

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only
received _____
date entered _____

1. Name

historic China Grove Roller Mill

and/or common _____

2. Location

street & number 308 North Main Street

_____ not for publication

city, town China Grove _____ vicinity of _____

state North Carolina code 037 county Rowan code 159

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name China Grove Roller Mills, Inc., Mrs. Rogers C. Sherrill, President

street & number Post Office Box 597

city, town China Grove _____ vicinity of _____ state N. C. 28023

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Rowan County Office Building

street & number 402 North Main Street

city, town Salisbury _____ state N. C. 28144

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title The Architecture of Rowan County has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date To be published Summer 1983 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local _____

depository for survey records Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History

city, town 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh _____ state N. C. 27611

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

China Grove Roller Mills, Inc. is located at 308 North Main Street in China Grove, N. C., ten miles south of the Rowan County seat of Salisbury. The village, (population 1,780) which derives its name from the once prevalent Chinaberry tree, a small ornamental shade tree, served as a cotton and chicken market for the surrounding agricultural communities.

The present handsome three-story brick mill was constructed in 1903 to replace the original 1896 frame mill building. The earlier mill building which housed a sawmill and cotton gin as well as a grist mill, was moved to the 200 block of Main Street and used as a residence until it was subsequently torn down and the Rowan County Savings & Loan built on that lot.

The crisp signs painted on the mill's brick facade, the din of the working, intact 1906 milling machinery, several additions of varying dates and the constant stream of farmers's pickup trucks through the paved parking lot proclaim that the China Grove Roller Mill is a going concern, still family owned and continuously operated since its founding 88 years ago. In addition to its usual three day per week wheat or corn grinding schedule and production of 5/10/50 lb. sacks of flour or meal, the mill also retails dog, horse, and rabbit feed, salt licks and gardening needs such as seeds, bedding plants, fertilizers, etc. Jack Miller, the miller, oversees operations from a small one story, two bay wide, one bay deep, tin covered gable roof brick office, built in 1940 in front of the mill near the street. It is furnished with the original roll top desk and safe from the former mill office in the main mill building which is now used for storage.

Facing west, onto Main Street and parallel with the street, the China Grove Roller Mill is rectangular in plan, three stories in height above a basement, four bays wide on its west front elevation and three bays deep, laid up in warm red brick in a five to one running bond. The tin covered gable roof is pierced by one simple flue stack and a pair of short ventilators on the western slope and one on its eastern slope. The white trimmed windows are segmentally arched, 2/2 sash, with parged brick windowsills, except for those on the third floor front and rear elevations which are of wooden awning type with two vertical panes divided by a plain, vertical muntin.

A sheet tin shed roof carried by plain square posts shelters the front loading dock and door which are reached by a short flight of wooden steps rising at its north end. The roof butts against what appears to be an early addition, the original shed roof office, sheathed in white board and batten, covered with sheet tin. The interior of this office has a narrow beaded board ceiling with the same boards used to create wainscoting below the plastered walls.

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Description

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Two later (c. 1920-1940) one story brick garage additions follow the gentle downhill slope to the right south of the main facade. The first, with a stepped parapet roofline, is lighted by two 2/2 rectangular sash windows and has a door with five horizontal molded panels, and a garage door. The other adjoining garage addition features brick corbelling over the slightly recessed side-hinged double door opening and further to the south an open shed entrance flanked by metal trimmed casement windows. A projecting, tin shed roof shelters the entrance to this garage. The four bay south facade of the garage addition is partially obscured by a large metal storage tank. The second and third story south elevation of the main mill building rises above the flat roofs of the garage additions and presents, on the second story, three segmentally arched 2/2 sash windows, and on the third story, one centered 2/2 sash window.

Much of the east or rear facade of the main mill block is obscured by additions, including the one story, metal shed roofed grain storage area which rests on a cinder block foundation. The addition, erected in 1974, butts against the original mill, extending across the entire eastern elevation, enclosing the 1913 metal covered three-story with cupola grain elevator, and wraps around the storage building nearly reaching the juncture of the main mill and the grain elevator on the north elevation. The uncovered rear portion of the original mill reveals one 2/2 sash window on the second floor and two awning type windows on the third floor. (The asymmetrical arrangement of windows in the mill reflects the placement of a variety of stationary machinery needed for the mill operation.) Also at the rear stands a 3,800 gallon molasses tank and sprayer used in the production of horse feed. The molasses and some of the grains are brought in by train on the siding running parallel to, and close by, the mill.

Set in a segmental arch on the north facade is the handsome recessed main entrance with paired four molded panel doors and molded, panelled reveals. The entrance is reached via a short flight of wooden steps rising west to east. A shed roof porch carried by plain square posts and brackets shelters the loading dock and entry, and extends east to meet the 1974 addition. On the second floor level of the mill are two 2/2 sash windows, with three sash windows on the third floor.

Despite the additional area provided by the large metal covered grain elevator attached to the rear of the mill, lack of storage area necessitates periodic year round purchase of the local semi-hard wheat, corn, oats and barley. The loaded trucks drive onto a Howe Scale, manufactured in Rutland, Vermont, at the rear or east elevation. The various grains are offloaded and then stored in small bins in the one story shed roof, metal sided addition built in 1974 after a fire at the rear of the mill. The majority of the belt drive grain processing machinery dates from 1906 when the mill was converted from the original steam power to electricity. While the base for the steam engine still remains, the basement now houses an assortment of electric motors including one 75 hp, two 65 hp, and two 40 hp belted to the mill machinery.

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Through a labyrinth of beaded wooden chutes, the grains are elevated by cup belts to the third floor where they begin the route of travel which will grind and refine the whole grain to flour. On the third floor is a scouring machine which cleans and polishes the whole grains, removing grainfield weeds including cockle. The fine dust, constantly generated by a gristmill, is collected on this floor by metal Whirlwind Dust Collectors, and is used as a component in animal feed. From the scourers, the grain moves to the sifters or bolters, so named after the jiggling action of the machine which draws the grain through an increasingly fine series of silkscreens. The final sifting is done by the whip-sifter, with its very rapid side to side motion.

On the second floor are the dressers or separators, wheat bin and a corn cracker.

On the first floor, among the large chamfered timbers which frame the building, are six 1906 roller mills. This sturdy machinery is in very good condition with only an occasional recorrugating needed for the rollers. Also on this floor are the mixers for the self-rising flour, manufactured by the Robinson Co., Muncy Pennsylvania, dated June 12, 1906, which add salt, phosphate and soda to the regular flour. The Showes Company (Silver Creek, N.Y.) manufactured the packers for the plain and self-rising flour and for animal feed stand opposite the mills, their wooden knee operated levers worn smooth after 80 years of use.

There is a belt drive man-lift elevator connecting the basement and three floors, as well as a staircase in the southeast corner.

On operating days, the China Grove Mill produces 420 lb. of flour every 28 minutes. Modern nutritional concerns have necessitated some changes in the end product. The flour is enriched and no longer "bleached", although the bags, whose art work probably dates from the early 1940s, claim it is. Due to a lessening of interest in home baking, bag sizes have also changed from 24/48/98 lb. sizes to 5/10/50 lb. And wheat bran and wheat germ, once considered fit only for animal feed, are now popular for human consumption.

The China Grove Roller Mill is an architectural and historical landmark in China Grove. The handsome and sturdy 1906 brick mill with its various additions, replaces the earlier 1896 frame mill. The business has been locally owned and continuously operated for 88 years, providing a strong sense of continuity in the village. It is the oldest continuously operating concern in China Grove. The mill continues to act as a center for the community, a place not only to buy fertilizer and seeds, but a place to pass the time of day with fellow farmers as the wheat or corn crop is milled, by the smoothly operating original machinery, into a fine quality flour or meal.

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¹ Interview with Jack Miller, miller China Grove Roller Mill, May 5, 1983, China Grove. Mr. Miller provided much of the information about the milling process, the uses of the various machines, and the dates of the additions.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1903 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The China Grove Roller Mill, a three-story brick industrial building erected in 1903 to replace the firm's earlier frame building, possesses historical, architectural, and industrial significance in China Grove and Rowan County. The tall brick mill, enlivened by signs painted on its street front elevation, survives intact as an important example of industrial architecture in both the town and county. Although it has received additions, they have not compromised nor impaired the building's integrity. China Grove Roller Mills, Inc. enjoys the distinction of being one of the oldest continuously operated concerns, either industrial or commercial, in Rowan County. J. F. Cooper (1866-1949) oversaw the operation of the mill for over half a century serving as secretary-treasurer from 1898 until 1934 and as president from 1934 until his death. He was succeeded as president by his son Whitson L. Cooper (1982-1964) who also served as president until his death in 1964 and has been succeeded, in turn, by his daughter, Mrs. Rogers C. Sherrill, the current president. As one of the first roller mills in Rowan County, the China Grove Roller Mill is an important landmark in the industrialization of Rowan County and Piedmont North Carolina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. China Grove Roller Mill is associated with the agricultural prosperity of Rowan County and the late-nineteenth/early twentieth century industrialization of piedmont North Carolina.
- B. The mill is associated with the lives of members of the Cooper family who have served as officers in the mill company from 1898 to the present. In 1898 J. F. Cooper was elected secretary-treasurer of the company and served in that capacity, with M. N. Ketchie as president until Ketchie's death after which (1934) he assumed presidency of the firm serving until his death in 1949. He was succeeded by his son Whitson L. Cooper who served as president from 1950 until his death and, in turn, by his granddaughter Rogers Cooper Sherrill, who succeeded her father in 1965 and continues to run the mill.
- C. China Grover Roller Mill, with most of its original 1903 machinery intact and operating, survives as an important example of industrial architecture in Rowan County and embodies the distinctive, functional characteristics of its type.

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The China Grove Roller Mill Company was chartered in 1895 by local businessmen and farmers as one of the first roller flour mills in Rowan County. The original frame mill building was replaced on the same site in 1903 by the present three-story brick structure. Some of the mill equipment still in use may date from 1895, but most of it is 1906-1911 vintage machinery. The mill has been locally owned and continuously operated since its founding eighty-eight years ago.

The China Grove post office was established in 1823 at a crossroads trading center for the surrounding agricultural area.¹ The community was located approximately halfway between the Rowan County seat of Salisbury, ten miles to the north, and the Cabarrus County seat of Concord, twelve miles south. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, China Grove served farmers of several counties as a cotton and chicken market. An 1878 business directory listed two general stores, carriage, wagon, and wheel factories in the village, and three of the twenty-four corn and flour mills in Rowan County were in China Grove.² By 1884, however, there were only fifteen corn and flour mills still operating in the county with only one mill, that of S. N. Wilson, remaining in China Grove.³

S. N. Wilson's mill was the only corn and flour mill in the community until the China Grove Roller Mill was organized in 1895. As its name implied, the new mill employed the roller process, a relatively new method of grinding corn and wheat. The roller mill process, first used in the United States in 1876, substituted a series of steel rollers in place of millstones for grinding grain. The rollers produced a cleaner and finer flour and meal that sold at higher prices than that made with grindstones.⁴ The first roller mill in Rowan County was probably the McCubbins-Harrison mill at Mill Bridge, converted from grindstones to rollers in 1886-1887.⁵ The Salisbury Roller Mill was operating by 1892 and the China Grove mill was probably the third roller mill in the county when it opened in 1896; the North Side Roller Mill began operating the next year in Salisbury.

At the time the China Grove Mill was organized, China Grove and all of Rowan County was experiencing a period of agricultural prosperity and the beginnings of the industrialization that would change the economy of piedmont North Carolina in the next several decades. With a population of about 500, China Grove was incorporated in 1889 with General Andrew Jackson Sechler as the first mayor.⁶ In 1893 a large cotton mill, the Patterson Manufacturing Company, was opened in the town by Frank Patterson.⁷ Both Sechler and Patterson were instrumental in establishing the China Grove Roller Mill Company, with Patterson serving as the company's first secretary and treasurer and Sechler as a director.⁸ Other founders and officers of the company were John C. Corriher (1849-1895), the first president of the mill and owner of a general store in China Grove; D. W. Bostian, a prominent farmer who served as a director; and M. M. Ketchie, also a director and one of the managers of the mill. At Corriher's death in 1895 Sechler was elected president of the mill company and was followed in the office by A. L. Patterson; at Patterson's death in 1898 M. M. Ketchie was elected president and J. F. Cooper (1866-1949) was elected secretary and treasurer. Cooper succeeded Ketchie as president in 1934 and served until his death in 1949. Cooper's son, Whitson L. Cooper (1892-1964), was elected president in 1950 and served until 1964; Whitson Cooper's daughter, Mrs. Rogers C. Sherrill, succeeded her father in 1965 and continues to run the mill.

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When the mill opened in 1896 it was housed in a frame structure on the present site and the mill equipment was powered by a steam engine. Evidently the mill was a financial success and the frame structure was replaced by the present three-story, brick structure in 1903.⁹ The former mill building was moved nearby and remodeled into a private residence which has since been demolished.¹⁰ The new brick building was constructed by contractors Lipe and Corriher; Lipe was probably John Lipe of Enochville, a noted millwright who traveled all over North Carolina putting up roller mills.¹¹ In 1906 the mill's power source was converted from steam to electricity, and much of the mill's equipment may have been updated at that time; several pieces of machinery still in use have the date 1906 stenciled on them. The machinery was purchased from several different companies including the S. Howes Company of Silver Creek, New York, the Robinson Manufacturing Company of Muncy, Pennsylvania, the Kelly Duplex Mill and Manufacturing Company of Springfield, Ohio, and the Columbia and Governor Company of Minneapolis (patent date 1911). In 1913 a large metal storage bin was added to the rear of the mill (this bin was damaged in a 1974 fire) and at some point brick additions have been made to the south side of the mill.¹²

The China Grove Roller Mill continues to use locally grown grains to produce flour, wheat germ, wheat bran, cornmeal, and livestock feed, selling these products mainly to the local market. The mill also serves as a small general store with garden seed, fertilizer, eggs, honey, molasses, and fresh vegetables available. Continuously operated since 1896, and connected with the Cooper family since 1898, the China Grove Roller Mill Company is a well-known institution in the Rowan County business community. The little-changed mill building, with its early twentieth century machinery intact, is an important county landmark, illustrating the beginnings of the industrialization that has changed the economy of piedmont North Carolina since the end of the nineteenth century.

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FOOTNOTES

¹William S. Powell, The North Carolina Gazetteer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 105.

²L. Branson (ed.), The North Carolina Business Directory 1877 and 1878 (Raleigh: L. Branson, 1878), 268. Future references to the directories published by Levi Branson will be cited as Branson's Directory with the appropriate year.

³Branson's Directory, 1884, 582.

⁴The Salisbury Carolina Watchman of 28 October 1886 reported that flour made in roller mills sold for \$1.00 more a barrel than did flour from gristmills.

⁵Bruce S. Cheeseman, "Historical Research Report, Kerr Mill and the Mill Bridge Community," Typescript, 15 May 1979, copy in the Research Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, 67-68.

⁶Branson's Directory, 1897, p. 546; James S. Brawley, The Rowan Story, 1753-1953 (Salisbury, N.C.: Rowan Printing Company, 1953), 296, hereinafter cited as Brawley, The Rowan Story.

⁷Brawley, The Rowan Story, 293.

⁸Mrs. Rogers C. Sherrill, president, China Grove Roller Mills, Inc., to Davyd Foard Hood, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, 18 June 1980. This letter contains much information on the company taken from original records; copy of letter in Survey and Planning Branch file.

⁹Mrs. Rogers C. Sherrill to Davyd Foard Hood, 18 June 1980.

¹⁰Mrs. Rogers C. Sherrill to Davyd Foard Hood, 18 June 1980.

¹¹Mrs. Rogers C. Sherrill to Davyd Foard Hood, 18 June 1980; Brawley, The Rowan Story, 297.

¹²Mary Jane Park, "Old Way is the best . . .," Salisbury Post, 19 September 1976.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 0.67 acres

See attached Rowan County Tax Map

Quadrangle name China Grove

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 1 7	5 3 1 8 2 1 3 1 0	3 1 9 9 1 6 2 1 5 1 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
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D			
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E			
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F			
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G			
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H			
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Verbal boundary description and justification

The property being nominated consists of Tract 162, China Grove Township Tax Map 102, and includes approximately 0.67 acres which are the site of the mill and its business grounds.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	<u>N/A</u>	code
-------	------------	------	--------	------------	------

state		code	county		code
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11. Form Prepared By

Statement of significance and criteria assessment by Davyd Foard Hood (staff); architectural description by Patricia Dickinson (consultant); historical research by Marshall Bullock (staff).

organization Division of Archives and History date July 14, 1983

street & number 109 East Jones Street telephone 919 733-6545

city or town Raleigh state N. C. 27611

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. Price, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date September 7, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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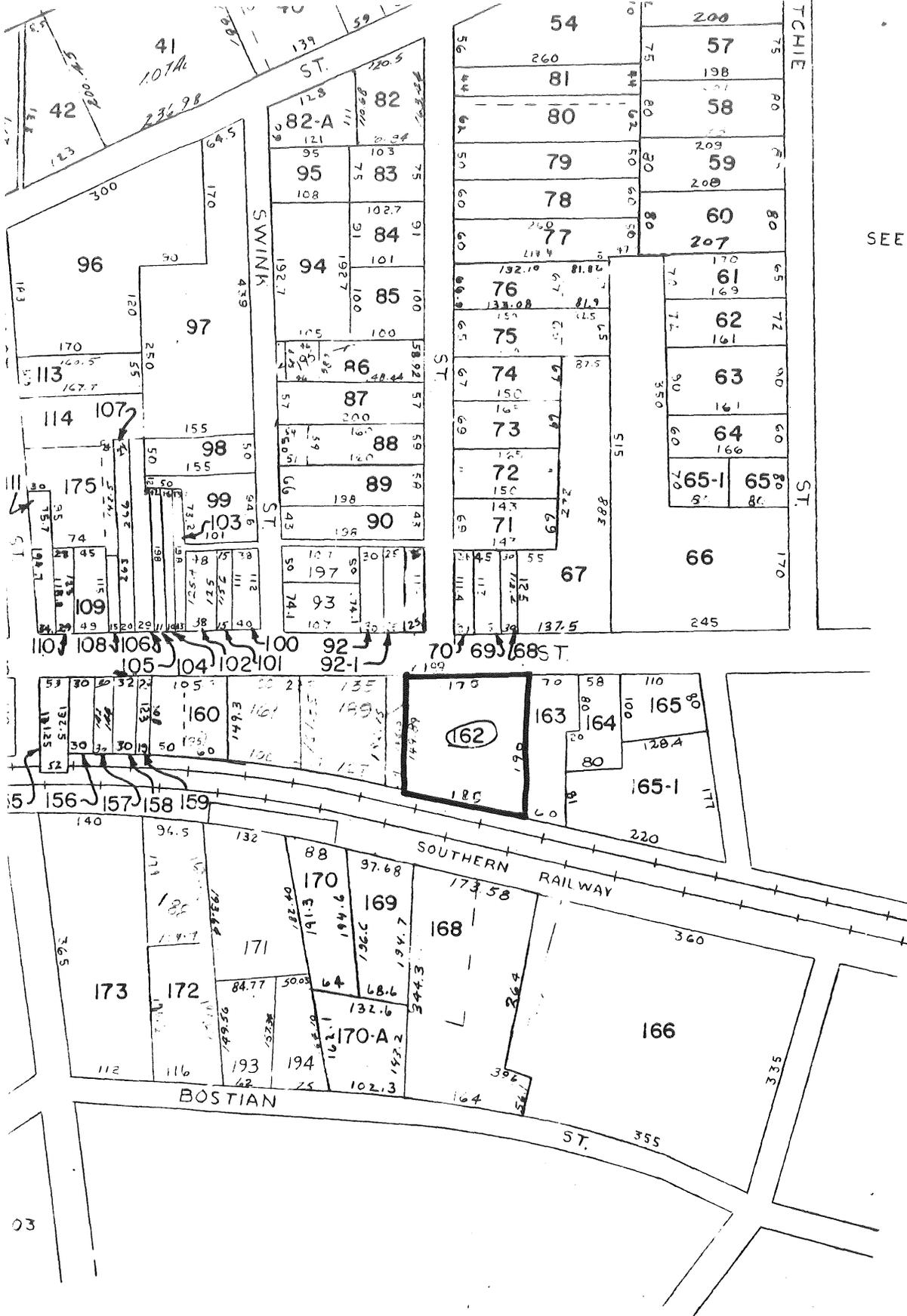
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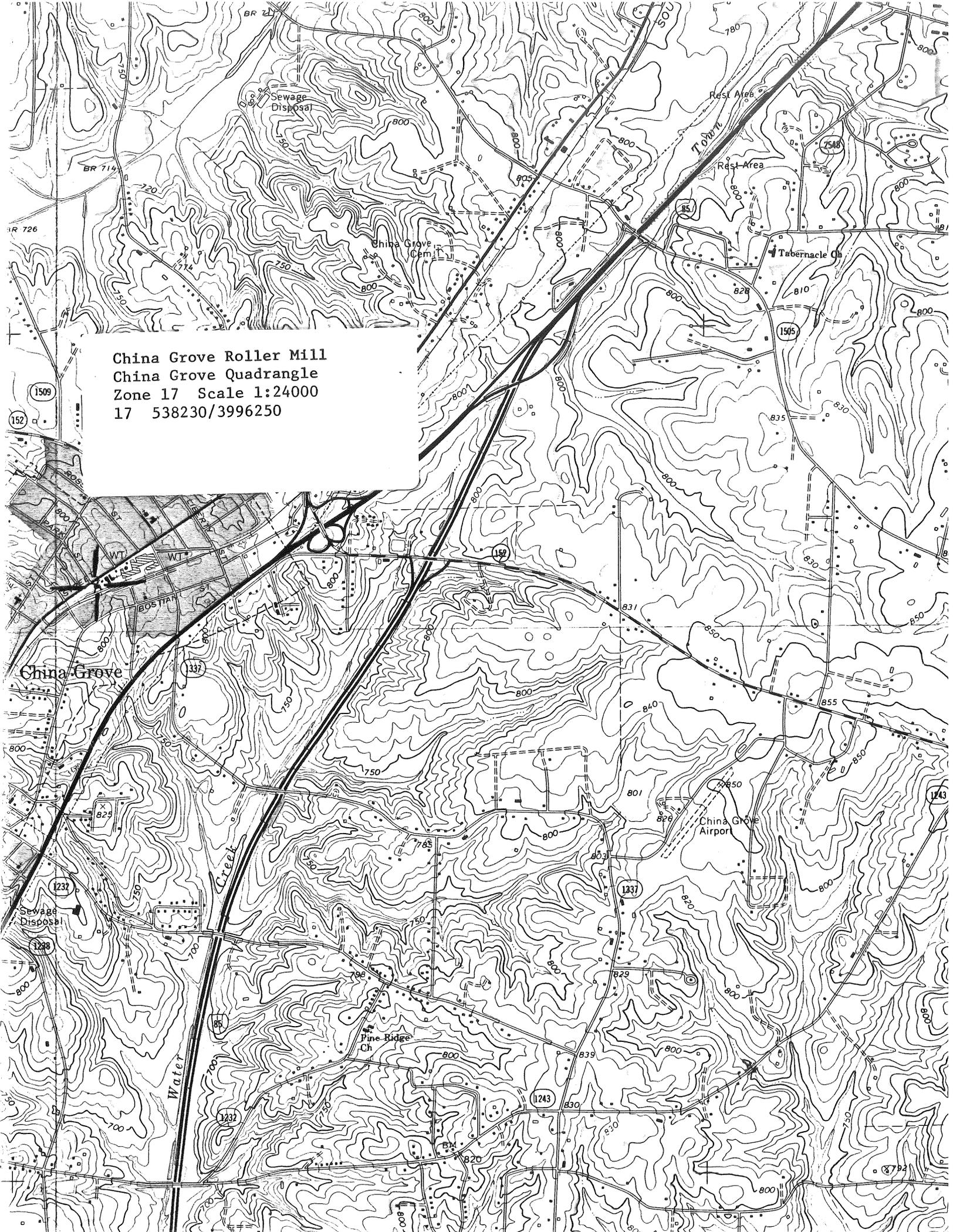
Sherrill, Mrs. Rogers C. to Davyd Foard Hood, 18 June 1980. Copy in China Grove Roller
Mill file, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.



SEE MAP NO. 101

CITY	TWP	MAP NO.
CHINA GROVE	CHINA GROVE	102
ROWAN COUNTY, N. C. HUNNICUTT & ASSOCIATES ST. PETERSBURG, FLA. SCALE: 1" = 200'		

China Grove Roller Mill
China Grove Quadrangle
Zone 17 Scale 1:24000
17 538230/3996250





CHINA GROVE ROLLER MILLS, INC.

FLOUR
MEAL
FEEDS

DIST.
of
Purina
FEEDS

CHATHAM
DOG
FOOD

PURINA
CHOWS

