

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill**

Burlington, Alamance County, AM2442, Listed 8/26/2016

Nomination by Jennifer Martin

Photographs by Jennifer Martin, December 2015



Overall view



Rear view

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 612 South Main Street n/a  not for publication  
city or town Burlington n/a  vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Alamance code 001 zip code 27253

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, explain:)	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**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 include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

n/a

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

n/a

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: reinforced concrete construction

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

Concrete

roof Asphalt

other

**Narrative Description**

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1928-1929

**Significant Dates**

1928

1929

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill  
Name of Property

Alamance County, North Carolina  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 1.6

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

See latitude and longitude coordinates on continuation sheet.

1                                   
Zone Easting Northing  
2                                 

3                                   
Zone Easting Northing  
4                                 

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Cynthia de Miranda and Jennifer Martin  
organization MdM Historical Consultants Inc. date April 8, 2016  
street & number Post Office Box 1399 telephone 919/368-1602  
city or town Durham state NC zip code 27702

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Vision Properties, c/o Chad Porterfield  
street & number PO Box 877 telephone 336-227-6586  
city or town Graham state NC zip code 27253

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill  
Alamance County, North Carolina

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## *Description*

May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill stands on the southwest corner of South Main and East Morehead Streets on the east side of downtown Burlington, North Carolina. The building is one block to the southwest and a half-block to the south of the South Broad-East Fifth Streets Historic District (2001), a residential district with dwellings primarily from the 1890s to the 1940s, and immediately southeast of the Downtown Burlington Historic District (1990), the city's principal historic commercial area.

The mill occupies the east half of a nearly rectangular 1.65-acre parcel that slopes slightly downward from north to south. The South Main Street façade faces northwest, but for the purposes of the description that follows the building will be described as facing due north. East Morehead Street runs along the east side of the building, while South Spring Street is immediately to the south of the nominated parcel. Fourth Street borders the west side of the tract.

The building has no setback from the street on its north, east, and south sides. A parking lot and small green space are located on the west half of the lot. A fence composed of brick pillars with concrete bases and concrete caps and linked by spans of vertical metal open fencing extends along the East Main Street side of the parking lot. This fence curves around to a front a small portion of the East Fourth Street side of the parking lot. A continuous tall, chain link fence topped with barbed wire contains the remainder of the parking lot.

The area surrounding the property is a mostly commercial in character. Directly north of the mill is the *Times-News* newspaper building and its parking lot. One-story brick warehouses and parking lots are to the west. A parking lot occupies the parcel to the south and a modern office building and parking lot are to the east and occupy the spot where additional buildings associated with May Hosiery Mills once stood.

## *May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill 1928-1929*

### *Exterior*

Constructed in 1928 and 1929, the rectangular building is constructed of red and blond brick in a stretcher bond with staggered joints. The building is one-story on its north end, but as the parcel slopes downward toward the south, the building rests on a brick basement and is a full two stories on its south end. The one-story heating and plumbing plant located at the southwest corner dates to 1928, while the rest of the mill dates to 1929.

The building's roof is a sawtooth form made up of a series of parallel one-sided asymmetrical skylights. As is typical with sawtooth roofs, the shorter slope faces north so that only northern light—not direct sunlight and its associated heat—filter into the interior. The shorter but steeper north sides of the roof were originally glazed, but the openings have been covered in metal sheathing. A blond-brick smokestack is located near the south end of the mill with "May Hosiery" written vertically in darker glazed brick. The stack has been truncated slightly and is capped with flat concrete coping. A red-brick stair extends one-story above the flat roof mid-way along the east elevation. This projection permitted roof access and a connection to a crosswalk that formerly linked the building with a larger May

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Hosiery Mills building that was demolished in 2006. Terra cotta coping made in Pomona, North Carolina, tops most of the building's flat parapets, except on the façade and the heating plant on the southwest corner where the flat parapet is crowned with sheet metal.

The nine-bay, blond-brick north elevation facing South Main Street served as the principal façade with an entrance centered between a series of large recessed windows. Those bays—the door and windows—have been bricked in with blond brick, but remain discernable because of the soldier-course lintels that frame them. A low, curved-top parapet formerly crowned the center of the façade, but it and the crenellations and stepped roof were removed and the entire parapet is now topped with sheet metal. The Commercial Style elevation displays six partially-deteriorated and removed blond-brick pilasters with that were capped with sloped terra cotta caps. The pilasters and caps were damaged when recently-removed brick veneer and metal siding was applied to the façade in the last quarter of the twentieth century. While damaged, the removal of the brick veneer and metal revealed the original façade. A continuous row of off-white terra cotta blocks forms a beltcourse below the cornice and above the bricked-in bays. Diamond shaped and square terra cotta tiles further enliven the facade of the mill. Three small, fixed-light windows framed by modern red-brick veneer are located on the lower portion of the west bay of the façade. Around 1960, the main entrance was moved to the north end of the west elevation. It has double-leaf, fully-glazed, metal-framed, west-facing doors with a transom and sidelights at the northwest corner of the building. A small section of the metal sheathing that once covered the façade remains at the northwest corner above the entrance. A small exterior entrance vestibule with a terrazzo floor was built of red Roman brick and patterned concrete screen blocks.

The east elevation is finished in red brick, except at the north end where the blond brick wraps around from the façade to sheathe a projecting one-bay-wide section of this elevation. This single-bay has the same terra cotta elements as the facade. The east elevation consists of the nineteen-bay main mill building and the three-bay boiler room to the south (discussed below). On the main mill, the window openings with concrete sills and soldier course lintels are bricked in and a series of nearly full-height brick pilasters rise between every two windows. A single metal basement-level door, a recessed basement-level loading dock entrance containing half-glazed divided light metal doors, and six small randomly-placed square openings—some with vents and some boarded over—pierce this elevation. They were inserted in the bricked in window openings.

The boiler room at the mill's southeast corner stands slightly lower than the main mill to the north. A flat roof with a monitor that retains metal-frame windows with green glass tops the roughly rectangular boiler room. On its east elevation, it retains its first and second floor metal-framed windows with concrete sills. A roll-down metal loading dock door fills the bay at the south end of the lower level. The south elevation displays four bays with intact metal-framed windows and concrete sills and a metal loading dock door and single-leaf metal door on the first level.

To the west of the boiler room and southwest of the main mill building is, according to company records, the oldest portion of the mill—the 1928 heating and plumbing plant. The one-story brick building has a flat roof and contains the smokestack or chimney built of blond radial brick by M. W. Kellogg and Company. A small second story flat roof extension from the mill rests on the roof of the heating and plumbing plant at its north side. The plumbing and heating plant's south elevation contains two windows with vents and a double-leaf metal door and a single-leaf door

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set in a larger bricked-in recessed bay. The west elevation contains two large vents and a smaller vent set in a bricked-in bay. A concrete ramp with a brick side wall on its west side dates to 1928-1929 and leads from the parking lot to the roof of the heating and plumbing plant.

The mill's west elevation faces the parking lot and small green space. The south half of the west elevation of the main mill features a flat-roofed metal awning sheltering three loading dock doors and adjacent single-leaf doors accessed by metal or concrete stairs. Immediately to the north of the loading dock is a small, flat-roofed, one-story brick appendage that projects from the elevation. Immediately to its north is a metal awning that shelters the north-facing door to this projection and a double-leaf metal door leading to the mill interior. A window with metal sash is just to the north of the double-leaf door. A flat-roofed metal deck above the mill entrance holds heating and cooling equipment on its roof and is supported by metal and concrete posts. The remainder of the elevation to the north is blank, but shows bricked-in windows with soldier-course lintels.

## *Interior*

The interior of the mill contains four principal spaces: the main level, the partial basement, the heating and plumbing plant, and the boiler room.

The main level is one large open space with brick walls, a wood ceiling, and a concrete floor. Steel I-beams and joists support the ceiling sheathed in wood. On the ceiling of the sawtooth roof, some windows have been covered in a synthetic material resembling horizontal siding. Other sawtooth roof ceilings have been insulated with a padded material, likely for insulation. Sixteen round metal columns support the I-beams. Concrete block has been used to infill window openings on the brick walls. A stair leading to the roof, one leading to the basement, and a freight elevator are along the east wall. An additional freight elevator is located on the south wall. Along the west are a series of small rooms that served as offices, a loading dock, and restrooms. The restrooms have original tile and finishes.

The partial basement lies under the middle section of the mill. This basement and the main level above it were built soon after the front one-story section of the mill was completed. Both sections date to 1929. The lower level consists of two main open rooms with the larger room located to the south. Accessed by stairs on the building's west and south sides, the finishes in the basement include concrete floors and brick and concrete walls. The larger space to the south contains fifty-nine concrete posts supporting concrete joists that support the wood ceilings. The east wall features a freight elevator in the northeast corner, a small wood enclosure containing equipment, and a ramp leading to double-leaf doors that provide access to the exterior fronting East Morehead Street. The south wall features an enclosure for stairs, a metal loading dock door, and a freight elevator contained in the brick projection. Shallow offices and a restroom line the west wall and were part of the original building.

The north basement room is smaller and contains four concrete posts like those in the large room. The finishes are like those in the rest of the basement. This space also includes an office in its southeast corner and small rooms on the west wall.

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A metal door on the south wall of the larger space leads to a concrete ramp connecting to the heating and plumbing plant, the one-story section at the building's southwest corner. The plant, built of flat slab construction, contains three rooms of different sizes, but all containing concrete mushroom columns supporting drop panels, concrete floors, brick and concrete walls, and concrete ceilings. The plant contained the pump for the sprinkler system, but the Sanborn map for 1929 indicates that the plant itself was not sprinkled. It also contains the radial brick chimney and coal chute built by M. W. Kellogg and Company Chimney Builders of New York, a leading chimney and smokestack builder in the early twentieth century. The company name is on the metal cover to the coal oven.

The boiler room contains a large, full-height open space with brick walls, a concrete floor, and heavy timber beams supporting a wood ceiling. The monitor retains many of its green glass, metal-framed windows. A steel platform holds flash tanks, where water from the boilers is converted to steam, and a steam generator.

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## *Summary*

May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion C as an important example of an early twentieth-century hosiery knitting mill in Burlington, Alamance County, North Carolina. The knitting mill of May Hosiery Mills, established by brothers William and Benjamin May in the early twentieth century, is one of a few remaining historic buildings associated with the hosiery mill industry in Burlington, a town known for its dominance in that industry in the first half of the 1900s. The one-story-on-partial basement brick and reinforced concrete building is the only remaining historic resource associated with the company and dates to 1928-1929. May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill epitomizes textile mill design and technology for dealing with fire issues and ensuring structural stability. The use of flat-slab reinforced concrete construction and a sawtooth roof at May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill characterizes distinctive industrial building construction in the early twentieth century. The period of significance of the locally-significant May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill is 1928-1929, the building's period of construction.

## *Historical Background*

William H. (1875-1954) and Benjamin V. (1880-1945) May, sons of Henry P. and Barbara Clapp May of Alamance County, established May Hosiery Mills in Burlington in the early twentieth century, incorporating the firm in 1922.<sup>1</sup> Their father worked as a builder and contractor, but spent most of his life as a farmer. After William May attended Elon College, he worked as a travelling salesman. In 1906, he became assistant manager at Daisy Hosiery Mill, the company the May brothers took over, eventually renaming Mill Hosiery Mills.<sup>2</sup> Benjamin May attended Whitsett Academy and by 1900 was working as a farm laborer.<sup>3</sup>

The company the May brothers established was initially a brokerage concern, arranging sales between manufacturers and wholesalers and retailers. A Charlotte newspaper from 1919 noted that the company “finances small mills, furnishing materials for manufacture, etc. and handling the output.”<sup>4</sup> This was a crucial function, as textile production in the early twentieth century was a complicated system of highly specialized companies in which hosiery left the knitting factory uncolored and unsewn, headed to dye houses and finishing factories for the final work. But hosiery mills that could carry out all stages of production were headed for vertical integration and modernization in the second quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (Burlington) *Daily Times-News*, October 23, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *History of North Carolina, Volume VI: North Carolina Biography* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1919), 57.

<sup>3</sup> William Murray Vincent, *Historic Alamance County: An Illustrated History* (San Antonio: Historical Publishing Company, 2009), 50; Ancestry.com. *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004, accessed January 7, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> *The Charlotte Observer*, January 3, 1919.

<sup>5</sup> *Burlington Times-News*, January 17, 1957; “Industry—Alamance County,” *The State*, December 12, 1942, in survey file at the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh; Walter E. Whitaker, Staley A. Cook, and A. Howard White, *Centennial*

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These industry changes are reflected in the history of May Hosiery Mills. Before establishing their eponymous company, the brothers had already invested in Burlington's first hosiery mill, Daisy Mills, established in 1896. That factory produced socks and stockings but sent them on to Keystone Finishing Mills for completion. In 1907, the Mays bought out Daisy, which was located in the 500 block of Church Street. They also established National Dye Works before 1921, running it out of an existing factory once used by the Scott-Mebane Manufacturing Company. The 1924 Sanborn map shows National Dye Works in three buildings at 426, 428, and 430 East Main Street and May Hosiery Mills in buildings adjacent to the east and south along a private street bisecting the block between East Morehead Street and Maple Avenue. The May Hosiery Mills building at the southeast corner of the block was apparently unfinished; the Sanborn delineator notes that its footprint was drawn "from plans." The May brothers consolidated all three companies before 1929 into a single entity, retaining the name May Hosiery Mills.<sup>6</sup>

May Hosiery Mills company ledger books from the late 1920s, which are archived in the Rare Book Collection at Duke University, document the construction of the knitting mill. The books record that new buildings were under construction from late winter of 1928 through the summer of 1929. In July 1928, expenses are first recorded for a heating plant and boiler room built by Sharpe & Bryan. The 1948 Sanborn map that indicates the heating plant (now called the heating and plumbing plant) was built in 1928 confirms this date. Burns-Hammonds Construction Company erected additional portions of the plant February 1928 through July 1929, using building materials and subcontracting services from Thermidaire, Fuel Economy Company, Piedmont Electric, Grinnell (makers of sprinkler systems for fire protection), and others. Subcontractors and suppliers included Tuscon Steel, Pittsburgh Plate Glass, Oettinger Lumber Company, E. I. DuPont, and others.<sup>7</sup>

By the 1940s, May Hosiery Mills manufactured rayon and nylon stockings. The company operated out of two buildings in downtown Burlington—the knitting plant and the finishing plant. The knitting plant, the only building surviving, raw materials such as rayon, cottons, and nylon were processed into hosiery through knitting, looping, and seaming, then inspected. Workers transported the stockings to the finishing plant (no longer extant) where they were dyed, packed, and shipped. Besides hosiery workers, the knitting plant employed watchmen, fire fighters, who worked in the boiler room, and a clerical worker.<sup>8</sup>

The company remained downtown and expanded through the next quarter of a century. A rendering of the company's complex around 1945 shows nine buildings, but the rendering is not a wholly accurate depiction of the blocks

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*History of Alamance County 1849-1949* (Burlington: Burlington Chamber of Commerce, [1949]), 164; Brent Glass, *The Textile Industry of North Carolina: A History* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1992), 56-59.

<sup>6</sup> "Industry—Alamance County," "Downtown Burlington Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1990, <http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/AM0583.pdf>, 8.4-8.6; *Burlington Times-News*, January 17, 1957; Sanborn maps viewed online with ProQuest.

<sup>7</sup> May, McEwen, Kaiser Company Records, Vol. 30, Part 1, Ledger September 1927- August 1935, Rubenstein Library, Duke University; Grinnell Mechanical Products, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grinnell\\_Mechanical\\_Products](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grinnell_Mechanical_Products).

<sup>8</sup> National Labor Relations Board, Case No. 161: McEwen, Kaiser Co., 05-R02147 (March 28, 1946) National Labor Relations Board website, accessed January 7, 2016.

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surrounding the May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill building erected in 1929. Other buildings unrelated to the company are not shown in the depiction, such as the Alamance Hotel, the better to showcase the company buildings. At any rate, the 1929 May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill building is the only surviving structure related to the company.

Even before much of the complex was lost, mergers combined the May Hosiery Mills with other textile concerns. In 1941, as the result of a merger, the company changed its name to the May, McEwen, Kaiser Company. In 1947, the company announced a merger with Burlington Mills Corporation. That merger was completed in 1948.<sup>9</sup>

In 2003, Kaiser Roth Corporation sold the property to Main Street Properties LLC, who, in turn, sold it to the current owners, Vision Properties of Burlington LLC in 2007.<sup>10</sup>

### *Architecture Context: Hosiery Mills in Burlington*

Burlington became a center of the hosiery industry in the late nineteenth century. This transformation occurred after the North Carolina Railroad removed its operations and repair facilities from Company Shops, the community established in the mid-nineteenth century that became Burlington, to Spencer in 1866. While the loss of the railroad shops might have signaled the end of what had turned into a thriving community, Burlington, incorporated in 1893, transformed into an industrial hub and widely known by the early twentieth century for its mills producing cotton fabric and hosiery.<sup>11</sup>

Lafayette Holt started the first hosiery mill in Burlington in 1892 after visiting Philadelphia where he saw men's hosiery being manufactured on machines. His factory closed after one year. The first successful operation was Daisy Hosiery Mill, which opened in 1896 on Church Street. Between 1908 and 1926, at least five other hosiery mills opened including Burlington Knitting Company, Whitehead Hosiery Mill, Sellars Hosiery Mill, May Hosiery Mills, and McEwen Knitting Mill. McEwen Knitting Mill was the first to produce full-fashioned hosiery, or hosiery that is knitted flat and then the two sides are sewn together forming a seam.<sup>12</sup>

The form, materials, and features of May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill are typical of early twentieth-century textile construction in Piedmont North Carolina. The use of metal and concrete allowed for the evolution of the heavy timber mill construction that was common in the nineteenth century. Introduction of these sturdier materials allowed for wider window and door openings and higher ceilings, while still providing fireproofing. While the use of metal and concrete was quite the norm by the early twentieth century, the sawtooth roof found on the May Hosiery Knitting remained relatively rare for North Carolina. The construction standards and design at these mills conformed to standards of machine manufacturers in New England and insurance requirements. Mill engineers trained in the northeast, where the textile industry proliferated in the nineteenth century, spread the tenets of mill design and

<sup>9</sup> *New York Times*, Jan 17, 1941 and May 4, 1947.

<sup>10</sup> Alamance County Register of Deeds, book 1821, page 689, March 3, 2003; Alamance County Register of Deeds, book 2529, page 191, February 9, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Allison Harris Black, *An Architectural Heritage of Burlington, North Carolina* (City of Burlington, 1987), 13-18.

<sup>12</sup> "Hosiery in Alamance," *Textilehistory.org*, accessed January 5, 2016.

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construction across the country, including in North Carolina. Following standards of the period, mills throughout the Piedmont North Carolina were typically built of brick and steel, stood two stories tall, had flat or shallow gable roofs, and oversized windows.

May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill also incorporated features including reinforced concrete flat slab construction using mushroom columns in the heating and plumbing plant built in 1928. These large structural columns, reminiscent of a mushroom, flare at the top and support floor slabs making beams unnecessary. Conceived by engineer Claude A. P. Turner in the early twentieth century who first used the system in 1905-1906 for the Johnson-Bovey Building in Minneapolis, flat slab construction was designed to eliminate beams from floors designed to carry light loads if reinforcement was located in the floor slabs between mushroom columns. The mushroom columns enclosed the reinforcement joining the columns and floor slabs together, allowed light to be distributed more effectively, and reduced vibration.<sup>13</sup>

The sawtooth roof at May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill is an environmental adaptation favored by some builders of industrial buildings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Composed of a series of parallel one-sided asymmetrical skylights with a profile similar to the teeth in a saw, the roof has a shorter slope facing north so that only northern light—not direct sunlight and its associated heat—filtered into the interior. As is typical on sawtooth roofs, the vertical portion of the window faces north. Although it was considered by some engineers to be one of the most important developments in industrial design, others criticized its jarring appearance of sawtooth roofs and often parapet walls were extended upward to shield the public’s view of the roofline.<sup>14</sup>

While Burlington was regarded as a major producer of hosiery in the early to mid-twentieth century, few buildings associated with the industry remain intact in the city.

Brown Hosiery Mill on the 100 block of East Holt Street dates to the early 1920s and is a one-story brick building with a front parapet with corbelling and sawtooth brickwork. A shed roof with brackets shelters the front recessed entrance that is flanked by large windows that have been covered in board. Several large one-story additions have been built onto the rear and sides of the original mill. The form and style of Brown Hosiery Mill is typical of industrial buildings of the 1920s. The original rectangular building was enlarged several times in the twentieth century to accommodate an expanding workload and new technology.

The Baker-Cammack Hosiery Mill took over the portion of the Aurora textile mill south of Webb Street in the early 1930s and operated there until 1982. Dating to the period between 1904 and 1908, the portion of the mill acquired by Baker-Cammack consists of two-story, brick buildings. The Baker-Cammack Mill displays the oversized windows with arches, a flat roof with parapets, and a red-brick exterior characteristic of early twentieth-century hosiery mills. A portion of the south end of the largest building in the complex has been demolished.

<sup>13</sup> D. A. Gasparini, “Contributions of C. A. P. Turner to Development of Reinforced Concrete Flat Slabs, 1905-1909, *Journal of Structural Engineering*, October 2002, 1246; Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 158-159.

<sup>14</sup> Bradley, 192-193.

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## Section 10

### Latitude and Longitude Coordinates

**Latitude:** 36.091452

**Longitude:** -79.440365

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill is shown on the accompanying aerial map drawn at a scale of 1"=86'. The parcel number for the property is 135508.

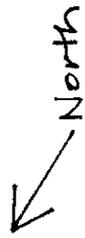
### Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the 1.65-acre parcel historically associated with the May Hosiery Mills Knitting Mill.

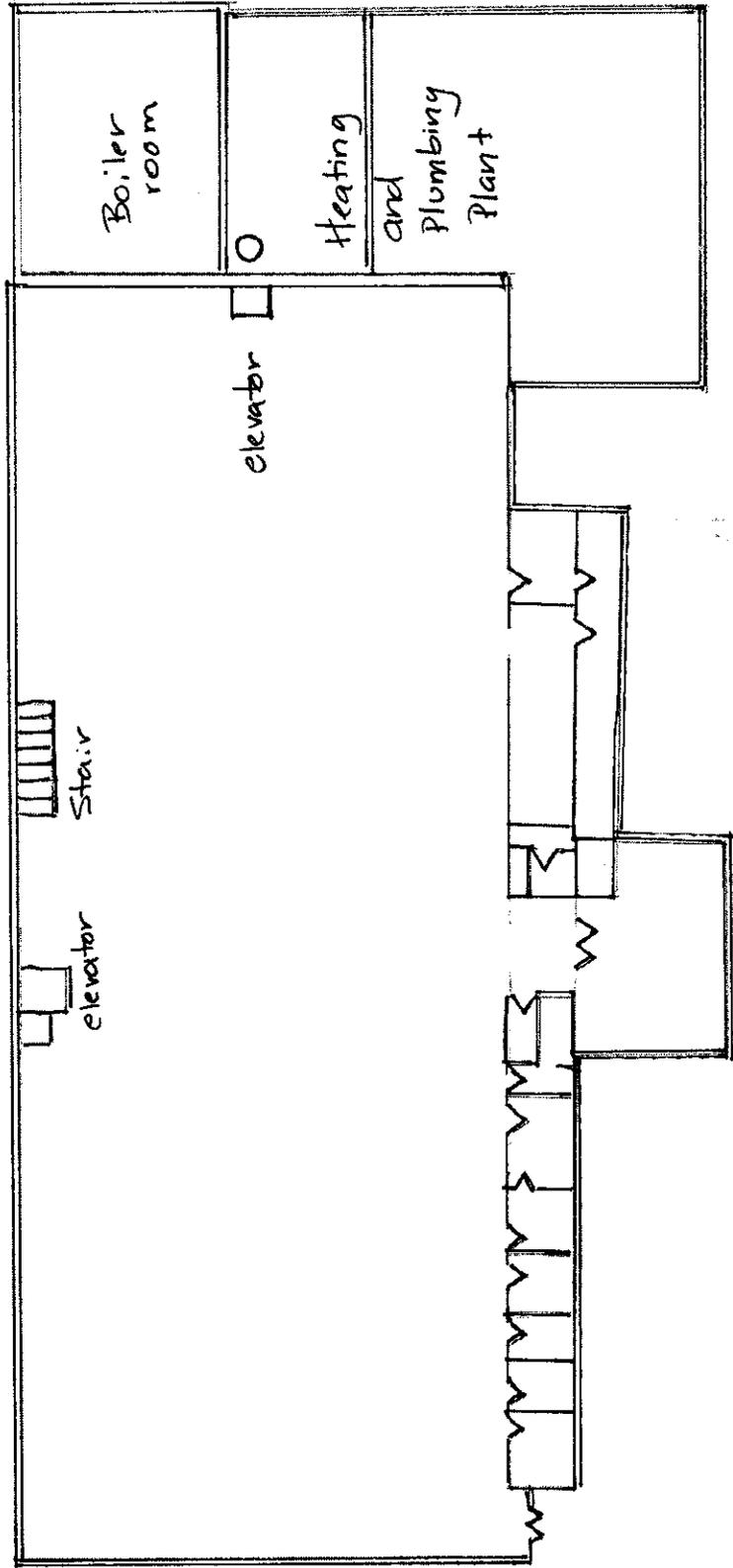


MAY HOSIERY MILLS Knitting Mill  
612 South Main street  
Burlington, Alamance County, North Carolina

MAIN FLOOR  
NOT TO SCALE

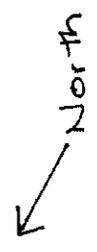


East Morehead street



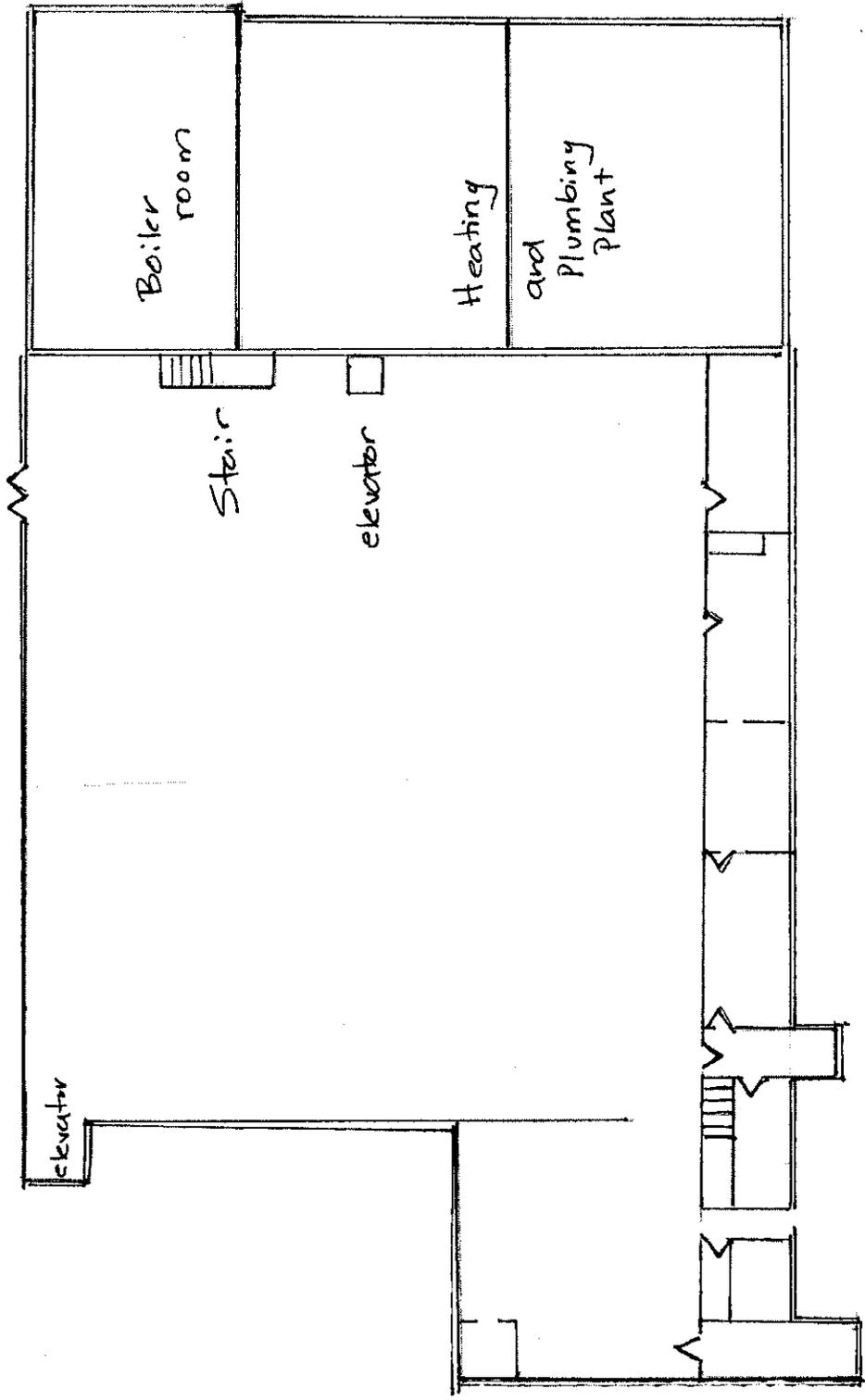
South main street

MAY HOSIERY MILLS Knitting Mill  
612 South Main Street  
Burlington, Alamance County, North Carolina



East Morehead street

South Main Street



Lower Level  
Not to Scale

