

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received FEB 8 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic American Mills Web Shop

and/or common East Coast Loose Leaf Company, Inc.

2. Location

street & number 114-152 Orange Avenue (U.S. Route 1) n/a not for publication

city, town West Haven n/a vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county New Haven code 009

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name East Coast Loose Leaf Company, Inc.; Vernon Tait, President

street & number 114-152 Orange Avenue

city, town West Haven n/a vicinity of state CT 06516

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City Clerk's Office

street & number 355 Main Street

city, town West Haven state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records CT Historical Commission

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" 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 (BUILDING NUMBERS KEYED TO SITE MAP)

The American Mills Web Shop is located at the intersection of Front Street and Orange Avenue (U.S. Route 1) in the Allington neighborhood of West Haven. The mill complex is bounded by a mix of service, commercial, industrial and residential structures. The site is dominated by a single-story one-and-a-half-acre weaving room (Building #1, 1903) and its subsequent additions (1909, 1914). A two-and-a-half-story administrative wing (building #2, 1909) faces northwest on Orange Avenue, and houses administrative offices and additional warehouse space. The boiler room and smokestack (Buildings #3 and #4) stand behind the weaving room. A long row of out-buildings, no longer extant, stretched north of smokestack.

The weaving room extends about five hundred feet along Front Street behind the administrative wing, and is outlined on the southwest elevation by a series of triple-hung sash and brick piers (photograph #2). Additions to the weaving room in 1909 and 1914 maintain the architectural elements of the original elevation: common-bond brick walls rest on hewn sandstone sills and foundation walls (photograph #3). In each bay, brick piers frame large 10/10/10-light triple-hung sash with hewn sills and segmentally arched lintels. Corbeled brick courses over each window merge the recessed planes of the glass with the plane of the piers. The piers, in turn, reach up to a corbeled cornice that runs the full length of the southwest elevation. The interior of the weaving room housed rows of looms that produced elastic web. Its expansive and open plan, free of structural partitions, facilitated the manufacturing process. Low-pitch ceiling trusses span the one-hundred-twenty foot width of the room with only three interior supports. These three supports, repeated in each bay, divide the weaving room into four uninterrupted longitudinal bays. Perpendicular to the ceiling trusses are smaller trusses which support a series of sawtooth skylights which originally helped to light the inner bays (photograph #9). All skylights are intact but sheathed by insulation and roofing material. Bathroom additions protrude prominently to break up the rhythm of the northeast elevation of the weaving room. Toilets appear as small appendages with modest corbeled cornices (photograph #4). The three-by-four-bay boiler room employs segmentally arched window bays and piers consistent with that of the weaving room (photograph #5). Behind the boiler, a corbeled octagonal brick shell encases a fire-brick smokestack (photograph #6). A metal-frame structure (building #6), constructed in 1925 for storage purposes at the north corner of the weaving room, does not contribute to the architectural character of the complex. A water tower, no longer extant, was situated between the boiler room and the weaving room, and was mounted on a steel frame.

The two-and-a-half-story administrative wing employs detail similar to that of the weaving room; however, minor refinements announce the wing's importance as administrative center (photograph #1). Stone sills are smooth-cut, and the rounded corners of the brick piers and window lintels lend the elevations a sleek appearance (photograph #2). On the Orange Avenue facade, the off-center entrance bay is clearly marked by a semi-circular arched keystone, and a double-leaf-iron gate with an iron transom (photograph #7). The arch springs from the course of the main-floor sills, above the

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 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Criteria A,C

Specific dates 1903, 1909, 1914 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The American Mills Web Shop is an important example of industrial development in New Haven County around the turn of the century (Criterion A). Constructed in 1903 as the Narrow Fabrics Company, the mill more than tripled its size over the next eleven years. Its brick elevations conceal structural features such as sawtooth skylights and low-pitch ceiling trusses which made its sprawling single-story weaving room a model for the elastic web industry in Connecticut. Today the mill complex retains the distinctive architectural integrity of its exterior elevations, and is a significant example of the early twentieth-century commercial/industrial Italianate-style of architecture (Criterion C).

In 1839, Hotchkiss & Pritchard of Waterbury (factory no longer extant) are credited to have first woven elastic web in America through the use of hand powered looms.¹ The web was used for the manufacture of suspenders. Connecticut's domination of the elastic web industry continued through the nineteenth century. In 1841 the Russell Manufacturing Company of Middletown opened a new factory with power driven looms. By 1910, the uses of elastic web had diversified to include tire foundations, brake linings, safety belts, machinery belting and zipper tape. In 1902, Earl Smith, Archer J. Smith and Julius Maltby of Waterbury incorporated with \$50,000 capital the Narrow Fabrics Company at West Haven. The mill (constructed in 1903), with its new looms and large shuttle space, attracted the best weavers in the New Haven area, especially those employed at the New Haven Web Company, a rival firm established in 1865.² In 1914, the Narrow Fabrics Company, New Haven Web Company and the American Mills Company of Waterbury merged to become the American Mills Company of Connecticut, and the Narrow Fabrics Company name was dropped in favor the the American Mills Web Shop. From its roster of twenty-five employees and 10 looms in 1914, the company boasted over two-hundred-fifty employees and more than 20 looms by 1940.³ In 1941, American Mills was purchased by the United Elastic Corporation, and was operated as a separate division. The American Mills Web Shop was closed down in 1970 after United Elastic Corporation relocated the division to Alabama. After removal of all looms and other machinery, the mill was used as a warehouse until its purchase in 1981 by the East Coast Loose Leaf Company, Inc., of Stamford, assemblers of custom printed notebooks.

By 1900, the problem of interior industrial lighting, traditionally solved by rows of double-hung sash, was addressed by the use of walls with increasing percentages of glass. Although weaving rooms of five hundred feet in length were common in the textile industry by 1903, overall width was restricted by the ability of perimeter lighting to light interior bays. Furthermore, the width of each interior bay was limited by the spans of massive floor-to-ceiling structural supports. The solution offered by the

9. Major Bibliographical References

Aronin, Jeffrey Ellis, Rise of the Factory Style in the USA.
New York: American Association of Architectural
Bibliographers, 1975.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 4.87

Quadrangle name New Haven

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	6	7	1	1	7	0	4	5	7	3	3	7	5
Zone	Easting			Northing										

B

Zone	Easting			Northing										

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification Northwesterly: 381 feet by Orange Ave; Easterly: 310 feet by land of C.W. Blakeslee & Sons Inc.; Northeasterly: 372.5 feet by land of C.W. Blakeslee & Sons Inc.; Southeasterly: 299.91

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

state n/a code n/a county n/a code n/a

state n/a code n/a county n/a code n/a

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jack A. Gold Historic Preservation Consultant,
edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization self date June 1982

street & number 50 Hubinger Street telephone 203/389-4590

city or town New Haven state CT 06511

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

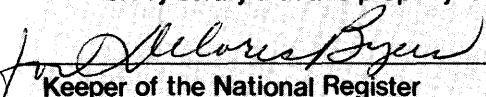
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date February 3, 1983

For NPS use only

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

 Entered in the National Register date 3/10/83
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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AMERICAN MILLS WEB SHOP

Continuation sheet

Item number 7, 8

Page 1

7. Description

raised basement. A single-run stair leads from the Orange Avenue entrance to the first-floor offices. Office walls feature varnished, vertically-boarded tongue-in-groove paneling; paneled wainscot and chair rails add scale and relief. The ceiling is coffered with varnished wood panels, and is outlined by a well delineated entablature which sheaths the structural ceiling beams (photograph #10). In the warehouse section east of the office, round wooden posts with iron caps divide the plan into three longitudinal bays (photograph #8). This plan is duplicated on the basement and second floor.

The first step in the manufacturing process was the processing of fabric in the second floor of the administrative wing (building #2). Fabrics used for the manufacture of web, such as cotton, rayon and silk, were warped from spools onto sheets of rubber. The elastic web was produced by running this woven material through heated revolving drums, a process known in the trade as vulcanization (patented by Charles Goodyear in 1839). The web material was then transported to the weaving room (building #1), and was stretched and cut in the looms. The finished material was sorted and packaged on the first floor (east side) of the administrative wing (building #2) and shipped from the basement of the same building. Initially, elastic web was used for the manufacture of suspenders. By the 1920s the uses for elastic included automobile brake linings and clutch facings, airplane safety belts, high-speed machine belting, ladder tape for Venetian blinds, garter and corset webs, and zipper tape.

8. Significance

American Mills Web Shop incorporated sawtooth skylights and low-pitch ceiling trusses, substantially increasing the usable floor area. Use of sawtooth skylights and low-pitch ceiling trusses requiring minimal structural intrusions facilitated the consolidation of the manufacturing process on one floor, and the use of larger looms with shuttle space far in excess of those generally in operation.

Architecturally, the ensemble of mill buildings retains its early twentieth-century appearance. The rhythmic repetition of corbeled cornices, brick piers and segmentally arched fenestration recalls the exuberance of the commercial/industrial Italianate style (Criterion C). The usual stylistic differentiation between administration and manufacture is also evident here. The elevated two-story office-wing, defined by softer, rounded piers and more pronounced roof cornice, contrasts with the vast, low-slung weaving room. This stylistic differentiation also occurs on the interior. Neo-classical detail in the front office interior, expressed by coffered ceilings and paneled wainscot, conveys formality, authority and an esthetic presence which contrasts with the utilitarian weaving room. Although lacking original machinery, the American Mills Web Shop has assumed new significance upon rehabilitation in 1981-1982, and offers a viable solution for other vacant and/or underutilized industrial sites in New England.

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National Park Service

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AMERICAN MILLS WEB SHOP
Continuation sheet

Item number 8,9,10

Page 2



8. Significance

NOTES

¹Clifford H. Richmond, History and Romance of Elastic Webbing, p.18.

²Richmond, p.32.

³Richmond, p.40.

9. Major Bibliographical References

History of West Haven, Connecticut. Writers Program of the Works Progress Administration, 1940.

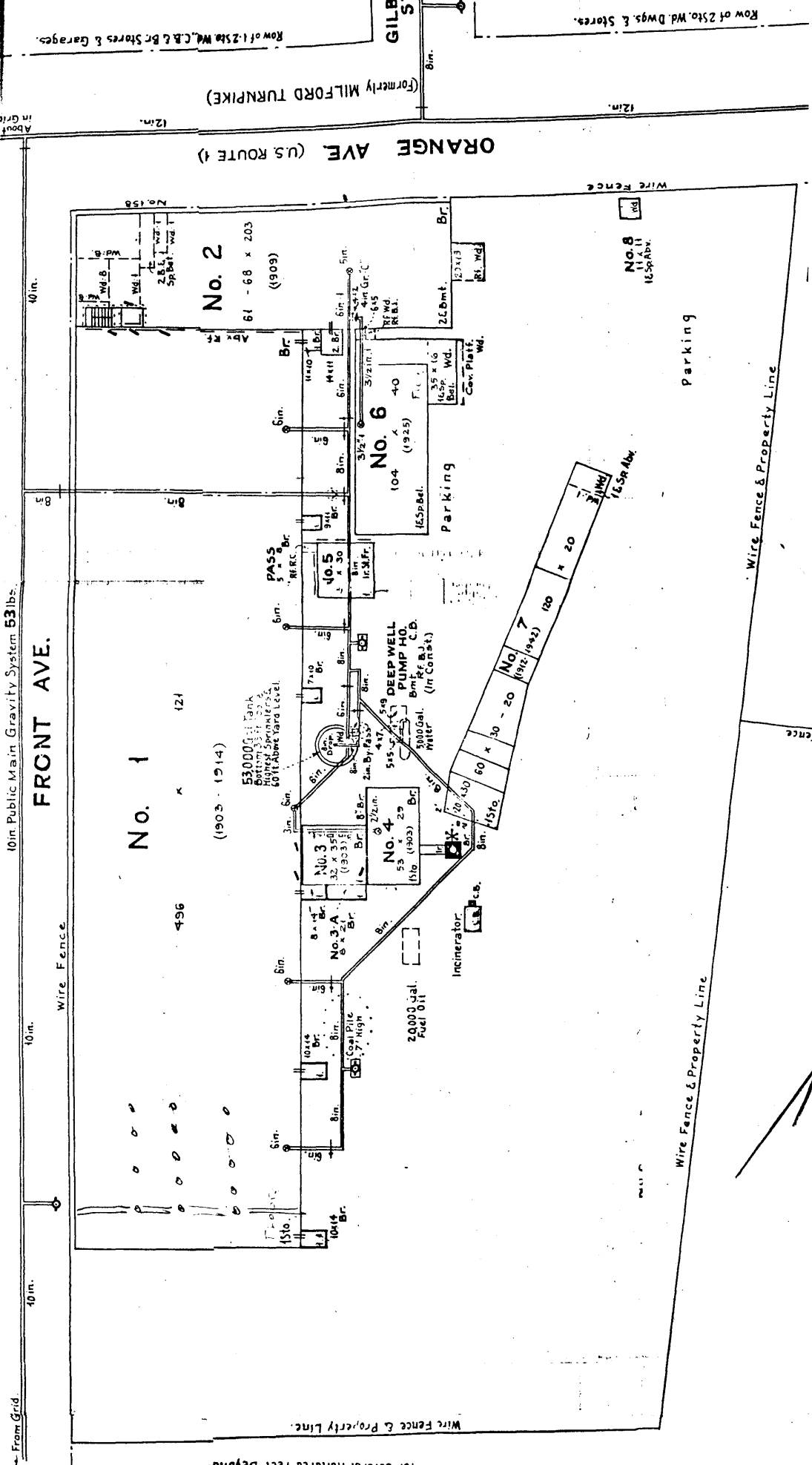
Richmond, Clifford A., History and Romance of Elastic Webbing. Easthampton, Mass.: Easthampton News Co., 1946.

Roth, Matthew, Connecticut, an Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites. Washington: Society for Industrial Archeology, Smithsonian Institution, 1981.

The United Way, 1941-1966. Pamphlet, 25th Anniversary, American Mills Division, United Elastic Corporation.

10. Geographical Data

feet by land of C.W. Blakeslee & Sons Inc.; Southwesterly: 662.96
feet by Front Avenue.



scale: 1"=50'

PLAN

American Mills Web Shop
West Haven, Connecticut

Prepared by: Associated Factory
Mutual Fire Insurance Company,
Norwood, Massachusetts, 1956

10in. Public Main Gravity System 53 lbs.

FRONT AVE.

ORANGE AVE (U.S. ROUTE 4)

No. 1
(1903 - 1914)

No. 2
61 - 68 x 203
(1909)

No. 6
104
(1925)

No. 7
(1912/1922)

No. 8
165-26-40

53,000 gal. Tank
Bottom 3' 3" to 2'
Highest Sprinklers 2'
60' Above Land Level

DEEP WELL
PUMP HD.
500 Gal. Tank
5' x 3' x 3' (In Const.)

20,000 Gal.
Fuel Oil

Incinerator

Wire Fence & Property Line



Open Air Theatre Abt. 500ft. then Vacant Land for Several Hundred Feet B.

Vacant Land for 45ft then 125ft Br.C.B. Bldgs of the NEW ENGLAND DIECASTING CO. INC.

- 1. 1.5' x 1.5' x 1.5' (1903)
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From Grid

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Wire Fence

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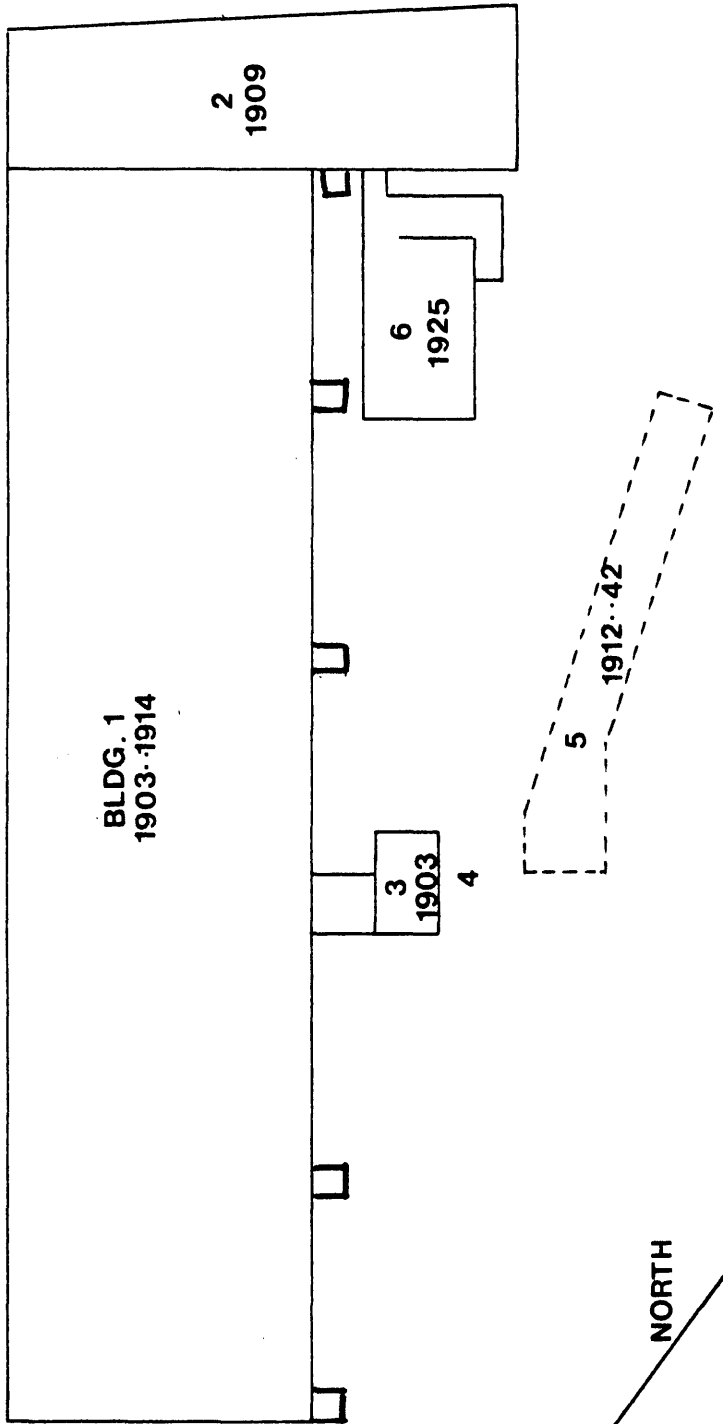
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10in.

ORANGE AVE.

FRONT ST.



NORTH

SCALE: 1"/50'

EXISTING SITE MAP
American Mills Web Shop
West Haven, Connecticut