

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Wilkes Hosiery Mill

North Wilkesboro, Wilkes County, WK0214, Listed 4/30/2008

Nomination by Laura A. W. Phillips

Photographs by Laura A. W. Phillips, May 2007



North elevation – center gable, original 1923 mill



Front (north) and side view



Rear and side view – southwest corner – 1947 addition



Rear (south) view – east end

Wilkes Hosiery Mills
Name of Property

Wilkes Co., North Carolina
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	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)

Cat: INDUSTRY Sub: manufacturing facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

roof SYNTHETICS

walls BRICK

METAL

other WOOD

Narrative Description

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

Wilkes Hosiery Mills
Name of Property

Wilkes Co., North Carolina
County and State

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.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a 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)

Industry

Architecture

Period of Significance

1923-1957

Significant Dates

1923

1929

1947

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Foster and Allen, Contractor (1929)

Biberstein & Bowles, Architects (1947)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

Wilkes Hosiery Mills
Name of Property

Wilkes Co., North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approx. 1.4

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 487200 4002100
2

Zone Easting Northing
3
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 Laura A. W. Phillips, Architectural Historian

organization N/A date July 20, 2007

street & number 637 North Spring Street telephone 336/727-1968

city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27101

12. 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Key City Furniture Company, Inc. (F. D. Forester, CEO)

street & number P. O. Box 680 telephone 336/838-4191, ex. 262

city or town North Wilkesboro state NC zip code 28697-0680

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Wilkes Hosiery Mills
Wilkes County, North Carolina

DESCRIPTION

Summary and Setting

Wilkes Hosiery Mills is a large brick and metal industrial building of approximately 89,481 square feet. It is located on a hillside northeast of North Wilkesboro's downtown commercial area, four and a half blocks from the railroad, and at the edge of a middle-class residential area whose one- and two-story houses largely predate the mill. Together with its parking lot, the mill fills a half block in the town's grid plan of streets. It is bounded on the north by F Street, on the east by Fourth Street, on the south by an alley that transverses the block east-west at its mid point, and on the west by Fifth Street. The building fills the western two thirds of its 1.4 acre tract, while its paved parking lot fills the remaining one third of the lot east of the building. (See site plan.) The land on which the mill stands slopes downward from F Street toward E Street and beyond and from the center of F Street to Fourth Street on the east and Fifth Street on the west. Because of this, the mill's four floors, consisting of a sub-basement, basement, first floor, and second floor, present as different heights on the four elevations. (See elevation drawings.) Although the mill and the town grid of streets are not oriented directly in a north-south, east-west pattern, but more in a northwest-southeast, northeast-southwest manner, for the purposes of discussion in this nomination, the F Street elevation will be considered north, the Fourth Street elevation east, the alley elevation south, and the Fifth Street elevation west.

Exterior

Wilkes Hosiery Mill's multiple sections, dating from 1923 to ca. 1967, fit together to form a single large rectangle. Those parts of the building erected during the 1920s are constructed of six-to-one common bond brick with a brick foundation. The 1947 addition at the southwest corner of the rectangle is constructed of six-to-one common-bond brick with a concrete basement. The ca. 1967 addition filling the northwest corner of the rectangle is sheathed with corrugated metal and set on a brick basement. The small garage addition of the same date that projects eastward from the brick boiler room at the southeast end of the building is a frame structure on a concrete-block foundation. Most of the roof sections of the mill are flat. However, the three contiguous brick sections of the building facing F Street have broad, low, street-facing gable roofs, and the ca. 1967 garage addition at the southeast corner of the mill, the added frame shed between the east-end loading dock and the boiler room, and the loading dock all have shed roofs. Almost all of the mill's windows are large, multi-paned, metal industrial windows with sections that tilt outward for ventilation. Exceptions include a row of small square windows on the first floor of the mid section of the south elevation that date from a 1947 remodeling, three sets of sash windows near the west end of the second floor of this same section of the south elevation, a two-light window in the brick veneer connector between the north and

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south sections of the mill at the east end of the building, and small, modern sash windows in the ca. 1967 garage. Almost all the windows remain exposed and largely in good condition. Doors vary from double-leaf wood doors with three horizontal panels topped by a vertical glass panel, to modern doors.

The north elevation of the building displays the oldest brick sections of the mill on what originally was considered the building's façade. Although this façade is only one-story in height because of the sloping topography, it is actually the second floor of the mill. Each five-bay section is sixty feet wide. The center section constitutes the original mill constructed in 1923. It has a central double-leaf wood-and glass-paneled door (glass now covered with plywood) and a louvered ventilator beneath the peak of the low gable roof. Wood planking, a continuation of the interior ceiling, forms the underside of the eaves. On both sides of the entrance are two symmetrically placed windows with slightly projecting brick sills with sloping concrete caps. Here and on the other two gabled sections of the F Street elevation, the orange-red bricks include sliced-off headers that reveal different colors of clay in a swirled pattern.

Round metal downspouts at either side of the center section hide the brickwork seams where the flanking additions were attached. The low-gabled section east of the original mill is nearly identical to it, except that the easternmost bay has another double-leaf door rather than a window. This section dates from 1927. Attached to the west side of original mill is a 1929 brick addition. The form of this section is the same as the other two, but its fenestration differs. It has three windows grouped in the center of the façade with an off-center ventilator. The east-to-west downward slope of the land along this section allows for partial windows beneath the three main windows that open to the first floor of the building. The west bay contains a double-leaf door halfway up the wall, now stranded without its steps. The east bay contains a roll-up loading door, a replacement of what was probably originally another double-leaf door. Together, the low gables of the 1920s north sections of the mill form a shallow accordion. Running from the west end of the 1920s brick sections to the corner of F and Fifth Streets is the north elevation of the ca. 1967 addition. Prior to this addition, the exposed west elevation of the 1929 brick section of the mill, now removed, contained two north-south rows of industrial windows at first and second-story levels. The north elevation of the ca. 1967 addition consists of a blank corrugated-metal wall interrupted only by a central door accessed by a metal fire escape. The metal section rests on a brick base, which has a door in the center beneath the upper door, and a stretch of exposed concrete foundation at the western end beneath the brick level. This section of the building has a flat roof.

The primary section of the east elevation is the 100-foot east side of the 1927 portion of the mill. Two stories in height, it consists of a long, eight-bay loading dock on the first floor with a modern double-leaf door in the south end bay and a row of nine industrial windows on the second floor. Originally the loading dock had only two bays at the south end, and the other first-story bays had industrial windows like those on the second story. The loading dock was changed to its present configuration ca. 1967. The roll doors of the loading dock are currently covered

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with particle board and are headed by the top section of the original industrial windows. Sheltering the doors is a metal-sheathed shed roof supported by braces. At the roofline, the eaves are supported by the shaped ends of the heavy-timber ceiling joists of the mill's second floor. Immediately south of the loading dock section of the east elevation is a brick connector between the north and south sections of the mill that probably dates from the 1940s. Although two stories in height, it is lower than the front and rear sections of the mill. Its second floor has a small, modern window, and the first floor has a projecting frame shed with a central double-leaf door and a metal-sheathed shed roof. A projecting concrete base provides access from the connector door to the door of the adjacent boiler room. Steel security bars run along the outer edge of the concrete deck between the two doors. At the south end of the east elevation is the one-story, 1920s, brick boiler room. The original and current configuration of the four bays of its north elevation consists of a door at the west end and three windows in the other bays. The middle windows are somewhat shorter than the one in the east end bay. Attached to the east end of the boiler room is a ca. 1967 frame truck garage. It has a concrete-block foundation, paneled siding, a shed roof that slopes from north to south, and two small windows on the north side. The east end of the garage contains the metal rolling garage door.

The south elevation of the mill runs along the alley. Like the other elevations, it is divided into multiple sections. Beginning at the east end the garage and the boiler room, which are aligned with each other but set back several feet from the rest of the south elevation. The garage has two small windows and, at the west end, a modern door. The south wall of the boiler room is blank except for two windows, one at each end, high on the wall under the roof eaves. The next section of the south elevation, the stock room, is sixty feet wide with two stories and a basement built between 1929 and 1932. Its east end rises, tower-like, nearly a story above the rest of the section and houses the mill's original elevator. A window is positioned on both the south and west sides at the top of the elevator shaft. Roof eaves project out over the south window. The remaining elevation of this section is four bays wide with windows along the first and second floors, while the basement level has two boarded up windows in the center bays and a wood-paneled door in the east end bay. The mid section of the south elevation, the boarding room, is 120 feet across and is somewhat taller than the sections at the east and west ends. Originally one story tall, it was raised another story in a 1947 remodeling that altered the window configuration. Prior to the 1947 remodeling, this section of the south elevation had a row of tall industrial windows with another row of much shorter windows above the first row. The 1947 alteration left this section with a blank wall at basement level, a row of fifteen small, square windows along the first-story and, at second-story height, a row of eleven large industrial windows along the eastern three quarters and a small window and pair of larger square sash windows at the west end. The last section of the south elevation, a 1947 dye house addition, is 100 feet long and thirty feet deep. It has three levels: a sub-basement, a basement, and a first floor. The sub-basement walls are concrete; the walls of the basement and first story are brick. The sub-basement level has a pair of large, metal, roll-up doors near the west end. East of the

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doors are a pair of windows (now boarded up), and, near the east end of the exposed sub-basement is a third boarded-up opening, either another window or a ventilator. The basement and first-story are lined with industrial windows, with those of the first story being slightly taller than those of the basement. The first story has twelve windows; the basement has only eleven, because instead of a window in the third bay from the east end, there is a double-leaf door. Two large metal ducts toward the center of this section of the south elevation drop over the edge of the roof down to the basement level.

The west elevation is divided into two sections. At the south end next to the alley is the end of the 1947 addition. Its sub-basement level has a narrow horizontal window, the basement level has a double window of the same width as the sub-basement window, but taller, and the first story has three symmetrically placed windows. The other section of the west elevation is slightly taller than the 1947 section and extends from it northward to the north elevation of the mill at F Street. A ca. 1967 addition, it has three levels: basement, first story, and second story. The upper two levels, which are sheathed in corrugated metal, are totally blank, except for four square, louvered vents, two per floor, positioned about a third of the way toward the center from each (north and south) end. The basement level is brick, except for the lower portion of the north end, which is concrete. Fenestration at the brick basement level is located in the southern two thirds of the ca. 1967 section, where the grounds slopes downward enough to the south to allow for it. It consists of a large, metal, roll-up door flanked by a pair of narrow vertical windows and then a pair of three-part windows.

Interior

The interior of Wilkes Hosiery Mills will be discussed by floor, from sub-basement up to the second floor. (See floor plans.)

The sub-basement is a small rectangular area located in the southwest corner of the mill, a part of the section that was added in 1947 to serve as the new dye house. It is a single room with a concrete floor, ceiling, walls, posts, and ceiling joists. Near the west end, an enclosed frame stair rises south to north to the upper-level basement. The sub-basement was called the "distillery" by the mill workers because it housed concrete vats for alcohol used in the dyeing process.

Except for the elevator shaft in the southeast corner of the mill and the room around it—composing the basement of the easternmost two-story section along the alley (not accessible)—the east two thirds of the overall basement level consists of crawl space or is on grade. The western third is a functional basement. The south section of the basement is part of the 1947 addition and conforms to its overall 30 by 100-foot footprint. The opening in the floor where the stair from the sub-basement reaches the basement is bordered by an iron pipe guard rail. Just north of the opening, the stair continues, again enclosed, to the first floor. An added frame storage closet without doors fills the space between the stair and the west wall. The south

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section of the basement has brick walls and a concrete floor, posts, and ceiling joists. Industrial windows line the outside west and south walls. In the center of what is otherwise a single long room, a brick-tile enclosure with brick corner quoins projects a little more than halfway into the main space from the south. Double-leaf doors on its north wall open into the space. Near the east and west ends of the 1947 section of the basement, doorways open into the 100 by approximately 110-foot, ca. 1967 basement. Here there is a concrete floor, a steel I-beam grid structural system, brick outer walls—the west wall containing windows and a metal roll-top door—and a corrugated metal ceiling that rests on the ceiling joists. An elevator that rises to the first and second floors is located in the southeast corner of this section of the basement.

The first and second floors have nearly identical layouts. Together, the different sections form a rectangle, not counting the 1920s boiler room and ca. 1967 garage that project eastward from the southeast corner of the mill. The interior of the mill on the first and second floors can be discussed in terms of a north side, a south side, and, between the east 180 feet of the north and south sides a narrow middle section. The oldest sections of the mill make up the eastern two-thirds of the building and fit within a footprint measuring 180 feet east-west by approximately 140 feet north-south. The north side of this, facing F Street, is composed of three 1920s units, each measuring sixty feet by 100 feet. The south side, measuring thirty feet north-south, is divided into two sections: the western 120 feet dating from the 1920s with a 1947 expansion to two stories, and the eastern sixty feet dating from between 1929 and 1932. Between the north and south sections is a middle section measuring approximately ten feet north-south that connects the north side of the mill to the south side. West of the 180-foot-wide older sections of the mill are the ca. 1967 addition filling the northwest corner and measuring 100 feet wide (east-west) by approximately 110 feet deep (north-south). South of the ca. 1967 section is the 1947 addition, measuring thirty feet north-south by 100 feet east-west. The 1947 addition is part of the first floor, but not the second.

The 1920s north side of the first floor (the northeast portion) is one large room with a wood floor and a grid of heavy wood posts with wood collars supporting wood ceiling joists and the wood ceiling. This space was the mill's finishing room. The east wall of this section is lined with the roll-up doors of the mill's loading dock. Near the southeast corner of the room a conveyor belt rises from east to west to the second floor. The west end of the 1920s finishing room opens, with its original exterior brick wall removed, into the ca. 1967 addition with its steel I-beam post-and-beam structural system, concrete floor, and corrugated-metal ceiling. At the southeast corner of the ca. 1967 section is the elevator.

The south side of the first floor is divided into three rooms. The southwest corner, part of the 1947 dye house, is a long room measuring thirty by 100 feet. It has a concrete floor, brick walls, and a wood ceiling supported by steel I-beams. Three doorways open from this room to the ca. 1967 addition to the north. Industrial windows lining the west and south sides flood the room with light. The first floor is the top floor for the 1947 southwest corner of the building. Two open doorways lead from the southwest room to the middle room on the south side.

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Originally this section of the mill was only one-story and was the dye house, but when the new dye house was built in 1947, another story was added to this section and this room became the boarding room. It has wood floors, brick walls, and a wood ceiling supported by steel I-beam joists. On the north side of the room, a conveyer belt runs from east to west up to the second floor. Small square windows, dating from 1947, line the south, outside, wall. Industrial windows line the north wall. These open either to the open space between the north and south sections of the mill, or else into the rooms and stairs of the middle section. Two doorways in the north wall open to the north section of the mill via passages in the middle section. At the east end of the room, two openings provide access to the third, easternmost room of the south side that was originally the stock room. The room has wood floors, brick walls, and a wood ceiling. Steel poles, apparently replacements of the original heavy wood posts, support the heavy wood ceiling joists. Four industrial windows line the south wall, and mill's old elevator shaft is in the southeast corner. Two windows are located along the north wall and, along with a closet-like door at the west end of the wall, open to a narrow space in the middle section of the building. At the east end of the north wall, a modern double-leaf door opens to the east entry section of the mill.

The middle section of the mill, measuring approximately ten feet wide, has a combination of enclosed rooms and areas that are open. Part of the space between the 1923 north section of the mill and what was originally its dye house to the south remains open to the sky, with windows opening from the north and south into it. On either side of the open space are passages between the north and south sections of the mill. The 1927 and 1929 sections of the north side of the mill each have a rear extension, measuring approximately eight feet deep and approximately forty feet wide. The date of these extensions is not known, but it was probably between 1929 and 1945. Each contains an enclosed stair with a solid wood balustrade, and two rooms of unequal size. Behind the 1929 section of the mill, these constitute two restrooms. Behind the 1927 section of the mill, only the smaller room is a restroom, while the other is currently a vacant room. These rooms and the stairs open to the north side of the mill. Windows are along the south side, opening into a long, narrow light well. Each of the extensions now has an additional room between the stairwell and the passages between the north and south sections of the mill accessed from the stairwells. At the east end of the middle space is a large room that has double-leaf doors into both the north and south sections of the mill. This room also opens into the narrow open space between the north side extension and the south side of the mill. At the west end of the middle section of the mill are two additional rooms: one that originally served as a passage between the north and south sections of the mill, but has been enclosed on the south side, and the other, a much smaller room, that is accessed from the larger room.

The second floor is, for the most part, like the first, with some exceptions. There is no second floor to the 1947 addition in the southwest corner of the mill. The mid section of the south side of the mill, added in 1947, has large industrial windows on both sides instead of the small square windows that line the south wall on the first floor. Part of this room was used as the

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mill's first aid room. The room in the southeast corner of the mill retains its heavy wood posts instead of the replacement steel poles found in the same room on the first floor. As on the first floor, the narrow middle section of the mill on the second floor has a combination of stairs, restrooms, other rooms, and open spaces, although the configuration of these spaces varies somewhat from that of the first floor. In the 1920s sections of the north side of the mill, the ceiling joists slant upward slightly to form the low gables of this part of the building. Also, a grid of fourteen gabled skylights pierces the roof to provide more natural light to the working area. The combined 1923 and 1927 sections of the north side of the mill were used originally as the knitting room, while the 1929 section was used as the looping room.

Integrity Assessment

Still on its original site and in its original setting at the edge of a middle-class residential area, Wilkes Hosiery Mills grew from 1923 to 1947 to accommodate its ever-increasing need for more space. The additions, however, did little to change the sections of the mill that had come in earlier years. The one exception was the expansion of the original dye house to two stories in 1947. Remarkably, almost all the mill's industrial windows remain intact and open to view. Only after the mill was no longer used as a hosiery mill and became a furniture factory in 1966 were there any real changes to the physical plant. Around 1967 the northwest corner of the property that had remained vacant until that time was infilled with a steel-framed addition with corrugated metal siding. Around the same time, a frame truck garage was built to the east end of the boiler room, and the bays of the loading dock on the east side of the mill were expanded in number. However, even with these changes, Wilkes Hosiery Mills retains a high degree of integrity in terms of its location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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SIGNIFICANCE

Architect/Builder, cont'd.

Jenkins, E. M., Contractor (1947)

Summary

P. Ward Eshelman (1883-1962), a High Point businessman, arrived in North Wilkesboro in 1918 to start a hosiery mill. North Wilkesboro, incorporated 1891, had been established on the north side of the Yadkin River specifically to serve as the western terminus of the Northwestern North Carolina Railroad, from which point it could tap the vast timber and agricultural resources of the upper Yadkin River valley. The new town developed rapidly and soon became the region's principal shipping point, the area's center of commerce, and home to numerous industries, especially those that produced tanned leather, lumber, furniture, and other products that depended on the natural resources of the nearby mountain forests. Despite all this, local promoters encouraged the establishment of more industries, such as textile mills, that would add more diversity—and more capital—to the town's industrial base. Ward Eshelman was one of those who answered the call.

Eshelman's Wilkes Hosiery Mills started in a small way, with fifteen employees located in North Wilkesboro's former opera house. After that building burned in 1921, the hosiery mill briefly occupied another building, until in 1923, with approximately ninety employees, it built its own plant on F Street. As the company experienced phenomenal success, it built large additions to the plant in 1927, 1929 (two), and 1947. When the number of employees reached 650 in 1943, Wilkes Hosiery Mills became by far the largest company in Wilkes County. For a quarter of a century, this industry had a major impact on the local economy and on the lives of hundreds of women in the county. Typical of the textile industry as whole, but unlike the other industries in North Wilkesboro, Wilkes Hosiery Mills's workforce was composed predominantly of women. Eshelman's mill provided the first major opportunity in the county for women to work outside the home, changing the face of local labor forever. After thirty-six years as the head of Wilkes Hosiery Mills, P. Ward Eshelman retired on January 1, 1955. The mill continued to operate for another two years under the leadership of Winston-Salem's Gordon Hanes, of the Hanes Hosiery Mills family, but closed in 1957. During the next nine years, two other textile firms owned and occupied the plant, until in 1966 it became the manufacturing facility for Key City Furniture Company, who built a structural steel and corrugated metal addition to the northwest corner of the plant and continued to use it until 2003. Because of its local industrial significance, Wilkes Hosiery Mills fulfills Criterion A for listing in the National Register.

It also fulfills Criterion C for its local architectural significance. Wilkes Hosiery Mills is an excellent, well-preserved, and rare representative in North Wilkesboro of the standard

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industrial design of the second quarter of the twentieth century. It displays the signature features of this construction in its solid brick perimeter walls, wood floors, wood ceilings laid on heavy, exposed wood joists supported by a grid of heavy wood posts with wood collars (the 1947 additions have concrete floors, steel I-beam ceilings joists, and no support posts), and outside walls lined with large industrial windows that remain exposed. Wilkes Hosiery Mills is rare in North Wilkesboro because it is the only pre-1950 textile mill that survives and, in fact, is one of the very few pre-1950 industrial buildings left standing from among the many that once were part of the town's industrial landscape.

The period of significance for Wilkes Hosiery Mills extends from 1923, the year in which the first section of the mill was built on F Street and business began to boom, to 1957, the year in which the company ceased to operate. The post-1957 history of the mill property is not of exceptional significance.

Historical Background

The Wilkes Hosiery Mills building is located in North Wilkesboro, a town of approximately 4,200 residents on the north side of the Yadkin River in Wilkes County. Incorporated in 1891, North Wilkesboro was established to serve as the western terminus of the Northwestern North Carolina Railroad, from which position it could tap the vast timber and agricultural resources of the upper Yadkin River valley. The town rapidly developed as the region's principal shipping point for many forest and farm products. At the same time, it soon became the area's center of commerce and the home of numerous industries. By 1906 the town could boast a large steam tannery, two large furniture factories; two sash, door, and blind factories and planing mills; a coffin factory; two roller mills; a foundry and machine shop; two harness manufacturers; a ladies' hat factory; a branch of the Golden Belt Bag Manufacturing Company; a locust pin factory; and a pin, bracket, and cross arm factory (Phillips, *Downtown Main Street*, Section 8, p. 19; *Views of North Wilkesboro*, 37-38).

Despite the healthy industrial life of the town, local promoters encouraged more industry and more diversity in that industry. D. P. Waters, writing in *Wilkes County, North Carolina, 1914*, noted that "Unusual Opportunities are offered here for the installation of a knitting mill or overall factory owing to an abundance of female labor which could be employed, a local and permanent supply" (Anderson, 76-77). Around 1917, Clem Wrenn, Cashier of the Deposit and Savings Bank, took up the call for a knitting mill, believing it would be advantageous to the economy of the area. His efforts to obtain a knitting mill for North Wilkesboro paid off when he caught the attention of P. Ward Eshelman, a High Point man who at the time was associated with the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company. Meanwhile, Henry Blair, a resident of North Wilkesboro and a friend of Eshelman, was encouraging Eshelman to move to the town to set up business (Anderson, 80; 1918 newspaper article in Eshelman Scrapbook; Eshelman Interview, May 24, 2007).

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Paul Ward Eshelman (1883-1962) was born in Pennsylvania and, while still a child, moved with his parents to High Point. As a young adult, he worked as a postal clerk in High Point and then as a salesman for Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company. Friends of the Eshelman family were associated with the hosiery industry in High Point, and Ward Eshelman became interested in that field as a permanent career (Eshelman Interview, May 24, 2007). His decision to move to North Wilkesboro to establish a knitting mill proved advantageous to the community in more than just the economic arena, for during his life in North Wilkesboro, Eshelman became not only an important industrialist, but also a prominent civic leader. In 1936 Eshelman helped organize the Southern Hosiery Association and was its second president. He also was a director of the National Hosiery Association for six years and served as vice chairman of the board. Locally, Eshelman was a member of the North Wilkesboro Board of Commissioners, chairman of the Wilkes Public Library, a member of the board of trustees of Wilkes County Hospital, a member of the first board of directors of the Wilkes YMCA, president of the Wilkesboro Hotel Company, a member and trustee of First Methodist Church in North Wilkesboro as well as of the North Wilkesboro District of the Methodist Church, a charter member and president of the North Wilkesboro Kiwanis Club, a commissioner of the Wilkes District of Boy Scouts of America, and a director of the North Carolina Children's Home Society. Eshelman had a strong interest in education and was a member of the North Wilkesboro Board of Education. In his early years as a manufacturer in the town, the average education of his employees was fourth grade. However, in later years, all of his company's several hundred employees were high school graduates (*The Journal-Patriot*, January 8, 1962).

P. Ward Eshelman's Wilkes Hosiery Mills began operation in North Wilkesboro in June 1918. Eshelman had the expertise to run the business aspects of the mill, but he wisely brought with him to North Wilkesboro a superintendent with fifteen years experience in the knitting mill business to oversee the operation of the mill. From its beginning until its closing in 1957, Wilkes Hosiery Mills manufactured men's socks (half hose) exclusively. For most of the mill's history, its socks were sold through Hanes Hosiery, Inc., of New York, the sales subsidiary of the Hanes Hosiery Mills Company in Winston-Salem. In 1952, when Hanes stopped producing socks in order to concentrate on women's seamless stockings, Wilkes Hosiery Mills appointed Iselin-Jefferson of North Wilkesboro as its exclusive selling agent. In 1955 the company switched to the P. D. Murphy Company hosiery sales agency. The socks were marketed nationally through such stores as J. C. Penney and Thom McCann (1918 and 1954 newspaper articles in Eshelman Scrapbook; *Daily News Record*, August 11, 1952 and January 21, 1955; Eshelman Interview, May 24, 2007).

Wilkes Hosiery Mills was first located in the former Trogdon Opera House, a three-story brick building at the northeast corner of D and Fifth Streets. The mill occupied part of the first floor, while F. D. Forester and Company used another part of the first floor for the storage of roots and herbs. The Athletic Underwear Company occupied the second floor, and the third floor was used as a storage room. The mill began operation with fifteen employees and twelve

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knitting machines but quickly grew. By the end of 1920, the mill had added sixty-five new machines and employed thirty-two women, a number that was expected to increase in the near future to sixty. However, on the night of January 8, 1921, the opera house building burned, and Wilkes Hosiery Mills suffered a loss of around \$30,000, most of which was in machinery and equipment. For the next couple of years, the mill operated out of a commercial building on Tenth Street (Anderson, 96; *The Journal-Patriot*, January 8, 1962; undated newspaper article and photographs in Eshelman Scrapbook).

At the January 1923 meeting of the Wilkes Hosiery Mills Company Board of Directors—which included P. W. Eshelman, president and treasurer; J. G. Hanes of Winston-Salem, vice president; and J. N. Weeks, also of Winston-Salem, secretary—the board made several momentous decisions. Deciding that the company should make provisions for future expansion by erecting suitable buildings to be owned by the company, the board granted the company authority “to purchase real estate in the town of North Wilkesboro on which suitable buildings may be erected.” The board decided “to begin the erection of said buildings as early as possible, and that a dye house and finishing mill be started in order that the goods might be made a finished product at the mill, it having here-to-fore to be shipped to Winston Salem to be finished.” The board also decided to borrow approximately \$14,000 from the Bank of North Wilkesboro to finance the building program (Board Minutes, January 1923).

On January 16, 1923, Wilkes Hosiery Mills Company purchased lots 24, 22, 20, 18, 16, and part of lot 14 in block 63, as shown on Trogdon’s Map of the Town of North Wilkesboro, from D. F. and Elizabeth Sebastian for \$1,100 (Deed Book 127, p. 166). Located in the center of the half block bounded by F Street on the north, Fourth Street on the east, an alley on the south, and Fifth Street on the west—just a block and a half north of the company’s original location—this land became the core of the Wilkes Hosiery Mills property. In February, the local newspaper announced that Wilkes Hosiery Mills was to erect at once a new plant with modern buildings on its recently purchased F Street property. The report continued that the main building, most of which would be two stories, would measure 60 by 100 feet. Additional buildings included a one-story dye house and boarding room measuring 30 by 60 feet, and a boiler room measuring 12 by 16 feet. All three buildings were to be brick and of “full mill construction.” Prior to the construction of its new plant, Wilkes Hosiery Mills had produced socks only “in the white” and then would ship them elsewhere for finishing. With the new plant and its dye house, the company could now finish its product on site. This additional step in the manufacturing process would require the addition of approximately fifteen to twenty employees to the force of sixty-five to seventy. The construction contract for the new plant was expected to be let the same week the article was published, with construction to begin the following week. The article concluded that the “this enterprise [the new plant] means much to the commercial life of the community” (*Carter’s Weekly*, February 15, 1923).

A 1924 photograph (in the possession of Tom Eshelman) shows the employees of Wilkes Hosiery Mills—most of whom were women—standing in front (F Street elevation) of the new

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main mill, a five-bay-wide brick structure with a central entrance, two industrial windows on either side of the entrance, and a very shallow front-gable roof. The Sanborn map of June 1926 shows the new main mill in the center of the block with the separate dye house immediately behind it on the alley. An attachment to the east side of the dye house was probably the boiler room. According to the map, the mill operated day and night (Sanborn Map, 1926).

Growth continued at a brisk pace during the remainder of the 1920s as the success of Wilkes Hosiery Mills grew. On November 19, 1926, a called meeting of the company's board of directors met to discuss future plans for the mill. It was the unanimous opinion of the board that the company should make provisions for future expansion by purchasing some of the adjoining property and erecting additional mill buildings. The board also decided to begin the erection of said buildings as soon as possible (Board Minutes, November 19, 1926).

Not wasting any time, on December 4, 1926, the company purchased part of lots 8 and 14 and all of lots 10 and 12 adjacent to the east end of the mill property, from Fannie B. and W. N. Pardue. The Pardues also deeded to the mill their interest in a road that ran through the east part of lot 8 just east of the lots included in the sale (Deed Book 147, p. 204). On the twentieth of December, E. F. and M. O. Stafford sold lots 2, 4, and 6 to Wilkes Hosiery Mills. With this sale, the mill property extended eastward to Fourth Street (Deed Book 134, p. 489).

A month later, at its annual meeting on January 24, 1927, the board of directors amended the charter of the Wilkes Hosiery Mills Company by increasing the authorized capital stock from \$100,000, as it was listed in the original certificate of incorporation, to \$500,000 divided into 4,000 shares of common stock and 1,000 shares of preferred stock with a par value of \$100 each. At the time of the amended charter, the company had four stockholders. P. W. Eshelman was the majority stockholder, with 348 shares; Hanes Hosiery Mills Company, a Winston-Salem corporation, held 154 shares; and James G. Hanes and J. N. Weeks, both associated with Hanes Hosiery Mills, each owned three shares (Record of Corporations, Volume 2, pp. 304-307). The facts that James G. Hanes was vice president of the Wilkes Hosiery Mills and that the Hanes Hosiery Mills was a major stockholder were key to the company's future.

Having purchased the land east of the 1923 mill and having greatly increased the amount of capital stock available for sale, the company was ready for a large expansion of the mill. Construction of the east third of the mill and possibly a new, larger, boiler room proceeded in 1927. In its January 12, 1928, issue, the *Wilkes Patriot* reported on the construction projects of the previous year in North Wilkesboro. One of these was the Wilkes Hosiery Mills, which the paper said "erected a large new two-story brick factory building as an addition to its plant here" (Anderson, 112).

Construction continued in 1929, during the first half and the last quarter of the year. On May 18, 1929, mill president P. Ward Eshelman hosted a "Good Will Dinner" for its veteran employees at the prestigious Hotel Wilkes downtown. The event came complete with a bound program that listed the five speakers and their talks on "Retrospective," "Banking on Hosiery," "Co-operation," "The Merchant's Point of View," and "Citizenship." The printed menu gives

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evidence of the types of food enjoyed by people of the area at that time. It included fruit cocktail, mixed pickles, queen olives, fried chicken, cold boiled country ham, creamed white potatoes, snap beans, baked apples, stuffed celery, perfection salad, hot rolls, biscuits, orange ice and vanilla cream with cake, tea, coffee, and cigars. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the program is that it included two photographs of the mill, presumably shot in 1929. One of the photographs is a panoramic view of the mill taken from the northeast. It shows the one-story frame mill office located on the site of the current parking lot, the 1923 and 1927 sections of the mill that face F Street, and the free-standing boiler room with its tall smoke stack located on the alley just southeast of the 1927 section of the mill. The other photo is an interior view of the mill showing its heavy timber frame mill construction and long rows of machines operated by mill workers ("Good Will Dinner"). On May 23, 1929, *The Wilkes Journal* carried a front page report on the banquet. At the end of the article, the paper reported that:

The banquet dinner came just as the new addition to the mills is completed. The addition having been finished, machines are being installed as rapidly as possible, thus further adding to the productivity of the mills. The company now employs upwards of four hundred people, all of these coming from Wilkes and adjoining counties. It has been Mr. Eshelman's policy to use only people from this immediate section, no outside help being considered.

Just what this addition was is not clear. It does not seem likely that the eastern third of the mill, reported to have been erected in 1927, actually took an additional year and a half to complete. The referenced addition may have been a section at the rear of the mill not visible in the program photograph, such as an expansion to the original dye house.

On October 3, 1929, the Wilkes Hosiery Mills Company purchased lots 26, 28, 30, and 32—those lots lying west of the 1923 mill building—from P. W. and Willie Eshelman, thus completing its acquisition of the entire half block bounded by F Street, Fourth Street, the mid-block alley, and Fifth Street (Deed Book 156, page 470). A week later, *The Wilkes Journal* printed a front page announcement that:

The Wilkes Hosiery Mills company let contract this week to Foster and Allen, local contractors, for additional building, approximately 60x100 feet, two stories high. The new addition will adjoin the present main building on the west side and is being built to take care of the rapidly increasing business of the company. This is the second addition this company has had to build this year (*The Wilkes Journal*, October 10, 1929).

This addition was the third of the three low-gabled mill sections fronting on F Street. The two 1929 mill additions—particularly the one that was undertaken in mid October—are a reflection not only of the success of the mill, but also of the roaring economy in general that continued right up until the stock market crash of October 24, 1929, that led to the Depression.

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Apparently the Depression did not have a strong impact on Wilkes Hosiery Mills, for construction continued unabated. A photograph (in the possession of Tom Eshelman) dated May 1932 of the mill's night employees, most of whom were women, clearly shows the two-story section of the mill—labeled “stock” on the 1945 Sanborn map—located on the alley directly behind the 1927 east third of the mill and connected to the west end of the boiler room. The exact date of this addition is not known, but since it was not present in the 1929 dinner program photograph and it was present in the 1932 photograph, it must have been erected between those years. This was the last known addition to the mill for the next fifteen years.

However, the company purchased additional lots on the north side of F Street in 1937 and 1946. In a building (no longer standing) on the lots purchased in 1937, the company furnished a clubhouse, called the Ward Eshelman Club, for the women employees. On two of the lots purchased in 1946 stood a one-and-a-half-story frame dwelling that became the home of the mill foreman. On the adjacent two lots, the company built that year a double Quonset-hut type warehouse, measuring 50 by 100 feet, with concrete block walls and a metal roof. All this property on the north side of F Street was later sold and is not included in the nominated property (Deed Book 178, p. 461; Deed Book 227, p. 306; Eshelman Interview, May 24, 2007; *The Journal-Patriot*, July 14, 1947).

By 1943 the number of employees at Wilkes Hosiery Mills had risen to approximately 650, by far the largest number of any firm in Wilkes County (*The Journal-Patriot*, March 1943, copy in Eshelman Scrapbook). With business booming, the company once again planned for expansion of the mill at the conclusion of World War II. In January 1944, Wilkes Hosiery Mills amended its charter, this time increasing its capital from the \$500,000 allowed in the 1927 charter amendment to \$1,000,000 (Hayes, 323). At a called meeting of the board of directors on December 11, 1946, mention was made of the proposed building program. It was to include a substantial addition to the main mill and the construction of a new dye house, the cost of which was estimated to be \$150,000. However, the company had not yet been able to gain approval from the Civilian Production Administration for a permit to build the additions and had no choice but to wait until conditions permitted such a construction project (Board Minutes, December 11, 1946).

Construction began in July 1947. Biberstein and Bowles, textile mill architects of Charlotte, designed the additions. The firm, still operating under the name of Biberstein, Bowles, Meachem, and Reed, was founded by prolific textile mill designer Richard C. Biberstein (1859-1931) and continued after his death by his son, Herman V. Biberstein (1893-1966), a 1914 North Carolina State University graduate. E. M. Jenkins of West Jefferson served as the contractor. The new dye house measured 30 by 100 feet and was three stories (sub-basement, basement, and first floor in this nomination). The first level (sub-basement) was to be used for a two-truck garage, storage, and pumps for the dye departments on the upper two floors. The second level (basement) was to be used for yarn dyeing, while the top level (first floor) was to house the hosiery dyeing. The old dye house was completely remodeled and a second floor,

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measuring 30 by 120 feet, was added. The first level was to be used as the new boarding room, the old one having been located in the main mill. This move added considerable space to the finishing and shipping departments. The second level was to be used as a men's wash room, tool room, and a new and modernly equipped first aid room (*The Journal-Patriot*, July 14 and August 18, 1947; Huffman, Report on R. C. Biberstein House).

The same news article also noted that the company was in the planning stages for a much larger expansion. The proposed addition, to be located at the southeast corner of F and Fifth Street, was to be a three-story building measuring 100 by 100 feet. The article added, however, that this project was being delayed, although the company would probably start on it in the near future (*The Journal-Patriot*, July 14, 1947). The foundation was excavated for the corner structure, but business began to slow for the Wilkes Hosiery Mills, and the company never built this addition. In fact, by the time another decade had passed, Wilkes Hosiery Mills was no more.

After thirty-six years as the head of Wilkes Hosiery Mills, P. Ward Eshelman retired on January 1, 1955. He continued, however, to serve as a director of the company. At that time, controlling interest and management of the mill were taken over by Hanes Hosiery Mills Company of Winston-Salem, although there was no merger and each company continued to operate as an individual entity. It was natural that leadership of the company should go to Hanes, for there had been a close financial relationship between Hanes Hosiery Mills and Wilkes Hosiery Mills since 1920. While Eshelman had served as president and treasurer of the North Wilkesboro firm, James G. Hanes had served as vice president and James N. Weeks, who in 1955 was chairman of the board of Hanes, had served as secretary. These three men made up three of the four stockholders of the company, with Hanes Hosiery Mills Company being the fourth and, after Eshelman, the largest stockholder. Upon Eshelman's retirement, Gordon Hanes, executive vice president of Hanes Hosiery Mills, was elected president and director of Wilkes Hosiery Mills (Various news articles in Eshelman Scrapbook; Board Minutes, January 15, 1923; Record of Corporations, Volume 2, p. 307; *The Journal-Patriot*, March 4, 1957).

In his introductory address to the employees of Wilkes Hosiery Mills, Gordon Hanes acknowledged that sales had been slow for some time at the mill and that the company had lost a lot of money in 1954. He noted that Eshelman had done everything possible to correct the situation, but that the whole hosiery industry had been suffering. However, he assured the employees that the Hanes company had no intention of moving the Wilkes mill from North Wilkesboro nor of selling it to anyone else. Rather, the plan was to continue making at Wilkes Hosiery Mills the finest socks that could be made in their price brackets (1955 news article in Eshelman Scrapbook).

In October of 1956, although the mill was said to be in full operation, the number of employees had dropped to approximately 300, considerably less than the 650 employees in 1943 (*The Journal-Patriot Presents the Happy, Prosperous State of Wilkes*, October 1956). Despite Gordon Hanes's assurances to the contrary, on May 3, 1957, Wilkes Hosiery Mills was sold in its entirety to Harriss and Covington Hosiery Mills, Inc. of High Point, another major

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manufacturer of men's socks. At that point, Wilkes Hosiery Mills, as such, ceased to exist (Deed Book 326, p. 318; *The Journal-Patriot*, March 4, 1957).

Eight years later, on July 23, 1965, Harriss and Covington sold the mill to Northwest Interests, Inc., composed of several of the executives of Modern Globe, (previously L & L Manufacturing Company and, after 1984, a division of Vanity Fair) (Deed Book 442, p. 213; Anderson, 168). Less than a year later, on April 5, 1966, Northwest Industries, Inc. sold the property to Bryce J. and Ruby G. Caudill, F. D. and Lorene C. Forester, and Jack F. and Rose C. Anderson (Deed Book 458, p. 88).

F. D. Forester and Jack Anderson were married to the sisters of Bryce Caudill, and the three couples were business partners. They immediately leased the former Wilkes Hosiery Mills property to Key City Furniture Company, of which they were the principals. At the same time, the Caudills, Foresters, and Andersons took out a loan from North Carolina National Bank for \$70,000. Soon thereafter they added the steel and corrugated metal addition to the mill at the southeast corner of F and Fifth Streets, where Wilkes Hosiery Mills had hoped to build an addition twenty years earlier. The new owners also added the frame truck garage to the east end of the boiler room and increased the number of bays of the loading dock at the east end of the 1927 section of the mill building. In 1970 the Caudills, Foresters, and Andersons conveyed the property to another of their partnerships, Key City Realty Company, and on January 1, 2000, Key City Realty Company sold the property to Key City Furniture Company. Key City Furniture occupied the mill as a manufacturing facility from 1966 until July 2003. The property is currently for sale (Shoemaker Interviews, July 12 and August 7, 2007; Deed Book 451, p. 1; Deed Book 457, p. 65; Deed Book 512, p. 352; Deed Book 756, p. 421; Deed Book 833, p. 397).

Industry and Architecture Contexts

In its earliest years, North Wilkesboro's industry was dominated by tanning, lumber, furniture, and other products related to the natural resources of the nearby mountain forests. Furniture, in particular, remained an important industry (*Views of North Wilkesboro*, 37-38). Hosiery and other textiles were introduced in the 1910s in an effort to diversify and bring in more capital. Wilkes Hosiery Mills was established in 1918, and for more than a quarter of a century, it was the dominant textile industry in the area. It began with fifteen employees. By the end of 1920, there were thirty-two. By 1923, the number had jumped to approximately ninety, and the mill was always open, operating day and night. The number of employees continued to grow. By 1929 the number had jumped to nearly 400, and by 1943 there were 650 employees, making Wilkes Hosiery Mills by far the largest company in Wilkes County. The numbers began to drop in the 1950s, so that by 1956 there were only 300 employees, still a sizeable number. All the employees came from Wilkes and the adjoining counties, for it was president P. Ward Eshelman's policy to use only people from the immediate area, rather than hiring from the outside (*The Journal-Patriot*, January 8, 1962; Anderson, 96; *Carter's Weekly*, February 15,

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1923; *The Wilkes Journal*, May 23, 1929; *The Journal-Patriot*, March 1943, copy in Eshelman Scrapbook; *The Journal-Patriot Presents the Happy, Prosperous State of Wilkes*, October 1956).

Traditionally, women made up most of the employees in the textile industry, and Wilkes Hosiery Mills was no exception. There, the ratio of women to men was approximately seventy to thirty percent (Eshelman Interview, May 24, 2007; Gaddy Interview). When D. P. Waters, writing in 1914, touted the opportunities available for opening a knitting or overall mill in North Wilkesboro, it was in large part due the “abundance of female labor which could be employed, a local and permanent supply” (Anderson, 77). Wilkes Hosiery Mills provided the first major opportunity in the county for women to find work outside the home. This was because there were no other textile mills, at least of any size, and the other industries did not employ women, except for a small number in clerical positions. In a hosiery mill, women could work in the knitting, looping, and finishing (pairing and inspection) departments, while men served as mechanics for the machines and worked in the dye house, boarding room (where socks were ironed on upright boards), and in shipping—the heavier and more dangerous jobs. However, during World War II, while many of the male workers at Wilkes Hosiery Mills were gone, a group of about ten women worked as mechanics to keep the machines running properly (Eshelman Interviews, May 24 and 25, 2007; Gaddy Interview; Eshelman Scrapbook).

Of the textile mills established more than fifty years ago in Wilkes County, almost all date from the 1910s or the 1950s. The reasons for these two waves are not clear. However, it is likely that the first wave came as North Wilkesboro was trying to diversify its industrial base, and that the second was a result of the post-World War II boom in business and building.

The earliest mill of record was the Fin Win Cotton Mills, established February 8, 1910, for the manufacture of cotton and woolen fabrics. Nothing more is known of this mill, except that apparently its name was later changed, but to what is not known (Hayes, 322).

Grier Cotton Mills, which manufactured cotton yarn, started on August 28, 1918, less than two months after Wilkes Hosiery Mills. Located west of Reddies River on the western outskirts of town, it appears on the Sanborn maps of 1920, 1926, and 1945 as a large, one-story, brick building on the Old Road to Jefferson. The mill was still operating in 1962, but ceased sometime thereafter, and the building no longer survives (Hayes, 322; Sanborn Maps, 1920, 1926, 1945).

The Athletic Underwear Company was established around the summer of 1919 and was located, along with the Wilkes Hosiery Mills, in the Trogon Opera House. Nothing else is known of this early mill, and it may be that after the opera house burned in 1921, the company ceased to operate (Anderson, 96; Sanborn Map, 1920).

Ronda Cotton Mills was also started in the summer of 1919 but in the eastern section of the county. Nothing more is known of this mill (Hayes, 322).

Nearly twenty years passed before another textile mill was established in the county. Skyland Textile Company, which produced anklets, began in September 1947 with twenty-six employees. Only two years later, it had 240 employees. In 1953, Skyland Textile Company

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became Peerless Hosiery Company. At that time, it had 300 employees and was planning to add 100 more. By 1962 the company employed around 500 workers and was located in a modern plant on NC 268. It is no longer extant (Anderson, 158, 167; Hayes, 325).

The second big wave in the establishment of textiles mills began several years after Skyland Textile Company. L & L Manufacturing Company began in 1953. Two years later, it became Modern Globe Company, and in 1984 it became a division of Vanity Fair, manufacturing women's and children's underwear. With approximately 300 employees, it occupied a new plant on NC 268 in 1956. It went out of business around 2000 (Hayes, 325; Anderson, 168, 170; Dyer Interview, August 8, 2007).

Nancy King Textile Company, a lingerie manufacturer, also began operating in 1953. It still occupies a modern plant on NC 268 (Anderson, 187).

Textile mills operating in North Wilkesboro in 1955 included Gordon Mills, which made combed cotton yarns; Grier Mills; L & L Manufacturing Company; Parkway Textile Company, which manufactured women's and children's underwear; Peerless Hosiery Company; and Wilkes Hosiery Mills. Nothing more is known of Gordon Mills and Parkway Textile Company (Anderson, 170).

Renown Hosiery Mills was established in 1957 and occupied a plant on NC 268. In 1959 Holiday Custom Carpeting Company began manufacturing rugs. Nothing else is known about either of these two companies (Hayes, 324).

By 1965, only three textile mills were operating in North Wilkesboro. These were the L & L Manufacturing Company (Modern Globe), the Nancy King Textile Company, and Peerless Hosiery Mills (Anderson, 187). Of these, only the Nancy King mill survives. Today, several glove manufacturers operate in the county (Dyer Interview, August 8, 2007).

Wilkes Hosiery Mills was in operation from 1918 to 1957. It was not the only textile mill in the county, nor the earliest, but its history was long and strong, and during the second quarter of the twentieth century, it was the largest and most dominant textile mill in North Wilkesboro. In particular, it provided employment for many women in the county. In 1943, with 650 employees, it was by far the largest company in Wilkes County. Wilkes Hosiery Mills holds an important place in the industrial history of North Wilkesboro, and due to its size and longevity, it had a great impact on the economy of both North Wilkesboro and Wilkes County for many years.

Wilkes Hosiery Mills is also significant in the architectural history of North Wilkesboro, because it is an excellent and rare surviving example of standard mill construction from the second quarter of the twentieth century. It exhibits the signature features of the standard mill construction of its time. Its 1920s sections have exposed, solid brick perimeter walls, wood floors, and wood ceilings laid on heavy, exposed wood joists supported by a grid of heavy wood posts with wood collars. On the upper floor, the ceilings of the north 1923, 1927, and 1929 sections have a slight rise to a center north-south ridge. The 1947 sections have concrete floors and steel I-beam ceiling joists. The standard mill construction allowed for large, open spaces

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that could be used for different manufacturing purposes. The outside walls of both the 1920s and 1947 sections are lined with rows of large industrial windows. These are particularly significant, because unlike those in many mills that have been bricked up or otherwise covered, almost all the windows at Wilkes Hosiery Mills remain exposed. Even though the construction of the large, ca. 1967 steel and corrugated metal addition at the northwest corner of the mill did away with the west wall of the 1929 north section of the mill and covered the north wall of the 1947 section, the overall architectural integrity of the mill remains high.

As an excellent example of standard mill construction from the second quarter of the twentieth century, Wilkes Hosiery Mills is all the more significant because it is a rare example in North Wilkesboro. Certainly it is the only pre-1950 textile mill left standing. And although from the beginning, the town had numerous industries, almost none of the buildings from these other industries survive. Many were lost during the great floods of 1916 and 1940, because they were located in the low-lying land around the railroad and near the river, while others were destroyed by fire. The buildings from several small industries, such as the Scott Cheese and Butter Company at the southwest corner of Ninth and Cherry streets, the Chero Cola Bottling Company at 719 B Street, and the Red Top Bottling Company, the North Wilkesboro Candy Company, and the Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company—all in the 300 block of Tenth Street—survive, but they are one or two-story brick structures with the appearance of commercial buildings. The 1912 Smoot Tannery Laboratory at the northwest corner of Maple and Vance streets and the ca. 1930 Home Chair Company Office at the northeast corner of Maple and Cleveland streets both survive. The former is a one-story brick building with a gable roof with a monitor projection, and the latter is a two-story brick building with a clipped-gable roof and a round-arched entrance. The New Williams Mill Company, later Meadows Mill Company, still stands at 108 Fifth Street. Built in 1918, it is a one-story brick building with a low-pitched gable roof and segmental-arched doors and windows (Phillips, "North Wilkesboro Historic Inventory," 18-19). Other than these, the large, early industrial buildings, such as Forest Furniture Company, Oak Furniture Company, Home Chair Company, Turner-White Casket Company, and Carolina Mirror Company, as well as the main buildings from the Smoot Tannery, are all gone (1945 Sanborn Map, on-site survey by author). Thus, there is little with which to compare the architecture of Wilkes Hosiery Mills. While it may not be the only industrial building from its period to survive, it is certainly one of the few, one of the oldest, and the only large mill still exhibiting the standard mill construction of the second quarter of the twentieth century.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is defined as Wilkes County Tax Parcel ID 1404357 (also known as Wilkes County Tax PIN 3868-75-6941). It is delineated by the bold black line on the accompanying Wilkes County Tax Map, drawn to a scale of 1" = 100'.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property encompasses the tract of approximately 1.4 acres that constitutes the historic and current property on which the Wilkes Hosiery Mills stands. While additional property was owned by the company on the north side of F Street, the nominated property includes the most important resource, the mill.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information for #1-5 applies to all nomination photographs, except where noted:

- 1) Wilkes Hosiery Mills
- 2) North Wilkesboro, Wilkes County, North Carolina
- 3) Laura A. W. Phillips
- 4) 1-7 and 16 were photographed May 1, 2007; 8-15 were photographed July 19, 2007
- 5) CD: NCHPO, Raleigh
- 6-7) 1: F Street setting, view to E
 2: Fifth Street setting, view to SE
 3: Overall, view to SE
 4: F Street (north) elevation, view to SW
 5: Fourth Street (east) elevation, view to SW
 6: Alley (south) elevation, view to W
 7: Fifth Street (west) and alley (south) elevations, view to NE
 8: Basement, SW corner of 1947 addition with view to NE into ca. 1967 addition
 9: First floor, 1947 addition, dye house, view to SW
 10: First floor, 1947 alteration, boarding room, view to NE
 11: First floor, space between north and south sections of mill, view to SW
 12: First floor, 1920s sections, finishing room, view to W
 13: First floor, junction of 1929 and ca. 1967 sections, view to NW
 14: West stair from first to second floors, view to SW
 15: Second floor, 1947 alteration, view to E
 16: Second floor, 1927 section, view to N