

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

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

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

1. Name

historic Continental Gin Company

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 4500 - 5th Avenue South not for publication

city, town Birmingham vicinity of congressional district 4

state Alabama code county Jefferson code

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Hill Realty Company, Inc.

street & number 4500 - 5th Avenue South

city, town Birmingham vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number 716 21st Street North

city, town Birmingham state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Avondale Section not surveyed has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Continental Gin Complex is located 2.8 miles east of 20th Street, adjacent to the Railroad Reservation that deliniates the North and South sectors of the City of Birmingham. The 25 acre industrial site is a part of the Avondale section of the city. The Continental Gin site now owned by Hill Realty Company, Inc. is bounded on the north by the Railroad Reservation and the main trunk line of the Seaboard Costline Railroad; on the east by a residential district along 47th Street; on the west by a residential district along 44th Street; and on the south by 5th Avenue and Crestwood Boulevard. The original property boundaries formed a parallelogram 1,300 feet deep north to south by 950 feet east to west. The site slopes gently down from its southern boundary along Crestwood.

The c. 17 acre plot that is included in the nomination encompasses the concentration of industrial buildings dating before 1930 and omits later buildings and open space. The long axis of the factory buildings are aligned on the site parallel to the east and west property lines. The site plan was engineered and designed to provide for rail spur access to each of the four primary groups of industrial buildings from the Seaboard Coastline rail siding entering the northeast corner of the property. Four spur tracks originally branched off of this main siding, paralleling the Seaboard Coastline main track. The spurs off the siding curved in a southerly direction to serve long loading docks adjacent to each of the four primary building groups. Only one of the rail spurs remains in use today, the other three have been removed at various times from 1961 to the present.

The removal of the two western-most sidings have allowed the development of the northern and western extremes of the property for further warehouse and industrial use. Prior to the removal of the spurs, the northern yard was occupied by curving railroad sidings and spoil areas for industrail waste.

The factory buildings associated with the intial development of the complex are shown on the original site drawing (map B) and include those structures with letter designations. Those buildings which still remain are indicated on the attached district map (A).

STRUCTURES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMPLEX

1. The Continental Gin Office Building (c. 1926), (noted as proposed on the plan) now named the Hill Building. The central block of this building was completed a year after the industrial buildings were in operation. The east and west wings were added to the original building in 1947 and 1957 respectively. The office building is a three-story reinforced concrete structure with walls of load bearing clay tile and brick veneer. The "H" shaped floor plan divides the 20,000 sq. ft. of the office space into two wings and a central block.
2. The Foundry Building (c. 1925), "A" on early plan, is 130' x 400'. The building historically housed the pattern shop, the core room, the cupola chamber, and the heavy, medium and light foundry areas. This building is the Ferguson Standard Factory Building No. 3 alongside a specialcrane way bay adopted from the Railroad Divisions selection of engine repair shops.

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3. The Old Machine Shop (c. 1925) "B" on early plan, is 150' x 400'. This building historically housed the heavy and light machine shops, blacksmith shop, tool room and crude oil engine test stands. This building is also the Ferguson Standard Factory Building No. 3 alongside a special craneway designed for railroad engine repair.
4. The Old Assembly Building (c. 1925), "D" on the early plan, is 150' x 400'. This building housed the Assembly Shop and Paint Shop on grade level and a Sheet Metal Shop in the basement adjacent to the covered rail platform between the Assembly Building and the Warehouse. This is a modification of the Ferguson Standard Factory Building No. 3 incorporating a double line of roof monitors with a structure of three 50' wide bays.
5. The Old Wood Working Shop (c. 1925) "E" on plan is 150' x 200'. Prior to 1930 substantial portions of the housings for cotton ginning stands were manufactured of wood. After 1930, wood was no longer used in the manufacture of machinery but was used extensively for crating the finished ginning equipment for shipment. The Wood Working Shop is the Ferguson Standard Factory Building No. 7 with a single clerestory and single crane bay.
6. The Old Warehouse (1925) "H", is a three story structure 112' x 200'. In 1929, the original warehouse was expanded by the construction of a three story addition 80' x 200'. The Warehouse is the Ferguson Standard Factory Building No. 8 termed "Mill Construction".
7. The Old Boiler House (c. 1925 and 1944) Building "K" is 45' x 90'. This building housed the steam boilers, turbines and generators which supplied heat and electricity to the industrial complex. The boilers and heavy equipment were sold at the time the complex was closed by Fulton Industries in 1961.

ORIGINAL BUILDINGS WHICH HAVE BEEN DEMOLISHED OR MOVED

Old Paint Storage Shop, Building C. (c. 1925) was a small building to the north of the machine shop. The date of demolition is unknown.

The Wood Drying Kiln, Building J (c. 1925). Demolished.

The Dry Lumber Storage Shed, Building L (c. 1925) was a simple wooden post and beam shed 150' x 180' with a tin roof as indicated on the original building sections and plans. Demolished c. 1941-1942 to make way for the existing Metal Fabrication Shop.

The Demonstration Ginning Buildings, noted as future construction on the 1925 site plan of the complex were built in 1926. One was relocated and still exists in the northeast corner of the site adjacent to the entrance of the rail siding into the property.

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There have been several additions and alterations to the site and the original office, industrial and warehouse buildings from 1930 to the present. These are enumerated below:

8. Infill warehouse building (c. 1962) was constructed by connecting the eaveline of the west side of the old Machine Shop and the east side of the Old Foundary Building with a steel bar joist roof structure. The additional interior space enclosed was 65' x 340' x 30' high. The creation of this warehouse space necessitated the removal of the factory window walls in the adjoining Machine Shop and Foundry to meet fire code requirements for tenant separation.
- The Metal Plate Fabrication Shop (located just outside of the district boundaries) This shop, craneway and plate storage yard replaced the Dry Wood Storage Shed. The Fabrication Shop was built during the early war period (1941-1942) adjacent to the Old Woodworking Shop.
 - The northern end of the boiler house was extended in 1944 to encompass the base of the smokestack.
 - The East and West wing additions to the original office building were built in 1947 and 1957 respectively. These additions increased the size of the office building from 20,000 square feet to nearly 60,000 square feet.
 - The remodeling of the north wall of the Old Machine Shop building was commenced in 1961 to provide truck loading bays when the buildings were converted to warehouse space by Hill Grocery Company.
 - A continuous shed roof was constructed over the rail loading platform on the west side of the old Foundary Building in 1961.
 - The Factory window walls on the south elevation of the old Machine shop and the west elevation of the old Foundary Building were removed and the openings filled with brick and concrete block in 1961. The clerestory windows in the old foundry were also removed and replaced with corrugated aluminum panels and translucent panels.
 - Presently the northern yard (approximately 5 acres) along the Seaboard Coastline Railroad is being developed for two new warehouse/industrial buildings totaling 75,000 square feet. This section of the property was historically open space used for rail sidings and the storage of bulk material and industrial wastes. This area was not significant to the historical or industrial aspects of the Continental Gin operation. The rail spur along the western elevation of the Old Foundry Building was removed recently to accommodate a new entrance road from Crestwood Boulevard to the new warehouse/industrial buildings in the rear. The new warehouse development is indicative of the contemporary emphasis on truck transport. However, the existing main rail spur will be realigned to serve the rear of the largest new warehouse (60,000 square feet) presently under construction.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates c. 1926 **Builder/Architect** H. K. Ferguson & Company

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Continental Gin Complex is significant as the corporate headquarters (1926-1963) and production facility (1925-1955) for the world's largest manufacturer of cotton gins. Technological improvements by the company substantially improved the profitability and marketability of the cotton farmer's crop in national and world markets from 1886-1980 in the face of rising labor costs and increasing competition from the production of foreign cotton markets.

The history of Continental Gin and its six parent companies is representative of the dynamic growth obtainable by corporate entities in the late 19th and early 20th century and is linked with some of the South's most prominent industrial leaders. The location of the main plant and the corporate headquarters of this major firm reflects the attractiveness of Birmingham as an industrial site. Additionally, the company was ranked in the top ten industries in Birmingham and as such was a major employer of a highly skilled work force.

The Continental Gin Complex constitutes an outstanding example of site planning, plant engineering and industrial architecture for the southeast during the period 1915-1940. It was the most comprehensively planned complex of the period completed by the H. K. Ferguson Company, the first U. S. firm to provide complete design-build-equip services using standard designed factory buildings. The design of the complex was a direct result of an engineering and industrial process study conducted by H. K. Ferguson Company in 1920.

* * * * *

9. Major Bibliographical References

Archives of Bush Hog/Continental Gin. Main Plant. Prattville, Alabama
 Continental Gin Company. "A Trip through the Continental Gin Company."
 Brochure printed by Woodlawn High School Print Shop. No date
 (see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property 17

Quadrangle name Birmingham North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	6
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5	2	2	0	0	0
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3	7	0	9	7	8	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B

1	6
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5	2	2	0	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	7	0	9	5	4	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C

1	6
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5	2	1	8	8	0
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3	7	0	9	4	6	0
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D

1	6
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5	2	1	7	8	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	7	0	9	4	6	0
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E

1	6
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5	2	1	7	8	0
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3	7	0	9	7	2	0
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F

1	6
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5	2	1	8	6	0
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3	7	0	9	7	8	0
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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

(See yellow line on plat plan and continuation sheet.)

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Randolph C. Marks/Preservation Planner

organization Kidd, Wheeler & Plosser, Inc

date October 16, 1980

street & number 2101 Magnolia Avenue, Suite 509

telephone (205) 251-0125

city or town Birmingham

state Alabama

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Mills B. Hayward, Jr.

title SHPO Alabama

date October 17, 1980

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for fact...
W. Ray Price
 Keeper of the National Register

date 11/20/80

Attest:

Cecil Dubie

date 11/20/80

Chief of Registration

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H. K. Ferguson Company. Plot Plan, Continental Gin. Commission Number 307, Sheet #1.

Smith, Algernon L. Continental Gin Company: Fifty-two Years of Service. (Edited by James L. Sulsby, Jr.) Privately printed, Birmingham, 1952.

The Manufacturer's Record. June 11, 1925, page 81.

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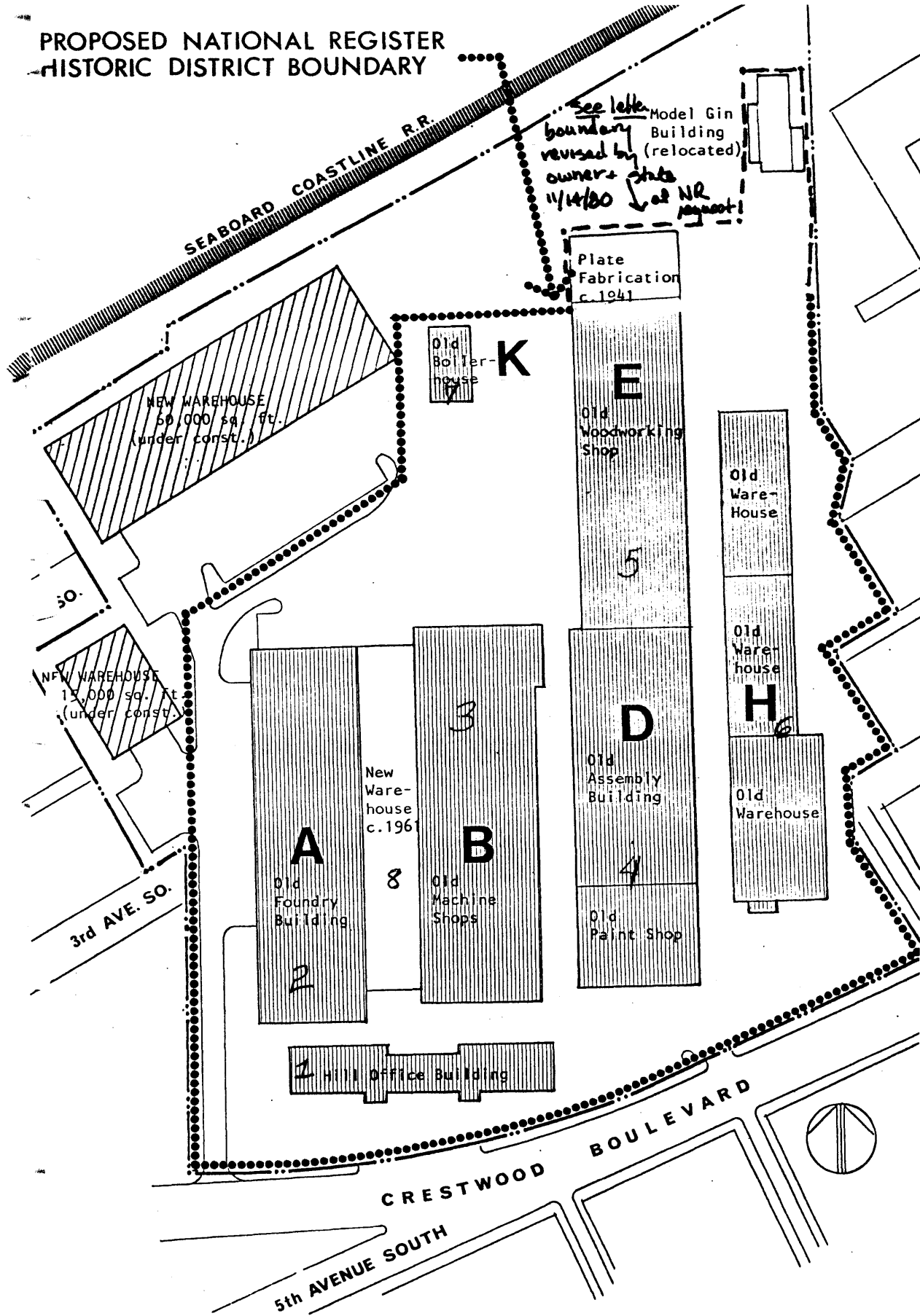
Item number

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the Continental Gin Complex are described both verbally and by the yellow line on the attached scale map C. The boundaries encompass those buildings in factory areas which contributed to the historical significance of the industrial process of cotton gin manufacturing. The buildings in the district are all original buildings dated before 1926. The buildings excluded from the district include a model ginning building c. 1926 which was moved from its original position in front of the warehouse building on Fifth Avenue and the Metal Fabrication Shop (c. 1941) which is a prefabricated metal building connected to the woodworking shop at a common firewall, but is otherwise completely detachable. This building is later than the Gin Complex and is not considered to be a contributing element. The boundaries, while including the original factory buildings, also provide for the use of the north yard for compatible warehouse or industrial development now in progress or planned for the future and provides for the future development potential of the north yard, contributing to the long range economic viability of this industrial property.

PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER
HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY



**OLD
CONTINENTAL GIN COMPLEX
HISTORIC DISTRICT MAP A**