

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Colonial-Hites Company

Other names/site number: Colite Industries

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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

## 2. Location

Street & number: 228 North Parson Street

City or town: West Columbia State: S.C. County: Lexington

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this x nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide   x   local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

  x   A     B     C     D

	<u>4/3/2018</u>
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer	
<hr/>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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**Signature of commenting official:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Title :** \_\_\_\_\_ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

5/24/18  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site

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Structure

Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	Total

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/manufacturing facility

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, concrete, metal

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Colonial-Hites Company manufacturing plant, located at 228 North Parson Street in West Columbia, South Carolina first occupied this lot in 1951. Originally comprised of a brick corner building, various additions expanded the complex to approximately 300,000 square feet by 1971. To accommodate the company's growing needs for more manufacturing space, Colonial-Hites made multiple additions between 1951 and 1971. The additions range in size and material, from 15,000 square foot additions to 75,000 square foot additions, and include brick, concrete block, and corrugated metal construction. Multiple rectangular buildings with low-sloped roofs surround two barrel-roofed warehouses. After two decades of growth, the Colonial-Hites complex encompassed nearly the entire 200 block of Parson Street. It is a rare example of a large scale industrial property in a city center and encompasses multiple building methods and materials. Even after sitting vacant for decades, the building continues to represent the evolution Colonial-Hites from a small, local company into an international success and still retains a number of original features such as windows, doors, and signage.

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## Narrative Description

The original Colonial-Hites building sits at the northwest corner of the 200 block of North Parson Street and its walls are laid in a running bond pattern. The north elevation is five bays wide, separated by two buttresses and two brick pilasters, and also features a stepped parapet as the grade slopes down the block. The first bay, at the western corner, has a window, which has been covered with a wooden board. The second bay features a set of recessed double doors. The two brick buttresses are located at the center of the elevation between the double doors and window. The west elevation is three bays wide with a flat roofline and a cornice comprised of two runs of stretchers and a rowlock at the top. Three window openings are located along the elevation and have been infilled with wooden boards. Each window has a soldier course above it and brick sill at the bottom. Two brick pilasters separate the three bays of the elevation. Historically, the windows were paired sixteen-light windows with the center eight panes being an awning window. The building was originally red brick but has been painted white.<sup>1</sup> Scarring from two previous doors is evident adjacent to the center window and the south window. The doors have been filled with brick, but the soldier course lintels above each door remain.

Multiple additions were made south of the original building between 1951 and 1959. What currently appears as one long addition is in fact multiple smaller additions, based on the roofing and visible seams between each new addition. The additions were made from the northern to the southern end. The first of these additions is shorter in height than the original building and is distinguished by brick laid in common bond, as opposed to a running bond, pattern. The low-sloping roofline features clay coping tiles. The west elevation has two bays composed of one window and one doorway, which was in-filled with matching brick prior to 1966, but still retains a double rowlock lintel above the previous door opening.<sup>2</sup> This entrance is visible on the Jimmy Price 1959 photograph of the building. A visible seam runs between the in-filled door and a window, indicating this was the terminus of the addition. Moving south, the next portion of the west elevation features two windows and a single door entrance which is covered by a canopy. Wooden boards currently cover the two windows and the door. A four-bay addition was made to the south and has a slightly lower roofline than the building to its north. The roofline features clay coping tiles above a rowlock cornice and the brick bond returns to a common bond pattern from a running bond. The four windows on this elevation are currently covered with wooden boards but were four-over-two awning-style windows. All of these additions were completed by 1959 based on an aerial photograph of the property.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jimmy Price, "Colonial Hites Company, West Columbia Aerial with pond," November 22, 1959, Jimmy Price Collection, Richland County Public Library.

<sup>2</sup> Colonial-Hites Facility c.1966, Colite, accessed November 6, 2017. [www.colite.com/about](http://www.colite.com/about).

<sup>3</sup> Jimmy Price, "Colonial Hites Company," November 22, 1959.

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Figure 1: Jimmy Price Photograph, 1959.

The final addition of this wing was added between 1959 and 1966 and returns to the original building's height.<sup>4</sup> This addition features three windows that match the previous addition's four, clay coping tiles above a single stretcher and rowlock cornice. The southernmost bay features a triple door recessed entry with a projecting flat metal awning with wide eaves, which is lower than the building's roofline. The brick at the recessed entry has never been painted and the three doors have been boarded up, leaving only their transoms visible. The south elevation of this addition features four awning windows which are smaller than the windows on the west elevation. The flat, overhanging eave covers the elevation and terminates into the west elevation of a corrugated metal warehouse. This building was previously an open loading dock but was walled with corrugated metal after 1971.<sup>5</sup> Its west elevation features two window openings that do not have glass or a fenestration. The south elevation is composed of a sliding barn door.

One of the earliest warehouse spaces on the lot is east of the original corner building. It is composed of cinderblocks, has a barrel roof, and is connected by a flat-roofed cinderblock hyphen. The warehouse's north elevation is thirteen bays long and features a basement level as the grade changes. The thirteen bays are composed of a set of sliding metal doors leading to a concrete loading dock on the west end of the elevation and twelve windows heading east. The windows are steel-cased twelve-light with the center six panes being awning windows. The

<sup>4</sup> While the photograph from c.1966 shows this addition, based on newspaper accounts, it seems that it was completed in 1962. However, because there are no photographs between 1959 and 1966, it is unclear which portion of the building was added. Colonial-Hites Facility c.1966; "Colonial-Hites Plans Expansion," *The State*, April 3, 1962.

<sup>5</sup> Colonial-Hites Facility c.1966, Colonial-Hites Facility c.1971, Colite, accessed November 6, 2017. [www.colite.com/about](http://www.colite.com/about).

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basement level is the western eight bays of this elevation. The barrel roof of this building is in poor condition as much of it has caved in and continues to deteriorate. The east elevation of the warehouse is eight bays wide and features the same twelve-light windows. The curved gable features a louvered vent at the center. At the basement level there is a corrugated metal shed roof addition that lacks windows and doors.



Figure 2: C.1966 Image from [www.Colite.com/about](http://www.Colite.com/about)

Much of the east elevation is obscured from view, particularly in the middle portion of the building. This obstruction is due to the fact that the middle area is recessed compared to the north and south ends, but also because there is heavy vegetation growth and a house, which block much of the elevation. The large two-story warehouse at the south end of the block prominently displays a “Colite Industries” sign across the second level of its east elevation, both of which most likely dates to 1968 when the company rebranded as Colite from Colonial-Hites.<sup>6</sup> This elevation of the building is a light-pink painted cinderblock and thirteen bays wide. The first level features twelve windows with a sliding barn-style door at the center of the elevation. The windows are steel six-light with a concrete sill. The barn door is blue and features vertical planks and is accessible from a raised concrete loading dock. North of the sliding barn door is a pedestrian door, which is also blue, and lines up beneath one of the windows. A set of concrete steps leads from the ground to the loading dock and pedestrian door. The second level has only six windows across it. These windows are eight-light and have an awning window in the center four panes. They are located directly above the space between the first level windows.

The south elevation faces Meeting Street and is composed of the large two-story warehouse on the east. The face of this elevation is painted brown instead of the light pink color of the east elevation and is nine bays long. Because of the change in grade of the landscape, the first level of

<sup>6</sup> “Colonial-Hites Changes Name,” *The State*, November 6, 1968.

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this elevation moves up hill and becomes smaller in size by the eighth bay. The first six bays of windows from the east are six-light and the last two windows on the west end of the building are four-light. The second level only features three windows, all of which are six-pane, and one of which is covered by an air vent chute that runs from the roof to the first level. Near the roofline on the east end of the elevation there are four hooded vents as well as one additional hood on the western end of the building. There is evidence of a former hooded vent adjacent to this single one on the west end. Halfway down the block, the two-story warehouse ends and the one-story cinderblock and corrugated metal addition, which was made sometime after 1971, begins.<sup>7</sup> The south elevation of this addition is devoid of windows and doors although there are three square vents located along the elevation.

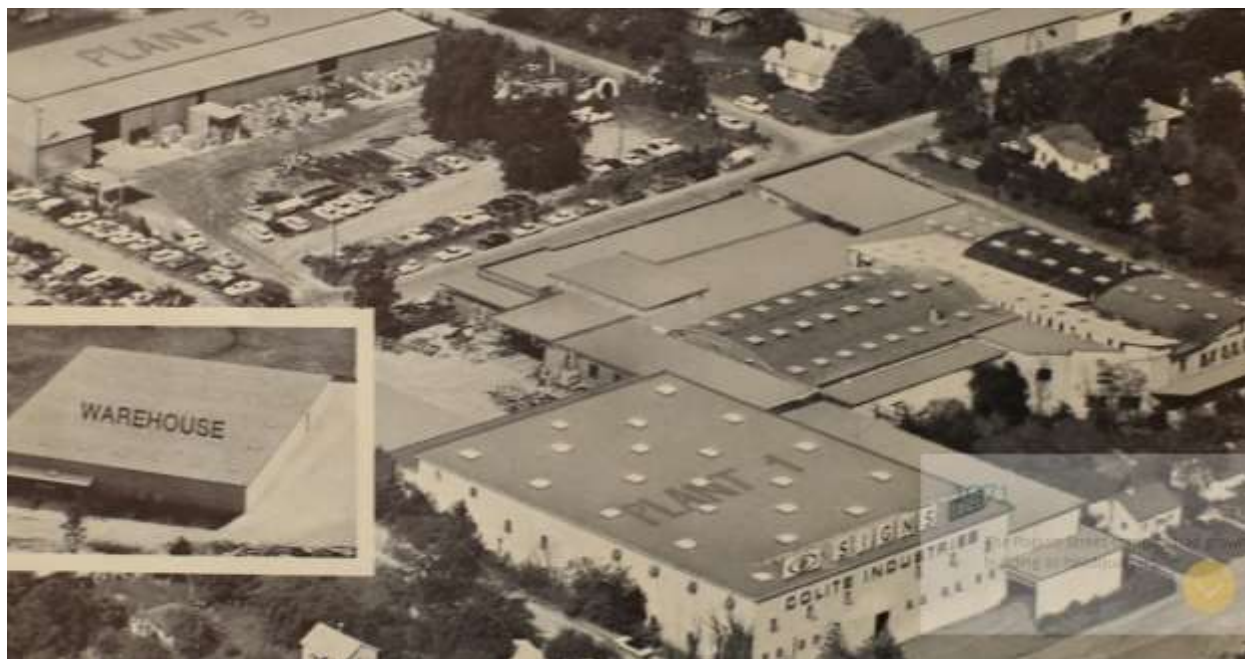


Figure 3: C.1971 Image from [www.Colite.com/about](http://www.Colite.com/about)

The west elevation of this addition features one garage door on the north end of it and two rectangular signs, one at the center and one on the south end. The shed roofline is clearly visible from this elevation. The north elevation of this addition faces a courtyard for loading and is built of blue corrugated metal and features two bays of sliding doors. The metal elevation terminates into the two-story cinderblock warehouse.

The progression of this site has been relatively well documented since 1959. From the purchase of the property in 1951 until Jimmy Price Studio's photograph in 1959, newspaper articles document additions that Colonial-Hites made, but only in square footage. It is unclear whether additional warehouse space came first or more office space was added to the building during this time. The two barrel-roofed warehouses were the earliest production facilities on the site, being constructed before 1959. The large, two-story painted cinderblock building on the southeast

<sup>7</sup> Colonial-Hites Facility c.1971, Colite, accessed November 6, 2017. [www.colite.com/about](http://www.colite.com/about).



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corner of the block was completed by 1966.<sup>8</sup> Between 1959 and 1966, the remaining area between these spaces was infilled with additional space needed by the company.

The interior of the building is primarily exposed cinderblock or brick walls as it was a manufacturing plant. The majority of the additions feature concrete floors and open space with exposed trusses and columns supporting the interior space. One of the notable features inside one of the earliest warehouse spaces is a “pool” used to submerge signs to provide certain types of finishes at the end of their manufacturing process. This “pool” is located in the barrel-roofed warehouse in the center of the block, laid in a north-south orientation. Many original windows are located inside the building, left in place as additions went up around them. There are small, windowless rooms located adjacent to warehouses, which appear to be studios for design preparation. The smaller additions along the west elevation appear to have been used as office space.<sup>9</sup>

While the building continuously grew in size over the years, it has remained relatively unchanged. Much of the original historic fabric is present throughout the building and despite being vacant, still conveys its original use through its large warehouses, small photography studios, and finishing “pool.” The multiple additions within a two-decade period proves the success that Colonial-Hites was experiencing, and its need for additional production, storage, and administrative space. The building is a tangible example of the rapid growth Colonial-Hites experienced in a few short decades.

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<sup>8</sup> Philip G. Grose Jr. “Expansion Continues At Sign Co.: Colonial-Hites Adds Plant Space, Boosts Sales Effort,” *The State*, November 13, 1966; Colonial-Hites Facility c. 1966, Colite, accessed November 6, 2017. [www.colite.com/about](http://www.colite.com/about).

<sup>9</sup> Due to areas of collapsed roofing, those sections were inaccessible during the site visit, therefore it can only be implied that those areas were office space.

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## 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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
1951-1968  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Colonial-Hites Company complex on North Parson Street in West Columbia was once a thriving and prosperous manufacturing facility, becoming one of the largest manufacturing plants in the country.<sup>10</sup> What began as a merger between two small, local businesses quickly evolved into an international conglomerate. Within seven years of merging, signs were installed in every state in the southeastern United States, all of which were produced in the West Columbia plant.<sup>11</sup> Over the next decade, Colonial-Hites expanded to become a national company, opening sales offices across the United States including cities such as New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and St. Louis. As their recognition spread nationally, their reach began to take hold internationally, winning a bid for the Ethiopian Adis Abbaba Airport in 1962 and establishing international offices in 1966.<sup>12</sup> The company is responsible for the United States Seal inside the United Nations building in New York City, as well as the signage in the Houston Astro Dome, Disney World, and Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, the largest airport in the United States at the time of their installation. These high-profile projects, among countless others, made it necessary for Colonial-Hites to expand their facility, which they did numerous times. Between 1962 and 1967, the manufacturing plant increased multiple times from fewer than 90,000 square feet to approximately 280,000 square feet, which made it one of the largest plants in the country in 1967.<sup>13</sup> This physical expansion was the result of widespread global success. Therefore, because of the company's growth from a small business to an international firm, the building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its contributions to West Columbia's industry and the larger trend of "growing internationalism among major corporations" in the postwar period.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Kroger to 'Pep Up' Triangle City," *The State* and *The Columbia Record*, October 18 & 19, 1966.

<sup>11</sup> Carlton Truax, "Develop Unique Business – These Midlanders Believe in Signs," *The Columbia Record*, July 9, 1957.

<sup>12</sup> Philip G. Grose Jr. "Local Firm Strives for World Market in Sign Business," *The State*, November 13, 1966; Colite, "About: Our History," [www.colite.com/about](http://www.colite.com/about) (accessed December 5, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Philip G. Grose Jr. "Expansion Continues At Sign Co.: Colonial-Hites Adds Plant Space, Boosts Sales Effort," *The State*, November 13, 1966.

<sup>14</sup> Grose Jr. "Expansion Continues At Sign Co.," *The State*, November 13, 1966.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Criterion A: Industry**

Established in 1951 at the corner of Parson and Shull streets in West Columbia, the Colonial-Hites Company grew from a cottage industry sign business to a global powerhouse with high profile clients in a few short decades. Therefore, Colonial-Hites is significant at the local level for its widespread success in industry in the post-war period. Prior to becoming the Colonial-Hites Company, H. Arthur Brown of Hites Manufacturing Company along with J. C. Kelly and J. E. Fitts of Colonial Metal Letters decided to merge their companies since separately, they were “too small to do the job they both wanted to do.”<sup>15</sup> After merging on January 1, 1950, the company moved to the 7,000-square foot brick building at 228 Parson Street house their thirty employees in early 1951.<sup>16</sup> In the early years, they were primarily producing signs in the Columbia area, eventually spreading to the entire state of South Carolina and parts of North Carolina.<sup>17</sup> However, within seven years of merging, the new company had installed signs in every state east of the Mississippi River, all of which were produced in the West Columbia plant.

Part of Colonial-Hites’ early success was due to the industrialization of the economy during World War II. It was during the war that J. E. Fitts, founder of Colonial Metal Letters, first began creating aluminum letters. As an engineer at the Columbia airport, Fitts witnessed an engineer cast airplane parts from aluminum when parts were not available.<sup>18</sup> This experience inspired Fitts to establish Colonial Metal Letters in 1946 when the war ended and to merge with Hites Manufacturing Company. When the two companies combined, they were collectively employing twenty people and worth approximately \$55,000.<sup>19</sup> Within ten years, however, Colonial-Hites was worth \$350,000 and employing ninety workers.<sup>20</sup> During these first ten years of business, Colonial-Hites expanded their client base geographically from South Carolina to the entire Southeast and eventually along the entire eastern seaboard. This widespread growth necessitated both an increase in plant size, and the creation of satellite offices. Some local examples of their earlier work include the metal curtain screens at the University of South Carolina’s Thomas Cooper Library, as well as the signage on the Belk’s department on Main Street.<sup>21</sup> Between 1951 and 1957, the company made an addition to the plant nearly every year due to their widespread success and added offices in Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago, and St. Louis.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Truax, “Develop Unique Business,” *The Columbia Record*, July 9, 1957; Interview of Arthur Brown by Wade Caughman, February 16, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> *Columbia City Directories*. Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., 1950 & 1951; Interview of Arthur Brown by Wade Caughman, February 16, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Truax, “Develop Unique Business,” *The Columbia Record*, July 9, 1957.

<sup>18</sup> Philip G. Grose Jr. “Signs of Our Times...And the People Who Make Them,” *The State and The Columbia Record*, December 27, 1964.

<sup>19</sup> Truax, “Develop Unique Business,” *The Columbia Record*, July 9, 1957.

<sup>20</sup> Truax, “Develop Unique Business,” *The Columbia Record*, July 9, 1957.

<sup>21</sup> Grose Jr. “Signs of Our Times,” *The State and The Columbia Record*, December 27, 1964; Truax, “Develop Unique Business,” *The Columbia Record*, July 9, 1957.

<sup>22</sup> Colite.com/about 1950s.

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The company's innovative and holistic approach to sign manufacturing was another reason for its explosive success. Colonial-Hites could produce a sign start-to-finish in their facility on Parson Street largely due to their vertically integrated setup. As H. A. Brown said it, "The reason we have grown so fast is that there is nobody else offering all of the services we offer...they are not troubled with all the details, with subcontracting, shipping, designing, or erection. We do the entire operation."<sup>23</sup> Because of this system, which allowed the company to take on more business, they were forced to add more space to their facility every year for five years consecutively in the late-1950s. Within the massive facility, the company was divided into sixteen departments, such as welding, plastics, and neon signs, for specialization and efficiency, making Colonial-Hites well-organized and highly productive.<sup>24</sup> This organization approach made the company better suited to handle the shift from signs for smaller, local businesses to the retail giants that Colonial-Hites was attracting. The move from personalized signs for local businesses to homogenous signage for chain stores allowed Colonial-Hites to focus on one design and manufacture multiple copies for stores all over the country. This standardization allowed for higher profit margins as it cut down on the design time of each sign and facilitated bulk production. This model of production facilitated the company's ability to rapidly expand and become more prosperous.

As the company continued to thrive domestically through the 1950s, Colonial-Hites expanded their reach internationally, beginning in the early 1960s. The company began the decade with a strong start, having erected the United States Seal at the United Nations building in New York City.<sup>25</sup> By 1964 the company featured another high-profile New York City project – four bronze plaques on the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge that give passersby "vital information about the bridge," but also gave the company national exposure.<sup>26</sup> Their success continued when the company won its first international bid – Adis Abbaba Airport in Ethiopia in 1962. The \$50,000 order included three giant aluminum lions with neon illuminated plastic faces, each weighing more than 600 pounds!<sup>27</sup> Once they broke into the market overseas, the company established business connections everywhere from Africa, to South America, the Middle East, and Canada. The increase in business necessitated further expansion in production space, leading the company to add another 50,000-square feet to their already 100,000-square foot facility and the creation of fifty more jobs, bringing the number of employees at the facility to 200.<sup>28</sup>

The sign company's strong employee base was a critical factor in its success through the years. Employing nearly 300 people by the late 1960s, Colonial-Hites had a reputation as a premiere employer. They offered employees paid vacations, a group insurance plan, and frequently gave bonuses for surpassing production goals.<sup>29</sup> From the beginning, the sign firm employed both

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<sup>23</sup> Brown quoted in "Develop Unique Business," *The Columbia Record*, July 9, 1957.

<sup>24</sup> Truax, "Develop Unique Business," *The Columbia Record*, July 9, 1957.

<sup>25</sup> "Local Firm Casts Huge U.S. Seal," *The State and The Columbia Record*, February 26, 1961.

<sup>26</sup> Grose Jr. "Signs of Our Times," *The State and The Columbia Record*, December 27, 1964.

<sup>27</sup> Gus J. Chigges, "Local Firm Gets Sign Order from Ethiopia," *The State*, June 7, 1963.

<sup>28</sup> "Colonial-Hites Plans Expansion," *The State*, April 3, 1962.

<sup>29</sup> "Business Spotlight: Colonial-Hites Co.," *The State*, January 13, 1965. "Help Wanted," *The State*, September 23, 1966.

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white and African American workers in the same facility.<sup>30</sup> They did not specify the need for “white” or “colored” employees in their advertisements like many other employers did during this period, perhaps due to their rapid expansion, which required more men immediately regardless of color. As an important part of the West Columbia economy, Colonial-Hites employed a large number of people in the area, from blue-collar manufacturers to white collar executives. In 1954, South Carolina became a “right to work” state, stating that the “denial of right to work for membership or non-membership in labor organization declared against public policy.”<sup>31</sup> The passage of this law allowed Colonial-Hites to obstruct unionization at their plant and maintain control over the wages and benefits they provided employees. The company also employed people in satellite offices across the United States, and around the world.

Colonial-Hites’ location in West Columbia was another reason for its success. As the company’s secretary-treasurer W. L. Gantt stated, “I think we are situated in the most desirable area anywhere in the greater Columbia area. We are within a mile or so of superhighways, which lessens potential for accidents and heavy traffic. We have a good supply center in Columbia.”<sup>32</sup> Located one block from U.S.-1 and fewer than two miles from Interstate-26, Colonial-Hites’ positioning for interstate movement could not have been better. The construction on Interstate-26 in the late-1950s and early-1960s aided in the company’s development by facilitating shipments throughout the country. Interstate-26’s connections with other major interstate highways such as Interstate-85, Interstate-95, Interstate-77, and Interstate-20 linked it major cities like Atlanta and Charlotte, but also to ports such as Charleston, and northern cities for further transportation. The state legislature created the State Ports Authority in the 1950s to enhance the Port of Charleston facilities to aid in commercial trade, which in conjunction with Interstate-26, benefitted the company.<sup>33</sup> In 1966 as the interstate highway system continued to traverse the country, Colonial-Hites added a fleet of specialized trucks to transport larger signs to their destinations. These new trucks allowed the company to ship its signs “to all points in the continental U.S.,” a point of pride for the local facility.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Gantt attributed the plant’s proximity to the state capital, which attracted out-of-state buyers and suppliers for business, as aiding in the company’s quick transformation from a small business to an international company.<sup>35</sup> In addition to its location in the center of the state and its proximity to interstate channels, Colonial-Hites’ evolution was also aided by the industrialization of South Carolina in the wake of World War II.

Colonial-Hites was part of South Carolina’s push to industrialize its economy following the Second World War. Prior to the war, South Carolina’s economy was largely focused on the production of textiles. After the war, however, the state launched an aggressive attempt to heavily industrialize its economy.<sup>36</sup> This push by South Carolina was an attempt to keep up with its Southern neighbors, who became obsessed with expanding their industrial economies in the

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<sup>30</sup> Interview of Arthur Brown by Wade Caughman, February 16, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> South Carolina Code of Laws, Section 41-7-10.

<sup>32</sup> “Kroger to ‘Pep Up’ Triangle City,” *The State and The Columbia Record*, October 18 & 19, 1966.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce W. Eelman, “Industrialization,” *South Carolina Encyclopedia* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Institute for Southern Studies, 2016.) Accessed December 28, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Grose Jr., “Expansion Continues At Sign Co.,” *The State*, November 13, 1966.

<sup>35</sup> “Kroger to ‘Pep Up’ Triangle City,” *The State and The Columbia Record*, October 18 & 19, 1966.

<sup>36</sup> Eelman, “Industrialization.”

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postwar period.<sup>37</sup> Colonial-Hites was among these early established industries in South Carolina, which was highlighted in *The State* newspaper in 1966 for being one of the pillars of industry in Lexington, calling Colonial-Hites a part of a “substantial industrial community” that “makes for a stable economy in the county.”<sup>38</sup> Colonial-Hites was among many companies to arise or relocate to the Midlands during this period. Other examples of industrialization in the region included General Electric, Allied Chemical, and Swansea Manufacturing, who were all located in Lexington County by the mid-1960s.<sup>39</sup>

By 1964, Colonial-Hites was solidifying itself as a leader in the signage industry, both domestically and internationally. When they started in the early 1950s, the firm’s first client base was largely automobile dealerships as evidenced by their first three signs sold as Colonial-Hites: Hancock Motors, Shealy Mac Truck, and Yonce Nash Motors, all of which were in downtown Columbia.<sup>40</sup> In the early 1960s, the shift from smaller, local businesses to chain grocery and retail stores brought them clients such as Winn-Dixie, which launched their foray into largescale signage. Some of their other high-profile clients included Montgomery-Ward, Singer Sewing Machines, IBM, Coca-Cola, Pitney-Bowes, and Sears Roebuck, demonstrating this shift to large-scale chain stores.<sup>41</sup> The expansion of large-scale corporations in the post-war period allowed Colonial-Hites to scale their business, mass producing signs for large chains rather than relying on small one-off projects. Eventually, large scale public facilities like the sporting arenas, convention centers, and airports became the firm’s biggest projects.<sup>42</sup> Colonial-Hites’ broad range of abilities all under one roof is what helped maintain their staying power.<sup>43</sup> The vertically integrated company flourished because of its ability to design, manufacture, ship, install, and maintain client relations. With their well-known client base, who had locations around both the country and the world, the West Columbia plant had grown to 280,000-square feet by 1966. In thirteen years, the facility at 228 Parson Street expanded from a 7,000-square foot office to nearly 300,000-square feet because of their widespread success domestically and amongst international markets, particularly by the mid-1960s. Their earnings were estimated at \$3 million in 1964, a substantial increase from the \$350,000 they earned in 1957.<sup>44</sup> In 1966, Colonial-Hites acquired the Levin Neon Company of Atlanta, giving the company a second manufacturing facility, located in Atlanta, to “expedite production of certain orders and will give us erection and maintenance facilities there which we do not have.”<sup>45</sup> The acquisition of Levin followed with the firm’s vertically integrated business model as Levin Neon continued to operate as a “wholly-owned subsidiary.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>37</sup> James C. Cobb, *The Selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development, 1936-1990* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>38</sup> Betty Leopard, “Lexington: Booming County Had Early, Temporary Life,” *The State*, February 13, 1966.

<sup>39</sup> Leopard, “Lexington,” *The State*, February 13, 1966.

<sup>40</sup> Wade Caughman, email message to author, February 19, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Grose Jr., “Signs of Our Times,” December 27, 1964.

<sup>42</sup> Fred Monk, “Area Firm Leading Producer,” *The Columbia Record*, January 8, 1976.

<sup>43</sup> Monk, “Area Firm Leading Producer,” *The Columbia Record*, January 8, 1976.

<sup>44</sup> Truax, “Develop Unique Business,” *The Columbia Record*, July 9, 1957; “Business Spotlight,” *The State*, January 13, 1965.

<sup>45</sup> “Colonial-Hites Buys Sign Firm,” *The State*, June 5, 1966.

<sup>46</sup> “Colonial-Hites Buys Sign Firm,” *The State*, June 5, 1966.



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The company's international connections began in 1962 in Ethiopia and by 1966, Colonial-Hites was establishing offices overseas. The massive facility in West Columbia welcomed its first international guests, a delegation of Japanese businessmen, to see their innovative, start-to-finish process. Barry Winston, the new vice-president of Colonial-Hites, was largely responsible for this visit, as well as organizing a world-wide alliance of sign manufacturers where the companies could participate in a "free exchange of information and personnel in handling the manufacture of signs for international customers."<sup>47</sup> Mr. Winston's role in the company was pivotal for bringing it onto the international stage. He created the international division of the company in addition to the international alliance. It was Mr. Winston who designated Colonial-Hites affiliates in France, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, India and Japan as well as in South America and southern Africa, giving the company a wider breadth of business opportunities.<sup>48</sup> In 1968, the company officially changed its name to Colite Industries to help diversify the company as it acquired Serefco, a line of incinerators used by supermarkets and retail outlets, after marking all of their products with the brand "Col-ite" for years.<sup>49</sup> The name change also coincided with the company making a public offering on the stock market, wanting a more sophisticated title for their company.<sup>50</sup>

From the beginning, the Colonial-Hites Company experienced remarkable success for a small, locally owned business in the postwar period. Since its consolidation in 1950, Colonial-Hites grew exponentially both in the size of its headquarters and its expansive reach across the United States and abroad. Its impressive résumé included high profile projects locally, nationally, and internationally. These projects, among thousands of others, demonstrated the vast reach that Colonial-Hites experienced from its small roots in West Columbia. Therefore, because of its impressive growth from a local cottage industry to an international powerhouse, the Colonial-Hites Company building is worthy of recognition in the National Register.

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<sup>47</sup> Grose Jr., "Local Firm Strives," *The State*, November 13, 1966.

<sup>48</sup> Grose Jr., "Local Firm Strives," *The State*, November 13, 1966.

<sup>49</sup> "Colonial-Hites Changes Name," *The State*, November 6, 1968. It is unclear exactly why the company purchased a line of incinerators, but presumably it enhanced their business plan in some way.

<sup>50</sup> Colite.com/about; Interview of Arthur Brown by Wade Caughman, February 16, 2018.

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Eelman, Bruce W. "Industrialization." In *South Carolina Encyclopedia*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Institute for Southern Studies, 2016.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

Colonial-Hites Company  
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### 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 3.04

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 33.988449 | Longitude: -81.078959 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

Or

#### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the Colonial-Hites Company building begin at the southeast corner of Shull and North Parson streets and runs south along North Parson Street. At the northeastern corner of North Parson and Meeting streets, the boundary turns and moves east to the northwest corner of Meeting and Senn streets. The boundary line then heads north, but turns west at the end of the building. When the building terminates into another portion of the building, the property line follows the edge of this building, which runs north, until the next addition begins. This next addition moves east until the building ends and turns north. A chain link fence runs along this building's edge, which is the boundary line between the Colonial-Hites building and a separate property. The eastern boundary terminates at Shull Street and turns west, creating the northern boundary along Shull Street. The boundary is shown as the light blue light drawn on the attached Lexington County tax map and labeled "Colonial-Hites Company."

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries described above encompass all of the Colonial-Hites Company building, which is composed of the multiple additions that took place during the period of significance.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Jane Campbell, Preservation Consultant  
organization: Rogers Lewis Jackson Mann & Quinn, LLC  
street & number: 1901 Main St. Suite 1200  
city or town: Columbia state: SC zip code: 29201  
e-mail: jcampbell@rogerslewis.com  
telephone: 803-978-1963  
date: 1/8/2018

Colonial-Hites Company  
Name of Property

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Colonial-Hites Company

City or Vicinity: West Columbia

County: Lexington

State: SC

Photographer: Jane Campbell

Date Photographed: 12/1/2017

Colonial-Hites Company

Name of Property

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Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 54 Northwest oblique, original corner building.
- 2 of 54 West elevation, looking south.
- 3 of 54 North elevation, looking east.
- 4 of 54 North elevation, looking west.
- 5 of 54 Northeast oblique, early warehouse.
- 6 of 54 East elevation, early warehouse.
- 7 of 54 Cinderblock and corrugated metal corner addition, east elevation.
- 8 of 54 East elevation, southern end, 1966 warehouse addition.
- 9 of 54 Southeast oblique, 1966 warehouse addition.
- 10 of 54 South elevation, looking east of 1966 warehouse addition.
- 11 of 54 South elevation, looking west with later addition.
- 12 of 54 West elevation, latest addition.
- 13 of 54 Southern end of west elevation, loading dock area.
- 14 of 54 West elevation entrance at southern end with metal awning.
- 15 of 54 West elevation entrance with metal awning.
- 16 of 54 West elevation, looking north.
- 17 of 54 North elevation entrance, original corner building.
- 18 of 54 North elevation of early warehouse.
- 19 of 54 Eastern end of north elevation, early warehouse.
- 20 of 54 Window detail, north elevation, early warehouse.
- 21 of 54 West elevation of original corner building.
- 22 of 54 West elevation, location of addition.
- 23 of 54 West elevation, early additions to corner building.
- 24 of 54 West elevation, addition "seam" visible.
- 25 of 54 West elevation, addition "seam" visible.
- 26 of 54 West elevation, addition "seam" visible.
- 27 of 54 Window detail, south elevation, 1966 warehouse.
- 28 of 54 Awning window detail, south elevation, 1966 warehouse.
- 29 of 54 South elevation, looking east.
- 30 of 54 Loading dock and awning window detail, north elevation of early warehouse.
- 31 of 54 Location of addition at 1966 warehouse, south elevation.
- 32 of 54 Detail of cornice and clay coping tiles, west elevation.
- 33 of 54 Window detail, basement level of early warehouse, north elevation.
- 34 of 54 Scarring of former door, west elevation.
- 35 of 54 Canopied entrance, west elevation.
- 36 of 54 Corrugated metal addition, south end of west elevation.
- 37 of 54 Roofing on cinderblock and corrugated metal addition, south elevation.
- 38 of 54 Cinderblock and metal additions on north end of east elevation.
- 39 of 54 East elevation from street, cinderblock and corrugated metal construction.
- 40 of 54 Buttresses and scarring of former windows on north elevation.
- 41 of 54 Interior of warehouse space, looking northwest
- 42 of 54 Interior of warehouse space with "pool," looking north

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- 43 of 54 Interior of warehouse space, looking northeast
- 44 of 54 Interior windows extant, but painted, looking west
- 45 of 54 Interior space with collapsed roof, looking south
- 46 of 54 Interior warehouse space, looking east
- 47 of 54 Interior looking towards original corner building, looking west
- 48 of 54 Interior 1966 warehouse, looking southeast
- 49 of 54 Interior of 1970s loading dock area, looking west
- 50 of 54 Basement level interior, 1966 warehouse, looking southeast
- 51 of 54 Basement level interior, 1966 warehouse, looking northwest
- 52 of 54 Basement level interior, 1966 warehouse, looking west
- 53 of 54 Basement level interior, 1966 warehouse, looking west
- 54 of 54 Basement level interior, 1950s warehouse, looking east

**Index of Figures**

- 1 of 3 Jimmy Price Photograph, 1959 aerial view looking northeast
- 2 of 3 Colite Industries photograph, c. 1966, aerial view looking southeast
- 3 of 3 Colite Industries photograph, c. 1971, aerial view looking northwest

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

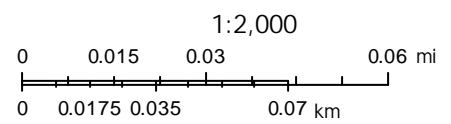


# Colonial-Hites Company



March 5, 2018

Parcels



**Colonial-Hites Co.**  
West Columbia, Lexington Co.



Colonial-Hites Company

Google Earth

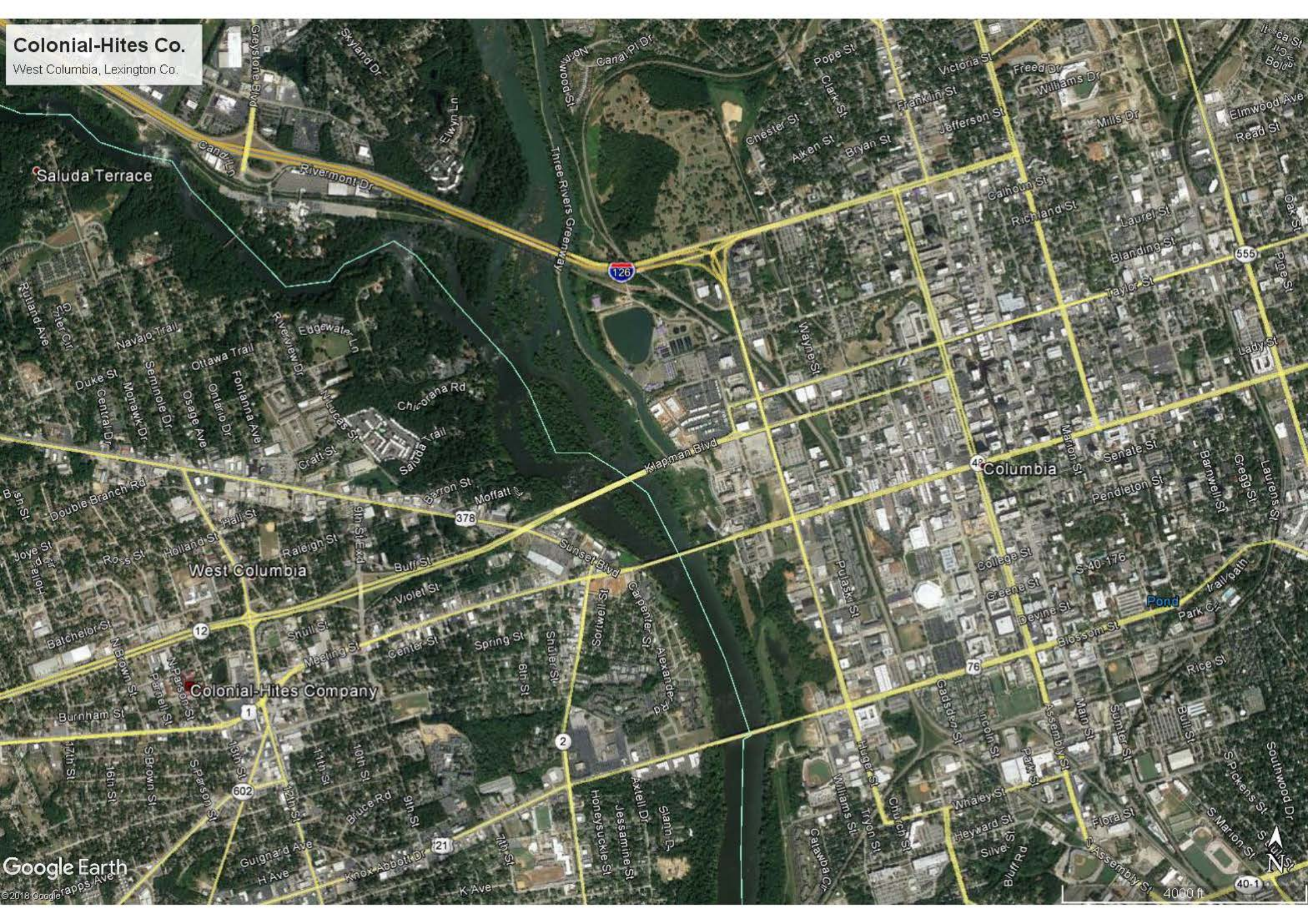
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400 ft



# Colonial-Hites Co.

West Columbia, Lexington Co.



Saluda Terrace

West Columbia

Colonial-Hites Company

Columbia

















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ZZ. 1998-702

RESERVED FOR MOTORCYCLES AND OTHER WHEEL VEHICLES ONLY



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NO TRESPASSING  
ALL OTHERS  
PROHIBITED  
BY ORDER OF THE  
PROPERTY OWNER

NO TRESPASSING  
ALL OTHERS  
PROHIBITED  
BY ORDER OF THE  
PROPERTY OWNER









NO TRESPASSING  
PROPERTY OF  
THE CITY OF  
MEMPHIS  
ALL VIOLATIONS  
WILL BE PROSECUTED



NO TRESPASSING  
THIS PROPERTY  
UNDER JURISDICTION  
OF WEST COLUMBIA  
POLICE DEPT.  
VIOLATORS SUBJECT  
TO ARREST OR FINE

















**NO TRESPASSING**  
VIOLATORS  
WILL BE FINED \$500  
OR WILL FACE UP TO  
30 DAYS IN JAIL







**NO TRESPASSING**  
THIS PROPERTY  
UNDER JURISDICTION  
OF WEST COLUMBIA  
POLICE DEPT.  
**VIOLATORS SUBJECT  
TO ARREST OR FINE**



NO  
PARKING

SA Vehicle Co. Ltd

A High Works  
B ELEMENT  
C

NO  
PARKING





# INDUS RIES



NOTICE  
This building is  
for industrial use only.  
No residential use is  
permitted.  
Violators will be  
prosecuted.  
Duke Power  
Company, Inc.

NOTICE  
This building is  
for industrial use only.  
No residential use is  
permitted.  
Violators will be  
prosecuted.  
Duke Power  
Company, Inc.

NO  
SMOKING

NO  
SMOKING



PRIVATE PROPERTY  
SAFETY  
No Hand To  
Be Held In  
Front Court

















- NO -  
SMOKING













Global Paper  
Shred, Inc.

DANGER  
ONLY HERE  
FOR CLEARANCE  
IT IS FOR  
PAINT ONLY







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Colonial--Hites Company

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

State & County: SOUTH CAROLINA, Lexington

Date Received: 4/16/2018      Date of Pending List: \_\_\_\_\_      Date of 16th Day: \_\_\_\_\_      Date of 45th Day: 5/31/2018      Date of Weekly List: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference number: SG100002526

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      5/24/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: POS: 1951-1968, AOS: Industry, LOS: Local

Recommendation/ Criteria: Criterion A.

Reviewer Lisa Deline      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2239      Date 5/24/18

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.



SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF  
**ARCHIVES • HISTORY**



April 6, 2018

Lisa Deline  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Deline:

Enclosed is the National Register nomination for the Colonial-Hites Company in West Columbia, Lexington, South Carolina. The nomination was approved by the South Carolina State Board of Review as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance. We are now submitting this nomination for formal review by the National Register staff. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Colonial-Hites Company to the National Register of Historic Places.

If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below, call me at (803) 896-6182, fax me at (803) 896-6167, or e-mail me at [efoley@scdah.sc.gov](mailto:efoley@scdah.sc.gov).

Sincerely,

Ehren Foley  
Historian and National Register Coordinator  
State Historic Preservation Office  
8301 Parklane Rd.  
Columbia, S.C. 29223