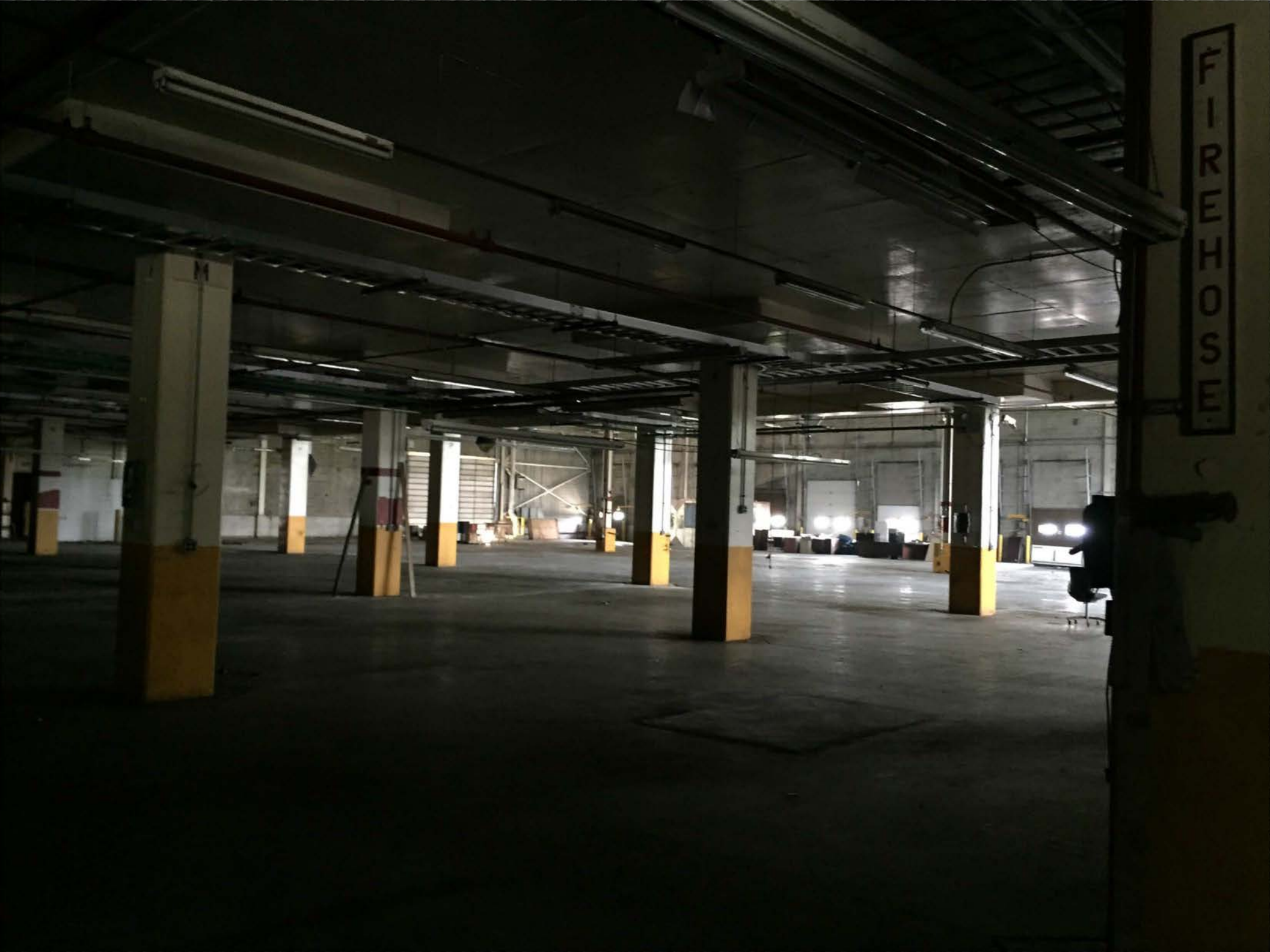








FIREHOSE





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Lee Paper Company Mill Complex  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Kalamazoo

DATE RECEIVED: 7/01/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/26/16  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/10/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/16/16  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000524

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 8.11.16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.





RECEIVED 2280

JUL - 1 2016

RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
NAT. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
CHRISTENSEN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June 14, 2016

Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Lee Paper Company Mill Complex in Kalamazoo County, Michigan, to the National Register of Historic Places. No written comments concerning this nomination were submitted to us prior to our forwarding this nomination to you.

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Robert O. Christensen, National Register Coordinator, at 517/335-2719 or christensenr@michigan.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Brian D. Conway  
State Historic Preservation Officer

