

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Clark Thread Company Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

East Newark Industrial Center/First Republic Industrial Center

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

900 Passaic Avenue between Central Avenue —NOT FOR PUBLICATION 14

CITY, TOWN

and the Erie Railroad Line

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

East Newark

— VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

New Jersey

34

Hudson

017

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Contact: Norman A. Halper, V.P.

First Republic Corporation of America

STREET & NUMBER

302 Fifth Avenue

CITY, TOWN

New York

— VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry Division, County Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Hudson County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Jersey City

STATE

New Jersey

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

77

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

When George and William Clark launched their American thread manufacturing operation in the 1860's, they erected their factory on the west bank of the Passaic River in Newark. Today only one major building remains from that complex, and it is significantly altered. In the early 1870's, when the Clark Thread Company was on the verge of becoming the world's largest maker of cotton sewing thread, George and William expanded their facilities across the Passaic to East Newark. The Clark Thread Company Historic District incorporates most of the extant company factory buildings erected in East Newark after 1875. In all, there are more than 35 edifices on approximately 13 acres in the district, which covers an oversize city block bounded by Passaic Avenue on the west, the Erie Railroad on the north, Grant Avenue on the east, and Central Avenue on the south. The only other known extant structure prominently associated with either brother is a beautiful Newark mansion that William occupied from 1880 to 1902.

The Clark company sold its East Newark complex in 1935, but the exteriors of most of the chief buildings, as well as the interiors of some, are little changed. Now known as the East Newark Industrial Center and owned by the First Republic Corporation of America, the complex retains association with the textile industry. The Center leases the buildings to small manufacturers, and the majority of the tenants are garment makers.

All the structures are of red brick and are compatible in style. The larger manufacturing buildings display open attics and wood truss systems with cast-iron support columns, and all structures of three or more stories have modern elevators. Most windows are rectangular and set in segmentally arched openings with radiating brick voussoirs and stone sills. A few windows in almost every building have been bricked or otherwise filled. The AASLH representative was permitted only a cursory inspection of the complex, but generally the major edifices appeared structurally sound. Building dates noted below are those furnished by the owner from corporate property records.

Major Structures Along District Perimeter. The principal manufacturing buildings of the Clark complex are situated along the four streets that form the general boundary of the district.

The oldest structure is No. 57, a rectangular-shaped, four-story, gable-roofed, mill erected in 1875. Positioned on the southwest corner of the block, it fronts onto Passaic Avenue, is 6 bays wide and 18 bays long, measures about 75 by 400 feet, and has 20-over-20 sash windows.

(continued)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1875-1935 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

According to textile industry historian James R. Young, "of the large number of small, yet important industries in our country perhaps none has had a greater influence upon the members of the average household" than the cotton thread industry.¹ From the 1870's through the first half of the 20th century, Clark Thread Company and its descendent firms led the Nation in the manufacture of this important product. Founded in 1864 by George A. Clark, the company rose to its position of dominance within a decade, thanks largely to the phenomenal success of "O. N. T." thread, which Clark developed especially for the sewing machine. This product, says historian John T. Cunningham, "became known wherever American women stitched."²

Late in the 1890's, the Clark Thread Company merged with the Scottish firm of Clark & Company and with the rival American firm of J. & P. Coats, thereby creating almost a worldwide monopoly in the sewing thread industry. In the United States, however, the Coats and the Clark companies maintained separate corporate identities for many years while sometimes sharing executive talent. Their names were so identified with quality thread, says Young, that "every general store in the country found it as necessary to stock J. & P. Coats threads and the Clark 'O. N. T.' as to keep a cracker barrel."³

The Clark Thread Company Historic District includes approximately 13 acres and more than 35 multistory red brick structures erected between 1875 and about 1910. Nearly all the principal mill buildings date from 1875, 1881, 1883, or 1889, and their dates of construction coincide with Clark's rise to the position of the world's largest maker of cotton sewing thread. Today the structures form the East Newark Industrial Complex which leases the individual buildings to small manufacturers. The only two other known extant structures prominently associated with the Clark brothers are a significantly altered circa 1868 factory building in Newark and a beautiful Newark mansion that William Clark occupied between 1880 and 1902.

(continued)

¹James R. Young (ed.), Textile Leaders of the South (Columbia, 1963), 708.

²John T. Cunningham, Newark (Newark, 1966), 176.

³Young (ed.), Textile Leaders of the South, 258.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet.)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY circa 13 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1.8	570620	4511540	B	1.8	570830	4511460
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1.8	570780	4511140	D	1.8	570540	4511240
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See last page of description.)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE History by: Ralph Christian, Historian, Historic Landmarks Proj
Description by: George R. Adams, Director, Historic Landmarks Project.

ORGANIZATION

DATE

American Association for State and Local History April 1977

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1400 Eighth Avenue South

615/242-5583

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Nashville,

Tennessee 37203

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET Clark Thread ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

Also fronting onto Passaic are Nos. 18 and 21, both mill buildings that were erected in 1881. No. 21 is larger, measuring about 125 feet by 275 feet to about 75 by 175 feet for No. 18. Each structure rises five stories to a low-pitched gable roof and displays nine-over-nine sashes. Situated between these two edifices are a pair of small, one-story, hip-roofed gate houses from which a low, green-painted, cast-iron fence extends north and south along the sidewalk. These are Nos. 19 and 20.

Fronting south onto Central Avenue are a pair of 1883 mills, Nos. 52 and 53, that stand six stories high and feature low-pitched hip roofs. The former has 20-over-20 sashes and the latter 9-over-9 sashes. Each edifice measures approximately 125 by 200 feet. Attached to the west end of No. 53 are two smaller, two-story structures, Nos. 54 and 55, that served originally as either a residence and carriage house for the complex manager or as a company office facility. Hip-roofed No. 54 displays a five-bay-wide facade; a partially raised basement; a pair of rectangular, tripartite, mullion windows on the first story left; and a pair of rounded tripartite windows on the second story left. No. 55 is distinguished by a flat roof and center-placed, double, wood door in the first-story front facade. A high cast-iron fence separates the small yards of the two structures from the street.

Along the east side of the district, mill buildings No. 37 and No. 39 front eastward onto Grant Avenue. Built in 1889 they rise five and six stories respectively and feature low-pitched gable roofs and 12-over-12 sashes. They also exhibit one of the most complete rows of mill towers in the complex. With the exception of towers on these buildings and on No. 57, most tower turrets have been removed over the years. A cast-iron fence separates these structures from the street.

Other Perimeter Structures. Completing the perimeter of the district along the north side is a series of four, abutting, one-story, gable-roofed support structures, each of which measures about 37 by 82 feet. These, Nos. 24 through 26A, were completed in 1881. Most of their window openings are closed with concrete blocks.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Clark Thread ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE two

Facing east on Grant Avenue, between Nos. 52 and 37, is building No. 64, a three-story structure erected in 1922 for administrative use. It displays eight-over-eight tripartite and double windows and has stone initials "O.N.T." inlaid in brick near the Cornice line of the Grant Avenue Facade.

Smokestacks. Two large, red brick smokestacks remain in the Clark complex. The oldest, No. 1, is rectangular and rises above a small gable-roofed structure rear, or north, of building No. 53. Probably this stack was erected about the same time as the mill, 1883. The other stack, No. 2, is round and rises about 300 feet near the center of the complex. Near the top it bears the formerly white-painted initials "O.N.T." fashioned from cast-iron.

Major Structures Inside Perimeter of the Complex. Generally the buildings inside the perimeter of the Clark complex are more altered and in poorer condition than the large mill edifices described above.

Building No. 30, erected in 1889, is especially interesting. It measures approximately 30 feet square, rises two stories to a hipped roof and resembles a modern "garage apartment" with a carriage or other vehicle facility at ground level and office or living space above. Large round-arched double doors grace its south facade, and a pair of double-size, sliding doors open on its west facade. The latter do not appear original. Adjacent to the east side are three two-story-high, gable-roofed shops, Nos. 31 to 33, which were also erected in 1889.

Directly south of No. 30 is No. 62. Presumably built about the same time, it rises two stories, has a gable roof, and exhibits an eight-bay-long north facade of round-arched openings that presently are bricked. Another 1889 structure is No. 38, a two-story, gable-roofed edifice now undergoing conversion to office space. It displays the same kind of internal construction as the large mill buildings.

Other Structures Inside the Complex Perimeter. Approximately 13 additional buildings complete the Clark complex. All are small one- or two-story structures in poor condition, and most were erected after 1900. One, however, No. 29, was completed in 1881. Erected in 1889 were Nos. 36, 37, 37A, 39A, and 50.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Clark Thread ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE three

Boundary Justification. The boundary of the district encompasses all the major extant 1875-1900 structures that formed Clark Thread Company's East Newark complex at the height of the firm's national significance. The area is well defined and includes no modern intrusions. Not included within the boundary are approximately seven former Clark structures across Passaic Avenue west of the district. These are omitted because they are smaller and less significant than the principal district buildings, reflect a greater degree of alteration, and have intruding structures among them.

Boundary Description. As indicated in red on the accompanying maps [(1) U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, N.J., Orange Quad., 1955, photorevised 1970; and (2) East Newark Industrial Center DWG. No. EN-186-2, n.d.], a line beginning at the northeast corner of the intersection of Passaic and Central Avenues and extending northward approximately 900 feet along the east curb of Passaic to the south edge of the right-of-way of the Erie Railroad tracks; thence, eastward approximately 600 feet along the south edge of said rail right-of-way to the west curb of Grant Avenue; thence, southward about 800 feet along the west curb of Grant to the north curb of Central Avenue; thence, westward about 700 feet along the north curb of Central to the point of beginning.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Clark Thread ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

History

George Aitken Clark was born August 9, 1823, in Paisley, Scotland, the son of John Clark, a leading thread manufacturer. By the time of George's birth, the Clark family had earned an international reputation for its fine cotton sewing thread. In the late 1790's George's grandfather, James Clark, and great-uncle, Patrick Clark, had developed a successful business supplying Paisley's 12,000 weavers and spinners with looms, silk thread, and other equipment. In 1806 their prosperity as well as that of the city was seriously threatened when Napoleon's decrees cut off the supply of silk fiber used to make heddles or guiding threads for the looms. The Clarks experimented with other fibers, and Patrick Clark soon developed a fine, smooth, and strong cotton thread which not only replaced silk heddles on the looms but was found to be an excellent replacement for the silk and linen thread used in general sewing as well. In 1812 the Clarks established a factory to manufacture thread, and by 1818 they had begun to export a portion of their finished product to the United States.

Little is known about George Clark's childhood except that he attended grammar school in Paisley. In 1840 his father sent him to Canada to work for the firm of Kerr & Company in Hamilton, Ontario, but within 4 years, he returned to Paisley and became a shawl manufacturer in the firm of Ronald & Clark. In 1851 George left this business and formed a partnership with Robert Kerr, his brother-in-law, to manufacture cotton thread. Soon, however, this company was merged into the family firm of Clark & Company.

In 1856 George came to the United States as agent for the Clark's Paisley factory. He settled in New York and proceeded to take orders for thread. Within 4 years, however, because of the high tariff duty on imported thread and their desire to exploit the new market opened up by the rapid spread of the sewing machine, George and his younger brother William established a thread factory in Newark, N.J. Known originally as the Passaic Thread Company, the firm changed its name in 1866 to the Clark Thread Company. About this same time, George developed a new type of thread specifically suited for sewing machines. His product, says textile scholar James R. Young, was "a 6-cord thread made of three strands of 2-cord thread twisted tightly together in a cable construction."⁴ Widely touted as "Our New Thread," or "O. N. T.," this product, according to historian John T. Cunningham, "became known wherever American women stitched."⁵

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⁴Young (ed.), Textile Leaders of the South, 258.

⁵Cunningham, Newark, 176.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Clark Thread ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE two

By the time of George Clark's death in 1873, the Clark Thread Company employed over 1,000 workers in its mills and was the Nation's largest manufacturer of cotton sewing thread. Writer William F. Ford proclaimed the following year that "probably no other branch of American industry has attained to greater supremacy than the manufacture of spool cotton."⁶ After William Clark succeeded his brother, the firm continued to expand, and by the time of his retirement in 1897, it had almost doubled in size. In this same decade, the Clark interests in the United States and Scotland were merged with those of the rival J. & P. Coats firm, and this created a worldwide monopoly of the sewing thread industry. Despite the general merger, however, in the United States the Coats interests and the Clark interests maintained separate corporate identities for many years. They did share executive talent, though. More important, their names were so identified with quality thread, says Young, that "every general store in the country found it as necessary to stock J. & P. Coats threads and the Clark "O. N. T." as to keep a cracker barrel."⁷

In the years that followed, the Clark Thread Company continued to prosper. The development of the mercerization process between 1910 and 1920 made it possible to use cotton thread on all fabrics. Later as synthetic fabrics were developed, the company became one of the first thread manufacturers to produce synthetic threads. In the 1930's the company began to shift its base of operations from Newark to the southern states because of cheaper labor and operating costs--a move which was virtually complete by 1947. In 1954 the Clark Thread Company and the J. & P. Coats Company were merged to create a new firm, Coats & Clark Incorporated.

⁶William F. Ford, The Industrial Interests of Newark, N.J., Containing An Historical Sketch of the City (New York, 1874). 223.

⁷Young (ed.), Textile Leaders of the South, 258.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Clark Thread ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE one

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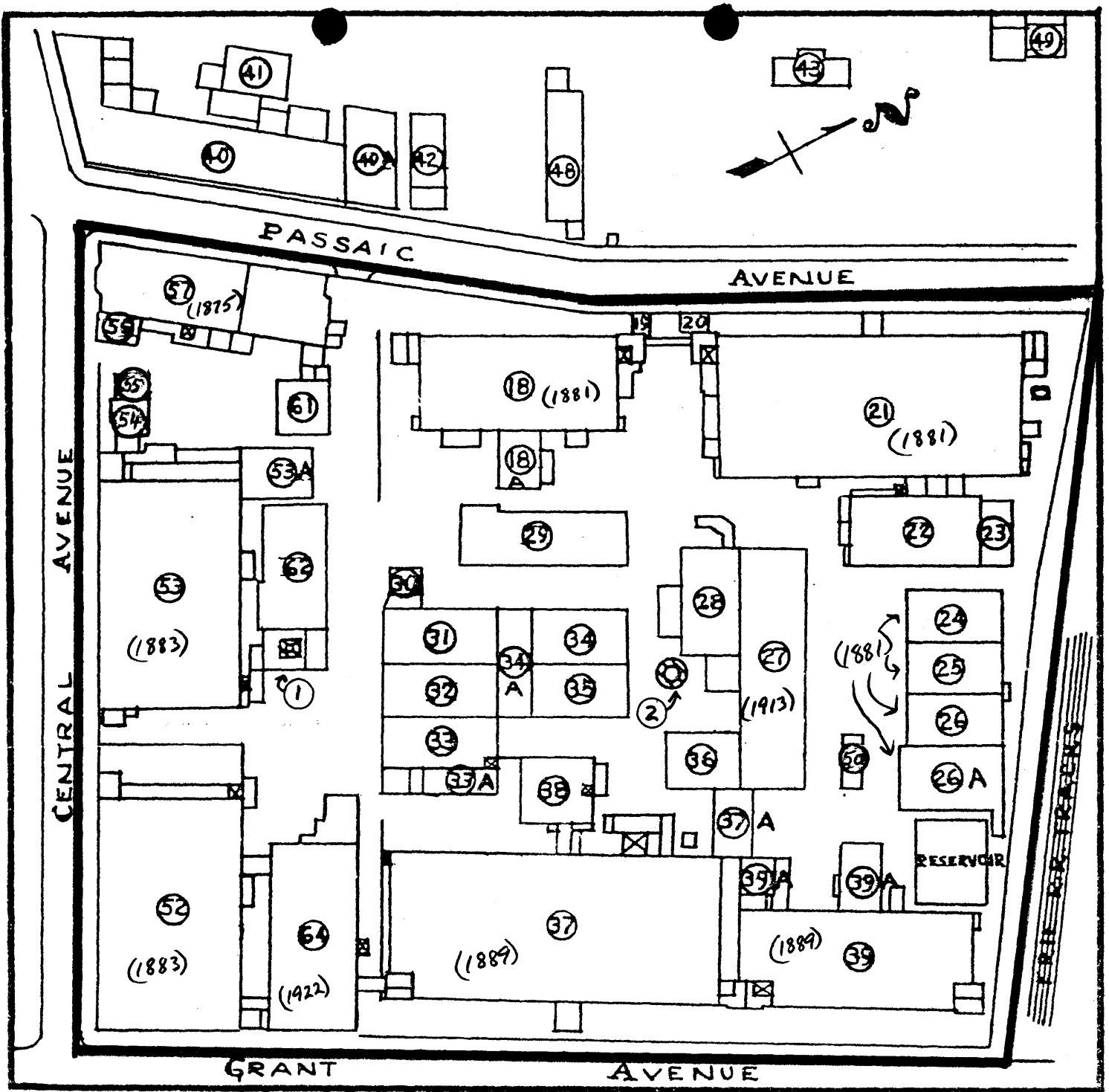
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Clark Thread Company
 900 Passaic Avenue
 East Newark, N.J.

East Newark Industrial
 Center DWG No. EN-186-2 (n.d.)

The First Republic Corporation of America

EAST NEWARK INDUSTRIAL CENTER

EAST NEWARK N.J.

DWG NO EN-186-2

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