

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

## SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 100001312

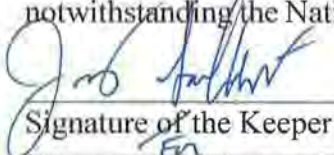
Date Listed: 7/13/2017

Property Name: Southern Cotton Oil Mill

County: Natchitoches

State: LA

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper  
FA

7-13-2017  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8: Significant Dates

1981-82 and 1998 are hereby deleted as significant dates. Significant dates must fall within the period of significance

\_\_\_\_\_  
The Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

### DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

SG-1312



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: Southern Cotton Oil Mill  
Other Names/Site Number: N/A  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

### 2. Location

Street & Number: 110 Mill Street  
City or town: Natchitoches State: LA County: Natchitoches  
Not for Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets, meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  state  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

 5/16/17  
**Signature of certifying official/Title:** Kristin Sanders, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer **Date**  
**Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism**  
**State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

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

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**Signature of commenting official:** **Date**

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**Title:** **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

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**4. National Park Certification**

I hereby certify that the 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: \_\_\_\_\_

*[Handwritten Signature]*  
Signature of the Keeper  
For

7.13.2017

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public – Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – Federal

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	Building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

Contributing	Non-contributing	
7	3	Buildings
0	0	Sites
0	0	Structures
0	0	Objects
7	3	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions.):  
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/manufacturing facility



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**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions.): GOVERNMENT/government office [City of Natchitoches Department of Public Works]

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions.): NO STYLE

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

foundation: concrete

walls: metal, brick

roof: metal, asphalt

other: wood, steel, glass

### Narrative Description

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

### Summary Paragraph

The Southern Cotton Oil Mill, located at 110 Mill Street in Natchitoches, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, is an irregularly shaped industrial site located south of Natchitoches' historic downtown. The site is bordered by Mill Street and Cane River to the east and railroad lines to the west, and consists of 7 contributing buildings: 4 seed houses, a meal and hull house, a machine shop, and a mill office. The buildings range in date from 1945, when the Southern Cotton Oil Company purchased the site and replaced the existing mill, to 1980, when international agricultural processor Archer Daniels Midland purchased the property and constructed the southernmost 2 seed houses (Seed Houses 3 and 4). The mill stayed in operation until 1998. Since c. 2009, it has served as the headquarters of the City of Natchitoches Department of Public Works. Despite the loss of a handful of mill buildings, the property retains a high degree of integrity due to the continuous operation of the site from the WWII period to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the City's compatible reuse of the site, and thus it retains eligibility for listing in the National Register.

### Narrative Description

The Southern Cotton Oil Mill site is located at 110 Mill Street in Natchitoches, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, approximately 0.95 miles south of Natchitoches' historic downtown. It sits just outside the boundaries of the Natchitoches Historic District, a National Historic Landmark.

The property is a 3.2-acre tract bordered to the east by Cane River and Mill Street, which bends to create the property's irregular shape, and to the west by railroad lines, which include spurs onto the mill site. Virtually all cotton oil mills were strategically located next to railroad lines, and often waterways as well, because they were the most efficient means of transporting cottonseeds to the mills in the era before diesel trucks. Across the railroad tracks to the west was an independently operated large cotton compress, portions of which remain in place today, and beyond that, across Cane River Lake, lies the Northwestern State University campus.

There are seven contributing buildings on the Southern Cotton Oil Mill site. (Figure 1) Five of the seven contributing buildings date to 1945-48, when Southern Cotton Oil purchased and rebuilt the mill. These include Seed House 1, Meal and Hull House, Seed House 2, the Machine Shop, and the Mill Office. The remaining two buildings, Seed House 3 and



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Seed House 4, date to 1980, when international agricultural processor Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) purchased the property. Seed houses are storage warehouses where cottonseed awaited processing. Meal and hulls, two byproducts of the oil extraction process, were processed and bagged in a dedicated building, in this case known as the Meal and Hull House. The Machine Shop was dedicated to the repair and maintenance of mill equipment, and the Mill Office served as managerial headquarters. For more information on the cottonseed oil industry, please see the Statement of Significance (Section 8).

Seed Houses 1-4 and the Meal and Hull House are all Muskogee buildings, an industrial building type created during the interwar period by the Muskogee Iron Works of Muskogee, Oklahoma.<sup>1</sup> Muskogee buildings became the building type of choice for seed houses and other larger-scale buildings at cotton oil mills after World War II. (Figure 2) Whereas pre-war mill buildings were smaller and typically brick or wood frame, Muskogee buildings were prefabricated, relatively lightweight steel-frame structures that were affordable, fireproof, and adaptable to a variety of dimensions. This flexibility was important in the cotton oil industry after World War II, when oil companies consolidated to create fewer, larger mills, and substantially increased their annual output of cottonseed products, thereby requiring larger buildings than ever before. Muskogee-type buildings are characterized by their 45-degree roof pitch and high ridgeline, which is topped by a monitor or conveyor gallery resembling a clerestory. The steep pitch maximized storage volume (seed houses were typically filled from floor to ceiling with unprocessed cotton seed) while minimizing the forces that the seed created as it flowed against the walls.<sup>2</sup> The seed was transferred from exterior loading docks into the buildings via external conveyor belts, which traveled up the 45-degree roof pitch and into the conveyor gallery, where the seed was then released into the house's interior.

The lint shed, seed-cleaning house and press room, and cotton gin buildings, along with two small storage buildings, have been demolished. The cotton gin and two small storage buildings were replaced in 1980 with Seed Houses 3 and 4, when ADM discontinued on-site cotton ginning in favor of purchasing all of its seed from a third-party gin and using the extra space to increase the mill's storage capacity.

Seed House 1 (contributing) (Photos 1, 2, 7-13)

Seed House 1 (Building "A" on the enclosed site map) is a 100' x 210' Muskogee building located at the northern end of the site and is one of 4 buildings that were used to store unprocessed cottonseed. It was constructed in 1945 shortly after Southern Cotton Oil acquired the mill property.<sup>3</sup> It is roughly rectangular in plan but distinguished in elevation by its dramatic 45-degree roof pitch. The exterior walls and roof are clad in corrugated metal panels. The conveyor gallery is punctuated by operable 6-lite steel windows. At the south end of the building is a covered unloading dock clad in corrugated metal panels and an approximately 38-foot metal-clad tower, which connects to an external conveyor belt system that runs up the south slope of the seed house roof. Remnants of this conveyor belt system are in place in the tower and on the exterior of the seed house roof. At the north end of the building is a 1-story fan room that cooled the cottonseed to prevent burning. The seed house is accessed on all four sides, and several of the openings are fitted with wood-frame metal-clad sliding doors. The interior of the seed house is open in plan and features a concrete slab floor and exposed-steel wall and roof framing. There is a recessed conveyor belt trench running longitudinally through the center of the concrete slab floor.

Meal and Hull House (contributing) (Photos 2, 5, 6, 20, 21)

The Meal and Hull House (Building "B") is a 70' x 200' Muskogee building constructed in 1948 southeast of Seed House 1. It is similar in appearance to Seed House 1 although somewhat smaller in scale. Like Seed House 1, the exterior walls and roof are clad in corrugated metal panels, and the building is topped with a conveyor gallery with 12-lite steel windows. Two gable dormers protruding from the west slope of the roof and the adjacent equipment are remnants of the external conveyor belt system that transported hulls and meal into the building. There are concrete loading platforms on the north and west elevations with steel-frame canopies overhead. The exterior door openings are fitted with wood-frame

<sup>1</sup> Brown-McKee, Inc., "Muskogee Buildings," <http://brownmckee.com/muskogee.asp>.

<sup>2</sup> Cotton Incorporated, "Buildings," <http://www.cottoninc.com/fiber/AgriculturalDisciplines/Cottonseed/Cottonseed-Storage/Buildings/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Short Notes," *New Orleans Item*, December 5, 1945.

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metal-clad sliding doors. The interior is divided transversely into 2 halves by a concrete knee wall and corrugated metal partition; each half is open in plan and features a concrete slab floor and exposed-steel wall and roof framing. Meal was processed and bagged in the north half of the building, and hulls were processed and bagged in the south half. There is a recessed conveyor belt trench running longitudinally through the center of the concrete-slab floor in the south half of the building.

Seed House 2 (contributing) (Photos 22-23)

Seed House 2 (Building "C") is a 90' x 140' Muskogee building located directly south of the Meal and Hull House. It was constructed in 1948 as a second seed house. It is similar in appearance to both Seed House 1 and the Meal and Hull House, although it is oriented to sit perpendicular to the other buildings. The exterior walls and roof are clad in corrugated metal panels and the operable windows in the conveyor gallery are 9-lite steel hoppers. The external conveyor belt system runs up the east slope of the roof and is connected to a covered loading dock that replaced a small storage building sometime between 1956 and 1975. There are three doorless exterior openings. The interior is open in plan and features a concrete slab floor and exposed-steel wall and roof framing.

Seed House 3 (contributing) (Photos 4, 24-25)

Seed House 3 (Building "D") is a 100' x 170' Muskogee building located directly south of Seed House 2. Along with Seed House 4 (see below), it was constructed in 1980 when ADM acquired the mill site. At that time, ADM began outsourcing the cotton ginning process in favor of focusing on vastly increasing the mill's seed processing capacity. With the substantial increase in seed storage space that the 2 new seed houses afforded, ADM was able to purchase substantial quantities of seed from other suppliers and thereby increase its output of cottonseed products.<sup>4</sup> It is very similar in appearance to the other earlier Muskogee buildings on the site. The exterior walls and roof are clad in corrugated metal panels, some of which are translucent to introduce additional daylight into the interior. The conveyor gallery includes 12-lite metal windows. The interior is open in plan and features a concrete slab floor and exposed-steel wall and roof framing. There is a recessed conveyor belt trench running longitudinally through the center of the concrete slab floor. Although Seed Houses 3 and 4 are both less than 50 years old, they are contributing elements because they represent the final phase in the mill's evolution into a modern, large-scale processing facility, and because they contribute to the mill's significance as Louisiana's last remaining oil mill supporting the state's cottonseed industry at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, the nature of building design in facilities like this is unique to cotton seed mills throughout the southeastern regions of Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. The unity in design ties Seed House 3 and 4 to the 1948 buildings. The 1980 seed houses are virtually identical in design and function to those built in 1948 and thus, because of this unity in design and function as well as their impact locally within the entire mill complex, they are considered contributing.

Seed House 4 (contributing) (Photos 3, 4, 26-28)

Seed House 4 (Building "E") is a 90' x 160' Muskogee building located directly south of Seed House 3 and is the southernmost building on the mill site. It was constructed in 1980 and is virtually identical to Seed House 3 in appearance. On the north end of the building is a portion of the external conveyor belt structure that connected Seed Houses 2, 3, and 4, as indicated on aerial photographs from the period.

Machine Shop (contributing) (Photos 2, 17-19)

The Machine Shop (Building "F") is a rectangular 1-story warehouse with clerestory dating to c. 1948. It is located on the east edge of the site near the Meal and Hull House. It is steel-frame construction faced with corrugated metal panels to match the other industrial buildings on the site. There are large steel windows on the north, east, and west elevations. The clerestory windows are operable steel hopper windows. The main entrance to the shop is a large overhead garage door located on the west elevation. The interior is open in plan with a shallow concrete-block mezzanine level at the south end. The wall and roof framing is exposed on the interior, and the floors are concrete slab.

<sup>4</sup> "National Firm to Buy Southern Cotton Oil," *Natchitoches Times*, July 17, 1980.

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Mill Office (contributing) (Photos 14-16)

The Mill Office (Building "G") is a small 1-story building dating to c. 1948 located northwest of the Machine Shop. (Figure 3) It is wood-frame construction faced with red brick veneer and topped with an asphalt-shingle roof. The office housed all of the mill's administrative functions, including offices for the plant manager and superintendent, a vault, and a scale for measuring incoming and outgoing delivery trucks. This scale was connected to an exterior in-ground scale located beneath a porte-cochere on the north side of the property. The exterior of the property has elements of the Colonial Revival style, including 6-over-6 wood sash windows and rectangular sidelites. The interior is characterized by wood floors, wood wall paneling, and lite-over-panel interior doors. The ceilings are acoustical tile. The vault and scale remain in place. The underside of the porte-cochere is clad in vinyl, but the building otherwise retains the majority of its defining exterior and interior features.

Non-contributing resources:

There are 3 non-contributing resources on the site: a small 1-story metal storage shed located in the northwest corner of the site (#1); a small 1-story storage shed clad in T1-11 siding located south of Seed House 1 (Building "A") (#2); and a small, 1-story metal storage shed located southwest of the Meal and Hull House (Building "B") (#3). All three date to the 1990s and are considered non-contributing because they are generic storage buildings that are not distinctive to the site's historic use as an oil mill. They are very small in scale compared to the site's contributing buildings and do not visually detract from the site's historic identity.

Assessment of Integrity:

*Location:* The property possesses integrity of location. It remains in its original location.

*Setting:* The property retains a high degree of integrity of setting. The key elements that defined its historic setting—Cane River and Mill Street to the east and railroad lines to the west with spurs entering the mill site—are all extant. Beyond these markers, portions of the former cotton press and the Northwestern State University campus to the west are also intact setting features.

*Design, Materials, and Workmanship:* The property retains a good degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The key physical features of the mill remain intact to easily identify it as a historic cotton oil mill. These features include the overall industrial character of the site; distinctive form, massing, and scale of the Muskogee buildings; exterior corrugated-metal cladding; steel windows and metal-clad sliding doors; open floor plans and exposed interior framing; conveyor belt system remnants; arrangement and orientation of the buildings on the site; and residential scale and stylistic features of the Mill Office. The loss of the lint shed, seed cleaning house and press room, and cotton gin are regrettable, but without them the site still retains sufficient integrity to remain clearly identifiable as a historic cotton oil mill. Furthermore, the gin and small storage buildings were replaced within the period of significance as the site's use evolved in step with changes in the industry in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and therefore do not constitute a significant loss of integrity.

*Feeling and Association:* The property possesses integrity of feeling through the intact scale, form, and massing of the Muskogee buildings and overall industrial feel of the site, which has been largely preserved through the site's continuous operation as a cotton oil mill from World War II until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the City of Natchitoches's more recent compatible reuse of the site as the headquarters of its Department of Public Works. The property's integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling combine to give it integrity of association. A former employee would easily recognize the property as his former workplace.

**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.)



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<b>X</b>	<b>A</b>	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	<b>B</b>	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
	<b>C</b>	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.
	<b>D</b>	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

**Criteria Considerations:**

	<b>A</b>	Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
	<b>B</b>	Removed from its original location
	<b>C</b>	A birthplace or grave
	<b>D</b>	A cemetery
	<b>E</b>	A reconstructed building, object, or structure
	<b>F</b>	A commemorative property
<b>X</b>	<b>G</b>	Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions.): Industry

**Period of Significance:** 1945-1980

**Significant Dates:** 1945-48, 1981-82, 1998

**Significant Person** (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above): N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion D is marked above): N/A

**Architect/Builder (last name, first name):** 1940s buildings – Castillow, C. C. (Southern Cotton Oil District Engineer); 1980s buildings - unknown

**Period of Significance (justification):** The period of significance begins in 1945, when Southern Cotton Oil Company purchased and began rebuilding the mill site, and ends in 1981, when Seed Houses 3 and 4 were constructed as part of ADM’s mill expansion. The property continued to be used until 1998 when the mill closed.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary):** The period of significance extends beyond the 50-year cutoff because the mill is particularly significant for its continuous operation into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and for its status as the last remaining example of a cotton oil mill in the state supporting the cotton oil industry. Furthermore, extending it to 1981 includes Seed Houses 3 and 4 whose construction continued both the visual and functional use of the Muskogee style building type. Their construction punctuated the exceptional importance of the property.

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

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The Southern Cotton Oil Mill in Natchitoches, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, is significant under Criterion A in the area of industry at the state level for its association with the cottonseed industry in Louisiana. For nearly 200 years, cotton was Louisiana's primary cash crop, and cottonseed was an important component of the state's cotton industry. In the post-World War II period, Louisiana was home to approximately 19 cotton oil mills, most of them located in the central and northern parishes. However, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Southern Cotton Oil Mill was the last oil mill in operation, and today it is the last substantially intact cotton oil mill site still standing in Louisiana. It is also important as a reflection of the changes that took place in the cottonseed industry in the postwar and late 20<sup>th</sup>-century periods. The period of significance begins in 1945, when Southern Cotton Oil Company purchased and began rebuilding the mill site, and ends in 1981, with the construction of Seed Houses 3 and 4 as part of ADM's mill expansion. Their construction continued both the visual and functional use of the Muskogee style building type and punctuated the exceptional importance of the property, thus qualifying the property under Criteria Consideration G. Additionally, The period extends beyond the 50-year cut-off because the mill is particularly significant for its continuous operation into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and for its status as the last remaining example of a cotton oil mill in the state supporting Louisiana's cottonseed oil industry.

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

Historical Overview of the Cottonseed Oil Industry

The cottonseed oil industry originated in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Cotton Belt region of the southeastern United States, where the vast majority of the country's cotton was grown. The impetus for the industry was a need to identify a profitable use for the many tons of bulky, perishable cottonseed left over from the cotton ginning process. One hundred pounds of cotton yields roughly 180 pounds of cottonseed, and only 18 pounds are needed to plant the next year's crop, leaving significant quantities of seed to dispose of in some way.<sup>5</sup> A small amount was sometimes used as livestock feed, and the remaining leftovers were treated as a waste product that was burned or dumped into rivers and lakes near farms and gins.<sup>6</sup> Rotting seed produced a noxious odor, and the seeds killed livestock if eaten in large quantities. Some states were forced to pass laws to regulate its disposal.<sup>7</sup> Various attempts were made through the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to process the seeds and "make something out of nothing," as the cottonseed oil industry described it, and these early efforts focused primarily on oil extraction.<sup>8</sup>

The first large-scale seed crushing activity appears to have taken place in Natchez, Mississippi, in 1834, but this mill and the handful of others like it were unsuccessful.<sup>9</sup> Instead of first removing the linters (the bits of cotton left on the seed after ginning) and hulls (the hard outer casing of the seed) and then pressing the soft inner meat, these mills crushed the seeds whole. As a result, the linters and hulls absorbed much of the oil, and the remaining oil was dirty and undesirable. However, these early challenges did not discourage further innovation. Through the 1840s and 1850s, machinery was improved, the extraction process was refined, and various products were developed and sold, including soaps and a convincing substitute for Italian olive oil.<sup>10</sup> Shortly after the Civil War, dehulling and delinting equipment became available, which significantly improved the oil extraction process, and from that point the cottonseed oil industry grew rapidly. In 1870, there were 26 mills in the United States; in 1880, 145; at the start of World War I, there were 900.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> National Cottonseed Products Association, Inc. *Cottonseed and Its Products, Fifth Edition* (Memphis: National Cottonseed Products Association, Inc., 1954), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Lynette Boney Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South: A History of the Cottonseed Industry, 1855-1955* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1995), xv.

<sup>7</sup> Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South*, xvi.

<sup>8</sup> National Cottonseed Products Association, Inc. *Cottonseed and Its Products*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> H. C. Nixon, "The Rise of the American Cottonseed Oil Industry," *Journal of Political Economy* 38 no. 1 (Feb 1930): 77.

<sup>11</sup> National Cottonseed Products Association, Inc., 6.

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During this period, writes historian Lynette Boney Warren, "cottonseed-oil mills dominated the economic life of hundreds of market towns in the Cotton Belt."<sup>12</sup>

Due to cottonseed's perishable quality and bulk, which made long-distance travel impractical, most of these mills were small, highly localized operations located near cotton-producing farms and cotton gins.<sup>13</sup> It was common for mills to choose sites adjacent to bodies of water and railroad lines to facilitate transportation from their nearby seed sources (usually small country gins). Some mills operated their own small gins. Most mills processed cottonseed to create four types of products: linters, hulls, oil, and meal. (Figure 4) Linters are the short cotton fibers left on the seed after the ginning process. Almost pure cellulose, linters have been used for batting, industrial textiles, and high-quality paper products, and they are also an important component in the manufacturing of plastics, acetate, and explosives, among other products. During World War II, linters were used almost exclusively for the production of American artillery shells.<sup>14</sup> Hulls are the hard outer casings that protect the meat of the seed. They have been used for roughage in livestock feed, mulch, packing material, and the ashes of the hulls were used at one time to make lye for soap. Oil, the most valuable of the four products, is extracted by cooking and pressing the seed meat into flakes using either a hydraulic press, a screw press, or, in more recent years, a chemical solvent process. Oil is used to make edible products such as margarine, cooking oil, salad dressings, and vegetable shortening. Finally, the meal, or the remains of the seed meat after the oil has been extracted, is formed into cakes, flakes, or pellets and sold as livestock feed.

World War I brought several challenges and opportunities to the cottonseed oil industry, which changed in some important ways during the interwar period. Challenges such as labor shortages, coal shortages, increased freight charges, deflation, a reduction in cotton production, and new federal restrictions caused many mills to go out of business or merge with other companies. The proliferation of the automobile in the 1920s led to improved roads and more efficient ground transportation of cottonseed, which put small country gins out of business but allowed modern gins to sell unprecedented amounts of seed in shorter periods of time to area mills.<sup>15</sup> Mills, in turn, built larger facilities to store the increased amount of seed. Brick and wood-frame buildings were gradually replaced with spacious metal-frame buildings, particularly Muskogee buildings, which became the quintessential building type for cotton oil mills by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the value of cottonseed oil increased 200 percent after World War I, and the demand for nitrocellulose (gun cotton) greatly enhanced the value of linters.<sup>17</sup>

To address the challenges facing the industry during this period, larger companies began buying up smaller mills in an effort to consolidate. Many small mills were closed, and the remaining mills were enlarged and modernized. Among the companies leading consolidation efforts was the Southern Cotton Oil Company, a subsidiary of Wesson Oil and Snowdrift Company of New Orleans. "By 1930," writes Warren, "ten companies with 178 mills owned about 45 percent of the cottonseed-crushing capacity in the United States."<sup>18</sup> By August 1945, Southern Cotton Oil alone owned 69 mills, making it one of the largest companies in the industry.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, World War II made cottonseed products into a vital commodity because of the strategic importance of its products (e.g., nitrocellulose, explosives), and because of the wartime shortage of edible fats and oil products usually imported into the United States.<sup>20</sup>

After World War II, enlarged modern mills continued to replace smaller mills, as transportation methods were further improved, labor-saving technologies were introduced, and competition increased from newer oils such as soybean and peanut.<sup>21</sup> In 1954, there were 330 mills in operation. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the total number of mills

<sup>12</sup> Warren, xvii.

<sup>13</sup> National Cottonseed Products Association, Inc., 9.

<sup>14</sup> Texas State Historical Association, "Cottonseed Industry," <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/drc04>.

<sup>15</sup> Warren, 132.

<sup>16</sup> National Cottonseed Products Association, Inc., 6.

<sup>17</sup> Warren, 121.

<sup>18</sup> Warren, 136.

<sup>19</sup> "Wesson Oil Now Twenty Years Old," *The Times-Picayune*, November 15, 1945.

<sup>20</sup> James F. Hudson, *Marketing of Cottonseed in Louisiana – Louisiana Bulletin No. 400* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1946), 5.

<sup>21</sup> Warren, 162.



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gradually declined as large mills continued to increase in size and capacity. Despite this overall reduction in numbers, however, the volume of seed crushed remained substantial due to the increased capacity of post-war mills.<sup>22</sup>

It was during this era that the architecture associated with cotton oil mills changed significantly. Whereas late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century mill buildings were typically smaller in size and either wood-frame or brick construction, postwar mill architecture became dominated by the Muskogee-type building, a prefabricated, relatively lightweight steel-frame structure that was affordable, fireproof, and adaptable to a variety of dimensions. It was the ideal solution to accommodate the increased capacity of the country's larger postwar mills, and quickly grew to become a symbol of modernization in the industry. (Figure 2) Given its unique suitability to the industry's needs, Muskogee buildings continued to be the building type of choice for mills into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, as evidenced by the two seed houses (Seed Houses 3 and 4) added to the Southern Cotton Oil Mill site in Natchitoches in 1980.

Today, there are less than 50 oil mills producing the entire national supply of cottonseed products.<sup>23</sup> Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the value of cottonseed has accounted for roughly 15 percent of the total farm value of the cotton crop.<sup>24</sup> Between 1990 and 2002, cotton oil production declined by 30 to 40 percent, as the demand for cottonseed products declined, and cotton acreage was reduced by the proliferation of soybeans and industrial-grade corn.<sup>25</sup>

The Cottonseed Industry in Louisiana

Like most other southern states, cotton became Louisiana's primary cash crop after the invention of the cotton gin in 1793. Cotton grew very well in the state's fertile soil, particularly in the Mississippi, Atchafalaya, Ouachita, and Red River valleys of central and north Louisiana. In the decades leading up to the Civil War, Louisiana's annual cotton crop increased from 375,000 bales to nearly 800,000 bales, which constituted approximately one-sixth of the nation's cotton and nearly one-third of the cotton exported from the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Cotton's remarkable success in Louisiana attracted related industries, including the cottonseed oil industry. In 1835, the state gained its first oil mill, the Cotton Seed Oil Factory and Insurance Company of New Orleans.<sup>27</sup> Although the company proved unsuccessful, as did all of the early mills, New Orleans served as an important locale in the 1840s and 1850s for the refinement of the oil production process, and a number of individuals based in the city made notable contributions to mill machinery and the manufacturing of various products. Three of the 7 mills listed in the 1860 United States Census were located in Louisiana.<sup>28</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the cottonseed industry had become "one of the most important industries in the state."<sup>29</sup> By 1900, there were an estimated 21 oil mills in the state and the industry was valued at over \$7 million.<sup>30</sup>

In 1920, there were 32 cotton oil mills in Louisiana, a number that remained more or less steady into the 1940s.<sup>31</sup> During the interwar and post-World War II periods, cotton was still the state's largest cash crop, having "more persons directly dependent upon it than any other single Louisiana industry," which included cotton growers, gin operators, and cotton

<sup>22</sup> National Cotton Products Association, "Cottonseed and Its Products," <http://www.cottonseed.org/publications/cottonseedanditsproducts.asp>.

<sup>23</sup> Bruce W. Marion and Donghwan Kim, "Concentration Change in Selected Food Manufacturing Industries: The Influence of Mergers vs. Internal Growth" (Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1990), 17-18, <https://www.aae.wisc.edu/fsrg/publications/Archived/wp-95.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> National Cotton Products Association, "Cottonseed and Its Products," <http://www.cottonseed.org/publications/cottonseedanditsproducts.asp>.

<sup>25</sup> "A Vestige of King Cotton Fades Out in Mississippi," *New York Times*, October 18, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Louisiana State Museum, "Antebellum Louisiana II: Agrarian Life," <http://www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-museum/online-exhibits/the-cabildo/antebellum-louisiana-agrarian-life/>.

<sup>27</sup> Nixon, 78.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Federal Writers' Project, *Louisiana: A Guide to the State* (New York: Hastings House, 1941), 70.

<sup>30</sup> Federal Writers' Project, *Louisiana*, 70; and *Census Reports, Volume IX: Manufactures, Part III – Special Reports on Selected Industries* (Washington DC: United States Census Office, 1902), 589.

<sup>31</sup> "Directory of Cottonseed Oil Mills," *The American Fertilizer Hand Book* (1920): J-15; and Federal Writers' Project, *Louisiana*, 70.

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oil mill owners and employees.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the cottonseed industry was vitally important to small cotton farmers, who borrowed money to produce their crop and relied on their cottonseed income to pay for harvesting and ginning costs.<sup>33</sup> A 1946 state bulletin entitled *Marketing of Cottonseed in Louisiana* reported that

Cottonseed, which less than sixty-five years ago was considered largely a by-product from the growth of cotton, is at present an important source of cash income to Louisiana farmers. Cottonseed ranked sixth in value among the major field crops grown in Louisiana during the 1943-44 season and accounted for about 18 per cent of the total value of the cotton crop. The cottonseed sold from the 1943-44 crop was worth nearly 14 million dollars.<sup>34</sup>

After World War II, the cottonseed industry evolved in sync with the rest of the Cotton Belt, as its mills consolidated and modernized. Louisiana's postwar mills decreased in number but grew substantially in size and capacity.<sup>35</sup> In 1951, 16 mills were listed in the state's manufacturer's directory.<sup>36</sup> Several of these mills were owned by large companies such as Southern Cotton Oil, which operated mills in Natchitoches, Eunice, Gretna, and New Roads.

Oil mills were also an important source of employment for towns throughout the central and northern parishes, particularly for working-class residents, and the plant managers and superintendents who managed the mills were regarded as prominent citizens. In Natchitoches, for example, the retirement of Southern Cotton Oil's superintendent, Frank Harris, made the front page of the *Natchitoches Times* in 1965, as did the promotion of L. J. Melder to plant manager that same year.<sup>37</sup> Cotton and cottonseed-related activities often made front-page news in mill towns as well, with newspapers covering such issues as the health of cotton crops, the first cotton bale sold at the beginning of the harvesting season, and the first ginned bale. Mills were also points of pride for many towns. The national journal *Oil Mill Gazetteer* reported that Natchitoches' Southern Cotton Oil Mill was "a show place in the town and visitors are welcome. Northwestern State University is located there and every year groups of students tour the mill."<sup>38</sup> In 1962, the *Ruston Leader* boasted that its oil mill, which had been in operation since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was one of the oldest mills in Lincoln Parish.<sup>39</sup>

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, soybeans were a growing source of competition to the cottonseed industry, and in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, some mills began adapting their facilities to produce soybean oil as well as cottonseed products. In addition, many mills transitioned to the chemical solvent extraction process, an expensive yet more efficient means of extracting oil than older methods. By 1980, soybeans had replaced cotton as Louisiana's primary cash crop, although cotton was still an important source of income for many farmers. Indeed, in the mid-1970s, oil mills remained "a major portion of the Agri-business industry in rural cotton communities," and were the largest employers in the state's cotton industry.<sup>40</sup> Some cottonseed oil mills closed during this period, while others continued to adapt to the changing industry.<sup>41</sup> Opelousas's large mill became an oil refinery (Lou-Ana Foods), which purchased and refined cottonseed, soybean, and other types of oil for human consumption. In 1981, there were 3 cottonseed oil mills left in Louisiana: Southern Cotton Oil in Natchitoches, Union Oil Mill in West Monroe, and Louisiana Cotton Oil in Bossier City.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>32</sup> State Department of Commerce and Industry, "Industrial Directory: State of Louisiana" (Baton Rouge: State Capitol, 1942), 5.

<sup>33</sup> Hudson, *Marketing of Cottonseed in Louisiana*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Hudson, 25.

<sup>35</sup> J. P. Montgomery, *Agricultural Statistics, 1909-1963 - Louisiana Bulletin No. 490* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1954), 7.

<sup>36</sup> State Department of Commerce and Industry, "Industrial Directory: State of Louisiana" (Baton Rouge: State Capitol, 1951), 45.

<sup>37</sup> "Frank Harris Retires January 1 After 45 Years with Oil Mills," *Natchitoches Times*, January 7, 1965.

<sup>38</sup> "Frank Harris, Veteran Superintendent from Natchitoches, Retires; Oil Milling Career Spanned 45 Years," *Oil Mill Gazetteer* 69 no. 8 (February 1965): 22.

<sup>39</sup> "Ruston Oil Mill Is One of Oldest Plants in Parish," *Ruston Leader*, July 19, 1962.

<sup>40</sup> James F. Hudson and Ricky W. Guidry, *Economic Importance of the Louisiana Cotton Industry* (Baton Rouge: Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, Louisiana State University, 1978), 7, 18.

<sup>41</sup> "Crops Increase Five Percent," *Natchitoches Times*, July 3, 1980.

<sup>42</sup> Louisiana Department of Commerce, *1981 Directory of Louisiana Manufacturers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Department of Commerce, 1980), 307.

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Postwar cotton gins, the state's major cottonseed suppliers, were subject to the same economies of scale as oil mills, and only the larger gins could afford the latest equipment and process enough cotton to make financial sense.<sup>43</sup> In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Louisiana's few remaining oil mills supported these gins, which would have otherwise been forced to truck their seed to out-of-state mills in Mississippi and Arkansas.

Southern Cotton Oil in Natchitoches was Louisiana's last cotton oil mill still in operation when it finally stopped processing cottonseed in 1998.

*Southern Cotton Oil Mill in Natchitoches, Louisiana*

Like many other parishes in central and north Louisiana, agriculture was one of Natchitoches Parish's chief industries for much of its existence, and cotton was its primary cash crop.<sup>44</sup> The cotton and cottonseed industries were important economic contributors in the parish into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, even as soybean and corn acreage surpassed cotton in other parts of the region.<sup>45</sup>

Cottonseed processing was part of Natchitoches's local economy for over a century. The site at 110 Mill Street had been used as a cotton oil mill since at least the 1890s, when it was considered a remote distance from the center of town. Known as the Givanovich Oil Company, this early mill was a small local operation that burned in 1899. The remains of the mill were sold to the Union Oil Company in 1901, which replaced it with an equally modest operation. By 1904, the mill was known as the Natchitoches Cotton Oil Company Mill, which burned in 1919. After rebuilding, the Natchitoches Cotton Oil mill remained in operation through World War II, when Southern Cotton Oil Company purchased it in 1945 and rebuilt the mill yet again to the modern standards of the postwar era. These modernization efforts involved replacing the smaller, older wood-frame structures of the early 1920s with substantially larger metal buildings, including two large Muskogee seed houses, a large Muskogee meal and hull house, a large lint shed, a new seed-cleaning house with 24 linters and a press room with 16 hydraulic presses, a larger cotton gin, and a modern mill office with in-ground scale. The grounds were paved with concrete to allow trucks to reach any part of the site with ease.<sup>46</sup> In 1953, Southern Cotton Oil expressed its gratitude to the community in a special edition of the *Natchitoches Times*:

We are happy to have a place now in the industrial life of this community. Rich in its historic background, the Natchitoches area has, with its fine climate, suitable transportation facilities, likeable people, and nearness to our sources of supply, given us just what we wanted in the way of a plant site. And, the thousands of dollars distributed through our payroll has helped, we know, to add to the prosperity and progress of this area.<sup>47</sup>

The important role of Natchitoches's cottonseed industry was widely recognized in the postwar period. Southern Cotton Oil's new mill was a "show place" for the Natchitoches area, where visitors were welcome and tours were given to Northwestern State University students every year.<sup>48</sup> Promotions and retirements of mill personnel were front-page news in regional papers, and each year the parish's first sold cotton bale and first ginned bale were headline-worthy events.<sup>49</sup> In a 1958 Port of New Orleans advertisement that highlights goods produced in towns and cities throughout the state, Natchitoches is singled out for its cottonseed meal (Figure 5).<sup>50</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Charles D. Covey and James F. Hudson, *Cotton Gin Efficiency: As Related to Size, Location and Cotton Production Density in Louisiana – Bulletin No. 577* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1961), 5-6.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Barnard and Burk, Inc., "Overall Economic Development Program for Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana" (Natchitoches: Natchitoches Area Economic Development Association, August 1962), 37.

<sup>45</sup> Nancy Grush, "Officials: Natchitoches Parish Economy Holding Its Own," *Alexandria Town Talk*, January 29, 1983; Milburn Calhoun, ed. *Louisiana Almanac* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1992), 223; and Milburn Calhoun, ed. *Louisiana Almanac* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1995), 223.

<sup>46</sup> "Frank Harris, Veteran Superintendent from Natchitoches, Retires; Oil Milling Career Spanned 45 Years," *Oil Mill Gazetteer* 69 no. 8 (February 1965): 22.

<sup>47</sup> Southern Cotton Oil Company advertisement, *Natchitoches Times Golden Jubilee Edition*, March 13, 1953.

<sup>48</sup> "Frank Harris, Veteran Superintendent from Natchitoches, Retires; Oil Milling Career Spanned 45 Years," *Oil Mill Gazetteer* 69 no. 8 (February 1965): 22.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, "First Bale of Cotton Sold at Premium/First Bale of Cotton Ginned in Parish," *Natchitoches Times*, August 19, 1955;



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In 1980, the *Natchitoches Times* announced on its front page that a “national firm,” agricultural processor Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), was in the process of acquiring the mill for \$750,000.<sup>51</sup> This acquisition was part of ADM’s takeover of Southern Cotton Oil Co., and during this transitional period, ADM closed a number of Southern’s mills to consolidate and streamline its operations.<sup>52</sup> The Natchitoches mill was not among these closures, and in fact was to benefit from a nearly \$2-million expansion project that would nearly double the mill’s storage and processing capacities.<sup>53</sup> The expansion included the demolition of the mill’s small cotton gin and 2 small storage buildings, and the erection of two large Muskogee seed houses (Seed Houses 3 and 4).<sup>54</sup> (ADM purchased seed from the state’s third-party gins, including a new \$1.5 million gin that opened in Natchitoches in 1981.<sup>55</sup>) This level of investment would not have been feasible for a smaller company; with its net worth of “some \$374 million” and “annual sales in excess of \$200 billion,” according to the *Natchitoches Times*, ADM kept the cotton oil industry alive in Natchitoches, where thousands of residents relied on it both directly and indirectly, from cotton farmers to local banks.<sup>56</sup>

The fact that ADM kept the Natchitoches mill in operation and invested in its future was an important economic boost for the town and the parish. First, it demonstrated a continuing faith in Natchitoches’s cotton and cottonseed industries, which remained an important part of the parish’s economy in spite of declines in neighboring parishes. Second, it meant that one of the city’s stable, long-time employers could remain open even as mills in other towns were closing. This was particularly beneficial for the local African-American community, who comprised approximately 70 percent of the mill’s employee base.<sup>57</sup> Plant manager L. J. Melder commented on the economic impact of ADM’s improvements to the *Natchitoches Times*: “‘Employment at the plant will increase by thirty-three percent almost immediately,’ Melder said....At present, the plant employs about 50 persons. ‘We’re going to a 7-day, 24-hour operation this fall. That will add another shift right away.’”<sup>58</sup> And third, in the 1990s, when it became the last mill in operation in the state, ADM’s expanded facility provided Louisiana’s 60 or so remaining cotton gins with a local buyer for their cottonseed. Rather than trucking the seed out of state to the next closest mill, which substantially added to their overhead costs, Louisiana’s gin operators overwhelmingly preferred to sell to the Natchitoches mill.<sup>59</sup> In this way, the mill played a critical supporting role in the state’s cotton and cottonseed industries at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Southern Cotton Oil ceased production in 1998. Former plant manager L. J. Melder suspects that the closure was the result of several factors.<sup>60</sup> The mill’s proximity to residential areas and the Northwestern State University campus made it unsafe to switch to volatile chemical solvents, which had become the overwhelming norm for modern oil mills. In addition, the mill had grown to the limits of its site, and it would have been too costly to move to a new site to expand. The increase in crops like soybeans and corn and the subsequent reduced supply of cottonseed made it difficult to stay in operation without manufacturing other products such as soybean oil. Newspaper coverage indicates that another important factor was a major drought in 1998, which dramatically impacted the state’s already beleaguered cotton crops; that year, Southern Cotton Oil, five of the state’s cotton gins, and a cotton compress all went out of business.<sup>61</sup>

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“Frank Harris Retires January 1 After 45 Years with Oil Mills,” *Natchitoches Times*, January 7, 1965; “Hart Retires, Melder Elevated to Manager of Local Oil Plant,” *Natchitoches Times*, March 4, 1965; “First Cotton Bale Ginned,” *Shreveport Times*, August 15, 1969.

<sup>50</sup> “Port of New Orleans, USA,” *Opelousas World*, April 22, 1958.

<sup>51</sup> “National Firm to Buy Southern Cotton Oil,” *Natchitoches Times*, July 17, 1980; and “Expansion Program Underway at Mill,” *Natchitoches Times*, August 3, 1980.

<sup>52</sup> Edd Lee, former office manager of ADM’s Southern Cotton Oil mill, in a phone interview with Gabrielle Begue, February 10, 2017.

<sup>53</sup> “National Firm to Buy Southern Cotton Oil,” *Natchitoches Times*, July 17, 1980.

<sup>54</sup> “Expansion Program Underway at Mill,” *Natchitoches Times*, August 3, 1980.

<sup>55</sup> “Grower Confident Cotton Here to Stay,” *Alexandria Town Talk*, April 12, 1981.

<sup>56</sup> “National Firm to Buy Southern Cotton Oil,” *Natchitoches Times*, July 17, 1980; and Randy LaCaze, Director of Community Development, City of Natchitoches, in a phone interview with Gabrielle Begue, February 8, 2017.

<sup>57</sup> Lee interview.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> L. J. Melder, former plant manager, in an interview with Gabrielle Begue, November 16, 2016.

<sup>61</sup> “Warning: Area Lawmaker Says Farm Crisis Threatens Us All,” *Alexandria Town Talk*, February 4, 1999.

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Comparison to Other Cotton Oil Mills in Louisiana

The Southern Cotton Oil Mill in Natchitoches was one of approximately 19 mills operating in Louisiana in the post-World War II period. Today, it is one of only 2 still standing that are recognizable as cotton oil mills, the other being Arcadia Oil Mill in Arcadia, Louisiana. Of these two, Southern Cotton Oil is the most intact overall. The following list of oil mills was derived from the 1951, 1961-62, and 1968 manufacturers' directories of Louisiana. The integrity of each mill site was evaluated using Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, newspaper articles, and Google Earth imagery.

1. Arcadia Cotton Oil Co., 2400 South Beech Street, Arcadia, Louisiana. This small former cotton oil mill site retains 3 buildings: a seed house, a mill office, and a small warehouse. A sizeable second warehouse on the site appears to be new construction. This site lacks the cohesiveness and scale found at the Southern Cotton Oil site, and it does not appear to retain any mill-related machinery, such as the candidate's remnant conveyor belt system. It closed in the 1970s.
2. Caddo-DeSoto Cotton Oil Co, Mansfield Road, Shreveport, Louisiana. Demolished.
3. Clinton Feed Oil and Gin Plant, Jackson Road near Marston Street, Clinton, Louisiana. Demolished.
4. Evangeline Cotton Oil Co., SE Railroad Street and E Oak Street, Ville Platte, Louisiana. Demolished.
5. Independent Mill & Gin Inc., Third Street, Alexandria, Louisiana. Demolished.
6. Independent Mill & Gin Co., corner of Leitrim and Ulster Avenues, Boyce, Louisiana. Demolished.
7. Minden Cotton Oil & Ice Co., Shreveport and West Streets, Minden, Louisiana. Demolished.
8. Opelousas Oil Refinery, Division of Cotton Products Co, Inc., 715 N Railroad Avenue, Opelousas, Louisiana. This site was converted exclusively into an oil refinery (Lou-Ana Foods) in the 1970s. The refinery remains in operation today, but the remnants of the oil mill have been engulfed by the refinery's modern facility, and the site is no longer recognizable as an oil mill. There are two visible seed houses and an extensively modified mill office, which constitutes less than half of the historic mill property.
9. Peoples' Cotton Oil Co., 121 S. Washington Street, Lafayette Louisiana. One brick warehouse building remains from this large oil mill. The rest of the site was redeveloped and is currently home to the Boys and Girls Club of Acadiana.
10. Red River Cotton Oil Co., 514 N. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Alexandria, Louisiana. Demolished.
11. Ruston Oil Mill & Fertilizer Co., 312 W. Louisiana Avenue, Ruston, Louisiana. Demolished.
12. Southern Cotton Oil Company/Hunt Foods & Industries, 1601 4th Street, Harvey, Louisiana. Roughly 80 percent of this very large oil mill was replaced in recent years by an enviro-industrial and safety products company. The only mill buildings remaining are the postwar-era shortening plant and mill office.
13. Southern Cotton Oil Co., E. Bacciochi Street near Prairie Street, Eunice, Louisiana. Demolished.
14. Southern Cotton Oil Co., 311 Mill Street, New Roads, Louisiana. One Muskogee building is extant on this site. It is currently used as an antiques mall.
15. Southern Cotton Oil Co., 110 Mill Street, Natchitoches, Louisiana (the candidate).

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16. Southland Cotton Oil Co., 400 Coleman Street, Bossier City, Louisiana. Later renamed Louisiana Cotton Oil, this oil mill remained in operation until the early 1980s and was one of the last mills in Louisiana to shut down. Demolished.

17. Tallulah Oil Mill & Gin/Clayton Anderson & Co., East Craig and N. Elm Streets, Tallulah, Louisiana. Demolished.

18. Union Oil Co., Inc./Independent Mill & Gin, East Pine and Evergreen Streets. Bunkie, Louisiana. Demolished.

19. Union Oil Mill, 520 Trenton Street, West Monroe, Louisiana. This large oil mill remained in operation until 1992. Today, all that remains are 1 pre-war brick warehouse building and what appears to be a modified mill office. The brick warehouse was enlarged with a sizeable 2-story addition and converted into apartments with ground-floor retail space.

Of the 19 postwar cottonseed oil mills in Louisiana, 12 mills (63 percent) have been demolished. Five mill sites (26 percent) retain 1-3 mill buildings but no longer retain sufficient integrity to identify them as former oil mills. Only two mill sites, the candidate and Arcadia Oil Mill in Arcadia, Louisiana, remain recognizable as former oil mills. However, Arcadia differs from the candidate in that it was a small oil mill that did not reflect the modernization and expansion efforts of postwar and late 20<sup>th</sup>-century mills; it retains only 3 mill buildings, the integrity of which is diminished by the addition of a new warehouse structure near the center of the site; and it does not appear to retain any processing equipment, such as a conveyor belt system.

Conclusion

The Southern Cotton Oil Mill property is a layered historic site that embodies virtually all of the steps in the evolution of the cottonseed industry in Louisiana. Its distinctive setting between the railroad and Cane River was necessitated by the need for the mill's predecessor, Givanovich Oil Company, to operate near these methods of transportation before the era of truck delivery. The postwar buildings, particularly the large Muskogee buildings, represent the mill's era of modernization and expansion after World War II and its consolidation with Southern Cotton Oil Company. Finally, the large Muskogee buildings dating to 1980 are products of the mill's adaptation to the challenges facing the cotton industry, and reflect continuing efforts to keep the cottonseed industry alive in Louisiana at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In sum, the candidate possesses exceptional significance because it is the last large cottonseed oil mill intact in Louisiana, and it represents the rise, evolution, and decline of the state's cottonseed industry, which was a major economic generator for countless communities, including Natchitoches, which retained its cottonseed oil mill considerably longer than any other parish in the state.

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**Developmental History/Additional historic context information**

See above

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*The Times-Picayune*. "Wesson Oil Now Twenty Years Old," November 15, 1945.

United States Department of Agriculture. *Cottonseed Oil Mills: Their Comparative Efficiencies and Effects on Prices and Producers' Returns*. Washington DC: United States Department of Agriculture, June 1953.

Southern Cotton Oil Mill  
Name of Property

Natchitoches Parish, LA  
County and State

Wrenn, Lynette Boney. *Cinderella of the New South: A History o the Cottonseed Industry, 1855-1955.*  
Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1995.

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** N/A

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property:** 3.165 acres

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates** \*\*(Note: Numbered coordinates correspond to locations on enclosed 2016 Google Earth aerial map)

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 31.749815° | Longitude: -93.088273° |
| 2. Latitude: 31.749476° | Longitude: -93.086984° |
| 3. Latitude: 31.749042° | Longitude: -93.086813° |
| 4. Latitude: 31.748131° | Longitude: -93.086808° |
| 5. Latitude: 31.747345° | Longitude: -93.086932° |
| 6. Latitude: 31.746570° | Longitude: -93.087102° |
| 7. Latitude: 31.746255° | Longitude: -93.087426° |
| 8. Latitude: 31.749656° | Longitude: -93.088334° |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.) For the purposes of this nomination, the historic property boundaries are Mill Street to the north and east, the intersection of Mill Street and the railroad tracks to the south, and the railroad tracks to the west.

Southern Cotton Oil Mill  
Name of Property

Natchitoches Parish, LA  
County and State

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.) Mill Street and the railroad tracks clearly dictate the boundaries of the mill site and appear to be the historic boundaries, according to the 1930-50 Sanborn Fire Insurance map.

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Gabrielle Begue/Principal  
organization: Clio Associates LLC  
street & number: 1139 Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard  
city or town: New Orleans state: LA zip code: 70113  
e-mail: gabrielle@clioassociates.com  
telephone: (504) 858-4426  
date: 01/13/2017

### 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 3000x2000 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: Southern Cotton Oil Mill  
City or Vicinity: Natchitoches  
County: Natchitoches  
State: Louisiana  
Name of Photographer: Rick Fifield  
Date of Photographs: November 15-16, 2016

#### 01 of 28

View of mill from across Mill Street. Camera facing southwest.

#### 02 of 28

View of mill from across Mill Street. Camera facing northwest.

#### 03 of 28

View of mill with Seed House 4/Building E in foreground from across railroad tracks. Camera facing northeast.

#### 04 of 28



Southern Cotton Oil Mill

Name of Property

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View of mill from southern end of site. Camera facing north.

05 of 28

Exterior view of Meal and Hull House/Building B. Camera facing northwest.

06 of 28

View of railroad spur on west side of mill site. Camera facing north.

07 of 28

Exterior view of Seed House 1/Building A. Camera facing northwest.

08 of 28

Exterior view of Seed House 1/Building A. Camera facing north.

09 of 28

Exterior view of Seed House 1/Building A. Camera facing northeast.

10 of 28

Exterior view of Seed House 1/Building A from across Mill Street. Camera facing south.

11 of 28

Non-contributing shed #2 at Seed House 1/Building A. Camera facing west.

12 of 28

Interior view of Seed House 1/Building A. Camera facing northwest.

13 of 28

Conveyor belt system in Seed House 1/Building A. Camera facing southwest.

14 of 28

Exterior view of Mill Office/Building F from across Mill Street. Camera facing west.

15 of 28

Exterior view of Mill Office/Building F. Camera facing northwest.

16 of 28

Interior view of Mill Office/Building F showing scale. Camera facing north.

17 of 28

Exterior view of Mill Shop/Building G. Camera facing southeast.

18 of 28

Exterior view of Mill Shop/Building G from across Mill Street. Camera facing southwest.

19 of 28

Interior view of Mill Shop/Building G. Camera facing north.

20 of 28

Exterior view of Meal and Hull House/Building B. Camera facing southeast.

21 of 28

Interior view of Meal and Hull House/Building B. Camera facing south.

Southern Cotton Oil Mill

Name of Property

Natchitoches Parish, LA

County and State

22 of 28

Exterior view of Seed House 2/Building C from across Mill Street. Camera facing southwest.

23 of 28

Interview view of Seed House 2/Building C. Camera facing southwest.

24 of 28

Exterior view of Seed House 3/Building D. Camera facing southwest.

25 of 28

Interior view of Seed House 3/Building D. Camera facing southeast.

26 of 28

Exterior view of Seed House 4/Building E. Camera facing southeast.

27 of 28

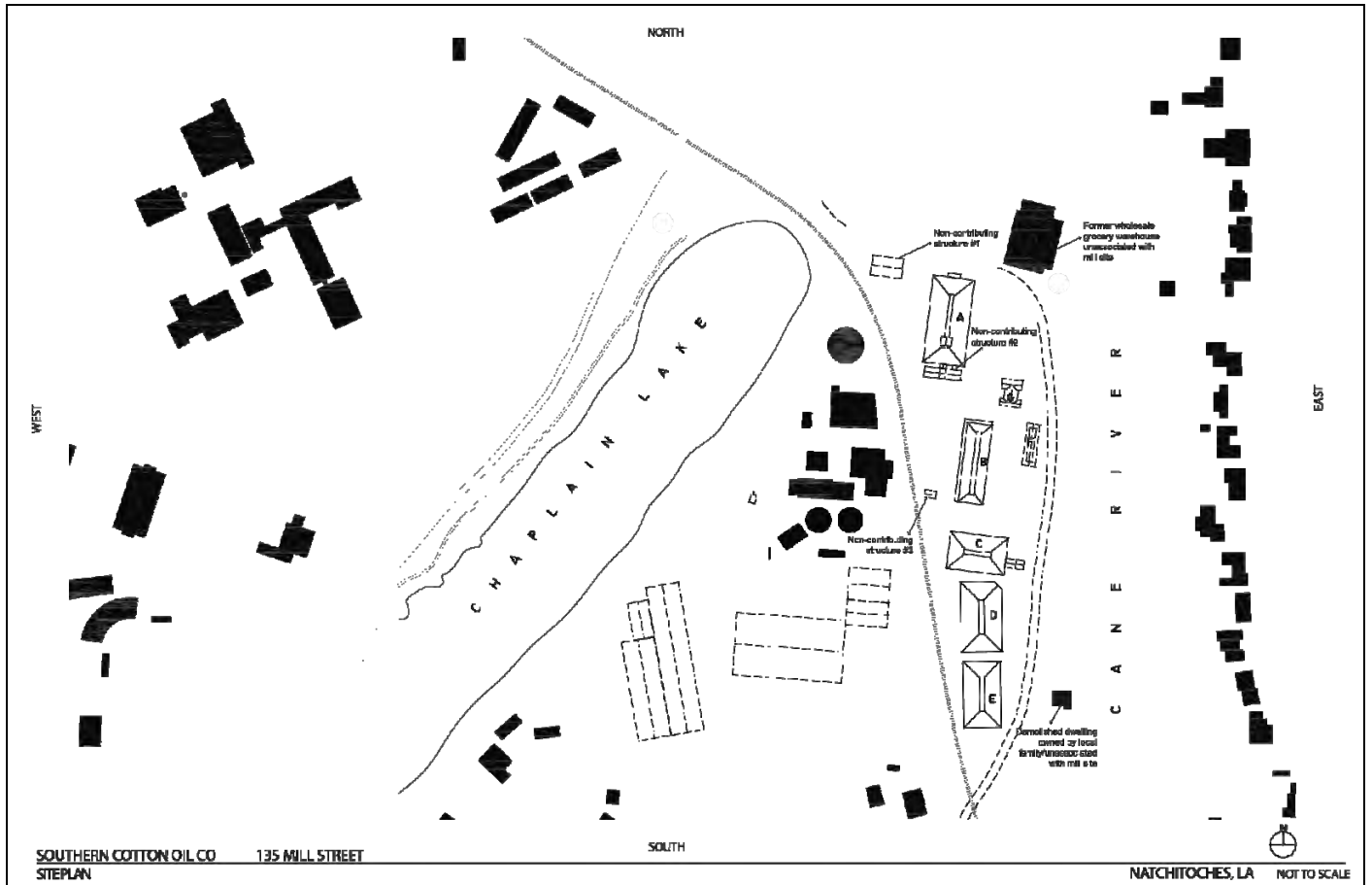
Exterior view of Seed House 4/Building E from across Mill Street. Camera facing southwest.

28 of 28

Interior view of Seed House 4/Building E looking up at conveyor gallery. Camera facing north.

Southern Cotton Oil Mill  
Name of Property

Natchitoches Parish, LA  
County and State



**Figure 1.** This site plan of the Southern Cotton Oil Mill property shows all seven contributing buildings (A-G) and the locations of the site's 3 non-contributing buildings. Building A - Seed House 1; Building B - Meal and Hull House; Building C - Seed House 2; Building D - Seed House 3; Building E - Seed House 4; Building F - Machine Shop; Building G - Mill Office.

Southern Cotton Oil Mill  
Name of Property

Natchitoches Parish, LA  
County and State

# COTTONSEED OIL MILLS: THEIR COMPARATIVE EFFICIENCIES AND EFFECTS ON PRICES AND PRODUCERS' RETURNS



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Production and Marketing Administration  
Washington, D.C.  
June 1953

**Agriculture Information Bulletin No.103**

**Figure 2.** This June 1953 publication from the United States Department of Agriculture includes a photograph of a prototypical postwar cottonseed oil mill on the cover of its report. Muskogee Buildings such as those shown here were typical of postwar cottonseed oil mills throughout the Cotton Belt.

Southern Cotton Oil Mill  
Name of Property

Natchitoches Parish, LA  
County and State



Plant of Southern Cotton Oil Co., City of Natchitoches


**Figure 3.** The Southern Cotton Oil Mill as it appeared in 1957. This photograph was taken from Mill Street looking southwest. The Mill Office is near the center of the frame. From *Natchitoches Parish Resources and Facilities: A Survey* (Baton Rouge: Department of Public Works, Planning Division, 1957).

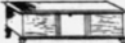






Southern Cotton Oil Mill  
Name of Property


Natchitoches Parish, LA  
County and State

  
*Canned Vegetables  
from Jeauerette*

  
*Cedar Chests  
from Sikes*

  
*Pine Oil  
from Covington*

  
*Cottonseed Meal  
from Natchitoches*

  
*Industrial Chemicals  
from Good Hope*

These and hundreds of other products from the land and factories of Louisiana find added markets because of exports through Louisiana's excellent port facilities.

Raw materials for Louisiana's growing manufacturing plants and other items not available domestically are brought in economically through the State's ports. Expanding foreign and domestic commerce through these ports helps employment and prosperity throughout our State.

Use your port facilities and urge shippers everywhere to use them to build a yet greater Louisiana.

**PORT OF  
NEW  
ORLEANS  
U.S.A.**

**Figure 5.** This Port of New Orleans newspaper advertisement from the late 1950s highlights cottonseed meal as one of Natchitoches' valuable exports. *Opelousas World*, April 22, 1958.

**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.

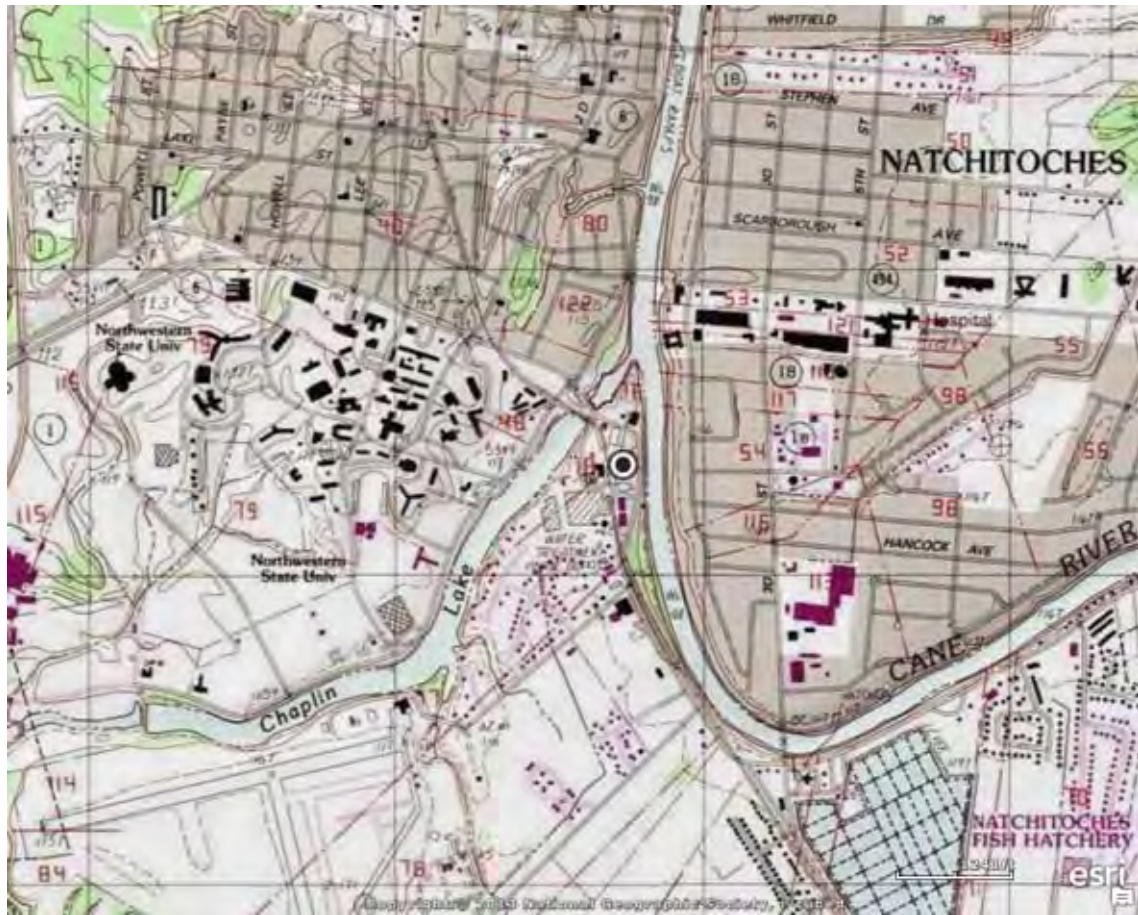


**Southern Cotton Oil Mill, Natchitoches Parish, LA**



Latitude: 31.748845 Longitude: -93.087369

Southern Cotton Oil Mill, Natchitoches Parish, LA



Latitude: 31.748845 Longitude: -93.087369



Southern Cotton Oil Mill  
Natchitoches, Natchitoches Parish, LA  
Boundary Map

31.749815°, -93.088273°



31.749656°, -93.088334°

31.749476°, -93.086984°

31.749042°, -93.086813°

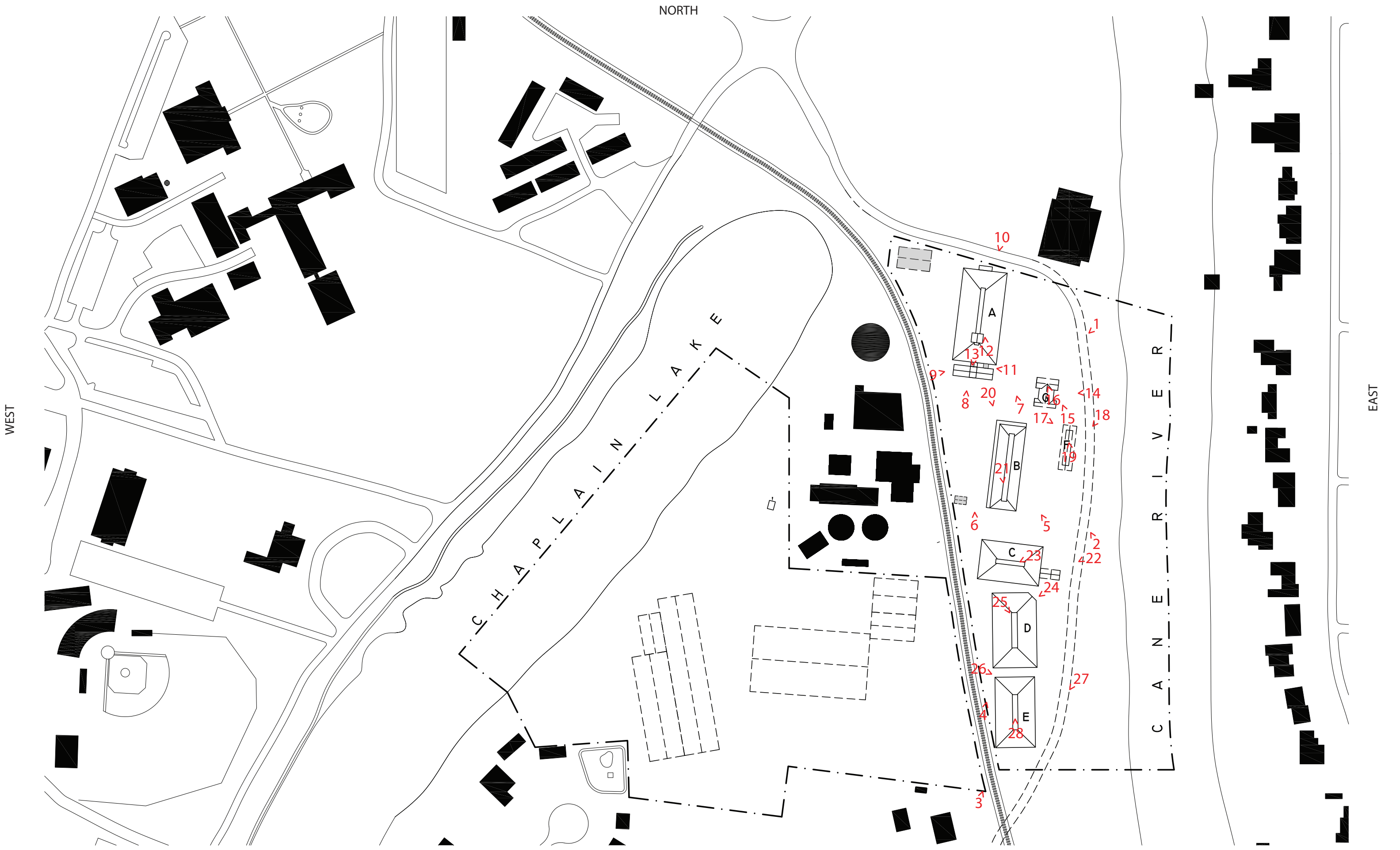
31.748131°, -93.086808°

31.747345°, -93.086932°

31.746570°, -93.087102°

31.746255°, -93.087426°

Boundary



SOUTH

■ = non-contributing























































City of Natchitoches  
Public Works Department  
(318) 357-2675



















SPEED  
LIMIT  
25





JOHN DEERE





































UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Southern Cotton Oil Mill

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

State & County: LOUISIANA, Natchitoches

Date Received: 6/2/2017      Date of Pending List: 6/28/2017      Date of 16th Day: 7/13/2017      Date of 45th Day: 7/17/2017      Date of Weekly List: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference number: SG100001312

Nominator: State

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |  |

Accept       Return       Reject      7/13/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The cotton oil industry was an exceptionally important aspect of the local economy. The POS for this property extends to 1980 to capture the expansion of the mill's capacity by the construction of warehouses that are identical in plan, form, and materials to those built in the historic period.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept / A

Reviewer: Jim Gabbert

Discipline: Historian

Telephone: (202)354-2275

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : ~~No~~ Yes

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





*City of Natchitoches*  
Oldest Settlement in the Louisiana Purchase

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
Lee Posey

April 6, 2017

Division of Historic Preservation  
Office of Cultural Development  
P.O. Box 44247  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: Southern Cotton Oil Mill, Natchitoches Parish, LA

Dear State Review Committee:


The City of Natchitoches is pleased to have the above referenced property considered by the State Review Committee for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Our parish is home to many historical sites reflecting the unique culture and heritage that make up Natchitoches, Louisiana, established in 1714 as the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase Territory. Nearly 300 years of deep-rooted history are found within the Historic District through its historic building and cultural traditions that are still maintained within the community.

This specific site is now located in a thriving historic district filled with unique shops and dining opportunities and is home to a prevalent arts community that highlights visual arts, music, cuisine, and heritage tourism. We are certain if the Southern Cotton Oil Mill site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places this will only enhance these aforementioned opportunities and draw more tourism to Natchitoches.

If you have any questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to call my office at (318)352-2772. Thank you again for your consideration of this nomination.

Sincerely,

  
Lee Posey, Mayor

LP:hpw

SENATE  
STATE OF LOUISIANA



Gerald Long  
State Senator  
President Pro Tempore  
District 31  
Post Office Box 151  
Winnfield, LA 71483-7525

Winnfield District Office  
9671 Highway 84  
Winnfield, LA 71483-7525  
(318) 628-5799  
(800) 265-2437  
Fax: (318) 628-6120  
Email: longg@legis.la.gov

March 22, 2017

Division of Historic Preservation  
Office of Cultural Development  
P.O. Box 44247  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Re: Southern Cotton Oil Mill  
Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana

Dear State Review Committee:

As a state senator representing Natchitoches Parish I am excited the above mentioned property is being considered by the State Review Committee for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Southern Cotton Oil Mill is located in a thriving historic district. It is filled with dining opportunities and many unique shops. It is also home to a prevalent arts community that highlights arts, music, cuisine, and heritage tourism. I feel sure if it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places that not only would it enhance the above mentioned but will definitely draw more tourism to Natchitoches.

Thank you for reviewing my letter and please do not hesitate to call me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerald Long".

Senator Gerald Long

COMMITTEES:  
Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture and Rural Development  
Insurance  
Retirement  
Transportation, Highways and Public Works  
Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget





## CANE RIVER

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

23 March 2017

Ms. Jessica Richardson  
National Register Coordinator  
P.O. Box 44247  
Baton Rouge LA 70804

Dear Ms. Richardson and Members of the Review Committee,

On behalf of Cane River National Heritage Area, I am sending our support for the nomination of the Southern Cotton Oil Mill for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. This historic site has large presence within the Historic District of the City of Natchitoches and serves as a visual reminder of our industrial and southern agricultural heritage.

We share the vision of ensuring the mill's preservation and hope for the site's redevelopment in a manner that is sensitive to the historic character of the site. Our goal as National Heritage Area is to "tell the story" of America's past. This site can become a key component in preserving the history of our regional, state, and national past.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me, at any time, if you would like additional information, or if I can provide any assistance.

Sincerely,

*Cynthia Sutton*

Cynthia Sutton  
President, CRNHA, Inc.

05/13/2017

05/13/2017

05/13/2017

452 Jefferson Street, Suite 150, Natchitoches, LA 71457  
T. (318) 356-5555 F. (318) 356-8222

**NATCHITOCHESES HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION REPORT FOR:  
SOUTHERN COTTON OIL MILL  
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION**

**NAME OF CLG:** City Of Natchitoches

**PROPERTY NAME:** Southern Cotton Oil Mill

**PROPERTY ADDRESS:** 110 Mill Street Natchitoches, LA 71457

**DATE SENT:** March 7, 2017

**DATE OF NATIONAL REGISTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING:** \_\_\_\_\_

Does the nomination meet the Criteria for Listing on the National Register of Historic Places?

Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_ Criterion: A  B \_\_\_\_\_ C \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_

Has public comment been included? Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_ Explain:

The Historic District Commission met in legal session March 6, 2017. The Commission, by unanimous vote, recommended that the Southern Cotton Oil Mill be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Commission recommends that the property or properties should be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Commission would like to make the following recommendations regarding the nomination (use additional sheets if necessary): The Southern Cotton Oil Mill site possesses buildings and a place that are historically and culturally significant to the City of Natchitoches and which should be preserved. Ordinance 4-2017 was adopted to enlarge the boundaries of the Local Historic District to include the Mill Site. (ordinance is attached)

The Commission recommends that the property or properties should not be listed on the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons:

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

The Commission chooses not to make a recommendation on this nomination for the following reasons:

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

Sharon T. Gahagan  
Historic District Commission Chair (Print Name)

Sharon T. Gahagan 3-7-17  
Signature Date

Lee Posey, Mayor  
Chief Elected Official (Print Name)

Lee Posey 3-7-17  
Signature Date





BILLY NUNGESSER  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**State of Louisiana**  
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR  
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM  
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT  
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

RENNIE S. BURAS, II  
DEPUTY SECRETARY

DATE: May 26, 2017

TO: Mr. James Gabbert  
National Park Service Mail Stop 7228  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

FROM: Nicole Hobson-Morris, Director *NHM*  
Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation

RE: Southern Cotton Oil Mill, Natchitoches Parish, LA

Jim,

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copy of the National Register Documentation for the Southern Cotton Oil Mill to be placed in the National Register of Historic Places. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 225-342-8172, or nmorris@crt.la.gov.

Thanks,

Nicole

Enclosures:

- CD with PDF of the National Register of Historic Places nomination form
- CD with electronic images (tiff format)
- Physical Transmission Letter
- Physical Signature Page, with original signature
- Other: *correspondence*

Comments:

- Please ensure that this nomination receives substantive review
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner(s) objection(s) do \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_ constitute a majority of property owners. (Publicly owned property)
- Other: