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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

12 1994

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 15A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Southern Cotton Oil Company (Columbia Mill)
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 737 Gadsden Street not for publication _____
city or town Columbia vicinity _____
state South Carolina code SC county Richland code 079
zip code _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mary W. Edmonds 12/8/94
Signature of certifying official Date

Mary W. Edmonds, Deputy SHPO, S.C. Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall 7-25-96
Mary M. [unclear] 1995 Entered in the National Register

[Signature] for
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
7	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
7	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURE

Sub: Processing
Storage

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE

Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)
Late 19th and Early 20th
Century

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation Brick
roof Metal
walls Brick/Metal
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

Significant Dates

1887

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Period of Significance

1887-1944

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately 3.7 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>17</u>	<u>496500</u>	<u>3761160</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>					

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Roger Christman
organization Applied History Program, University of South Carolina date 4 May 1994
street & number 1311 Whaley Street, Apt. 702 telephone (803) 544-0350
city or town Columbia state SC zip code 29205

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Central Roofing & Supply Company, Inc.
street & number c/o Belser & Belser, P.A., P.O. Box 96 telephone (803) 929-0096
city or town Columbia state SC zip code 29202

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 7 Page 5

INTERAGENCY DIVISION

Southern Cotton Oil Company (Columbia Mill)
name of property
Richland County, South Carolina
county and State

The Southern Cotton Oil Company complex is a group of seven industrial buildings--the Linter Room, Press Room, Oil House, Cotton Storage Room, Machine Shop, Seed House, and Storage Shed--located on approximately four acres in square block bounded by Gadsden, Green, Devine, and Wayne Streets in Columbia. The first four of the buildings listed above date from the company's founding in 1887 and the other three date from ca. 1904, ca. 1913, and ca. 1919, respectively. Five of the buildings are constructed of brick and the other two are constructed of galvanized sheet metal. The complex is situated in a neighborhood which consists of a large number of industrial and commercial buildings whose transportation needs were historically met by the nearby railroad. A spur line of the Columbia and Augusta Railroad served the Southern Cotton Oil Company and ran parallel to the Wayne Street facades of the Seed House, Linter Room, and Press Room. The property is in a deteriorated condition, but with the exception of the recent demolition of two buildings--the Meal House and the Hull House--this is a nearly intact representation of a late nineteenth and early twentieth century cotton oil industry complex.

The changes to the complex paralleled the growth of the cotton oil industry in South Carolina. During the industry's boom years in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the complex underwent numerous changes. The Seed House was replaced three times before 1913 and the Meal and Hull Houses were expanded numerous times as well. The cotton oil industry in South Carolina peaked in the years just preceding World War I and it is important to note that no significant additions or alterations to the complex were made after that time. After the complex was purchased in 1962 by the Central Roofing and Supply Company, the cotton oil machinery was removed and the Meal House and Hull House were subsequently demolished in 1994. The rail spur line has also been removed.

At present (mid-1994) seven resources contribute to the character of the cotton oil company complex:

1. **Linter Room, ca. 1887:** A two-story brick building with arched entries and segmental arched windows. The roofline facing Wayne Street has parapet steps from right to left.
2. **Press Room, ca. 1887:** A two-story brick building connected to the Linter Room. It has arched windows on the Wayne Street facade and round windows on the Green Street facade. The roof was originally a continuation of the stepped parapet found on the Linter Room but has been altered to an end-gable roof.
3. **Oil House, ca. 1887:** A two-story brick building with a low stepped-parapet roof and arched windows. The area surrounding the Gadsden Street entrance has been altered and a large brick chimney has been removed.

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4. Cotton Storage Room, ca. 1887: A two-story brick building with a ca. 1894 one-story addition. The second floor has small arched windows.
5. Machine Shop, ca. 1904: A two-story brick building with a stepped-parapet roof, arched windows, and an arched entrance in which the door has been removed and boarded over.
6. Seed House, ca. 1913: A three-story building constructed of corrugated galvanized sheet metal with an end-gable roof. The Gadsden Street facade has large garage-style openings. This seed house replaced an earlier brick building.
7. Storage Shed, ca. 1919: A one-story building constructed of corrugated galvanized sheet metal.

The Southern Cotton Oil Company complex is an excellent example of a cotton oil company which retains its basic integrity in spite of its somewhat deteriorated state.

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name of property
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The Southern Cotton Oil Company is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with the development of the cottonseed and cotton oil industry in South Carolina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The complex consists of seven industrial buildings--the Seed House, Linter Room, Press Room, Machine Shop, Oil House, Cotton Storage Room, and Storage Shed. The Linter Room, Press Room, Cotton Storage Room, and Oil House are original components of the complex and were built in 1887. The Machine Room, Seed House, and Storage Shed were later additions, built in ca. 1904, ca. 1913, and ca. 1919, respectively.

The cotton oil industry in the United States had its origins in Columbia, South Carolina, in the early nineteenth century. Though most cotton planters considered cotton seed worthless, their low opinion of it changed when it was discovered that cotton seed oil and cotton oil were useful and even profitable products. Benjamin Waring, an early settler of Columbia who also served as treasurer of South Carolina, is believed to have been the first manufacturer of cotton oil in the United States, producing it as early as 1801. The first cotton oil mill in South Carolina was established in 1869 by General E.P. Alexander.¹ The industry languished in its first few years due in large part to consumer biases against cotton seed oil and meal. Most consumers preferred olive oil over cotton seed oil, and many farmers feared that cotton seed meal, which was marketed as cattle feed, might poison their livestock.² These biases were eventually overcome by scientific studies demonstrating the uses and benefits of cotton oil and other cotton seed products and by aggressive promoters of the cotton oil industry. Increased cotton production and the exaggerated profit potential claimed by cotton seed and cotton oil promoters combined to give the industry a boost in the 1880s and into the 1890s. A get-rich-quick frenzy in the cotton oil business during this period, however, was responsible for the construction of hundreds of cotton oil mills for which there was no real need.³ The number of cotton oil mills in South Carolina, for example, grew from none in 1879 to sixty-two by 1901. Columbia boasted two of the largest cotton oil mills in the United States by 1891, and one of the two was the Southern Cotton Oil Company complex.⁴

¹Benjamin F. Taylor, "Commerce and Manufacturing," in Helen Kohn Hennig, Columbia: Capital City of South Carolina 1786-1936 (Columbia: R.L. Bryan Company, 1936), p. 336.

²B.F. Taylor, Early History of the Cotton Oil Industry in America (Columbia: n.p., 1936), p. 19.

³Taylor, p. 18.

⁴The Columbia City Directory 1891 (Charleston: Southern Directory and Publishing Company, 1891), p. 13.

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The manufacture of cotton oil can best be explained by describing the process and relating it to the spatial arrangement of the Southern Cotton Oil Company complex--a typical cotton oil company complex--as depicted in Appendix A, the enclosed Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map of 1919.

Cotton seed usually arrived on site by rail and was stored in the Seed House (#1), which in 1919 had a capacity of 12,000 tons.⁵ The seed was unloaded from the railroad cars under a shed roof to protect it from rain and moisture, which would have caused the cotton seed to decay and ruin it for the production of cotton oil.⁶ The seed was then taken by an elevator to a conveyor belt (no longer extant at this complex) connected to the second floor of the Linter Room (#2). After being cleaned of all foreign substances such as wood or sand, the cotton seed was then taken to the first floor of the Linter Room, where the linters removed the remaining lint, or cotton fibers, left on the seed after the cotton had been ginned. The linters were stored, when not in use, in the Cotton Storage Building (#3) adjacent to the Linter Room. The cotton lint was used to manufacture mattresses, pillows, and padding, and linters were also used to manufacture rayon and explosives. Conveyor belts then carried the cleaned cotton seed to the Hull House (#4, no longer extant at this complex), where the hull, or outer covering of the seed, was removed; hulls were sold as cattle feed. The unshelled cotton seed, or meat, was taken to the Oil House (#5), where the seed was crushed, cooked, and formed into cakes. The formed cakes were taken to the Press Room (#6), where they were inserted into a hydraulic press and subjected to approximately 350 tons of pressure.⁷ The extracted cotton seed oil was stored in large tanks before shipment to other processing plants where it was used in manufacturing salad oils, cooking oils, margarine, and soap, and in packing sardines. The pressed cotton seed cakes were taken to the Meal House (#7), ground into meal, packed into 100-pound bags, and sold as cattle feed. Cotton meal was also used to manufacture various fertilizers. The Meal House and oil tanks are no longer extant at this complex. The Southern Cotton Oil Company's Columbia Mill normally operated from September to June and employed as many as 75 men ca. 1900.

The life of the cotton oil industry was shortlived, in large part because so many mills were built that crushing capacity far exceeded the available supply of cotton seed, and because the fierce competition among cotton oil mills for the seed supply inflated costs and virtually eliminated profits.

⁵Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Columbia, South Carolina, 1919.

⁶D.A. Tompkins, Cotton and Cotton Oil (Charlotte: Privately Printed by the Author, 1901), pp. 206-07.

⁷Tompkins, p. 311.

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By 1901 many cotton oil mills were in deep financial difficulty and either closed or were bought out. The Southern Cotton Oil Company, for example, operating nine mills, purchased an additional sixty-two well-equipped cotton oil mills that year.⁸ The cotton oil industry peaked in South Carolina in 1909 with 103 mills in operation. That number dropped to 97 in 1914, 81 in 1919, 38 in 1928, and only 30 by 1939.⁹

The promoters of cotton oil, during its heyday in the 1880s and 1890s and after, characterized their industry as one which turned a useless product into a potential gold mine for the farmers of the South and which provided useful employment for thousands of workers.¹⁰ Some observers, however, had serious doubts about the industry. A 1911 article in The State voiced the opinion that the cotton oil industry had actually helped impoverish many South Carolina farmers because it encouraged farmers to sell their cotton seed and buy cotton meal with the proceeds instead of using their seed to fertilize their crops and improve the quality of their soil and their production. "The poor crops all over the State tells the rest of the story," the article concluded.¹¹

The Southern Cotton Oil Company was founded in 1887 with its Columbia Mill as the flagship cotton oil mill, and by 1900 the company operated nine large cotton oil mills in the South. In 1901 the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company, a fertilizer manufacturer, began purchasing mills throughout the South to ensure a stable supply of ammonia, a product of cotton meal which was a key ingredient in many fertilizers. The Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company purchased the Southern Cotton Oil Company in July 1901 for an estimated \$3,000,000, one of the largest single business transactions in South Carolina up to that time; the Southern Cotton Oil Company was reorganized as a subsidiary of the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company.¹² Both the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company and the Southern Cotton Oil Company went into receivership in 1924, victims of the depression in agricultural industry in the early 1920s. Both companies had a large inventory of goods at the time, and the Southern Cotton Oil Company listed its assets and liabilities at \$11,000,000.¹³ The Southern Cotton

⁸Taylor, p. 19.

⁹Taylor, pp. 17-20.

¹⁰Taylor, p. 20.

¹¹The State (Columbia, S.C.), 8 July 1901.

¹²Ibid.; Yates Snowden, ed., History of South Carolina, 5 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1920), 3:180.

¹³"Chemical Cos. Fail Owing \$51,000,000," New York Times, 4 March 1924.

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Oil Company was not destined to remain in receivership for long, however, for the Wesson Oil and Snowdrift Company of New Orleans purchased it and its mills in 1925 for approximately \$10,000,000. Wesson operated the Columbia Mill until its 1960 merger with Hunt Foods, and the mill--which was the longest-operating cotton oil mill in Columbia--closed in 1962 when Hunt Foods sold the complex to its current owner, Central Roofing and Supply Company.

Christopher FitzSimons was perhaps the most prominent figure closely associated with the Southern Cotton Oil Company's Columbia Mill during its heyday; FitzSimons, a Charleston native, joined the company in 1887 as a salesman and was promoted to general manager of the Columbia Mill in 1889. He was lured away from the Southern Cotton Oil Company by the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company in 1901 and was instrumental in the Virginia-Carolina acquisition of the cotton oil company that year.¹⁴ FitzSimons served as general manager of the Columbia Mill until his death in 1925. He was a tireless promoter of the cotton oil industry, and was instrumental in organizing the Interstate Cotton Seed Crushers' Association and the South Carolina Cotton Seed Crushers' Association; an obituary in The State called FitzSimons "the best informed man in his profession in the entire Southern states."¹⁵

The Southern Cotton Oil Company (Columbia Mill) is significant for its long association with the cotton oil industry in South Carolina during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

¹⁴Louise Jones Dubose, "Christopher Fitzsimmons, Sr., Man of Vision," South Carolina Magazine (October 1948), 16.

¹⁵The State, 8 October 1925.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the pencil line labeled "Southern Cotton Oil Company" on the accompanying Richland County Tax Map 089-15, Block 12, drawn at a scale of 1"=100'.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire area historically associated with the Southern Cotton Oil Company (Columbia Mill).

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Section PHOTOGRAPHS Page 14 Southern Cotton Oil Company (Columbia Mill)
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Richland County, South Carolina
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Name of property: Southern Cotton Oil Company (Columbia Mill)
Location of property: Columbia, Richland County, South Carolina
Photographer: Steven A. Davis
Location of negatives: South Carolina Department of Archives & History,
Columbia, S.C.
Date of photographs: April 1994

1. Seed House
Gadsden Street (W) facade
2. Seed House
Wayne Street/Atlantic Coast Line Railway (E) facade
3. Machine Shop (L), Press Room (C), Linter Room (R)
Wayne Street/Atlantic Coast Line Railway (E) facades
4. Press Room
Green Street (S) facade
5. Machine Shop
Green Street (S) facade
6. Seed House (L), Oil House (R)
Green Street (S) facade
7. Linter Room (L), Cotton Storage Room (R)
Gadsden Street (W) facade

