State of North Carolina  
Division of Archives and History  

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR  

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**NAME**  

HISTORIC  
West Durham Historic District  
AND/OR COMMON  

**LOCATION**  

STREET & NUMBER  

CITY, TOWN: Durham  
STATE: North Carolina  
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**CLASSIFICATION**  

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**OWNER OF PROPERTY**  

NAME: Mayor of Durham  
STREET & NUMBER: 101 City Hall Plaza  
CITY, TOWN: Durham  
STATE: North Carolina  
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**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**  

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Durham County Register of Deeds  
STREET & NUMBER: Durham County Judicial Building  
CITY, TOWN: Durham  
STATE: North Carolina  
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**FORM PREPARED BY**  

NAME / TITLE: Claudia Roberts Brown  
Consultant to the City of Durham  
ORGANIZATION:  
DATE: June 1984  
STREET & NUMBER: 301 E. Poplar Ave.  
TELEPHONE: 919/968-1181  
CITY OR TOWN: Carrboro  
STATE: North Carolina
The West Durham Historic District consists of approximately ninety acres of industrial buildings, company-built housing, and a commercial district dating from the early twentieth century. Divided by the east-west thoroughfare of Hillsborough Rd., the district is composed of two distinct areas that are roughly rectangular in shape: the larger area south of Hillsborough Rd., which has an east-west orientation, is fairly flat except for a gentle downward slope along its east edge, while the smaller area north of Hillsborough St. with a north-south orientation covers a slope that rises from south to north. Changes in land use help define the district's boundaries. Beyond W. Main St. and the Southern Railway tracks at the south edge of the district, many acres formerly occupied by Erwin Auditorium and large company-built houses for mill management have been cleared for the extension of the East-West Expressway. A combination of altered mill houses and more recent commercial structures flank the southern end of the district while the north end of the district is surrounded by privately built traditional house types, bungalows and period houses popular early in the century.

The West Durham Historic District's structures are neatly arranged in clearly defined areas. Taking up most of the southern end of the district, the industrial complex that originally was the Erwin Cotton Mills Co.'s Mill No. 1 and Mill No. 4 covers almost one-half of the district's total acreage in a single tract unbroken by public streets. The commercial district, which includes two churches, lines the east side of Ninth St., adjacent to the industrial complex. At the west edge of the industrial complex, there are one-and-one-half blocks of company-built houses. Most of the district's houses, however, occur in the grid of rectangular blocks to the north. This area north of Hillsborough Rd. also contains the E.K. Pow School, which occupies an entire block at the northeast corner of the district. Along the north side of Hillsborough Rd., there are several acres that once were covered by mill houses and now provide an "open space" with grassy fields, trees, and a stream.

The architectural focus of the West Durham Historic District is the industrial complex fronting W. Main St. Covering approximately thirty-five acres, this textile manufacturing center began with the construction of the Erwin Cotton Mills Co.'s Mill No.1 at the east end of the tract in 1892. The two-story brick building was typical of mills of its day in its long and narrow form with a four-story tower at each end, slow burn construction, and elevations covered with very tall and closely spaced segmental arched windows. In 1896, this "old mill" was more than doubled in length with the virtually identical "new mill" punctuated at its northeast corner by another tower. The building's ornamentation consists of arched denticulated lintels at all doors and windows that are executed in brick and linked by small corbelled pendants to form two string courses around the entire perimeter of the mill. Situated to the east of Mill No. 1, the 1892 Headquarters Building displays a residential quality in the two-story, one-room-deep form of the main block capped by a gable roof with two decorative front gables. Here, vernacular expression of the Italianate and Queen Anne styles appears in bands of decorative brickwork, segmental arched windows with denticulated label moldings, and the sawn and turned millwork of the long wraparound porch.
On the west end of the industrial tract, the enormous Mill No. 4 built by the Erwin Cotton Mills Co. in 1909-10 contrasts to the company's first mill in its sprawling proportions and one-story height that originally featured a sawtooth roof. Although the tall segmental arched windows that formerly lined Mill No. 4's elevations have been bricked in, the building retains its several short towers marked by corbelled brickwork, rondels, and stone plaques bearing the date 1909. The other buildings in the historic district's industrial complex, all with brick exteriors, include a long row of cotton warehouses attached end to end and a cotton room and bleachery, all dating from the early twentieth century, as well as a large one-story, windowless factory built by Burlington Industries in the 1960s.

Of the eighty-four houses in the West Durham Historic District, seventy-seven were built by the Erwin Cotton Mills Co. for its employees. All of the mill houses were built at the turn of the century and later. (The company's earliest houses, built in the 1890s when Mill No. 1 was constructed and then expanded, have been destroyed to make room for later expansion of the factory complex and commercial development along Ninth St.) Three types of mill houses, all one-story frame structures, appear in the district: 1) one-room-deep gable-roofed houses with rear ells (a few with triple-A rooflines), built around the turn of the century; 2) T-shaped houses built between the first years of this century and the early 1910s, oriented so that the "stem" is parallel to the street and the "top" is asymmetrical, longer toward the rear; and 3) two-room-deep pyramidal-roofed houses built around 1910. All single-family dwellings, the pyramidal-roofed houses appear in two sizes: a smaller version distinguished by two front doors and a single chimney penetrating the front plane of the roof and a larger model with a single front door and a chimney piercing each of the roof's side planes.

Generally, the mill houses are clustered in rows according to type, as indicated on the accompanying map. As the oldest houses in the district, the simple one-room-deep houses, of which there are only a few, naturally are situated closest to the mills, along Bolton St. and the south end of Carolina Ave. The T-shaped houses are the most prevalent in the district, lining Rutherford St., the north end of Carolina Ave., and a portion of W. Knox St. The pyramidal-roofed houses are found primarily along Edith and Virgie streets, near the district's northeast corner.

The original identifying features of the mill houses help distinguish each of the three basic house types as well as augment the uniformity that is characteristic of mill villages. All of the houses were built with less than full-facade shed-roofed porches, sawed pine shingles covering the roofs (all now covered with asphalt shingles), and interior chimneys with simple corbelled stacks. Both the T-shaped and pyramidal-roofed houses were sheathed in German siding while the simple one-room-deep houses had plain weatherboards. Other features that the T-shaped and pyramidal-roofed houses shared in common were six-over-six double-hung sash windows and box posts with match stick railings at the porches. The older one-room-deep houses were built with narrow four-
over-four double-hung sash windows and porch supports of chamfered posts with sawn spandrels. The T-shaped and pyramidal-roofed houses, as well as the one-room-deep houses with triple-A roofs, have molded cornices with plain frieze boards; the one-room-deep houses with simple gable roofs have plain cornices with exposed rafter ends in the gable eaves.

The district's seven houses not constructed by the mill consist of three small nondescript one-story frame houses built in the 1940s and 1950s, one plain 1920s bungalow, and three early twentieth-century traditional house types. Of the latter group, two houses situated side by side on W. Knox St. resemble some of the mill houses due to their boxy two-room-deep forms and hipped roofs. Both houses have almost full-facade porches, one supported by turned posts and the other by slightly tapered box posts. The most distinctive of the privately built houses in the West Durham District is the recently restored former Wesleyan Methodist Church parsonage at 2014 W. Knox St. This two-story gable-roofed house with turned posts and match stick railing at the front porch has small two-over-two double-hung sash windows in the second story of the main façade.

One- and two-story buildings characterize the commercial area that defines much of the historic district's eastern edge. The two-story buildings at 700-02 and 762-64 Ninth St. and 1920 Perry St. are the district's oldest commercial structures, constructed around 1910. They all have metal cornices and the Perry St. building also features a band of decorative brickwork near the top of its main elevation. Architecturally the district's most distinctive commercial building, the former Fidelity Bank at 626 Ninth St. is an imposing Neoclassical Revival style structure erected in the early 1920s according to a design by the Durham architectural firm of Rose and Rose. It is characterized by ochre-colored brick elevations, two-story arches flanked by pilasters with stone capitals and bases, stone entablature and cornice, and stone plaques bearing foliate reliefs. The majority of the Ninth St. commercial area's buildings, constructed in the 1920s and 1930s, are typical of their period -- one story tall with tapestry brick elevations and single-stepped low parapets with simple decorative patterns of brick, an occasional inlay of stone, and stone coping.

Good examples of the early twentieth-century Neoclassical and Gothic Revival styles may be found in the West Durham Historic District's three institutional buildings. The 1928 E. K. Lowe School, designed by the Durham architectural firm of Atwood and Nash, displays a projecting entrance bay marked by a stone pediment, fluted pilasters running the full two stories, and an entrance surround with a broken pediment. A modified temple front also dominates the Blacknall Memorial Presbyterian Church built in 1922. Here, the front consists of an engaged portico with pairs of Ionic columns in antis, a simple entablature and cornice, and a pediment applied to the stepped parapet that rises above the portico. In contrast, the Gothic Revival style of St. Joseph's Episcopal Church built in the first decade of this century is reminiscent of an English parish church in its modest proportions, cruciform plan, and lancet windows and stepped buttressing defining the cut granite elevations.
Many buildings in the West Durham Historic District have been altered since the area became fully developed in the 1930s. Like most mill villages in which the company has sold its houses, the district's residential areas have been the results of efforts to modernize, "weatherize," and reduce maintenance made by the mill worker occupants who purchased their homes. The most frequent changes are the installation of replacement siding and porch supports. Most of the remodelling is reversible and has left the basic character of the houses and their streetscapes intact. Fortunately, a considerable number of the mill houses have received few if any noticeable alterations to their exteriors. A high rate of owner-occupancy in the district is reflected in the generally good condition of its houses and in the careful maintenance of the yards. Most of the houses are surrounded by foundation plantings and many are shaded by mature hardwoods. During the warm months, many of the large back yards still are cultivated with the vegetable gardens for which they were planned.

The most dramatic changes in the district have occurred in its southeastern area along Ninth St. At the same time that the neighborhood's commercial district was beginning to be revitalized with the patronage of residents of other nearby areas (primarily the Duke University community), local developers became interested in adaptively re-using the Erwin Cotton Mill Co.'s Mill No. 1 which had served as a warehouse for several years. After purchasing the mill and the headquarters building from Burlington Industries in 1982 and 1983, respectively, SEHED Development Corp. conducted certified historic rehabilitations of the mill as office and apartments and the headquarters building for continued use as offices and attractively landscaped the entire tract. Since 1980, a few businesses have rehabilitated their buildings. Currently, the City of Durham Planning and Community Development Department is providing design and other assistance to several other Ninth St. merchants and property owners who wish to rehabilitate their upper storefronts by removing intrusive replacement siding and restoring the original elevations.

Structures, of course, are closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structures. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structures. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.
Unless otherwise noted, the houses in the West Durham Historic District were constructed by the Erwin Cotton Mills Co. for its employees. To avoid excessive repetition in the entries, detailed descriptions of the house types built by the mill follow:

One-story, one-room-deep houses with rear ells, built around the turn of the century. Only a few of these houses, probably the oldest in the district, survive, and all of them are located on Bolton St. and the south end of Carolina Ave., close to the mill complex. Three of the houses have triple-A roofs with molded box cornices, plain frieze boards, and a circular vent in the front gable; the rest have gable-end roofs with simple cornices, exposed rafter ends and gable eaves, and diamond-shaped gable vents. All of these houses were built with siding of plain weatherboards, narrow four-over-four double-hung sash windows, three-quarter shed-roofed porches with slender chamfered posts and sawn spandrels, and a single central chimney with a simple corbeled stack. A single central entrance leads to a small foyer opening onto the two principal rooms of the front block.

One-story, T-shaped houses built between the first years of the 20th century and the early 1910s. They are oriented so that the "stem" is parallel to the street and the "top" is assymetrical, longer toward the rear. All were built with a corbelled chimney in the middle of the intersection of the two wings. Originally they had four rooms -- a parlor in the "stem", a bedroom and another bedroom or dining room in the front end of the "top"; and a kitchen at the rear. Sheathed in German siding, these houses feature simple molded box cornices, plain frieze boards and a shed-roofed porch extending across most of the "stem". The porches were built with box posts and match stick railings. All of the windows were six-over-six double-hung sashes.

One-story pyramidal-roofed houses built around 1910. Sheathed in German siding, these boxy two-room-deep houses built with four rooms appear in two sizes. The smaller houses, built as single-family dwellings, have a main facade containing two front doors centered with a window to either side. Each front door leads to one of the two front rooms, linked on the interior by a connecting door. Each of the front rooms has a fireplace served by a single chimney penetrating the front plane of the roof. The larger house, built for factory workers with seniority or large families, have a single centered front door leading to a center hall and two interior chimneys with corbeled stacks penetrating each of the side planes of the roof. All of the pyramidal-roofed houses were built with molded cornices, plain frieze boards, six-over-six double-hung sash windows, and three-quarter shed-roofed porches supported by box posts with match stick railings.
With only a few exceptions, all of the dwellings constructed by Erwin Cotton Mills are designated merely as "house," without any identifying family name. Durham city directories did not list West Durham residents by specific street address prior to 1927. Thus, it is impossible to identify occupants for which houses could be named prior to that year. Furthermore, due to the large number of houses in the district, it was not feasible within the parameters of the Durham Multiple Resource Nomination project to trace every mill house through the city directories for the period 1927 to 1940. Instead, approximately one dozen mill houses scattered throughout the district were selected and researched in the directories for the years 1927, 1930 and 1935. The results indicated that the "turnover" rate of occupancy was fairly high: four of the houses were occupied by the same family for the full eight-year period, four houses had the same occupants in 1927 and 1930 or 1930 and 1935, and the rest had different occupants for each year examined. As a result, only eight of the mill houses are identified by the name of an occupying family.

The significance of the West Durham Historic District lies in its social history as reflected in its building patterns rather than its architectural detail. Therefore, it is appropriate to introduce another rating level, "(C)," for those mill houses that have been considerably altered and would be ranked as non-contributing (N) in a district in which architectural detail is more important. In order to determine the rating of each house, four aspects have been considered: siding, fenestration, porch elements and additions. Usually, if alterations have occurred in one or two of these areas, the building receives a "C" for "contributing"; those mill houses with more extensive alterations (or alterations in only two areas that are particularly harsh) merit a "(C)." All of the mill houses designated with a "(C)" still contribute to their streetscapes and the overall character of the district. Furthermore, these houses' extensive alterations—siding placed over original weatherboards, additions, replacement windows and porch elements—could be reversed.

West Main Street

1. Erwin Cotton Mills Co. Mill No. 1 and Headquarters Building, 2100 W. Main St. Shortly after the incorporation of the Erwin Cotton Mills Co. in 1892, work began on the two-story Mill No. 1 of "slow burn" construction. The fenestration and narrow width of the building dramatically demonstrate the early manufacturing process's dependence on ventilation and ample natural light. Covered with a very shallowly pitched gable roof, the 748-foot-long mill is characterized by three square towers projecting from the east facade and by hundreds of large and closely spaced windows that occupy most of the four elevations. When the mill was built in 1892, it was 342 feet long with a tower at each end of the east facade. Four years later, this "old mill" was lengthened 406 feet with the virtually identical "new mill" punctuated at its northeast corner by another tower. Originally the three towers were four
stories tall, accommodating stair wells in the bottom two stories and water tanks for the emergency sprinkler system in the upper two. In the 1950s, the upper two stories were removed. Brick fire walls projecting slightly above the roof divide the building into units ranging from thirteen to fifteen bays in length. The mill exemplifies "slow burn" construction with its exterior load bearing brick walls, its heavy timber heart pine beams and columns, and approximately four-inch thick wooden floor of the second story. The building's most distinctive ornamentation consists of the arched dentiled lintels at all doors and windows, executed in brick and linked by small corbelled pendents to form two string courses around the entire perimeter of the mill. On the west side of the building, there are a two-story picker house, a power house, and a one-story dye house, also of slow burn construction, built at the same time the "old mill" was erected.

When the mill opened in the spring of 1893, the production of its 5,000 spindles was restricted to the type of muslin used for smoking tobacco pouches. With an increase in capital and the direction of general manager William A. Erwin, a few months later the company installed additional machinery and diversified profitably into the manufacture of other cloths, including denim. As the mill cut back its production of muslin, it increased its output of the other cloths, particularly denim, which previously had not been manufactured widely or profitably in the South. Healthy sales encouraged increased production, which in turn prompted the company to expand, first with the doubling in size of Mill No. 1 and then with the acquisition and construction of additional mills in Durham (Mill No. 4), elsewhere in North Carolina, and in Mississippi. Mill No. 1 remained a functioning mill for several decades until its conversion to a warehouse by Burlington Industries, which purchased the Erwin Mills property in 1963.

As originally constructed in 1892, the two-story brick Headquarters Building displayed a distinctly residential character, only one room deep with a triple-A roofline, symmetrical four-bay main facade, and a one-story wraparound porch. When the mill was enlarged in 1896, a long, two-story brick warehouse very similar to the mill was added to the west end of the Headquarters' rear facade. Around 1905, the entire building became L-shaped when the front block was enlarged with an addition to its west end identical in construction and design to the original building. The latter addition boasts an additional front gable and an extension of the porch. Vernacular expression of the Italianate and Queen Anne styles is exhibited in the fenestration, decorative brickwork, and sawn and turned millwork. All of the fenestration are segmental arches with dentiled label hood moldings of brick coursed into the walls. On the end and main facades, there is a string course of brick "prisms"; bands of prisms also appear beneath the first-floor
windows and plain frieze or raking boards and narrow sawn rafter ends of
brackets delineate the roofline. The porch features thick, decoratively sawn
rafter ends, a spool frieze, turned posts, and ornamental sawn spandrels.
The buildings served as the main offices for Erwin Cotton Mills Co. and then
as the offices for Burlington Industries' Durham operations until 1983.

As part of the consolidation of its North Carolina facilities, Burlington
industries sold Mill No. 1 and the Headquarters Building to SEHED Development
Corp. of Durham in 1982 and 1983, respectively. In 1983 and 1984, SEHED
renovated the mill as offices and apartments and in 1984 the company
renovated the Headquarters for continued use as offices. Both projects were
certified by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

2. Erwin Cotton Mills Co. Mill No. 4. 2300 W. Main St. Encouraged by the
profits of the 1890s, Erwin Cotton mills embarked upon a major expansion
beyond Durham with the construction of Mill No. 2 at Erwin and the purchase
of the Cooleemee Mill near Salisbury for Mill No. 3. In spite of a depressed
market for manufactured cloth at the end of the first decade of the new
century, in 1909 Erwin Cotton Mills began construction of the enormous Mill
No. 4 next to its original mill in West Durham. Immediately west of Mill No.
1, the new one-story brick complex built to produce bleached sheeting
consisted of a large spinning mill and a large weave mill in the main factory
building, and a separate bleachery, cloth room, engine house, as well as its
own reservoir. With the market continuing to be depressed through most of
1911, only a small portion of the new mill was put into operation, but by the
new year conditions were improved and the mill was functioning at full
capacity. Short towers marked by corbelled brickwork, rondels, and stone
plaques bearing the date 1909 ring the building. Like its predecessors, the
structure also featured tall segmental arched windows, now bricked in. It
was built with a distinctive sawtooth roof containing windows in order to
admit sufficient daylight onto the factory floor of the huge L-shaped
building, much wider than the long and narrow Mill No. 1. In a modern
renovation, the sawtooth roof of Mill No. 4 was replaced with a flat one.
Burlington industries, which purchased Mill No. 4 in 1963 with the rest of
the Erwin Cotton Mills property, has continued to use the factory to the
present, having expanded the complex in the 1960s with an enormous austere
one-story brick factory built on the site of Mill No. 4's reservoir.

St. Joseph's Episcopal Church. 1902 W. Main St. In 1894, William Allen
Erwin, director of Erwin Cotton Mills, helped establish an Episcopal parish
(the second oldest in Durham) for the benefit of his mill workers. For many
years he taught Sunday School in the West Durham Episcopal mission on the
second story of the company store at the northwest corner of W. Main St. and
Ninth St. (destroyed). In the first decade of this century, Erwin and his brothers and sisters donated the funds for St. Joseph's Episcopal Church, which was dedicated to their parents, Jospeh J. and Elvira J. Erwin. This modest cut granite building, reminiscent of an English parish church, is in the traditional cruciform plan with lancet windows and stepped buttressing defining the exterior elevations. The interior is a wonderful example of the Gothic Revival style woodworking popular during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rich sawn and joined ornamental bracing lines the gabled ceiling in the same dark wood which outlines the windows and forms archways and partitions. Behind the altar there are three stained glass windows. The center and largest window is dedicated to Erwin's parents and the flanking windows are dedicated to Erwin and his wife. In later years, a two-story education and administration building was constructed to the rear of the church to which it is connected by a colonnade. Although only one mill worker remains in the congregation today, many parishioners retain ties to the mill through business and ancestry.

N 4. Wachovia Bank and Trust Co. Building. 2000 W. Main St. Austere one-story building, nearing completion. Its modern design is executed in red brick similar to that used in the adjoining Erwin Cotton Mills factories.

Perry Street

5. Blacknall Memorial Presbyterian Church. 1902 Perry St. A Presbyterian congregation was organized for the mill workers of West Durham sometime between 1903 and 1907 as the West Durham Presbyterian Mission. For several years it occupied a small frame building (destroyed) on Presbyterian St., now named Bolton St. When the congregation erected this Neoclassical Revival style brick building in 1922, they chose a new name in honor of Richard Blacknall, a pharmacist who had been instrumental in the establishment of Durham's first Presbyterian congregation and who had resided nearby in West Durham. The modified temple front of the building consists of an engaged portico with pairs of Ionic columns in antis, a simple entablature and cornice all around, and a pediment applied to the stepped parapet that rises above the portico. Windows arranged in two tiers contained in a single plane and topped by a splayed lintel are separated by pilasters on all elevations. In contrast to the fluted piers supporting a denticulated entablature framing the altar, a geometrically stylized pressed tin ceiling dominates the interior. In 1970, the congregation abandoned plans to build a new church in favor of a thorough renovation of the existing structure.
6. **Commercial Building. 1914 Perry St.** Early 20th-century one-story brick building remodeled with very plain new brick facade and plate glass windows. Early occupants included Hawley's Barber Shop during the 1920s and Quality Clothing Store in the 1930s.

7. **Commercial Building. 1916/1918 Perry St.** Two-story brick structure containing two storefronts and decorated with simple corbelled brickwork at the top of the main facade. One of the early occupants was Andrews Furniture Co., located here for a few decades beginning in the 1920s.

8. **Commercial Building. 1920 Perry St.** This two-story brick building featuring decorative brickwork and a cast iron cornice is one of the more elaborate structures in the West Durham business district. Constructed around 1910, it also was one of the district's first brick buildings. Its earliest known use was as the plant of Blalock and Beck Cleaners, whose office was at 417 W. Main St. For many years beginning around 1935, the building served as the office and plant of Cheek Dry Cleaners. The earliest known occupants of the second story were Frederick Sorrell, a tailor, and a fraternal order named the Pythians.

9. **(Former) Fidelity Bank. 626 Ninth St.** The Fidelity Bank had this West Durham branch, constructed in the early 1920s according to a design by the Durham architectural firm of Rose and Rose. The handsome Neoclassical Revival style building in ochre-colored brick features pilasters with stone capitals and bases; two-story-tall arches (originally containing windows and now filled with stucco) with keystones at the entrance bay and along the side elevation; decorative plaques on the end bays of the west and north facades; and a stone entablature and cornice surmounted by a parapet. A pedimented stone surround marks the main entrance. The shorter two-story wing incorporates the same base, pilasters, and cornice as the main unit but has rectangular windows which have been filled with glass brick on the main facade.

10. **Commercial Building. 700-02 Ninth St.** Circa 1910 two-story brick building, one of the earliest in the West Durham business district, containing two storefronts, a molded metal cornice above each story, and replacement second-story windows. E.R. Thomas and Sons, druggists, occupied 700 from the early 1910s into the 1920s, succeeded by Brewer's Drug Store which remained in business here for many years. 702 was the site of an A & P grocery until the late 1930s when it was replaced by barber and beauty shops.
11. Commercial Building. 704 Ninth St. In the late 1920s, this two-story beige brick building containing one storefront was attached to 700-02 Ninth St. The molded and dentil cornices of the older building were continued across the new unit so that both buildings appear to be one. Unlike the older building, 704 Ninth St. retains its original second-story windows. The A & P grocery moved from 702 to this building upon its completion.

12. Goodwin Dance School & Gym. 706-708 Ninth St. Two-story brick structure dating from 1950s, with metal casement windows in second story; storefront has been remodelled with large multi-paned windows.


14. Couch Furniture Company. 714 Ninth St. Large and austere 1950s two-story building with plate glass windows covering most of main facade.

15. Carolina Copy Center. 716 Ninth St. Very austere one-story sandstone brick building with three storefronts of plate glass windows flush with the brick wall.

16. Regulator Bookshop. 720 Ninth St. One-story brick building constructed 1940s for Couch Dry Cleaners; popularly known for its second and current occupant, located here for many years. The ochre-colored brick front features a centered recessed entrance flanked by large plate glass windows with a band of glass brick on either side. A stone base and molded stone cornice accent this small Moderne structure.

17. (Former) Bank of West Durham. 726-28 Ninth St. Circa 1920 one-story building of tapestry brick with two storefronts. The simple parapet with a decorative brick pattern has been covered with aluminum (soon to be removed) and the storefronts have been remodelled with large plate glass windows in metal frames. During the 1920s and 1930s, the entire building was the home of Bank of West Durham; its president was J.O. Cobb and vice presidents were T.M. Davis and J.C. Dailey. When the bank vacated the building around 1940, the structure was divided into two units: the West Durham Cafe occupied 726 and Martha's Beauty Shop was in 728 during the 1940s.

18. McDonald's Drug Store. 730-32 Ninth St. A stepped and curved parapet with stone coping and decorative geometric stone panels highlights this one-story tapestry brick building with two storefronts built around 1920. Some of the metal siding covering the brickwork blew off during a 1983 storm and the rest
is scheduled to be removed soon. Ever since the building was constructed, McDonald's Drug Store has occupied 732 Ninth St. This business is the oldest establishment in the West Durham business district. Many shops have occupied 730, including the West Durham Cash Store for many years beginning around 1940.

C 19. Dailey's Hardware. 734-38 Ninth St. Late 1930s one-story building with simple tapestry brick parapet (now covered with aluminum) and three storefronts with large plate glass windows. Early occupants of the building (around 1940) were Louis E. Bonardi's fruit and produce market in 734 and 736 and Bishop's Upholstery in 738. For many years, Dailey's Hardware has used the entire building.

C 20. (Former) Dailey's Grocery. 740 Ninth St. Early 1910s one-story brick building with simple parapet; upper facade now covered with aluminum, which merchants plan to remove. John C. Dailey operated his grocery here for many years from as early as 1925.

C 21. Commercial Building. 742 Ninth St. Early 1910s one-story brick building with simple parapet; upper facade now covered with aluminum, which merchants plan to remove soon. The earliest identified occupant of the building was the West Durham Cash Store, which used it during the 1920s. In 1930, Westover Electric Shoe Shop was located here, supplanted by 1940 by New Champion Shoe Shop.

C 22. Commercial Building. 744-46 Ninth St. One-story 1940s brick structure containing three storefronts surmounted by a broad single-stepped parapet.

C 23. Commercial Building. 748-52 Ninth St. One-story brick building constructed in the 1920s with three storefronts and a very simple stepped parapet. Above each storefront, the tapestry brick elevation contains a banded brick in a basketweave pattern. Early occupants included a grocery named Universal Stores in 750 during the 1920s, supplanted by Moser's Barber Shop by 1930. West Durham Meats and later Talley's Meats were located in 748 during the 1930s and 1940s.

C 24. Commercial Building. 754 Ninth St. Now occupied by Ninth Street Bakery, this one-story brick building constructed around 1920 originally housed William York's grocery and later Pender's Stores grocery; around 1940 it was the Columbia Billiard Parlor. The upper facade of tapestry brick (now painted) is distinctive for its large grillwork panels.
C 25. Commercial Building. 756 Ninth St. Small one-story brick building with tapestry brick facade (now painted) and flat parapet topped with stone coping. Built in the late 1920s, it originally housed a restaurant and by 1940 contained Southern Dry Cleaners.

C 26. Commercial Building. 758-60 Ninth St. One-story building containing two shops. The tapestry brick facade features a simple stepped parapet with stone coping, small stone panels, and patterned brickwork. The earliest known occupant of 758 was Pender's Stores grocery, which moved here around 1940 when it vacated 754 Ninth St. Early occupants of 760 included a shoe repair shop and later a five-and-ten-cent store.

C 27. Commercial Building. 762-64 Ninth St. Like its counterpart at the opposite end of the block (700-02 Ninth St.), this two-story brick building was built around 1910 and features molded box cornices above each story. The two-unit building retains its original storefronts with large plate glass display windows flanking a recessed entrance; segmental arched windows appear in the second story. During the early 1930s, 758 accommodated Whitmore's Bakery and 760 contained Mack's Food Shop, the building's earliest known occupants.


C 29. E.K. Powe School. 909 Ninth St. The Neoclassical Revival style central portion of this two-story brick building was constructed in 1928 according to a design by the Durham architectural firm of Atwood and Nash as an addition to West Durham Elementary School. The central entrance bay projects slightly in a temple-front design incorporating a pediment, fluted pilasters, windows with keystone lintels, and a main entrance surmounted by a broken pediment. The original frame portion of the West Durham Elementary School (built prior to 1913) was removed after 1928; the steel-framed brick-veneered wing north of the 1928 structure was built on the site of the frame building in 1975. Other additions to the Atwood and Nash-designed building include the 1949 brick gymnasium which replaced an earlier frame gymnasium and the two-story classroom wing extending to the west constructed in 1961. The school was renamed for Edward Knox Powe, long-time general manager of the Erwin Cotton Mills' West Durham plant. Powe was widely known throughout Durham for his philanthropic interests, particularly his concern that all children receive a thorough education.
Edith Street

C 30. Browning House. 905 Edith St. Pyramidal-roofed house intact except for removal of one of two original front doors and installation of metal porch posts. Textile worker James H. Browning and his family lived here for several years beginning in the late 1920s.

(C) 31. House. 907 Edith St. Pyramidal-roofed house remodelled with asphalt siding, removal of chimney, conversion of one of the two front doors to a window, and replacement one-over-one double-hung sash windows. Carport on brick piers has been attached to the north elevation.

C 32. House. 911 Edith St. Pyramidal-roofed house intact on the exterior except for replacement wooden porch posts, the extension of the shed porch to wrap around the north elevation, and the addition of a small gable-roofed wing on the north side in keeping with the original structure.

N 33. House. 913 Edith St. Extensively altered pyramidal-roofed house. Now a duplex, the entrances have been removed from the front elevation and placed on either side with a gable-roofed porch above each. Other changes include asbestos shingle siding, removal of chimney and replacement metal-framed casement windows.

(C) 34. House. 917 Edith St. Pyramidal-roofed house remodelled with removal of chimney, replacement windows, metal porch posts and railing, and aluminum siding.

C 35. House. 919 Edith St. Except for the removal of one of the two original front doors, this pyramidal-roofed house is unaltered on the exterior.

C 36. House. 923 Edith St. Pyramidal-roofed house. One of the two front doors has been removed and the porch has replacement metal posts and railing.

Virgie Street

C 37. House. 900 Virgie St. Large pyramidal-roofed house with replacement siding of stained cedar shake shingles and new porch supports of paired wooden posts with latticework.

C 38. Hester House. 904 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house intact except for replacement siding of asbestos shingles. Mill hand Milton Hester and his family lived here during the 1920s.
(C) 39. House. 908 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house. The porch has been screened in and shaded with a metal awning on all three sides and the original siding has been covered with aluminum.

(C) 40. House. 910 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house covered with asbestos siding. Gabled attic vent with decorative scalloped bargeboard trim has been added to the front plane of the roof and porch has been altered with replacement metal supports and railing.

C 41. House. 914 Virgie St. The only significant alteration to this pyramidal-roofed house is the replacement of one of the original two front doors with a window.

C 42. House. 916 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house which retains all of its original identifying features except for the porch railing and supports which have been replaced with slender wooden posts.


C 44. House. 922 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house covered with asphalt "brick" siding. The only other alteration occurs in the porch railing which has replacement wooden slats.

C 45. House. 901 Virgie St. Large pyramidal-roofed house completely intact on the exterior except for the enclosure of one end of the front porch.

C 46. House. 905 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house with replacement wooden porch posts and railing. The chimney has been removed and a wing has been added to the rear.

C 47. House. 909 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house intact on the exterior except for asbestos shingle siding and metal supports and railing at the porch.

N 48. House. 911 Virgie St. Extensively altered pyramidal-roofed house with brick veneer. Porch has metal posts on brick piers and a brick balustrade.

(C) 49. Carden House. 915 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house covered with aluminum siding. One of the front doors has been replaced with a window and the porch has metal supports and railing. Mill hand J.D. Carden and his family lived here during the 1920s.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

C 50. House. 917 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house with small replacement one-over-one double-hung sash windows and metal porch supports.

(C) 51. House. 921 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house with two types of replacement siding (masonite and T-111 plywood), metal porch supports, and a window in place of one of the two original front doors.

C 52. House. 923 Virgie St. Pyramidal-roofed house intact except for removal of one of the two original front doors and application of aluminum siding.

N 53. House. 925 Virgie St. Small and very plain one-story gable-roofed frame cottage constructed in the 1940s by a private individual.

Carolina Avenue

C 54. House. 806 Carolina Ave. One-story, one-room-deep house covered with asbestos shingles; porch has metal supports without railing.

C 55. House. 808 Carolina Ave. One-story one-room-deep house with replacement metal porch railing and box posts separated by latticework at the corners of the porch. Some of the original fenestration has been replaced.

(C) 56. House. 812 Carolina Ave. One-story, one-room-deep house altered with bled-roofed addition on and north gable end, aluminum siding, replacement metal porch and railing, and replacement six-over-six double-hung sash windows.


N 58. House. 816 Carolina Ave. Small 1940s frame house built by private individual.


C 60. House. 904 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house with replacement jalousie windows and siding of asbestos shingles.


C 62. Wagner House. 910 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house, unaltered on the exterior. John E. Wagner, listed in city directories as a farmer, lived here with his family during the 1920s and 1930 and possibly longer. Some of his children worked in the mill and one of his sons was a clerk for grocer John C. Dailey on Ninth St.
C 63. House. 912 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house with replacement siding of asbestos shingles and metal porch supports and railing.

C 64. House. 916 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house with replacement siding of aluminum and metal porch supports and railing.

C 65. House. 918 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house with aluminum siding and replacement metal porch supports.

C 66. House. 922 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house covered with aluminum siding. One of the original front windows has been replaced with a picture window and the porch has very ornate foliate wrought iron porch supports.

C 67. Crabtree House. 807 Carolina Ave. One-story, one-room-deep house with triple-A roof, round vent in front gable, central corbelled chimney, narrow fenestration, and shed-roofed three-quarter porch with slender chamfered posts, sawn spandrels, and match stick railing. Exterior intact except for replacement siding of asbestos shingles. Weaver J. Floyd Crabtree and his family lived here from the late 1920s until at least the mid 1930s.

C 68. House. 809 Carolina Ave. One-story, one-room-deep house altered on the exterior only with replacement metal porch supports and railing. Windows have shutters of closely spaced vertical wooden slats.

C 69. House. 813 Carolina Ave. One-story, one-room-deep house identical to entry no. 68 except for additional feature of aluminum awning on porch.

N 70. House. 815 Carolina Ave. Plain 1940s or 1950s one-story gable-roofed frame house built by a private individual.

C 71. House. 817 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house with replacement metal porch supports and railing and siding of asbestos shingles.


C 73. House. 905 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house intact on exterior except for replacement siding of asbestos shingles.

C 74. House. 907 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house intact on exterior except for a few replacement six-over-six double-hung sash windows.

C 75. House. 911 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house with replacement siding of asbestos shingles and metal porch supports and railing.
C 76. House. 913 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house with replacement metal porch posts and six-over-six double-hung sash windows.

C 77. House. 917 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house covered with aluminum siding; replacement metal porch supports.

C 78. House. 919 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house covered with aluminum siding. Some of the fenestration has been altered and the porch railing has been removed, but the porch retains its original box posts.

C 79. House. 923 Carolina Ave. T-shaped house intact on exterior except for replacement metal porch supports and railing.

Gin Street

C 80. House. 2806 Gin St. One-story, one-room-deep house with low-pitched triple-A roof and almost full-facade hip-roofed porch supported by turned posts with sawn spandrels. Exterior appears to be unaltered.

Bolton Street

C 81. Hicks House. 709 Bolton St. Pyramidal-roofed house covered with aluminum siding. One of the two original front doors has been removed, some of the windows have been replaced, and the front porch has replacement metal supports and railing. Miller hand J.M. Hicks and his family lived here during the 1920s and 1930s.

C 82. House. 711 Bolton St. One-story, one-room-deep house with triple-A roof. Gables have replacement rectangular attic vents and porch has replacement metal supports.


C 84. House. 719 Bolton St. One-story, one-room-deep house with triple-A roof. Altered with replacement siding of asbestos shingles and metal porch supports.

C 85. House. 721 Bolton St. T-shaped house with replacement siding of asbestos shingles and metal porch supports.

N 86. House. 725 Bolton St. T-shaped house extensively altered with enclosure of porch, replacement of original windows and repositioning of doors.
Rutherford Street


C 88. House. 720 Rutherford St. T-shaped house. The only alteration of note is the replacement of one of the original front windows with a multi-paned picture window.

C 89. House. 722 Rutherford St. T-shaped house, completely intact on the exterior with the exception of replacement latticework "balusters" in the porch railing.

C 90. House. 726 Rutherford St. T-shaped house with replacement siding of asbestos shingles and metal porch supports and railing.

C 91. House. 730 Rutherford St. T-shaped house, virtually intact on the exterior. Only discernable alteration is the replacement of the original box porch posts with slender solid wooden posts.

C 92. House. 732 Rutherford St. T-shaped house with replacement siding of multi-colored asphalt "brick" and metal porch posts and railing.


C 94. House. 738 Rutherford St. T-shaped house with replacement siding of asbestos shingles and metal porch supports and railing.

(C) 95. House. 715 Rutherford St. T-shaped house extensively altered with aluminum siding, metal framed windows, and removal of front porch.

(C) 96. House. 717 Rutherford St. Aluminum-sided T-shaped house with replacement double-hung sash windows and metal porch supports and railing.

C 97. House. 721 Rutherford St. T-shaped house with replacement siding of asbestos shingles and metal supports and railing at the porch, part of which has been removed.

C 98. House. 725 Rutherford St. T-shaped house with replacement siding of asbestos shingles and metal porch supports and railing.

(C) 99. House. 727 Rutherford St. T-shaped house altered with replacement siding of asbestos shingles, metal porch supports and railing, a few replacement double-hung sash windows, and an exterior chimney in the side gable end.
C 100. Nash House. 731 Rutherford St. T-shaped house with replacement siding of asbestos shingles, a replacement picture window on the main facade, and metal porch supports and railing. Mill hand Edward Nash and his family lived here during the 1920s and 1930s.

C 101. House. 733 Rutherford St. T-shaped house with replacement siding of asbestos shingles and metal porch supports and railing.

West Knox Street


C 103. (Former) Wesleyan Methodist Church Parsonage. 2014 W. Knox St. Low two-story gable-roofed house built early in the 20th century as the parsonage for the Wesleyan Methodist Church, formerly located nearby at the corner of Ninth and W. Knox streets. Recently restored as a duplex, the house features a small shed-roofed attic dormer, small two-over-two double-hung sash windows in the second story of the main facade, and an almost full-facade hip-roofed front porch with turned posts and match stick railing.

C 104. House. 2208 W. Knox St. Early 20th-century one-story, two-room-deep frame house with two interior chimneys and raised seam tin-covered hip roof with front attic gable. The intact exterior of this unaltered privately built house also features an almost full-facade porch supported by turned posts. The earliest known occupants of the house were James H. DuPriest, a steelworker, who lived here around 1930, and textileworker Frank T. Conway, who resided here beginning in the mid 1930s.

C 105. House. 2210 W. Knox St. Privately built early 20th-century frame house very similar to entry no. 104. This house varies from its neighbor in the orientation of its hip roof and in its front porch which has a shed roof supported by slightly tapered box posts with molding at top and bottom.

C 106. Commercial Building. 2212 W. Knox St. This small, privately built frame structure is the only neighborhood store in the residential portion of the West Durham Historic District. Formerly a grocery (now unused but maintained), the gable-front building features a plain false parapet front of weatherboards and a full-facade shed-roofed porch supported by plain posts and spandrels. Several grocers have used the building, including William G. Tate around 1930 and Edward W. Smith beginning in the mid 1930s.
C 107. House. 2101 W. Knox St. Pyramidal-roofed house with one of its two original front doors removed and replacement metal porch supports and railing.

(C) 108. House. 2105 W. Knox St. Pyramidal-roofed house altered with a few replacement windows, siding of asbestos shingles, removal of one of the two original front doors, and metal porch supports and railing.

C 109. House. 2107 W. Knox St. Pyramidal-roofed house now used as a duplex. The original three-quarter shed-roofed porch has been replaced with a gable-front hood over the two front doors.

(C) 110. House. 2111 W. Knox St. Pyramidal-roofed house extensively altered with siding of asbestos shingles, removal of one of the two original front doors, a replacement gable-front entrance porch, and additions to one of the side elevations.

C 111. House. 2201 W. Knox St. T-shaped house with replacement picture window on the main facade; now covered with asbestos shingles.

C 112. House. 2205 W. Knox St. T-shaped house intact except for a replacement double window with double-hung sashes on the main facade and removal of the porch railing.

C 113. House. 2209 W. Knox St. T-shaped house identical to entry no. 112 with additional alteration of replacement siding of asbestos shingles.

N 114. House. 2211 W. Knox St. T-shaped house extensively altered with enclosure of front porch, additional doors, some replacement windows, and a series of additions on the side and rear elevations.

C 115. House. 2303 W. Knox St. Intact T-shaped house altered only with a replacement double window with double-hung sashes on the main facade.

C. In their construction techniques and conservative brick decoration, the Erwin Cotton Mills Co.'s No. 1 and No. 4 mills at the heart of West Durham Historic District exemplify late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century industrial architecture. The district also is characterized by traditional rural mill house types, popular early twentieth-century brick commercial buildings, and two churches that are handsome examples of the Neoclassical Revival and Late Gothic Revival styles, respectively.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The approximately ninety-acre area that constitutes the West Durham Historic District began its development as the environs of a tiny settlement known as Pin Hook. ("Pin Hook" means speculator.) On the Hillsborough Road (the present W. Main St.) one mile west of Durham, Pin Hook was little more than a travelers' rest when the railroad town of Durham was being established in the early 1850s. It was located southwest of the future site of Erwin Cotton Mills and consisted merely of a lodging house, camping grove, grog shop, and well. In spite of the dirt and noise generated by the railroad that ran through Pin Hook, people gradually settled near the Hillsborough Road which provided easy access to Durham. Some of them probably followed the example of the original Pin Hook settlers who catered to travelers in Durham. A few of those settling between 1850 and the early 1890s were established Durham artisans and businessmen, such as Richard D. Blacknall who built his brick house a few blocks southwest of the district in 1889 (see Blacknall House National Register nomination, # 1 in the Durham Multiple Resource Nomination).

Through the 1880s, the district remained very sparsely populated. Beginning in the early 1890s, however, the area experienced rapid development as it was transformed into the textile mill village of West Durham. At the turn of the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Dukes and George W. Watts recognized that there were tremendous profits to be made in textiles. These men headed the local tobacco dynasty, W. Duke Sons & Co., which in 1890 was sold to the new American Tobacco Company trust formed by J. B. Duke. While J. B. Duke presided over American Tobacco's quest for complete control of America's cigarette and other tobacco business from his New York City offices, in Durham his brother, Benjamin N. Duke, and George W. Watts sought to increase their earnings by reinvesting their tremendous tobacco profits.

Historian Robert F. Durden notes that the decision of Duke and Watts to enter textile manufacturing reflected good business sense; furthermore, it was characteristic of them that they should choose to start a new venture at home when there were scores of other good opportunities across the country. Durham seemed to be a natural site for textile mills because of the railroad for easy shipment of goods and the area's plentiful supplies of cotton and labor. A market for textiles already existed right in Durham where the tobacco factories required muslin for the pouches in which loose smoking tobacco was packaged. Nor were Duke and Watts entering uncharted waters, for Julian S. Carr, their chief local rival in the tobacco industry, had established the successful Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company in East Durham in 1884.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 89.43 acres

ZONE EASTING NORTING
A 1 7 6186 95 0 3987 45 0
B 1 7 687 25 0 3987 40 0
C 1 7 6187 34 0 3986 60 0
D 1 7 686 70 0 3988 97 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
see continuation sheet
In 1892, Benjamin N. Duke secured William Allen Erwin to be general manager and secretary-treasurer of the new textile enterprise. Erwin, a member of the Holt family who pioneered textile manufacturing in Alamance County, had gained invaluable experience managing some of the family's mills. He contributed $40,000 of the initial $125,000 capitalization of the new company and the Dukes and Watts provided the balance. The mill was named for the Dukes' new business partner, but the product they decided to manufacture—muslin for tobacco bags—was an appropriate complement to the Dukes' original, successful endeavors. Ben Duke served as president of Erwin Cotton Mills and Watts as vice president.

Erwin joined the venture in the spring of 1892, and by the end of the year the mill village of West Durham was taking shape. He oversaw every aspect of starting the new factory, from purchasing the machinery to selecting the locations for the factory building and laborers' houses. When Erwin Cotton Mills commenced operations in the spring of 1893, its plant consisted of a long, two-story brick mill building accented with two four-story towers, a dye house, a picker house, a 105-foot-tall smokestack attached to a power house, and a two-story brick office building.

The textile company built dozens of frame houses for its employees who operated the 5,000 spindles and dozens of looms in the mill. H. C. Zachary and M. A. Moser, president and secretary, respectively, of Powhatan Lumber Company in Burlington were the contractors for three-, four-, five-, and six-room houses for Erwin Cotton Mills. Recently discovered plans and specifications reveal that the six-room houses were a single story with four fireplaces; the five-room houses were two stories with a one-story rear ell and a single chimney serving three fireplaces; the four-room houses were one-story gable-roofed duplexes; and the three-room houses had a single chimney with two fireplaces. The roofs were covered with heart pine sawed shingles and the interior walls and ceilings were sheathed in beaded tongue and groove "ceiling" boards. The construction costs ranged from $339 for the three-room houses to $606 for the six-room houses; the costs were slightly reduced if blinds and weights on the window sashes were omitted. The number of houses that Zachary and Moser built for Erwin Cotton Mills has not been determined. Until the late 1900s, most of the mill houses were built on the original large factory tract bounded by the present W. Main St., Rutherford St., Hillsborough Rd., and Ninth St., with a few houses east of Ninth St. One-story houses were built very close to the mill and the two-story houses, probably occupied by high-ranking employees, lined the west side of Ninth St. (originally named Main St.). Over the years, many of these early mill houses were removed to make room for factory expansion.

The swift success of Erwin Cotton Mills may be attributed to a combination of local capital, Erwin's managerial talents, and the low price of both cotton and labor. When the mill opened, it only produced the type of muslin used for tobacco pouches. Under Erwin's direction and with an infusion of extra capital by Ben Duke and Watts in late 1893 or early 1894, the mill soon installed additional machinery and diversified profit-
ably into the manufacture of chambrays, camlets, and denim. As the mill gradually cut back its production of muslin (ceasing to manufacture it altogether in 1899), it increased its output of the other cloths, particularly denim, which previously had not been manufactured widely or profitably in the South.

Rapid expansion of the factory and surrounding village reflected Erwin Cotton Mills' success. In 1895, Erwin Cotton Mills employed 375 workers. One year later, the main factory building was more than doubled in size to accommodate approximately 1,000 workers operating 25,000 spindles and 1,000 looms.

The 1898 Sanborn maps show that the dye house also was enlarged, cotton warehouses built, and a large brick warehouse appended to the office building. Next to the office, there was a 2,400,000-gallon brick- and cement-lined reservoir. The company general store, post office, and public hall occupied a two-story frame building at the southeast corner of the property. By 1902, another one-story factory building and a second large cotton warehouse had been added, and a one-story cloth room was about to be built; all were of slow burn construction. As it enlarged its work force and steadily expanded its operations at the close of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, Erwin Cotton Mills also increased its housing stock. In addition to the house types built by Zachary and Moser, these later dwellings included one-and-one-half-story duplexes with one-story side wings that were placed west of the factory.

Encouraged by the profits of the 1890s, Erwin Cotton Mills embarked upon a major expansion beyond Durham. As the company's local interests encompassed the city's other textile firms, its directors became keenly aware of the importance of hydroelectric power to industrial growth. At the turn of the century, Erwin Cotton Mills announced plans for its new Mill No. 2 on the Cape Fear River in Harnett County primarily for the production of denim. Four years later, Erwin Cotton Mills established its Mill No. 3 with the purchase of the Cooleemee Mill near Salisbury in Davie County, which William Erwin had been managing since its organization in 1900.

Erwin Cotton Mills' net profits at the turn of the century were sizeable—$195,000, or 55% of capital stock from 1899 to 1901.

Later in the first decade of the new century, however, growth slackened as the price of cotton rose and labor became less plentiful than it had been during the 1890s. Nevertheless, the company began construction in West Durham of the large Mill No. 4 in 1909. The new complex, erected immediately west of Mill No. 1, consisted of a large spinning mill and a large weaving mill, a bleachery, a cloth room, an engine house, and another reservoir. The City of Durham Illustrated of 1910 called it "the most modern plant in the entire cotton-making section of the United States." Built to produce bleached sheeting, the mill represented further diversification by Erwin Cotton Mills. With the manufactured cloth market continuing to be depressed through most of 1911 (due largely to agricultural problems that created higher costs for raw materials and hence for cloth production), only a portion of the machinery in the new mill was put into operation, but by the new year conditions were improved and the mill was functioning at full capacity.
In Durham alone, Erwin Cotton Mills employed approximately 1,600 people at the beginning of the 1910s, most of whom lived in company-constructed houses that by this time radiated in every direction from the mills. Older mill houses still covered all of the tract that had not been developed with factories—along Ninth St. north of Mill No. 1, and along Bolton and Rutherford streets (originally 13th and 14th streets, respectively) at the northwest corner of the property. Now that the two mills took up most of the original factory tract, the majority of the mill houses were situated in expanded areas to the north, west and south. Around 1910, when Mill No. 4 was under construction, Erwin Cotton Mills built the houses on Edith St., Virgie St., and Carolina Ave. (as well as a few on the north side of Hillsborough Rd. that have been removed). The simple one-story, one-room-deep and one-story T-shaped houses along Carolina Ave. were typical of mill houses built throughout Durham and the rest of the piedmont, but the one-story pyramidal-roofed houses with two front doors along Edith and Virgie streets were new to the area. To the west, T-shaped houses lined 15th St., both sides of Rutherford St., and the north side of W. Main St. To the south, across the railroad tracks, Erwin Cotton Mills erected dozens more houses. Here, fashionable two-story houses for factory foremen and administrators lined the north side of Erwin Rd., while farther south eight narrow lanes were filled with modest houses for laborers. (The mill village west of Rutherford St. and south of the railroad tracks is excluded from the district due to the removal of most of the houses to make room for apartments and the East-West Expressway; only a few scattered one-story houses remain there.)

Textile mills were characterized by an incongruous combination of paternalism and economic pressures that sanctioned long hours, low wages, and poor living conditions. As Robert F. Durden points out in his history of the Dukes, "... the Erwin mill and the Village that grew around it reflected many of the harsh realities of the period and of the industry. Yet in some ways Erwin, encouraged by Ben Duke, managed to do better than many of his fellow textile manufacturers." Erwin provided the West Durham community with a park before Durham had any city parks. In 1895 he equipped the large grove across the railroad tracks opposite the mill with swings and benches. This park quickly became the community's social and recreation center, exemplified by the brass band organized among the mill workers the same year. In 1922, Erwin Cotton Mills built Erwin Auditorium (destroyed 1984) in the middle of the park. In addition to the large auditorium that served as a gymnasium and theatre, the building contained game and music rooms, a library, and a swimming pool in the basement. The surrounding playing fields were augmented with tennis and basketball courts and even a small zoo.

More important than these paternalistic acts were Erwin's shortening of the work day in his mills to eleven hours in 1895 and his refusal to employ children under twelve years of age. Early in the twentieth century, he actively supported stricter child labor legislation. He did not, however, relax his stance against labor unions. When an organization incited workers to strike Mill No. 1 in 1900, Erwin effectively
kept labor unions out while weakening their cause by authorizing the company store to issue food to all of the mill hands, even those on strike.

Erwin and Edward K. Powe (Erwin's brother-in-law and general superintendent of the West Durham plant) were known for their interest in the education of their employees' families. They were particularly concerned that West Durham's children receive a primary education. Erwin is credited with the establishment of West Durham Graded School No. 1 (formerly on Swift Ave. south of the district and no longer standing) in the first decade of the twentieth century. West Durham had so many school-age residents around 1910 that another, larger, graded school (West Durham Graded School No. 2 on Ninth St.) was built. That original frame structure eventually was replaced by brick buildings and renamed in honor of Powe. In addition to supporting primary education, Powe assisted many of those who were academically inclined to continue their education beyond high school.

Erwin Cotton Mills executives also contributed heavily to the support of neighborhood churches. Next to the mill at the northeast corner of W. Main and Ninth streets, the West Durham Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had the distinction of being the community's first church building (no longer standing). It was erected in 1895 with funds provided by Ben Duke. The congregation that used this one-and-one-half-story frame building with a three-story tower moved to the larger Asbury Methodist Church in Trinity Heights in 1926 (in the Trinity Historic District, also included in the Durham Multiple Resource Nomination). Erwin, described by historian Durden as a devout Episcopalian, taught Sunday School for many years in a West Durham mission he founded on the second floor of the company store and post office in 1894. This mission was replaced in the following decade with St. Joseph's Episcopal Church located one block east of the mill on W. Main St. Erwin and his brothers and sisters founded the church in honor of their parents.

Two other denominations also were represented by congregations established in West Durham prior to 1910. The mill village's very first congregation was a mission organized by the First Baptist Church of Durham in 1894. The Baptists met in a frame building on Ninth St. until it was destroyed by a tornado in 1897, and then in a frame church on Alexander Ave., south of the district. The congregation began construction of a much larger church on Hillsborough Rd. in the 1930s (also outside of the district) which they named Grey Stone Baptist Church. A Presbyterian congregation was organized around 1905 in the small frame West Durham Presbyterian Mission on Bolton St. (destroyed). In 1922, the Presbyterians built the brick Blacknall Memorial Presbyterian Church on Perry St.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, businessmen were opening shops in the village in response to the large retail market created by the steady expansion of the Erwin Cotton Mills work force. West Durham's business district had been
established at the corner of W. Main and Ninth streets with the company store, which soon proved to be inadequate for meeting all of the mill workers' needs. Although Ninth St.'s initial development was primarily residential with the two-story mill houses on its west side, the few privately owned dwellings on the east side of the street soon were interspersed with commercial buildings. The two groceries, general store, bootmaker and watchmaker shops shown on the 1898 Sanborn maps were augmented with four more stores, an office, a millinery, a drugstore, and a barber shop by 1902. Frame commercial buildings continued to be constructed on the empty lots on the east side of Ninth St. and the north side of Perry St. Around 1910, they began to be replaced with brick buildings, beginning with the two-story structures at each end of the long block bounded by Perry St. and W. Markham Ave. Twenty years later, almost all of the houses in the block had been replaced with one- and two-story brick commercial buildings containing the wide variety of shops characteristic of a mature neighborhood commercial district: several groceries, two drugstores (including McDonald's Drugstore at 630 Ninth St. which remains at that location today), a bakery, a dry goods store, a restaurant, two shoe shops, two dry cleaners, barber and beauty shops, and two banks (the Bank of West Durham and a branch of Fidelity Bank).

The Erwin Cotton Mills Co. continued to prosper and grow for several decades and remained a leader in the manufacture of denim, despite its eclipse around 1920 by Cone Mills of Greensboro. In 1925, Erwin Cotton Mills built its Mill No. 5 at Duke (now Erwin) and in 1932 it purchased the Pearl Cotton Mills for its Mill No. 6. Significant expansion occurred again in 1948 with the company's purchase of Diana Mills near Wake Forest and Stonewall Cotton Mills near Stonewall, Miss., for Mills No. 7 and 8, respectively. In Durham, the plant was enlarged with additional cotton warehouses prior to 1937. By that time, the residential portions of the district were fully developed. After the mid-1910s, no new mill houses are known to have been built at the periphery of the village, which contained a total of approximately 440 company-built dwellings.

The profitable decades of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s were not without their problems for the West Durham Historic District as confrontations between management and labor, typical of the South's textile industry overall, became increasingly frequent. According to Karen Boström in her study of Erwin Cotton Mills and paternalism, after World War I mill management began raising production quotas as technological improvements were made. The workers' resentment of this "stretch-out" and its incentive system grew with the rise in pressure from production overseers who threatened workers if their production was low and raised their quotas (which did yield higher pay) if their production was high. In the early 1930s, when production quotas were up and wages were down, union activists stirred disgruntled workers into agitation across North Carolina. When paternalistic benevolences no longer countered the frustrations of the Erwin Cotton Mills workers, the union members went on strike for six weeks in 1934.
Although the strikers won the right to their union at Erwin Cotton Mills, the strike really changed nothing because the union’s activities were watched closely by management, which continued to install better machines requiring higher skill and output. Negotiations between the union and management for an equitable pay rate without the strict regulation of an incentive system broke down in late 1945 and all Erwin Cotton Mills workers struck the company for five months. Their demands for a $0.65 an hour minimum wage was met, but the work load was not diminished. Furthermore, the stretch-out continued because the union agreed to give Erwin Cotton Mills the right to institute changes from hourly rates to piece (incentive) rates without the union’s agreement. Bostrom concludes:

Erwin Mills employed a dual control mechanism over its workers. One was the technological structure of the firm in the form of the machines; the machines kept working, and so must the operatives. The social-organizational structure of the factory also held a tight grip on the employees. The definite and unquestioned hierarchy of authority (inclusive now of the union) and the idea of known ‘company rules’ promoted worker loyalty with the threat of negative sanctions. The workers felt their individuality and sense of pride in their work slowly slipping away.

The years following World War II signalled further change in the West Durham Historic District. One development that had a profound effect upon many of the area’s residents was Erwin Cotton Mills decision in 1946 to sell all of its houses. Many of the mill employees purchased their houses from the company; the rest of the houses were sold to investors, most of whom continued to rent the houses to their mill worker occupants. Today, the majority of the occupants of the district’s houses are employees or retirees of the mill. Other modern transformations of the district include the removal of most of the oldest mill houses on or adjacent to the factory tract to make room for plant expansion. The original reservoir and the houses on the tract north and east of Mill No. 1 (including all of the two-story houses on the west side of Ninth St.) as well as the houses on the north side of Hillsborough Rd. were removed and most of their sites paved for parking lots. The other reservoir and many of the houses north of Mill No. 4 were replaced with an enormous new one-story factory in the 1960s, the most significant addition to the plant since 1910. Elsewhere in the district, most of the post-World War II construction has occurred along Ninth St. where brick commercial buildings have supplanted the last of the early frame houses and empty lots.

In recent years, the business district, which had remained stable due to mill worker patronage, has been infused with a new variety of specialty shops that attract customers from outside of West Durham, particularly from nearby Duke University.

In 1963, Burlington Industries purchased all of Erwin Cotton Mills’ remaining West Durham property along with the rest of its mills, and in 1970 Erwin Cotton Mills formally merged with Burlington Industries, which had kept all seven of the functioning
Erwin mills in operation (Mill No. 1 already had been converted to a warehouse.) As part of its plans to consolidate its North Carolina facilities, in 1982 Burlington so: the east end of the West Durham plant containing Mill No. 1 to 35EHED Development Corp of Durham, which bought the mill office parcel one year later. SEHED renovated the mill as offices and apartments and restored the original headquarters building for continued use as offices in 1983 and 1984. The rest of the Burlington Industries plant, which still manufactures sheeting, remains the major employer of the district residents and as such is an important factor in the stability of the West Durham neighborhood.

NOTES


3 Ibid., p. 124.

4 Durham County Register of Deeds (DCRD), Book of Incorporations A, page 255; and Boyd, p. 122.

5 Durden, p. 130.

6 Sanborn Map Co., "Durham, North Carolina," 1893 series. The mill and office buildings already are on the National Register. Reference should be made to the Erwin Cotton Mills Co. Mill No. 1 and Headquarters Building nomination for more detailed information about the company.

7 In the correspondence relating to the Pilot Mills Co. of Raleigh recently donated to the Manuscript Department of Perkins Library at Duke University, there are several letters with drawings and specifications written in 1893 between Powhatan Lumber Co. and Pilot executives. These letters concerning mill house construction refer to Powhatan's construction of houses for Erwin Cotton Mills in Durham. The letterhead for Powhatan Lumber Co. includes the phrase "contractors and builders" and "wholesale and retail dealers in pine and hard wood, laths and shingles and all other building material." These papers are in "Pilot Mill Co. Information Folder Correspondence, 1893-1915," 1-C, Box 1, Manuscript Department, Perkins Library.

8 Sanborn Map Co., 1898 series. The early Sanborn maps for West Durham focus on industrial buildings and show only the houses immediately adjacent to the mill.
9 Durden, p. 133.


12 Durden, p. 133.

13 Ibid., pp. 137-38.

14 Ibid., p. 139.

15 Ibid., pp. 140-41; and Sanborn Map Co., 1913 series.

16 The City of Durham Illustrated (Durham: Seeman Printery, 1910), inside front cover.

17 Durden, pp. 42-44.

18 Similar pyramidal-roofed houses with a single front door were built in Gastonia by Parkdale Mills (late 1910s) and Arkray Mills (1920); however, prototypes for the Erwin Mills houses have not been identified.

19 During the late 1890s and early 1900s, mill executives William Erwin, his brother Jess; Harper Erwin (on the Erwin Cotton Mills Board of Directors and the manager Pearl Cotton Mills and Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company), and his brother-in-law Edward K. Powe (general superintendent of the Erwin Cotton Mills West Durham plant) had constructed the area's largest and most stylish houses southeast of the mills, just beyond the boundary of district. See the nomination for the Powe House, included in the Durham Multiple Resource Nomination; William Erwin's house has been destroyed and the Jesse Harper Erwin House has been extensively altered.

20 Durden, p. 134.

21 Ibid.


23 Durden, pp. 134-36.
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form  

Continuation sheet West Durham Historic District item number 10  

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Beginning at the southeasternmost corner of Block 1, Durham County Tax Map 46, follow the south edge of Block 1 to its southwest corner; then proceed north along the west edge of Block 1 to a point opposite the southeast corner of Lot 14, Block 1, Map 47 and cross Rutherford St. in a straight line to that corner; follow the south line of Lot 14 to the southwest corner of the lot and then proceed north along the west lines of Lots 14 through 21 and east along the north line of Lot 21 to the northeast corner of Lot 21, Block 1, Map 47; cross Rutherford St. in a straight line to the west line of Lot 2, Block 1, Map 46 and proceed north along the west edge of Block 1 to the northwest corner of the block and then east along the north edge of the block to the northeast corner of Lot 19, Block 1, Map 46; cross Hillsborough Rd. in a straight line to the southwest corner of Block 6, Map 45 and proceed north along the west line of Block 6 to a point opposite the southeast corner of Lot 6, Block 7, Map 45; cross Carolina Ave. in a straight line to the southeast corner of Lot 6, Block 7, and follow the south edge of Lots 6 and 4 west to the southwest corner of Lot 4; then follow the west and north edges of Lot 4 and cross Deveran Alley to the west edge of Lot 7, Block 7, Map 45; proceed north along the west lines of Lots 7 through 10 of Block 7 and cross Green St. in a straight line to continue north along the west edges of Lots 16 through 23 and Lot 25 of Block 2, Map 45; at the northwest corner of Lot 25 turn to follow the north edges of Lots 25 and 24 east and cross Carolina Ave. in a straight line to the northwest corner of Lot 1, Block 1, Map 45; cross W. Knox St. in a straight line to the southwest corner of Lot 7, Block 5, Map 11, and then follow the west edge of Lot 7, the north edges of Lots 7 and 8, and the east edge of Lot 8 to the southeast corner of Lot 8; cross W. Knox St. in a straight line to the northeast corner of Lot 21, Block 1, Map 45; proceed east along the north edge of Block 1, Map 45, cross Virgie St. to the northeast corner of Block 5, Map 12, and follow the north edge of Block 5, Map 12 to its northeast corner; cross W. Knox St. in a straight line to the southwest corner of Lot 11, Block 4, Map 11 and follow the east line of Lot 11 to the northwest corner of Lot 1, Block 10, Map 4; then follow the north edges of Lots 1 and 2 of Block 10, Map 4 to the northeast corner of Lot 2 and proceed south along the east edge of Lot 2; cross W. Knox St. in a straight line to the north edge of Block 4, Map 12 and then follow the north, east and south edges of Block 4 to a point opposite the northeast corner of Lot 12, Block 9, Map 12; cross Green St. to the northeast corner of Lot 12 and proceed south along the east edge of Lot 12; then follow the north, west and south edges of Lot 13 and the south edge of Lot 14, Block 9 to the northwest corner of Lot 2, Block 9; follow the west edge of Lot 2, and cross Hillsborough Rd. in a straight line to a point in the north edge of Lot 32D, Block 1, Map 46; proceed east along the north edge of Lot 32D and cross Ninth St. in a straight line to the northwest corner of Block 2, Map 13; proceed east along the north edge of Lot 1, Block 2, Map 13 and then follow the east edges of Lots 1 through 10 of Block 2 south; cross the alley in a straight line due south to the north edge of Lot 1, Block 4, Map 12 and proceed along that line across Lot 1 to the northeast corner of Lot 1B, Block 4; follow the east edge of Lot 1B and then the north edge of Lot 2 to the east; then follow the east edge of Lot 2 south to Lot 10; follow the north edge of Lot 10 east and then the east edge of Lot 10 south; cross Perry St. to the northeast corner of Block 6, Map 13 and proceed south along the east edge of Block 6; then follow the south edge of Block 6 west to the southeast corner of Lot 2, Block 6 and proceed north along the east edge of Lot 2 to its northeast corner; follow the north edge of Lot 2, Block 6, Map 13 west to Ninth St., cross Ninth St. in a straight line due west to the east edge of Block 1, Map 46, and follow the east edge of Block 1 south to the point of beginning.