

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15**

Mebane, Alamance County, AM1791, Listed 12/27/2010

Nomination by Ashley Neville

Photographs by Ashley Neville, July 2010



Façade view



North and west elevations

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of property**

historic name Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15

other names/site number Mebane Yarn Mills, Inc., Rockfish-Mebane Yarn Mills, Inc.

**2. Location**

street & number 301 West Washington Street not for publication N/A

city or town Mebane vicinity N/A

state NC code NC county Alamance code 001 zip code 27302

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official                      Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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

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

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15  
Name of Property

Alamance County, NC  
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/PROCESSING Sub: Manufacturing Facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)  
Cat: WORK IN PROGRESS Sub: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)  
NO STYLE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)  
foundation Concrete  
roof Foam  
walls Concrete  
Brick  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15  
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**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  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1922-1960  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1922  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

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

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15  
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County and State

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 5.53

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

Zone Easting Northing  
1 17 17/655440 3995920  
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.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Anne Barrett, John Salmon and Ashley Neville

organization Ashley Neville LLC date April 1, 2010

street & number 112 Thompson Street, Suite B-1 telephone 804-798-2124

city or town Ashland state VA zip code 23005

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**12. Additional Documentation**

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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)

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**Property Owner**

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

name Mebane Lofts, LLC

street & number 406 East Fourth Street telephone 336-714-8941

city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27101

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**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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Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15  
Alamance, North Carolina

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### 7. Narrative Description

Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15 stands on a 5.53-acre parcel at 301 West Washington Street in Mebane, Alamance County, North Carolina. Located to the west and within walking distance of downtown Mebane, the mill stands on the south side of the North Carolina Railroad (currently Norfolk Southern) railroad tracks that bisect the city. The nominated area is bounded on the north by West Washington Street and the railroad tracks, on the east by South First Street, on the south by Holt Street, and on the west by a light industrial area. The land on the south side of Holt Street, once part of the mill property where Dixie Yarns held its yearly picnic for workers, is now a city park. The 1916 Durham Hosiery Mill No. 8, the first Durham Hosiery mill to be built in Mebane, is located in the next block to the east.

The east-facing Mill No. 15 occupies most of the parcel on which it stands and sits back from South First Street with an open lawn to the front (east) and rear (west) of the building. The lot slopes down to the west from South First Street to the building and rises again in the rear (west). A sidewalk connects the public sidewalk with the front entrance and a paved parking lot is located at the southeast corner of the property. A paved driveway provides access to a rear loading dock near the southwest corner of the building.

The historic two-story mill, constructed in 1922, is twenty bays long and a 1966 addition extends it another nine bays to the south. The mill was built of cast-in-place concrete with two-story concrete pilasters that define each window bay. The original large industrial steel windows were removed and the openings were enclosed with concrete block when the mill was air conditioned in about 1960. The concrete window sills are visible on all sides except the original south end, which is now inside the 1966 addition. Beneath the cornice, a large curved bracket is positioned above each pilaster. The roof is built up with a very low gable roof underneath. When the 1966 addition was built onto the south end, it continued the use of concrete pilasters and curved brackets to divide the bays, although it has no windows. Unlike the historic mill, the 1966 addition was built using load-bearing brick, a departure from the concrete construction of the original mill.

A centrally-placed, two-story, projecting square tower provides the main decorative feature on the façade in addition to the pilasters, concrete wall band beneath the second-story windows, and curved brackets. Projecting pilasters define the two front corners of the two-bay tower, which houses the entrance, stair, and restrooms. The existing entrance door is a replacement. The parapet, topped by concrete coping, is separated from the tower by a raised band with a central triangular parapet on the front with a triangular recessed panel, and a stepped parapet with

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rectangular recessed panels on each side. The tower also features large square window openings with concrete sills and concrete caps on the pilasters. The front tower is balanced on the rear by a second, plainer tower that houses restrooms on each floor.

The Sanborn Map Company documented the mill in 1924, two years after it was built, providing an early glimpse of the mill.<sup>1</sup> The 1924 drawing shows a rectangular-shaped mill, with a boiler room located on the northwest corner of the building, which is still extant. The front and rear towers are shown on the map, as is the elevator tower located on the southwest corner of the original building. The map also depicts the railroad spur on the north end of the mill that ended in a trestle. The trestle allowed a railroad car to dump a load of coal at the north end of the mill where it could be shoveled into the coal-fired boiler. Although the path of the spur can still be discerned on the ground, the tracks and trestle have been removed. The second-story concrete platform that extended north from the mill to the trestle still stands. The Sanborn map also shows a no-longer-extant clerestory, or monitor, on the roof with the notation, "raised 10 [feet]." The 1924 Sanborn map noted that the mill had a sprinkler system and steam heat, while the 1945 Sanborn map showed no changes. The use of concrete construction and a sprinkler system indicates the importance placed on a fireproof building due to the combustible nature of cotton.

The first addition to the mill occurred between 1945 and 1959 when a warehouse was added to the front of the mill at the north end creating an L-shaped building.<sup>2</sup> The warehouse is constructed of brick and concrete-block and has a bowstring truss-supported roof divided and flanked by tall firewall parapets with terra cotta coping. A concrete loading dock with metal siding and a shed roof on a brick foundation is located on the north elevation of the warehouse. A brick-veneered, flat-roofed addition was constructed on the east end of the warehouse in 1982. The warehouse is windowless. In about 1995, a one-story brick-veneered and windowless addition was built onto the rear (west) of the 1966 addition.

The interior of the original mill maintains its utilitarian appearance and the volume of open space has been retained on both floors. The walls are painted concrete and concrete-block. The first floor has concrete pillars with mushroom capitals and a concrete ceiling. The floors on the first floor are hardwood laid on timbers set directly on the ground. The second floor has metal posts supporting concrete beams and a wooden ceiling. The floors on the second floor are hardwood floated on concrete. All pipes and mechanical equipment are exposed and both floors have

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<sup>1</sup>Sanborn Map Company, Mebane, NC, 1924 and 1945, on file at the Mebane Public Library, Mebane, N.C.

<sup>2</sup>The warehouse is not shown on the 1945 Sanborn map of the mill but was standing when L. B. Parrish began working at the mill in 1959. Interview with L. B. Parrish, former employee Rockfish-Mebane Yarn Mills, Inc., Mebane, N.C., March 22, 2010.

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suspended fluorescent lights. The separate room on the north end of the first floor was the picker room as noted on the 1924 and 1945 Sanborn maps. (There is no corresponding room on the second floor; the entire floor is one large open space.) The picker room has the same type of interior finishes as the rest of the first floor.

The front tower contains the entrance, the only interior stair, and one restroom on each floor. The tower interior features brick walls in the outer vestibule and concrete walls, ceiling, and floor elsewhere. A partial height brick wall topped by metal panels separates the small outer vestibule from the stair and rest of the tower. The concrete dog-leg stair has a simple metal pipe handrail. Double-leaf metal doors with four lights in each leaf provide access from the entrance tower into the mill on each floor. A metal fire door was positioned to cover the entrance doors on the interior on both floors.

The front and rear towers house a restroom on each floor; men's were in the front tower, women's in the rear tower. The windows are set high on the wall to allow for privacy. Except for the ceramic tile floors and a step up where the fixtures were located, no original finishes or fixtures remain in the restrooms. A second, smaller tower on the southwest corner of the original mill contains the freight elevator. The current elevator is a modern replacement.

The arched-roofed warehouse interior has exposed concrete block between brick pilasters on the interior. The firewall between the two sections of the warehouse is entirely brick. The floors are concrete and the ceiling is open, exposing the steel trusses and wooden roof decking. As elsewhere in the mill, the sprinkler pipes and electrical conduit are exposed.

The interior of the 1966 addition, like the original mill, is utilitarian in character. Both floors feature exposed brick walls, steel I-beam posts, and wooden ceiling joists. The floors are also wooden. The ca. 1995 addition to the rear (west) of the 1966 addition contains two large rooms and a metal-enclosed loading dock, features exposed concrete-block walls, wooden floors, steel I-beam posts, bar joists and a corrugated metal ceiling.

Like most late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century textile mills and factories, Mill No. 15 has undergone alterations and additions as changes in operations, production capacity, and ownership required modifications to the building. Major additions to the original building occurred between 1945 and 1959 with the addition of the warehouse, in 1966 with the extension of the mill to the south, and in 1995 when a one-story addition was built on the rear (west) of the 1966 addition. It was probably when the 1966 addition extended the mill to the south that a brick veneer was added to cover the entire façade and create a uniform red-brick appearance on



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the front. As happened in many textile mills, when air conditioning was introduced in this mill, the windows were removed and the openings enclosed with concrete block. Original windows survive in the restrooms. The mill is currently undergoing rehabilitation and the red-brick veneer has been removed from the façade of the historic mill, revealing its concrete construction and large window bays including the concrete window sills. Most windows still contain the concrete-block infill, which will be removed when new windows are installed. Smaller additions to the north and south ends and rear (west side) have been removed, exposing the original building. Although the mill evolved as more space was needed, it is a good example of an early-twentieth-century textile mill of concrete construction and the only example of such a building in Mebane. It retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as an early twentieth-century textile mill.

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### 8. Statement of Significance

Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15, located at 301 West Washington Street in Mebane, Alamance County, North Carolina, meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion A (Industry) as the only intact textile mill located in Mebane. For eighty years, the mill was associated with an important industry: the processing of cotton yarn. Although many textile mills were located in Alamance County, only two textile mills were located in Mebane and both were built by Durham Hosiery Mills. Constructed in 1922, with several later additions that reflect periods of expansion and modernization, Mill No. 15 operated until 2001, when it was closed. Mill No. 15 was built across the street from the earlier textile mill built in Mebane in 1916; Mill No. 8, which is located at 101 South First Street. The two mills were closely linked in the production of yarn with Mill No. 8 providing finishing and packing for the yarn produced in Mill No. 15. However, Mill No. 8 was significantly altered in 2005 when it was converted into the public library, leaving Mill No. 15 to convey the importance of the textile industry in Mebane. The period of significance is from 1922, the date of construction, until 1960, the year the mill was air-conditioned, most windows were filled in, and the original architecture was altered. Although Mill No. 15 continued its operations until 2001, the post-1960 industrial use lacks the exceptional significance necessary to extend the period of significance to within the last fifty years.

### Historical Background

Durham Hosiery Mills, Inc. constructed Mill No. 15 in Mebane, North Carolina, in 1922. The corporation was founded in 1898 with the merger of the Golden Belt Hosiery Company and the Durham Hosiery Company in order to compete more effectively with Northern hosiery mills. The strategy succeeded: by 1910, the corporation had become the world's largest manufacturer of cotton hosiery. Success bred further expansion, and the operation quickly outgrew its original quarters on three floors above W. W. M. Fallon and Company, a downtown Durham, North Carolina, tobacco factory located on Morris Street. In 1902, the company had completed its first purpose-built hosiery mill, Durham Hosiery Mill No. 1, which still stands on Angier Avenue in Durham. Over the next two decades, it constructed additional mills in Durham, as well as in Carrboro, Goldsboro, High Point, Chapel Hill, and Mebane. Much of the expansion was prompted by the increased demand for cotton clothing during World War I, which caused the rapid growth of the industry nationwide.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Barry Jacobs, *Durham Hosiery Mill*, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1978, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, N.C.; William K. Boyd, *The Story of Durham: City of the New South*

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The North Carolina Railroad, which delivered coal and cotton to Mebane, as well as to the other towns in which Durham Hosiery Mills constructed mills, was an essential element in the company's expansion plans. The railway was constructed in the 1850s to link Goldsboro and Charlotte. Towns that soon became textile-manufacturing centers, such as Durham and High Point, sprang up along the line. At first, water powered many of the mills, but later in the nineteenth century, electric power plants or coal-fired boilers furnished electricity to operate the mills at locations distant from rivers and hydroelectric plants. The North Carolina Rail Road promoted its association with the Southern textile industry in a series of booklets published annually beginning about 1902 and ending in 1930. A map was included that showed mill towns along the rail lines as thick as beads on a necklace—so thick, according to one edition, that “it is not possible to show all of the towns at which there are textile mills.”<sup>4</sup>

Mill No. 15 was not the first mill that Durham Hosiery Mills, Inc., constructed in Mebane. The first, Durham Hosiery Mill No. 8, was completed in 1916 on the northeastern corner of a large parcel bounded by South Center Street (present-day Washington Street) and Holt Street on the north and south, and First Street and Second Street on the west and east, respectively. A commodious two-story brick building with a nine-bay west facade, the mill is located near the North Carolina Rail Road's Greensboro-Goldsboro Branch, which runs parallel to North and South Center Street a few feet north of the mill. The mill is located three blocks west of the former location of the railroad station (no longer extant) at the corner of Center and Fifth streets. In 2004-2005, this building was rehabilitated and today serves as the Mebane Public Library, a branch of the Alamance County Public Library system.<sup>5</sup>

According to a textile directory published the year that the mill opened, Mill No. 8 was a knitting mill that specialized in “Misses’ and Children’s Hosiery.” It had 30 latch needle knitting machines, 30 “ribbers” (machines that knitted hosiery with vertical ridges or ribs), and 3 sewing machines. In contrast, in the same year, Durham Hosiery Mills’ much larger Mill No. 1, in Durham, which produced “Men’s and Women’s Cotton Seamless Hosiery,” had 1,250 knitting machines with the numbers of needles ranging from 176 to 220, 35 sewing machines, 70 ribbers, and 17,000 cotton spindles.<sup>6</sup>

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(Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1927), 127; Brent D. Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1992), 56–57. Despite diligent searches of state, local, and university libraries and archives, as well as various Internet sites, very little information and very few company-related records were located.

<sup>4</sup> Southern Railway, *Textile Directory* (Washington, D.C.: Southern Railway System, 1930), 24.

<sup>5</sup> Boyd, *Durham*, 127; Sanborn Map Company, Mebane, N.C., 1924, Mebane Public Library, Mebane, N.C.

<sup>6</sup> *Official American Textile Directory* (New York: Bragdon, Lord and Nagle Co., 1916), 293, 302.

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According to a notice published in the company newsletter in 1919, “Mr. E. T. Carr, at Hosiery Mill No. 8, is working and studying how to get things straight; he is trying hard and looking about to see how fast he can ship the stockings out; his mill is coming in every way, he wants to get up to one thousand dozen per day.” Durham Hosiery Mills had decided to construct a second mill at Mebane soon after No. 8 opened and began acquiring land nearby. The new mill, Mill No. 15, would produce the yarn to help Carr meet his production and shipping goals.<sup>7</sup>

Durham Hosiery Mills assembled the tract on which it built Mill No. 15 through several purchases beginning on December 31, 1919, when it acquired two lots on the northwestern corner of First and Holt streets from J. T. Trollinger, his wife Nellie N. Trollinger, and J. T. Trollinger, “a single man.” By March 1920, the company’s holdings included the entire block just west of Mill No. 8. The site was bounded by South Center Street (present-day Washington Street) on the north, First Street on the east, Holt Street on the south, and an unnamed street (today an alley) on the west. Among the company’s acquisitions was an easement allowing Durham Hosiery Mills access to the Mebane Land and Improvement Company’s property “to erect and maintain poles, towers, and wires for the purpose of connecting with the lines of the Southern Power Company and conveying electric current both for lighting and power purposes for the commercial uses and purposes of said Durham Hosiery Mills . . . in the operation of its mills.”<sup>8</sup>

Construction soon began, and to finance the new building, in 1921 Durham Hosiery Mills mortgaged its Mebane property to Edgemont Securities Company; in 1925, the securities firm returned the property to the company’s possession. In contrast to Mill No. 8, Mill No. 15 was of concrete construction instead of brick and slow-burn construction and was designed in a stripped-down modernist industrial style rather than in a late nineteenth-century industrial style. The large multiple-light windows were made of steel rather than of wood, and additional light came into the building from a clerestory atop the roof. A spur led from the railroad to the

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<sup>7</sup> *Durable-Durham Doings*, March 15, 1919, Duke University, Perkins Library, Special Collections, Durham, N.C.

<sup>8</sup> Alamance County, Deed Book 68, p. 126, Trollinger et al. to Durham Hosiery Mills, Dec. 31, 1919, recorded Jan. 13, 1920, Alamance County Register of Deeds, Graham, N.C.; *ibid.*, Deed Book 69, pp. 452–453, Mebane Land and Improvement Co. to Durham Hosiery Mills, interest in Trollinger lots, Jan. 8, 1920, recorded Jan. 13, 1920; *ibid.*, Deed Book 73, pp. 23–24 same to same, 7 lots including Block 25 as shown on p. 80, Plat Book 1, Jan. 1, 1920, recorded March 16, 1920; *ibid.*, Deed Book 73, pp. 25–26, deed of easement, same to same, March 4, 1920, recorded March 17, 1920.

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northern end of the mill via a trestle, so that coal could be unloaded immediately adjacent to the boiler.<sup>9</sup>

In 1922, the first year that Mill No. 15 operated under hardworking Edward Carr's supervision, it was classed as a knitting and cotton mill producing "Combed Merc[erized] Yarn." Mercerizing is a process in which cotton thread is treated in a solution of caustic soda to make the fibers softer but stronger, resemble silk threads more closely, and accept dyes more readily. It was ideal for increasing the strength and comfort of hosiery. The mill contained 11,000 ring spindles. A boiler created electrical power. In the same year, Edward Carr was also the superintendent at Mill No. 8, which still produced "Women's and Children's Ribbed Hosiery," then using 320 knitting machines fitted with 136 or 176 needles. Other machines included 100 ribbers, 8 hemmers, and 41 loopers (machines that close the opening in the toe of seamless hosiery). Mill No. 15 provided the cotton yarn that Mill No. 8 utilized in its hosiery production.<sup>10</sup>

A "family" atmosphere prevailed in many small-town mills, such as those at Mebane, to offset the long hours, the noise, the monotony, the regimented labor system, and the sometimes dangerous work. Many mill workers came from local farms, were highly mobile, and moved either from mill to mill in search of better conditions and wages or readily returned to farm life. Workers and supervisors often knew each other's families and had shared experiences outside the mills. Mill companies sponsored community picnics, Fourth of July celebrations, awards ceremonies, and other festivities to compensate somewhat for low wages and lack of benefits.

Durham Hosiery Mills' owner, Julian S. Carr Jr., was interested in increasing worker morale, and thereby improving the efficient operation of his mills. Edward T. Carr managed both Mebane mills after Mill No. 15 opened. Born about 1885, Carr was thirty-seven years old in 1922 and lived in Mebane with his wife, Ethel, their three-year-old son, Edward, and their one-year-old daughter, Virginia. In 1915, just before Mill No. 8 opened, the *Charlotte Observer* noted that he had "perfected a sliding chair for the use of operatives at the machines in the [new] mill. The chair gives perfect freedom of movement to the occupant, and saves one from the necessity of standing on the feet all day . . . [whereas] now the operatives . . . break down sooner and must stay out of the mill for rest oftener than would be the case if they could sit down while running the machines." It is not known whether the company adopted Carr's chairs for use in the mills. The *Charlotte Observer* also announced in 1915 that the Mebane mill would have a showroom

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Deed Book 74, pp. 321–331, Durham Hosiery Mills to Edgemont Securities Co., all lots in Mebane, Aug. 8, 1921, recorded Aug. 17, 1921; *ibid.*, Deed Book 83, pp. 506–510, deed, Edgemont Securities Co. to Durham Hosiery Mills, all lots in Mebane, Feb. 3, 1925, recorded Feb. 10, 1925.

<sup>10</sup> *Official American Textile Directory* (1922), 400.

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elsewhere in town “for commercial men coming here” on buying trips. In the summer of 1919, Julius Carr instituted a “constitution” that provided for a “congress” of workers with an upper and lower house, overseen by a cabinet composed of the company president and other officers. The cabinet had veto power, and the congress could not adopt policies that affected mill operations or profits, but improvements were solicited and made cooperatively in such matters as lighting, sanitation, pay inequality, and individual grievances. Employees published a monthly bulletin, *Durable-Durham Doings*, to give news, announce awards, and encourage cooperation. The experiment ended, however, early in 1921, the year before Mill No. 15 opened, in the manufacturing downturn caused by a drop in demand for cotton products and a rise in the competing silk industry. Massive layoffs followed at many cotton mills.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps because of the good will that the two Carrs’ efforts generated among employees, as well as the small-town “family” atmosphere at the Mebane mills and a continuing tradition of organized employee activities, Durham Hosiery Mills seems to have been spared the worst of the labor unrest of the next two decades. However, the Great Depression took a toll. In 1936, Durham Hosiery Mills leased both Mill No. 8 and Mill No. 15 to Mebane Yarn Mills, Inc., and then sold both mills to the new company the next year. The deed of sale specified that the property included “Mill No. 15 and Mill No. 8 . . . including the spinning machinery in Mill No. 15, and the supply and repair parts incident thereto, including all right, title and interest . . . in any side tracks or spur tracks adjacent to said mill property.”<sup>12</sup>

Mebane Yarn Mills was in reality a subdivision of Dixie Mercerizing, a company formed in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1919. John T. Lupton (1862–1933), owner of numerous Coca-Cola bottling plants, and his son, Thomas C. Lupton (1899–1977), directed Dixie Mercerizing successively. In 1947, Dixie Mercerizing purchased Rockfish Mills in Hope Mills, North Carolina, and changed the name of its holdings in the state to Rockfish-Mebane Yarn Mills. Dixie Mercerizing changed its own name to Dixie Yarns in 1964, then to Dixie Group in 1997. Two years later, Dixie Yarns exited the apparel business because of foreign competition and

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Census, Schedule of Inhabitants, North Carolina, Alamance Co., 1920, on Ancestry.com Web site, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), accessed March 28, 2010; *Charlotte Observer*, Sept. 22, 1915, p. 12, on Genealogy Bank Web site, [www.genealogybank.com](http://www.genealogybank.com), accessed March 28, 2010. A search of census records revealed no apparent family relationship between Edward T. Carr (whose father was Alfred Carr) and Julian S. Carr, Jr. Glass, *Textile Industry*, 45–50; Boyd, *Durham*, 131–135.

<sup>12</sup> Alamance County, Deed Book 111, pp. 436–440, lease, Durham Hosiery Mills to Mebane Yarn Mills, Inc., all property in Mebane, March 30, 1936, recorded Apr. 14, 1936, Alamance County Register of Deeds, Graham, N.C.; *ibid.*, Deed Book 114, pp. 485–488, deed, same to same, Feb. 1, 1937, recorded Feb. 19, 1937.

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falling demand to focus entirely on carpeting, and sold the Mebane mills to R. L. Stowe Company; Stowe closed the mills in 2001.<sup>13</sup>

Along with these changes in ownership and names, Mill No. 15 also underwent changes in its physical plant to modernize the facility and increase production. Dixie Yarns, which then owned both Mebane mills, embarked on a company-wide efficiency campaign in the 1950s. One major change was the air conditioning of all spinning rooms in both their Tennessee and North Carolina plants by 1960.<sup>14</sup> Between 1945 and 1959, two arched-roofed warehouses were added at Mill No. 15, and air conditioning was introduced in about 1960. The introduction of air conditioning into the mill caused the most profound change to the building since its construction thirty-eight years earlier. All the windows were removed, except those in the restrooms, and the openings infilled with concrete block. Prior to the introduction of air conditioning, open windows were the only means of ventilation and cotton lint filled the air. It was probably at the same time that Dixie installed equipment to clean lint from the air.

A major expansion in 1966 created a two-story, nine-bay addition to the south end of the mill, which was then brick veneered to match the addition. Finally, in about 1995, a one-story addition was constructed to the rear (west) of the 1966 section to provide space for additional machines.<sup>15</sup> Other smaller additions included a shop and store room on the first floor at the north end, an oil room on the rear side near the boiler when it was converted from coal to oil, an air conditioning room on the rear when air conditioning was installed, and a lunch room, or canteen, on the rear.

By the mid-1960s, the use of rail transportation was abandoned, and the rail line and trestle were removed. The use of trucks to haul goods necessitated the construction of a new loading dock on the south side of the warehouse. An enclosed loading dock was part of the 1995 addition to the rear of the main mill.

Although the mill changed ownership several times and it was expanded and modernized in the last half of the twentieth century, it appears that the interior arrangement of the mill did not significantly change over time. It was in the picker room, at the north end of the first-floor, that the bales of cotton were opened and the raw cotton was placed on the picker machine - or lappers as they were also known. Thirty-two bales were lined up and cotton was pulled from each bale

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<sup>13</sup> John Longwith, *Bound and Determined: The Dixie Group, 1920-2004* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: The Dixie Group, 2005), 6-9, 21, 33, 94-95, 100.

<sup>14</sup> John Longwith, *Bound & Determined, The Dixie Group, 1920-2004*, (Chattanooga: The Dixie Group, 2005) 29.

<sup>15</sup> *Mebane Enterprise*, Oct. 31, 2001, reprint of Oct. 17, 1966, article, "Rockfish-Mebane Yarn Mills."

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for a blend to put in the picker machine. A 60-pound mat of cotton, or lap, emerged from the picker and was hung on the back of the cards (carding machine).<sup>16</sup>

The carding machines were located in the large first-floor room, which was known as the card room although other machines were also located here. The cards took the lap, pulled it apart removing any remaining dirt, and converted it into a continuous, loosely compacted rope called a sliver that was coiled into cans. Also located in the card room were breaker drawings, lap winders, combers, finish drawings, and slubbers. These machines continually refined the cotton, removing short fibers, and blending it into smaller ropes of cotton yarn.<sup>17</sup>

The spinning and twisting machines were located on the second floor. Here the yarn was spun onto bobbins and then a three-pound cheese, which is a round flat of yarn, three inches by six inches. The cheeses were hung on the twisters, which made one thread out of two or more. The winders took the bobbins and put the yarn on a 5 ½ -pound cone. By the 1960s, the cones were taken to the 1916 mill for finishing. During the time that Dixie Yarn owned the mill, all yarn was shipped to Chattanooga to be dyed.<sup>18</sup>

When the 1966 addition was built, the first floor became the warp and winding room. The second floor housed additional twisters. The addition in 1995 provided additional room for more machines, as well as a second truck loading dock.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the changes, the work routine and the relations between the workers and the company managers remained much the same for many years during the latter part of the period of significance. The Mebane mills continued to avoid labor unrest in the mid-twentieth century; workers were generally satisfied with their treatment and the conditions under which they worked, and jobs there were in high demand. Prospective employees relied on friends or relatives in the mills to recommend them. The company continued the tradition of providing employee picnics on open land next to the mill (today a city park), complete with pie-eating contests, and instituted awards ceremonies for employment anniversaries. It also established a Quarter-Century Club for workers who had twenty-five years of employment with the firm; they received silver dollars in recognition of the occasion. The closing of the mills in 2001 not only

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<sup>16</sup>Interview with L. B. Parrish, former employee Rockfish-Mebane Yarn Mills, Inc., Mebane, N.C., March 22, 2010, Telephone interview with David Solomon, former employee Rockfish-Mebane Yarn Mills, Inc., Mebane, N.C., March 22, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



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ended generally satisfactory working careers for the employees, it closed a chapter in the history of this close-knit milling community.<sup>20</sup>

The design of Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15 follows a traditional pattern for textile mills although the use of reinforced concrete construction was a relatively new method of mill construction when it was built. Reinforced concrete construction for mills or large manufacturing facilities began in the first quarter of the twentieth century and allowed for large open spaces, multi-storied buildings, large windows that provided light and ventilation and fireproof construction. One engineer wrote in 1922, "It is almost impossible to obtain satisfactory large timbers and modern practice has adopted reinforced concrete construction as standard for practically all buildings."<sup>21</sup> At only a marginal cost over the traditional slow-burning construction of brick with wooden support members, reinforced concrete had been adopted by this point as the preferred construction method for mills. The Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15, built in 1922, is a good example of a textile mill built in a transitional period of industrial design.

Numerous textile mills had the same or similar footprint as the larger Mebane mill. They were long rectangular-shaped buildings with projecting entry/stair towers. The tower could be centrally placed on the long side, which was generally also the façade, but in the larger, multi-storied mills two towers might be placed closer to the ends of the façade. Most of the decoration for the building was frequently concentrated on the stair towers and cornices. Until the first quarter of the twentieth century, most textile mills were constructed of brick using slow-burn techniques. These mills had rows of punched windows usually with segmental arches. Textile mills were frequently multiple stories and many had a clerestory running the length of the roof.

Durham Hosiery Mills owned fifteen mills, two of which were constructed in Mebane. Mill No. 8 was the earlier of the two Mebane mills, built in 1916, and featured traditional slow-burn brick construction with a central tower. It also had punched windows with multiple rows of segmental arches above the windows. Six years later when Mill No. 15 was constructed in 1922, it was larger and followed the same plan (rectangular with a central tower), but it had cast-in-place, reinforced concrete construction, which allowed for the use of large multiple-light steel windows instead of the smaller punched windows. It also had a clerestory, which is now gone.<sup>22</sup> Mill No. 15 was presumably the last mill built by Durham Hosiery Mills. All of the Durham Hosiery

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<sup>20</sup> Interview, L. B. Parrish, former employee (42 years), Mar. 22, 2010, Mebane, N.C.; Former Employee Interviews, n.d., Mebane Public Library, Mebane, N.C.

<sup>21</sup> George Wrigley, "Electric Drive in Cotton Mills," *General Electric Review*, (New York: General Electric, Feb. 1922), 102.

<sup>22</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Mebane, NC, 1924 and 1945, on file at the Mebane Public Library, Mebane, NC.

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mills known to date, except for Mill No. 15, had traditional slow-burn brick construction. Of the seven mills that have been identified, six were brick.

Durham Hosiery Mills Nos. 8 and 15 were the only two textile mills located in Mebane. The two mills functioned together, especially in the later years, and by the 1960s there was one manager for both mills. The cones of yarn were brought to the little mill (No. 8) from the big mill (No. 15) where they were put on a warper in the warp room. The cotton was then weighed and bagged to be shipped to Chattanooga for dyeing. Later the little mill housed the offices for both buildings.<sup>23</sup> The 2004-2005 renovation of Mill No. 8 for use as a public library greatly altered its appearance. New Craftsman-style windows with a large expanse of glass were inserted in the former window openings (they had been infilled with brick) and a new hipped-roof porch was added to the west façade. Because of the changes to Mill No. 8, especially the insertion of inappropriate windows, Mill No. 15 is the only textile mill in Mebane that retains historic integrity and conveys its significance as an early twentieth-century textile mill.

No other textile mills were constructed in Mebane. However, two other manufacturing complexes are located in Mebane and are comparable in size to the Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15: White Furniture Company and the Kingsdown mattress plant - but neither ever functioned as a textile mill. The original section of the sprawling Kingsdown complex was built in 1904 and is located a block east of Mill No. 8. Most of the buildings in the complex are of brick construction and are two stories in height. The Kingsdown plant has been heavily altered and no longer conveys a sense of its historic significance.

The White Furniture Company complex, like Kingsdown, is a multiple-building complex that occupies most of the block on which it is located, two blocks east and across the railroad tracks from Kingsdown. A massive fire in 1923 destroyed most of the buildings and it was rebuilt in 1924. Although these buildings were erected two years after Mill No. 15, they continued the use of the older building technology with load-bearing brick construction with simple punched windows for the most part.

Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15 was part of the life of Mebane for eighty years and provided good jobs for many of the city's residents. Its closure in 2001 brought an end to the textile industry in

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<sup>23</sup> Telephone interview with David Solomon and Doe Clayton, former employees of Rockfish-Mebane Yarn Mills, Inc., Mebane, N.C., March 23, 2010.

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Mebane. It stands as the most intact textile mill in Mebane and a reminder of the importance of the textile industry to Mebane's economy.

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### 10. Geographical Data

#### Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property encompasses the following Alamance County tax parcels:  
9815942129, 9815940214, 9815940318, and 9815849325.

#### Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the land historically associated with the mill and provides an appropriate setting.

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### Photographs

The following information pertains to each of the Photographs:

<u>Name of Property:</u>	Durham Hosiery Mill No. 15
<u>Location:</u>	301 W. Washington Street, Mebane, North Carolina
<u>County:</u>	Alamance County
<u>Name of Photographer:</u>	Ashley M. Neville
<u>Location of CD:</u>	Survey and Planning Branch North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources 109 East Jones Street Raleigh, North Carolina 27601
<u>Date of Photographs:</u>	July 2010

1. Façade (east elevation) and Warehouse (south elevation), view to the northwest
2. Façade (east elevation), view to the southwest
3. Entrance and Stair Tower, view to the west
4. North elevation, view to the south
5. Rear (west elevation), view to the northeast
6. South elevation, view to the northeast
7. Façade (east elevation) including 1966 Addition, view to the northwest
8. Mill Doors, view to the east
9. Interior, First Floor, Original Building, view to the southeast
10. Interior, Second Floor, Original Building, view to the north
11. Interior, Second Floor, 1966 Addition Looking To Original Building, view to the north