

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Royall Cotton Mill Commissary  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number corner of Brick and Brewer Streets N/A  not for publication  
city, town Wake Forest N/A  vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Wake code 183 zip code 27587

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

William S. Fric, Jr. Signature of certifying official 8-7-91 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade ; department store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

work in progress

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Vernacular Industrial

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof tin

other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Royall Cotton Mill Commissary sits on an irregularly-shaped, 9/10 acre flat lot in the curve where Brewer Street turns sharply east to become Brick Street. The lot, enclosed by a chain link fence, contains low plantings around the driveway and parking areas. The commissary is surrounded on the east, south and west by the small wooden houses originally built for the mill workers. It is bordered on the north by the Royall Cotton Mill, a large brick industrial building with various appendages and detached warehouses that sits in a treeless, open area gradually sloping downward to Mill Creek and its man-made pond.

The Royall Cotton Mill Commissary is a two-story, unpainted brick rectangular building in English bond that has two porches on the west elevation and one porch on the east elevation. These three one-story, flat-roofed wooden porches are replicas of the originals that are based upon the intact but very deteriorated porch that remained on the west elevation when renovation of this building began in March, 1991. The two pilasters and four wooden support columns are slender square posts with chamfered corners and plain curved brackets. The porches have wooden flooring on brick, curtain-wall foundations.

The commissary's low gabled metal roof features a stepped parapet at each gable end. Above the second story in the gable ends, open brickwork in a horizontal lozenge shape provides ventilation. The gable ends widen above the second story so that the parapet is the full width of the roof including the eaves. The shallow eaves at the long east and west elevations feature the plain exposed ends of the roof beams.

The commissary measures 32 feet by 100 feet and is three bays wide by six bays deep. All of the openings are segmental-arched. The windows are six-over-six, double-hung sash with flat wooden sills. All of the window sashes are segmental-arched except for those at the second story of the gable ends which are rectangular. There are two double, paneled doors on the first floor of the west elevation that are capped by four-pane transoms. An identical door appears on the first floor of the east elevation. These doors are covered by the wooden porches described above. There is a single, paneled door with a segmental-arched transom on the first floor of the southwest corner of the southern elevation. A similar door on the northwest corner of the north elevation was converted circa 1935 to a window with a wooden, paneled apron. Ghost marks on the brick wall indicate that a small porch originally covered this door, but it has not been replaced.

The interior of the Royall Cotton Mill Commissary originally followed a fairly open floor plan on both levels. Each floor is marked by one central row of seven chamfered wooden posts and impost blocks that run the length of each floor. Maintenance and quality of the pine flooring on the northern end of the first floor indicates that this area was partitioned off as the store's office. Elsewhere the flooring was

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only crudely finished and maintained. The second floor is reached by a staircase just inside the northern-most door of the west elevation. The quarter turn stairs with landing have a simple balustrade with square balusters, plain rounded handrail and square, capped newel post. The first floor windows have wide, handsomely molded surrounds with deep sills while the second floor windows have narrow flat surrounds. The doors throughout have long vertical top panels over a short horizontal middle panel and arched bottom panel. The commissary had wooden, beaded-board ceilings and plaster walls.

During the last fifty years, the building has experienced reversible changes and has suffered deterioration. The original partition walls were removed in the late 1930's when the commissary was converted into apartments. Low-grade partitions and kitchen and bath facilities were installed as well as a heating system and an enclosed staircase in the southwest corner of the building. All of these elements have been removed leaving only the original staircase, doors, most of the windows and their surrounds, and the pine flooring.

Current interior rehabilitation of the commissary includes repair of windows, doors and staircase, new partition framing and sheetrock, and utilities rough-in for two apartments on the second floor and one apartment on the first floor. The walls and ceilings have been covered with sheetrock because the original plastered walls were deteriorated and fire codes required the wooden ceilings to be covered. An office/mercantile space of 1,800 square feet on the southern end of the first floor will have structural repair only. All work is being done according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Commerce  
Industry  
Architecture

1900-1934

1900

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Summary

The Royall Cotton Mill Commissary is eligible for National Register listing under criteria A and C. The Royall Mill, built in 1900, was the first major industry in the small college town of Wake Forest. Prominent businessman W. C. Powell and his brother-in-law, Robert E. Royall, incorporated the mill with three other investors in October, 1899.<sup>1</sup> Although they had no experience with the textile industry, their decision to establish the mill followed the current "mode of the day for Southern gentlemen with surplus money...."<sup>2</sup> By September, 1900, the mill, commissary and houses for the mill operatives had been built on twenty-five acres located on the northern edge of the town between U.S. #1 on the west and the Seaboard Airline Railway on the east. The mill and village were enlarged between 1906 and 1908 to become one of the largest cotton mills in North Carolina with 16,000 spindles in operation. The Royall Cotton Mill Commissary closed in 1934, but the mill remained in operation until 1976.<sup>3</sup> The Commissary, as the company store that sold food and dry goods to mill operatives, played an important commercial role in Wake Forest history as well as an industrial role as office space and storage for the mill. With its handsomely molded, segmental-arched windows and doors and its stepped parapet gable roof, the commissary also is architecturally significant because it exemplifies turn-of-the-century industrial design adapted for commercial purposes. It has remained basically intact and has retained the integrity of its central location and visual prominence within the mill complex.

Industry and Commerce Contexts and Historical Background

The Royall Cotton Mill was incorporated on October 10, 1899, by three prominent Wake Forest men, W. C. Powell, R. E. Royall and T. E. Holding. Powell and Holding married two of Mr. Royall's sisters so they decided to use the Royall name, common among the three families, to identify their new venture.<sup>4</sup> W. C. Powell had varied interests in naval stores, banking and railways that required most of his time and Mr. Holding owned and operated a local drugstore, leaving most of the daily mill operations to Mr. Royall. All three men had strong ties to Wake Forest College as graduates of the school and later as contributors and trustees. R. E. Royall was the

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son of Dr. William Royall, a Wake Forest College English professor.

By September, 1900, the mill, commissary and houses for mill operatives had been built on twenty-five acres on the northern edge of Wake Forest. The first Board of Directors included W. C. Powell, President; R. E. Royall, Vice President; T. E. Holding, Secretary; J. B. Carlyle; and B. F. Bullard.<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Powell died in 1923 and Mr. Royall resigned in 1929 due to ill health. Don P. Johnston, Jr., and Harvey Seward, sons-in-law of W. C. Powell, gained control of the mill management in 1929 and continued operations until they sold the mill to B. Everett Jordan and Willis Smith (later U.S. Senators) in 1945. The commissary closed in 1934 and the mill operatives' houses were sold to private individuals in 1943 due to financial difficulties at the mill. Jordan and Smith consolidated their interests with Sellers Dyeing Company in 1951 with headquarters in Saxapahaw, N.C.<sup>6</sup> Sellers Dyeing Company sold the mill and commissary in December, 1987, to Alvin Moore and Associates. In September, 1990, Steve Gould and Jim Adams, of Gould Adams Associates, bought the Royall Cotton Mill Commissary, partitioned on 9/10 acre, in order to rehabilitate it as apartments and office/mercantile space. The Royall Cotton Mill, owned by a separate group of investors, stands vacant with no immediate plans for rehabilitation or nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Royall Cotton Mill and its Commissary and mill village have played an important role in Wake Forest's economic, social and physical histories. Although there were various textile mills in northern Wake County and adjacent Franklin County, this was the first industry in Wake Forest. The mill, commissary, and about seventy-five operatives' houses, church, and school were incorporated as the Town of Royall Cotton Mills in 1907, predating the Town of Wake Forest's incorporation by two years. The mill village had its own constable and commissary or company store where operatives could buy food and goods on credit. In this way, the "lintheads" had few reasons to go into Wake Forest itself.<sup>7</sup>

The Royall Cotton Mill Commissary or Company Store, as it was locally known, was central not only in the physical context of the mill village but also in the mill workers' economic and social lives. It was the primary store where mill operatives bought food and dry goods from 1900 until the store closed in 1934. Wake Forest's central business district is about seven blocks southeast of the commissary and was rarely used by mill workers until the commissary closed. After the commissary ceased to be used as a store, it served as an office, storage space and apartments. The second floor was frequently occupied by overseers or visiting labor management and their families. In the 1950's, Jessie Wall, Aubrey Davis and Morton Harding operated small stores scattered throughout the mill village. Continuing the tradition of social interaction established at the commissary, older residents remember that children were inoculated in these stores and that the Bookmobile stopped there.<sup>8</sup>

However much the college town of Wake Forest might be separated socially from the mill, the industry's sheer size made it a major aspect of the community as a whole. The mill and commissary are still two of Wake Forest's largest buildings. On sixty-eight acres, with eighty-nine operatives' houses (as of 1927), it was the second most important physical feature of Wake Forest next to the college.<sup>9</sup> The entire mill complex was annexed by the Town of Wake Forest in 1977.

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### Architectural Context

The Royall Cotton Mill Commissary is architecturally significant because it exemplifies turn-of-the-century industrial design adapted for commercial purposes. No other building in Wake Forest resembles the commissary with its stepped parapet gable roof, handsomely molded segmental-arched bays, and wooden porches. Wake Forest buildings to which the commissary can be compared in function and age include the Holding Cotton Warehouse on South White Street and the Medlin Store on North Main Street. The Holding Cotton Warehouse is a large two-story brick building with a flat roof and irregular bays built circa 1910 to store and distribute bales of cotton. It served a strictly functional warehouse purpose and exhibits none of the architectural details found in the commissary. The Medlin Store, built in 1905, is a one-story brick rectangular building that features large plate glass windows flanking a double, paneled door on the front elevation. This building exhibits a more traditional design for its function as a grocery and dry goods store in the Wake Forest community.

Compared to these two Wake Forest buildings of similar age and function, the commissary proves itself to be more of a vernacular industrial design than strictly commercial or warehouse design with its originally open floorplan, stepped parapet gable roof, segmental-arched bays and rectangular brick mass.

In configuration, "internal" proportions, roofline, windows and construction, the commissary is more akin to larger-scaled industrial buildings of the region. Although the neighboring mill is distinguished from the commissary by its much greater size, and lack of parapets and porches, numerous tobacco and textile factories, particularly in Durham and Burlington, N.C., are similar to the Royall Cotton Mill Commissary.

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### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Edgar E. Folk, "The Story of Wake Forest", 1971, p.28.

<sup>2</sup>Don P. Johnston, Jr., "A History of Royall Cotton Mill Company", Dissertation, Princeton University, 1945, p.4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Johnston, p.20.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Folk, p.28.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Johnston, p.3.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., Folk, p.29.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, Johnston, p.25.

<sup>8</sup>Catlett, A. Wayne, private interview, March 13, 1991.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., Johnston, p.59.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

- Catlett, A. Wayne, private interview, March 13, 1991.
- Davis, Jessie, private interview, December 3, 1990.
- Folk, Dr. Edgar E., "The Story of Wake Forest", 1971, pp. 28-29.
- Johnston, Don P., Jr., "A History of Royall Cotton Mill Company", Dissertation. Princeton University, 1945.
- Moore, Ida L., "Description of a Mill Village", September 20, 1938, FWP Collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Murray, Elizabeth Reid, Wake, Capital County of North Carolina: Vol. I, Prehistory through Centennial, Edwards and Broughton Co., Raleigh, N.C., 1983.
- Paschal, George W., History of Wake Forest College, Vol. III, 1905-1943, Edwards and Broughton Co., Raleigh, N.C., 1943.
- Powell, William S., North Carolina Through Four Centuries, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N.C., 1989.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 9/10 acre

UTM References

A 

17
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7	2	5	2	5	0
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3	9	8	5	4	5	0
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Zone      Easting      Northing

B 

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Zone      Easting      Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Royall Cotton Mill Commissary property consist of all lines and information shown as Tract 2 of the Recombination Survey for Glen Royal Mill Map, Wake Forest Township, Wake County, North Carolina, dated December 2, 1987, revised September 17, 1990.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass all of the property currently and historically associated with the Royall Cotton Mill Commissary.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

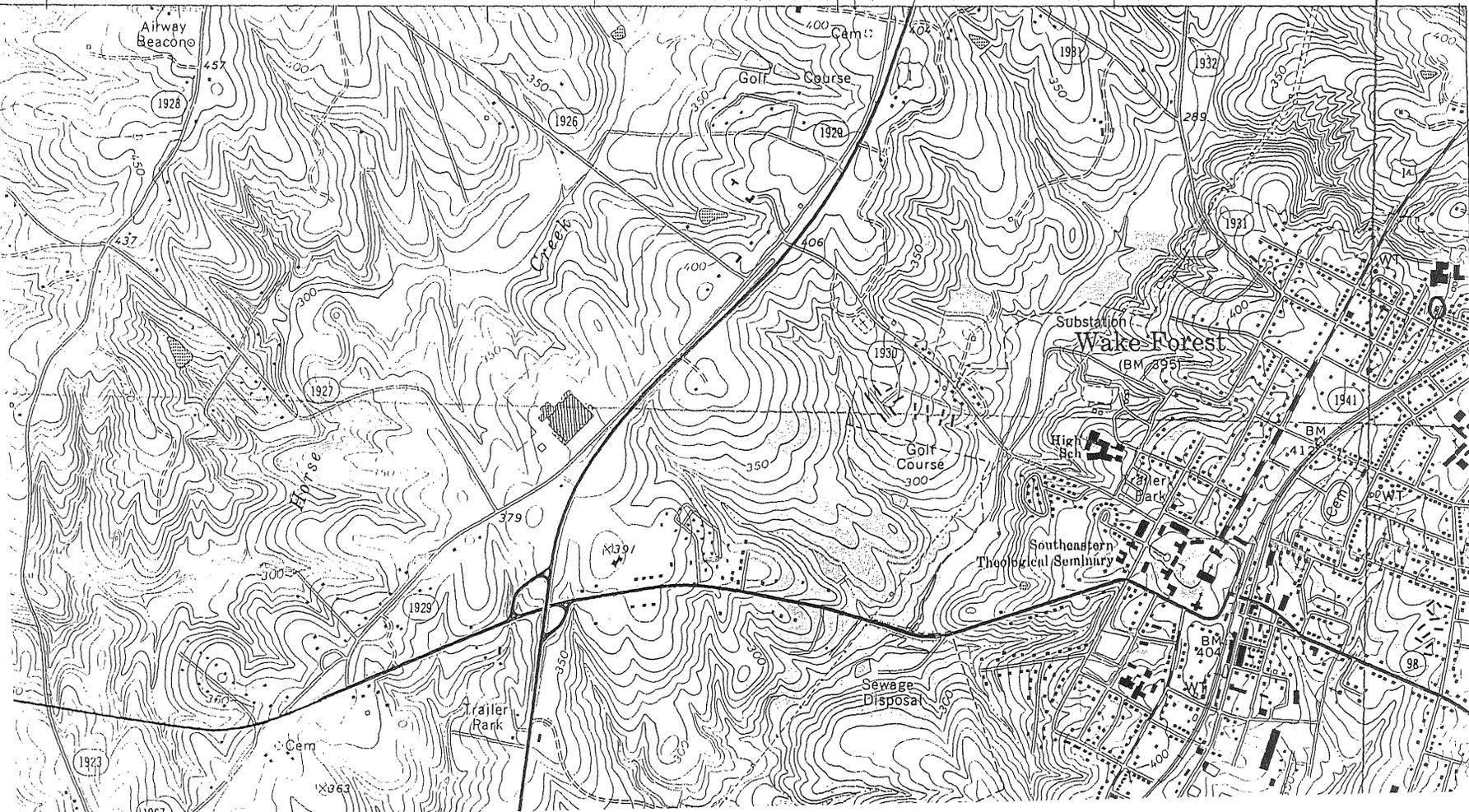
name/title A. Melanie Murphy  
 organization \_\_\_\_\_ date May 27, 1991  
 street & number 1421 Jenkins Road telephone 919/556-2100  
 city or town Wake Forest state NC zip code 27587

WAKE FOREST QUADRANGLE  
 NORTH CAROLINA - WAKE CO.  
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

NE/4 RALEIGH 15' QUADRANGLE

5356 III SW  
 (FRANKLINTON)

11 SE (SOM) | 720 | 721 | 32'30" | 722 | 2 140 000 FEET | 723 | HENDERSON 24 MI. FRANKLINTON 9 MI. | 724 | 725 | 78° 30' | 36° 00'



ROYALL COTTON  
 MILL COMMISSARY  
 WAKE FOREST, NC  
 WAKE FOREST DWD  
 ZONE 17  
 N 3985450  
 E 725250

3984  
 810 000  
 FEET  
 3 40 64  
 S.

