

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Proximity Print Works**

Greensboro, Guilford County, GF6574, Listed 12/1/2014  
Nomination by Cynthia de Miranda and Jennifer Martin  
Photographs by Jennifer Martin, March 2014



Original ca. 1920 mill façade view



1920s-1940s warehouse and cloth storage building

**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 an 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 Proximity Print Works  
other names/site number Cone Finishing Plant

**2. Location**

street & number 1700 Fairview Street N/A  not for publication  
city or town Greensboro N/A  vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Guilford code 081 zip code 27405

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for 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/Title \_\_\_\_\_ 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 certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the 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: _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**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 count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
9	0	buildings
0	0	sites
2	0	structures
1	0	objects
12	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic and Architectural Resources of Greensboro, NC, 1880-1941

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

n/a

**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: slow-burn construction

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

Concrete

roof Asphalt

other

**Narrative Description**

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

**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 n/a**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

**Period of Significance**

1913-1964

**Significant Dates**

1913

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**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: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, NC

Proximity Print Works  
Name of Property

Guilford County, North Carolina  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 18.22 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>610440</u>	<u>3996050</u>	3	<u>17</u>	<u>610735</u>	<u>3995625</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>17</u>	<u>610735</u>	<u>3996175</u>	4	<u>17</u>	<u>610440</u>	<u>3995625</u>

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 Cynthia de Miranda and Jennifer Martin  
organization MdM Historical Consultants Inc. date July 28, 2014  
street & number Post Office Box 1399 telephone 919/368-1602  
city or town Durham state NC zip code 27702

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### 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Printworks Properties LLC  
street & number P.O. Box 14279 telephone 336-317-1865  
city or town Greensboro state NC zip code 27415

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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 listing. 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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Proximity Print Works  
Guilford County, North Carolina

## *Physical Description*

Proximity Print Works at 1700 Fairview Street is a large, brick, roughly rectangular collection of industrial buildings constructed in multiple stages beginning in 1913. The complex stands near the center of an 18.22-acre parcel at the northeast corner of Fairview and Ninth Streets in northeast Greensboro. The mill, with its longer elevations facing northwest and southeast, had its entrance along Fairview Street at the complex's southwest end. An out-of-use railroad right-of-way runs along the long, northwest side of the mill where loading docks extend along that elevation.

North Buffalo Creek forms the parcel's north boundary. The lot slopes upward on the southeast side of the building. There are a few trees scattered in the roughly triangular space to the southeast of the mill and in a clearing to the northeast of the building, but otherwise the lot is grass-covered or surfaced with small paved parking lots. A large concrete pad with four raised concrete circles that served as the base for a large metal tank that held chemicals for the printing process is on the south side of the mill. A chain-link fence borders the parcel and access is through locked gates on the east side of Fairview Street or on the west side of an access road on the north side of Ninth Street. The aerial map of the property attached to the nomination shows a metal water tower in the southeast corner of the property. The tower is no longer standing.

Proximity Print Works stands between two other industrial or former industrial complexes, Revolution Cotton Mill (NR, 1984) and White Oak Mill, all originally part of the Cone family textile mill empire. Revolution Cotton Mill, which is immediately to the west, has been rehabilitated for office space, while White Oak Mill, to the northeast, produces denim, which was its original function. Hundreds of mill houses, as well as community buildings, such as schools, churches, and athletic fields, historically associated with the three plants are to the northwest and southeast of these large complexes. The first mill the Cones established, Proximity Cotton Mills, stood about one mile to the south of Proximity Print Works on a parcel to the west of the intersection of Fourth Street and Maple Street. Established in 1895, Proximity Mill has been demolished.

## **Inventory**

The following inventory is keyed to the attached floor plan, which was created by the current owner, and the site plan. Each section of the building is identified by its original or early function, if known, and a date or approximate date of construction and major alterations is provided. These dates come from historic information, documentary photographs, and available architectural renderings. Some portions of the complex are not accessible due to unsafe conditions where wood floors have deteriorated. Deferred maintenance and ongoing vandalism by trespassers have been key contributors to parts of the mill's current deteriorated state. However, Proximity Print Works, as a whole, retains the integrity necessary to convey its significance as the one of South's first and most extensive fabric printing enterprises.

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## Proximity Print Works Building (Buildings 1-4, 6-9) Contributing Building

### Building 1: Packing and Pressing Rooms, ca. 1920

The packing and pressing rooms section of the mill likely dates to around 1920. This part of the plant does not appear on the 1919 Sanborn map, but is on the 1925 map and is shown with interior spaces devoted to cloth staging, pressing, and packing. Its southwest corner includes a machine room.

The 110 x 250-foot, long, two-story, brick, flat-roofed building features a low-pitched, front-gabled parapet with concrete coping on its west and east ends. Building 1 is roughly rectangular, although its northeast corner is taken up with a boiler room (described later). It contains 43,200 square feet. Most of Building 1's windows have been bricked in, probably in the 1950s, but their concrete sills and segmental arched lintels composed of three rows of header bricks remain.

The façade (west elevation) faces Fairview Street and is eleven bays wide with brick pilasters separating groups of bays. An elevator tower at the southwest corner dates to 1947 according to plans and is approximately half a story taller than the building. It appears in a 1948 photograph and on the 1950 Sanborn map. An elevator tower with a hipped roof was located on the northwest corner, but it was taken down some time after 1950. A course of corbelled bricks tops the bays on the upper level. A metal canopy supported by large, steel triangular braces shelters the first level concrete loading dock and continues along the north elevation; it was added in the 1980s. On the first level, some ca. 1960 steel, awning-type windows have been fitted into the bricked-in bays. A pair of metal, half-glazed doors with divided lights above and a single half-glazed door provide access from the poured concrete loading dock to the interior. Just north of the double doors, a horizontal opening remains uncovered. The north elevation is twenty-eight-bays long with brick pilasters separating each bricked-in-window or door opening. The façade loading dock continues on this side of the building and is sheltered by the metal canopy. Beneath the canopy are a series of doors and windows, many of which are modern and have been fitted into bricked-in bays. This loading dock, which is partially open underneath, is oriented toward a former railroad siding that extends along the building's northwest side. Wood rafter tails below a shallow roof overhang grace this elevation. The east end of building 1 terminates in a parapeted firewall bordering the boiler room. A stair tower extends from the center of the roof near the east end of the building.

### Interior

The interior of Building 1 maintains its utilitarian appearance and retains its open floor plan throughout. On the first level, walls are painted brick and floors are concrete. Steel vertical columns spaced 25' x 16' support steel I-beams. Much of the mechanical equipment, such as banks of fluorescent lighting and water pipes, remain intact and exposed. Fire resistant asbestos panels sheath portions of the ceiling. The second floor was not accessible because of safety concerns.

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## Boiler Room, ca. 1913

The brick rectangular boiler room with a shed roof was built northeast of Building 1. It measures 46' x 56' and consists of a basement and upper story. It contains 2,576 square feet. Its tall brick smokestack that rose from the southeast corner was removed around 1980. The boiler room's roofline is slightly lower than Building 1's. Four bays on the second story north elevation have been bricked in. The steel-frame windows remain uncovered on the basement level. The metal canopy continues along the north elevation and shelters the concrete loading dock.

### Interior

The boiler room has brick walls, concrete floors and steel trusses on the ceiling. Its wood ceiling remains uncovered. A large steel door on a metal track leads from Building 1 into the boiler room. In the early 1930s, the boiler room was renovated into a bathroom that included showers. The ceramic tile shower stalls remain intact. The second level was not accessible due to safety concerns.

## Building 2: Bleachery, ca. 1920

Measuring 200' x 125', the one-story-on-basement brick bleachery is roughly rectangular in form with a very low gable roof. It contains 25,000 square feet. Nine bays span the north elevation, but its windows have been bricked in or fitted with smaller, horizontally-oriented, hopper-style windows. One bay contains a metal roll-up loading dock door. The metal canopy continues along the bleachery's north elevation and shelters the concrete loading dock.

### Interior

The bleachery contains two rooms divided by a ca. 1980 fire wall that is pierced by a wide center opening with a roll-up metal door. Walls are painted brick and concrete block, floors are concrete, and columns are cast steel set 25' apart. Steel I-beams and cast concrete finish the ceiling. Pipes and banks of fluorescent lights hang from the ceiling.

## Building 3: Napper and Singe Room, 1920

The one-story-on-basement napper and singe room is a rectangular, brick building that measures 100' x 125'. A flat roof tops the building. It contains 12,500 square feet. This section of the mill was used for cotton weighing and sampling. Some of the six metal sash windows remain uncovered on the north elevation.

### Interior

The open interior space features painted brick walls, a concrete floor, and steel vertical I-beams that support steel ceiling I-beams and wood decking. Spacing of the columns is 25' x 25'.

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## **Main Entrance, 1928**

The entrance is contained in a 30 x 35-foot brick building at the west end of the overall complex. The one-story, brick building has a single door opening on its west elevation that is sheltered by a hip-roofed porch with rafter tails and a single, hexagonal wood post. The hipped roof shelters a concrete loading dock with an attached front declining ramp. Windows on the two visible elevations have been filled with brick. The flat-roofed building features a flat parapet with tile coping on the north and west elevations. Directly behind (east of) the entrance, is a concrete pedimented wall pierced with large multi-light, steel-frame windows with blue glass. This parapet marked the original entrance into Proximity Print Works. There is currently no access to the interior of the main entrance portion of the building.

## **Building 4: Dye House and Finishing Room, 1926, ca. 1940, ca. 1960**

Building 4 comprises the largest portion of the mill complex. Construction began in 1924-1926 and it received additions in the 1940s and 1960s.

### **Building 4a: Drying and Finishing Room, 1926**

The one-story, brick building measures 110' x 420' and contains 42,000 square feet. It is south of and parallel to Buildings 1 and 2. The original exterior is no longer visible because of additions, but the interior remains intact. It consists of a large open space with a concrete floor, steel columns spaced 25' x 20' apart, and a cast concrete ceiling.

### **Building 4b: Cloth Storage and Warehouse Addition, 1926**

The two-story, brick building was built onto the west end of the original section of Building 4 and is open to the original section. It measures 185' x 80' and is 14,800 square feet on each level. Its exterior is obscured by later additions. On the interior, floors are concrete, steel posts set 25' x 20' apart support a cast concrete ceiling.

### **Building 4c: Plisse Room Addition, 1926, ca. 1940**

The two-story, nearly square, brick building measures 65' x 64' and is 4,160 square feet on each level. The interior space has a concrete floor, metal ceiling trusses and joists and a wood ceiling. Around 1960, an addition was made to its roof, but it is not currently accessible.

### **Building 4d: Dye House and Finishing Room Addition, 1926**

The one-and-a-half-story, brick and concrete rectangular addition measures 65' x 96' and contains 9,360 square feet between its two levels. It was constructed between the original building and the main section of Building 4. The upper level displays a concrete floor, steel vertical supports, and steel I-beams. The upper level has a clerestory built of concrete with a concrete floor and concrete ceiling joists.

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## **Building 4e: Dye House and Finishing Room Addition, ca. 1950**

The two-story, brick and poured concrete addition to the south side of the east end of Building 4 measures 25' x 45' and is topped by a flat roof with concrete eave brackets. The west side is built into the side hill so that only the upper level is visible from the exterior. Walls of steel-framed windows with colored and clear lights remain intact on the west and south elevations. The same windows remain on the upper level of the east elevation, but a solid brick wall is below. A double steel door is centered on the south elevation. A concrete and metal stoop flanked by a pair of metal stairs occupies each side of the stoop. A single-leaf door is immediately below the double door, but it is obscured by the front wall of the stoop. A flat-roofed open shelter supported by round poles is on the southeast corner.

### Interior

The upper and lower levels feature concrete floors, square concrete supports, and a ceiling with steel I-beams and a cast concrete slab. Walls are concrete and painted brick. A metal spiral staircase occupies the southeast corner. Each level is 1,125 square feet.

## **Building 4f: Dye House and Finishing Room Addition, ca. 1940**

The two-story, brick addition to the south side of the west end of Building 4 measures 30' x 65'. Each level is 1,950 square feet. A flat roof with concrete eave brackets tops the building. Stepped parapets with tile coping are on the east and west ends. Steel framed windows that retain most of their original lights are on the three visible exterior elevations. These oversized, vertically-oriented windows have concrete sills. A double-leaf, half-glazed door with missing lights is off-center on the south elevation. A concrete-topped brick stoop spans a portion of this elevation in front of the door. A set of concrete steps with a metal pole railing descends from the east side of the stoop.

### Interior

Walls on the interior are painted brick and floors are poured concrete. In the lower level, thick, rectangular brick piers support steel I-beams and a concrete ceiling. A metal spiral staircase in the southeast corner leads to the upper level where finishes are the same, minus the brick piers.

## **Building 4 Addition: Dye House and Finishing Room Addition, ca. 1940**

The long brick addition to the south side of the original section of Building 4 measures 500' x 32'. Most of its exterior south wall is visible, except where it is interrupted by the 1940s additions (buildings 4e and 4f). The south elevation features a span of steel-framed windows with blue and clear glass. Concrete brackets grace the flat roof overhang. The addition is built into a steep hillside, which is thick with tree coverage on its west end. A concrete stair with round metal pole railings descends from the top of the hill to a set of double steel doors that pierce the south side of the Building 4 addition.

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## Interior

The long, relatively narrow addition displays painted brick walls, and a cast concrete ceiling with clerestory between the addition and the original Building 4.

### **Building 5: Warehouse, 1923, 1944, ca. 1960 (Originally a separate building, Contributing Building)**

Building 5 attaches to the east end of building 4. The two-story, brick building features a low parapet with tile coping on its east end sheltering a low-pitched gable roof. A brick firewall runs through the building from north to south. An elevator shaft is at the north end of the firewall. It rises above the roofline, but is not visible from the ground. The east end displays four, nearly full-height recessed panels in the brick exterior. A steel-frame pivoting window pierces the lower level of each panel. The south elevation includes steel-frame pivoting windows on both levels, although the lower level windows are larger.

## Interior

The lower level features mushroom-shaped concrete columns spaced 25' x 20' apart and set on pine inlay floors laid on a concrete subfloor. In 1944, a machine shop was installed in the east end of the lower level. On the upper level, steel I-beam posts support wood ceiling joists and a wood roof in southeast corner that has partially collapsed.

### **Building 9: Maintenance Shed, ca. 1960**

The building with a shed roof is an addition to Building 5. It attaches to the south elevation of the warehouse (Building 5). The upper section of its east elevation is sheathed in corrugated metal. A set of metal double doors pierces the center of the east elevation. The interior features brick and concrete walls, steel I-beams, concrete and metal joists, and a concrete floor.

### **Building 6: Compartment Warehouse, 1928, ca. 1960**

The four-story, brick building stands at the west end of the mill. It measures 120' x 72' and is a total of 34,560 square feet. Very low-pitched parapet walls with tile coping top the east and west sides and shield a low-pitched hipped roof. An elevator tower rises from the east side of the roof. A one-story brick connector built in 1928 on the east side linked the four-story compartment warehouse to Building 4 and the rest of the mill. Around 1960, a second story was added to the connector. On its north elevation, the only side visible, the connector displays paired six-light windows and tile coping. The north elevation is six bays wide with high, horizontal, steel-framed windows that are three lights wide and one light tall on the upper three stories. Pairs of the windows are set in recessed brick panels nearly the full height of the building. The panels are separated by brick pilasters and crowned with three courses of corbelled brick. Six, large, steel-frame windows, most missing their lights, span the first level.

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The west elevation is topped by the low parapet wall and is ten-bays wide. The same horizontal windows found on the north elevation are on the upper floors on this side of the building. The top three floors also have a pair of double-leaf, half-glazed doors with divided lights on the top half of each leaf. The first level has seven of the large, steel-frame windows, but also the double-leaf doors positioned below the upper floors' doors. The south end of the first level is obscured by a one-story, ca. 1950 brick loading dock that continues to the south to front the west elevation of Building 7.

Interior

Throughout the building, walls are painted and unpainted brick and floors and ceilings are wood. Columns are 10" in diameter and according to the plans, made of long-leaf pine, and support wood cushion blocks that in turn, support wood ceiling beams. Columns are set 12' x 12' apart, except on the first level where spacing is 10' x 10'. Cast metal spiral staircases connect the floors and are positioned near the elevator tower in the east part of the interior. The interior of the connector was not accessible.

**Building 7: Cloth Storage Building, 1941**

The January 15, 1941 edition of the *Textile Bulletin* announced the planned construction of "a seven-story addition...to the warehouse storage of Proximity Print Works on Fairview Street." The seven-story, brick building stands at the southwest corner of the mill complex. It measures 80' x 120' and contains a total of 67,200 square feet. Very low-pitched parapets with terra cotta coping on the north and south elevations shelter a low-gable roof. According to company journals for the period 1927-1944, the building was constructed in 1940. The north elevation is blank and abuts the south wall of Building 6. This elevation is divided into five full-height recessed panels with three courses of corbelled brick at their tops. The west elevation is eight bays wide and divided into four recessed panels. Each upper story contains horizontally-oriented windows that are six lights wide and one light tall. The fourth bay from the south on each level contains a double-leaf, half-glazed door with divided lights on their upper halves. These windows and doors are identical or similar to those on building 6 and many were salvaged from that building when its south elevation was covered by the construction of Building 7. The first level of the west elevation is obscured by the shed-roofed, ca. 1950 loading dock. The south elevation is ten bays wide and consists of the same windows found on the west elevation, also set in pairs in five, full-height, recessed brick panels with corbelling at their tops. The east elevation is eight bays wide and consists of the windows found on the other elevations. They are set in pairs in recessed panels with corbelling at their crowns. A brick elevator and stair tower occupies the north end of the east elevation. It contains the same windows found on the rest of the warehouse. It rises above the warehouse building's roofline and is topped by a flat roof. Like the rest of the elevations, three courses of brick corbelling crown the elevator tower. A door on its west side allows access to the roof.

Interior

The interior space on each floor is identical: wood floors, steel vertical columns supporting steel I-beams, and wood ceilings. The vertical supports are spaced 12' x 12' apart.

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## **Building 8: Warehouse, 1951**

The four-story-on-basement, brick building measures 120' x 120' and attaches to the east end of Building 3. It is six bays wide on the north elevation where almost all its pivoted steel windows remain intact. On the upper three levels windows are set in horizontal bands with concrete sills below. On the first level, below the metal 1980 canopy, the main windows are vertically-oriented, also with concrete sills. Both sets of double doors on the first level have been bricked in, but their horizontal, metal-frame transoms remain. A 1963 ramp sloping from west to east and fronted by a metal pole railing extends in front of the first level façade. A concrete wall with a single opening shelters the basement level. It has the same door and window arrangement that the first floor did originally, but its double doors lack transoms. Both sets of doors on this level have been replaced with solid, steel doors. The east elevation features a slightly stepped concrete-topped parapet wall. This side of the building lacks windows, but has a full-height fire escape with single-leaf doors on each level. A square stair tower is on the northeast corner; it rises above the roof of the building. Stacks of wood obscure the main level below the canopy that wraps around this side of the building, but drawings from 1951 indicate that there is a service bay on the north end of this level. The south elevation is blank with no windows or doors. A small, metal shed roof supported by metal posts is on the east end of this elevation. It is similar in material and form to the 1980 canopy on the buildings' north sides.

### Interior

All levels of the interior are finished with painted brick walls, maple floors, and wood decking in the ceilings. Steel vertical posts are spaced 20' x 20' apart and support steel I-beams in the floors and ceilings.

## **Pipe Stage Building, ca. 1930 Contributing Building**

The three-story, brick building with a flat roof stands on the north side of Buildings 2 and 3. It measures 30' x 90' and contains 8,100 square feet. It contains steel-frame windows with center pivoting sash and concrete sills. The east elevation is three bays wide. The second floor displays two windows and a service bay that has been covered in plywood. The first level contains no openings. The north elevation is nine bays wide, including the metal windows on the north side of four-story, brick stair tower with a flat roof. A shed-roofed, open canopy with metal pole supports shelters a service bay and two windows on the west end. The west elevation is three bays wide with windows on each level. The lower level is obscured by overgrown brush.

## **Turbine Room, ca. 1930 Contributing Building**

The two-story, brick building with a flat roof and parapet with tile coping stands on the north side of Building 2 and west of the pipe stage building. It measures 30' x 50' and contains 3,000 square feet. It displays large, steel-frame windows on concrete sills on each elevation. The east and west elevations are two bays wide with larger windows (42 lights) on the upper level and smaller windows (24 lights) on the first level. The north elevation displays four of the

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larger windows on the upper story. The first floor contains three of the smaller windows centered on the elevation. A wide opening fronted with a chain link gate is on the east end and a smaller opening with a wood door is on the west end. A small, wood, shed-roofed storage shed is at the center of the first floor of this side of the building. The south elevation is partially obscured, but contains windows like those on the other elevations and double-leaf steel doors with divided lights.

## Interior

The interior displays painted brick walls and concrete ceilings. The lower level contains several concrete support structures that flare outward from top to bottom. They and the brick piers in this space were intended to support the heavy equipment on the upper level. A metal stair on the north side of the interior provides access to the upper level, which is finished with a brick tile floor, steel I-beams, and a wood ceiling. A metal tank remains on interior of the upper level.

## **Southern Railway Right-of-Way, ca. 1900 Contributing Structure**

Proximity Print Works stands on the south side of an extension of the Southern Railway line that served Revolution Cotton Mills and White Oak Cotton Mills. On the 1907 Sanborn map it is labeled the White Oak Branch of the Southern Railway. All of the steel tracks remain on Proximity Print Works property.

## **Southern Railway Trestle, first half of the twentieth century Contributing Structure**

On the north side of Proximity Print Works, a wooden railroad trestle spans North Buffalo Creek and carries the railroad tracks toward White Oak Cotton Mills, which was opened between 1902 and 1905. The trestle is built almost completely of wood except for the horizontal concrete column caps that support the base below the tracks.

## **Firehose Houses (3), ca. 1920 Contributing Buildings**

Three of these small buildings with brick foundations remain on the property. One is located north of Building 1 at its west corner. It is a gable-roofed building that is open on its north side and has wood trim around the entrance. A similar one survives on the south side of the mill, near its southwest corner. An additional firehouse house, this one built of wood, is east of the mill and has a shed roof.

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**Pumphouse, ca. 1960**  
**Contributing Building**

A small, low-gable-roofed, red-brick building stands on the north side of the east end of the plant near the pipe stage building. A door pierces its north side. It does not appear on the 1950 Sanborn map.

**Grinnell Firehose Pump, ca. 1930**  
**Contributing Object**

A metal Grinnell firehose pump survives on the south side of the mill. It stands approximately three feet tall.

**Dye House, ca. 1920**  
**Contributing Building**

A small concrete block, shed-roofed dye house stands east of the mill. It is overgrown with dense vegetation.

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## SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

Proximity Print Works in northeast Greensboro is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Industry for its place in the diversification and evolution of the textile industry in Greensboro. The mill was the first textile printery in the South and proved that southern mills could complete the more sophisticated tasks of printing cloth. The period of significance begins in 1913, the year after Proximity Manufacturing Company, which was owned by Moses and Caesar Cone, purchased a mill from the Van Deventer Carpet Company for the location of Proximity Print Works. It continues through 1964, a period during which the mill was expanded several times and produced large amounts of finished printed fabric for the Cone textile empire. Although production continued at Proximity Print Works after that date, the activity is not exceptionally significant.

Marvin A. Brown's 1991 Multiple Property Documentation Form "Historic and Architectural Resources of Greensboro, North Carolina, 1880-1941" includes the historical and architectural context for the mill, and the textile industry in Section E, "The Textile Industry and Industrial Greensboro," in Context 2, "Modern Suburbanization and Industrialization, 1900-1941," on pages E21-E23. "Property Type 4: Industrial and Commercial Buildings" on pages F24-F26 provides a description of industrial buildings, including textile mills, such as the Proximity Print Works.

Textile mills in Greensboro are significant as reflections of the growth of the city and its essential industrial economy. Individual mills must be built between 1880 and 1941 and must retain historic integrity sufficient to identify the building's historic function. The significance and registration requirements for industrial buildings are discussed on page F28. This building meets these requirements as one of a handful of surviving early twentieth-century industrial buildings that reflect the dramatic growth of the city during the period. Proximity Print Works, like the city's other textile mills, is a visual testimony to the city's most important and influential industry. Additional information is provided for the post-1941 time period.

Proximity Print Works is a mostly intact textile mill from the first half of the twentieth century. The floor plans, rectangular footprints, brick construction, and flat and low gable roofs at Proximity Print Works epitomize the types and forms of textile industrial buildings constructed in the Piedmont of North Carolina during this period. The many periods of physical growth that took place at Proximity Print Works illustrate the expansion of technology that occurred and the evolution of industrial processes over time.

## HISTORY OF PROXIMITY PRINT WORKS

When Proximity Print Works was established, the Cone family mills were already "unquestionably an imposing force" both in Greensboro and in the field of southern textile production. Establishment of Proximity Print Works plant helped diversify textile production in Greensboro by printing on woven fabrics.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marvin A. Brown, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Greensboro, North Carolina, 1880-1941," Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1991, accessed on April 21, 2014, at <http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/GF7565.pdf>.

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The Cones has first established a finishing mill in Greensboro in 1893—at a time when there were few elsewhere in the south. “Finishing” in this context involves processing untreated woven textile to produce a finished cloth. Finishing processes include mercerizing, bleaching, dyeing, shrinking, and printing. However, through the first decade of the twentieth century, printing machines for woven fabrics were still all produced and operating in northern manufacturing centers.<sup>2</sup>

In 1912, the Cones’s Proximity Manufacturing Company bought an old carpet plant to open its Proximity Print Works. It was the heyday of printed indigo jeans and drill, which is used to make durable clothing, and the Cones wanted to take advantage of this popularity by opening their own fabric printing mill.<sup>3</sup> The property they purchased had been the location of the Van Deventer Carpet Company of Plainfield, New Jersey. In 1905, that company was renamed Marshall Mills after “a Boston man by the name of Marshall...secured a controlling interest in the plant and [took] charge of the same,” according to the *American Wool and Cotton Manufacturer*. Within two years, the carpet mill had shut down.<sup>4</sup> Marshall Mills first appears on a Sanborn map of Greensboro 1907, which noted that it was closed. At that time, the plant consisted of two parallel, rectangular brick buildings, one about twice the length of the other. Small frame support buildings surrounded the mill and single story dwellings arranged in a semicircle stood to the east.<sup>5</sup>

The 1913 Sanborn map indicates that the mill was being largely rebuilt following its purchase by the Cones, but it remains unknown if the carpet plant was demolished completely or parts of it were incorporated into a new building for Proximity Print Works. The 1913 map shows the southernmost long brick building that appeared on the 1907 Sanborn map, but the parallel brick building attached to its northeast corner has been taken down.

In their newly-purchased facility, the Cones installed a printing machine for indigo fabric. In an often-repeated story about the transaction, the Providence, Rhode Island, manufacturer of the machine was content to make the sale but found it a dubious investment: “What in the world are you going to do with a printing machine way down there in the sticks?” Fabric printing had been something mostly done in the northeast. Finishing and printing began at the plant in 1913 with J. E. Hardin as manager and H. A. Barnes as overseer.<sup>6</sup> By 1914, Proximity had forty employees laboring at Proximity Print Works; most were unskilled.<sup>7</sup> During the period 1917-1918, the company was printing indigo, khaki, and drill. The plant was powered by electricity and steam. J. E. Hardin remained manager and the plant’s

<sup>2</sup> Laura A. W. Phillips, “Revolution Cotton Mills,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1983, accessed on April 21, 2014, at <http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/GF0172.pdf>, 81; A Division of Cone Mills Corporation, “The Romance of Textile Finishing,” undated booklet, in the collection of Revolution Mills Studios, LLC, Greensboro.

<sup>3</sup> Half Century Book, 1891-1941: Cone Export and Commission Co. (New York: Cone Export and Commission Co., 1941), n. p.; “Herman Cone, Textile Empire Head, Listens to Advice of Co-Workers,” *Greensboro Daily News*, February 6, 1955.

<sup>4</sup> Marvin A. Brown, *Greensboro: An Architectural Record* (Greensboro, N. C.: Preservation Greensboro, 1995), 62; *Greensboro Telegram*, 20 April 1901; *The Blue Book Textile Directory of the United States and Canada: Fourteenth Annual Edition, 1901-1902* (New York: Davidson Publishing Company, 1901), 278; *American Carpet and Upholstery Journal*, Volume 23, No. 5 (May 10, 1905); *American Wool and Cotton Reporter*, July 6, 1905.

<sup>5</sup> 1907 Sanborn Map of Greensboro, North Carolina.

<sup>6</sup> “Cone Mills had a Modest Start,” *Greensboro Daily News*, February 21, 1937.

<sup>7</sup> “Number of Operatives, April, 1914,” Collection of Revolution Mills Studios, LLC.

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capital stock was valued at \$500,000. For this period, Proximity Print Works used a little over three and a half million pounds of raw fabric. The plant operated 296 days during a one-year period within the 1917-1918 time frame.<sup>8</sup>

Productivity required that within six years of opening, the plant needed an overhaul and additional space, work undertaken from 1920 through 1921. By this time, the state Department of Labor and Printing reported that Proximity Print Works was producing printed drills, khaki shirtings, and art ticks, which was printed fabric with small repetitious designs printed on the cloth from copper plating. The state estimated the value of the plant at \$750,000 and the value of its yearly output was one and a half million dollars. The payroll for workers for a year was \$100,000 and the plant operated for 292 days during a one-year period in 1921-1922. Proximity Print Works employed 124 men and seventeen women who worked nine-hour days and fifty-five-hour weeks. All of the workers could read and write. The highest paid males earned \$4.55 per hour and the highest paid females were paid \$ 2.45 per hour. The lowest paid workers males made \$2.45 per hour compared to \$1.89 for the lowest paid females.<sup>9</sup>

By 1923-1924, Proximity Print Works value had climbed to two million dollars since the Department of Labor's 1921-1922 report. The payroll also increased by \$33,000, while the total number of workers decreased to 124. A total of 103 of those workers were male and twenty-one were female. For a one-year period during 1923-1924, the plant operated 246 days, as compared to a one-year period in 1921-1922 when the plant ran 292 days. The reason for a decrease in the workdays is unknown.<sup>10</sup>

The state Department of Labor's report for 1925-1926 recorded an increase in the value of the plant's production. By this time, the value of yearly output was three million dollars. The number of workers went up to two hundred, with twenty of those female. Naturally, the payroll expanded to \$180,000. Even with more workers, the workday was extended to ten hours. The plant operated a total of 276 days in a one-year period for 1925-1926, an increase from the previous report.<sup>11</sup>

A 1928 newspaper article describes in detail the process for printing cloth at Proximity Print Works. Unlike paper, which was printed with ink, cloth was printed with dye, a much more complicated undertaking. At the time, according to the article, 200 people worked at Proximity Print Works and 125,000 yards of cloth were produced daily.

<sup>8</sup> *Thirty-First Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina, 1917-1918* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., 1918), 36-37, 50-51.

<sup>9</sup> *Thirty-Third Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina, 1921-1922* (Raleigh: Mitchell Printing Company, 1923), 146-147, 217.

<sup>10</sup> *Thirty-Fourth Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina, 1923-1924* (Raleigh: Mitchell Printing Company, 1924), 198.

<sup>11</sup> *Thirty-Fifth Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina, 1925-1926* (Raleigh: Mitchell Printing Company, 1926), 181.

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The plant held seven printing machines that could print one to fifteen colors on cloth at a time. Each machine delivered 50 to 75 yards of cloth per minute.<sup>12</sup>

The grey cloth was delivered to Proximity Print Works in bales that held 1,200 yards. After the bales are opened, the two ends of the cloth are sewn together so that the fabric could be placed on the mill's machines. First, lint, thread ends, specks, spots, and other debris that could interfere with the printing had to be removed in a very extensive process. One machine ran the cloth through sandpaper rolls that removed specks and other matter. The cloth was then exposed to gasoline vapors, which would burn off the nap, lint, and loose thread ends. The cloth had to go through the gas very quickly to prevent it from catching fire. Next, the cloth was dipped in a desizing solution to soften it. While still wet, it was placed in a vat for several hours, removed, then placed in the kiers, another type of vat, where it was boiled. The cloth then traveled through a washing process to remove impurities and then through a chlorine bath. A neutralizing agent designed to end the bleaching process was applied, then the cloth is washed one final time and then dried. The cloth was then ready for printing.<sup>13</sup>

For indigo or khaki dyeing, the cloth traveled through dyeing machines where they were given repeated baths of dye liquor, then washed and treated with chemicals that made the colors fast against the action of the light or water, two elements that could compromise the coloring process. For indigo, the cloth was dipped and washed four times. Printing designs proved more complicated. The designs that were printed on the fabric were copied from hand-painted sketches by artists. These artists' work was transferred to etched copper rolls and one copper roll was designated for each shade of color used in the design. Making the copper rolls was labor intensive and expensive, about fifty dollars each. The cloth was placed on the printing machines for dyeing then put through a finishing process that smoothed the fabric. The cloth was then put in a calendaring machine that replicated ironing. A folding machine measured and inspected the fabric. It was labeled by an inspector and then placed on bolts and sent to the stock room and readied for shipping.<sup>14</sup>

A new office building (not extant) went up in 1931 and a filter plant (not extant) was built five years later. In 1934, *the Textile Bulletin* proclaimed Proximity Print Works "one of the most up-to-date printing plants to be found in the South."<sup>15</sup> By 1937, Proximity Print Works' output was fifty million yards of printed cloth, using nine printing machines.<sup>16</sup> In January 1941, *the Textile Bulletin* announced the planned construction of "a seven-story addition...to the storage warehouse of the Proximity Print Works."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "Trailing Yard of Denim Through World's Largest Denim Mills," *The Charlotte Observer*, Carolina Industries Special, March 2, 1929.

<sup>13</sup> "Trailing Yard of Denim Through World's Largest Denim Mills."

<sup>14</sup> "Trailing Yard of Denim Through World's Largest Denim Mills"

<sup>15</sup> Ethel Thomas Dabbs, ed. "Visiting the Mills," in *the Textile Bulletin*, May 3, 1934, 28.

<sup>16</sup> A Member of the Staff, "The Cone Mills in North Carolina," reprinted from "Cotton—Serving the Textile Industries," October 1938, n.p.; "Age of Proximity Print Works Factory Buildings," Collection of Revolution Mills Studios, LLC., Greensboro; "Proximity Print Works, Greensboro, North Carolina, Building Plans, Collection of Revolution Mills Studios, LLC., Greensboro; "Cone Mills had a Modest Start," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 21, 1937; Megan Coker, "A Brief Survey of

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During the next two decades, Proximity Manufacturing Company continued its “forward vertical integration,” a phenomenon of diversification described by Brent Glass in his history of the industry in the state. Rather than buying more mills producing the same product, as textile companies had once expanded, Proximity established or bought mills to process what its other mills produced. The company opened the Granite Plant, another finishing plant at Haw River, North Carolina, before 1947. The next year, Proximity Manufacturing Company and Revolution Cotton Mills merged and became Cone Mills Corporation. The reorganization reflected a larger trend of consolidation and corporatization common to the industry during this period. The printing and finishing unit of Proximity Manufacturing Company became a Cone Mills Corporation subsidiary known as Cone Finishing Company. In 1952, Cone Mills purchased the Union Bleachery Plant in Greenville, South Carolina, adding another finishing plant to its assets. Three years later, the Carlisle Plant was under construction, to provide finishing services in Carlisle, South Carolina.<sup>18</sup> By 1955, Proximity Print Works was known as Cone Finishing Plant.<sup>19</sup>

Diversification of textile processes and the consolidation of smaller mills into larger corporations led to advances in the industry over time. Text of a 1972 brochure produced by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Economic Resources touts the “increase in the sophistication of the textile industry in the State.” The state, by then, was home to both private and institutional textile research laboratories, including those at the Research Triangle Institute and North Carolina State University. The expansion of the textile industry prompted the establishment of metalworking plants to support machinery at the textile mills. The state’s promotion of these industry achievements sought to attract more producers to the state.<sup>20</sup>

Despite those efforts, however, the industry suffered greatly over the next decades. Clashes between management and organized labor, changes in regulations, and competition from imported yarns and fabrics all put stress on North Carolina textile mills. Cone Mills closed the former Proximity Print Works in 1977.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “Mill News,” *Textile Bulletin*, January 15, 1941, 28.

<sup>18</sup> *Proximity Manufacturing Company 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report, 1947*, n.p.; *Cone Mills Corporation 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 1948*, n.p.; Phillips, 8.7; *Cone Mills Corporation, 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 1952*, n.p.; Brent Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1992), 79, *Cone Mills Corporation, 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report, 1957*.

<sup>19</sup> “N. C. Textile Pioneer Dies,” [Raleigh] *News and Observer*, December 11, 1955.

<sup>20</sup> “The Textile Industry in North Carolina” (Raleigh: Research and Statistics Section, Commerce and Industry Division, Dept. of Natural and Economic Resources, 1972), n.p.

<sup>21</sup> Glass, 96-97; Diane Lamb, “Greensboro: 1808-present,” News and Record Research Wiki, accessed on April 24, 2014, at <http://nrtimelines.wikifoundry.com/page/Greensboro+1808+--+present>.

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“Trailing Yard of Denim Through World’s Largest Denim Mills.” *The Charlotte Observer: Carolina Industries Special*. March 2, 1929.

Section 10:

## Verbal Boundary Description

The legal boundary for parcel 0027498 is shown on enclosed tax map generated from the Guilford County GIS department and drawn at a scale of 1 inch equals 232 feet.

## Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass Proximity Print Works and 18.22 acres of land historically associated with the buildings. The setting reflects the physical conditions in which Proximity Print Works was established and operated, and provides an appropriate setting.