

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 01000288

Date Listed: 4/3/01

Overland Cotton Mill  
Property Name

Denver  
County

CO  
State

Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*Beth Boland*

Signature of the Keeper

*4/12/01*

Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

The correct period of significance is 1891-1903; 1941-1945.

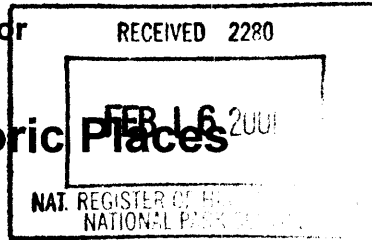
This information was confirmed by Holly Wilson on the CO SHPO staff.

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DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
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288

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 Overland Cotton Mill

other names/site number Mariposa Works; Colorado Builders Supply Company; 5DV2458

2. Location

street & number 1314 West Evans Ave. [N/A] not for publication

city or town Denver [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Denver code 031 zip code 80223

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 [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Sherraine Boutigaglia* State Historic Preservation Officer 12/21/00  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Colorado Historical Society  
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  
[ ] See continuation sheet.

*Bill Boland* Signature of the Keeper 4/3/01 Date of Action

Overland Cotton Mill  
Name of Property

Denver, Colorado  
County/State

**5. Classification**

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

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

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	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.**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/warehouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
walls BRICK  
GLASS  
roof ASPHALT  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

Overland Cotton Mill  
Name of Property

Denver, Colorado  
County/State

## 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.

### 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  
# \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

MILITARY HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

### Periods of Significance

1891-1903

1939-1945

### Significant Dates

1942

### Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Makepeace, C.R., & Company

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Colorado Historical Society



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 1/7 Page 1

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**NAME OF PROPERTY**

Other names/site number (cont.): Pittsburgh Radium Company; Card Corporation; Hercules Industries

**DESCRIPTION**

The Overland Cotton Mill is located approximately one-quarter mile west of the South Platte River and 150 yards south of West Evans Avenue in southwest Denver. The surrounding area is composed of light industry, office, and retail buildings. The all red brick mill is an irregular T-shaped plan aligned along an axis running approximately north-northeast to south-southwest. Asphalt paving surrounds most of the building, the exception being the west elevation along which runs an industrial branch of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad.

**EXISTING BUILDING**

The central portion of the T-plan includes the main production section of the mill (*Fig. 1*). The original two-story southern portion of this section measures 408 ft. x 102 ft. The one-story northern addition measures approximately 90 ft. x 100 ft. The eastern wing (picker house or office) consists of a two-story original section measuring 78 ft. x 48 ft. and a one-story northern addition measuring approximately 78 ft. x 60 ft. A three-story tower joins the east wing to the main section. The tower rises 70 ft. to the eaves. The west wing contains the former boiler and power rooms on the south (approximately 60 ft. x 100 ft.) and a two-story addition on the north (approximately 90 ft. x 75 ft.).

A square, brick smokestack rises south of the west wing. The stack is approximately 150 feet high and sits on a foundation 16-feet deep. The tower terminates with a corbeled chimney cap. Large white painted letters spell out "COBUSCO" on each of the smokestacks elevations.

Brick walls of the original southern portion of the main production area of the building are 31-inches thick to the first floor; 28-inches thick to second floor; and 24-inches thick to the roof. The walls rise from a concrete foundation that ranges from 5- to 8-feet thick. The fenestration consists of evenly spaced bays of windows separated by brick pilasters. The tall, narrow first- and second-story window openings are of identical in size and each contain 24-light metal casement windows with red sandstone sills and segmental double rowlock arches. Corbeling tops each bay and alternating pilasters. The south elevation contains a centered rollup metal door. The gently sloped gable roof is formed of steel decking with a built-up composite surface over metal trusses.

The ca. 1900 northern addition to the main portion of the building repeats the basic fenestration of the older section although here each bay contains a single multi-light single-hung sash with multi-light transoms. The addition has a gently sloped gable roof with asphalt shingles.

The north elevation of the three-story tower forms the main entry to the building. The 1900 and 1949 additions form an alley approximately 40-feet long leading to the entry. Five graduated red sandstone slabs, about twelve feet at the base narrowing to five feet at the top, lead to the six-light double doors. The doors are surmounted by a multi-light semi-circular transom surrounded by a semi-circular double rowlock arch with corbeled impost. The second story consist of three bays. The central bay contains a large central multi-light window with a segmental rowlock arch. The flanking bays each contain narrow multi-light windows with segmental arches. All tower windows have red sandstone sills. The three bays continue to the third story were the three window sills



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 3

---

form part of a thick sandstone belt course which wraps the tower. Large sandstone lintels occupy a space below the corbeled pilaster capitals. The elevation terminates in a plain brick frieze and gently sloping pyramidal roof with asphalt shingles. An engraved sandstone tablet above the central third-story lintel marks the commencement of construction in 1890.

The tower's south elevation duplicates that of the north with the exception of concrete steps used in place of sandstone and the elimination of the date stone. The third story east, west and south elevations all match that of the north.

The east wing, or picker house, again repeats the basic fenestration of the main section. The first story retains its multi-light windows sandstone sills and segmental arches. The upper-story windows have all been replaced with glass block surrounding small aluminum framed slider windows. The multi-light transoms have been retained. On the south elevation a metal fire escape provides egress from the second floor. The 1949 addition covers most of the first-story windows on the north elevation. The flat roof is supported at the eaves with the original wood brackets. A belvedere-like brick ventilator occupies the eastern-most edge of the roof. The gable-roofed 1949 addition has a stepped gable on its north elevation. Large window openings in the east, north and south elevations are each infilled with split-faced concrete blocks and a single fixed light window. The central bay on the north contains an aluminum framed glazed door with multi-light surrounds. The southern-most bay of the east elevation also contains a fully glazed, aluminum framed entry with protective canopy.

The west wing boiler room and power house consists of an irregular assortment of multi-light windows and arched entries. The pilaster capitals consist of corbeled triple brackets supporting the eaves of the hipped roof. A shed-roofed addition runs across a portion of the west elevation. A repressed ramp leads to a metal roll-up door on the south elevation. The brick, two-story 1952 north addition is of simple industrial design with aluminum frame multi-light windows and a gently slopping shed roof.

**BUILDING INTERIOR**

The interior of the main section of the building consists of an open production area surrounded by a steel frame mezzanine. The east wing (picker house) as well as the 1949 and 1952 additions contain office space. The 1900 addition is used for production and warehousing. The building's additions were constructed without destruction to the original exterior mill wall which now serves as the south interior wall of each addition. With the exception of four windows in the 1900 addition, all the original window and door openings remain, some hidden under paneling in the east and west office wings.

In the tower interior, the stair railings and newel posts of unfinished oak display decorative details. The surfaces have been repaired and restored to a condition approximating the original appearance. The original oak floor remains in good although stained condition under carpeting in the office wing. It appears that no original interior doors remain. However many of the original fire doors remain in their original locations.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 4

ALTERATIONS

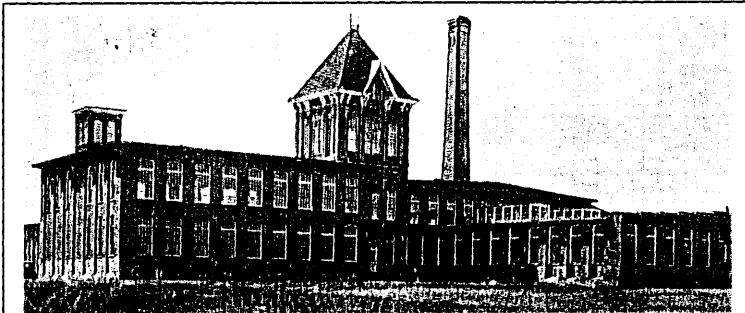


Figure 2 Overland Cotton Mill with Addition  
Photograph circa 1930  
Waters: *Denver's Cotton Mill*

On its completion in 1881, the Overland Cotton Mill contained six boilers to run the 850-1,000 horsepower tandem, compound Corliss engine which powered the mill equipment by means of belts and shafts. The manufacturing machinery included 184 cards and spinning apparatus consisting of slubbers, fly frames and mules, and 16,200 spindles with all the necessary drawing frames and railway heads, 2 slashers, 480 looms and 10 breakers, openers and pickers.

The 1893 Sanborn-Perris insurance map identifies the activities which occurred in the various sections of the mill. The map shows that the main section and the east wing (picker house) interiors consisted of two continuous wood framed floors. The 1904 Sanborn insurance map shows the north addition in place labeled as the cloth room. Other evidence indicates that the addition was constructed by 1900. The picker house remained the same.

It is not known when the milling equipment was removed following the closure of the mill in 1903. Interior modifications likely were made to accommodate ore processing when the building was used by the Pittsburgh Radium Company in the 1920s.

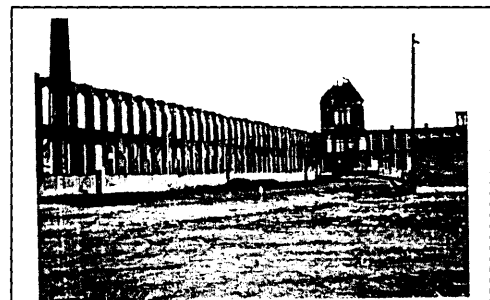


Figure 3 Mill After the 1942 Fire  
Main Section, Tower and Picker House



Figure 4 Mill After the 1942 Fire  
Picking House and Tower

Significant changes occurred beginning on the evening of December 19, 1942, when the factory wing was gutted in a nighttime blaze. Although the exterior brick walls remained standing, the wooden roof was destroyed and all the wood framed windows were destroyed. The interior was completely reconstructed and the roof replaced by one of precast concrete slabs on steel trusses. While the office and boiler wings were not involved in the fire, the tower roof was damaged. The tower's replacement roof was of gently sloping pyramidal design without the original eave brackets. The windows destroyed by fire in the tower and the factory wing were replaced by multi-light steel frame units which closely resemble the original wood double-hung windows. At an

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 5

unknown date, windows on the second floor of the east wing were replaced with glass block and aluminum slider infills.

The plant included a Sturievant blower and heater to control heat and humidity. Roy Waugh, who during World War II ran a munitions plant in the building and who was, later, vice president of the Colorado Builders Supply Co. (COBUSCO), explained how the cotton mill managed to overcome Denver's dry climate, which would ordinarily be considered incompatible with such an operation.

"There's a concrete underground tunnel that starts at the boiler room, running east, under the floor of the main building, and underneath the tower room and on under the floor of the old office on the main floor. It empties into what's now the receiving room.

Out of this room is an airshaft going through, that shows from the roof of the office building, and through this airshaft air is drawn by a large fan. The air is forced through a sheet of water into the tunnel, and when the tunnel reached the main buildings, there were lateral tunnels running off down each wall of the long building. Out of these lateral tunnels air was forced into every other pilaster throughout the building. These pilasters were hollow. Outlets were controlled on the first and second floors of the original building and it is believed they controlled the humidity in the manufacturing area in this way."

"Through this underground tunnel, from in-ground reservoirs, water was pumped or allowed to run by gravity back to a central cistern between the boiler room and the main building. Out of this cistern, water was pumped up and allowed to spray onto the roof. From the roof, which is eaveless, it ran down into a concrete gutter on the Ground at the edge of the building. The water ran in this gutter to the in-ground cisterns. This way, they more or less had a closed system for water and it could be used and reused many times. The reason for this was the controlling of the humidity within the manufacturing area."

"Air tunnels ran down the inside of the building, under the first floor, fed air to the hollow pilasters on each side of the building. The humidity in this air was controlled by the amount of water allowed to spray through the air as the fan forced it into the tunnel at the air shaft. The tunnel was underneath the main floor and was kind of an arch with the openings from the tunnel into each of the pilasters. It's a form of our modern-day air conditioning, I would say."

"I would imagine they had some type of humidity gauges throughout the building so as to know when they needed to increase humidity. They had many controls and could alter them - open them up to-the point where they could get just a little air out of the hollow pilaster or take the whole flow. As I remember, these openings were about nine to 10 inches wide and about 14 to 16 inches in height. They could be completely opened or completely closed."

A one-story office wing of 5,675 square feet was added in 1949 to the northeast end of the building and a two-story northwest wing of 7,841 square feet was added in 1952.

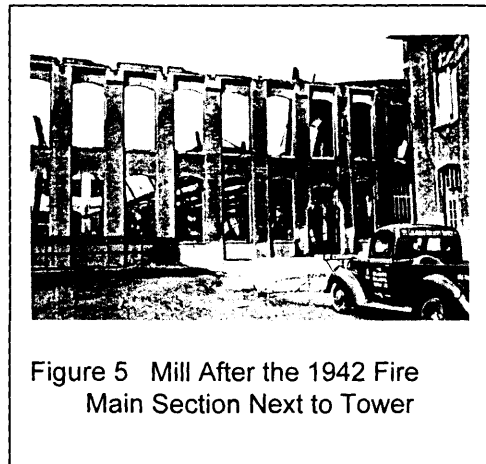


Figure 5 Mill After the 1942 Fire  
Main Section Next to Tower

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 6

---

In 1999 the building went through a rehabilitation project under the Federal investment tax credit program. During this project the masonry was cleaned, repointed and sealed; the paneling and other originals in the tower interior were stripped and painted and missing pieces were replicated from the remaining originals; the 1942 concrete roof was replaced with metal decking and built up roofing on the 1942 metal trusses; the south tower door and stairs were replaced; and the historic (1942) windows were repaired by having broken glass replaced, mullions cleaned and sanded, and sills repaired.

**DYE HOUSE AND WAREHOUSE BUILDING**

The 1904 Sanborn map also shows the brick one-story dye house and warehouse complex to the southeast of the picker house. The dye house contained approximately 6,000 square feet and the attached warehouse supplied an additional 12,000 square feet for storage. This complex was most likely constructed by 1900. A chute connected the picker house to the dye house/warehouse.

In the years since the closure of the mill in 1903, the dye house and warehouse house building has been significantly altered. The building is now under separate ownership from the mill building. For these reasons the dye house and warehouse building is not included in the property being nominated.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 7

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

The 1891 Overland Cotton Mill is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, in the area of industry, for its role as the only successful cotton mill in Colorado. At its peak, the mill's annual production reached 12 million yards of cloth in a variety of types and patterns. The building operated as a mill from 1891 until 1903. The building contained a specially designed ventilation system to increase the humidity in Denver's dry climate to a level conducive to the milling of cotton. The mill served as the primary source of employment for the associated town of Manchester and is the best surviving structure associated with the community. The Overland Cotton Mill is important in the area of industry and social history for its association with local labor history, particularly as it relates to children in the work force during the 1891-1903 period.

The Overland Cotton Mill is also important in the areas of industry and military history for its use as a munitions factory during World War II. The plant suffered a devastating fire in 1942. So important was the plant to the war production efforts that it was immediately repaired and restored to full operational status. The plant operated as a munitions factory from 1941 to 1945.

Finally, the Overland Cotton Mill is eligible under Criterion C, in the area of architecture, for its basic design characteristics. The layout and fenestration typify large industrial buildings of late nineteenth century Denver. Such buildings were characterized by rhythmic bays of tall multi-light windows puncturing load-bearing masonry walls to maximize access for natural illumination. Though heavily damaged in the 1942 fire, the Overland Cotton Mill building continues to convey its overall design and spatial characteristics.

**COTTON MILL OPERATIONS**

The unincorporated community of Manchester lay south of Denver and west of the South Platte River, stretching approximately between present day West Mississippi and West Yale Avenues. The community derived its name from Manchester, England, and alluded to hopes that the Denver suburb might soon establish a textile industry rivaling that of its namesake. At the economic heart of the new community was the plant of the Overland Cotton Mills Co. Started in 1890 and completed the following year, the mill represented \$100,000 in local financing and another \$350,000 from out-of-state sources. The mill formed part of a growing industrial area that eventually included the Platte River and Denver Paper Mills, the Midland and later Queen City Woolen Mill, and the manufacturing complex of the Griffin Wheel Company.

Joseph K. Choate served as Overland's first president and general manager. Other officers included W.G. Fisher, vice president, Colonel A.C. Woodworth, agent, and W.D. Woodman, secretary. T.W. Wilmoth oversaw day-to-day operations as the mill superintendent. These men were soon joined by John L. Jerome, prominent Denver attorney and treasurer for one of the mill's principal investor, the Colorado Fuel & Iron Co., who assumed the position of treasurer.

Choate previously worked for the Union Pacific Railroad and in that position came to be impressed with Denver as an important railroad hub. He felt that for the new city to establish a firm economic base from which to grow, it must develop strong local industries. Of the many options he investigated, the possibility of establishing a cotton milling industry appeared to be particularly promising. Choate's relied heavily on the advice of Colonel Woodworth who had extensive experience with the New England textile industry. Local support for the idea came from Henry R. Wolcott, H.B. Chamberlin and John Jerome.

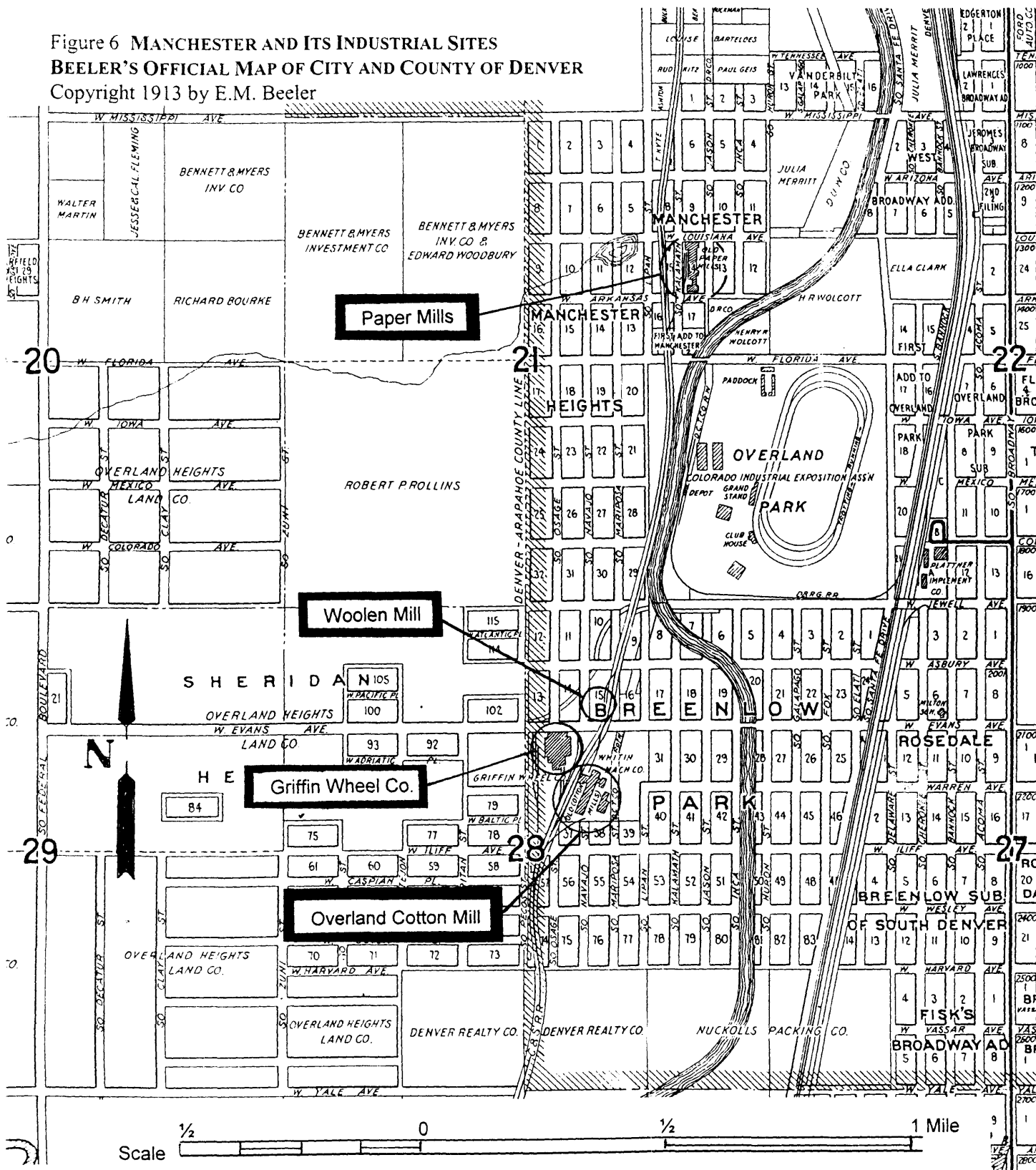
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 8

Figure 6 MANCHESTER AND ITS INDUSTRIAL SITES  
BEELER'S OFFICIAL MAP OF CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER  
Copyright 1913 by E.M. Beeler



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 9

The Overland Mill opened during the high point of Colorado's silver boom, a time when local citizens had money to invest and out of town interests could be persuaded to speculate in the fast growing Denver economy.

The Overland opened on July 13, 1891, when a special train containing 200 local dignitaries traveled to Manchester for the christening of the mill's power plant. Following a short speech by President Choate, engineer A.B. Courtney set the huge Corliss engine into motion. The engine, which the *Rocky Mountain News* claimed to be the "largest single tandem, compound Corliss engine ever constructed," powered all the milling machinery by means of five miles of belts.

Each year the *Rocky Mountain News* ran a year-end summary of economic conditions around the state. A special section was devoted to Denver area industries. It is from these reports that we gain an understanding of the Overland's annual operations (Fig. 7).

Figure 2  
**Overland Cotton Mill Labor and Production Statistics**  
Source: *Rocky Mountain News* annual year-end business summaries, 1891-1903

Year	No. of Employees	Annual Payroll	Yards of Cloth Produced	Value of Annual Production
1891	300	\$72,000	150,000(est.)	Not given
1892	200-250	\$90,000	3,600,000	\$350,000
1893	235	\$100,000	5,546,000	\$380,000
1894	300	\$90,000	6,698,122	\$450,000
1895	250	\$100,000	8,113,724	\$500,000
1896	250	Not given	8,474,834	\$380,000
1897	300	\$110,000	7,600,000(est.)	\$485,000
1898	350	\$120,000	8,392,724	\$385,000
1899	350	\$120,000	8,118,000	\$385,000
1900	Not avail.	Not avail.	10,000,000	\$475,000
1901	400	Not given	12,000,000	\$484,000
1902	400	\$125,000	Not given	\$650,000
1903	350	\$110,000	Not given	\$375,000

The first report on the Overland ran in the *News* addition for January 1, 1892. In a short article titled, "Five Thousand Yards a Day Turned from the Looms," the paper reported that the first loom at the Overland began operating on November 12<sup>th</sup> of the previous year. The four months since the public christening had been spent fine tuning the machinery and

preparing the mill for full operation. Since production started, the *News* continued, 5,000 yards of cloth a day had been produced. The first product made was brown, or unbleached, sheeting. During the coming year the mill managers planned on weaving drills and ducks, "for which there is an endless demand from the mountain towns." Ore sacks, tents, and awnings would be manufactured during the next summer by new Denver industries, thus relieving the miners from having to buy these products from sources in Kansas.

Though not running at full capacity in 1891, the plant contained 184 cards, 480 looms, and 16,200 spindles. Three hundred workers made up the mill's payroll. These laborers drew their pay principally on the basis of piece work. The youngest boys earned about 5¢ per hour. The top employees working in special lines earned 37½¢ an hour. Women spinners were paid 10¢ a side, consisting of a row of bobbins. An average worker could attend to ten sides and twelve sides was considered the capacity of a good worker. In other words, spinners could make \$1.00 to \$1.20 per day. Since opening, the mill's payroll amounted to approximately \$6,000 per month.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 10

---

As illustrated above, there existed a wide disparity of pay among Overland's employees. However, assuming a steady workforce of 300, the average mill worker made \$20 a month in 1891.

By New Year's Day 1893, the *News* could report impressive gains in production at the mill. Beginning 1892 with only 25 looms in operation, the mill ended the year with the full 480 looms in production. The plant was designed with a production capacity of 6 million yards of cloth. The first full year of operation saw production reach 3.6 million yards. Overland marketed its heavy brown cotton goods under the Silver State L.L. brand and sold them in Chicago, St. Louis and throughout the West, particularly along the Pacific Coast. The mill manufactured a finer grade of sheeting known as Overland R, as well as cotton flannel, bagging, ducks and cotton bats. The *News* indicated that the Overland obtained all its cotton from Texas and sold most of its output west of the Missouri River.

The *News* year-end report for 1893 showed a slight reduction in cloth output but a small increase in dollar value (*Fig. 7*). Forty-percent of the year's production was sold to Colorado firms with the rest selling in the western U.S., particularly in California. The following year-end report for 1894 showed a new production high of 6.75 million yards of cloth, including brown sheeting, cotton flannels and cotton batting. In addition to western U.S. markets, the *News* reported that the Overland sold goods in British Columbia, Japan and other oriental countries. The mill used some 2,500 bales of cotton in its annual production.

On January 1, 1896, the *Rocky Mountain News* announced the mill's biggest year yet with over 8 million yards produced. As this considerably exceeds the original plant capacity of 6 million yards, we might assume that the extra production was facilitated by the first north side addition to the plant. In discussing sources of competition, the *News* article reported that only two other cotton mills existed west of the Missouri River, in Kearney, Nebraska, and Galveston, Texas. The January 12, 1896 issue of the *Rocky Mountain News* stated that the mill had received a medal for an exhibit of cotton sheeting at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago and that Denver's Daniels and Fisher Department Store stocked various cloth samples from the mill. At that time the Overland marketed its cloth under the Silver Dollar and Bear's Head brand names. The columbine state flower and the head of a Rocky Mountain sheep were used as product trademarks.

The report for 1896 showed 8.5 million yards of production of which 60 percent constituted unbleached sheeting. The mill shipped to every state in the Union with the Pacific coast being the primary customer. Colorado businesses consumed 18 percent of the total output. The mill brought in almost 2 million pounds of cotton from Texas and other sources.

The next several years saw steady increases in output. By 1898 the mill's principal products were brown sheeting, flannel and bagging, but the addition of a dyeing plant had allowed the plant to produce a better quality of flannel and ladies' dress goods. A significant portion of the mill's production went to local manufacturers of overalls and work clothes. For the year 1899, the *News* reported that a little over half the production consisted of "colored domestics." Approximately 226 patterns of material were offered for sale. California purchased 31 percent of the mill's output, Colorado firms purchased 20 percent, Illinois took 19 percent, and the remainder was sold throughout the U.S. and in China.

The *News* reports for 1900 through 1902 showed steady increases in production and in employment (*Fig. 7*). According to the paper, by 1903 the plant was entirely owned by Denver capital.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 11

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Early local booster and historian Jerome C. Smiley reported in his 1901 *History of Denver* that:

Perhaps the most suggestive, and being one of the more important of the city's manufactories, is the Overland Cotton Mill producing unprinted cotton cloth .... In recent times it has enjoyed great prosperity, and its suggestiveness lies in the fact that it has proved the expediency of manufacturing cotton goods at Denver, and has firmly established itself as a pioneer in that industry in Colorado.

Smiley noted that the mill operated with considerable early success, selling its "Silver State Double L" textiles to such department stores as Chicago's Marshall Field's.

The final report for cotton mill production in Colorado appeared in the January 1, 1904, *Rocky Mountain News*. The value of production had dropped over 40 percent from the previous year. The last couple of years had been turbulent at the mill and much of that turbulence had been stirred up by the *News* competitor, the *Denver Post*.

**WORKER EXPLOITATION AND CHILD LABOR AT THE OVERLAND MILL**

The City of Denver annexed the Manchester area in 1901, just a year before the city transformed itself into a city and county. About this same time reports began to circulate that the labor conditions at the Overland Mill left much to be desired. Critics claimed that the mill employed child labor and treated its other employees little better than indentured servants.

The owners of the cotton mill recruited families from the South, particularly from the mill towns of Galveston, Dallas, Knoxville, Nashville, and the Carolinas. Many of these families brought with them years of experience in the textile industry. Such families were familiar with the poor working and living conditions that typified cotton milling operations. Overland often advanced travel funds to families and many then repaid the company a small amount each week against their debt. Since these payments were deducted from earnings, a man with a family, it was said, "can drudge in the mills many weary months without handling a dollar of the pittance he earns."

At one time the mill employed 240 loom operators and paid an average wage of \$1.75 for an eleven-hour day. A boiler tender shoveled coal at 5¢ per ton and might manage to earn \$1.00 to \$1.10 per day. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported on wage levels at Overland in its January 1, 1897, edition stating that "the standard of wages paid is necessarily forced by competition with Eastern factories to a lower level than prevails in a great many other lines." There were also complaints that the mills always held back one week's wages for all new employees.

In his opening day speech on July 14, 1891, mill president Joseph Choate spoke about the firm's plans for community development. "Arrangements are also completed for building a large boarding house, store and public hall combined, and cottages for our operatives, it being our object to give our employees an opportunity, on small payments and at low rates of interest, to either own their own homes or lease them cheaply, and in that respect to be repaid, not in money, but in the character and content of our employees."

Many workers and their families rented company housing in Manchester. The mill community, often referred to as "Misery Hollow" by its residents, lay between the mill and the Platte River to the east. The main thoroughfare



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 12

was called Choate Avenue in “honor” of the Overland’s president. The mill deducted rent from each employee’s paycheck. The rent on a two-room dwelling with one window and a door amounted to 35¢ a week. Many workers were forced by their supervisor to rent company houses if they wanted to retain their jobs. Conversely, workers who occupied lodgings belonging to the company were turned out if they became sick and unable to work.

Manchester contained a company general store of which the mill owned two-thirds and the store manager owned the remainder. The July 27, 1901, *Denver Post* stated that mill workers were often forced to buy on credit. Because the workers often had no cash, they had no choice but to charge purchases at the company store. A man was allowed credit equal to his accrued wages. Workers complained of the prices at the mill store which were much higher than prices for similar items appearing in Denver newspapers ads.

By the time the mill deducted travel expenses, housing and store purchases from wages earned, it was not unusual for workers to receive no cash payment at all. The Humane Society documented one Alabama woman who, because of the rent, company store purchases, and transportation charges, drew only \$12.78 total cash wages for nineteen weeks of work. Twelve weeks passed before she received her first cash wages, a meager \$2.01. The inability to save any money left workers perpetually tied to the mill with no chance to move on to better employment opportunities.

**Figure 8 Labor and Wage Statistics by Selected Industries**  
Source: *Rocky Mountain News* annual year-end business summaries

Industry	1892		1898		1903	
	No. of Employees	Annual Payroll	No. of Employees	Annual Payroll	No. of Employees	Annual Payroll
Brick	1,500	\$477,000	250	\$145,000	260	\$160,000
Brewery	315	308,000	350	240,000	275	200,000
<b>COTTON</b>	252	79,000	350	120,000	350	110,000
Flour	83	64,000	128	100,000	150	125,000
Foundries	200	187,200	200	150,000	NA	NA
Lumber	650	507,000	400	220,000	500	400,000
Paper	172	120,840	200	50,000	150	100,000
Railroad Shops	1,300	936,000	814	583,000	1,500	1,000,000
Smelting	1,323	1,179,695	1,700	1,200,000	Not Given	Not Given
<b>Total of all Denver Industries</b>	<b>12,135</b>	<b>\$8,536,864</b>	<b>13,276</b>	<b>\$8,310,450</b>	<b>17,693</b>	<b>\$15,079,00</b>



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 14

years-old. Willie's brother, aged eleven, and his fifteen-year-old sister also worked for the mill. When he quit two years later, Willie was supposedly earning 90¢ a day. However, children were regularly docked for such things as making noise. One boy popped a paper bag and was docked 25¢. Such fines saved considerably on payroll.

In its January 27, 1901, article titled "Miseries of Mill Slaves Uncovered," the *Post* described the appearance of the children as they finished their shift at the mill. "Covered from head to foot with cotton, or begrimed with oil and soot, they look completely worn out. Their frail little bodies carry faces which make them appear far beyond their age. The care and worry which mark these faces show the result of working twelve hours a day week in and week out, month after month." The article raised the level of pathos by mentioning that some of the children worked without shoes or stockings.



Figure 10 "The Beginning of the Day of 12 Hour's  
Labor for the Children of the Overland Cotton Mills"  
*Denver Post*, November 28, 1902

According to the *Post*, when visitors appeared, children who worked in the shops were hustled out and herded into a little room, where they stayed out of sight until all visitors had left. Two days after its initial story, the paper reported that visitors were no longer allowed at the mill.

Attempts were made to provide educational opportunities for the children of Manchester. The South Denver School Board established a school in the area but few children attended. Children, the *Post* claimed, were taught to lie about their ages. If a child stayed off the job to attend school, the mill boss could fire all other members of the family and keep them out until the child returned to work.

In addition to the *Denver Post* reporters, County Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey became interested in the conditions at the mill and in Manchester and conducted his own investigation. He visited the factories and the homes of Manchester residents and made it a point to talk to the children. Ben Lindsey became a county judge in 1900 and held that position for the next twenty-six years. An advocate for improved social conditions and judicial reform, Lindsey particularly championed the cause of juvenile justice. He reported that some of the worst conditions he had heard about in the South were being reenacted in Colorado. "These imported people were practically slaves," Lindsey told Lincoln Steffens about the Overland Mill. "They had come out under contracts, and the children, unschooled, toiled at the machines first to liberate their parents, then to support them." Judge Lindsey charged that child labor in Manchester contributed to juvenile delinquency. He decided to act against Overland, even though the state's rudimentary child labor legislation permitted no penalty more than a small fine.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 15

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Throughout 1902 accusations and denials freely flew about the operations of the cotton mill. Lindsey later wrote that former Overland treasurer and then president John Jerome stated that “we have never had any trouble until this fight started.... We’re helping Denver and we ought to be encouraged instead of being persecuted. I warn you...that if this thing is kept up, we’ll shut down the mills and you’ll have to take the consequences.”

On November 28, 1902, the *Post* ran an article which revealed that the State Humane Society was also about to take action against Overland for violation of the state factory law which prohibited the employment of children less than fourteen-years-of-age. The paper noted that prior to employment the mill obtained signed statements from parents stating that their child was at least fourteen. Prosecution was made more difficult when such signed statements could be produced. The paper charged that the mill preferred to hire families over single men as families were much less apt, or able, to walk away from the job. Once obligated for the cost of transportation, housing, and charges at the company store, Overland families found themselves perpetually in debt and unable to terminate their employment. A typical family might consist of a husband making \$8 to \$9 a week, two-half grown children earning \$4 a week each, and two younger children each bringing home \$2. The family’s total income would be \$21 a week. However, \$10 a week in transportation repayments, a four-room house renting for \$1 a week and a bill for the store and furniture could leave little or no cash wages. With the first weeks wages withheld by the company, newly arrived families is almost always started out in debt with little chance to ever come out ahead.

Mill employees were often reluctant to talk to reporters or other strangers as this action could lead to dismissal. This fear of reprisal made it difficult for the State Humane Society or the Society for the Protection of Children to obtain evidence.

The *Post* noted the contrast in living conditions in the houses owned by the cotton mill and those further west where employees of the Griffin Wheel works lived. While the row of handsome new homes, likely to rent for \$40 a month in town, might be of the type for superintendents at the mill, here they were for the iron workers of the wheel works. “The contrast is a living mockery. On one side well paid American workmen live in handsome, even pretentious homes. On the other side American workmen live in fear and trembling for their miserable wages in tiny humble cottages.”

The December 15, 1902, *Post* reported that Judge Lindsay had found the Overland Cotton Mill guilty of employing under-age youths and fined the firm the maximum allowable, \$50 plus costs. In addition, he fined mill president Jerome and foreman Dean Sutcliffe each \$50 for their involvement. Lindsay stated that while Sutcliffe was directly involved in the child labor violations, Jerome knew or should have known of the labor practices in the mill. Lindsey further suggested that charges ought to be brought on mill superintendent Cumnock. As to the third person formally charged, mill secretary H.C. Williams, Lindsey found him not guilty as he was not in a position to be familiar with mill labor practices. Fining not only the firm but the foreman and company president was an unusual action for 1902 given the political and social climate of the time. And though Jerome was later exonerated of any blame, the willingness of the court to take action in support of children helped advance social and working conditions in Colorado. This and similar campaigns for labor reform set the stage for passage of the new state Child Labor Act of 1903.

Lindsey may have struck a blow for child labor reform, but the Overland owners soon followed through on Jerome’s threat to close the mill. The fines and bad publicity may have hurt the Overland Mill, but more basic operating conditions brought about its demise. A major coal strike in 1903 forced the mill to cease operations in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 16

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December 1903. John Jerome died in 1903. The Overland Mill went into receivership in January 1904 and never reopened.

#### RADIUM PROCESSING AND THE KLAN

The City and County Denver most likely took possession of the former mill for unpaid taxes. The 1913 Beeler city map indicates that part of the property may have been used by the Whitin Machinery Company while the former dye house and warehouse were occupied by the "D.C. T. Co." (Fig. 6)

In 1920 the Pittsburgh Radium Company purchased the factory for use as a radium-processing plant, part of a large-scale operation centered in Denver. Under the aegis of the National Radium Institute, radium for medical use was extracted from Colorado ores at several Denver sites. Plans were to process 120 tons of carnotite ore monthly. A 1923 U.S. Geological Survey publication reports that the Overland site continued to receive ore shipments through 1923. The plant recovered primarily vanadium as opposed to radium. Up to ten tons of vanadium ore may have been processed daily. Sometime in the mid-1920s Pittsburgh Radium transferred its operations to the former Neff Brewery at Twelfth Ave. and Quivas St. The 1930 Sanborn insurance map indicates that the mill stood totally vacant and had last been used as a ore treatment plant for the Interstate Co. – Partnership Association.

The 1920s also saw a very non-industrial use of the former mill. The Ku Klux Klan became a prominent force on the Denver political scene during the twenties. The group chose for its local headquarters the office wing of the mill which adjoined the radium processing factory. Perhaps the Klan's choice was based on the mill's proximity to Ruby Hill, above Overland Park, where the Klan rallied to burn crosses. By 1925 the property fell into litigation and the city eventually took possession on tax title.

In 1935, the wool auction firm of Merrion & Wilkins leased the building from the city and for the next six years used the old mill as one of the largest wool auction centers in the West. In 1941 the firm moved to others quarters and shortly afterward the site was converted for war use.

#### WORLD WAR II MUNITIONS MANUFACTURING

Denver businessman James D. Maitland purchased the mill in 1941 for his Colorado Builders Supply Company (COBUSCO) to convert to the Mariposa Plant munitions factory. The plant manufactured shell casings throughout World War II. The December 12, 1942, *Rocky Mountain News* claimed that the plant served as a "manufacturing site for the largest munitions contract of its kind in this part of the nation."

During the evening shift on December 19, 1942 a disastrous fire caused an estimated million dollars damage to the plant. At 4:45 a.m. a heat-treating furnace for shells jammed. The quench tank, a 3,000 gallon vat of oil used to temper shells, sprayed oil over the plant interior. Part of the oil came into contact with the hot furnace and a major fire resulted. Three members of the 60-person shift were injured, one seriously. The interior of the two-story main production area was totally destroyed leaving only the exterior brick walls. No explosives were used in the manufacturing process at the Mariposa Plant or the damage, both to the building and its workers, might have been even more serious. Denver Fire Chief John F. Healy stated that the wings on either side of the main building escaped undamaged.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 17

The plant was determined to be so important to the war effort that plans were quickly drawn to rebuild utilizing the existing exterior walls. On June 7, 1943, the Denver City Council approved the construction of a new 1,000-foot rail spur across West Evans Ave. to speed the reconstruction of the plant. COBUSCO president Maitland told the council that the spur would allow monthly shipments of 1,000 tons of steel until the plant was again operational. Though the fire and rebuilding resulted in the loss of some original design, materials and workmanship, the changes represent an important part of the building's industrial history and constitute a second period of significance from 1941 to 1945. The rebuilt building, at least on the exterior, retained the major character defining design elements that typified its original design and construction.

Maitland's companies occupied the building for the longest continuous period of any owner. It was during this period that the two newer additions were constructed. The expansion of the plant and the drive toward modernization reflect the post-war industrial boom. In 1976, the Maitland Estate sold the former mill property to Mentor Corporation which in turn sold it to the Card Corporation in 1988. Hercules Industries later purchased the site for use in the manufacturing of heating and air conditioning duct systems.

In 1979 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) discovered evidence of the past radium operations. Subsequent analysis of residual radium contamination led to the placement of the former cotton mill, along with 43 other Denver locations, on the National Priorities List for remediation under Superfund legislation.

**MILL AND INDUSTRIAL ARCHITECTURE**

Denver's industrial architecture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exhibited many common design characteristics. These characteristics included brick load-bearing wall construction, one- and two-story buildings utilizing long rectangular floor plans, fenestration consisting of rhythmic bays of tall multi-light windows to maximize interior illumination, and tall brick smokestacks to dispense the thick smoke generated by coal-fired boilers. Industrial buildings of the period almost always contained large rooftop water tanks to supply

fire suppression systems. It was not unusual for the water tank to be contained within a tower designed to match the overall architecture of the complex. Often these towers utilized steeply-pitched hipped or pyramidal roofs popular in late Victorian era designs.

The 1890 Overland Cotton Mill utilized all these design characteristics (*Fig. 11*). Though designed for utilitarian purposes, the mill afforded an attractive and commanding presence typical of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Denver.

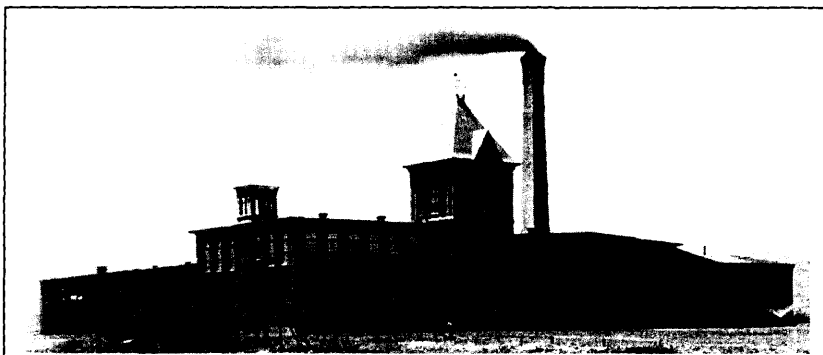


Figure 11 Overland Cotton Mill  
William Henry Jackson photographer, circa 1890  
Collection of the Western History Dept., Denver Public Library

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 18

The cotton mill stood in an increasingly industrial area immediately southwest of Denver along the South Platte River known variously as Manchester and Overland. The area included several major industrial complexes as well as related residential clusters and was serviced by the Denver, Leadville & Gunnison Railroad (later the Colorado and Southern Railway).

Approximately one mile north of the Overland Mill stood the Denver Paper Mills

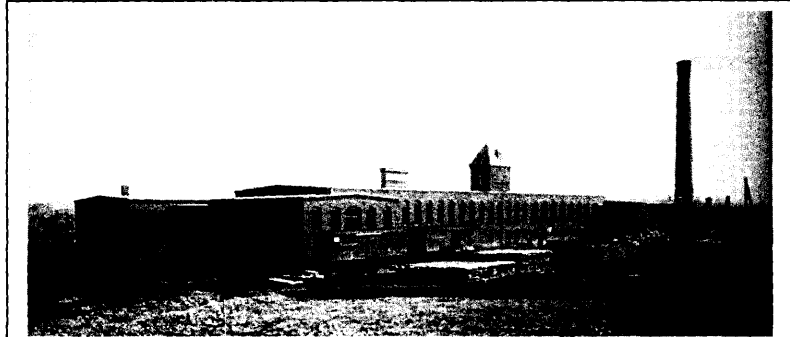


Figure 12 Denver Paper Mill  
William Henry Jackson photographer, circa 1890-1900  
Collection of the Colorado Historical Society

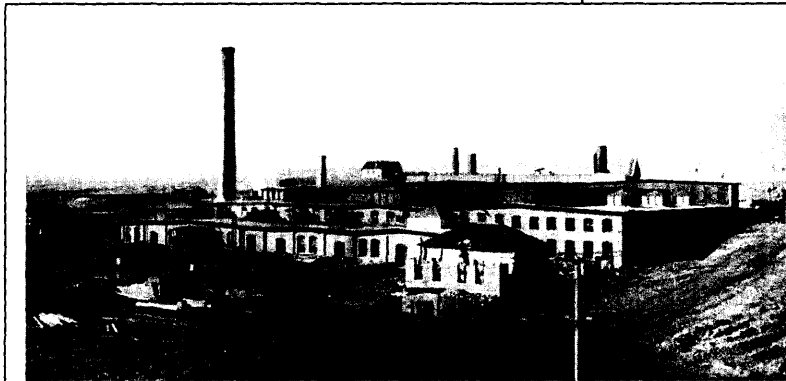


Figure 13 Griffin Wheel Company Plant  
Louis Charles McClure photographer, circa 1900-1915  
Collection of the Western History Dept., Denver Public Library

Company complex. The mill was located on Manchester Avenue (now S. Kalamath St.) between Gray (W. Louisiana Ave) and Agnes (W. Arkansas Ave.). Also built about 1890, the mill bears a strong resemblance to the Overland (*Fig. 12*). The paper mill utilized brick load-bearing walls for its long, rectangular plan, two-story buildings. The fenestration consisted of regular bays of tall multi-light windows with segmental arches. The mill contained a three-story tower with hipped roof and a tall brick smokestack.

The Griffin Wheel Company plant was another nearby industrial facility. From 1895 on, this major complex occupied a site just across the railroad tracks northwest of the Overland Mill (*Fig. 13*). The wheel works utilized similar brick load-bearing walls for its long, rectangular plan, one- and two-story buildings. The fenestration again consisted of regular bays of tall multi-light windows with segmental arches. The wheel works also utilized a tall brick smokestack but failed to include a tower in its basic design.

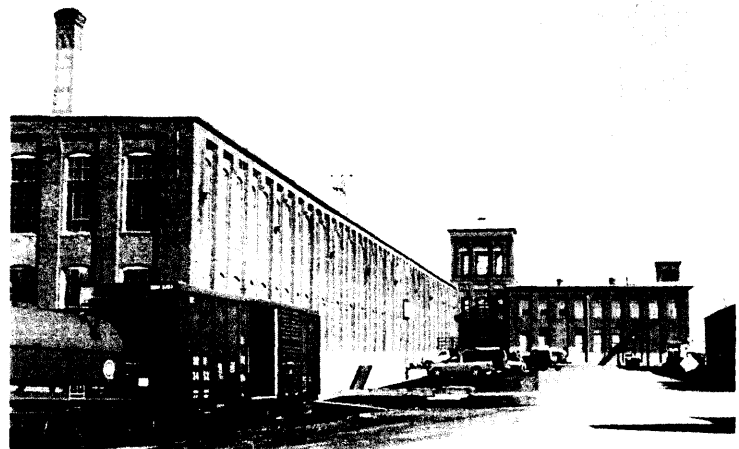


Figure 14 Overland Cotton Mill, 2000  
Colorado Historical Society

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 19

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The Denver Paper Mill, the Griffin Wheel Co. works, and other major turn of the century manufacturers in the Manchester/Overland area of Denver have now been totally demolished. Only the Overland Cotton Mill building remains to convey the general design characteristics of these important mill and manufacturing complexes. The Overland Mill lost some of its original materials in the 1942 fire, and repair of the fire damage also resulted in a change in the appearance of the tower roof (*Fig. 14*). However, despite these changes, the mill building remains capable of conveying its architectural significance as a rare surviving example of typical late nineteenth century industrial construction in respect to overall design, fenestration and spatial characteristics.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 9 Page 20

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Photograph collection, Western History Department, Denver Public Library.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 9 Page 21

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- January 1, 1895, p. 20.
- January 1, 1896, p. 25-26.
- January 1, 1897, p. 26.
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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number 10 Page 22

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Parcel A – That part of Block B, Breenlow Park, more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at the point of intersection of the west line of Block 38 Breenlow Park with the south line of block B, Breenlow Park;

thence westerly along the south line of block B a distance of 44.74 feet to the point of beginning;

thence continuing along the south line of block B a distance of 261.88 feet to the intersection with the southeasterly right of way line of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (formerly the Colorado and Southern Railroad);

thence on an interior angle to the left of 69 degrees 56 minutes 49 seconds northeasterly along the southeasterly right of way line of said railroad line, a distance of 393.99 feet to a point of curvature of a curve to the right; thence continuing along the southeasterly right of way line on a curve to the right having a central angle of 5 degrees 00 minutes 34 seconds a radius of 1410.02 feet, an arc length of 123.28 feet;

thence on an interior angle to the left, measured from the chord of the previous course, of 92 degrees 34 minutes 25 seconds easterly a distance of 187.87 feet;

thence on an interior angle to the left of 270 degrees 00 minutes 00 seconds northerly a distance of 11.33 feet;

thence on an interior angle to the left of 89 degrees 11 minutes 49 seconds easterly a distance of 27.21 feet;

thence on an interior angle to the left of 270 degrees 35 minutes 41 seconds a distance of 17.42 feet;

thence on an interior angle to the left of 90 degrees 05 minutes 34 seconds easterly a distance of 108.04 feet;

thence on an interior angle to the left of 90 degrees 02 minutes 11 seconds southerly a distance of 90.27 feet;

thence on an interior angle to the left of 89 degrees 46 minutes 38 seconds westerly a distance of 81.89 feet;

thence on an interior angle to the left of 270 degrees 08 minutes 10 seconds southerly a distance of 365.98 feet to the point of beginning, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The nomination includes all the land historically associated with the Overland Cotton Mill during its periods of significance and which retains its integrity. The associated dye house and warehouse house building has been significantly altered over time. The building is now under separate ownership from the mill building. For these reasons the dye house and warehouse building is not included in the property being nominated.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number \_\_\_ Page 23

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**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-18 except as noted:

Name of Property: Overland Cotton Mill  
Location: Denver, Colorado  
Photographer: William M. Newland  
Date of Photographs: September 1, 2000  
Negatives: Hercules Industries, Inc.  
1310 W. Evans, Denver, CO 80223

Photo No.                      Photographic Information

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- 1 Main building, east elevation; view to the southwest.
- 2 Main building, east elevation; view to the southwest.
- 3 East wing, north and east elevations; view to the southwest.
- 4 East wing, south elevation; view to the north.
- 5 Entry tower, south elevation; view to the northwest.
- 6 Entry tower, north elevation; view to the south.
- 7 Entry detail, entry tower, north elevation; view to the south.
- 8 Interior stairs, entry tower.
- 9 West wing, south elevation, view to the north.
- 10 Main building, west elevation, view to the northeast.
- 11 Main building, south elevation, view to the north.
- 12 Smokestack; view to the northeast.

The following information applies to all photographs below:

Photographer: Dale Heckendorn    Date: 10/1/2000

Negatives: Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society  
1300 Broadway, Denver, CO 80203

- 13 Tower, north elevation; 1900 addition, east elevation; view to the southwest.
- 14 East wing addition, north elevation, view to the southwest.
- 15 Tower, north elevation; 1900 addition, east elevation; view to the southwest.
- 16 1900 addition and west wing additions, north elevation, view to the west.
- 17 All north side additions, north elevations, view to the west.
- 18 West wing addition, north and west elevations; view to the south.

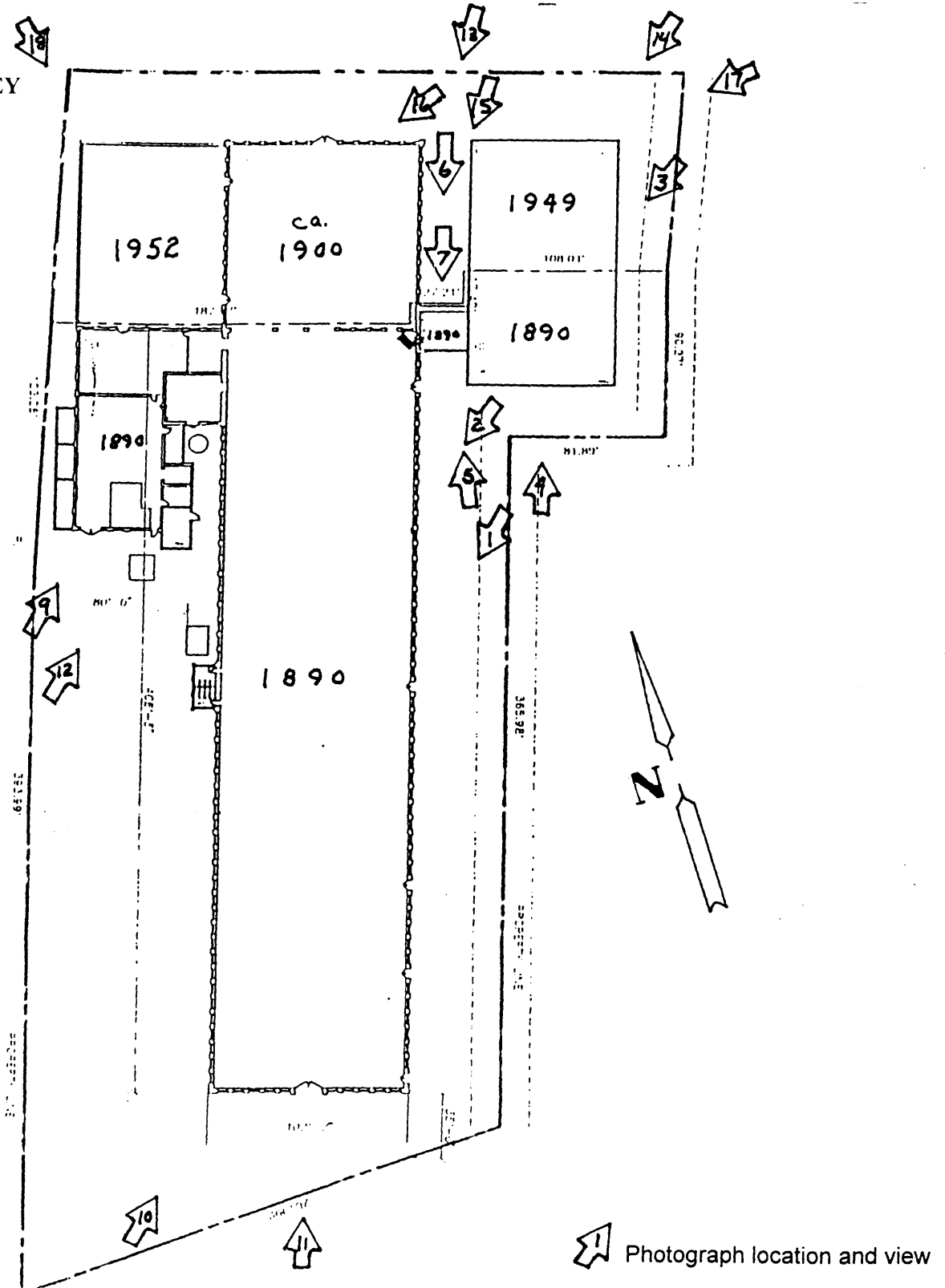
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number \_\_\_ Page 24

SITE PLAN and  
PHOTOGRAPH KEY



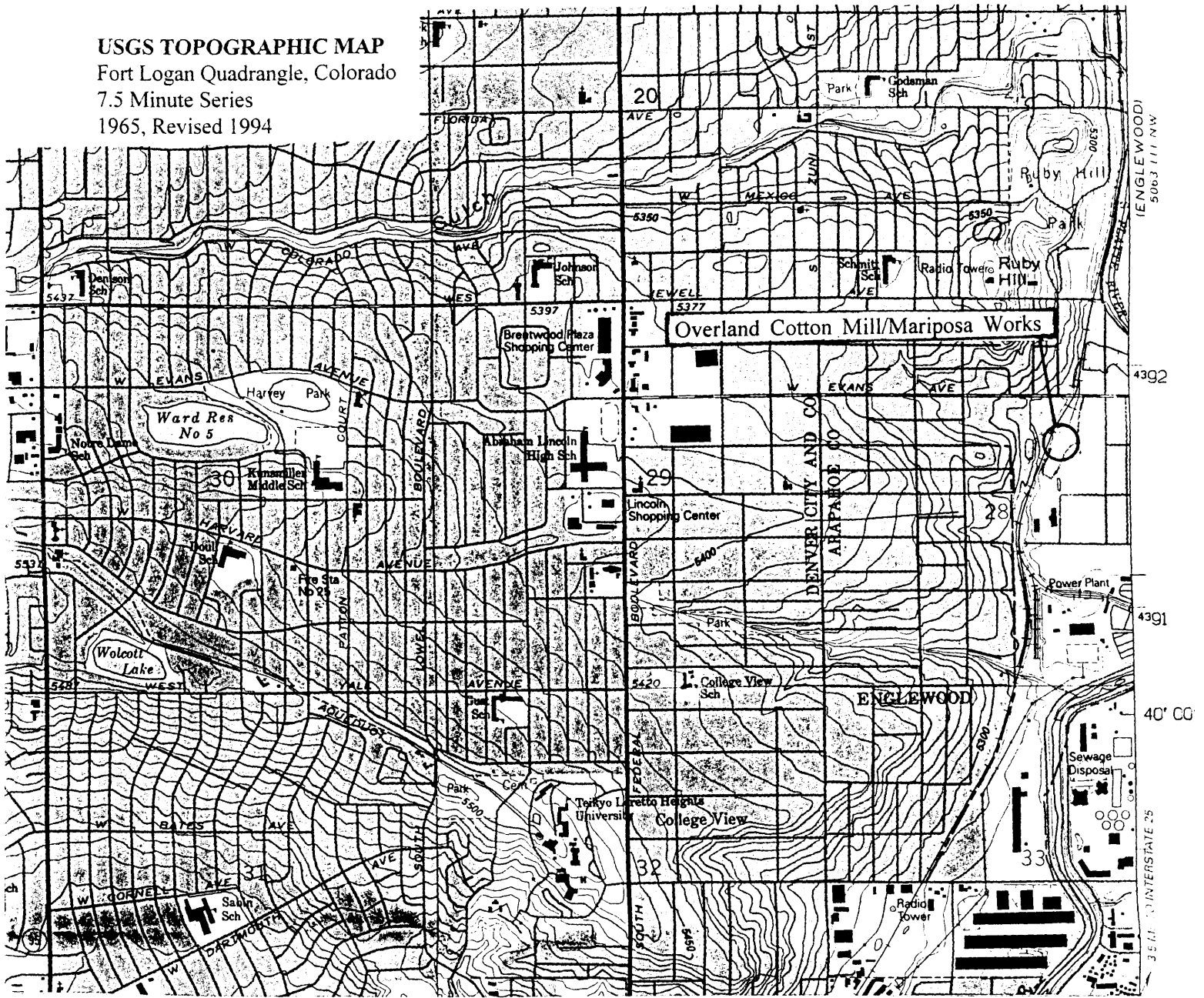
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

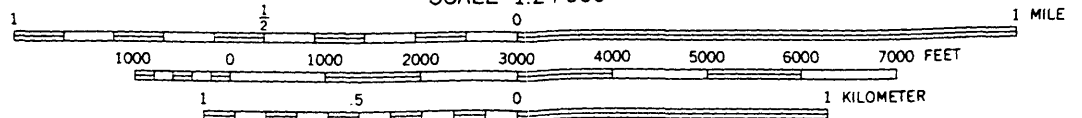
Overland Cotton Mill  
Denver, Colorado

Section number \_\_\_ Page 25

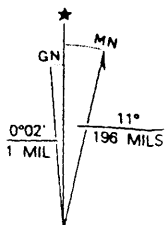
USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP  
Fort Logan Quadrangle, Colorado  
7.5 Minute Series  
1965, Revised 1994



SCALE 1:24 000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929



UTM GRID AND 1994 MAGNETIC NORTH  
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET