

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 Mount Holly Cotton Mill

other names/site number Alsace Manufacturing Company

2. Location

street & number 250 North Main Street  N/A not for publication

city or town Mount Holly  N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Gaston code 071 zip code 28120

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 forth 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.)

Jeffrey J. Crow SHPO 4/10/96  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of 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

- 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:)

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

Mount Holly Cotton Mill

Gaston County, NC

Name of Property

County and 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 include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 2            |                 | buildings  |
|              |                 | sites      |
|              |                 | structures |
|              |                 | objects    |
| 2            |                 | Total      |

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

-0-

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry: manufacturing facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry: manufacturing facility

Commerce/Trade: business

Commerce/Trade: specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Industrial Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation granite

walls brick

roof asphalt

other wood

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

Industry

Period of Significance

1875-1946

Significant Dates

1875

ca. 1919

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

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:

\_\_\_\_\_

Mount Holly Cotton Mill  
Name of Property

Gaston County, NC  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 2.766 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 7 |
|---|---|---|

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 9 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

  
Zone Easting Northing

3 

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

  
Zone Easting Northing

2 

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

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.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Lucy Penegar, Barry Jacobs, and the North Carolina HPO

organization Gaston County Historic Preservation Commission date January, 1996

street & number 737 Ferguson Ridge Road telephone 704-864-7542

city or town Gastonia state NC zip code 28052

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

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

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

**Photographs**

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

**Additional items**

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

**Property Owner**

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

name Mr. And Mrs. Robert Friedl

street & number 250 North Main Street telephone 704-827-7246

city or town Mount Holly state NC zip code 28120

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 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 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Mount Holly Cotton Mill  
Gaston County, North Carolina

### Narrative Physical Description

Constructed in two stages beginning in 1875, the Mount Holly Cotton Mill was the fourth textile mill built in Gaston County and stands today as the oldest surviving mill structure in the county. The mill complex presently encompasses almost three acres and is located three blocks north of downtown Mount Holly on the banks of Dutchman's Creek that forms the south boundary of the nominated property. The west boundary of the complex is North Main Street, the north boundary is Alsace Avenue, and the east is the newly-constructed NC 273 by-pass. The topography of the site falls to the south and east toward the creek and dictates the integration of the complex into the slope above the sharp, heavily-overgrown creek bank. The west and north portions of the property are paved for parking, and a concrete retaining wall forms a terrace between the parking lot and the west elevation of the mill complex.

The surrounding neighborhood is heavily-developed with some industrial uses, but is largely residential. North of the mill property on Alsace Street is a row of south-facing late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century one-story modest houses that were erected by the mill's second owner. They are now privately owned and not a part of this nomination. Southeast of the mill complex across Dutchman's Creek is a row of substantial houses that were erected by mill owners and managers during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries.

The present mill building is a complex brick composition consisting of a presently two-and-one-half story 1875 rectangular block that forms the center block of the building; a nearly square three story brick west block added around 1916 following a damaging flood; and a one-story, T-plan brick machine shop and boiler house on the northeast elevation that very likely was added during the 1919 expansion. The main entrance to the mill is in the north elevation stair tower of the three story addition and is flanked on its west side by a T-shaped concrete loading dock that leads to the second floor. A one-and-one-half-story side gabled, tin-roofed brick picking room contemporary to the original mill is sited in the east yard. It is presently used as a garage and storage space.

The development of the original forty-acre site began in March of 1875 with the construction of a rectangular three-story brick building that forms the center block of the present building. This building was sited in an east-west orientation near the north bank of Dutchman's Creek. It was eight bays east-to-west and four bays north-to-south. Set on a raised granite-accented basement that is set into the east-to-south slope of the site, the heavy timber-frame building rose to a side-gabled roof with a wooden cornice and a small cupola on the west gable end. The large double-hung nine-over-nine wooden sash were set under flat-arched cement pediments and were finished with cement sills.

The mill race, which no longer exists, extended from the creek to the southeast corner of the original building. Part of the original dam remains on the creek, although much of it is inundated most of year due to a large Duke Power Company dam upstream at Lake Wylie. The mill dam lines up diagonally with the second bay of the original building, about twenty feet from the southeast corner where some replacement brickwork at ground level indicates where the water-powered generating machinery once rested.

The ca. 1919 three-story west addition is five bays wide on all four elevations. The south, west and north elevations are opened with three rows of flat-arched double-hung wooden sash

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Mount Holly Cotton Mill  
Gaston County, North Carolina

in a twelve-over-twelve pattern. A ground-level entry in the west elevation was probably filled with double-leaf wooden doors that have been replaced by a six-panel modern wooden one. The north elevation contains the main entry in a one-bay-by-one-bay brick stair tower in the easternmost elevation. This tower is embellished with brick parapets. The shallow gabled roof features a deep, wood-sheathed overhang supported by un-ornamented wooden rafter tails. The raised basement is concrete block and marked by recessed blind ventilators. Although there is no conclusive evidence for the date of the removal of the steep gable roof and third story of the original block, it is probable that this remodeling was accomplished with the construction of the three-story west addition. The reduced 1875 block was covered with a flat roof that, like the gable roof on the west block, is supported with plain rafter tails and overhangs the elevations. Both roofs are covered with asphalt composition shingles.

The brick T-plan machine shop and boiler room on the northeast elevation is covered with intersecting gable roofs. The roof of the machine shop, which forms the stem of the T is sheathed in standing-seam metal, while the roof of the boiler room is covered with asphalt shingles. The segmental-arched windows of this wing were filled with brick to accommodate modern machinery.

The interiors of both main blocks of the mill are largely composed of brick-walled large work floors with heavy timber columns topped by blocks supporting heavy beams in the 1875 block; and metal columns with simple, molded capitals supporting the timber beams of the west block addition. The ceilings are open to the rafters and wood-sheathed roof on the upper stories, and the beams and floor joists on the lower stories. The floors throughout are wood planking except in the recently-partioned office areas where the original wood has been covered with asphalt tile. There are simple wooden door surrounds throughout and the stair tower contains a wooden staircase with a balustrade of tongue-and-groove panels ending in a square wooden newel post capped with wooden blocks. The walls and ceiling of the full-depth hall between the 1875 and ca. 1919 blocks were covered with tongue-and-groove sheathing in the early twentieth century. The interiors of the machine shop and boiler room are strictly unadorned and utilitarian in character.

In recent years, plasterboard partitioning to create storage spaces has been installed at the east end of the top floor of the original block, and the east end of the main floor is similarly partitioned for office space. The ground level of the west block contains partitioned office space with a recently-added dropped florescent and acoustical panel ceiling. Other recent changes to the building include the brick infill of some of the windows and the replacement of some of the sash with metal jalousie windows.

The original double-leaf wood doors of the picking room were replaced with side-rolling doors to allow the space to be used as a garage. The interior of the building is stuccoed over the brick walls that rise to the roof supported by wooden trusses.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Mount Holly Cotton Mill  
Gaston County, North Carolina

---

## Statement of Significance

The Mount Holly Cotton Mill was built in 1875 by a partnership between Abel Peterson Rhyne, Daniel E. Rhyne, and Ambrose Costner along Dutchman's Creek near the Catawba River in Gaston County. It was the fourth textile mill built and the oldest surviving in Gaston County which retains the distinction claimed since the early twentieth century of having more textile mills than any other county in the United States. The Mount Holly Cotton Mill complex, which grew incrementally between 1875 and ca. 1919, is significant as an example of the functional Italianate-inspired industrial architecture that became a New South icon in the Gaston County landscape between the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. The 1875 establishment of the mill on the banks of Dutchman's Creek was a seminal event that sparked the 1879 change of the name of the adjacent settlement from Woodlawn to Mount Holly to recognize the mill, and the subsequent growth of the community into a flourishing textile production center that boasted four mills by 1891. In 1920 the Mount Holly Cotton Mill was merged into C. E. Hutchinson's American Yarn and Processing Company, and operated 5,700 spindles. In 1947 American Yarn acquired controlling interest in the Efrid Mills Company, and in 1953 the Mount Holly Cotton Mill complex was converted into a research unit. The site was abandoned in the early 1960s, and in 1973 was sold to an independent mill operator who presently uses the building for a variety of industrial and commercial purposes.

## Historical Background and Industry Context

The Mount Holly Cotton Mill was built in 1875 by a partnership of A.P. and D.E. Rhyne and Ambrose Costner along Dutchman's Creek near its confluence with the Catawba River in Gaston County. It was the fourth and is the oldest surviving textile mill in the county that rapidly became the textile capital of the country in the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

Gaston County has long been one of the leading textile manufacturing areas in the United States and in the South. Over the years some 150 cotton mills were founded within its boundaries.<sup>2</sup> As recently as 1978, a report by the American Textile Manufacturers Institute showed Gaston County with more textile employees (23,800) and more yarn Mills than any other American county.

Gaston County's involvement with the textile industry dates back to 1848, when the Mountain Island Mill was built along the Catawba River. Two other mills, Woodlawn (1852) and Stowe Factory (1853), were erected before the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> After Reconstruction, cotton textile manufacturing led a wave of development which helped forge a "New South." At the

---

1. Ragan, Robert A. *The Pioneer Mills in Gaston County, North Carolina*, 1961. (Unpublished ms. in the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), p. 2.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

3. Stowe, R.L., Sr. *Early History of Belmont and Gaston County, North Carolina*. December, 1951 (Privately published, found in the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), p. 15.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4Mount Holly Cotton Mill  
Gaston County, North Carolina

vanguard of this effort was the family partnership of Abel Peterson Rhyne, his brother Daniel E. Rhyne, and A.P. Rhyne's father-in-law, Ambrose Costner. In 1875 they began construction of the fourth mill in the county, called the Mount Holly Cotton Mill.<sup>4</sup>

The origin of the name "Mount Holly is obscure. The area along Dutchman's Creek, also called the Kykendall, where the Rhyne-Costner mill was built, was not part of any particular town. The nearest post office was named Woodlawn, the nearest railroad station was called Tuckaseege. One source indicated the name "Mount Holly" was chosen by Mrs. A.P. Rhyne in recognition of the holly-covered hills.<sup>5</sup> A more plausible explanation is at that time Mount Holly, New Jersey was known for producing the best cotton yarns in the nation.<sup>6</sup> The town was incorporated as Mount Holly in 1879 by an act of the General Assembly.<sup>7</sup> This act attested to the importance of the mill to the surrounding community.

The mill was situated south of the Catawba River and near the tracks of the Wilmington, Charlotte, and Rutherford Railroad, providing it with excellent transportation and marketing options. It is thought that the Mount Holly Cotton Mill was the first in the county to ship its yarns by rail to northern markets.<sup>8</sup> The approximately forty-acre site upon which the mill was situated, called Rudasill Shoal, was purchased in November 2, 1874 from the Rudasill family for \$1,000 by V.L. Johnson. Johnson, in turn sold the entire property, which extended on both sides of the creek, to A.P. Rhyne for \$1,100 on November 2, 1874.<sup>9</sup>

According to the account book of A.P. Rhyne, construction of the mill began on March 1, 1875 with the purchase of various tools and materials necessary to dig a foundation. Brick for the mill was reputedly fashioned on the site.<sup>10</sup> The 2,000-spindle mill began purchasing cotton and warps for the production of yarns April 1, 1876. The first floor of the water-powered mill was used for carding, the second for twisting, the third for spinning.<sup>11</sup>

The mill operation was quite successful. In 1876 it had a debt of \$4,175.51; by 1877 it showed a \$3,293.41 profit, which, by 1884 had increased to \$41,844.11.<sup>12</sup> This success spurred the partnership to institute kerosene-lit night shifts.<sup>13</sup>

---

4. Ragan. *The Pioneer Cotton Mills*, p. 2.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

6. Pleasants, Paul. "Town-Studded Gaston," *The State*, Volume 22, Number 18. Sharpe Publishing Company, Incorporated Raleigh, NC, January 29, 1955, p. 55.

7. Brengle, Kim Withers. *The Architectural Heritage of Gaston County, North Carolina*. published by Gaston County, the incorporated municipalities, and the State Historic Preservation Office, 1982.

8. Ragan. *The Pioneer Cotton Mills*. p. 2.

9. Rhyne, Henry H. from documents in his possession and interview with, March 26, 1980.

10. Rhyne interview.

11. Rhyne interview.

12. Clemmer, Cecilia Marie. "Mount Holly Mill," December 6, 1978 (An unpublished paper quoting A.P. Rhyne's account book; ms found in the Mount Holly Library, Mount Holly, North Carolina), p. 7.

13. Ragan. *The Pioneer Cotton Mills*. p. 2.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Mount Holly Cotton Mill  
Gaston County, North Carolina

---

In 1883 the Rhynes built Tuckaseege Manufacturing Company and in 1888 Mount Holly Knitting Company, whose name changed to Albion Manufacturing Company in 1899.<sup>14</sup>

On July 28, 1908, the Mount Holly Cotton Mills partnership was incorporated. The incorporators -- A.P. Rhyne, Henry A. Rhyne, and E.R. Cannon, (the later a relation by marriage, authorized an organizing capital stock of \$50,000 to \$100,000.<sup>15</sup> During this period the Mount Holly Cotton Mill employed about fifty-five to sixty workers at ninety cents to one dollar and twenty-five cents per day. Young boys were paid twenty-five cents a day and young girls ten cents a day.<sup>16</sup>

By this time Gaston County was recognized as "the center of the combed yarn industry in America," according to one local textile magnate, and had become "one of the world's largest and most prominent textile centers."<sup>17</sup> This success story was at least temporarily interrupted when, on July 16, 1916, the Catawba River flooded, cresting at fifty-three feet. Along with causing fatalities, the flood swept away most area bridges, almost wiping out rail and highway transport, as well as damaging six mills, among them the Mount Holly. During the flood Gaston County's first mill, the Mountain Island, was completely destroyed.<sup>18</sup>

There was a \$20,000 repair to the Mount Holly Cotton Mill. It is probable that the roof and the third floor of the 1875 building were removed at this time, or at the 1919 expansion.

Soon afterward, in 1918, Charles Egbert Hutchison and Associates (which had owned the Mountain Island Mill, among others) purchased the Mount Holly Cotton Mill. They renamed it the Alsace Manufacturing Company, and on December 20, 1919, incorporated it as the Alsace Manufacturing Company with authorized capitalization of \$250,000.<sup>19</sup> A three story addition was constructed to the west end of the original building, doubling its capacity. On July 31, 1920, the Alsace Manufacturing Company merged with Hutchison's American Yarn and Processing Company.<sup>20</sup> It was probably around this time that the mill house development on the north side of Alsace Avenue was fully developed.

Charles Egbert Hutchison, a Gaston County native, was one of the most prominent textile manufacturers in the region. By the early 1920s he controlled six mills in Gaston County.<sup>21</sup> "The Hutchison group of mills have been unusually successful," reported the Southern Textile Bulletin of December 25, 1919. In 1923 Hutchison was elected president of the American Cotton Manufacturers Association. He gained further distinction as the builder of the first warp

---

14. *Ibid.* p. 2.

15. *Ibid.* p. 2.

16. Clemer. "The Mount Holly Mill," p. 11.

17. Ragan. *The Pioneer Cotton Mills.* p. 2

18. Stowe. *Early History of Belmont and Gaston County,* pp. 29-30.

19. Ragan *The Pioneer Cotton Mills,* p. 2.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

21. Ragan. Robert A., *Leading textile Mills in Gaston County, North Carolina, 1904 to the Present,* Charlotte, North Carolina, May 21, 1975. (Unpublished manuscript found in the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). No page numbers.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Mount Holly Cotton Mill  
Gaston County, North Carolina

---

processing plant in North Carolina, where cotton warps from his mills -- Alsace, Albion, Nims, Adrian, Union, and Madora -- were mercerized (a chemical process ensuring greater fabric stability), gassed, bleached, and otherwise finished for use in yarns and knitting. At its peak of operations in the mid-1950s, the processing plant handled 200,000 to 250,000 pounds of yarn weekly.<sup>22</sup>

By 1923, the Southern Textile Bulletin reported that Gaston County led the South in producing mercerized cotton for hosiery and the Gaston County Chamber of Commerce claimed the county was third in the nation in the number of producing cotton spindles which totaled 1,130,625.<sup>23</sup>

During this period, the Alsace Mill, with 5,700 spindles, produced coarse single and two-ply warps known as "20s," which were processed and finished elsewhere as part of the Hutchison operation.<sup>24</sup> The mill operated as part of the American Yarn and Processing Company until 1932 when, at the height of the Depression, it was stripped of its equipment and converted into a warehouse.<sup>25</sup>

In 1942 American Yarn and Processing Company was sold to the R.S. Dickson Company, a Charlotte, N.C. investment banking firm. In 1947 American Yarn, run by Dickson, acquired controlling interest in the Efrid Mills Company of Albemarle, N.C., and in 1952 the two merged to form the American and Efrid Mills, a thirteen million-dollar corporation with 144,000 spindles, fourteen spinning mills, and 3,000 employees. It became one of the leading producers of combed cotton and carded yarns in the United States, manufacturing some thirty million pounds annually.<sup>26</sup>

In 1953 American and Efrid renovated the Mount Holly/Alsace Mill into a facility for experimental and research work. The complex housed this activity for about a decade until it was closed, acreage was sold off, and the mill complex was abandoned. Later, a property speculator, James Murphy of Stanly County, acquired the abandoned mill complex, which, by the early 1960s had shrunk to only five acres, more or less. He in turn sold the mill to Robert Friedl, an independent mill operator in 1973.<sup>27</sup>

When Friedl bought it, the building was unused, overgrown with vines and other vegetation, and the windows were broken. It took three months to clean up the building before Friedl was able to open a small, thirty-employee, three-shift mill operation that survived until the 1974 recession forced its closing.<sup>28</sup> Friedl has since rented the three-story 1919 block to another operator of an elastic band manufacturing operation; converted the machine shop into a knit

---

22. Ibid.

23. Gaston County Chamber of Commerce, Department of Industrial Affairs, Gaston County, N.C., March, 1923. (found in the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).

24. Ragan. *Leading Textile Mills*.

25. Ragan. *The Pioneer Cotton Mills*, p. 2

26. Ragan. *Leading Textile Mills*.

27. Friedl, Robert. interview on March 25, 1980.

28. Friedl, interview.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Mount Holly Cotton Mill  
Gaston County, North Carolina

sales outlet; and turned the main floor of the mill of the original building into office space at the eastern end for a family-run industrial engineering and standards development operation for synthetic, cotton, and wood fibers.

### Architectural Context

The Mount Holly Cotton Mill is one of an extended family of brick-constructed mill complexes that became a distinguishing feature of the Gaston County landscape beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and continuing through the early years of the twentieth century. The original block of the mill was erected in 1875, and like the earliest, antebellum mills in the county, was built to take advantage of the water power on one of the many creeks. Like six recorded pre-1880 mills in the county, the Mount Holly building was a three-story brick rectangle with a steeply pitched side-gable roof and banks of large, double-hung, flat-arched windows.<sup>29</sup> A separate brick, side-gabled picking house was erected at about the same time in the east yard of the mill building.

Beginning in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Southern mill owners began constructing buildings with a eye toward fire prevention. This movement toward increasing mill safety began in the mid-1830s among New England mill owners and was, in part, based on the high cost of fire insurance in an industry whose raw and finished products were highly combustible. Evolving mill design standards aimed at reducing both the risk of fire and the cost of insurance were developed. These standards advocated the use of "slow burning" materials, including brick and heavy timber, in building plans that isolated areas especially susceptible to fire. Suggested construction specifications included the erection of two-story, shallow-gabled blocks (the absence of attic space reduced the threat of rafter and roof fires), with twelve-inch-thick walls on the upper story that increased four inches in thickness in each floor below. It was recommended that stairs and elevators in which fires could spread quickly be placed in separate brick towers. Picker rooms, boiler rooms, waste houses, and warehouses were to be placed in separate buildings or in blocks that were separated from the work floors by broad brick firewalls that rose above the shallow roof.<sup>30</sup>

These nineteenth-century industry building standards produced a generation of distinctive late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century brick mill complexes in Gaston County. Although some, like the 1881 McAden Mill in McAdenville, or the 1899 Ozark Mill in Gastonia, were richly decorated, most were solid, safe, and functional brick building complexes that exhibited in varying degrees minimal Italianate-inspired characteristics in segmental- or flat-arched large multi-light windows, deep, overhanging shallow-gabled roofs, and perhaps vestigial corbelling or roof brackets. The Mount Holly Cotton Mill conforms to the architectural guidelines developed by the mill fire insurance industry with its original separate picker house, its later reduced 1875 block, its machine shop/boiler room block, and its brick stair tower. It is similar in plan, construction techniques, and character to 1888 Mount Holly Knitting Mill, also built by the Rhynes and J.A. Costner; and the 1918 American Precessing Company, also in Mount Holly and also erected by the second owner of the Mount Holly Cotton Mill, Charles Egbert Hutchison.

29. Brengle, Kim Withers. *The Architectural History of Gaston County*, p. 16.

30. *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

---

Section number 8 Page 8

Mount Holly Cotton Mill  
Gaston County, North Carolina

---

The Mount Holly Cotton Mill was the fourth textile mill to be erected in Gaston County and is today the oldest surviving one. The mill complex set on Dutchman's Creek conveys the character of late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century textile industry construction that concerned itself with an available source of power and the erection of buildings that were both safe and functional.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 & 10 Page 9

Mount Holly Cotton Mill  
Gaston County, North Carolina

---

### Bibliography

Brengle, Kim Withers. *The Architectural Heritage of Gaston County, North Carolina*. published by Gaston County, the incorporated municipalities, and the State Historic Preservation Office, 1982.

Gaston County Chamber of Commerce. Department of Industrial Affairs. *Gaston County, N.C.* March, 1923

Ragan, Robert A. *Leading Textile Mills in Gaston County, North Carolina, 1904 to the Present*. Charlotte, North Carolina, May 21, 1975. Unpublished manuscript on file in the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Ragan, Robert A. *The Pioneer Cotton Mills in Gaston County, North Carolina*. 1961. Unpublished manuscript on file in the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Stowe, R.L. Sr. *Early History of Belmont and Gaston County, North Carolina*. December, 1951. No publisher listed found in the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated property are shown in the heavy black line on the accompanying survey map titled "Mount Holly, North Carolina, Gaston County: Survey made at the request of the North Carolina Historical Society" and drawn to a scale of 1" = 40'.

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated property encompass the remaining 2.76 acres of the original 40-acre mill property and provide an appropriate setting for the mill complex on the north bank of Dutchman's Creek.

### Section 7: Materials continued

foundation: brick  
                  concrete  
roof:           tin

