

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in 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: Champion Coated Paper Company  
Other names/site number: Champion Paper and Fibre Company; US Plywood-Champion Papers, Inc; Champion International Corporation; International Paper Company; SMART Papers  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

### 2. Location

Street & number: 601 North B Street  
City or town: Hamilton State: Ohio County: Butler  
Not For Publication:  n/a Vicinity:  n/a

### 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

Barbara Cowen DSHPO for Inventory & Registration July 18, 2019  
Signature of certifying official/Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
   State Historic Preservation Office, Ohio History Connection \_\_\_\_\_  
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:)



Signature of the Keeper

9/9/19

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>4</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>2</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

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

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements

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

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; STONE; CONCRETE

### 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

Champion Coated Paper Company is an industrial site district of six existing buildings along the west bank of the Great Miami River in Hamilton, Ohio. The triangular 36-acre site includes a relatively narrow strip of land between the river and North B Street, with the bulk of the property on the west side of North B Street, extending back to a steep bluff that marks its western boundary. The site is otherwise relatively flat, bordered on the north by Black Street and Rhea Avenue. The property historically included multiple railroad sidings, and remnants of their rights-of-way remain, but all were abandoned many years ago and nearly all rails have previously been removed. No other significant historic site features remain; the vast majority of the property was historically covered by buildings, except for an open space in the northwest quadrant that served as an outdoor staging area. The oldest remaining building in the district is No. 1 Mill, originally constructed in 1902 as the primary manufacturing facility for Champion coated papers, and largely reconstructed after a flood and fire in 1913, with multiple subsequent additions. Although large sections of No. 1 Mill have been demolished, including the former power plant and boiler house at its south end, the building retains its defining façade along North B Street and its relationship to adjacent contributing buildings (Photos 1-8). No. 2 Mill, another large production facility where the company made uncoated paper, was constructed in 1906 and

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occupies the entire site east of North B Street along the river (Photos 8-27). The company's Administration Building, a free-standing 2-story limestone building, was constructed in 1925 near the northeast corner of the district boundary, on the west side of North B Street directly across from the Black Street bridge (Photos 28-34). The Pulp and Chemical Building stretches along the west boundary of the district, elevated above the main grade of the site and built into the side of the bluff. Originally constructed c.1913, the building has had multiple subsequent additions, but like the majority of the complex it had largely assumed its current form by 1925 (Photos 35-41). The district also includes two ancillary storage buildings in the northwest quadrant of the property. Both are concrete block buildings constructed c.1975, post-dating the period of significance, and are therefore considered non-contributing (Photo 42). Other small ancillary buildings and structures represented on the 1950 Sanborn map have previously been removed from the property's northwest quadrant, but none were significant in scale or function. Individual buildings are described in more detail below.

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## **Narrative Description**

### **No. 1 Mill - Contributing**

No. 1 Mill has undergone a number of evolutions throughout its history, including multiple additions, major reconstructions due to damage from fire and flood, and more recent demolition of sizable sections of the building. Although its historic footprint was substantially larger than it is today, No. 1 Mill retains its characteristic east façade lining North B Street (Photos 1-3) as well as a sizable c.1955 addition (Photos 4-5) that forms the other street-fronting elevation facing north onto Rhea Avenue.

No. 1 Mill was the outgrowth of the original timber frame paper coating mill constructed in 1894, although that building was completely destroyed in a massive fire in 1901. It was then replaced by a 450-by-300 foot steel frame building with masonry façades that opened in June 1902, completed just five months after the fire. That building was located near the center of the site, with a finishing room along the North B Street frontage and a large 18-machine coating room behind it to the west. It also included a separate boiler house and power plant to the south, with a paper production mill behind it to the west that in turn connected back to the coating rooms. In 1903, the finishing room was doubled in size with a 50-by-200 foot addition, continuing north along North B Street. Additions to the west side of the expanded finishing room, north of the coating mills, were used for storage and shipping and, although their dates of construction are unknown, they are believed to have been added c.1905-1910. A massive fire and flood in 1913 caused severe damage to No. 1 Mill. Although the plant was completely rebuilt within three months, photographs of the immediate aftermath show that the majority of the existing No. 1 Mill building was lost, including most masonry walls along North B Street (Figures 9, 10 and 11). The 1899 Sanborn map (Figure 1) and historic images from 1906 (Figure 5) also show a significantly different configuration and appearance for No. 1 Mill than what appears in the 1927 and 1950 Sanborn Maps (Figures 2 and 3).

The vast majority of the existing No. 1 Mill building dates to the 1913 reconstruction, including its primary east façade (Photos 1-3). A more recent remaining addition at the far north end of No. 1 Mill was constructed c.1955, creating a large storage and loading area with three large truck

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bays and a single bay at the north end for rail cars (Photo 4), as trucks were then likely replacing rail as the company's primary mode of distribution. The east façade of No. 1 Mill is the building's most distinctive exterior feature, a continuous 2-story red brick wall that fronts directly on North B Street for nearly 600 feet, before angling and stepping back around the rear of the adjacent Administration Building. The repetitive bays are slightly recessed from the flat pilasters and parapet, with simple cast stone brackets and a mousetooth course across the top of each bay, and understated decorative brickwork at the window heads and across the top of the parapet (Photos 1-3). The façade also features large multi-paned steel industrial windows across the full width of most bays, with two levels of windows in the three southernmost bays of the east façade and the two bays wrapping the southeast corner, but a single large opening in the other typical bays. Several bays also included historic door openings, and several others have previously been modified with brick infill and new door and vent louver openings. The character of the east façade continues as the building steps back at the north end, until the c.1955 addition, which is clearly distinct. Although it is also red brick and nearly the same height, the later addition's east and north elevations are flat, undecorated masonry, interrupted only by four east-facing overhead doors (Photos 4-5).

As indicated above, portions of No. 1 Mill have previously been demolished. The power plant, boiler house and paper production sections were all demolished in 2014 as part of an abatement and salvage operation, leaving a large open area to the south and southwest of No. 1 Mill and former interior walls exposed to the elements. The former coating mills and shipping and storage areas west of the remaining portion of the finishing room were then removed in early 2019, leaving the east portions of the machine shop and finishing room, as well as the cafeteria and service spaces in the northeast corner and the c.1955 shipping addition at the north end (Photos 6-7). The more decorative brick of the primary east façade wraps the southeast corner and continue down the remaining portion of the south elevation, where a rail spur previously turned to enter the building (Photo 7). The north elevation of the c.1955 addition is simple common red brick with no decoration, similar to its front and rear walls but with no openings.

The interior of No. 1 Mill is limited to the relatively small area of remaining space at the east and north ends of the building. Each section is comprised predominately of a single large open space, with structural elements exposed and expressed. The primary space at the east end is a representative portion of the former finishing room, with its expansive open character, exposed steel framing, and characteristic steel windows in the large openings across the east elevation. The interior of the c.1955 addition is also open and undivided, with an unfinished character of exposed masonry and structure.

Although several portions of No. 1 Mill have been demolished, those that do remain have experienced few modifications outside the period of historic significance and continue to express the most defining features of the building. The characteristic east façade is largely unaltered and retains its modestly ornamented brick masonry and large steel industrial windows, preserving integrity of materials and design (Photos 1-3). It remains a dominating presence along North B Street and retains its visual relationship to No. 2 Mill and the Administration Building, reinforcing the historic setting and feeling (Photo 8). No significant new additions to the building have occurred since c.1955. The remaining portion of the interior retains its industrial character

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and finishes and are representative of the character and conditions exhibited in No. 1 Mill during the period of significance, lending it integrity of association with the plant's significant history. The loss of the demolished sections has not overly compromised the historic integrity of No. 1 Mill and it continues to contribute to the character of the industrial district.

### **No. 2 Mill - Contributing**

No. 2 Mill is a long and relatively narrow two- and three-story red brick building occupying the strip of land east of North B Street, between it and the Great Miami River (Photos 8-20). The building includes six discrete sections, representing different functions of Champion Paper's uncoated paper production. The southern four sections were all part of the building's original construction in 1906 and are very similar in material and character – simple red brick façades with a corbel detail at the parapet and repetitive bays of multi-light wood windows in rectangular openings at the first floor and segmental arches above, all with cast concrete sills – although they exhibit some differences in height, roofline and interior structure (Photos 10-13, 20). A large addition constructed c.1915 extended No. 2 Mill to the north, with very similar brick detailing but massive multi-light steel windows filling 2-story openings beginning at the second floor above smaller rectangular openings at the first floor (Photos 9, 15). A relatively small trapezoidal addition was constructed c.1925 and caps the north end of the building, with a distinct character of darker red brick that lacks any detailing and metal trim around rectangular window openings (Photos 17-18).

The southernmost section of the building, historically used for pulp storage, is the shortest section at two-stories and has roughly square fixed windows on both levels, although with the typical segmental arches on the second-floor openings (Photo 12). Its south façade also features a stepped parapet that, while still simple and utilitarian in character, constitutes one of the building's most visible architectural expressions (Photo 13). The building's east elevation along the riverfront historically included a covered train platform along the full length of the building's first story, with a shed roof that intersected the wall below the second floor windows. The platform was extended beyond the building to the south before 1927, where it connected to a small storage shed and garage, later expanded to a larger garage before 1950. The separate garage no longer exists, but the platform with its south extension has been enclosed in a 2-story shed-roofed, metal-sided structure that conceals the entire east elevation of the south section, with west-facing truck loading docks created at the south end (Photo 14). The pulp storage section has a wood timber floor and roof structure, the only place it was used in the building, but many of the original columns have since been replaced with steel posts (Photo 21). Other than the exposed structure, the interior of each level is effectively a single open volume. The roof historically included a pair of narrow rectangular monitors running north to south near the center of the building, but they have previously been removed and the openings covered over.

The adjacent section to the north, historically the "beater room" where pulp was mixed with water and other raw ingredients, is similar to the south section but begins a transition to the more typical original façades to the north. Although still only two stories, it is taller than the south section and features the same larger hung windows typical of the other original sections (Photo 12). Its east elevation is effectively a mirror image of the west façade, with the same brick detailing and regularly spaced openings in each of its bays (Photo 20). The interior of the beater

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room features a concrete-encased steel structure on the first floor, with exposed steel columns and trusses on the second level, which was the main production level in all sections of the building (Photo 22). As in many locations on the building's roof, the former rectangular monitors were previously removed and covered over with a new metal deck.

North of the beater room is the machine room, where the raw paper mix was converted to sheets of paper. The façades of the machine room step up to three stories, with an additional roughly square segmental arched fixed window opening at the third level in each bay (Photo 11). The machine room is the tallest section of No. 2 Mill, with stepped parapets at its north and south ends, concealing a pair of large gables running north-south. The east elevation is again a mirror of the west (Photo 20). The interior features the characteristic open volume and exposed structure, with cast iron columns on the first floor supporting a concrete floor structure and exposed steel columns and trusses on the second floor, a 2-story volume that extends up into the roof gables. Once again, the roof historically included long rectangular roof monitors along each gable's ridge, and once again they were previously removed and roofed over.

The northernmost section of the original building was the finishing room, where paper was dried, rolled, sorted, cut and prepared for shipping. Its three-story west and east façades are nearly identical in appearance to those of the machine room, with one rectangular and two segmental arched window openings stacked in each bay, although the parapet is shorter on the flat-roofed finishing room (Photo 10). The interior has a combination of steel and concrete structure in the first floor and the characteristic exposed steel columns and trusses on the second floor, which is again an open two-story volume (Photo 23). The original rectangular rooftop monitors have previously been removed and roofed over, and another rooftop addition has been added in a different location near the east wall, also extending north onto the roof of the c.1915 addition.

The c.1915 addition north of the original finishing room was constructed as an extension of the same space and serving the same functions, with the entire north wall of the original building removed to accommodate the connection (Photo 23). The red brick addition is only slightly taller than the original and has a similar visual character, with simple brick detailing at the parapet and no other ornamentation. The façade of the c.1915 addition is clearly distinguished, however, by its wide bays filled with expansive multi-paned steel windows spanning the upper two stories and shorter openings of the same width below (Photos 8-9). The east elevation has similar openings but bends west as it moves to the north, following the curve of the river (Photos 18-19). A shallow one-story red brick addition with external steel bracing was extended from two bays near the south end of the west façade, added c.1945 to accommodate two large truck bays (Photo 15). The north end of the building was also extensively modified c.1945 to accommodate installation of the research lab. The large steel window openings in the three northern bays were replaced by groups of much smaller rectangular openings filled with glass block, with new sills installed and matching brick installed in the remainder of the opening, laid flush with the adjacent wall to disguise the infill (Photo 16). On the interior a third floor was added on steel columns and beams that begins as an open mezzanine within the finishing room (Photo 24) but then transitions to fully enclosed glazed block corridors and lab spaces constructed within the original volume (Photo 25). A new decorative stair was also added in the northwest corner (Photo 27). The remainder of the interior is unaltered and a visual continuation of the original



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finishing room, with exposed steel and concrete structure on the first floor and a 2-story open volume with exposed steel columns and trusses on the second floor (Photo 24). The roof historically included a series of four sawtooth monitors running east-west, but only the northernmost sawtooth structure remains and it is covered over.

The northernmost section of No. 2 Mill was originally constructed c.1925 and housed the 'box shop,' where paper boxes were made. The three-story building is trapezoidal in plan, intersecting the northwest corner of the c.1915 addition but immediately angling back to a narrower point at the north end, its east wall set back from and angling away from the east wall of the earlier addition (Photos 17-18). Although also red brick, it is a darker shade than the earlier sections, and its rectangular window openings feature a distinct metal trim, further distinguishing it from the remainder of the building. The interior of the c.1925 addition was thoroughly modified c.1945 when it was converted to a research lab with few clues to its original configuration. It now features three stories of traditional office spaces that connected to and supported the lab spaces created in the north end of the c.1915 addition, with glimpses of exposed masonry behind modern drywall and wood ceilings above dropped acoustical tiles (Photo 26).

All sections of No. 2 Mill have experienced similar alterations to varying degrees. In addition to the more significant alterations described above, a large number of window openings have been infilled with brick in all original sections of the building. In all but a few cases, however, the sills were retained and the infill was recessed, maintaining the rhythm of the historic fenestration. In other cases window openings have been modified to create doors, or to accommodate vent louvers or smaller windows, but again most often with the original openings still clearly apparent. Few interior alterations have occurred outside the c.1945 research lab installation, with No. 2 Mill retaining nearly all its historic interior fabric and still clearly expressing its industrial function and character. A very small number of block and frame enclosures have been added at various times but none are significant in scale or character and the open volumes of the interior remain clearly expressed. Overall the building retains historic integrity and architectural character, still clearly conveying its historic design and function as a contributing building in the district.

### **Administration Building - Contributing**

The Champion Paper Administration Building is a free-standing two-story building on a raised basement constructed near the north end of the site in 1925 to house the company's corporate offices (Photo 28). Frederick G. Mueller designed the building and F.K. Vaughn Company was responsible for its construction. Faced entirely in limestone, the building exhibits a simplified classical style, with flat pilasters rising from a slightly projected stone base and supporting a minimally ornamented entablature (Photos 29-30). Each bay between the pilasters features groups of three rectangular windows at the first and second floors, separated by spandrel panels with simple relief ornamentation, all slightly recessed from the face of the piers. Each group of three windows includes a paired casement window in the central opening flanked by undivided fixed windows on each side, and the first-floor windows also include transoms. The center bay on the east façade houses the primary entrance, a pair of recessed bronze doors with sidelights and transom raised above grade and recessed slightly more than the typical bay, with a set of wide stone steps flanked by stone walls topped with ornamental light posts (Photos 29-30). The

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façade's center bay is also marked by a stylized pediment extending above the parapet. The center bay on the rear (west) elevation houses a second, grade-level entrance, again with bronze doors, sidelights, and transom. A stone porte cochere extends from the building at the entry, with three tall narrow window openings extending from the porte cochere to the entablature, which open into the building's primary stair on the interior.

The interior of the Administration Building is highly decorative, particularly in contrast with the remainder of the complex, and remains largely intact, beginning with a marble-covered entry lobby and ornate coffered plaster ceiling (Photo 31). The building retains its historic circulation pattern, including a central north-south corridor, as well as the entry lobby and the historic stair centered on the west wall (Photo 33). Historic corridors on the first and second floors are lined with plaster and stained wood partitions that include wood doors and large transoms and borrow lights, with denticulated plaster crown molding at the ceiling (Photos 32, 34). In some cases, the stained wood partitions and wainscot extend into the office interiors as well. The primary stair is simple in design but wide and lined with marble wainscot. Modern finishes have been added in some office spaces, including dropped ceilings and non-historic finishes and trim, but the building retains a substantial amount of its original plan, fabric and character, lending it a high degree of historic integrity.

### **Pulp and Chemical Building - Contributing**

The Pulp and Chemical Building is a single building comprised of multiple distinct sections, sitting along the west boundary of the district near the south end of No. 1 Mill and elevated substantially above the remainder of the industrial complex (Photo 35). The varied designs of the discrete sections reflect their distinct functions. A long, narrow rectangular section lines the entire west side of the building, running behind the other sections and extending several hundred feet beyond them to the north (Photo 37). It was historically used for pulp and resin storage and is defined by tall, windowless walls and a gable roof with a rectangular monitor along its ridge. A two-story brick block that was used for chemical storage projects out to the east near the center of the pulp storage section, with large rectangular window openings spaced evenly across the façade (Photo 37). Abutting it to the south is the section historically known as the chemical building, a four-story concrete frame block with large rectangular openings in its east façade, flanked on the north by a group of four concrete silos on a rectangular base and on the south by a two-story extension with a large roof monitor (Photo 36). To the south of the chemical building is a large cylindrical concrete tank historically used for bleaching. The exact timing and sequence of construction is unknown, but all existing sections of the building were built between 1913 and 1927. The red brick chemical storage section was subsequently enlarged to the north sometime before 1950, but that addition has since been demolished.

The interior of the Pulp and Chemical Building also varies by section. The long, narrow pulp storage section is a single continuous volume with regularly-spaced angled buttresses projecting from its east and west walls (Photo 38). The chemical storage section is also an open two-story volume, with exposed brick walls and concrete structure (Photo 39). The main chemical building features multiple levels of exposed concrete walls, columns, floors and ceilings, with brick partitions in some locations but predominately open spaces (Photo 40). The two-story section at its south end is a single volume open into the monitor above (Photo 41).

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The Pulp and Chemical Building has experienced several alterations and is also in a more distressed condition than other buildings in the complex. All windows are missing, with most openings left open but others infilled. Long term water infiltration has caused deterioration of masonry and concrete throughout the building. Nevertheless, the building still retains its historic form and overall character and continues to reflect its historic function.

### **Non-Contributing Ancillary Buildings**

Two relatively small ancillary buildings also exist on the site, in the northwest quadrant behind No. 1 Mill. Each building is a one-story concrete block building used to provide storage for maintenance equipment (Photo 42). The larger of the two sits just north of the Pulp and Chemical Building, with the smaller building located further east, closer to the north end of No. 1 Mill. Both buildings were constructed c.1975 and are therefore non-contributing as they are outside the period of historic significance. The buildings are small in scale and have minimal impact on the overall complex, particularly given their location at the rear of the property.

### **Integrity**

The Champion Coated Paper Company district retains historic integrity. Although a sizable area of No. 1 Mill has been demolished, it retains both street-fronting elevations, including its long, characteristic east façade lining North B Street. The remaining façade clearly conveys the scale of No. 1 Mill, as well as its relationship to No. 2 Mill and the Administration Building, supporting its integrity of association and setting. Its remaining exterior and interior details are largely unaltered and representative of its historic character and construction, lending it integrity of design, materials and workmanship. The three other buildings constructed during the period of historic significance - including No. 2 Mill, the Administration Building, and the Pulp and Chemical Building - are minimally altered. A number of window openings in No. 2 Mill have been infilled or otherwise modified, but the historic form and fenestration pattern is still clearly apparent, and representative examples of the historic windows do remain, maintaining strong integrity of design. The interior has experienced very few alterations outside the period of significance and clearly conveys its historic character and function, providing integrity of design, materials, workmanship as well as association. The Administration Building is almost entirely intact, with no significant alterations of the exterior and the interior retaining the vast majority of its historic plan, details and materials. It therefore retains a very high level of integrity with regards to design, materials, workmanship and association. As with No. 2 Mill, windows have been removed from the Pulp and Chemical Building, but it also retains its historic form and fenestration pattern, maintaining strong integrity of design. Its unusual form and interior character also convey its specialized functions, lending integrity of association. The overall historic district still clearly conveys its industrial function and its significance as a major manufacturing plant, and its public appearance along North B Street is largely consistent with the historic, featuring the long repetitive facades of each production mill and the highly finished character of the freestanding Administration Building at the north end. In addition to each individual building's integrity of design, materials, workmanship and association, the organization of the site and the buildings' relationship to each other are also intact and lend a strong sense of its historic setting and feeling. The industrial district retains integrity to convey its historic significance.

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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

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

ARCHITECTURE

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

**Period of Significance**

1902-1961

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

**Significant Dates**

1902; 1906; c.1915, c.1925

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

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

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

**Cultural Affiliation**

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

**Architect/Builder**

Mueller, Frederick G.

F. K. Vaughn Company

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### Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

For its longstanding and highly significant role in the industrial economy of Hamilton, the historic Champion Coated Paper Company district on North B Street is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, in the area of industry at the local level of significance. The period of significance begins in 1906, the date of the earliest remaining building, and ends in 1961, a year that marked major changes for Champion in Hamilton, when they laid off approximately one-third of their employees in the City and moved their administrative headquarters away from the nominated property. Together these changes signaled the beginning of the end to their longstanding local presence and contributions to the city's industrial economy, and also marks a transition away from the family-run local company Peter G. Thompson had created toward a much larger international conglomerate created through subsequent mergers and acquisitions. The Champion Coated Paper Company is also nominated under National Register Criterion C, in the area of architecture at the local level of significance, as a significant and distinguishable industrial district that collectively conveys the historic significance and functions of this 20<sup>th</sup> century paper manufacturer within Hamilton's industrial history, although the individual components may lack architectural distinction.

As a highly significant local industrial operation, which grew from its modest beginnings in Hamilton to become a major international paper company, Champion Coated Paper Company played an important role in the industrial history of the city and established itself as the largest paper company in the world while housing its corporate headquarters and production facilities at the nominated site. Hamilton used its location on the Great Miami River and proximity to the Miami and Erie Canal constructed in 1828, as well as development of a hydraulic power system in 1845 and connections to an extensive rail system beginning in 1851, to establish itself as a significant industrial center in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although a variety of industries flourished, this combination of ample water and power with access to transportation was particularly conducive to paper production, which grew to become a significant sector of the industrial economy in Hamilton and the broader Miami Valley. By the time the Champion Coated Paper Company was established in 1893, the region was already home to several paper plants, but Champion was unique in its sole focus on production of coated papers then produced only on the East Coast. The company thrived and earned the distinction of the world's largest coated paper producer by 1900. Over subsequent decades, an aggressive program of vertical integration to control its supply chain and expansion to include uncoated paper production further solidified the company's role in the paper industry and the local economy of Hamilton, with Champion growing to a peak of 4,000 employees in the late 1920s, providing jobs for 20 percent of the city's population. Although the company began to decline in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and significantly reduced its presence in Hamilton in the 1960s, Champion continued operations at its original site and remained the city's largest employer as late as 1994, before finally closing the plant and ending all ties to Hamilton in 2000.

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## Narrative Statement of Significance

Champion Coated Paper Company was incorporated on November 2, 1893, by founder Peter G. Thomson (1851-1931). Born in Cincinnati in 1851, Thomson began working in publishing at age 16 and opened his own book store, print shop, and bindery in Cincinnati in 1877. Modestly successful at first, Thomson retooled the business in 1882 to focus on publishing children's toy books and nursery rhymes, with his wife Laura Gamble Thomson writing many of the books herself. By 1884, the company had grown to employ approximately 100 people operating five presses, and Thomson sold off his initial book and stationary business to focus entirely on children's books, games, and color printing. Strong sales of valentines led Thomson to a price war with Brooklyn's McLaughlin & Company, a much larger national card company who ultimately bought Thomson's publishing business for \$100,000 in 1887.<sup>1</sup>

Thomson then turned his attention and capital to real estate development, specifically a 187-acre tract of land on the west side of Hamilton, Ohio, that he and his partners purchased in 1891, and a portion of which would eventually become the site of Champion Paper. Hamilton was experiencing a period of substantial growth in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a transportation hub in the Great Miami River valley with access to both raw materials and major population centers that made it especially attractive for industrial development. The Miami and Erie Canal, opened in 1828, ran between Middletown and Cincinnati along a route just east of Hamilton, connected directly into the city by a side canal called the Hamilton Basin<sup>2</sup>. The access to transportation provided by the canal spurred Hamilton's initial industrial growth, which originally focused on pork packing and similar processing and distribution of the surrounding area's agricultural products. Industrial growth increased rapidly after the 1845 opening of the Hamilton Hydraulic, with a dam constructed across the Great Miami River to feed a canal capable of providing both water and power to industries along its four-mile length. By 1852, a variety of industries were using the Hamilton Hydraulic, including a flour mill, sawmills, a cotton factory, woolen mill, marble works, and the city's first paper plant, the Miami Paper Mill (later Beckett Paper).<sup>3</sup> Railroads also entered Hamilton beginning in 1851, and rapidly replaced the canal as the primary transportation network, with the Hamilton Basin filled in 1877.<sup>4</sup> Local industry expanded to include significant metal trades and machine tool operations, as well as establishment of three more paper mills (not including Miami or Champion) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Hamilton's industrial growth was attracting workers, and Thomson aimed to house them in his proposed 'Prospect Hill' subdivision, along the west bank of the Great Miami River. With most of the factories then on the east side of the river, Thomson promised a new bridge across Black Street, which was completed in 1893. He built a small 14 x 18 foot sales office on the west side of the Black Street Bridge along Seven Mile Pike (now North B Street), not far from the current

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<sup>1</sup> John Sargent, ed., *Champion: 100 Years of Papermaking in Hamilton, Ohio* (Champion International Corporation, 1994), 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> James Schwartz, PhD, *Hamilton, Ohio: Its History and Architecture* (Hamilton City Planning Department, 1986), 54-55.

<sup>3</sup> Schartz, *Hamilton, Ohio*, 55-56.

<sup>4</sup> George C. Crout, *Butler County: An Illustrated History* (Windsor Publications, 1984), 28.

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site of the Administration Building.<sup>5</sup> Despite Hamilton's growth, Thomson had minimal success selling lots and the Panic of 1893 ground everything to a halt, quickly ending his foray into real estate. Thomson already had other plans, however, as he began to focus his attention on paper manufacturing. His work in publishing had given him substantial insight into industry trends, and he recognized the rapidly growing demand for coated paper. The land he already owned adjacent to the Great Miami River was also well suited for a paper plant, providing easy access to abundant clean water for a water-intensive industry (at its height around 1930, Champion's daily water use was three times greater than of the entire remainder of the city), as well as close proximity to existing canal and railroad routes for distribution of the finished product.<sup>6</sup>

The 1880s witnessed several major breakthroughs in printing technology, which had previously relied on woodcuts and steel or copper engravings to print images. The development of 'halftone' printing, breaking down illustrations and photographs into a pattern of tiny dots, allowed for more realistic reproduction of light and shadow and thereby ushered in revolutionary changes in printing and advertising. This combined with the invention of the linotype machine and modernization of the photographic process to make printing much faster and more dynamic in appearance, which in turn spurred production of brightly colored advertisements and monthly magazines. Effective halftone printing, however, required a special "enameled book paper" created by applying a coating to the typical rough and uneven paper being produced at the time.<sup>7</sup>

One company, Pepperell, Massachusetts-based Champion Card and Paper Company, was producing the lion's share of coated paper in the early 1890s, having developed and patented a method for coating both sides of the paper simultaneously. Peter Thomson decided to strike a deal with its owner, Charles M. Gage, to establish a western branch of the company on his land in Hamilton. Thomson would create a new Ohio corporation and give 50% of the capital stock to Gage in exchange for perpetual rights to the coating machine patents, as well as initial funding and a few experienced employees from Massachusetts to help set up and operate the new Hamilton mill. Thomson agreed to restrict his sales to the territory west of Buffalo and Pittsburgh for a period of five years. On that basis, in 1893 Thomson incorporated Champion Coated Paper Company with \$100,000 of capital stock.<sup>8</sup>

Less than six months after incorporating, Thomson had built his new coating mill in Hamilton and installed the equipment, beginning operations on April 15, 1894. The building (destroyed by fire in 1901) was approximately 55 feet wide and 400 feet long, providing capacity for six coating machines, with a separate wing to the south for the boiler and engine room and another space housing the color room, where the coating itself was mixed. The small building from which Thomson had marketed his land development became the company's office (destroyed by fire in 1901). The plant opened with 10 employees, including three who had come from Massachusetts, but within three weeks the staff had grown to 25. The first shipment left the Hamilton plant on May 4, 1894.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Schartz, *Hamilton, Ohio*, 66-67.

<sup>7</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 6-8.

<sup>8</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 9.



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In the early years of the company, the Hamilton plant produced about 100 to 150 tons of coated paper each week. Uncoated paper was purchased from two of Hamilton's four existing paper plants, the Fordham Paper Mill and Franklin Paper Mill. Though neither remains today, both plants were just across the river from Champion, with the rolls of uncoated paper delivered by horse-drawn wagons. Rolls were lifted by hand onto the wood framed coating machines. A single 175-horsepower Corliss steam engine, fed by two boilers, powered the Champion plant, which had no electricity and used gas lamps for additional light when needed. The finished product was then loaded back onto horse-drawn carts and taken either to the Miami and Erie Canal Company's station, at High Street and Erie Boulevard, or to an existing siding for the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton Railroad at the Niles Tool Works factory. Most paper sent via the canal was bound for Cincinnati, a seven-hour trip, with most rail shipments sent to Chicago, arriving two days later.<sup>10</sup>

In its first year of operation, Champion Coated Paper Mill recorded sales of \$209,473 (\$6.3 million in 2018 dollars), allowing Thomson to buy out Massachusetts Champion Card and Paper's ownership interest in March 1895 and leaving him in total control of the company. Thomson also began planning the mill's first expansion, completed on January 1, 1896, which more than doubled the size and capacity of the original plant and added a second steam engine to power the equipment. Despite the rapid growth, however, the company was struggling to keep up with the demand for its coated paper and added a night shift early in 1896, installing a steam-driven dynamo to power incandescent lamps and supplement its gas lighting. Champion was also struggling to secure enough uncoated paper stock to feed its coated paper production, so in October 1897 Thomson purchased the defunct Eagle Paper Mill, 20 miles north in Franklin, Ohio, and restarted its machines to begin making his own paper. Annual sales reached \$617,944 in 1898 (\$18.7 million in 2018 dollars), with the mill producing 200 to 275 tons of coated paper per week.<sup>11</sup>

A massive flood hit Hamilton in March 1898, and the Great Miami River reached more than 24 feet above its banks. As the flood began to reach the Champion Paper plant, its workers scrambled to move what they could to higher ground. Despite sustaining substantial damage in the flood, Thomson immediately set his employees to work cleaning up the plant and repairing the machinery, and within three days Champion Paper had resumed normal operations.

Also in 1898, the Hamilton Belt Line Railroad was completed, a short 3-mile loop that connected the Champion site to the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton Railroad, which in turn gave the paper company direct access to raw materials and major markets throughout the United States. Champion's commitment to send at least 600 railcars over the line each year was a significant factor in the line being constructed, a promise it would easily exceed. By 1900, just six years after first beginning production, Thomson had crafted Champion into the largest coated paper producer in the world. Averaging 437 tons a week, the plant's production was twice that of the second largest mill in the United States and more than all other coated paper producers

<sup>10</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 11-14.

<sup>11</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 14-16.

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combined. The company employed 410 workers and exceeded \$1 million in sales (\$29.9 million in 2018 dollars).<sup>12</sup>

Despite its rapid growth, Champion was still limited by the available supply of uncoated paper stock, consuming everything it could produce at its Franklin mill and continuing to purchase additional stock from other companies. Thus, in December 1900 Champion announced plans to construct a new paper mill on its site, reported to be the largest in the world and with three times the capacity of all other local producers combined. The goal was for Champion to produce all of the paper stock it needed to supply its expanding coating business and eliminate the company's reliance on other sources.<sup>13</sup>

Before the new paper mill was completed, however, the existing coating plant was destroyed by a devastating fire. Beginning with a single kerosene lamp that exploded inside the plant on December 22, 1901, the fire quickly spread across the floor igniting the wood coating machines and timber building structure. The coating mill was a total loss, including all machinery and paper stock, and the plant's smokestack also collapsed in what was labeled the largest fire and heaviest loss in Hamilton's history to that point.<sup>14</sup>

Champion immediately set out to rebuild the coating mill from scratch, constructing a 450-by-300 foot masonry building with a steel frame, a third larger than the previous building. Now known as No. 1 Mill, it was completed in five months and opened on June 7, 1902, with 18 coating machines - constructed of metal instead of wood - capable of producing 100 tons of paper a day. The adjacent paper mill addition providing stock to the coaters also opened at the same time, with five papermaking machines and another for cardboard, and was itself capable of producing 125 tons per day. Together the two operations employed 450 workers. Just one year later, the finishing room in the coating mill was doubled in size with a 50-by-200 foot addition.<sup>15</sup>

With its coated paper business thriving and largely self-sufficient, Champion determined to expand into production and sales of uncoated papers around 1905. The 'No. 2 Mill' was constructed in 1906, stretching along the Great Miami River across North B Street from No. 1 Mill. The 900-foot-long masonry and steel frame building housed four papermaking machines and 32 beaters to mix the raw ingredients.<sup>16</sup>

The most important of those ingredients was pulp, and around the same time Champion began looking for its own source to supply its paper production. In the fall of 1905, Thomson acquired a site for a pulp mill in Canton, North Carolina, and 25,000 acres of spruce timber land in its surroundings. The Champion Fibre Company was established as a separate corporation in January 1906 and began logging operations right away. The pulp plant itself was completed in January 1908, supplying the Hamilton mills with 100 tons of both sulphite pulp and soda pulp each day.

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<sup>12</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 14-17.

<sup>13</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 18.

<sup>14</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 19-21.

<sup>15</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 21-23.

<sup>16</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 23.

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These investments in supply chain and capacity would initially pay off, as the company's sales grew from \$1.85 million in 1903 to \$3.36 million in 1906 (\$52.8 million to \$93.7 million in 2018 dollars). However, The Banker's Crisis of 1906 caused a stock market decline and hundreds of businesses failed, with the general economic malaise leaving Champion with lower than expected demand and excessive debt from the construction of No. 2 Mill in Hamilton and the North Carolina pulp plant. Fortunately for the company, Thomson was able to borrow what he needed to keep Champion afloat, which amounted to \$4.2 million (\$117.2 million in 2018 dollars). By 1910, however, Champion was back on stable footing and remained atop its perch as the largest coated paper plant in the world.<sup>17</sup>

In March 1913, another disaster struck Hamilton and Champion Paper, as the Great Miami River suffered a second massive flood that crested even 10 feet higher than the flood of 1898. The Champion plant was again almost fully submerged, and in the midst of the flood a major fire erupted in the No. 1 Mill, burning everything above the water line and supplanting the mill's earlier fire as the largest in Hamilton's history. Despite extensive damage to the plant and the entire region, Champion immediately set out to rebuild once again and was back in operation within 3 months. In the aftermath of the flood, Champion also provided water and electricity to Hamilton neighborhoods on the west side of the river, which had been cut off from their existing supply on the east side.<sup>18</sup>

Despite losing workers and supplies to the war effort, Champion benefited from large government contracts during World War I, with annual income ranging from \$5.2 million in 1914 to over \$8 million in 1919 (\$130.6 million and \$116.1 million, respectively, in 2018 dollars). The company continued its growth through the 1920s, expanding capacity, sales, and employment, but began to shift focus away from expansion to an emphasis on quality and service, crafting a corporate image centered on the contributions and collaborations of the many individual employees who made up the 'Champion Family.' The company also devoted considerable effort to labor relations, and established a reputation for fair treatment of its workers. From the beginning, Thomson had established automatic pay increases for all employees after 5 years of service, and in 5-year increments thereafter. Champion also offered a free medical clinic, free life insurance, and a company store that operated from 1917-1934, where employees could purchase a wide range of groceries and supplies at wholesale cost. Nevertheless, the pay at Champion was generally low by Hamilton standards and neither pension plans nor paid vacation were offered until the 1940s.<sup>19</sup>

The 1920s also saw additional developments within Champion to keep or set the pace of industry trends. In 1924 Champion created an advertising department, run by Peter Thomson's son Alexander, with a display showroom that included a variety of finished printed materials to demonstrate the possibilities of their papers. The company also designed and registered a trademark logo – a mounted knight in full armor holding a lance – which they first used in 1925,

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<sup>17</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 24-25.

<sup>18</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 25-29.

<sup>19</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 31-36.

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registered in 1927, and continued to use until 1961. A research department was also established in 1926, with some 30 scientists working in the company's laboratory and continually focused on improving quality and consistency. That same year Champion made its first colored paper, and the mill was producing 400 tons of paper products every day.<sup>20</sup>

The company's increased focus on its corporate culture and public image during the 1920s is reflected in the 1925 construction of the Administration Building, with its neoclassical stone façade and finely decorated interior contrasting with the utilitarian character of the manufacturing buildings in the district. An October 1924 article in the Hamilton Evening Journal announcing the project lauded the beauty and functionality of the new building, designed by architect Frederick G. Mueller and constructed by the F.K. Vaughn Building Company, specifically citing its Bedford stone exterior, American walnut interior trim, and use of marble and mosaic tile flooring.<sup>21</sup> In addition to providing needed space for the company's expanding administrative functions, the handsome design of the Administration Building also presented a more polished professional face to the public.

The Great Depression began to affect Champion around 1931, the same year founder Peter Thomson died and his son Alexander became president of the company. Coated paper products, which were higher grade and more expensive, suffered the most, with that mill often running at one-half to one-third of its possible capacity. Less expensive uncoated paper remained in demand, however, keeping No. 2 Mill running at or near full capacity. Beginning early in 1930, Champion had also begun investing in plant improvements to increase productivity and reduce costs, helping it keep prices lower and sales up despite weaker demand. Thus in 1932, *Fortune* magazine reported that Champion's mill was running 24 hours a day, six days a week, at 95% capacity, with the company holding over \$36 million in assets (\$659.8 million in 2018 dollars) and a net surplus of nearly \$8.5 million (\$155.8 million in 2018 dollars). Champion's continued success during the Great Depression was a significant stabilizing factor in Hamilton, keeping thousands employed and money circulating through the local economy when many other businesses were struggling and failing.<sup>22</sup>

Logan Thomson, Peter's youngest son, succeeded his brother Alexander as president of Champion in 1935 and oversaw several substantial changes to the company. In 1935 Champion Coated Paper Company merged with Champion Fibre Company – its pulp production subsidiary in Canton, North Carolina – to create the Champion Paper and Fibre Company. In 1936, a new pulp plant was constructed in Pasadena, Texas, to help meet increasing demand at the Hamilton mill. By 1939, however, the plant was producing more pulp than needed in Hamilton so a new paper machine was installed in Pasadena in 1940. Developed by Champion's research department, the machine made and coated the paper in a single operation, with workers brought in from Hamilton to handle the installation and operation. Then, in 1937, Champion started a clay mining operation in Sandersville, Georgia, gaining control of the supply chain for another important raw ingredient to both coated and uncoated paper.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 33-35, 39.

<sup>21</sup> "New Office Building for Champion Coated Paper Co.," *Hamilton Evening Journal*, 24 October 1924.

<sup>22</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 41-47.

<sup>23</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 47-48.

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World War II presented new challenges for Champion in the 1940s, including a reduction in civilian demand for paper, government restrictions on the types of paper that could be produced, material and labor shortages, and substantial tax increases. The company maintained substantial government contracts, however, and was declared an “essential industry” by the War Manpower Commission in 1943. Company publications highlighted the many uses of paper for the war effort, including maps, ration cards, instructions, correspondence, bonds, and tax stamps. More novel uses for paper were also developed, including a variety of paper packaging products designed to substitute for metal and tin. Like many manufacturers, with a large number of its regular workers serving in the military, Champion was forced to hire additional women – many of whom assumed jobs typically reserved for men – as well as local teens, 450 of whom were working at the plant at the end of the war.<sup>24</sup>

When Logan Thomson died in 1946, the presidency of Champion passed to Reuben Robertson, Sr., a son-in-law to Peter Thomson and 41-year veteran of the company, with most of his career spent managing the North Carolina pulp plant. Just four years later in 1950, Robertson’s son Rueben Robertson, Jr., became president, determined to continue Champion’s growth and efficiency in a year when it was already producing 429,000 tons of paper and generating net earnings of nearly \$85 million. Robertson Jr. was particularly focused on expanding the market for Kromekote, a new product developed by Champion that was coated, dried, and finished in one operation, resulting in an especially smooth and glossy paper ideally suited to magazine covers, brochures, post cards, and the like. Although the company’s research department had begun working on the Kromekote process as soon as it was founded in 1926, received a patent in 1929, and began marketing the product in 1939, it was not until after World War II that it became a significant focus and Reuben Robertson, Jr., is credited with aggressive expansion of the company’s Kromekote production during his tenure.<sup>25</sup>

Reuben Robertson, Jr., was killed in an automobile accident in 1960 and became the last member of the Thomson family to serve as Champion’s president. He was succeeded by Karl Bendetsen, an attorney who had joined Champion in 1952 and was then serving as vice president of operations. Bendetsen was forced to face a difficult reality confronting the entire paper industry at the time. Although U.S. paper consumption reached an all-time high in 1960, profits were shrinking across all companies despite increasing sales and production. Champion was not immune as its profits were cut nearly in half from 1957 to 1959, dropping from \$14.28 million to \$7.68 million (\$127.6 million to \$66.3 million in 2018 dollars). The costs of materials and labor were rising, but the industry as a whole was oversupplied and there was no way to raise or even maintain existing pricing.<sup>26</sup>

Needing capital to modernize its mills and remain competitive, Champion undertook substantial cost-cutting measures in the early 1960s. The company reduced inventories and eliminated several of the 96 different grades of paper it was then producing but was also driven to a massive

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<sup>24</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 50-54.

<sup>25</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 55-58.

<sup>26</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 58-60.

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layoff. On March 31, 1961, subsequently dubbed “Black Friday” by Champion employees, the company laid off approximately one-third of all production workers and an equal or larger proportion of its technical and administrative staff.<sup>27</sup> The changes managed to stabilize the company and increase net income, but the layoffs were undoubtedly a great shock to many workers, particularly in Hamilton where Champion had been a remarkably resilient and consistent employer for generations.

Champion’s “Black Friday” marks a significant turning point in the company’s history, and particularly its relationship to Hamilton and the nominated property. Leadership had shifted away from the Thomson family, seemingly decreasing emotional connections to the original site. Despite the reduction of its workforce, Champion’s physical presence in Hamilton did continue to expand during the 1960s. The company purchased a sizable property across the Great Miami River from No. 2 Mill, acquiring four factory buildings, a steam plant, and two office buildings from the former Baldwin-Hamilton-Lima Corporation in 1960. The factory buildings, located on either side of North Third Street, were recast as Champion’s No. 4 Mill and No. 5 Mill, and the research department moved into one of the former office buildings near Third and Vine streets. In August 1961, Champion also moved its corporate offices from the Administration Building adjacent to Mill No. 1 to a new headquarters complex dubbed ‘Knightsbridge,’ constructed south of downtown Hamilton at the intersection of Neilan Boulevard and Knightsbridge Drive (formerly South Avenue).<sup>28</sup> All of these buildings remain standing but are omitted from the nomination, as they represent a later phase of the company’s development that diverted away from the focus on the original site.

The biggest change for Champion, and its Hamilton connections, came in 1967 when the company merged with U.S. Plywood and moved its corporate headquarters to New York City. U.S. Plywood was a major manufacturer of plywood, lumber, and other building products, operating 90 plants and generating annual sales of \$537 million at the time (\$4 billion in 2018 dollars). The merger was intended to capitalize on more efficient use of the companies’ combined timberlands, reducing raw material costs for each operation. Originally known as U.S. Plywood-Champion Papers Inc., the new company was renamed Champion International Corporation in 1972.<sup>29</sup>

The merger with U.S. Plywood did not fare as well as had been hoped, and Champion remained relatively stagnant during the 1970s. In 1984, Champion purchased St. Regis Corporation, one of the largest producers of magazine paper and newsprint in the U.S., for \$1.8 billion (\$4.4 billion in 2018 dollars). With the acquisition, Champion then controlled 6.4 million acres of timberland, making it one of the country’s largest private landowners. After a brief rise in Champion’s net income, however, the paper industry entered a severe slump beginning in 1989, with Champion’s low point coming in 1993, when the company suffered a net loss of \$156 million (\$271 million in 2018 dollars).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 60.

<sup>28</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 60-61.

<sup>29</sup> Sargent, *Champion*, 60-62.

<sup>30</sup> “Champion International Corporation History,” *International Directory of Company Histories*, Vol. 20 (St. James Press: 1998).

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Champion rebounded strongly in the mid-1990s and posted its best year ever in 1995, with \$6.97 billion in net sales and \$772 million net income (\$11.5 billion and \$1.3 billion, respectively, in 2018 dollars). The company also expanded internationally with subsidiaries operating in Canada and Brazil, and exports distributed around the world.<sup>31</sup> Large mergers defined the paper industry in the late 1990s, however, and Champion was not immune. In May 2000, Champion International Corporation accepted a purchase offer from International Paper, a New York-based giant roughly five times the size of Champion. At the time of the merger, Champion had \$5.3 billion in revenue (\$7.7 billion in 2018 dollars) and 18,000 employees, but International Paper had \$24.6 billion in revenue (\$35.9 billion in 2018 dollars) and 99,000 employees.<sup>32</sup>

At the time of International Paper's acquisition, Champion's Hamilton mill employed 800 people, down from its peak of over 4,000 in the late 1920s. It remained Hamilton's largest employer as late as 1994, when it had over 1,400 employees. Within six months of its acquisition, however, International Paper closed the mill and sold the property, severing Champion's last ties to Hamilton. The mill was acquired by SMART Papers, who operated a portion of the facility with approximately 200 employees until it closed in early 2012. Another small paper company in Hamilton also closed at the end of 2011, marking the first time since 1848 the city was without an operating paper mill.<sup>33</sup>

Architecturally, the Champion Coated Paper Company industrial complex is unrivalled in its scale and range of buildings reflecting the industrial process and history of Hamilton's leading manufacturer and employer during the first half of the 20th century. Industrial/Manufacturing properties in Hamilton recorded in the Ohio Historic Inventory mostly date from the 1880s through the 1930s and display brick industrial design. Examples include single brick constructed, gable roof warehouses displaying brick corbelling such as the Hamilton Fruit & Produce Co., 1880 (BUT0000409); the J. W. Faucett Traction Co., 1909 (BUT0091909); and the Kelley's Carpenter Building, 1914 (BUT0081509). Other larger scale industrial complexes include several buildings associated with the Beckett Paper Co., 1885-1930 (BUT0022309) and remnants of complexes associated with the C. Benninghofer & Sons textile manufacturers, 1880, (BUT0095609) and the Fred J. Myers Manufacturing Co., 1886 (BUT0084809). All of these examples are located east of the river (opposite side from Champion) and concentrated along railroad lines. Many properties associated with Hamilton's late 19th and early 20th century industrial history are gone, such as the 1895 Diebold Inc. brick industrial complex (BUT0093409) and warehouses built in 1878-1920 (BUT0028109) and 1880 (BUT0089209). The Champion Coated Paper Company district is a cohesive industrial complex including mill buildings dating to the early history of the company, pulp & chemical building reflecting the technology and manufacturing process associated with company, and the administration building. The district is a significant representation of early 20th century industrial architecture in Hamilton and adds to understanding the overall plan and individual components associated with the manufacturing process.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Associated Press, "International Paper in Deal for Purchase of Champion," *The New York Times*, 13 May 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Blount, Jim, "After 164 Years, Papermaking Scheduled to End in Hamilton," *Hamilton Journal-News*, republished by Lane Public Library, 2011.

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### Archaeological Potential

Industrial sites like the Champion Coated Paper Company complex can be considered as likely sites to yield important information to our understanding of Ohio's industrial history.

Archaeological investigations may provide information about how such industrial sites functioned and how changes in technology impacted the paper making process and are evidenced through physical changes to the buildings, the site, and their relationship to one another. Physical investigations of the site in comparison to historic maps and building plans could provide an additional level of understanding of the function and use of the site and how it evolved over time. Currently, no archaeological excavations have occurred at the site and the property is not nominated under National Register Criterion D, however, the site likely has archaeological potential.

### Summary

The paper industry was the chief economic driver in Hamilton for over 150 years, and Champion Paper was the largest and most significant company in the city during much of that period. From its base in Hamilton, Champion was also a significant contributor to the paper industry nationally and internationally. The district's buildings are representative of the site's combination of administrative and production functions during the historic period, and reflect its greatest period of growth and economic impact during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The historic district is clearly recognizable as a major local industrial complex and possesses historic integrity to convey its significance.



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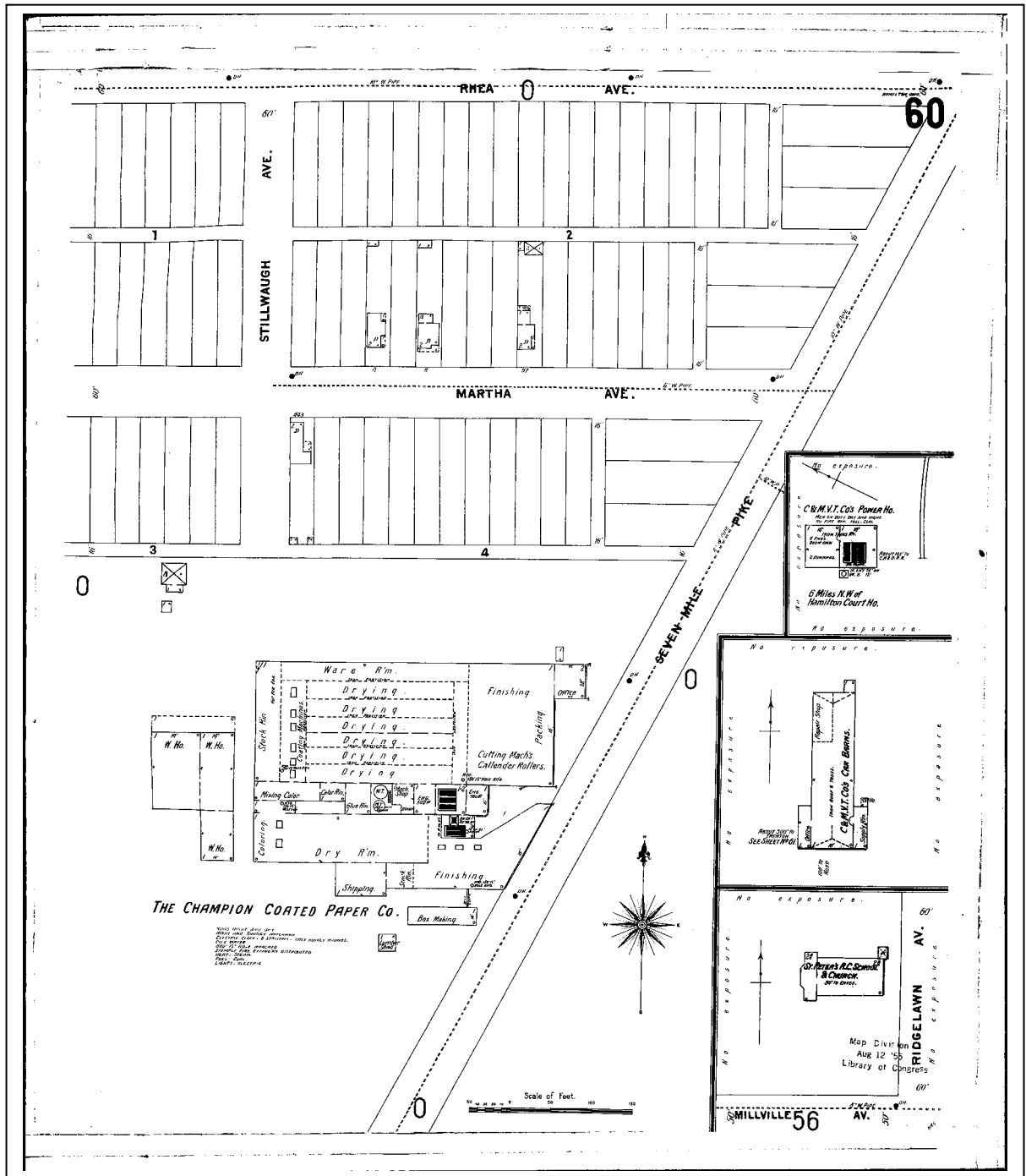


Figure 1: 1899 Sanborn Map, Ohio Web Library

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Butler County, Ohio  
County and State

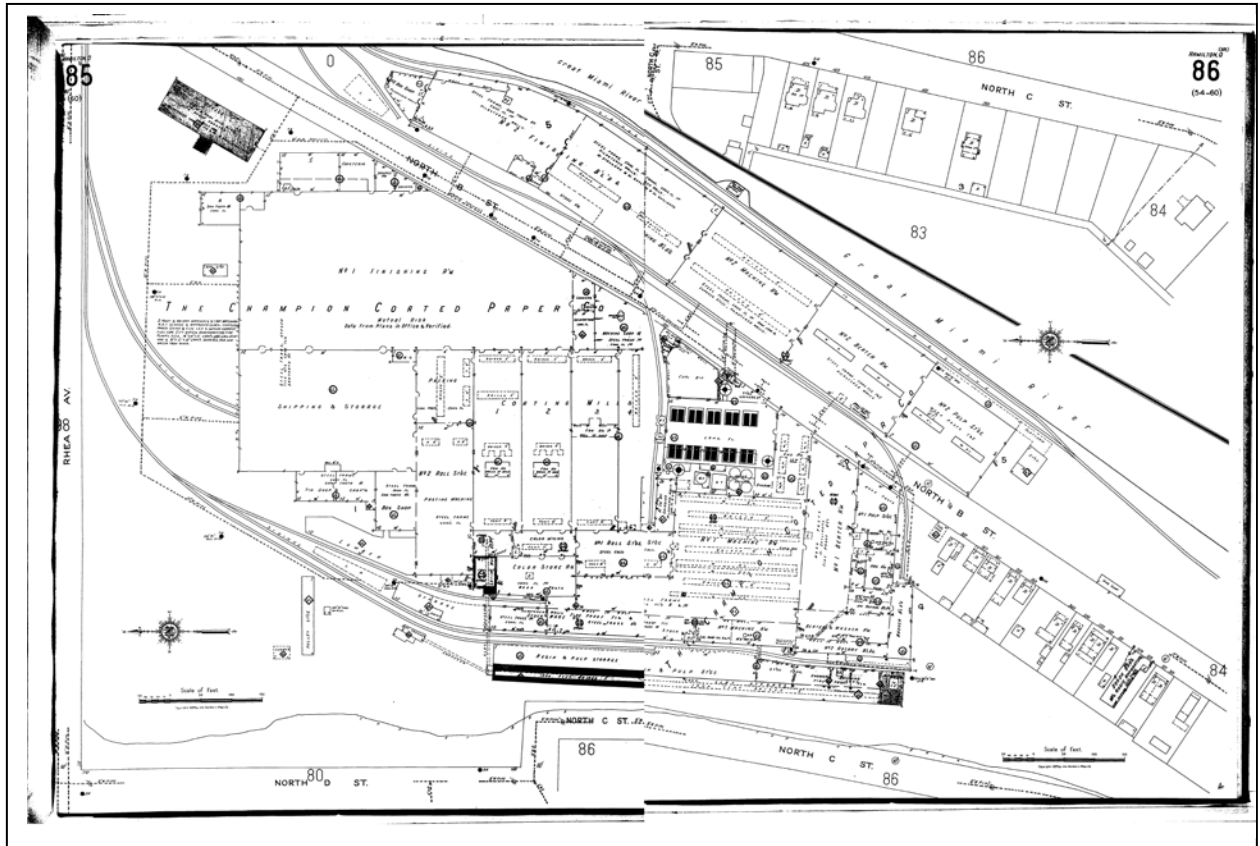


Figure 2: 1927 Sanborn Map, sheets 85 and 86 combined, *Ohio Web Library*

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State

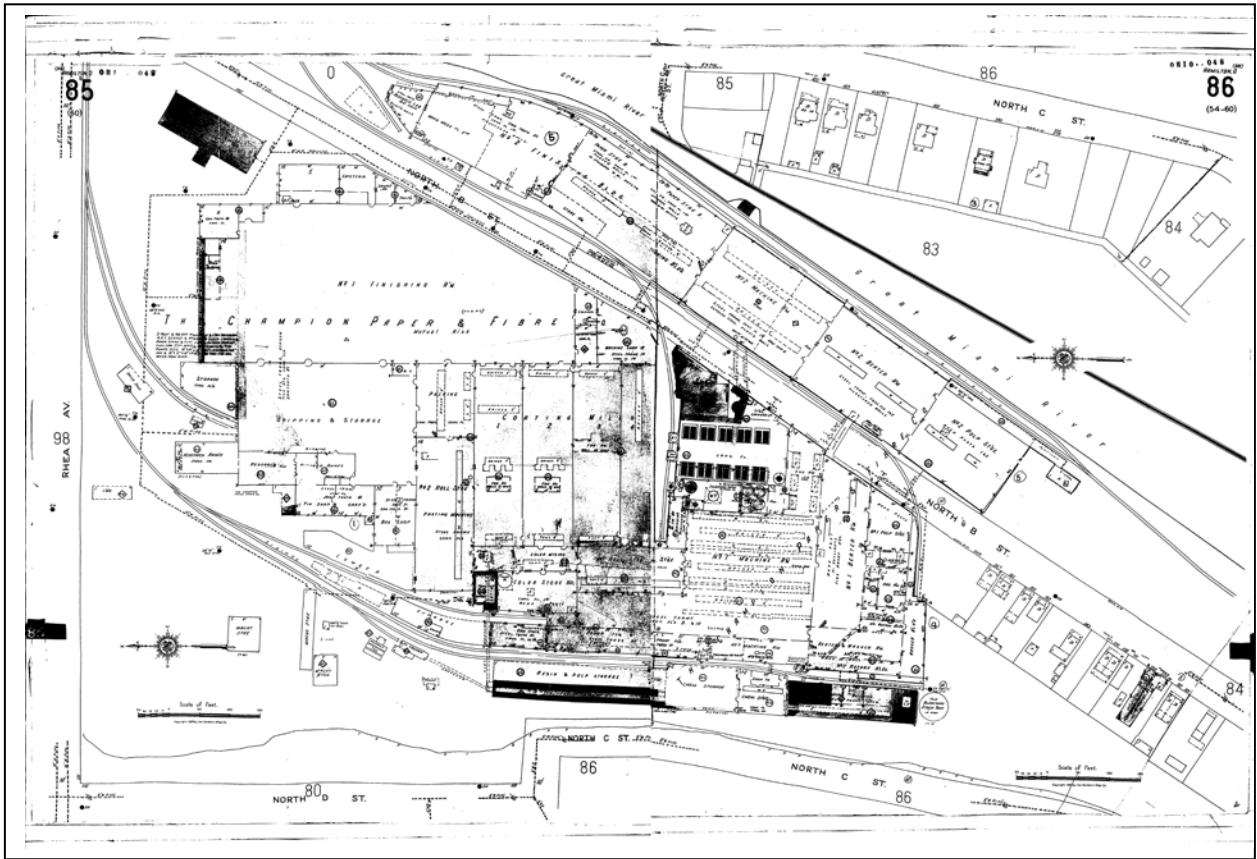


Figure 3: 1950 Sanborn Map, sheets 85 and 86 combined, Ohio Web Library

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State



Figure 4: Site prior to construction, 1893, *Hamilton Lane Library*

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State



Figure 5: Complex as seen from west bluff, 1906, *Hamilton Lane Library*

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

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County and State



Figure 6: Birdseye illustration of main complex, as seen from northeast, 1906, Hamilton Lane Library

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State



Figure 7: No. 2 Mill under construction, 1906, *Hamilton Lane Library*

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State



Figure 8: No. 2 Mill from east bank of Great Miami River, 1913,  
*Hamilton Lane Library*



Champion Coated Paper Company  
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Figure 9: No. 1 Mill (left) and No. 2 Mill (right), following 1913 flood/fire, as seen from south, 1913, *Hamilton Lane Library*

Champion Coated Paper Company  
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Figure 10: No. 1 Mill (right) and No. 2 Mill (left), following 1913 flood/fire, as seen from north, 1913, *Hamilton Lane Library*

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

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County and State



Figure 11: Extensive damage to No. 1 Mill from 1913 flood/fire, 1913,  
*Hamilton Lane Library*

Champion Coated Paper Company  
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County and State



Figure 12: Birdseye view of complex from northwest, 1935, *Hamilton Lane Library*

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

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County and State

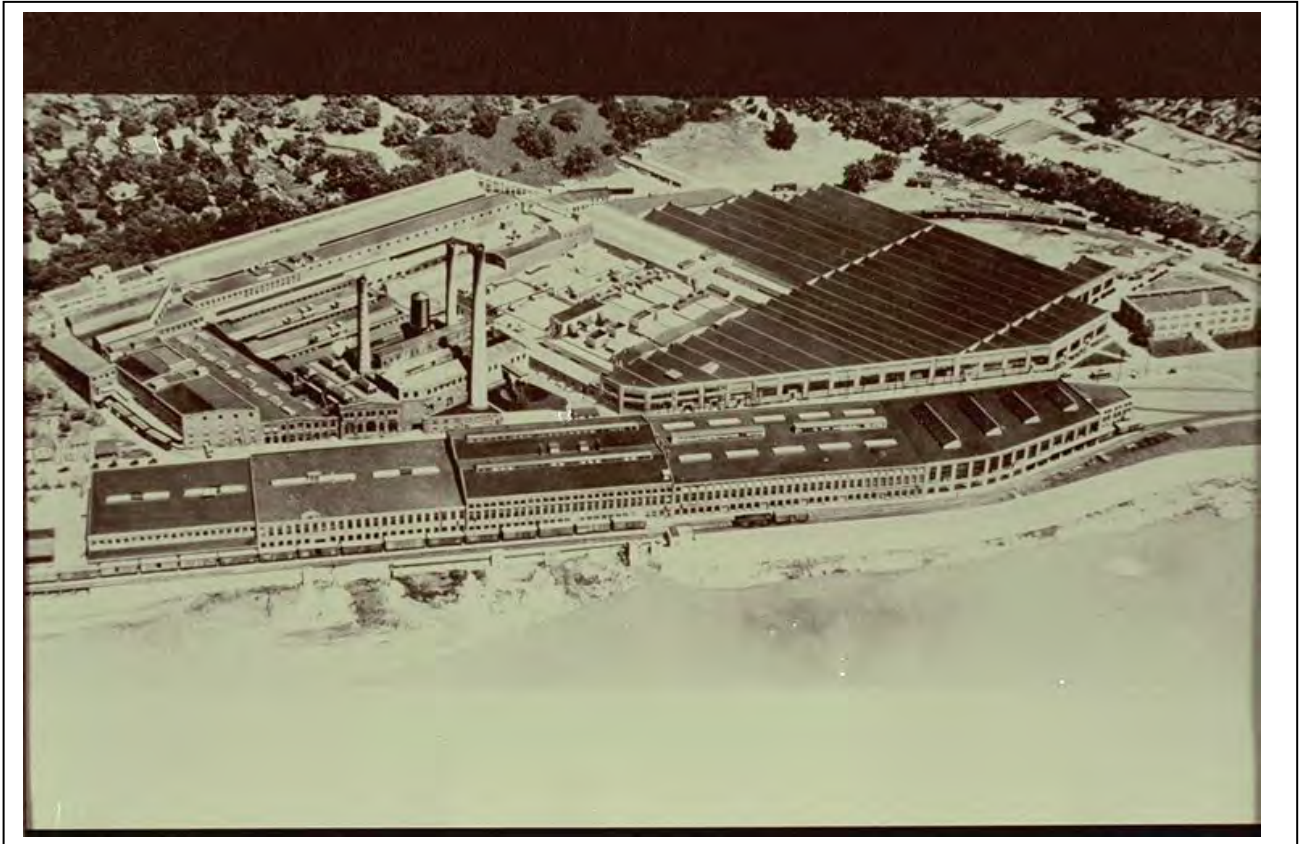


Figure 14: Birdseye view from east, 1940, *Hamilton Lane Library*

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State



Figure 14: Administration Building, 1938, *Hamilton Lane Library*

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Associated Press, "International Paper in Deal for Purchase of Champion." *The New York Times*, 13 May 2000.

Blount, Jim. "After 164 Years, Papermaking Scheduled to End in Hamilton." *Hamilton Journal-News*, republished by Lane Public Library, 2011.

"Champion International Corporation History." *International Directory of Company Histories, Vol. 20* (St. James Press: 1998).

Crout, George C. *Butler County: An Illustrated History* (Windsor Publications, 1984).

"New Office Building For Champion Coated Paper Co." *Hamilton Evening Journal*, 24 October 1924.

Sargent, John Sargent, ed. *Champion: 100 Years of Papermaking in Hamilton, Ohio* (Champion International Corporation, 1994).

Schwartz, James, PhD. *Hamilton, Ohio: Its Architecture and History* (The Hamilton City Planning Department, 1986).

---

### 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
- Other

Name of repository: Lane Public Library, Hamilton

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** BUT0027509, BUT0028509

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 36.1

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: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

#### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 16 | Easting: 709707 | Northing: 4364986 |
| 2. Zone: 16 | Easting: 710186 | Northing: 4365008 |
| 3. Zone: 16 | Easting: 709816 | Northing: 4364351 |
| 4. Zone: 16 | Easting: 709683 | Northing: 4364440 |



Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State

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

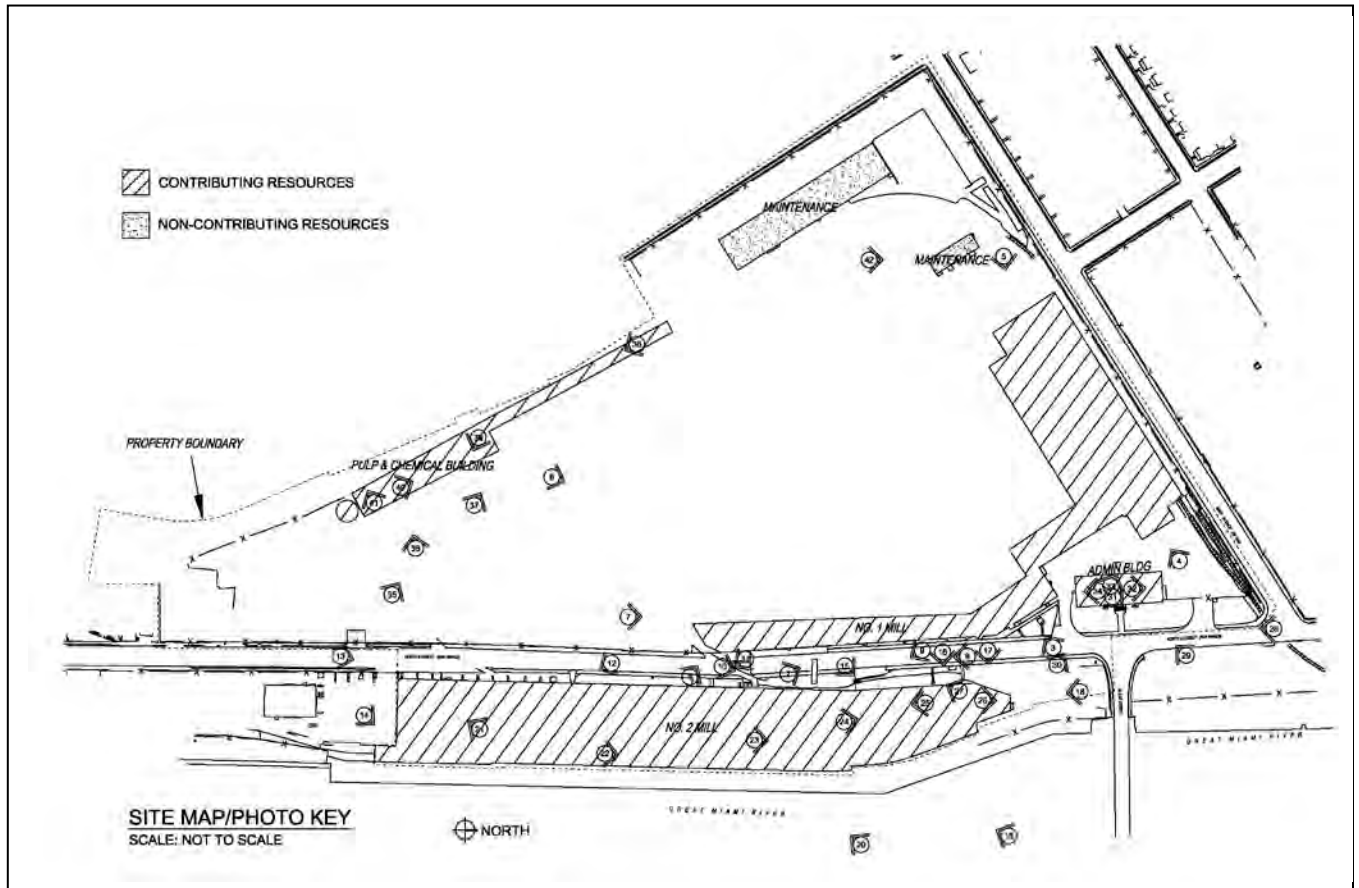
The site is bounded on the east by the Great Miami River, on the north by Black Street and Rhea Avenue, and on the west by the bluff topped by North C Street. The south boundary is abutted by adjacent properties on each side of North B Street. It now consists of four separate land parcels, Butler County Parcel Numbers P6411020000007, P6411020000008; P6411020000010, and P6411020000011.

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

The district includes all property historically associated with the Champion Coated Paper Company's development and operation of its original and primary production complex.

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

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Site Boundary Map

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State

---

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Peter Ketter, Director of Historic Preservation  
organization: Sandvick Architects Inc.  
street & number: 1265 W. Sixth Street, #200  
city or town: Cleveland state: OH zip code: 44113  
e-mail psetter@sandvickarchitects.com  
telephone: 216-621-8055  
date: February 27, 2018

---

## 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.)

## 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: Champion Coated Paper Company

City or Vicinity: Hamilton

County: Butler

State: OH

Photographer: Peter Ketter

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State

Date Photographed: February 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo #1

No. 1 Mill southeast corner, camera facing northwest.

Photo #2

No. 1 Mill east façade, camera facing northwest.

Photo #3

No. 1 Mill, north end of east façade, camera facing southwest.

Photo #4

No. 1 Mill c.1955 addition, east elevation, camera facing west.

Photo #5

No. 1 Mill c.1955 addition, west elevation, camera facing east.

Photo #6

No. 1 Mill, demolished sections at rear (west), camera facing northeast.

Photo #7

No. 1 Mill south elevation, remaining east end (right) and demolished sections (left), camera facing north.

Photo #8

View down North B Street of No. 1 Mill east façade (right) and No. 2 Mill west façade (left), camera facing south.

Photo #9

No. 2 Mill west façade, original section (right) and c.1915 addition (left), camera facing southeast.

Photo #10

No. 2 Mill west façade, original section, camera facing northeast.

Photo #11

No. 2 Mill west façade, original section, camera facing southeast.

Photo #12

No. 2 Mill west façade, original south sections, camera facing southeast.

Champion Coated Paper Company

Butler County, Ohio

Name of Property

County and State

Photo #13

No. 2 Mill south elevation (right) original section and west façade (left), camera facing northeast.

Photo #14

No. 2 Mill dock enclosure at south end, camera direction northeast.

Photo #15

No. 2 Mill, c.1945 dock addition at c.1915 addition, camera direction northeast.

Photo #16

No. 2 Mill west façade, modified north bays of c.1915 addition, camera facing east.

Photo #17

No. 2 Mill west façade, c.1925 addition, camera facing east.

Photo #18

No. 2 Mill north elevation, c.1925 addition, camera facing south.

Photo #19

No. 2 Mill east elevation and river, camera facing southwest.

Photo #20

No. 2 Mill east elevation and river, original sections, camera facing southwest.

Photo #21

No. 2 Mill, typical interior at south end, camera facing southwest.

Photo #22

No. 2 Mill, typical interior original sections, camera facing northeast.

Photo #23

No. 2 Mill, original finishing room interior, c.1915 addition beyond, camera facing northeast.

Photo #24

No. 2 Mill, c.1915 addition interior, camera facing northwest.

Photo #25

No. 2 Mill, c.1945 research lab modifications at north end, camera facing south.

Photo #26

No. 2 Mill, typical office alterations on interior of c.1925 addition, camera facing north.

Champion Coated Paper Company

Butler County, Ohio

Name of Property

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Photo #27

No. 2 Mill, c.1945 stair installed in c.1915 addition, camera facing southwest.

Photo #28

Administration Building, east façade and setting, camera facing southwest.

Photo #29

Administration Building east façade, camera facing southwest.

Photo #30

Administration Building east façade, camera facing northwest.

Photo #31

Administration Building, main lobby interior, camera facing northeast.

Photo #32

Administration Building, first-floor interior corridor, camera facing south.

Photo #33

Administration Building, historic central stair, camera facing northwest.

Photo #34

Administration Building, second-floor interior corridor, camera facing south.

Photo #35

Pulp and Chemical Building east elevation, camera facing northwest.

Photo #36

Pulp and Chemical Building east elevation, chemical building section, camera facing northwest.

Photo #37

Pulp and Chemical Building east elevation, chemical storage (center) and pulp storage (right) sections, camera facing northwest.

Photo #38

Pulp and Chemical Building interior, pulp storage section, camera facing southeast.

Photo #39

Pulp and Chemical Building interior, chemical storage section, camera facing southeast.

Photo #40

Pulp and Chemical Building interior, chemical building section, camera facing northwest.

Champion Coated Paper Company

Butler County, Ohio

Name of Property

County and State

Photo #41

Pulp and Chemical Building interior, chemical building section, south end, camera facing southwest.

Photo #42

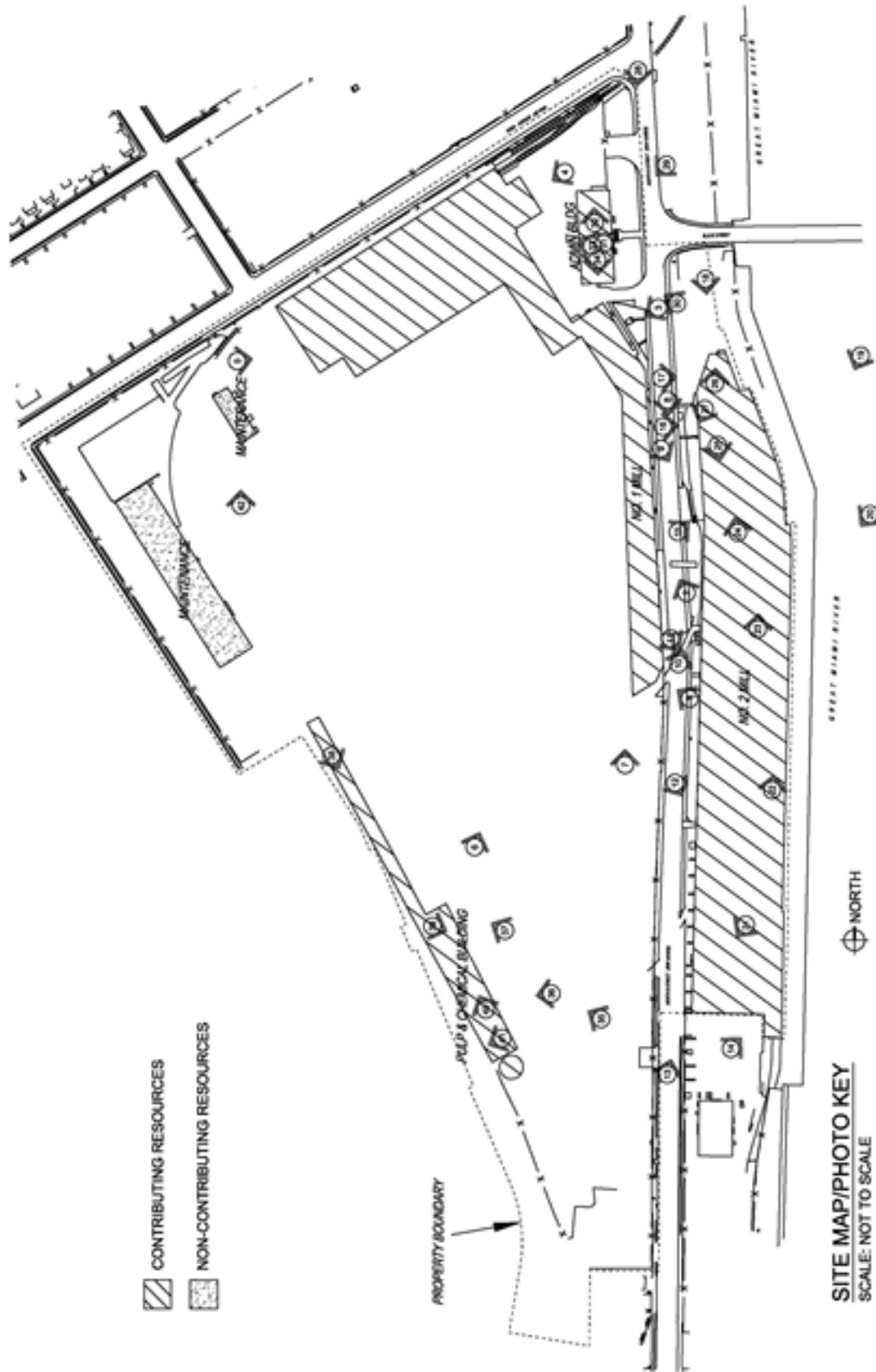
Typical non-contributing ancillary building, camera facing north.

**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.

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Name of Property

Butler County, Ohio  
County and State





# Champion Coated Paper Company

National Register Location Map

Boundary UTM Coordinates:

- 1. Zone: 16 Easting: 709707 Northing: 4364986
- 2. Zone: 16 Easting: 710186 Northing: 4365008
- 3. Zone: 16 Easting: 709816 Northing: 4364351
- 4. Zone: 16 Easting: 709683 Northing: 4364440



Google Earth

© 2018 Google

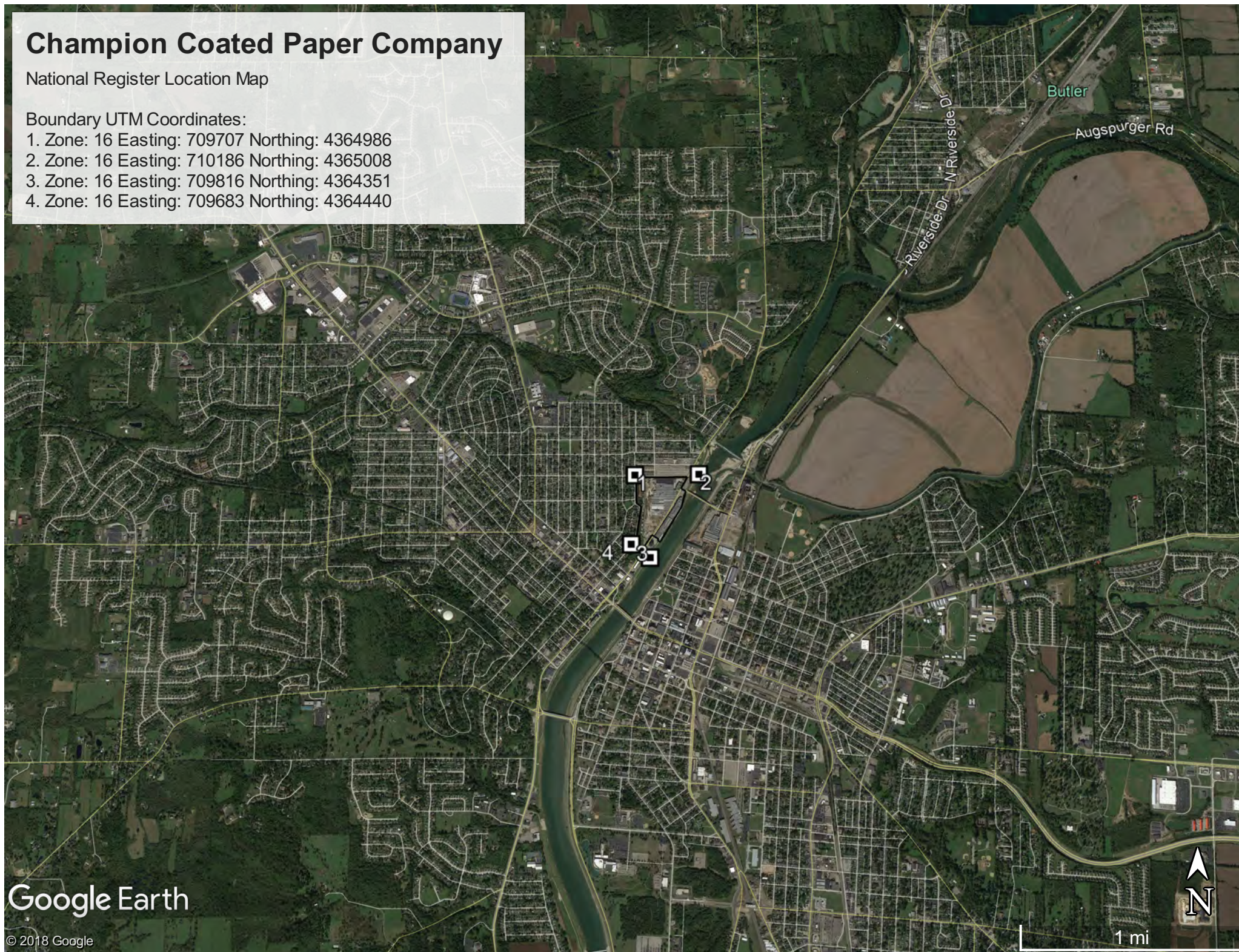
1000 ft

# Champion Coated Paper Company

National Register Location Map

Boundary UTM Coordinates:

1. Zone: 16 Easting: 709707 Northing: 4364986
2. Zone: 16 Easting: 710186 Northing: 4365008
3. Zone: 16 Easting: 709816 Northing: 4364351
4. Zone: 16 Easting: 709683 Northing: 4364440



Google Earth

© 2018 Google





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HCV 5628



**SMART**  
PAPERS

SMART  
PAPERS

NO  
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N. 3rd Ave

NOTICE

02

NOTICE



SMART  
PAPERS

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NEVER RE-ENTER THIS AREA WITHOUT PERMISSION

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EXPERT

TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND STREET SIGNAGE



SMART  
PAPERS











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WATY FORSYTH

101

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NO SMOKING



PUSH BELL BUTTON  
FOR LIFT ASSISTANCE

IN EMERGENCY  
CALL 911

















FLOOR LOAD  
800 POUNDS

KEEP  
DOOR  
CLOSED



JUST  
SMILE



sch  
11051

0105

← 18# STEAM  
10# STEAM →





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Champion Coated Paper Company

Multiple Name: \_\_\_\_\_

State & County: OHIO, Butler

Date Received: 7/24/2019      Date of Pending List: 8/9/2019      Date of 16th Day: 8/26/2019      Date of 45th Day: 9/9/2019      Date of Weekly List: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference number: SG100004357

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |   |

Accept       Return       Reject      9/9/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary AOS: Industry, Architecture; LOS: local; POS: 1902-1961  
Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation/ Criteria NR Criteria: A & C

Reviewer Lisa Deline      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2239      Date 9/9/19

DOCUMENTATION:      see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



July 22, 2019

Julie Ernstein, Acting Chief, National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Ernstein:

Enclosed please find four new National Register nominations for Ohio. All appropriate notification procedures have been followed for the new nomination submissions.

NEW NOMINATIONS

Champion Coated Paper Company  
Defiance High School  
Wright Company Factory  
Kenmore Boulevard Historic District

COUNTY

Butler  
Defiance  
Montgomery  
Summit

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copy of the information to the National Register of Historic Places nominations for Champion Coated Paper Company, Defiance High School, Wright Company Factory, and Kenmore Boulevard Historic District.

If you have questions or comments about these documents, please contact the National Register staff in the Ohio Historic Preservation Office at (614) 298-2000.

Sincerely,

*Barbara Power*

*for* Lox A. Logan, Jr.  
Executive Director and CEO  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
Ohio History Connection

Enclosures



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
NPS TRANSMITTAL CHECK LIST

OHIO HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
800 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Columbus, OH 43211  
(614)-298-2000

The following materials are submitted on July 22, 2019  
For nomination of the Champion Coated to the National Register of  
Historic Places: Paper Co, Butler County, OH

- Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form  
 Paper  PDF
- Multiple Property Nomination Cover Document  
 Paper  PDF
- Multiple Property Nomination form  
 Paper  PDF
- Photographs  
 Prints  TIFFs
- CD with electronic images
- Original USGS map(s)  
 Paper  Digital
- Sketch map(s)/Photograph view map(s)/Floor plan(s)  
 Paper  PDF
- Piece(s) of correspondence  
 Paper  PDF
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

- Please provide a substantive review of this nomination
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_  
Constitute a majority of property owners
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_