

4320

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 Caromount Mills, Inc. - Burlington Industries, Inc. Plant

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 450 West Ridge Street, 910 Carter Street

N/A not for publication

city or town Rocky Mount

N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Nash code 127 zip code 27804

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 the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for 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.)

Hein Cherry, SAPO  
Signature of certifying official/Title

7/9/18  
Date

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
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 certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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

Janet Salby  
Signature of the Keeper

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

8-26-2019

**5. Classification**

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

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

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

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local       | <input type="checkbox"/> district               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State       | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal     | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 |

Contributing	Noncontributing	
7	0	buildings
0	0	sites
5	2	structures
0	0	objects
12	2	Total

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

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: Manufacturing Facility  
INDUSTRY: Industrial Storage  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT: Not in Use  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Reinforced-concrete, steel, and brick  
construction  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
walls BRICK  
CONCRETE  
METAL  
roof SYNTHETICS: Rubber  
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 in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry

**Period of Significance**

1930-1969

**Significant Dates**

circa 1930

1940

1946

1947

1955

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

J. E. Serrine and Company, 1940 boiler house

Burlington Industries, Inc., 1958-1977 additions

**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: Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill

Braswell Memorial Public Library, Rocky Mount

Caromount Mills, Inc. – Burlington Industries, Inc. Plant  
Name of Property

Nash County, NC  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 24 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

See Latitude/Longitude coordinates continuation sheet.

1	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

See continuation sheet

### 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 Heather Fearnbach  
organization Fearnbach History Services, Inc. date 12/22/2017  
street & number 3334 Nottingham Road telephone 336-765-2661  
city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27104

### 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name RM Commercial, LLC (PIN 385014344078)  
street & number 300 Blackwell Street telephone (919) 433-1568  
city or town Durham state NC zip code 27701

name Emerita Associated USA, Inc. (PIN 385014334315)  
street & number 744 Broad Street telephone (919) 433-1568  
city or town Newark state NJ zip code 07102

**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 listing. 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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Nash County, NC

## Section 7. Narrative Description

### Setting

The city of Rocky Mount is located in northeastern North Carolina at the junction of three major highways: US 64, US 301, and Interstate 95. The central business district flanks the railroad, which serves as the Nash/Edgecombe county line. Rocky Mount's west side is in Nash County; the east side is in Edgecombe County. The Caromount Mills, Inc.-Burlington Industries, Inc. complex is in Nash County about one mile northwest of the central business district. The plant occupies an irregularly shaped, predominantly flat, approximately twenty-four-acre tract comprising two tax parcels bounded by fifteen small lots on West Elm Street's south side on the north, North Harris Street on the west, and Carter, North Pine, and West Ridge Streets on the south. The south portion of the tract's east boundary is on Mill Street's west side, while the north section extends diagonally east toward Peachtree Street, aligning with remnants of an Atlantic Coastline Railroad coal trestle.

The surrounding area is primarily residential, encompassing early- to mid-twentieth-century houses erected as Rocky Mount expanded northward. The National Register-listed Rocky Mount Mills Village Historic District is directly north of the Caromount Mills-Burlington Industries complex. Modest one-story weatherboarded houses constructed by Rocky Mount Mills for its workers line River Drive, Carr Street, and West Elm Street. The district includes those dwellings, Rocky Mount Mills' industrial complex, and associated resources. Although the Rocky Mount Mills employee houses on West Elm Street's south side at the north end of the Caromount Mills-Burlington Industries complex have been demolished, the six-foot-tall chain-link fence that historically separated the dwellings' rear yards and the manufacturing facility remains. Rocky Mount Village, LLC, owns the residential lots, which are not included within the plant's National Register boundary.

The area east and south of the Caromount Mills-Burlington Industries plant is also mainly residential. The early- to mid-twentieth-century dwellings were not owned or built by Caromount or Rocky Mount mills, but were at times rented by employees of both concerns. The one-story frame circa 1942 duplex at 700-702 North Pine Street and the one-story brick-veneered circa 1953 residence at 706 North Pine Street exemplify this tenancy trend. A series of blue-collar workers leased the units, which are now owned by the plant's prospective developer, Rocky Mount Mills, LLC, but have been excluded from the Caromount Mills, Inc.-Burlington Industries, Inc. plant's National Register boundary.<sup>1</sup>

Two large gable-roofed brick tobacco warehouses with stepped parapets stand on North Harris Street's west side, west of the Caromount Mills-Burlington Industries complex. Nash County property records indicate that both were erected circa 1910 and expanded in 1954. Two smaller metal-clad circa 1956

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<sup>1</sup> Factory Insurance Association, "Rocky Mount Mills, Inc., Rocky Mount, N. C.," November 12, 1936; *Rocky Mount City Directories*.

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tobacco warehouses with low gable roofs occupy the block at North Harris and Carter Street's southeast corner. To the east, a circa 1950 flat-roofed concrete-block tobacco warehouse fills the block bounded by Carter, North Pine, Gold, and North Vyne Streets. A portion of the two tobacco warehouses south of Caromount Mills-Burlington Industries at West Ridge, Carr, and North Pine Street's intersection may have been built in 1910, but the majority of the metal-clad complex has a 1950s appearance.<sup>2</sup>

## Site Evolution

Caromount Mills, Inc. purchased Rollinson Manufacturing Company's 1928 textile mill and, beginning in 1930, erected a series of brick, steel, and concrete buildings and additions to facilitate yarn and fabric manufacturing, dyeing, finishing, storage, and shipping. A one-story, brick, sawtooth-roofed, circa 1930 mill was demolished in the early 1950s to permit its site to function as a parking lot. The small brick softener house that served the circa 1930 mill is the complex's earliest extant resource. Caromount Mills executed its last significant improvement campaign in 1955. Burlington Industries enlarged the plant through 1977. The expansive complex has a roughly L-shaped footprint.<sup>3</sup>

A tall chain-link fence borders much of the site. The fence is set back from neighboring streets, allowing for a landscaped buffer punctuated by deciduous and evergreen trees. The setback on West Elm Street's south side is deeper due to the Rocky Mount Mills employee houses that once fronted the road. A short drive leads from West Elm Street to the double-leaf chain-link gate at the plant's northeast entrance. Within the fence, at the lot's northeast corner, a low concrete-block wall surrounds two round in-ground concrete oil storage tanks. The south tank was constructed between 1956 and 1966 and the north tank after 1971. A two-story 1940 boiler house enlarged in 1952 and a 1940 smokestack are south of the storage tanks. The concrete-paved area west of the boiler house and north of the 1955 warehouse addition's loading docks facilitated shipping and receiving.

The plant's fire suppression system included in-ground reservoirs, elevated water tanks, perimeter hose houses, and a sprinkler system. The 1956 Sanborn map illustrates a no-longer-extant round in-ground reservoir southwest of the boiler house in close proximity to the 1955 warehouse addition. A frame 1940s hose house and a brick 1950s utility building stand north of the pavement near the north fence. A short, landscaped drive from West Elm Street to a gate in the fence's central section is no longer in service. An asphalt-paved drive extends west around the plant's north and west elevations to another concrete-paved area where two manufacturing buildings stood by 1955.

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<sup>2</sup> Nash County property records, <https://nashcounty.connectgis.com/> (accessed in April 2018); *Rocky Mount City Directories*.

<sup>3</sup> Burlington Industries, Inc., Buildings and Grounds Department, "Men's Wear Division, Rocky Mount Finishing Company, proposal #1, 2, & 3 for new warehouse space," November 23, 1971.

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The site is wooded between the plant's west elevation and North Harris Street. South of the mill, in the now open lawn at the complex's southwest corner, the 1956 Sanborn map illustrates a no-longer-extant one-story Boy Scout hut identified as a "recreation house" and a small picnic shelter with a barbecue pit, labelled "cookhouse." The frame 1930s warehouse close to Carter Street in the lawn's southeast corner is in poor condition.

Degraded asphalt pavement wraps around the plant's south warehouses and office adjacent to loading docks. An asphalt-paved drive connects West Ridge Street to a chain-link gate adjacent to a mid-1960s guard house. A large asphalt parking lot occupies the site of the circa 1930 mill. A small, rectangular, one-story, side-gable-roofed building that served as a personnel office stood west of the circa 1930 mill on the east side of an access drive by the late 1940s and remained in use in 1971. Northwest of the personnel office, a 100,000 water tank was installed adjacent to a 1955 addition between 1956 and 1971.

A small brick circa 1930 softener house and a concrete salt pit constructed between 1956 and 1966 remain at the parking lot's northeast corner. The L-shaped, two-story brick building with a first-floor cloth room and a second-floor office that abutted the softener house's north elevation was demolished between 1956 and 1971. A 60,000-gallon water tank that rested on a 75-foot-tall steel tower south of the building has also been removed.

A concrete-paved drive extends from a chain-link gate at West Ridge Street to the parking lot's southeast section. An unpaved drive provided access to the softener house and circa 1930 manufacturing building. East of those resources, a low concrete wall and oil tank base were constructed at an undetermined date after 1971, likely in the 1970s. Wooded areas border the east lot line.

## Resource List (in inventory order)

Caromount Mills -- Burlington Industries Plant, 1930s-1971, 1977 addition, contributing building  
Finished Products Warehouse, 1947, contributing building  
Boiler House, 1940, 1952, contributing building  
Smokestack, 1940, contributing structure  
Atlantic Coastline Railroad Coal Trestle and Wall, 1930s, contributing structure  
Oil Storage Tanks, south tank between 1956 and 1966, contributing structure, north tank after 1971,  
noncontributing structure  
Utility Building, 1950s, contributing building  
Hose House, 1940s, contributing building  
Warehouse, 1930s, contributing building  
Guard House, mid-1960s, contributing structure

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Softener House, circa 1930, contributing building  
Salt Pit, between 1956 and 1966, contributing structure  
Oil Storage Tank Base, after 1971, noncontributing structure

## Inventory

The following inventory list begins at the complex's northeast corner and moves counterclockwise around the property. Principal resource headings are in bold and underlined. Building dates reflect the year of construction completion. Freestanding structures erected after 1969, which is the end of the period of significance, are noncontributing.

### **Caromount Mills -- Burlington Industries Plant, 1930s-1971, 1977 addition, contributing building**

#### *Exterior: Overview*

The Caromount Mills -- Burlington Industries plant gradually increased in size as buildings were constructed to facilitate the operation's growth. The complex encompasses a series of interconnected one- to two-story brick, concrete, and steel manufacturing and storage buildings and additions, most of which were erected from the 1930s through the mid-1960s. All exhibit a functional aesthetic in their form, massing, expressed structures, and open plans with fenestration dictated by interior use. Structural systems uniformly comprise concrete foundations, brick walls, and steel I-beams, posts, and trusses. However, some elements differ.

Flat roofs are prevalent, but barrel-vault-truss roofs distinguish the 1930s manufacturing building and the adjacent 1941/1946 dye house. The 1955 and 1977 warehouses to the north have low-pitched gable roofs. Exterior walls are typically brick, with 1940s and 1950s sections executed in common bond. Large multipane steel sash with operable hoppers provided ample light and ventilation in these portions of the mill. The 1955 warehouse in the complex's northwest section is distinguished by a tall brick kneewall below aluminum-sided walls. Paired rectangular six-pane sash illuminate the interior. Most of the late 1950s and 1960s additions have windowless oversized red brick running-bond walls. However, large multipane steel sash light areas such as the shop at the northwest corner of the plant's south section. The mid-1960s office addition at the complex's southeast end is characterized by tall, narrow, paired, tinted-glass windows. Metal-panel siding sheathes the 1960s and 1977 additions west of the 1955 warehouse as well as the mechanical room and equipment shed additions that extend from the 1930s building's south and east elevations.



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## *Exterior: north elevation, from east to west*

The additions in the plant's north section have gradually deeper setbacks moving west. The diagonal trajectory aligns with the access drive and West Elm Street to the north.

A one-story, four-bay, shed-roofed, loading dock projects at the 1955 warehouse's northeast corner. Red brick seven-to-one common bond walls rise from the concrete-block foundation. A concrete ramp leads to a concrete platform adjacent to the east bay, where double-leaf plywood doors have been installed. In the adjacent bay, wood steps with open wood railings provide access to a single-leaf door surrounded by early-twenty-first-century plywood infill. The two west bays have also been enclosed with plywood.

To the west, five loading docks with paneled roll-up doors pierce the 1955 warehouse's brick north elevation. The loading dock numbers are indicated on the wall above each door. West of the docks, the 1955 warehouse's north and angled west walls comprise aluminum siding above tall brick kneewalls. Pairs of rectangular, horizontal, six-pane steel sash illuminate the interior. A large poured-concrete mechanical platform extends from the north elevation's east half. Steel towers support rooftop ventilation equipment.

The corrugated-metal-panel-sided 1977 warehouse west of the 1955 warehouse has blind north and west elevations. A single-leaf steel door at the north elevation's east end and a corrugated-metal roll-up service door on the west elevation allow egress. Volunteer vegetation fills two long rectangular concrete-block tank foundations adjacent to the north elevation. A steel equipment platform projects from the warehouse's west elevation.

The 1977 addition abuts the north wall of a long, narrow 1955 addition that was extended west between 1956 and 1971. Corrugated-metal-panels sheathe the blind walls. The adjacent steel platforms support ventilation equipment. West of the metal-clad addition, the exposed portion of the tall brick 1955 dye house addition's north five-to-one common bond wall contains a corrugated-metal roll-up service door. A flat-roofed steel canopy with slender square steel posts and beams shelters the entrance. The wall is blind.

## *Exterior: west elevation, from north to south*

The 1955 dyehouse addition's west elevation is also windowless. A one-story shed-roofed 1960s addition that housed dye vats projects from the wall's south section. Double-leaf steel doors on the metal-clad addition's north and west elevations facilitate access.

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A long, narrow, one-story, flat-roofed 1955 building extends south from the 1955 addition's southwest corner. Regularly spaced brick and steel buttresses support oversized running-bond red brick blind walls. A corrugated-metal roll-up service door pierces the third bay from the north end. A narrow, one-story, flat-roofed, red brick wing projects from the wall's south section. The building's south end intersects another one-story, oversized running-bond red brick, flat-roofed, 1955 addition that extends further south and west. Two large service door openings pierce the windowless north elevation.

A one-story, six-to-one common-bond red brick, flat-roofed shop addition erected between 1956 and 1964 extends from the 1955 addition's west end. A large service door near the north elevation's west end allows egress. Twelve-pane steel sash with central six-pane hoppers pierce the west wall. The brick south wall and concrete-block east walls are blind. A large kalamein door secures the wide embroidery and art department entrance at the east elevation's south end. The 1947 finished products warehouse, enumerated as a separate resource as it was initially freestanding, is north of the shop.

### *Exterior: south section, north, west, and south elevations*

A series of one-story, oversized running-bond brick, flat-roofed additions built between 1956 and 1966 at the complex's south end provided office, warehouse, manufacturing, and research and development space. Although newspaper articles reference addition construction during the 1960s, architectural drawings and documentary photographs illustrating the complex's evolution have not been located, making it impossible to delineate exact expansion sequence. The northern additions were erected between 1956 and 1964 and the cutting, piece goods, and finishing departments and offices at the south end from 1964 through 1966. Much of the south section's west and north elevations are obscured by dense vegetation.

The blind north elevation of the addition that housed the embroidery and art departments, located between the shop and 1955 addition, has a corrugated-metal roll-up door at its west end. Two single-leaf steel doors pierce the west elevation. A large kalamein door secures the south interior door opening into the sample department, which has a blind west wall.

The sample department abuts the cutting department adjacent to the mechanical room that projects from the cutting department's northwest corner. The north elevations of the cutting department and the piece goods department to the west are blind. Mechanical and storage rooms extend from the piece goods department's north elevation and a one-story entrance vestibule projects from its southwest corner. The piece goods department's west and south elevations are windowless, as are the south elevations of the cutting and finishing departments to the east. A one-story, flat-roofed, brick mechanical room extends from the cutting department's south elevation. Four loading docks with corrugated-metal roll-up doors pierce the finishing department's south wall near its east end. The mid-1960s office addition to the east has shorter walls executed in a variegated light red brick. A flat-

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roofed metal canopy shelters the tinted-glass double-leaf door, sidelights, and transom. Concrete steps with metal-pipe railing lead to the entrance from the concrete sidewalk.

***Exterior: south section, east elevation, from south to north***

The mid-1960s office addition's east elevation features tall, narrow, paired, tinted-glass windows and a central entrance with a tinted-glass double-leaf door, sidelights, and transom surmounted by a flat-roofed metal canopy. To the north, a one-story corridor spans much of a large warehouse's east elevation, facilitating access to five loading docks with corrugated-metal roll-up doors as well as the 1955 addition at the corridor's north end. Large thirty-two-pane steel sash with central hoppers are intact on the L-shaped 1955 addition's south and east elevations, but have been painted to reduce heat and glare. Corrugated metal panels sheathe the upper portion of the east elevation beneath deep eaves.

***Exterior: north section, south elevation, from west to east***

The south portion of the plant's north section includes, from west to east, the 1955 dye house addition, the 1941/1946 dye house, and the 1930s manufacturing building. The 1941/1946 dye house and manufacturing building are distinguished by barrel-vault-truss roofs, while addition roofs are flat. A narrow, one-story, five-to-one common-bond brick, 1955 addition extends across the south elevation's west end to abut a slightly taller one-story flat-roofed addition likely erected in the early 1940s. Although most of the large windows have been enclosed with brick, original openings are visible. A flat-roofed metal canopy supported by slender steel posts shelters the double-leaf glass door installed in a portion of a former window location in the one-story 1955 addition's west section.<sup>4</sup> Further east, three fifteen-pane steel sash with six-pane hoppers and concrete sills fill the upper portions of once-larger window openings at 1940s addition's west end. A double-leaf steel door provides access to a mechanical room at the addition's east end.

To the east, a one-story, brick, flat-roofed mechanical room with a single-leaf steel door on its south elevation projects from the south elevation. Further east, metal panels sheathe the flat-roofed, rectangular, mechanical room that extends from the manufacturing building's south elevation. Four single-leaf steel doors pierce the mechanical room's south elevation and a metal louvered vent fills most of its east elevation. Both mechanical rooms were erected between 1956 and 1971.

East of the mechanical room, six-pane steel sash with concrete sills have been installed in the lower portion of two large window openings otherwise enclosed with brick. Two pairs of tall, rectangular, thirty-pane steel sash with six-pane hoppers and concrete sills, and one pair of narrower eighteen-pane sash remain at the south elevation's east end.

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<sup>4</sup> The addition had been constructed by 1945, as shown in photographs included in the *Rocky Mount Evening Telegram* on July 31, 1945, p. B1.

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## *Exterior: north section, east elevation, from south to north*

Groups of large multi-pane steel sash are intact on the manufacturing building's east elevation, although some glass has been painted. Sliding metal doors facilitate egress. A poured-concrete loading dock sheltered by a frame shed canopy supported by slender steel posts spans the wall. Chain-link fencing has been added to secure equipment beneath the canopy's northwest section.

The 1955 finished product warehouse wraps around the 1947 warping department warehouse's north and east elevations and abuts 1930s manufacturing building's northeast corner. A two-story corrugated-metal flat-roofed canopy protects the loading dock at this junction. The lower section of the 1955 warehouse's southeast wall is concrete-block with brick and steel buttresses, while the upper section is aluminum-sided beneath a continuous band of steel-frame windows covered with paper. Steel steps with a metal-pipe railing lead to the single-leaf upper-level entrance. North of the stair, a single-leaf wood door with a paneled base and glazed upper section pierces the wall's lower level. A sixteen-pane steel sash with a four-pane hopper remains north of the door. The identically sized window opening south of the stair has been infilled with plywood and a smaller rectangular, horizontal window. Corrugated-metal-panel siding sheathes the 1955 warehouse's south elevation. A sliding metal door facilitates access from the loading dock's north end. At the loading dock's northeast corner, metal panels rise to the canopy. To the south, a narrow, one-story, corrugated-metal-clad, flat-roofed addition borders the loading dock's east edge. North of the loading dock, the 1955 warehouse's windowless concrete-block east wall is angled to follow the railroad spur line trajectory. This elevation is obscured by dense vegetation.

## *Interior*

The mill's open plan and interior finishes original to each construction phase are substantially intact. Structural systems uniformly comprise concrete foundations, brick walls, and steel I-beams, posts, and trusses. Manufacturing and storage areas have brick walls, some of which are painted, and poured concrete floors. The open floor plan accommodated large equipment, warehouse shelving, and long dye vats. The roof structure is fully exposed in most areas. In the 1955 and 1977 warehouses at the complex's north end, corrugated-metal roof decking spans steel beams and trusses. Wide-board decking was utilized in the 1930s manufacturing building, 1941/1946 dye house, and many 1950s additions, while the 1960s additions at the complex's south end have pre-cast concrete roof panels. Ample ceiling height allowed for mezzanines in the 1930s manufacturing building and 1941/1946 dye house. Fluorescent lights, sprinkler system pipes, equipment pipes, and rigid metal ventilation system ductwork hang from the ceilings. Surface-mounted metal conduit houses electrical wiring.

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In a few areas, frame partition walls create offices, laboratories, conference, and storage rooms of various sizes, as well as a cafeteria, commissaries, and restrooms. Most appear to be original or had been erected by 1972.<sup>5</sup> Gypsum board, plywood panels, and faux-wood paneling sheathe partition walls. Vinyl-composition tile and commercial-grade carpeting cover some floors. Most offices have simple wood baseboards and door surrounds and some have dropped aluminum-frame acoustical-tile ceilings with fluorescent lighting panels.

The one-story 1955 addition on the south elevation of the plant's north section, which includes a cafeteria and commissary, is treated in this manner, as are the two levels of rooms lining the west section of the 1941/1946 dye house's south wall. The 1930s manufacturing building's west wall was removed when the dye house was constructed. At the east end of the 1930s building's south wall, concrete block walls enclose a series of small rooms beneath an equipment mezzanine. Steel steps with metal-pipe railings provide upper-level access.

The only other significantly subdivided area in the plant's north section is a two-story addition erected between 1956 and 1971 at the west end of a 1955 addition (north of the 1947 dye house expansion). Offices flank the first floor's narrow T-shaped corridor. Steel steps with metal-pipe railings lead to a second-story mechanical room and laboratories.

The 1955 restroom updates included square glazed-ceramic-tile wainscoting and mosaic floor tile installation. Some porcelain toilets and wall-mounted sinks are intact, but most have been removed.

As the complex grew, formerly exterior walls were typically enclosed within additions. Existing doors and windows were often left in place. New single-leaf, double-leaf, sliding, and roll-up service doors augmented connectivity between plant sections. Wood-panel, vertical-board, or steel doors hang in some interior doorways, but in many instances metal fire doors slide on steel tracks and are held open by weighted pulleys. Corrugated-metal roll-up fire doors are mounted above some door lintels.

Most of the plant's south section is open manufacturing and storage space. However, some areas were subdivided to accommodate product research and development functions. For example, three small rooms adjacent to the L-shaped 1955 addition's southwest wall housed the art department. The embroidery department to the west included two long narrow rooms on its east side. The sample department, pattern room, and a commissary are south of the embroidery department.

Water infiltration has resulted in significant damage throughout the mid-1960s office wing at the plant's southeast corner. Gypsum board walls are deteriorated, vinyl composition tile floors buckled

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<sup>5</sup> Burlington Industries, Inc., "Rocky Mount Finishing Plant Column and Beam Layout," November 20, 1972.

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and loose, commercial-grade carpeting saturated, and acoustical ceiling tiles collapsed. The wing is infested with mold and mildew. The basement is inaccessible due to standing water.

## **Finished Products Warehouse, 1947, contributing building**

A long, one-story, low-gable-roofed 1947 finished products warehouse is north of the shop erected between 1956 and 1964 at the northwest corner of the plant's south section. A narrow compressor room and short corridor connect the buildings. Regularly spaced brick and steel buttresses punctuate the warehouse's concrete-block walls and slender steel trusses and columns support the corrugated-metal roof panels. Service door openings at the east elevation's north and south ends provide access. The diagonal north elevation's wide door and five large window openings have been infilled with brick. Terra-cotta coping caps the south elevation's stepped-parapet blind south wall.

## **Boiler House, 1940, 1952, contributing building**

The two-level boiler house at the complex's northeast corner comprises a three-bay-wide and long 1940 south section and a 1952 north addition of equal size. Variegated red brick six-to-one-common-bond walls rise above the raised basement's concrete foundation. Slightly recessed bays topped with corbelled cornices create variation in the 1940 building's wall plane. Metal coping caps the very low-pitched gable roof's flat parapet. A tall, round, terra-cotta-tile smokestack rises above the shorter two-story one-bay-wide and long wing at the building's south end.

Multipane steel-frame sash with hoppers illuminate the interior. All windows have cast-stone sills. On the upper level of the 1952 addition's three-bay north elevation, the outer two bays each contain two paired twenty-four-pane steel-frame sash with four-pane hoppers. The wider center bay encompasses a group of four eighteen-pane steel-frame sash with six-pane hoppers above a single matching window and a corrugated-metal roll-up door. Two short paired six-pane steel-frame sash with two-pane hoppers flank the corrugated-metal roll-up basement door.

The 1952 addition's three-bay west elevation comprises two paired twenty-four-pane steel-frame sash with six-pane hoppers, two short paired six-pane steel-frame basement sash with two-pane hoppers, and a metal roll-up door in the north basement bay. The three-bay 1940 west elevation encompasses two groups of three eighteen-pane steel-frame sash with six-pane hoppers above three matching groups of windows. The metal smokestack flue pierces the upper level's north bay. A steel fire escape with two landings, metal-pipe railings, and straight steel ladders is mounted on the north bay. A single-leaf metal-frame glazed door installed in a portion of the lower window opening provides emergency egress. Three six-pane steel-frame sash with two-pane hoppers span the basement wall.

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The 1940 south elevation's west bay contains two thirty-pane steel-frame upper-level sash with six-pane hoppers and a short ten-pane basement sash with a six-pane pane hopper. The slightly wider center bay encompasses two pairs of twenty-four-pane steel-frame sash with four-pane hoppers above a corrugated-metal roll-up basement door. Three paired eight-pane steel-frame sash with four-pane hoppers pierce the projecting two-story wing's east and west elevations and the south elevation's upper level. A six-pane steel-frame sash lights the intermediary level above the single-leaf basement door.

The 1940 east elevation's west bay encompasses a group of three eighteen-pane steel-frame sash with six-pane hoppers above a corrugated-metal roll-up door. The center and north bays each contain two groups of three eighteen-pane steel-frame sash with six-pane hoppers above two matching groups. Three six-pane steel-frame sash with two-pane hoppers light the basement. The 1952 addition's three-bay east elevation comprises two rows of paired twenty-four-pane steel-frame sash with six-pane hoppers, a metal intermediary-level roll-up door, and short paired six-pane steel-frame basement sash with two-pane hoppers. A two-level shed-roofed aluminum-sided entrance wing projects from the north bay. Multipane steel-frame sash with hoppers fill its east elevation. A single-leaf steel door with a four-pane upper section provides basement access. A straight run of steel steps with metal-pipe railings leads to the single-leaf upper-level door.

## *Interior*

The boiler house's upper level is open to two-story ceiling height in both the 1940 south section and 1952 north addition. The windows and some wall sections in the 1940 building's north wall were removed to facilitate access between the two sections. In the 1940 building's basement, concrete posts and beams support the upper level's concrete floor. Elsewhere, the structure comprises steel posts, beams, and trusses beneath a metal roof. Enormous boilers rest on the concrete floor. Some walls have been painted. Steel steps and railings lead to steel-framed catwalks and platforms that facilitate equipment access and maintenance. The 1940 south wing contains stairs between the basement and second-story, restrooms, and a mezzanine-level office.

## **Smokestack, 1940, contributing structure**

A metal flue connects the tall, round, header-course, 1940 smokestack erected by New York-based Alphons Custodis Chimney Construction Company to the boiler house's west elevation at the upper level of the fourth bay from the building's north end.

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## **Atlantic Coastline Railroad Coal Trestle and Wall, 1930s, contributing structure**

Seven formed-concrete abutments of an Atlantic Coastline Railroad coal trestle remain east of the boiler house. A low formed-concrete wall parallels the trestle and the lot boundary east of the abutments.

## **Oil Storage Tanks, south tank between 1956 and 1966, contributing structure, north tank after 1971, noncontributing structure**

A low concrete-block wall encloses two round in-ground concrete oil storage tanks at the lot's northeast corner. Steel steps with metal-pipe railings provide access from near the center of the wall's south section. The south 100,000-gallon tank and the wall were constructed between 1956 and 1971. The north tank was installed at an undetermined date after 1971, likely in the 1970s.

## **Utility Building, 1950s, contributing building**

A small, square, brick utility building with a flat concrete roof with metal coping, running-bond red brick walls, and a poured-concrete foundation stands near the plant's north fence. A single-leaf steel door and a small, square, single-pane window pierce the south elevation. The remaining elevations are blind.

## **Hose House, 1940s, contributing building**

A small, square, vertical-board-sided hose house is located north of the plant. The open south elevation abuts a fire hydrant. The interior contains three full-width shelves. The building is in danger of collapse.

## **Warehouse, 1930s, contributing building**

A one-story, frame, gable-roofed 1930s warehouse stands south of the mill. Weatherboards cover the gables and corrugated metal panels sheathe the walls. Much of the wall cladding has been removed. The open-plan building rests on concrete piers and has wood floor and roof systems. Square posts and beams support the structure. An interior brick stovepipe chimney rises at the corner of the small southeast corner room with a German-siding-clad west wall. A sliding wood service door remains on the east elevation.



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## **Guard House, mid-1960s, contributing structure**

An asphalt-paved drive extends from West Ridge Street to a chain-link gate at the small, one-story, square, brick guard house that stands in the parking lot. The flat roof's deep aluminum-trimmed plywood eaves shelter aluminum-frame windows that fill the most of the north, east, and south elevations' upper sections above brick kneewalls. The west elevation is blind.

## **Softener House, circa 1930, contributing building**

A one-story, two-room, painted-brick softener house is south of the 1930s manufacturing building. Steel posts and beams support the structure. Terra cotta coping caps flat parapets. The taller, larger, flat-roofed north room contained softening vats, while the south shed room served as an office. Both rooms have painted brick walls and unfinished concrete floors. Single-leaf doors on the south and east elevations and a large service door opening in the north elevation provide softener room access. The service door opening at the north wall's east end has been enclosed with brick. The vats rested on concrete platforms. Office egress was through a single-leaf door on the west elevation or the single-leaf wood door with a vertical-board base and a six-pane upper section that remains on the east elevation. A thirty-pane steel sash with two six-pane hoppers pierces the east wall south of that door.

## **Salt Pit, between 1956 and 1966, contributing structure**

A concrete salt pit is south of the softener house and the water tank site. The flat concrete roof caps low formed-concrete walls.

## **Oil Storage Tank Base, after 1971, noncontributing structure**

A low painted concrete-block wall encloses a low round concrete oil storage tank base at the lot's northeast corner. A steel ladder with metal-pipe railings attached to the wall's west section provides access. The tank base and wall were constructed at an undetermined date after 1971, likely in the 1970s.

## **Integrity Statement**

The Caromount Mills, Inc. - Burlington Industries, Inc. plant possesses integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, design, materials, and workmanship. The nominated tract encompasses the acreage historically associated with the manufacturing enterprise. The demolition of the circa 1930 sawtooth-roofed mill in association with the mid-1950s plant improvement campaign did not diminish the complex's significance. Obsolete building removal and replacement is typical as textile manufacturing operations evolve to incorporate new technology.

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The interconnected one- to two-story brick, concrete, and steel manufacturing and storage buildings and additions erected from the 1930s through 1977 epitomize economical, functional, and fire-resistant mid-twentieth-century industrial construction. Original structural systems—concrete foundations, brick walls, and steel I-beams, posts, and trusses—are intact. Roof configurations range from flat in most areas to barrel-vault in the 1930s manufacturing building and the adjacent 1941/1946 dye house roofs and low-pitched gable in the 1955 and 1977 warehouses to the north. Although large multipane steel sash with operable hoppers have been removed from some earlier buildings, paired rectangular six-pane sash remain in the 1955 warehouse in the complex's northwest section and large multipane steel sash light areas such as the shop at the northwest corner of the plant's south section. The 1960s office addition at the complex's southeast end is characterized by tall, narrow, paired, tinted-glass windows. Original metal-panel siding sheathes the 1960s and 1977 additions west of the 1955 warehouse as well as the mechanical room and equipment shed additions that extend from the 1930s building's south and east elevations.

The mill's open plan and interior finishes original to each construction phase are substantially intact. Manufacturing and storage areas have brick walls, some of which are painted, and poured concrete floors. The roof structure is fully exposed in most areas. In the 1955 and 1977 warehouses at the complex's north end, corrugated-metal roof panels are attached to steel beams and trusses. Wide-board decking was utilized in the 1930s manufacturing building, 1941/1946 dye house, and many 1955 additions, while the 1960s additions at the complex's south end have pre-cast concrete roof panels. In a few areas, frame partition walls create offices, laboratories, conference, and storage rooms of various sizes, as well as a cafeteria, commissaries, and restrooms. Most appear to be original or had been erected by 1972. Gypsum board, plywood panels, and faux-wood paneling sheathe partition walls. Vinyl-composition tile and commercial-grade carpeting cover some floors. Most offices have simple wood baseboards and door surrounds and some have dropped aluminum-frame acoustical-tile ceilings with fluorescent lighting panels.

## Archeological Potential Statement

The Caromount Mills, Inc.-Burlington Industries, Inc. plant is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological deposits, such as trash middens, the remains of recreational facilities, infrastructure such as water pipes and reservoirs, and structural foundations which may be present, could provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the property. Information concerning worker health, nutrition, and quality of life, culture and daily life, as well as details of construction processes and the operation of the manufacturing facility can be obtained from the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the property's significance. No investigation has been undertaken to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in the property's development.

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## Section 8. Statement of Significance

The Caromount Mills, Inc. -- Burlington Industries, Inc. plant is eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A due to its local industrial significance. New York-based textile manufacturer Sidney Blumenthal and Company created Caromount Mills, Inc. in 1930 as a subsidiary entity to increase its cotton-pile fabric production capacity. The Rocky Mount plant was the first of three North Carolina operations that comprised the concern's southern division by 1954. Caromount Mills was one of Rocky Mount's few textile mills and largest employers for almost thirty years. In November 1958, after experiencing financial difficulties, Sidney Blumenthal and Company sold a controlling interest in the business to Burlington Industries, Inc., a prominent North Carolina textile manufacturer headquartered in Greensboro. Sidney Blumenthal and Company retained its corporate identity, leadership, and workforce until late 1964, when Burlington Industries ceased pile fabric manufacture and discharged approximately six hundred operatives. However, about one thousand Burlington Automotive Fabrics and Burlington House Fabrics employees continued to work at the complex, which was then known as the Rocky Mount weaving plant. Burlington Industries operated the facility until early January 1981. The contributions of Sidney Blumenthal and Company and Burlington Industries to the local economy as employers, consumers of local goods and services, and taxpayers, were enormous, as is the plant's footprint.

The mill comprises a series of interconnected one- to two-story brick, concrete, and steel manufacturing and storage buildings and additions, most of which were erected from the 1930s through the mid-1960s. A one-story brick circa 1930 softener house, a one-story frame 1930s warehouse, a two-story brick 1940 boiler house with a 1952 addition, a 1940 brick smokestack, a frame 1940s hose house, a brick 1950s utility building, a brick mid-1960s guard house, a concrete salt pit and a concrete oil storage tanks constructed between 1956 and 1966, a post-1971 concrete oil storage tank, and a post-1971 concrete oil storage tank base are freestanding. The period of significance begins in 1930 with the initial buildings' construction and ends in 1969. Although the plant's industrial function, expansion, and improvement continued after 1969, that period is not of exceptional significance.

## Historical Background

German immigrants and cousins Isaac and August Blumenthal established I. and A. Blumenthal, a New York City-based fabric importing concern, in 1854. Following Isaac's 1879 retirement, August's younger brother Sigmund was elevated to leadership, resulting in the business's reorganization as A. and S. Blumenthal. August's son Sidney had replaced Sigmund by 1887, when the company commenced manufacturing silk ribbon. The single-loom endeavor began at the firm's West Thirtieth Street establishment, but grew to a one hundred-loom operation on West Eighty-Ninth Street in 1889. Two years later, the company began weaving velvet cloth. When increased demand necessitated

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further expansion, the firm sought less expensive real estate. In 1898, A. and S. Blumenthal erected a mill adjacent to the Housatonic River in Shelton, Connecticut, that initially housed thirty-two looms. The following year, the business incorporated as Sidney Blumenthal and Company. The concern introduced upholstery and drapery fabrics in 1900 and increased capacity with plant updates and equipment installation in 1905 and 1906.<sup>6</sup>

Shelton Looms invested in product research and development, successfully experimenting with yarn blends to produce one of the first widely used rayon fabrics in 1906. The concern also originated a plush fabric used to emulate fur in coats, hats, scarfs, garment trim, furniture and automobile upholstery, lap robes, and toy animal covering. Popular brands launched by 1935 included Apadadoc, Astrania, Brytonia, Crystelle, Ermincrush, Kerami, La Loie Velvets, and Sealplush. The Shelton complex comprised approximately seventy buildings in 1935, when workers utilized more than 1,200 looms to produce velvet and plush cloth. The company gradually established satellite plants, acquiring South River Spinning Company's mill in South River, New Jersey, in 1920; Uncasville-Shelton Company's plant in Uncasville, Connecticut, in 1923, and Salts Textile mill in Bridgeport, Connecticut, around 1935. At that time, the three complexes altogether encompassed at least 125 buildings. Sidney Blumenthal and Company remained based in New York City, with offices in Detroit and San Francisco. Sidney Blumenthal chaired the board of directors and H. H. Schell served as the company's president, Sidney's son Andre Blumenthal its vice-president, and Arthur G. Holland the overall facilities manager.<sup>7</sup>

The company also established a presence in the south. Sidney Blumenthal and Company acquired an interest in Rollinson Mills, Inc.'s Rocky Mount, North Carolina plant in June 1929. Rollinson Mills, headed by William H. Rollinson and W. O. Rollinson, had grown from approximately twelve employees and two looms when production commenced in October 1928 to eighty employees who generate plush and velour fabrics on sixty broad looms by late 1929. W. H. Rollinson and Company, Inc. marketed the cloth in New York.<sup>8</sup> The mill's size and appearance is unknown. In early 1930, Sidney Blumenthal and Company created a subsidiary company, Caromount Mills, Inc., to increase its cotton pile fabric production capacity. The concern bought the remaining Rollinson Mills' stock and utilized the Rocky Mount plant for this purpose.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Textile Age Features Blumenthal Story," *Caromount News* (hereafter abbreviated *CN*), November 1954, pp. 1 and 3, newsletter in the Braswell Memorial Public Library collection, Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*; Leo Thomas Malloy, "Industrial Shelton: The Shelton Looms," *Tercentenary Pictorial and History of the Lower Naugatuk Valley* (Ansonia, Connecticut: Press of the Emerson Brothers, 1935), pp. 300-304.

<sup>8</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1929, p. 26; Davison Publishing Company. *Davison's Textile Blue Book: United States, Canada, and Mexico* (New York: Davison Publishing Company, 1930), p. 323; Wilson and Caromount Divisions of Sidney Blumenthal and Company, Inc., "From the Cotton Field to Cotton Cloth," *CN*, April 1946, pp. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> "Textile Age Features Blumenthal Story," *CN*, November 1954, pp. 1 and 3.

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It is likely that Caromount Mills erected the one-story, brick, sawtooth-roofed manufacturing building that stood southeast of the existing mill soon after purchasing the property. The building had become obsolete by the early 1950s, when it was demolished to allow the site to function as a parking lot. The small brick softener house that served the circa 1930 mill is the complex's earliest extant resource.

The circa 1930 mill's architect has not been identified. The building's massing and roof configuration resembled that of a mill at Sidney Blumenthal and Company's Shelton plant. The circa 1930 Rocky Mount mill was also very similar to the 1928 A. M. Johnson Rayon Mill in Burlington that may have been designed by Greenville, S. C.-based architects and engineers J. E. Serrine and Company.<sup>10</sup> The earliest architectural drawings for Caromount Mills' Rocky Mount complex located to date are from 1940, when Greenville, S. C.-based architects and engineers J. E. Serrine and Company rendered plans for a two-story boiler house. Sidney Blumenthal and Company's engineering department consulted with unidentified Charlotte architects and engineers while planning for subsequent additions.<sup>11</sup>

Within a few years of opening, Caromount Mills became one of Nash County's largest employers, tax payers, freight shippers, and power consumers. The plant maintained production during the Great Depression, providing critically needed jobs. Employees wove pile, plush, and velour fabrics on 130 broad looms by 1935. The labor force grew to between 150 and 200 by 1938, when workers running two forty-hour shifts per week earned approximately \$125,000 in aggregate pay. Increased product demand necessitated additional hires as the textile trade burgeoned in 1939. That year, wages of about 350 employees totaled almost \$300,000. This infusion of capital into the economy was tremendously beneficial to Rocky Mount's growth and development, as was Caromount Mills' civic engagement.<sup>12</sup>

The Rocky Mount complex grew with the construction of a modern converting plant in 1941. In February of that year, Caromount Mills purchased property in Wilson, North Carolina. The next month, approximately one hundred employees at that location began weaving cloth on fifty looms. The fabric generated in Wilson was sent to Rocky Mount to be dyed, finished, inspected, and shipped. The plants collectively operated as Sidney Blumenthal and Company's Caromount Division. E. H. Suessmuth, who began his tenure with the company in 1933 at the Shelton plant's design department, assumed oversight of the Rocky Mount complex in 1941.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Heather Fearnbach, "Western Electric Company – Tarheel Army Missile Plant," National Register of Historic Places nomination, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> J. E. Serrine and Company, "Elevations and Sections, Boiler House, Sidney Blumenthal and Company, Inc, Caromount Division, Rocky Mount, N. C.," November 14, 1940.

<sup>12</sup> *Davison's Textile Blue Book*, 1935, p. 258; "Textile Industry Subject of Talk," *RMT* (hereafter abbreviated *RMT*), February 10, 1938, p. 9; "Tours Reveal Factory Facts," *RMT*, September 16, 1939, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> "Caromount Mills Addition Nears Completion," *RMT*, March 11, 1941, p. 12; Wilson and Caromount Divisions of Sidney Blumenthal and Company, Inc., "Wilson Plant," *CN*, January 1946, p. 1; "Sidney Blumenthal Co. Lists Suessmuth as Vice President," *RMT*, November 20, 1953, p. B1; "Caromount Produces Wide Variety of Fabrics in City;" *RMT*, August 15, 1951, p. D1.

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The concern's employees were among the approximately 5,047 Nash County residents who served in the military during World War II.<sup>14</sup> Those left behind were occupied with the effort in a variety of ways, from rationing and participating in bond drives and salvage campaigns to filling vacant positions at factories that accelerated production to meet the needs of servicemen and women.<sup>15</sup> Worker demographics changed as industrial jobs rose by seventy-five percent in the South over the course of World War II, with traditionally underemployed groups such as women, African Americans, and the elderly receiving invaluable education, training, and experience. Output soared after May 1943, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Office of War Mobilization to coordinate a diverse array of support endeavors including manufacturing, scientific research, and agricultural production.<sup>16</sup>

Caromount Mills increased production in order to fulfill United States military requisitions during the war. The Rocky Mount workforce almost doubled between 1941 and 1942, when operatives wove cloth on 150 looms. Military products included heavyweight duck tent fabric and alpaca high-altitude flight jacket lining.<sup>17</sup> In January 1943, Caromount Mills began issuing a mimeographed newsletter to share updates regarding the company's wartime initiatives and the status of former employees in military service. At that time, ninety-five men who had worked in the Rocky Mount and Wilson plants were on active duty.<sup>18</sup> On August 2, 1945, United States Army and Navy representatives presented the company with an "E" award in recognition of excellent contributions to the war effort. During the ceremony, Lieutenant Colonel James P. Kinard stated that the concern's fabrics "had warmed and sheltered servicemen in all theaters of operation."<sup>19</sup>

Caromount Mills claimed to offer higher wages than any other Rocky Mount textile manufacturer. In December 1945, the concern rewarded its approximately five hundred employees with ten-percent raises. The company also began expanding the plant when the economy stabilized. Most non-essential construction had ceased during World War II, and building material and labor shortages, coupled with sharp inflation, increased building expense immediately after the war. However, a January 1946 delivery of steel and other materials allowed contractors D. J. Rose and Son to proceed with a one-

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<sup>14</sup> Spencer B. King, Jr., *Selective Service in North Carolina in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 322.

<sup>15</sup> T. A. Avera, "Chamber Executive Reviews City Activities in Year," *RMT*, January 2, 1943, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Marilyn M. Harper, et. al., *World War II and the American Home Front* (Washington, D. C.: The National Historic Landmarks Program, October 2007), 3, 13-16.

<sup>17</sup> T. A. Avera, "Chamber Executive Reviews City Activities in Year," *RMT*, January 2, 1943, p. 2; "Company Dates Back to 1854," and "Plant Products Service Army," *Rocky Mount Evening Telegram* (hereafter abbreviated *RMET*), July 31, 1945, p. B1.

<sup>18</sup> "Caromont News for Service Men," January 15, 1943, p. 2; "Caromont News for Service Men and Women," August 1945, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> "Sidney Blumenthal to get Army-Navy E Award Thursday," *RMET*, July 31, 1945, p. B1; "Large Crowd Sees Awarding of E Flag to Blumenthal," *RMT*, August 3, 1945, p. 10.

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story-on-basement, 32,000-square-foot addition to the circa 1930 sawtooth-roofed plant. The brick, steel, and concrete structure's large, open rooms were designed to house part of the warping department and supply storage space. The addition's 10,000-square-foot basement enlarged the existing basement machine shop and storage room. Also in January, employees resumed weaving automobile upholstery fabric for the first time since the war's onset.<sup>20</sup>

In April 1946, Caromount Mills announced that D. J. Rose and Son would soon begin expanding the dye house. Engineering department employee Charlie Laughridge stated that the addition's brick, steel, and concrete structure would emulate that of the adjacent building.<sup>21</sup> The company added an important employee amenity later that year, opening Caromount cafeteria in December. Manager Ernest Taylor estimated that the cafeteria served four hundred employees daily.<sup>22</sup>

Caromount Mills' approximately Rocky Mount 650 operatives produced pile fabrics in three shifts in 1946. Increased storage capacity became necessary when the company resumed international trade following the war. A new warehouse north of the weaving department was placed into service in February 1947.<sup>23</sup> The concern installed additional dyeing and finishing equipment in April 1947 and began erecting a 15,000-square-foot, \$41,000 finished goods warehouse west of the dye house/converting plant. The shipping department office moved into the finished goods warehouse in November.<sup>24</sup>

Mill workers had difficulty securing housing during the post-war shortage. Some were able to lease or purchase homes in neighborhoods close to the plant. Examining department employee Oscar Satterfield and his family occupied a one-story, weatherboarded, gable-roofed dwelling at 924 West Haven Boulevard erected through a Federal Housing Authority program. Others lived at greater distances. Weaving department employee A. R. Riley designed and built a one-story, frame, five-room home approximately five miles from Rocky Mount.<sup>25</sup>

Caromount Mills continued to support myriad philanthropic and civic endeavors, making bequests to organizations including the Boy Scouts, Chamber of Commerce, Community Chest, Kiwanis Club, Red Cross, and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). An October 1946 donation provided

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<sup>20</sup> "Caromount is Raising Wages," *RMT*, November 21, 1945, p. 8; *CN*, January 1946, pp. 1, 3; "The Rocky Mount Chamber of Commerce," *RMET*, May 11, 1946, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> It is *CN*, April 1946, p. 1; "Dyeing Plant at Caromount," *RMET*, July 31, 1945, p. B3.

<sup>22</sup> "Caromount Cafeteria Is Open To Employees," *CN*, December 1946, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> "Blumenthal Firm in Wilson Closes," *RMT*, April 18, 1947, p. 1; "Employees Appreciate More Space in Building," *CN*, February 1947, p.1.

<sup>24</sup> "Caromount Rejects CIO," *RMT*, August 7, 1946, p. 1; "New Building," *CN*, April 1947, p. 1; *CN*, April 1947, p. 5; "Caromount Plans New Structure," *RMT*, March 11, 1947, p. B6; "Shipping Dept. Sends Cloth to Foreign Markets," *CN*, June 1946, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> "The House that Gus Built," *CN*, April 1947, p. 3; *CN*, July 1947, p. 3; *Rocky Mount City Directories*.

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YMCA memberships for ten sons of Caromount Mill's operatives. The concern supplied fabric for costumes and sets to schools and entities such as the Grass Roots Opera Company.<sup>26</sup>

The company sponsored recreational activities to boost employee morale. Dinners, dances, and other large gatherings took place at the plant and in the large tobacco warehouses west and south of the complex. The annual Caromount Athletic Association picnic at local venues including Silver Lake and Sunset Park was a tradition instituted in 1935.<sup>27</sup>

Following World War II, the company constructed recreational facilities in the southwest section of its property, near the intersection of North Harris and Carter Streets. This area became known as "Caromount Park." In summer 1946, Caromount Mills supplied materials for a field house that included a room with pine wall sheathing and a fireplace, a storage room, and two locker rooms with showers. Local contractor D. J. Rose and Son poured the concrete foundation and employee volunteers erected the building. The company's baseball and softball teams soon hosted interdepartmental competitions as well as games with other local mills.<sup>28</sup>

Boy Scout Troop 113, organized in December 1944 and sponsored by the Caromount Athletic Association, utilized the field house until the company subsidized the construction of a one-story, hip-roofed, brick-veneered Boy Scout hut south of the plant in 1948. The hut also served as an event venue for other civic groups.<sup>29</sup> In summer 1950, Caromount Mills built a picnic shelter with a barbeque pit northwest of the hut. The August 1950 picnic was particularly sizable, drawing 1,700 white Rocky Mount and Wilson employees and their guests. The company held a separate picnic at an African American park for approximately one hundred black employees and their families.<sup>30</sup>

Caromount Mills' labor force grew to approximately seven hundred as the textile industry rebounded in the early 1950s. The company benefited from a series of sizable defense contracts during the

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<sup>26</sup> "YMCA Members Listed," and "Community Chest," *CN*, November 1946, p. 1, 3; "Local Firm Assists In Opera Costumes," *RMT*, February 17, 1953, p. B1.

<sup>27</sup> "Annual Outing is Sponsored by CAA," *RMT*, August 1, 1938, p. 7; "1,500 Plant Outing," *RMT*, August 12, 1946, p. 10; "Employees to Get Dinner and Dance," *RMET*, July 31, 1945, p. B1.

<sup>28</sup> The field house is no longer extant. "Construction of Field House Gets Underway," *CN*, September 1946, p. 1; "Employees Assist in Erecting Field House," *CN*, October 1946, pp. 1, 3; "Blumenthal Builds House for Employees," *RMT*, November 12, 1946, p. 10; "Softball Games Begin," July 1947, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> The Boy Scout Hut's construction was underway in March 1948 and the building was dedicated in December. "Work on Scout Cabin Progresses," *CN*, March 1948, p. 7; "Boy Scout Cabin Dedication Held," *CN*, January 1949, p. 1; Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Rocky Mount, N. C.," Sheet 23, 1923, updated in June 1956.

<sup>30</sup> The Boy Scout hut and picnic shelter were demolished to allow for the plant's 1960s expansion to the south. "Contribution to YMCA," *CN*, October 1946, p.1; "Residents of Two Cities Meet Here for Outing," *RMT*, August 14, 1950, p. 10; "Picnic and Outing Attended by 1700," *CN*, August 1950, pp. 1, 3; "Large Barbeque Pit is Added to Park Area," *CN*, September 1950, p. 1; "Blumenthal Negro Families Enjoy Picnic," *CN*, September 1950, p. 3; Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Rocky Mount, N. C.," Sheet 24, 1923, updated in June 1956.



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Korean War. The Rocky Mount plant boosted production, hiring around thirty employees in 1950 to fill U. S. Army and Navy orders for \$1.4-million-worth of double-faced wool-pile fabric utilized in winter combat garments. The concern received a \$1-million requisition for the same cloth in March 1951.<sup>31</sup>

Caromount Mills undertook a series of plant expansions in the 1950s. The engineering department erected a two-story addition on the boiler house's north end in spring 1952. That fall, two new gates facilitated access to the boiler house and the frame repair building from West Elm Street. The plant employed approximately 750 people in 1953.<sup>32</sup>

The next significant modifications were executed in 1954 as Sidney Blumenthal and Company planned to move its purchasing and technical departments and most weaving operations to North Carolina. The engineering department oversaw updates and expansions in both Rocky Mount and Wilson. Rocky Mount's addition comprised dyeing, finishing, and storage space. The Wilson plant received a 45,000-square foot addition. Also, the company purchased a third North Carolina site in Scotland Neck and began erecting a velvet-weaving mill in April 1954. In November, Rocky Mount residents elected to subsidize a \$149,000 bond to extend municipal water, sewer, gas, and electric lines to Caromount Mills.<sup>33</sup>

In February 1955, Greensboro contractor C. M. Guest and Sons installed a dye house ventilation system designed by unidentified Charlotte architects and engineers at the Rocky Mount mill. The company also added square footage to accommodate inspection, mending, yarn dyeing, and printing departments and provide raw material storage. Other 1955 projects supervised by plant engineer C. H. Laughridge and the maintenance and repair department included modernizing equipment, installing an underground conveyor belt to move fabric from the weaving department to the inspection and storage

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<sup>31</sup> "Sidney Blumenthal Important Local Industry," *RMT*, August 13, 1950, p. 15; "Sidney Blumenthal Gets U. S. Contract for Warmth Fabric," *RMT*, December 29, 1950, p. 10; "Caromount Builds Addition to Plant; Business Booming," *RMT*, September 7, 1950, p. 10; "Blumenthal Gets Big Order," *RMT*, March 15, 1951, p. 12; "Caromount Produces Wide Variety of Fabrics in City;" *RMT*, August 15, 1951, p. D1.

<sup>32</sup> "Boiler House Addition in Progress," *CN*, April 1952, p. 1; "New Gateways Open to Elm Street," *CN*, September 1952, p. 1; "Eastern North Carolina Needs More Industries Like Caromount Mills," *RMT*, January 11, 1953, p. B1; "The Blumenthal Co. Expansion is a Great Industrial Addition to this Area," *RMT*, October 7, 1953, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> "Blumenthal Equipment Being Moved to City from Shelton," *RMT*, July 13, 1953, p. B1; "Building Figure Shows Increase," *RMT*, September 27, 1953, p. 7; "Schell Announces Expansion Project at Caromount Mills," *RMT*, October 5, 1953, p. B1; "Caromount Addition Makes Progress," *CN*, March 1954, p. 1; "Construction of New Blumenthal Plant Beginning at Scotland Neck Site Soon," *CN*, April 1954, p. 1; "Velvet Weaving Factory Planned At Scotland Neck," *Daily Times-News* (Burlington), April 16, 1954, p. B10; "Textile Age Features Blumenthal Story," *CN*, November 1954, p. 3; "Rocky Mount Bond Will Help Caromount Plant," *CN*, October 1954, p. 1; Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Rocky Mount, N. C.," Sheet 24, 1923, updated in June 1956.

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building, updating restrooms, constructing a partition wall between the dye house and finishing room, adding crushed stone and fencing to create a 350-car parking lot, and pouring concrete sidewalks.<sup>34</sup>

Employee events such as annual picnics grew in size as the 1950s progressed. In October 1955, Caromount Athletic Association sponsored a day-long gathering at Sunset Park attended by approximately four thousand white Rocky Mount and Wilson employees and their families. Guests enjoyed the miniature train, merry-go-round, and golf course, as well as a barbeque lunch. Picnics remained segregated, with black workers congregating the following Saturday at an African American park.<sup>35</sup>

Although Sidney Blumenthal and Company sustained heavy losses during the 1955 textile industry recession, the concern remained one of the region's largest manufacturers, employing approximately one thousand operatives in Rocky Mount and 350 in Wilson in 1956. New directors, executives, and managers were appointed that year and the company reported a profit. New Jersey knitted-fabric manufacturer William Heller became Sidney Blumenthal and Company's president in September, working from the organization's New York office.<sup>36</sup>

Rocky Mount residents were able to purchase discarded automobile and furniture upholstery, carpeting, cloaking, and toy plush fabric at the Carosell Remnant Shop beginning on December 17, 1956. Cleveland Walker managed the store in the one-story brick-veneered commercial building at 711 North Pine Street.<sup>37</sup>

Sidney Blumenthal and Company struggled during the next few years, sustaining net losses despite production increases from late 1957 through July 1958. President Roy H. Niebling attributed the deficit to the generally depressed economy and highly competitive textile market, factors that necessitated price reductions in order to maintain sales volume. Attempts to restore profitability resulted in the November 1958 sale of a controlling interest in the company to Burlington Industries, Inc., a prominent North Carolina textile manufacturing concern established by J. Spencer Love in 1923. Sidney Blumenthal and Company retained its corporate identity, leadership, and workforce after the merger.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "Flash! Dyehouse Employees," "Flash! Finishing Department," "New Parking Area," and "Special! To All of the Caromount Employees," *CN*, January 1955, p. 1; "Expansion and Modernization Plan Nears Completion At Caromount Plant," August 1955, p. 1; Clinton Andrews, "Caromount and Wilson Employees Enjoying Expansion Program," *RMET*, August 28, 1955, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> "Blumenthal Employees' Picnic," *RMET*, October 13, 1955, p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> "The Blumenthal Situation," *RMET*, May 11, 1956, p. 4A; "Improvements By Mill Paying Off, Jones Says," *RMT*, August 13, 1956, p. 7; "Wm. Heller and Son Ben Both Named Presidents," *RMT*, September 4, 1956, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> "Carosell Remnant Shop to Sell to the Public," *RMT*, December 16, 1956, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> "Boost in Sales for Blumenthal," *RMT*, July 30, 1958, p. B1; "B-I Buys Blumenthal Operations," *Daily Times-News*, November 6, 1958, pp. B1 and B8; "Welcome, Burlington Industries," *RMET*, November 10, 1958, p. 4.

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In November 1959, Sidney Blumenthal and Company announced that Burlington Industries would invest in an experimental eight-thousand-square-foot pile plant to be located in the Minges Building at Washington and Hill streets' intersection in Rocky Mount. Burlington Industries had not previously manufactured pile, a fabric distinguished by its tall, fur-like nap. Pile expert Donald McCord, formerly with the Du Pont Company, and knitter Sam Tilley oversaw the operation.<sup>39</sup>

Product research and development remained an important aspect of the West Ridge Street complex's function. John Gieson, a fifty-three-year Sidney Blumenthal and Company veteran in 1960, headed the apparel, industrial, and toy fabric design department, assisted by George Erkes and Rufus Webb. After creating new textile patterns, colors, and textures, laboratory workers analyzed production cost and tested fabric colorfastness, strength, and shrinkage.<sup>40</sup>

Sidney Blumenthal and Company employee numbers remained constant in 1960, with about 1,200 workers in Rocky Mount and 350 in Wilson. Increased product demand spurred plant improvements. In September 1960, Greensboro-based Laughlin-Sutton Construction commenced erecting a five-thousand-square-foot brick, steel, and concrete addition to the Rocky Mount plant at an estimated cost of \$53,000.<sup>41</sup>

The Rocky Mount Lions Club recognized Sidney Blumenthal and Company as the city's "industry of the month" in February 1963. Executive vice-president and division manager Buford V. DeFore, weaving plant manager J. G. Middleton, finishing plant manager M. H. Thompson, industrial and personnel relations manager George Harper, and chief engineer Reid Abernathy supervised the Rocky Mount plant's approximately one thousand employees. The almost four-million-dollar annual payroll was a significant boon to the local economy, as were the company's utility consumption payments. The dyeing and finishing operation utilized about one-third of the municipal water supply at that time.<sup>42</sup>

In summer 1964, Laughlin-Sutton Construction modernized the dye house, replaced its roof, and began building a 34,000-square-foot addition at the plant's south end to house the slashing department.<sup>43</sup> The Boy Scout hut and picnic shelter were demolished in conjunction with this expansion.

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<sup>39</sup> "Burlington Industries Plans Pilot Operation," *RMET*, November 9, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Allen Casey, "People at Work," *Creating Fabrics, Patterns, Is Job of Textile Designer*, *RMET*, September 4, 1960, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> "Junior Chamber Hears Talk By Textile Leader," *RMT*, January 14, 1960, p. B1; "Caromount Set For Expansion," *RMT*, September 22, 1960, p. B1.

<sup>42</sup> "New Manager Named at Sidney Blumenthal Co.," *RMET*, April 21, 1961, p. 9; "Sidney Blumenthal Co. Hailed as City's 'industry of the month,'" *RMT*, February 20, 1963, p. B11.

<sup>43</sup> "Blumenthal Plant Here Begins Extensive Expansion Program," *RMT*, July 7, 1964, p. B1.

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The Rocky Mount workforce was considerably diminished in late 1964. After changing fashion trends resulted in decreased imitation-fur demand, Burlington Industries shuttered Sidney Blumenthal and Company's pile division, discharging approximately six hundred workers. However, Burlington Automotive Fabrics, also housed in the complex, retained almost two hundred employees.<sup>44</sup>

Burlington House Fabrics began utilizing the 1964 addition soon after its completion and soon required space for more weaving equipment. Daniel Construction Company started erecting an adjacent weave room in February 1965. Buford DeFore, plant manager since 1961, was promoted to manufacturing department head, while James Middleton assumed plant oversight. The complex was then called the Rocky Mount weaving plant. Burlington House Fabrics produced ready-made draperies, mattress ticking, and drapery, slipcover, and upholstery fabrics in Rocky Mount. The division also operated plants in Burlington, Ossipee, Reidsville, and Smithfield, North Carolina, and Galax, Virginia.<sup>45</sup>

In 1965, Burlington Industries acquired a thirty-three acre tract on Highway 301 north of town in order to expand its Rocky Mount operations. Daniel Construction Company began building an eighty-thousand-square-foot, \$1.75-million drapery plant for Burlington House Fabrics at the site in late October, with an estimated January completion date. The facility was expected to initially employ 180 workers.<sup>46</sup>

Burlington Industries comprised thirty-two divisions in 1966. Two of them, Burlington House Fabrics and Burlington Automotive Fabrics, had Rocky Mount plants with a total of approximately one thousand employees. In March, Burlington Industries publicized plans to erect a 170,000-square foot, \$4-million fabric dyeing and finishing facility at the Highway 301 complex. The new plant, known as Sheffield, would add at least one hundred employees to the company's Rocky Mount work force. Upon its completion, Burlington Industries would operate seventy-three North Carolina plants with approximately 33,000 employees.<sup>47</sup>

Burlington Industries celebrated the tenth anniversary of its Rocky Mount presence in 1968. About one thousand employees worked in four divisions—Rocky Mount Weaving, Rocky Mount Drapery, Rocky Mount Finishing, and Sheffield—at two sites. The expansion and modernization of Rocky Mount Weaving's portion of the West Ridge Street complex's south section was completed in 1968. The operation continued to supply other divisions with drapery and decorative fabric. Burlington

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<sup>44</sup> "B-I to Close Division Plant," *Daily Times-News*, December 2, 1964, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> "New Manager Named at Sidney Blumenthal Co.," *RMET*, April 21, 1961, p. 9; "Construction Underway On Addition to Burlington Plant," *RMT*, February 11, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> "Burlington Industries Announces Plan For \$1 Million Drapery Facility Here," *RMT*, October 27, 1965, pp. 1 and B1; "Burlington to Build \$4 Million Fabric Finishing Plant Here," *RMT*, March 17, 1966, pp. 1 and 13; "Burlington Industries," *RMT*, September 5, 1967, p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> "Burlington to Build \$4 Million Fabric Finishing Plant Here," *RMT*, March 17, 1966, pp. 1 and 13.

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Men's Wear renovated the complex's north section to serve as a finishing plant upon occupying the space in September 1968.<sup>48</sup>

Burlington Industries expanded and updated facilities as production soared in the early 1970s. New knitting equipment was installed at Rocky Mount Finishing plant, and the Sheffield plant was enlarged in 1970 and 1971. Burlington Industries employed the city's largest manufacturing labor force, with 1,250 operatives earning wages totaling more than \$8-million in 1971. Payroll climbed to 1,600 workers by 1973. The company contributed funds and leadership to local organizations and programs including Nash General Hospital, Wesleyan College, Little League baseball, the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, North Carolina Symphony, Red Cross, United Fund, YMCA and YWCA, and the city's fire department, rescue squad, and arts and opportunities industrialization centers.<sup>49</sup>

Burlington Industries attained its second-largest annual sales and earnings levels in 1976. Weaving department manager Jack A. Stuart reported a \$13.5-million payroll for 1,400 Rocky Mount employees, distributed amongst four plants. The concern undertook almost \$1.5 million in air quality and sewage treatment plant improvements in Rocky Mount that year.<sup>50</sup> In spring 1977, the company erected a cloth storage building, likely the addition at the 1955 finished product warehouse's west end.<sup>51</sup>

Burlington Industries' was the world's leading textile manufacturer by 1980, with approximately 67,000 employees, 30,000 of whom were in North Carolina. The Rocky Mount workforce comprised 1,130 operatives in October 1980: 560 at the Highway 301 complex (350 at the drapery plant and 210 at Sheffield) and 570 at the West Ridge Street facility (290 at the weaving plant and 280 at the finishing plant, which then housed the Burlington Knitted Fabrics division.) However, Burlington Industries announced in November 1980 that it would shutter the West Ridge Street plant in January 1981. About 275 Burlington Knitted Fabrics division employees would be impacted by the closure. Burlington Knitted Fabrics maintained a finishing plant in Wake Forest. Rocky Mount Weaving, Sheffield Finishing, and Rocky Mount Drapery continued operating at the Highway 301 complex, but the drapery division ceased production in December 1988 and the weaving division closed in early 1991.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "Burlington Industries Celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Rocky Mount," *RMT*, November 13, 1968, p. 11; "Burlington's Role in Rocky Mount Noted in Company's 50<sup>th</sup> Year," *RMT*, February 16, 1973, p. 16.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*; "Burlington Announces New Addition," *RMT*, October 1, 1971, p. 9; "Burlington is Area's Largest Industrial Employer, Still Growing," *RMT*, March 26, 1972, p. B7; "Two Area Companies Given Special Awards," *RMT*, November 17, 1975, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> "Burlington Industries Featured as Kiwanis 'Industry of Month,'" *RMET*, February 18, 1977, p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> *RMET*, March 19, 1977, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> "Industrial Development Commission Salutes Burlington Industries," *RMT*, October 16, 1980, p. 7; Burlington Industries, Inc., "Burlington to Discontinue Production at One of Four Rocky Mount Facilities," November 17, 1980; "Burlington Dyeing, Finishing Plant Here to Close in 1981," *RMT*, November 18, 1980, p.1.

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The Sheffield plant had a 345-person labor force in 2000. In November 2001, Burlington Industries, challenged by heavy debt, an economic recession, and a market dominated by inexpensive imported textiles, filed for bankruptcy. Spartanburg, South Carolina-based Tietex International Limited purchased the company in May 2002 and continued the Sheffield plant's function as a dyeing and finishing facility for apparel fabrics. However, employment diminished to 46 workers by November 2007 and Tietex ceased Rocky Mount operations in the second quarter of 2008.<sup>53</sup> The four parcels comprising the 48.5 acre Highway 301 complex, which extends to Airport Road, were purchased by Mid-Atlantic Warehouse and Storage in 2011 and 2012.<sup>54</sup> The Caromount Mills, Inc. - Burlington Industries, Inc. plant on West Ridge Street is vacant. The current owner, RM Commercial, LLC, plans to adaptively reuse the property.

## Industrial Context: Rocky Mount Textile Manufacturers

Tobacco and textile manufacturing dominated Rocky Mount's industrial sector from the nineteenth through much of the twentieth century. Rocky Mount Mills began spinning cotton yarn in 1818. The Rocky Mount Tobacco Market's 1887 founding and the Atlantic Coastline Railroad's freight yard and repair shop's 1893 opening stimulated economic development. Entrepreneurs established businesses on either side of the railroad that runs through the center of town and serves as the county line.<sup>55</sup> Industrial concerns including tobacco factories, Emerson Shops, Rocky Mount Ironworks, and Rocky Mount Mills, as well as the banks, construction companies, restaurants, and retail outlets that followed these primary economic engines attracted an influx of laborers, driving dramatic growth from 357 residents in 1870 to 12,742 in 1920, approximately half of whom were African American.<sup>56</sup>

Manufacturing endeavors burgeoned in the 1920s. Industrial laborers constituted a substantial portion of the city's population, which grew to 21,412 by 1930.<sup>57</sup> Caromount Mills purchased Rollinson Mills that year in order to increase its cotton pile fabric production capacity. Davison's 1930 *Textile Directory* listed three other textile manufacturers: Silkheart Mattress Company, which produced

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<sup>53</sup> Tom Murphy, "Burlington Industries keeps tight hold on fabric production," *RMT*, April 2, 2000, p. 9; Tom Murphy, "Burlington files for bankruptcy," *RMT*, November 16, 2001, p. 1; Nash County Deed Book 1873, p. 203; Tom Murphy, "Tietex purchase saves jobs in Rocky Mount," *RMT*, June 5, 2002, p. 1; Tom Murphy, "Nash plant set to end operations," *RMT*, November 3, 2007, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> The complex's current addresses are 500 and 604 Airport Road. Nash County Deed Book 2579, pp. 540 and 542; Deed Book 2640, p. 725.

<sup>55</sup> Kate Ohno, "Rocky Mount Central City Historic District," National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1980. The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad freight yard and repair shops complex was known as the "shops" for many years and eventually named Emerson Shops in honor of one of the railroad company's presidents.

<sup>56</sup> Leon E. Truesdell, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Census of Population, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population, Part A, Number of Inhabitants* (Washington, D. C. Government Printing Office, 1942), 778.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

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mattress batting and felt; W. H. Draper and Sons Company, a course yarn and cord purveyor; and Rocky Mount Mills, a cotton yarn producer with 350 employees. Rocky Mount Mills, established in 1818, was the oldest concern. In 1935, Caromount Mills, Eastern Cordage Company, and Rocky Mount Mills, which then had a 650-person labor force, were the only textile mills. Caromount Mills employed between 150 and 200 operatives in 1938 and approximately 350 laborers in 1939. Rocky Mount Cord Company, with 50 workers, was the city's third textile manufacturer in 1941.<sup>58</sup>

The Chamber of Commerce estimated that Caromount Mills' contributed \$2.1-million to the local economy in 1945 through its \$800,000 payroll and tax and municipal utility payments totaling around \$1.3 million. The concern's approximately five-hundred-person 1945 staff burgeoned to 650 in 1946.<sup>59</sup> Caromount Mills was one of the largest of Rocky Mount's forty-two manufacturing establishments, which altogether utilized 3,011 workers in 1947. Industrial production boomed the following year, when sixty-six manufacturing establishments employed 5,419 men and 3,212 women. Fourteen tobacco warehouses, ten redrying plants, and nine purchasing companies operated in Rocky Mount at that time.<sup>60</sup>

The city's industrial growth continued through the 1950s. Rocky Mount Rayon Mill, established in 1946, quadrupled its plant size and employed 120 workers by 1951.<sup>61</sup> Caromount Mills, which had an approximately 750-person workforce in 1953, undertook a multi-phase plant expansion campaign. That concern, Eastern Cordage Company, and Rocky Mount Mills remained Rocky Mount's primary textile manufacturers through the decade. E. E. Draper and Sons, began producing round braided cordage in the late 1950s.<sup>62</sup>

These and other industries contributed to Rocky Mount's population increase from 27,697 to 32,147 residents from 1950 to 1960, when the city's ninety-three manufacturing establishments employed approximately 7,720 workers. Around one thousand Burlington Industries employees ran the Caromount Mills plant. Rocky Mount Mills had 550 employees and Rocky Mount Cord Company 175 laborers in 1965.<sup>63</sup> That October, Burlington Industries began erecting the first of two facilities on a

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<sup>58</sup> Davison's *Textile Blue Book*, 1930, p. 323; 1935, p. 258; 1941, p. 252; "Textile Industry Subject of Talk," *RMT*, February 10, 1938, p. 9; "Tours Reveal Factory Facts," *RMT*, September 16, 1939, p. 7; "Rocky Mount Cord Co. Has Been Operating, Growing Here Since '36," *RMT*, April 12, 1970, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> "The Rocky Mount Chamber of Commerce," *RMET*, May 11, 1946, p. 7; "Blumenthal Firm in Wilson Closes," *RMT*, April 18, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Maxwell R. Conklin, supervisor. *Census of Manufactures, 1947*. Vol. 3 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1950, 451; "Statistical Review of Rocky Mount, N. C.," *The Tarheel Woman*, January 1948, 5; Davison's *Textile Blue Book*, 1944, p. 262.

<sup>61</sup> Billy Johnson, "Industrial Rocky Mount: Story of Impressive Expansion," *RMT*, July 6, 1952, p. 8B.

<sup>62</sup> Davison's *Textile Blue Book*, 1950, p. 330; 1955, p. 271; 1959, p. 213.

<sup>63</sup> Davison's *Textile Blue Book*, 1965, section 3, p. 90; *Rocky Mount City Directories*; "Eastern North Carolina Needs More Industries Like Caromount Mills," *RMT*, January 11, 1953, p. B1.

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tract off Highway 301 north of town for Burlington House Fabrics and Burlington Auto Fabrics. Both opened in 1966. The West Ridge Street plant, then known as the Rocky Mount weaving plant of Burlington House Fabrics, operated until early January 1981.<sup>64</sup> Tobacco and textile manufacturing at Rocky Mount plants gradually diminished in the late twentieth century as the economic base shifted to other industrial and manufacturing concerns.

## Joseph E. Sirriner - J. E. Sirriner and Company

Greenville, South Carolina-based J. E. Sirriner and Company, a prolific firm specializing in the design of industrial buildings, designed the 1940 boiler house for Caromount Mills' Rocky Mount plant. J. E. Sirriner and Company's commissions included textile mills, paper and tobacco factories, mill villages, bridges, colleges, commercial buildings, churches, hospitals, military installations, and schools throughout the southeast United States. Its founder, architect and engineer Joseph E. Sirriner (1872-1947), had a long history in the Carolinas. Beginning in 1876, his family resided in Greenville, South Carolina, where he matriculated at the Greenville Military Academy. He then attained a Bachelor of Science degree from Furman University in 1890 and began working as a civil engineer. Four years later, Sirriner supervised construction of a Greenville mill for one of the nation's most prominent industrial engineering firms, Lockwood, Greene, and Company. He remained in Greenville and managed the firm's Southern textile mill commissions from 1899 until 1902, when he established an independent office. Sirriner's endeavor was successful, and in 1921, with eight associates, he incorporated J. E. Sirriner and Company. His role in the textile industry was more complex than that of many engineers, as Sirriner served as a director on the managing boards of twenty-three milling concerns. A comprehensive list of his firm's commissions does not exist, but trade publications and newspaper articles allow for many attributions.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> "Burlington Industries Announces Plan For \$1 Million Drapery Facility Here," *RMT*, October 27, 1965, p. 1; "Burlington Industries," *RMT*, September 5, 1967, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> *Commerce and Finance*, November 14, 1923; *Manufacturers' Record*, March 26, 1925; Clemson Textile School, "Mr. J. E. Sirriner Passes," *The Bobbin and Beaker*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1947, 3, 20; John E. Wells, "Joseph Emory Sirriner," 2009, *North Carolina Architects and Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000303> (accessed September 2017).



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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Nash County, NC

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Nash County, NC

## Section 10. Geographical Data

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

1. Latitude 35.956028, Longitude -77.803161
2. Latitude 35.954396, Longitude -77.803079
3. Latitude 35.954166, Longitude -77.802907
4. Latitude 35.953632, Longitude -77.803170
5. Latitude 35.951762, Longitude -77.805107
6. Latitude 35.951492, Longitude -77.805592
7. Latitude 35.951889, Longitude -77.807390
8. Latitude 35.953998, Longitude -77.807032
9. Latitude 35.954684, Longitude -77.806336
10. Latitude 35.956149, Longitude -77.803566

### Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated 24-acre property comprises two Nash County tax parcels—450 West Ridge Street, PIN # 385014344078, 12.47 acres; 910 Carter Street, PIN # 385014334315, 11.54 acres—as well as the public right-of-way that extends north from Carr Street, encompassing an access drive and the guard house as shown on the site plan. A heavy solid line delineates the National Register boundary. Scale: one inch equals approximately 250 feet.

### Boundary Justification

The nominated tract encompasses the acreage historically associated with the Caromount Mills, Inc. -- Burlington Industries, Inc. plant.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Nash County, NC

## Additional Documentation: Current Photographs

All photographs by Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc., 3334 Nottingham Road, Winston-Salem, NC, on August 24, 2017. Digital images located at the North Carolina SHPO.



1. 1955 dye house addition, 1941/1946 dye house, and 1930s manufacturing building (from left to right), south elevation, looking northwest (above)
2. 1930s manufacturing building, south elevation, east end (below)



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National Park Service

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Nash County, NC



3. warehouse in plant's south section erected between 1956 and 1964, east elevation (above)
4. mid-1960s office addition (at right) and 1964-1968 manufacturing additions, southeast oblique (below)



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National Park Service

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Nash County, NC



- 5. 1955 finished product warehouse, north elevation, looking southwest (above)
- 6. 1930s manufacturing building and 1941/1946 dye house, looking west (below)



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**7. 1947 finished product warehouse, looking north (above)**

**8. 1955 finished product warehouse, west end, looking west into 1977 warehouse (below)**



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Nash County, NC



9. Second-story laboratory in addition erected between 1956 and 1971, looking west (above)  
10. 1964-1966 manufacturing additions at plant's south end, looking northeast (below)





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Nash County, NC



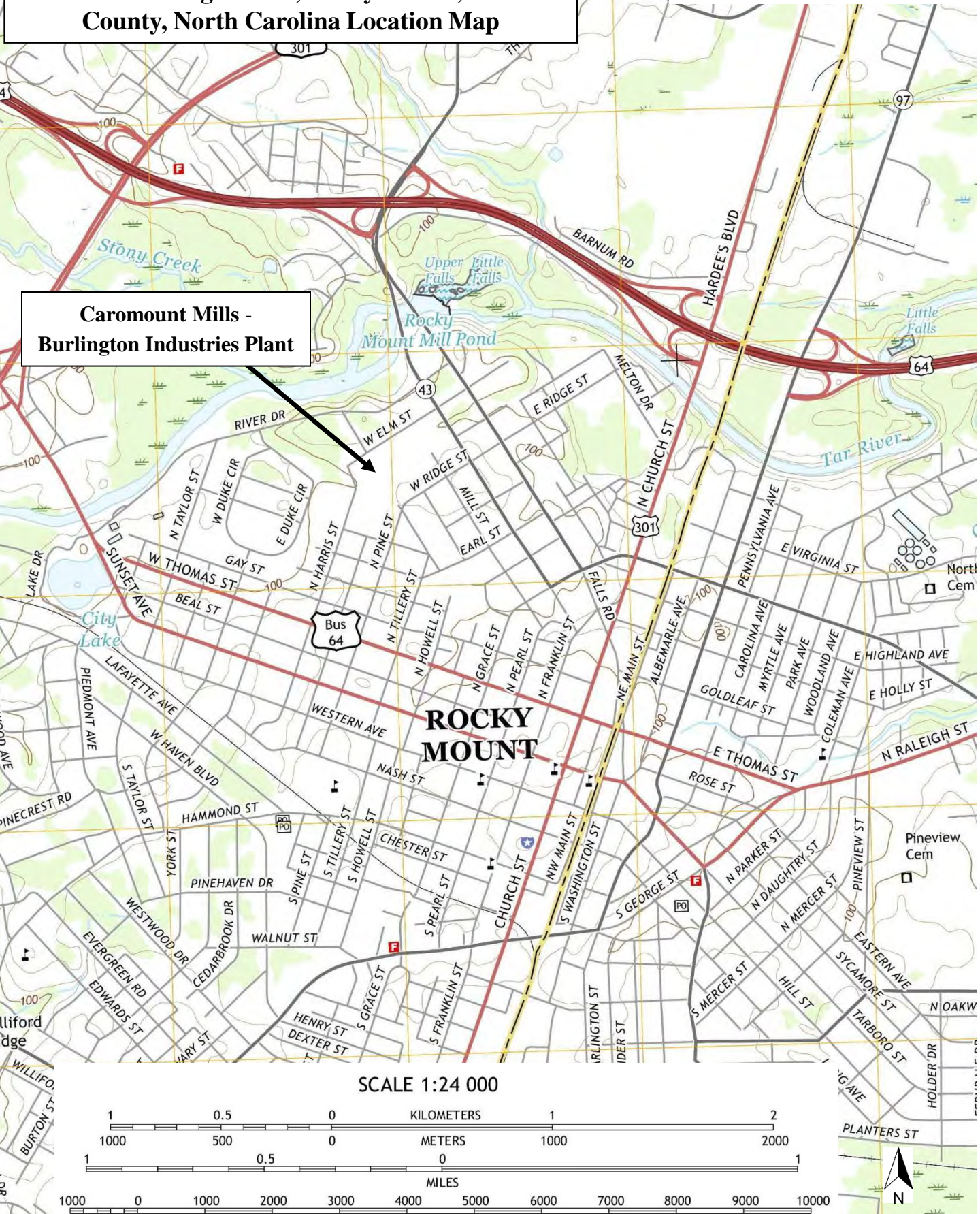
**11. 1940/1952 boiler house and 1940 smokestack, north elevation; oil storage tank at left**

# Caromount Mills - Burlington Industries Plant

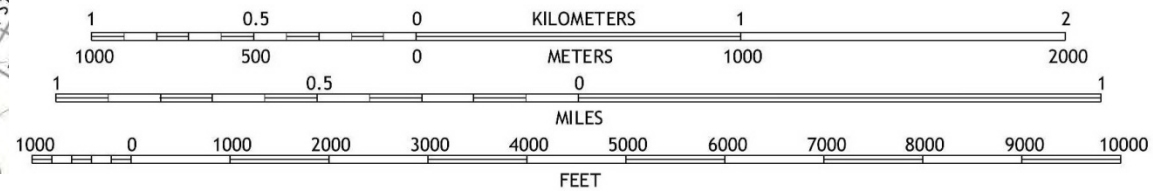
450 West Ridge Street, Rocky Mount, Nash County, North Carolina Location Map

U. S. Geological Survey  
Rocky Mount Quadrangle, 2016

**Caromount Mills -  
Burlington Industries Plant**



SCALE 1:24 000



**Caromount Mills - Burlington Industries Plant**  
**450 West Ridge Street, Rocky Mount, Nash County, North Carolina**  
**National Register Boundary**



10. Latitude 35.956149  
 Longitude -77.803566

1. Latitude 35.956028  
 Longitude -77.803161

Rocky Mount Mills  
 Village Historic District  
 National Register 1999

9. Latitude 35.954684  
 Longitude -77.806336

2. Latitude 35.954396  
 Longitude -77.803079

**Caromount Mills - Burlington Industries Plant**

3. Latitude 35.954166  
 Longitude -77.802907

8. Latitude 35.953998  
 Longitude -77.807032

4. Latitude 35.953632  
 Longitude -77.803170

**National Register Boundary**

**Warehouse, 1930s, CB**

7. Latitude 35.951889  
 Longitude -77.807390

5. Latitude 35.951762  
 Longitude -77.805107

6. Latitude 35.951492  
 Longitude -77.805592

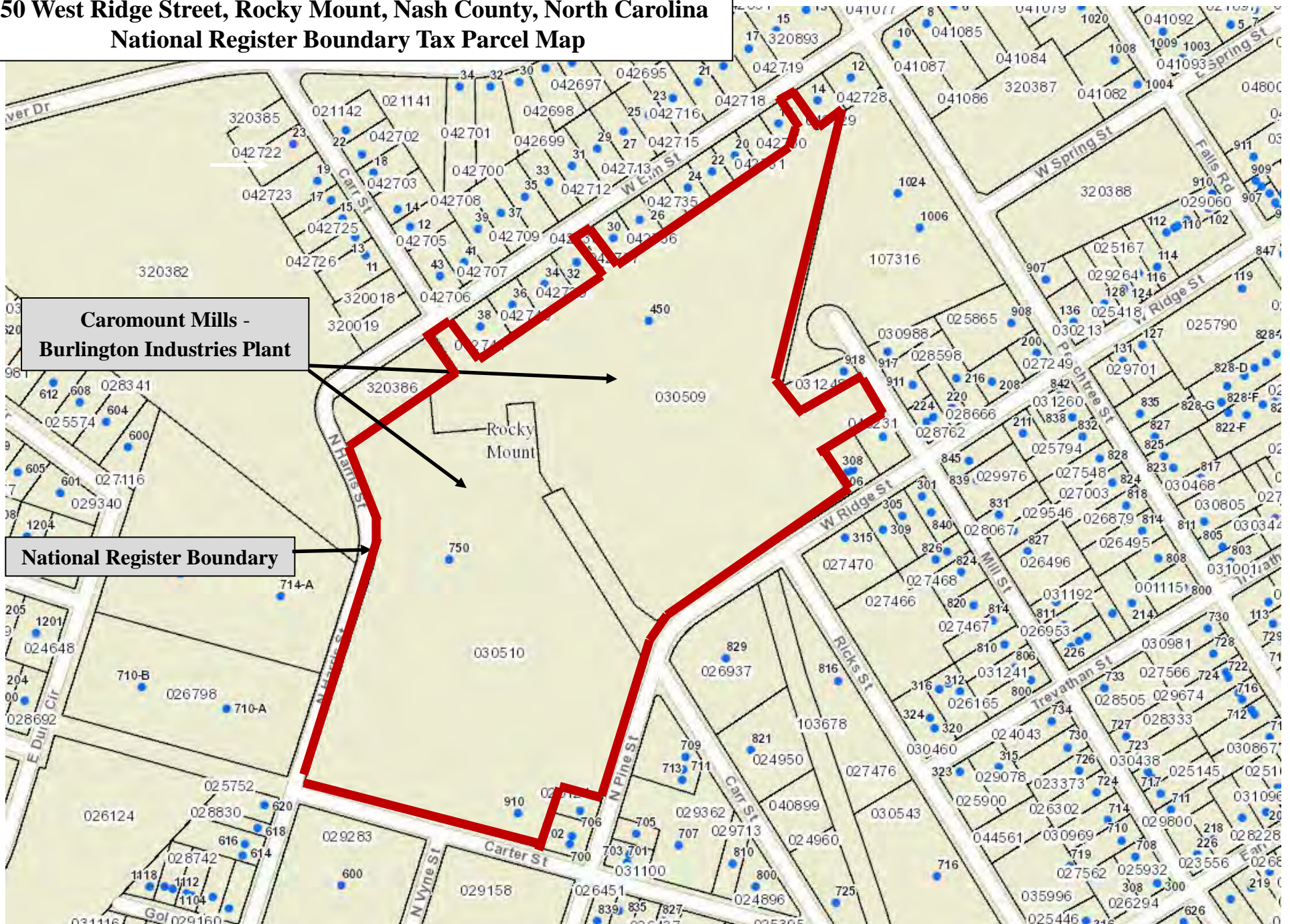
CB = Contributing Building  
 CS = Contributing Structure

1 : 250 Feet

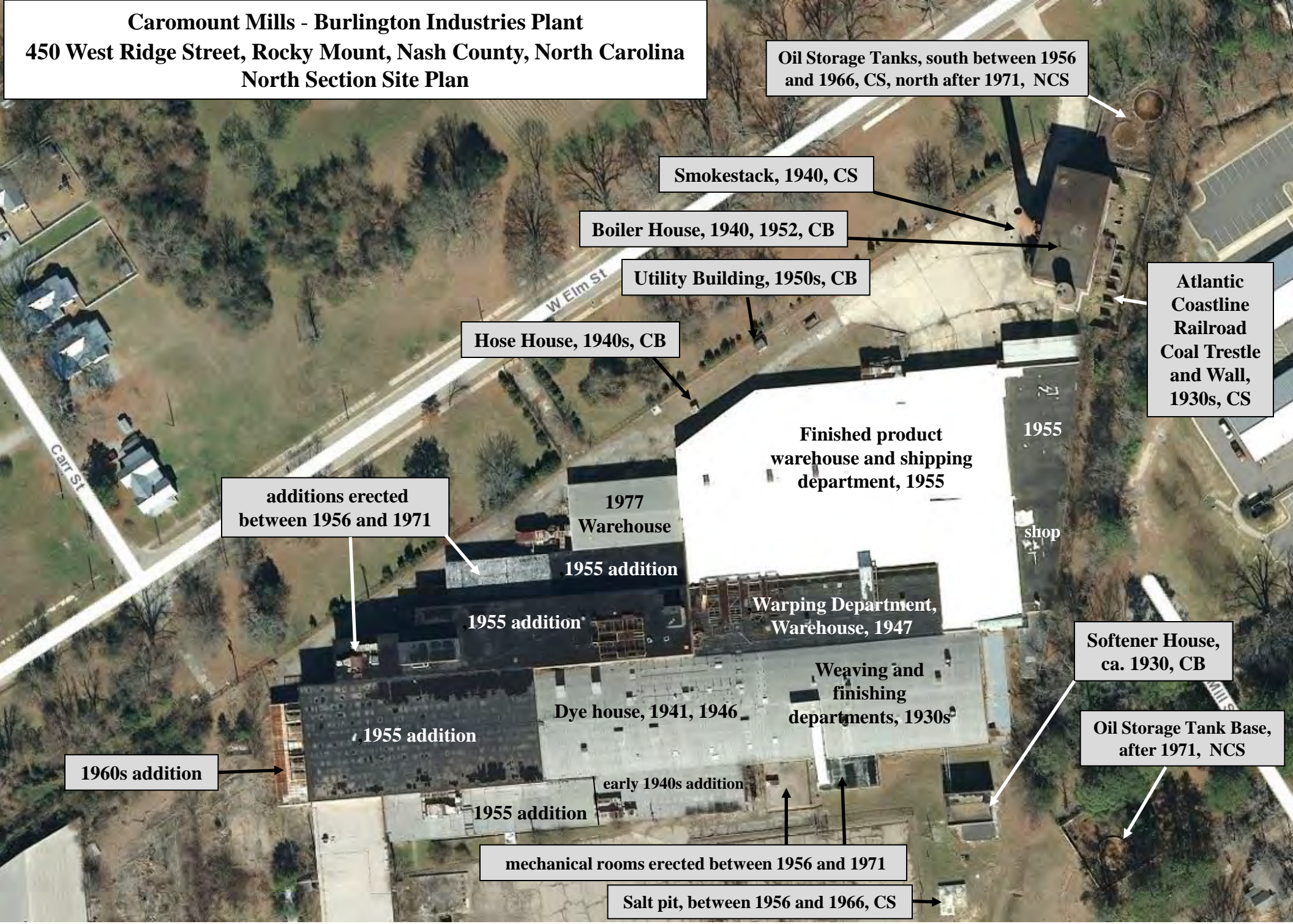


# Caromount Mills - Burlington Industries Plant

450 West Ridge Street, Rocky Mount, Nash County, North Carolina  
National Register Boundary Tax Parcel Map



**Caromount Mills - Burlington Industries Plant**  
**450 West Ridge Street, Rocky Mount, Nash County, North Carolina**  
**North Section Site Plan**



Oil Storage Tanks, south between 1956 and 1966, CS, north after 1971, NCS

Smokestack, 1940, CS

Boiler House, 1940, 1952, CB

Utility Building, 1950s, CB

Hose House, 1940s, CB

Atlantic Coastline Railroad Coal Trestle and Wall, 1930s, CS

additions erected between 1956 and 1971

1977 Warehouse

Finished product warehouse and shipping department, 1955

1955 addition

Warping Department Warehouse, 1947

1955 addition

Softener House, ca. 1930, CB

Weaving and finishing departments, 1930s

Dye house, 1941, 1946

Oil Storage Tank Base, after 1971, NCS

1960s addition

1955 addition

early 1940s addition

1955 addition

mechanical rooms erected between 1956 and 1971

Salt pit, between 1956 and 1966, CS

CB = Contributing Building  
 CS = Contributing Structure  
 NCS = Contributing Structure



**Caromount Mills - Burlington Industries Plant**  
**450 West Ridge Street, Rocky Mount, Nash County,**  
**North Carolina, South Section Site Plan**



additions erected between 1956 and 1964

additions erected between 1964 and 1966

Finished products warehouse, 1947, CB

Site of two early 1950s manufacturing buildings

1955 addition

1955 addition

early 1940s addition

1955 parking lot, site of ca. 1930 sawtooth-roofed mill

Shop

Embroidery and art departments

1955 addition

warehouse

Sample department

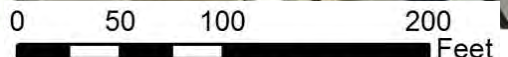
Guard House, mid-1960s, CS

cutting department 1964

Office, mid-1960s

piece goods department

Finishing Department



1 inch = 100 feet

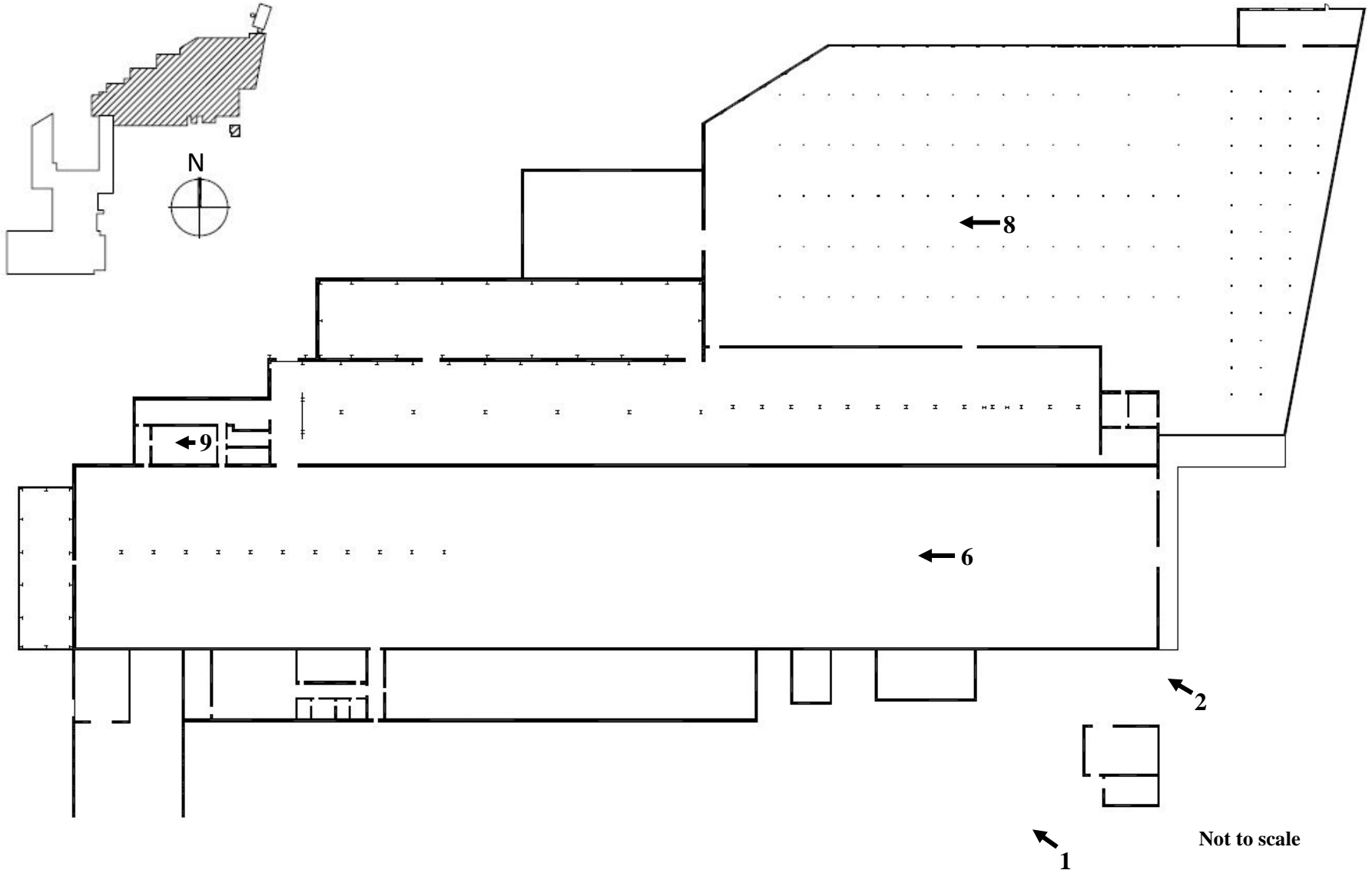


CB = Contributing Building  
 CS = Contributing Structure

**Caromount Mills - Burlington Industries Plant**  
**450 West Ridge Street, Rocky Mount, Nash County, North Carolina**  
**Floor plan, north section, and photograph views**

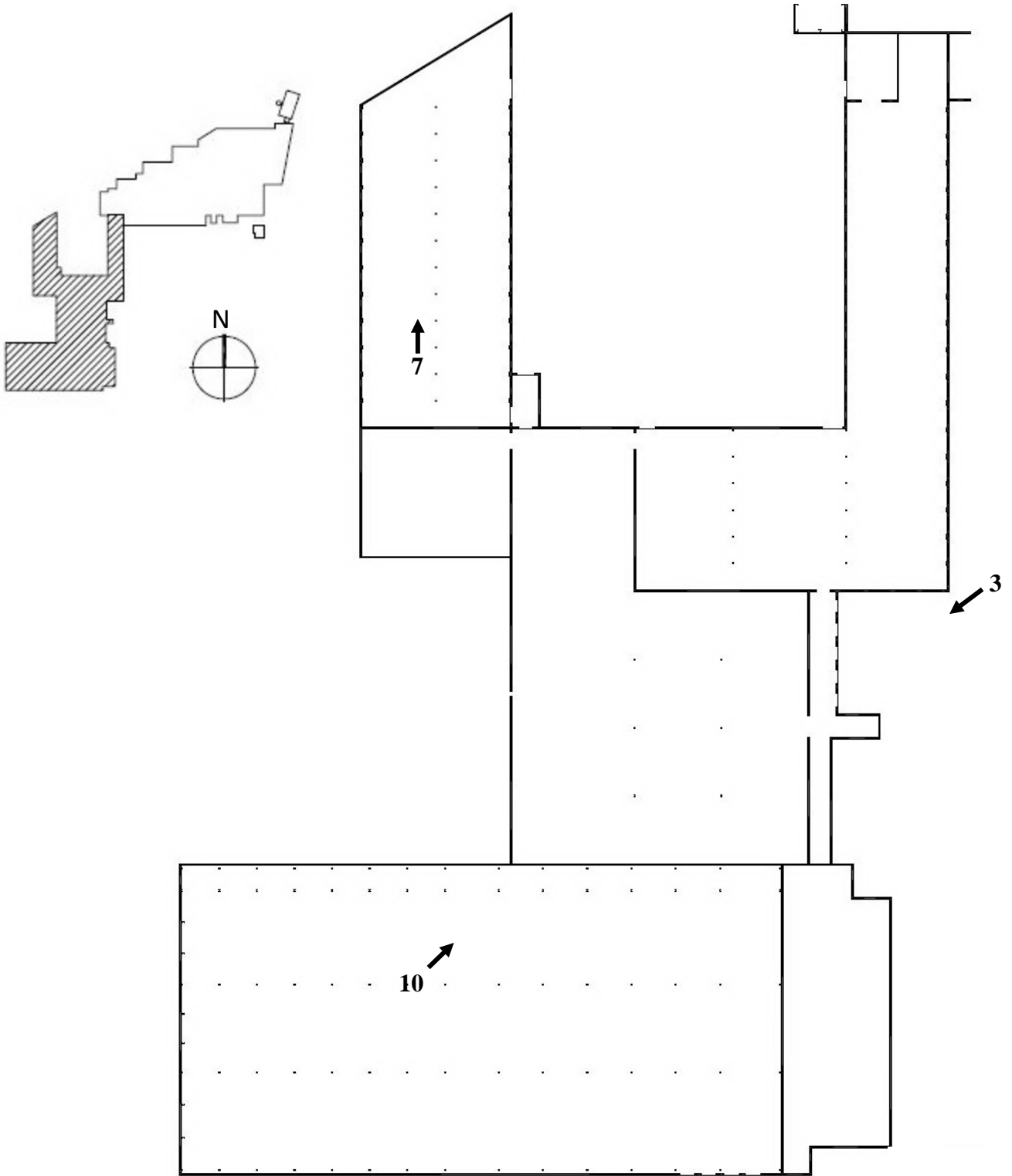
floor plan drawn by Belk Architecture in 2018  
photo views annotated by Fearnbach History Services, Inc. in April 2019

1940/1952  
boiler house  
and 1940  
smokestack



**Caromount Mills - Burlington Industries Plant**  
**450 West Ridge Street, Rocky Mount, Nash County, North Carolina**  
**Floor plan, south section, and photograph views**

floor plan drawn by Belk Architecture in 2018  
photo views annotated by Fearnbach History Services, Inc. in April 2019



Not to scale



























UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Caromount Mills, Inc. -- Burlington Industries, Inc. Plant

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

State & County: NORTH CAROLINA, Nash

Date Received: 7/17/2019      Date of Pending List: 8/9/2019      Date of 16th Day: 8/26/2019      Date of 45th Day: \_\_\_\_\_      Date of Weekly List: 9/3/2019

Reference number: SG100004320

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

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

Accept       Return       Reject      8/26/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: Locally significant industrial complex, the largest employer in the area and one of the few textile mills.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept / A

Reviewer Jim Gabbert      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275      Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper  
Secretary Susi H. Hamilton

Office of Archives and History  
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

July 10, 2019

Joy Beasley, Keeper of the National Register  
National Park Service  
National Register Program  
1849 C St., NW (Mail Stop 7228)  
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station – Caldwell County  
Caromount Mills, Inc.- Burlington Industries Inc., Plant – Nash County  
T. Austin and Ernestine L. Finch House – Davidson County  
Gem Theatre – Cabarrus County  
Sanford Tobacco Company Redrying Plant and Warehouse – Lee County  
Taylorsville Milling Company Roller Mill – Alexander County  
Bunyan S. and Edith W. Womble House – Forsyth County

Dear Ms. Beasley:

Enclosed are the nominations for the above-referenced properties to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. All the nominations are full digital submissions. The enclosed disks each contain the true and correct copy of their above-referenced nomination. The North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office received correspondence in support of all nominations within CLG jurisdictions including the T. Austin and Ernestine L. Finch House, Sanford Tobacco Company Redrying Plant and Warehouse, and the Bunyan S. and Edith W. Womble House. We included a digitized copy of that correspondence on each respective nomination Disk 1.

We trust you will find the nominations to be in order. If you have any questions, please contact our National Register Coordinator, Jenn Brosz, at (919) 814-6587, or [jenn.brosz@ncdcr.gov](mailto:jenn.brosz@ncdcr.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kevin Cherry".

Dr. Kevin Cherry  
State Historic Preservation Officer

KC/kpb