

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Speas Vinegar Company

Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, MK2254, Listed 8/12/2015

Nomination by Heather Fearnbach

Photographs by Heather Fearnbach, December 2014



Façade 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 Speas Vinegar Company

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 2921 North Tryon Street

N/A not for publication

city or town Charlotte

N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Mecklenburg code 119 zip code 28206

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 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:

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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

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

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1 | 0 | buildings |
| 0 | 0 | sites |
| 0 | 2 | structures |
| 0 | 0 | objects |
| 1 | 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
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: Manufacturing Facility

INDUSTRY: Industrial Storage

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: Manufacturing Facility

INDUSTRY: Industrial Storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Industrial building with a steel interior frame and load-bearing brick exterior walls

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

CONCRETE

roof SYNTHETICS: Rubber

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

1939-late 1950s

Significant Dates

1939

(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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, Main Branch, Robinson-Spangler North Carolina Room, 310 North Tryon Street

#

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Speas Vinegar Company
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 2.61 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

See Latitude/Longitude coordinates 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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Heather Fearnbach
organization Fearnbach History Services, Inc. date 1/10/2015
street & number 3334 Nottingham Road telephone 336-765-2661
city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27104

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 Michael W. Wilkinson, 2921 Investors, LLC.
street & number P. O. Box 35225 telephone 704-817-7913
city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28235

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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Section 7. Narrative Description

Setting

Located in an industrial area just over two miles north of downtown Charlotte's central commercial district, Speas Vinegar Company occupies a 2.61-acre tax parcel that is substantially bounded by a six-foot-tall chain-link fence. The fence terminates at the building's primary façade fronting North Tryon Street. The busy thoroughfare, which provides a direct conduit to downtown, is slightly lower in elevation than Speas Vinegar Company and the paved parking area that spans the distance between its façade and the concrete municipal sidewalk.

The street grid and the building's axis do not follow cardinal direction alignment. However, for the purposes of this document, the narrative is written as though the primary façade, which faces southeast, has a true south orientation.

A vacant lot separates the factory tract from West Thirty-Second Street and the former Western Electric plant on its west side. Railroad tracks and right-of-way are east of the tract. Neighboring parcels contain factories, warehouses, gas stations, and other commercial buildings.

At the façade's east end, a single-leaf chain-link gate and a double-leaf chain-link gate provide access to the concrete platform and a narrow grass strip west of the railroad right-of-way. West of the building, a wide double-leaf chain-link gate secures the gravel driveway that leads to additional parking and loading docks. The drive surrounds a central grass expanse that contained large vinegar vats through the mid-1990s. A tall, square, metal-sheathed water filtration tower, an oil tank, and a small corrugated-metal-sided shed stand on poured-concrete pads near the open area's north end. An eight-bay-wide, open-sided, metal-roofed equipment shed occupies the lot's northwest corner.

Speas Vinegar Company, 1939, late 1950s, contributing building

Speas Vinegar Company's two-story manufacturing and office section is fifteen bays wide and four bays deep with a low-pitched gable roof. The attached one-story flat-roofed rear warehouse, which is five bays wide and eight bays deep, projects to the north. Its east elevation aligns with that of the main block. Masons executed the load-bearing red brick walls in six-to-one common bond. Brick pilasters with cast-stone caps separate the bays and provide the austere building's only architectural embellishment. Although Speas Vinegar Company added the main block's western two bays in the late 1950s, a slight variation in brick color is the sole difference.¹ Terra cotta coping tops the flat parapets.

¹ The latest available Sanborn map of the area, created in June 1953, does not show the addition.

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Square concrete piers support the concrete platform that extends across the original thirteen-bay-wide south elevation adjacent to the primary entrance and two loading docks. The platform created truck-bed-level access for shipping product and receiving raw materials and supplies. Concrete steps with steel railings provide access to the platform's east and west ends.

In the second bay west of the building's southeast corner, which originally contained a window, a black-painted-aluminum storefront comprises a central single-leaf door, sidelights, and a tall three-part transom. A roll-up metal exterior door provides additional security. Matching metal doors enclose the loading dock openings in the fourth and thirteenth bays. The east dock (fourth bay from the east end) is south of the space that once served as the bottling room, while the west dock (third bay from the west end) leads into the manufacturing area.

Wide window openings with concrete sills and paired steel-frame sash fill most bays. Each sixteen-pane unit features a central eight-pane section that tilts open, facilitating ventilation. The steel frames on the main block's south, east, and west elevations have been painted black, while its north (rear) elevation's windows retain an exposed steel finish. A few frames have rusting mullions and missing panes of tempered glass.

A ten-bay-long, two-bay-wide, vinyl-clad roof monitor with paired steel-frame sash provides additional illumination and ventilation. This was particularly important historically due to the fact that the holes in the 1939 generators that allowed for the oxidation process and the lack of tight seals around wood pipes resulted in considerable vapor leakage. The low-pitched gable-roofed monitor is centered above the building's original thirteen bays and rises ten feet, eight inches above the second story.

The concrete platform continues along the full extent of the main block and warehouse's east elevation, which fronts the railroad, and thus facilitated sending and receiving shipments by rail. Three of the main block's first-story bays contain double-leaf door openings surmounted by sixteen-pane steel-frame transoms. All of the transoms remain, and one opening retains a double-leaf steel door with six-pane-upper sections. The south opening has been partially filled with concrete block and a single-leaf steel door installed in the remaining space. The north opening has been enclosed with concrete block. To the north, the warehouse's east elevation comprises one door opening filled with concrete block and a single-leaf steel door beneath the original sixteen-pane steel-frame transom.

The main block's west elevation contains four paired windows at each level. On its rear elevation, two first-story and five second-story windows have been enclosed or converted to doors. A metal roll-up door fills one first-floor door opening. A straight run of steel steps with a steel-pipe railing leads to the single-leaf steel door that has been installed in one second-story opening. A door opening in the third bay from the west end has been filled with concrete block and a single-leaf steel door. The sixteen-pane

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steel-frame transom is intact. A shed-roofed, white-painted concrete-block loading dock addition fills the one-bay-wide space at the junction of the two-story block and the warehouse.

On the warehouse's west elevation, a late-twentieth-century aluminum roll-up door has been installed in the third bay north of the main block. The door opening in the third bay from the north end has been filled with concrete block, but the sixteen-pane steel-frame transom remains. The remaining bays retain original paired steel-frame windows.

The warehouse's north elevation contains a central roll-up metal loading dock door flanked by two sets of paired windows on each side. An open shed supported by round wood posts and wood braces bolted to the wall shelters the loading dock and two equipment storage bays to the west. The metal-clad frame shed roof slopes to the east.

Interior

Most of the building's interior reflects its utilitarian function, with painted brick exterior walls and exposed steel I-beams that support wood roof and floor systems. The main block's five east bays contain offices and storage rooms, while the ten west bays functioned as manufacturing space until 1994 and currently serve as storage. Substantial wood joists and a wide plank subfloor span the areas between the steel frame and the brick exterior walls to create the second-story office mezzanine's floor system. Wood rafters and wood plank decking carry the roof load. Concrete block and frame interior walls have been added as needed. A full-height concrete block firewall separates the two sections.

East of the firewall on the first floor, a wide L-shaped corridor occupies the area immediately north of the main entrance and east loading dock. Most of the main block's first story retains original brick floors laid in a sand-filled pan. At the main entrance and adjacent to loading docks, the brick has been parged with concrete to facilitate rolling heavy loads.

Full-height frame walls create a reception area and office at the first floor's southeast corner. Wood shingles cover the enclosure's west wall. The room's interior features gypsum board walls and ceilings and vinyl composition tile floors. A window unit provides air conditioning.

North of the office, steel steps with steel railings lead to the second-floor offices. Farther north on the first floor, adjacent to the east wall, a wood-sheathed frame enclosure contains two offices with dropped-fiberboard-tile ceilings and faux-wood-paneling-sheathed walls. Single-leaf wood doors with three lower horizontal panels and three horizontal upper panes secure the first-floor offices. At the main block's northeast corner, wood-sheathed frame walls form two restrooms.

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West of the restrooms, a wide door opening in the north wall provides access to the warehouse. Concrete block walls on the corridor's west side create a three-bay-wide and three-bay deep room that briefly functioned as a bottling facility. Two rows of horizontal plate glass windows, smaller on the top level than the bottom level, light the space. Two galvanized-sheet-metal-clad doors slide on straight tracks mounted above the wide door openings. Acoustical tiles and fluorescent light panels fill the dropped aluminum-frame ceiling grid.

The four-level manufacturing area has an open plan with exposed steel I-beams supporting wood roof and floor systems. The steel frame creates a fifteen-foot tall first level and a nine-and-a-half-foot tall second level. The roof monitor rises ten feet, eight inches above the second story. At the manufacturing area's east end, the three-bay-wide, ten-foot-deep pit designed to accommodate tall vats has parge concrete walls and a brick floor. Narrow first-story walkways on the pit's north and south edges lead to the building's west end. The exterior brick walls have been painted white. In the 1980s, Fleischmann's Vinegar Company, a subsequent owner, replaced sections of the original brick first-story floor with concrete drains that emptied on the building's west side.

Open, straight runs of original steel steps with steel railings provide access between the levels, culminating in a walkway at the roof monitor's center. Yellow-painted original steel railings and later dimensional lumber railings secure the sections of the upper levels that contain floor boards. Sprinkler system pipes and linear and pendant fluorescent lighting hang below the ceilings. Metal conduit carries electrical wiring throughout the manufacturing area.

During its use of the plant, Speas Vinegar Company installed eighty-eight vinegar generators that were eight feet in diameter and eighteen feet tall. The generators stood at ground level at the building's west end, while large vats that stored the raw materials required for vinegar production were in the excavated portion of the manufacturing area's east end. Wood pipes connected the vats and generators.²

The generators extended above the second-floor level and loose wood boards spanned the distance between them and steel posts and beams. Fleischmann's Vinegar Company removed the original generators in the 1980s and fixed floor boards in some of the outer bays to allow the space to serve as file storage. In a few locations, however, loose boards remain. In others, a second layer of boards tops those that retain the large circular holes cut for the original generators.

The Ray Company, a roofing contractor, embarked upon a renovation project before occupying the building in 1997. The work created climate-controlled second-story administrative offices, a conference room, file room, and restrooms in the east five bays, which were originally open to the roof monitor, as

² Peter Klock, Fleischmann's Vinegar Company Director of Operations and former Charlotte plant manager, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 8, 2015.

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in the west manufacturing area. Although contractors added frame partition walls around the perimeter, the central space beneath the roof monitor remains open. Gypsum board sheaths the brick exterior walls, the concrete block firewall, and the office ceilings. Commercial-grade carpeting covers the floors.

The second-story office area is the only section of the building with a central HVAC system. The circular ductwork and large vents, left exposed due to their size and in order to preserve the original ceiling height, are painted gray to match the painted steel posts and beams. Large industrial pendant lighting hangs below the ceilings in the central section, while linear fluorescent lighting illuminates the offices and storage room.

The June 1953 Sanborn map indicates that the one-story rear wing functioned as a cooper's shop, ostensibly to fabricate the barrels needed to ship vinegar. The space is completely utilitarian, with painted brick exterior walls, concrete floors, and exposed steel I-beams that support the roof system. Corrugated metal panels attached to steel posts and beams that form a partition wall that divides the wing in half. The south four bays serve as manufacturing space, while the north four bays function as a warehouse and loading dock. In the warehouse's northeast corner, metal partition walls create a mechanical room and workshop. The Ray Company added all of the metal partition walls and gas furnaces to heat to the south room in 1997. Sprinkler system pipes and linear and pendant fluorescent lighting hang below the ceilings. Metal conduit carries electrical wiring throughout the wing.

The main block's single-ply ethylene propylene diene monomer (EDPM) roof is fair condition. Some sections are original, while others have been replaced as recently as 2009. The very low-pitched gable roof system consists of steel beams, wood rafters, and 2 ½" -thick wood decking boards. The warehouse has a flat thermoplastic polyolefin (TPO) single-ply roof installed in 2008.³

Water filtration tower, late 1980s, noncontributing structure

A tall, square, metal-sheathed water filtration tower stands on a poured-concrete pad northwest of the warehouse.

Equipment shed, 1997, noncontributing structure

An eight-bay-wide, open-sided, metal-roofed equipment shed occupies the lot's northwest corner. During the shed's 1997 construction, the Ray Company used existing concrete platforms as piers to support the wood posts flanking the west three bays.⁴

³ Wes Wilkinson, Ray Company, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 15, 2015.

⁴ Ibid.

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Section 8. Statement of Significance

Speas Vinegar Company at 2921 North Tryon Street in Charlotte, North Carolina, meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion C for architecture. The plant is a notably intact example of an industrial edifice with exposed steel interior framing and load-bearing brick exterior walls. The manufacturing area's open plan accommodated sizable vinegar generators and vats. The building displays elements common in early-twentieth-century fireproof industrial construction such as a low-pitched gable-roof, red brick exterior walls executed in six-to-one common bond, brick pilasters with concrete caps separating the bays, multipane steel-frame windows, and a long roof monitor.

The period of significance begins in 1939 with the building's completion and continues through the addition of two bays to the main block's west end in the late 1950s. Speas Vinegar Company, followed by H. J. Heinz Company and Fleischmann's Vinegar Company, manufactured distilled white and apple cider vinegar in the factory until 1994.

Historical Background

In the 1850s, Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line, North Carolina Central, North Carolina State, and Charlotte and South Carolina Railroads connected Charlotte to the region's major markets, facilitating the transport of raw materials and manufactured goods. During the late nineteenth century, myriad plants generated large quantities of building supplies, chemicals, equipment and machinery, pharmaceuticals, processed food, and textiles. Firms specializing in food production included American Mercantile Company, which completed a vinegar factory in August 1898.⁵

Industrial concerns burgeoned as the twentieth century dawned, fueling Charlotte's economy and building construction. In 1900, the city encompassed 18,091 residents and 112 manufacturing establishments that utilized 2,988 workers to generate products valued at \$4,702,301.⁶ Entrepreneurs launched many lucrative ventures during the century's first decades. Improved transportation networks, particularly paved highways, contributed to Charlotte becoming a distribution center in the 1920s. Lower land prices on the city's outskirts encouraged industrial development and allowed for unfettered expansion. Companies including baked goods purveyor Nabisco, Inc., prepared and distributed

⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, August 23, 1898, p. 6.; LeGette Blythe and Charles Raven Brockmann. *Hornet's Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), 272-279; Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 15, 31-32, 49-50.

⁶ William R. Merriam, director, *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900, Manufactures, Part II* (Washington, D. C.: United States Census Office, 1902), 663.

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merchandise from sizable new brick factories located outside of downtown's core. Railroad lines served the outlying areas.⁷

In 1920, federal census returns enumerated 6,242 Mecklenburg County residents employed at 127 manufacturing establishments. The vast majority (5,161) worked in 111 Charlotte businesses. Food-related enterprises included bakeries, canneries, confectionaries, creameries, flour and grist mills, and oil mills. Beginning in the early 1920s, Charlotte hosted the annual "Made-in-Carolinas Exposition" to promote North and South Carolina's industrial concerns.⁸ Most manufacturers operated from utilitarian brick buildings, but the Coca-Cola Bottling Company erected at 1401-1409 West Morehead Street in 1929-1930 features elaborate Art Deco-style ornament executed in cast stone.

In 1930, many of Charlotte's 82,675 citizens found work in industrial concerns, which occupied 167 complexes that year. The few industrial buildings erected during the period are purely functional, reflecting a widespread decline in companies' sales and profits during the early 1930s as a result of the economic depression. The circa 1931 Ashworth Brothers Building at 1201 Graham Street is embellished only with slightly projecting brick pilasters. Despite reduced physical growth, Charlotte's industrialists persevered and most existing plants remained open and were joined by new endeavors. In 1937, 191 manufacturing establishments reported production.⁹

Although a late 1930s recession slowed the country's recovery, some established enterprises expanded to new locations. Industrial architecture remained austere, with examples including Speas Vinegar Company's 1939 Charlotte plant at 2921 North Tryon Street and the smaller 1940 Nehi Bottling Company at 2308 North Tryon Street featuring simple brick pilasters. The one-story Charlotte Linen Supply Building at 1430 South Mint Street, completed in 1939, manifests Art Moderne-style elements such as curved corners with brick laid in stack bond.

Charlotte's ongoing industrial development resulted in population growth. The almost twenty-square-mile municipality encompassed 100,899 residents by 1940. Industrial production increased significantly during World War II, with 310 facilities generating goods in 1943. Only a small number of plants prepared and packaged food products, however. In 1945, the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce enumerated seven sizable food processing companies including Speas Vinegar. In 1948, the Chamber of Commerce estimated that 243 non-textile-related industrial plants contributed to the city's fifty-million-dollar overall manufacturing product value. Its publications featured photographs of substantial buildings recently erected by companies including Brown Equipment (trucks, trailers), Buckeye Cotton Oil, Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Company, Interstate Milling (flour), Old Dominion Box, Scandinavia

⁷ Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City*, 186.

⁸ Edgar T. Thompson, *Agricultural Mecklenburg and Industrial Charlotte* (Charlotte: Chamber of Commerce, 1926), 131-132, 165-166.

⁹ Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, "City of Charlotte," 1938, 1, 7.

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Belting, Southern Friction Materials, and Speas Vinegar. Enormous warehouses housed merchandise for purveyors who handled just over twenty-one percent of North Carolina's wholesale trade.¹⁰

Banking, manufacturing, and wholesaling continued to drive Charlotte's economy through the mid-twentieth century. In 1954, 21,511 employees facilitated manufacturing at 385 firms. Speas Vinegar Company and other manufacturers invested in plant improvements and equipment upgrades in the late 1950s and through the ensuing decade. The Charlotte Chamber of Commerce determined in 1966 that 526 manufacturers utilized 31,975 workers. Most were relatively small concerns, but others occupied expansive industrial complexes.¹¹

Vinegar Manufacturing

Vinegar serves many purposes, with the most common domestic and industrial uses including food preservation and cleaning. Vinegar creation requires the exposure of ethyl alcohol or an alcohol-containing liquid derived from fruit (typically apples or grapes), grains, or potatoes to air, thus initiating an oxidation process during which bacteria converts alcohol into acetic acid. The simplest historic production methods involved leaving an open vat, often a wooden barrel, of fruit juice at room temperature for a few months to ferment and then oxidize. Throughout the twentieth century, distilled and industrial vinegar manufacturing typically employed the generator method, whereby alcohol dripped through tall oak-lined vats filled with charcoal, fruit pulp, or beechwood shavings while compressors pumped air into the vats over the course of a few weeks. The vinegar that collected at the bottom of the vats was highly concentrated and was thus diluted with water prior to use. Distilled vinegar production involved the additional step of bringing vinegar to a boil in large tanks, creating a vapor that when collected in a condenser and cooled liquefied as distilled vinegar. Beginning in the 1980s, many vinegar manufacturers replaced generators with acetators, stainless steel tanks without filters that utilize centrifugal pumps to generate air bubbles. This oxidation process takes only a few hours.¹²

Speas Vinegar Company History

Ten-year-old Missouri native John Wesley Speas moved to Kansas City with his family in 1872. After studying at Spalding's Business College and working for W. A. Bunker, he served as Kansas City

¹⁰ Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, "Charlotte: The Industrial Center of the Carolinas," 1945, 5, 16; Maxwell R. Conklin, chief, Industry Division, *Census of Manufactures, 1947, Volume III* (Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 451; Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, "Charlotte, North Carolina: Focal Point of the Carolinas," 1948.

¹¹ Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City*, 225; Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, "Directory of Manufacturers, Mecklenburg County, N. C.," 1966, 1, 3-4.

¹² "Vinegar," How Products are Made, Volume 7, <http://www.madehow.com/Volume-7/Vinegar.html> (accessed January 2015); Peter Klock, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 8, 2015.

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Distilling Company's bookkeeper. Speas invested in Monarch Vinegar Works and became the company's sole proprietor by the time he married Evelyn Southworth on December 17, 1882. He established Speas Vinegar Company in 1888. The Kansas City concern produced apple cider and white distilled vinegar for use in cooking, pickling, preserving, and cleaning.¹³

The company enjoyed success in the early twentieth century, but John Wesley Speas shot himself in June 1909 after suffering from a terminal illness. His widow and the couple's son Victor E. Speas, then eighteen years old, inherited his estate. Victor assumed the company's management in 1911. As strong sales fueled the business's growth, he orchestrated the construction of expansive plants throughout the country.¹⁴

A dearth of company records makes an overview of its growth difficult. Disparate sources indicate that Speas Vinegar operated twenty-six plants, most of which were in the southern United States, by 1956. Newspapers occasionally mentioned plant construction. In some cases, local investors subsidized such endeavors. For example, in 1938, Gregory-Robinson-Speas Vinegar Company completed a \$350,000 building in Dallas, Texas.¹⁵ The architects and/or engineers the company used to create its factory plans have not been identified.

Each plant contained similar components: manufacturing areas for oxidizing, distilling, bottling, and packing vinegar; a warehouse; and offices. Oxidation vats were often located outside the building's footprint, while distillation tanks, condensers, and equipment needed to sterilize, fill, label, and package containers were inside. Merchants sold vinegar to chain stores and wholesale grocery distributors in quantities ranging from pint-size bottles and gallon jugs for household consumption. Industrial clients purchased vinegar by the barrel.

Vinegar factories were typically located in areas that afforded access to the raw materials necessary for production. Despite North Carolina's ample apple supply, Speas Vinegar was the only vinegar and cider manufacturer listed in the North Carolina Department of Labor's 1944 *Directory of Manufacturing Firms*. The company promoted vinegar's usefulness through newspaper advertisements and recipe books.¹⁶

Speas Vinegar Company became a subsidiary of The Pillsbury Company in 1978. In June 1980 Pillsbury sold the Charlotte property to H. J. Heinz Company, headquartered in Pittsburgh,

¹³ "The End to John W. Speas," *Kansas City Star*, June 3, 1909, p. 1.

¹⁴ Ibid., "The Will of John W. Speas," *Kansas City Star*, June 8, 1909, p. 1; "A Philanthropist here Dies at 81," *Kansas City Star*, March 3, 1970.

¹⁵ "Paris News," February 17, 1938, p. 2.

¹⁶ North Carolina Department of Labor, *Directory of Manufacturing Firms* (Raleigh: Division of Statistics, 1944), 164; "Vinegar Recipe Book Offered By Speas," *High Point Enterprise*, March 20, 1964, p. 9B.

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Pennsylvania. H. J. Heinz Company used the building for vinegar production until July 1983, when New Jersey-based Nabisco, Inc., purchased the property.¹⁷ At that time Fleischmann's Vinegar, a Nabisco subsidiary headquartered in Oakland, California, undertook significant improvements, the majority of which optimized vinegar production. In June 1984, the plant's annual output numbered seven million gallons of vinegar, eighty-five percent of which was distilled white and the remainder garnered from apple cider and corn sugar. Most of its industrial clients utilized vinegar as an ingredient in condiment manufacture.¹⁸

Plant manager Peter Klock oversaw building envelope updates in the 1980s ranging from window cleaning and reglazing to sheathing the 1939 roof monitor with vinyl siding. The company also painted the façade's upper edge; window sills on the main block's east, south, and west elevations; and some exterior doors and door trim with the bright blue paint scheme that remains in 2015. Company offices occupied the first floor's southeast corner, while the concrete-block-walled room to the west served briefly as a bottling facility. Fleischmann's soon dispensed with this endeavor, however, and the plant supplied manufacturers with barrels of vinegar for industrial purposes.¹⁹

The holes in the 1939 generators that allowed for the oxidation process and the lack of tight seals around wood pipes resulted in considerable vapor leakage. In order to achieve greater efficiency, Fleischmann's replaced the original generators with two twenty-foot-tall and seventeen-foot-wide fiberglass generators that had tight seals. The chemical process remained the same, however, as the new generators also facilitated bacterial conversion of ethyl alcohol to vinegar as liquid dripped through beechwood shavings. Fume scrubbers ameliorated production-associated odors. To expedite factory cleaning, the company removed sections of the original brick floor and added concrete drains that emptied on the building's west side.²⁰

¹⁷ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4310, p. 208; Deed Book 4701, p. 252.

¹⁸ The Fleischmann Company, incorporated in Delaware in 1929, acquired majority interest in twenty-four subsidiary businesses by 1940. The concerns generated products including yeast, baking powder, malt syrup, dough improvers, frozen eggs, cream, and rye bread cultures for industrial bakers as well as rye and barley malt for distillers, gin, vinegar, coffee, and gelatin and pudding desserts. In 1940, the company's holdings included six vinegar plants, one of which was at its Peekskill, New York, complex, which encompassed 101 buildings. By 1945, the Fleischmann Company's umbrella organization operated under the name of one of its subsidiaries, Standard Brands, Inc. Although mergers and acquisitions through the twentieth century continued to diversify its manufacturing endeavors, yeast, coffee, vinegar, malted grains, and liquor remained the company's most significant products. John Moody, *Moody's Manual of Investments: American and Foreign* (New York: Moody's Investors Service, Inc., 1940), 2925; John Moody, *Moody's Manual of Investments: American and Foreign* (New York: Moody's Investors Service, Inc., 1945), 2884-2885; Peter Klock, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 8, 2015; Louise Lione, "The Ancient Art of Vinegar Making," *Charlotte Observer*, June 28, 1984, p. 14A.

¹⁹ Peter Klock, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 8, 2015.

²⁰ Ibid.

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Heinz purchased staves to construct approximately thirty circular wood vinegar tanks that in the rear yard, but never erected them. Nabisco, Inc., conveyed the property to Oakland, California-based Fleischmann's Yeast, Inc., in June 1986. Fleischmann's engaged a Japanese contractor from California to assemble the tanks, most of which had a 30,000-40,000-gallon capacity. As part of a nationwide consolidation of many small plants, Fleischmann's closed the Charlotte facility in 1994.²¹

In March 1997, Fleischmann's sold the property to Michael W. Wilkinson and his wife Janis G. Wilson. Fleischmann's removed all vinegar generators, tanks, and vats. Roofing contractor The Ray Company, Inc., established in 1904, soon leased the property. The Ray Company embarked upon a renovation project before occupying the building in 1997 that created second-story offices, a conference room, file room, and restrooms. In August 2010, Michael W. Wilkinson conveyed the property to 2921 Investors, a LLC in which he holds a majority interest.²²

Industrial Architecture Context

Designers of purpose-built industrial buildings strove to accommodate machinery in a manner that allowed for efficient access to power sources as well as the utilization of natural light and ventilation. Most industrial buildings erected through the mid-nineteenth century were of "slow-burn" masonry construction, with load-bearing brick walls, exposed heavy-timber framing, thick plank floors, gabled roofs, large operable windows and transoms, and metal fire doors.²³ During the late nineteenth century, steam and electric power availability encouraged factory location in close proximity to railroad lines and large potential employee pools. Mill and factory construction evolved from a vernacular process whereby owners worked with builders who erected edifices based on mutually understood norms to a field dominated by professionally-trained engineers who designed industrial buildings and supervised their construction. Standards imposed by machinery manufacturers and insurance companies also guided industrial architecture's evolution. Innovations such as roof monitors provided mill workers with abundant light and ventilation.²⁴

North Carolina industrialists benefited from the contributions of resident architects and engineers who disseminated specifications dictating best practices in mill layout and function. These men sometimes

²¹ Peter Klock, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 8, 2015; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 5261, p. 344.

²² Mecklenburg County Deed Book 8992, p. 619; Deed Book 23214, p. 376; Deed Book 25839, p. 857; Wes Wilkinson, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 15, 2015.

²³ Sara E. Wermiel, "Heavy Timber Framing in Late-Nineteenth-Century Commercial and Industrial Buildings," *APT Bulletin: Journal of Preservation Technology*, Volume 35, No. 1, 2004, 56.

²⁴ Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15-21; "Piedmont Manufacturing Company,"

http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/DOE_dedesignations/Piedmont.htm, accessed in February 2011.

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designed structural systems for late-nineteenth-century industrial buildings that included cast-iron or wrought-iron columns or steel posts and beams, but high cost greatly limited the materials' use until the early twentieth century. The ability to withstand the weight and vibrations of heavy machinery without failing contributed to the popularity of structural-steel construction, as did the ease of fabricating framing systems from standard factory-generated components. Typical elements include I, T, H, and box-shaped posts and beams as well as reinforcing plates, angles, and webs. Steel posts and beams could be riveted together, creating strong connections, and tended to be smaller and lighter than heavy-timber or iron framing members. This allowed for wider and taller buildings with more square footage for equipment. The popularity of flat roofs and sizable roof monitors also resulted in structural-steel framing prevalence. In order to reduce oxidation and achieve fire resistance, steel members were coated with intumescent paint; sprayed with a thin mixture of cement, sand, and water called gunite; or encased in concrete.²⁵

Industrial buildings such as the 1939 Speas Vinegar Company manifest a cost-effective combination of steel interior framing and load-bearing brick exterior walls that was particularly popular as the county recovered from economic recession. Open interior plans accommodated sizable equipment and allowed for flexibility as manufacturing needs changed. Building materials and labor were in short supply during World War II, but when construction resumed after the war's end, industrial architecture often incorporated steel framing with masonry curtain walls and large steel sash. In these buildings, engineered brick, concrete, or tile curtain walls provided structural bracing but did not carry any weight. Steel truss roof systems spanned open interiors.²⁶

Although most industrial buildings were intended to be functional and fire-resistant rather than aesthetic masterpieces, they reflect many of the ideas promoted by architects such as Albert Kahn, Walter Gropius, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Industrial architecture consistently utilizes new building materials, technology, and forms in an attempt to create structures that manifest efficiency, modernity, and economic progress. Albert Kahn was one of only a few American architects who specialized in early-twentieth-century industrial building design. His Detroit office designed hundreds of factories for American industrialists, including automobile manufacturers Packard, Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors, as well as for international clients. At the 1910 Packard Motor Car Company Forge Shop in Detroit, Kahn used a steel structural frame to support a traveling crane mounted to the roof trusses and glass curtain walls to allow for maximum light and ventilation. He minimized the exterior walls' bay articulation by using narrow steel columns of about the same size as steel window sash. Kahn's practice continued to utilize bands of steel windows in conjunction with masonry or concrete screens to conceal steel structural framing in buildings such as the ca. 1915 Industrial Works in Bay City, Michigan. The firm's design for the Dodge Half-Ton Truck Plant in Detroit, completed in 1937, was a much more

²⁵ Bradley, *The Works*, 144-147.

²⁶ Ibid.

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sophisticated structure, with tall glazed curtain walls reminiscent of Walter Gropius's 1926 Bauhaus School in Dessau, Germany.²⁷

Charlotte's Non-textile-related Industrial Buildings

In 2001, architectural historians Sarah A. Woodard and Sherry Joines Wyatt completed a survey of Charlotte's industrial and educational buildings erected through 1945. They documented fifty-four industrial complexes: seventeen textile mills, one mill village, eight plants constructed for textile-related businesses, nine warehouses, thirteen miscellaneous manufacturing plants, and six factories utilized to generate food, beverages, and ice. Woodard and Wyatt included the 1939 Speas Vinegar Company in this last group, along with the 1940 Nehi Bottling Company, which is quite similar in its austere appearance. The 1929-1930 Coca-Cola Bottling Company at 1401-1409 West Morehead Street features elaborate Art Deco-style cast-stone ornament. Concerns erected the remaining three surveyed buildings associated with food production much earlier, from around 1900 to 1917.²⁸ Richard Mattson and Frances Alexander's Route 4 area update of the Charlotte architectural survey executed in 2014 recorded the Charlotte Linen Supply Building at 1430 South Mint Street, an Art Moderne-style edifice erected in 1939.

In order to take advantage of lower land prices and allow for unfettered expansion, many Charlotte industrialists located factories on the city's outskirts rather than in its downtown core. The 1939 Speas Vinegar Company and other manufacturing plants built in the 1930s and early 1940s are similar in their outlying location as well as their streamlined, functional construction that reflects the era's austerity. Most surveyed twentieth-century industrial buildings share characteristics such as brick walls containing bands of large multipane steel-frame windows that provide maximum light and ventilation while enclosing concrete and steel structures. The Charlotte architectural surveys did not include interior building documentation. However, steel interior framing prevailed nationally during this period due to its strength, resilience, and affordability.

The circa 1931 Ashworth Brothers Building at 1201 Graham Street, designed to serve as a card clothing manufacturing facility to supply the textile industry, is three bays wide and ten bays deep. Like Speas Vinegar Company, brick pilasters flank the bays. The Ashworth Brothers Building has no original windows, however, as the openings have all been enclosed, either with brick and smaller plate-glass windows or with large, four-part, aluminum-frame sash.²⁹

²⁷ Bradley, *The Works*, 248, 248–258. “Art: Industrial Architect,” *Time*, August 8, 1938.

²⁸ Sarah A. Woodard and Sherry Joines Wyatt, “Industry, Transportation and Education: The New South Development of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County,” report prepared for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission and the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, September 2001, 39-41.

²⁹ Mattson, Alexander, and Associates, Inc., “Ashworth Brothers Building,” 2014 Route 4 area survey file at the State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh.

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The four-bay-wide by two-bay-deep main block of the 1940 Nehi Bottling Company at 2308 North Tryon Street is much smaller than that of Speas Vinegar Company, but the Nehi building displays identical brick pilasters with cast-stone caps and also has a one-story rear warehouse. Cast-stone coping embellished with Art Deco-style geometric motifs embellish the flat parapet. As with the Ashworth Brothers Building, all of the window openings have been infilled with brick or smaller windows.³⁰

The architect of the one-story Hudson Hosiery Manufacturing Company complex at 4701 Monroe Road, erected in three phases in 1935, 1938, and 1939, also specified the use of brick pilasters with cast-stone caps. A stepped parapet and varying pilaster heights further ornament the otherwise austere edifice. Pilasters alternate between extending to the parapet's full height and terminating at the top of the window openings.³¹

A few industrial buildings erected during the period manifest elements of the Art Moderne style. The one-story Charlotte Linen Supply Building at 1430 South Mint Street, completed in 1939, features curved corners with brick laid in stack bond, cast-stone coping, and large window openings, all of which have been filled with replacement aluminum-frame windows. A low-gable-roofed monitor also illuminates the interior.³²

Speas Vinegar Company is the most intact of this sample. The multi-pane steel-frame windows with operable ventilators and sizable roof monitor are significant survivals. Interior elements such as brick and concrete floors, exposed steel posts and beams, and open plan in the manufacturing and warehouse areas reflect the building's functional design. The concrete platform that wraps around the building's south and east elevations is an intact example of a 1930s loading dock.

³⁰ Mattson, Alexander, and Associates, Inc., "Nehi Bottling Company," 2014 Route 4 area survey file at the State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh.

³¹ Sarah A. Woodard and Sherry Joines Wyatt, "Hudson Hosiery Manufacturing Company," 2001 survey file at the State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh.

³² Mattson, Alexander, and Associates, Inc., "Charlotte Linen Supply," 2014 Route 4 area survey file at the State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh.

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Section 10. Geographical Data

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

1. Latitude: 35.251372 Longitude: -80.812423

Verbal Boundary Description

Speas Vinegar Company's National Register boundaries are indicated by the bold line on the enclosed map. Scale approximately 1" = 100'

Boundary Justification

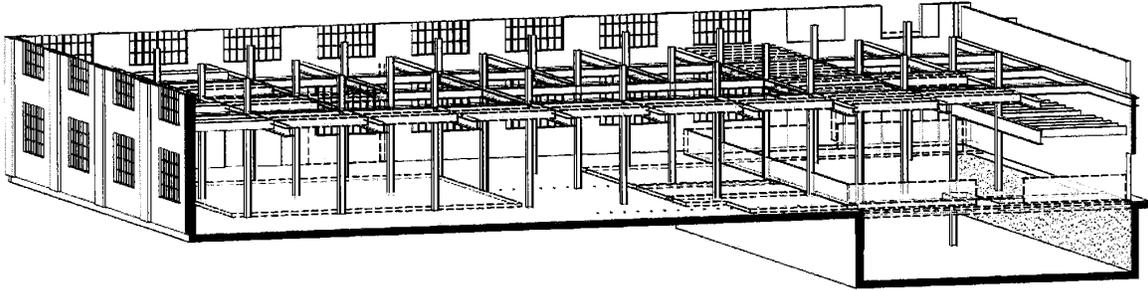
The 2.61-acre parcel just over two miles north of downtown Charlotte's central commercial district encompasses the acreage historically associated with Speas Vinegar Company.

Additional Documentation: Photographs

Photographs by Heather Fearnbach, 3334 Nottingham Road, Winston-Salem, NC, on December 16, 2014. Digital images located at the North Carolina SHPO.

1. Façade (south elevation), looking northeast
2. East elevation, looking northwest
3. Warehouse, northwest oblique
4. Two-story section, north elevation
5. Looking southeast from the rear yard with the water filtration tower in the foreground
6. Two-story section, first floor, east end, looking north into the warehouse
7. Two-story section, manufacturing area, pit at east end
8. Two-story section, manufacturing area, first floor, west end
9. Warehouse, south room, looking south
10. Second floor offices and meeting room, looking northeast

Speas Vinegar Company
2921 North Tryon Street
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina



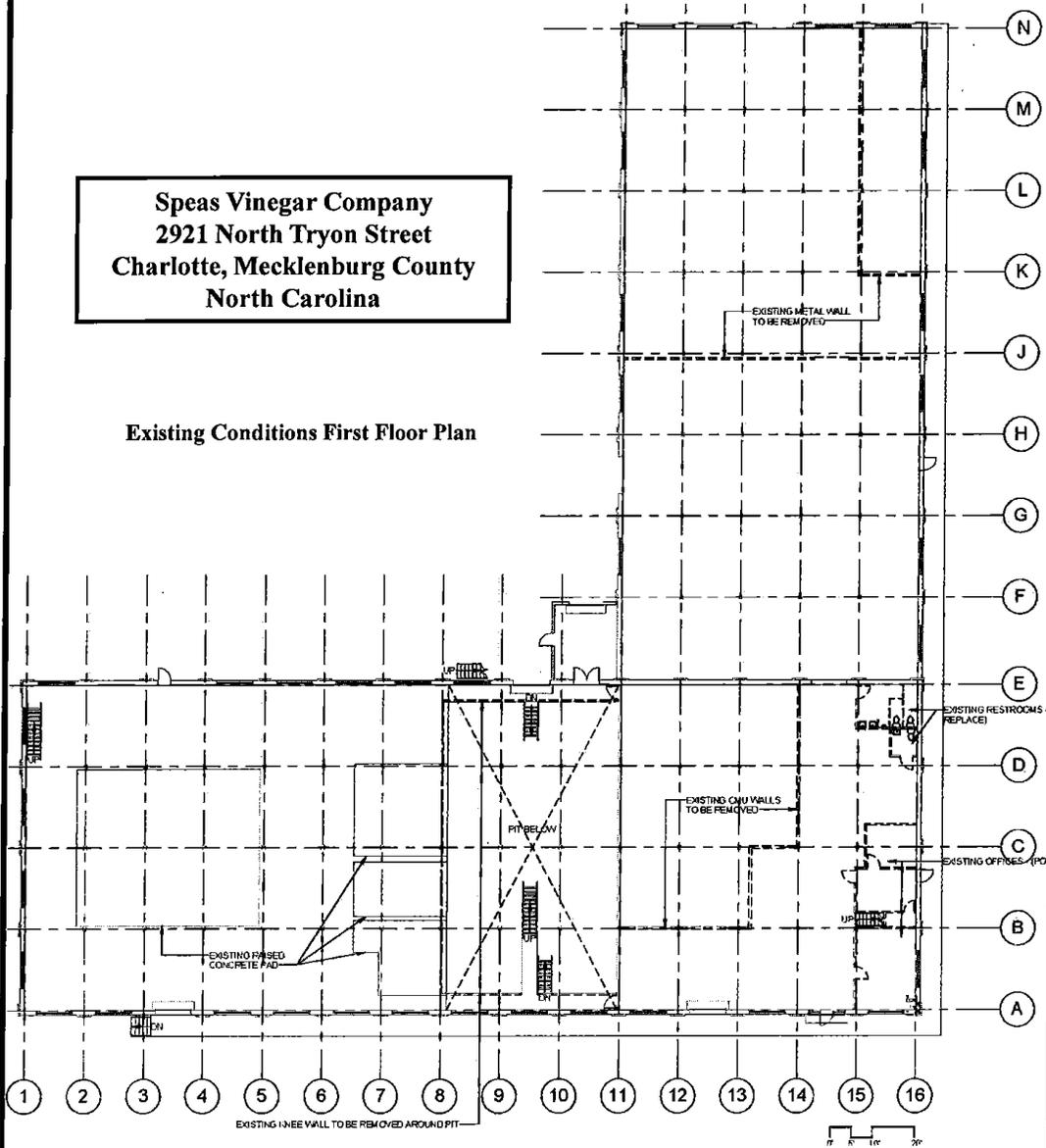
Interior steel frame in manufacturing area

Fearnbach History Services, Inc. / March 2015
Plan drawn by Overcash Demmitt Architects in February 2015



**Speas Vinegar Company
2921 North Tryon Street
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County
North Carolina**

Existing Conditions First Floor Plan



Fearnbach History Services, Inc. / March 2015
Plan drawn by Overcash Demmitt Architects in November 2014

