

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 (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 2000 South Boulevard N/A not for publication

city or town Charlotte N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Mecklenburg code 119 zip code 28203

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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William S. Pin SHPO 1-27-94
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of 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)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
4	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry/Processing/Extraction -
Manufacturing Facility

WORK IN PROGRESS

Industry/Processing/Extraction -
Industrial Storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Industrial Functionalism

foundation concrete

walls brick

steel

roof asphalt

other concrete

wood

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

(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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1919 - 1943

Significant Dates

1919

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Clement, E.H., and Company -

Contractor

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- XX State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
XX Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Hist. Landmarks Comm

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex

Name of Property

Mecklenburg Co., N.C.

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 5.151 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 51 264 10 38 96 10 10
Zone Easting Northing

3 4
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Frances P. Alexander/Richard L. Mattson, Architectural Historians

organization Mattson and Associates date September 16, 1993

street & number 309 East Park Avenue, Number 4 telephone 704/376-0985 704/342-3076

city or town Charlotte state N.C. zip code 28203

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name South Boulevard Properties, Inc. - David Ford, contact

street & number 91 Weston Road, Box 184 telephone 617/259-8347

city or town Lincoln state MA zip code 01773

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including 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 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7. Page 1

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

7. Narrative Description

The (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex manufactured industrial piping, heating, ventilation, humidification, and air conditioning systems, principally for the textile industry. This complex occupies a roughly triangular five-acre tract of land along the South Boulevard industrial corridor of the Dilworth neighborhood in Charlotte. This parcel is bounded by South Boulevard to the east, Tremont Avenue to the north, the Southern Railway right-of-way to the west, and the (Former) Atherton Cotton Mills to the south. Vehicular traffic has access to the property from South Boulevard. A spur line from the Southern Railway serve this manufacturing facility on the west side. The site includes grassy yard areas along the east and north sides with mature oak trees defining the corner of Tremont Avenue and South Boulevard.

The Parks-Cramer Company contains four contributing resources. One of the contributing buildings housed manufacturing. A second contributing building was used for shipping, receiving, and pipe storage, with an infill area which now connects these two formerly separate buildings. These two contributing buildings are located on the east side of the rail spur line, which comprises the third contributing resource. Flanking the spur line to the west is the fourth contributing resource: a long, steel frame, storage building. There are no non-contributing resources located on this parcel.

The Manufacturing Building was originally rectangular in plan, but between 1929 and 1946, two production areas were added (Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map 1929, 1946). One of these expansions extended the building to the south to which another section was extended to the east, giving the building an L-shaped plan and three areas for production lines. During this same period, a third section was added to the Shipping, Receiving, and Pipe Storage Building on the south end, providing more transfer space to correspond with increased manufacturing. The prefabricated "Standard Building" on the west side of the spur line was constructed before 1929 and has undergone little alteration.

In 1929, the site included other ancillary buildings which are no longer extant. Two one-story metal storage buildings, one used for machinery and the other apparently for pipe storage, were both located south of the manufacturing building. Another one-story metal building, which was also used for pipe storage, was located along the tracks north of the shipping

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7. Page 2

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

building. Finally, a one-story frame house stood at the north side of the tract, fronting on Tremont Avenue. It seems likely that the house predated the Parks-Cramer Company occupancy. The house and auxiliary building on the north side of the property were demolished after 1953, and the three metal sheds on the south side have been recently demolished.

Between 1946 and 1953 (the last year for which a Sanborn map is available), the site was unchanged except for the creation of the infill between the Manufacturing Building and the Shipping, Receiving, and Pipe Storage Building and the addition of a third building (now demolished), for sheet metal storage, on the south side of the property. In the late 1950s, the fourth production area was added to the east side (facing South Boulevard) of the manufacturing building. Probably at the same time, a new exterior wall was added along this elevation to create a unified front along South Boulevard. A new brick veneer was also added to the tall mid-section on the north, east, and south elevations, covering existing window openings. The older brick wall and now infilled window openings are visible on the west elevation. The north and east elevations of the northernmost section of the manufacturing building had a concrete false front added. This veneer has recently been removed, and the original brick exterior and steel-sash windows are being restored. Currently, the Parks-Cramer site is undergoing renovation and adaptive reuse for retail and office use.

Manufacturing Building

The Manufacturing Building is a large facility with an asymmetrical plan, reflecting several expansion campaigns (see Exhibit A). This facility is primarily one story in height although portions on the north side have two and three stories (see Photos 1, 2, 3). The Manufacturing Building is divided into six sections. Four large, one-story production areas are located on the south side and occupy roughly two-thirds of the building. The four production areas measure: 110' X 77', 92' X 77', and 202' X 77' (encompassing two areas). Two multiple story sections are situated in the northern one-third of the structure. The two northern sections measure 76' X 78' and 17' X 80'.

The building has brick exterior walls. With the exception of the east elevation along South Boulevard, all exterior walls rest on three foot tall concrete bases. Notably, some of the walls are double construction with concrete mortar filler. The complex has concrete slab foundations and steel I-beam framing. The roofs are flat, and except along the west elevation, the roof line is defined by

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7. Page 3

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

stepped parapets, lined in either terra cotta or concrete coping. Along the west elevation of the manufacturing building, overhanging wooden eaves and exposed rafters are visible. Each of the four production areas has a flat-roofed monitor with operable steel-sash windows for light and ventilation. The monitors are steel framed with wooden sheathing, eaves, and rafters.

There are numerous entries to the Manufacturing Building. Rail loading bays are located on the west elevation although some are now interior openings because of the infill area. Truck access bays are situated along the south elevation. The loading bays have double leaf, wooden doors with cross-bracing and fixed light upper sections. There are both hinged and sliding loading doors. There are two pedestrian entrances on the east (South Boulevard) elevation. One entrance, situated roughly in the center of the elevation, leads directly into the production areas, and another to the north provides access to administrative offices, located in the tall mid-section.

The fenestration in the Manufacturing Building consists of banks of large, steel-sash factory windows. In the two northern, multiple story sections, some windows have been brick infilled. The windows and doors all have concrete lintels and sills.

The interiors of the four production areas comprise large open spaces broken only by series of steel I-beam vertical supports. The roof and monitors are also steel framed with a wooden ceiling. Some of the monitor windows have been painted. The four areas are divided by what were once exterior walls. With additions, the doors and windows were removed. The floors are covered in wooden bricks embossed with the name of the manufacturer, "Geopine, Atlanta." In the southwest room, a track girder is suspended from the roof near the western loading bay, probably for moving the heavy materials or products (see Photo 5). The production areas are approximately two feet below the grade of the infill section and the shipping and receiving department, which would have been elevated for ease in rail loading.

Brick fire walls divide the production areas from the two northern sections. There are several segmental arched doorways in this fire wall, most of which are covered by steel covered, counterweight pulley fire doors. Some infilled windows are visible. These doors allow access to the upper floors of the midsection and to the northernmost section. Off the low, narrow corridors are small chambers. The function of these chambers is not clear, but these rooms have no intact windows, and the wall and floor covering have been removed.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7. Page 4

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

However, there is evidence that the walls were tiled, and the floors are equipped with drains. It seems likely that these rooms were used for testing the humidifiers and instruments manufactured in the plant. The easternmost door leading from the production areas opens into a small lobby and staircase to the administrative offices on the upper floor. The walls in the lobby and offices are plastered, the floors covered in linoleum, and the ceiling covered by dropped acoustical tile.

The northern section of the building has two floors although the southern portion of the tall first floor has an intermediate level. A decorative iron spiral staircase leads to this floor which is supported by steel girders. Along the west wall, the floor is braced by brick buttresses. The remaining first floor space is open, broken only by the steel I-beam vertical supports. The second story was inaccessible. Along the west wall are floor-to-ceiling wooden loading doors, located directly across from a pipe storage shed (see Photo 6).

Shipping, Receiving, and Pipe Storage Building

The Shipping, Receiving, and Pipe Storage building flanks the rail spur line to the east and is now connected to the west side of the Manufacturing Building (see Exhibit A and Photo 4). The Shipping, Receiving, and Pipe Storage Building is a one-story brick building, roughly rectangular in plan and divided into three sections. The three sections measure: 77' X 20-24', 63' X 28', and 76' X 32'. Each section projects slightly to fit the curved contour of the spur line which borders to the west. The brick walls rest on a three foot concrete base. The foundation is a concrete slab. There are tall, steel-sash factory windows with concrete sills and lintels as well as several large loading docks for rail shipment. The wooden loading doors are identical to those found in the manufacturing building. A loading bay on the south side leads to a raised concrete dock and ramp, and the middle section has a timber loading dock. The roof is flat with wooden overhanging eaves and exposed rafters. The short south elevation has a flat parapet lined in terra cotta coping. A brick smokestack rises from the junction of the southern and mid-sections. The narrow area between these two sections and the manufacturing building has been infilled. The interior of the two shipping areas are long, open spaces. The wooden roof is supported by I-beam girders, and there are no monitors. Next to the loading bay on the south side is an industrial scale. The staircase in the northeast corner of the southernmost room leads to the basement boiler room.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7. Page 5

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Used for pipe storage, the northern section is detached from the manufacturing building. The pipe storage shed also has brick end walls, but corrugated metal sheathing was used above the walls to the roofline and on the east and west elevations. These two side elevations are formed by a series of sliding wooden loading doors. A raised wooden loading door is located on the west side. The shed has no windows. The shed has a steel, I-beam frame with steel Warren roof trusses. The roof is wooden. The interior is open, and metal storage racks are situated along the north wall.

The narrow area between manufacturing and shipping and receiving has been enclosed, and this infill is a long, narrow space (measuring 15' X 131'). (In order to unload rail cars at grade, shipping and receiving were built approximately three to four feet above ground level.) This area has I-beam roof framing, and there are steel-framed, gable-roofed monitors to provide light in this dark section. There is one small, steel sash window in the south elevation, and a loading door in the north.

Storage Building

On the west side of the spur line is a long, rectangular, prefabricated steel storage building, measuring 210' X 30' (see Exhibit A). The building has a gable roof, banks of large, steel sash factory windows on the east side, and wire mesh awning windows on the west. The sheathing is comprised of steel panels with notable peg-and-eye connections. In the center is a single loading bay with an overhead steel door, and a solid, steel double door is located in the narrow north side. The building rests on a wooden sill over a concrete slab foundation. The interior is divided into two open rooms. The roof is supported by a truss, and the floor is laid in wooden bricks. Metal storage shelves are intact. The building has a nameplate which labels the structure a "USCON Standard Building" and identifies the manufacturer as the U.S. Consolidated Steel Company of Youngstown, Ohio.

Spur Line

A single track spur line from the Southern Railway is located on the west side of the (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex (see Exhibit A). The rail line enters the site on the northwest corner of the property and terminates on an adjacent property to the south. The spur line closely parallels the west side of the Shipping, Receiving, and Pipe Storage Building which is lined with loading docks. The rail line also flanks the east side of the Storage Building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7. Page 6

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Integrity Statement

Like most twentieth century industrial complexes, the (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex was designed for additions to accommodate expansion in production and technological changes in the manufacturing process. The Manufacturing Building has undergone two such expansion campaigns. However, the addition of these production areas replicate the open floor plan, structure, and materials found in the one original production room. Perhaps, most importantly, these additions did not greatly change the flow of production, which was an important factor in the configuration of the complex. The expansion of the Shipping, Receiving, and Pipe Storage Building was undertaken to accommodate the increased intake of raw materials and the outflow of finished products associated with greater manufacturing capacity. Similarly, the infill represented an easy solution to the growing need for storage, without altering or restructuring the system of rail and truck loading bays found on the west and south sides of these two buildings. The steel storage building on the west side of the single track spur line is unaltered. The (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex retains its integrity as a low-scale complex comprised of multiple buildings housing discrete functions and organized for efficient assembly line production and distribution.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8. Page 1

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

8. Summary

The (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex meets National Register Criterion A in the area of Industry as an important example of the textile-related industries that flourished in and around Charlotte, North Carolina, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The complex comprises a generally low-scale, multiple-building site dominated by a brick manufacturing building with flat-roofed monitors and banks of large, steel-sash windows. In 1919, the site consisted of the manufacturing building and a second, smaller building used for shipping, receiving, and storage sited to the west and adjacent to the spur line of the Southern Railway. These buildings underwent two expansions between 1919 and 1929, and were enlarged again between 1929 and 1946, when additions were made to the south and east side of the manufacturing building and to the south side of the shipping and receiving building. Around 1953, the two buildings were joined with infill and around 1955, an addition to the northeast side of the manufacturing building gave the complex its present configuration. Established during the heyday of the "cotton mill campaign" in the Piedmont, the Parks-Cramer Company was among the region's major manufacturers of state-of-the-art humidifying and air-conditioning equipment. These technological innovations significantly reduced yarn breakage and the malfunctioning of mill machinery and significantly contributed to the expansion of the southern textile industry. The company complex also illustrates the early industrialization of Charlotte, which emerged as the hub of the textile industry in the Piedmont. Just as the mills and support industries of this period essentially defined the "New South," Charlotte epitomized the New South city. By the 1920s, it boasted not only cotton mills but a true urban infrastructure that included banks, department stores, the Southern Power Company (later Duke Power), as well as scores of other factories geared to textile production. Located in Dilworth, Charlotte's first streetcar suburb, the impressive (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex ranks among the most significant early factories surviving in the planned Dilworth industrial district. This once-thriving district developed along South Boulevard, near the main line of the Southern Railway, and in the early twentieth century was the city's principal manufacturing corridor.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8. Page 2

~~(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex~~
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Historical Context: Industry

Established in the Dilworth neighborhood of Charlotte in 1919, the (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex is significant as an important and tangible reminder of the flourishing textile industry that transformed Charlotte and the southern Piedmont during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Parks-Cramer facility was one of the region's foremost manufacturers of humidifiers and air-conditioning equipment for the new cotton mills. The plant represented the southern branch of the Parks-Cramer Company, which also had operations in Fitchburg, Massachusetts and Boston. While the company was newly formed, its humidifiers and air-conditioners already had earned a national reputation. They had been developed and patented by noted textile-mill engineer and entrepreneur Stuart Warren Cramer in the early twentieth century. Cramer's Psychrostat, a humidifier control instrument, was one of the principal products of the Parks-Cramer Company. The company also manufactured the "Cramer System of Air Conditioning," which was his best known patent (Ingels 1952, 120-121; Young 1963, 51, 744). In October, 1919, the *Southern Textile Bulletin* noted that the new plant in Charlotte would manufacture humidifiers and air-conditioners that were "well-known" nationally (*Southern Textile Bulletin*, October 15, 1919). As the production of such equipment was highly specialized, requiring innovative and sophisticated technology, the Parks-Cramer complex was the first and only such facility in Charlotte, and like the small number of other such manufacturers served national rather than local markets (Leask 1921, 202-204; Charlotte Chamber of Commerce 1930).

The production of Parks-Cramer humidifiers and air-conditioning equipment began amidst growing experimentation and innovation throughout Europe and the United States in all forms of industrial ventilating, heating, cooling, and air-washing systems. The well-established textile industry spurred much of this experimentation, particularly after World War I, when manufacturers were increasingly concerned with technological innovations to increase productivity in the mills (Hall et al. 1987, 201-204). Air-conditioning in the cotton mills, which concerned primarily the control of humidity levels and airborne particles, was crucial to maximum productivity. The demand for humidity had been one of the factors in the location of the early mills near the rivers and coast of New England, and the ability to recreate artificially this condition was key to the success of textile mills in the South. Sufficient atmospheric moisture decreased yarn breakage, produced a tighter weave, and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8. Page 3

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

reduced the malfunctioning of mill machinery. Furthermore, the introduction of air-washing equipment helped reduce the lint created during textile production which generated static electricity as well as hazardous working conditions (McLaughlin 1938, 235; Ingels 1952, 120-121; 132-136).

The (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex also symbolizes Charlotte's status as the hub of the flourishing Piedmont textile industry, and stands as one of the finest remaining early factories within the Dilworth industrial district. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Charlotte was transformed from a trading town for local cotton farmers to a premier textile center. After the Civil War and the rebuilding and expansion of railroads in the South, leaders of the region began a drive for a New South based on manufacturing and urban growth rather than agriculture (Lefler and Newsome 1954, 474-489). The South's new economic base was to rest largely on cotton textile production. As southern historian C. Vann Woodward has stated, "The mill was the symbol of the New South, its origins and its promise of salvation" (Woodward 1951, 31). As early as 1906, Charlotte boosters celebrated the fact that "within the radius of 100 miles of Charlotte, there are more than 300 cotton mills, containing over one-half the looms and spindles in the South" (Hanchett 1985, 70). By the 1920s, the Piedmont South had surpassed New England to become the world's preeminent textile manufacturing region, and Charlotte, boasted a local newspaper article, had become "unquestionably the center of the South's textile manufacturing industry (Mitchell and Mitchell 1930; *Charlotte Observer*, October 28, 1928)." The city had thus emerged as the capital of a textile mini-state, with a population that had soared from approximately 7,000 in 1880, to over 82,000 by 1929, the largest urban population in the Carolinas (Sixteenth Census 1940).

The (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex was strategically sited amidst the thriving industrial district of Dilworth, which was established in 1891 as Charlotte's first streetcar suburb (Morrill 1985, 302-303; Hanchett 1986; Oswald 1987). A predecessor of the modern suburban industrial park, the district was located at the west edge of Dilworth, between South Boulevard and the Southern Railway. Reflecting the burgeoning textile manufacturing in the Piedmont, this corridor rapidly developed into Charlotte's major industrial sector. By the turn of the century it contained the Atherton Cotton Mills (located immediately south of the Parks-Cramer tract), the Charlotte Trouser Company, the Southern Card Clothing Company, the Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Company, a sash cord plant, the Charlotte Shuttle Block Factory, and the Park Elevator Company, producers of pumps, heaters, and elevators (Morrill 1980, Morrill 1985, 302-304; Hanchett 1986). By the 1920s, the district

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8. Page 4

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

had attracted not only the Parks-Cramer complex, but the Lance Packing Company, makers and distributors of snack-food crackers which occupied the 1300 block of South Boulevard, the Tompkins foundry and machine shop (located just north of Parks-Cramer), the Nebel Knitting Mill, the Hudson Silk Mill, a pipe and foundry plant, and assorted laundries, wholesalers, building suppliers, stores, and residences (*Miller's Charlotte City Directory* 1929; Morrill 1985, 302; Huffman 1987; Bradbury 1992, 53-63).

Today, the (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex ranks as one of the most significant surviving properties in this historic manufacturing district. Along with a small number of other industrial properties--including the (Former) Atherton Cotton Mills, (Former) Lance Packing Company, a machine shop and foundry, and the (Former) Park Elevator Company--the Parks-Cramer facility stands as a rare example of the factories that characterized the Dilworth industrial district. The property retains its original five-acre tract, which includes the main factory, a sizable auxiliary building, an expanse of lawn, and a row of mature oak trees lining South Boulevard.

Historical Background

In 1919, the Parks-Cramer Company, maker of humidifying and air-conditioning equipment for the cotton-textile industry, built a factory in Charlotte's streetcar suburb of Dilworth. *Manufacturers' Record*, the publication of record for southern industry in the early twentieth century, announced the construction. The new brick building, stated the announcement, was being constructed on a five-acre tract and would contain both plant and office space for the Parks-Cramer Company. The building contractor was E. H. Clement and Company of Charlotte (*Manufacturers' Record* 1919). In October, 1919, the *Charlotte Daily Observer* also chronicled the event, describing the erection of an "immense plant" on South Boulevard for the southern operations of the Parks-Cramer Company (*Charlotte Daily Observer* October 9, 1919). The Parks-Cramer Company had purchased the vacant tract from the Great Falls Power Company, a New Jersey firm which had acquired the tract in 1910 from the D.A. Tompkins Company (Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds 1910, 1919).

The Parks-Cramer Company was founded in 1918, when the G.M. Parks Company, manufacturers of industrial piping, heating, and ventilation systems and based in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, purchased the business interests of Charlottean Stuart Warren Cramer. Shortly, the new company

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8. Page 5

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

established operations in Fitchburg, Boston, and Charlotte. Cramer, who had retired from business in 1918, and was never directly involved with Parks-Cramer, was among the principal figures in the development of the southern textile industry. An inventor and entrepreneur, Cramer is credited with designing and equipping about one-third of the new cotton mills in the South between 1895 and 1915, and simultaneously acquiring extensive holdings in textile mills. His own mill at Cramerton, North Carolina included a model mill and village (Glass 1992, 4, 32-38).

Among Cramer's numerous industrial engineering patents were those for improvements in the humidification systems for textile factories in South which contributed significantly to the expansion of the textile industry in the region. In 1904, Cramer introduced an electrically operated heat and humidity control mechanism, and in 1905, an automatic hygrometer. These instruments were predecessors of the Psychrostat, the state-of-the-art humidifier control device which the Parks-Cramer Company subsequently manufactured. He also patented the "Cramer System of Air Conditioning," which included the automatic regulation of temperature and humidity. These early innovations in air conditioning resulted more from the need to remove lint from the air (a persistent problem in the textile mills) than to cool the factory atmosphere. Indeed, the term "air conditioning" is attributed to Cramer (Ingels 1952, 120-121; Young 1963, 51, 744; Powell 1979, 455; Glass 1992, 33).

In addition to Cramer, another figure instrumental to the success of the Parks-Cramer business venture in Charlotte was William Beach Hodge. The chief engineer for Cramer, Hodge subsequently assumed the position of vice-president and southern manager of the Parks-Cramer Company. Like Cramer, Hodge's contributions to the textile industry included a series of patents related largely to improving air conditioning systems. In 1940, he was recognized as a "Modern Pioneer in Air Conditioning" (*Who's Who* 1947, 440).

The Parks-Cramer Company was situated within the heart of the planned Dilworth industrial district. Dilworth, situated southeast of downtown Charlotte, was the first of a ring of streetcar neighborhoods that appeared around the city during the textile boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Developed in 1891 by the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company (locally known as the Four Cs), whose president was Edward Dilworth Latta, the original Dilworth plan included not only residential streets and a recreational park, but also a factory district (Morrill 1985, 302-303; Hanchett 1986; Oswald 1987). By 1895, the burgeoning industrial sector was already described by the local press as the "Manchester of Charlotte." The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8. Page 6

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Charlotte Daily Observer observed, "It does one good to go out to Dilworth and see the signs of prosperity and progress. The factories draw the people. Dilworth is beginning to be not only a social but an industrial center" (*Charlotte Daily Observer*, January 31, 1896).

Although the Dilworth industrial corridor began to lose factories by late 1920s and during the Great Depression, as firms shut down or started relocating to larger industrial tracts, the Parks-Cramer Company continued to expand its operations through the middle of the twentieth century. While the company employed 52 men and two women in 1930, by the 1950s, the work force had grown to over 100 employees (Charlotte Chamber of Commerce 1930; *Charlotte Observer*, April 19, 1986). The Parks-Cramer Company functioned on the South Boulevard site until 1988, when the firm sold its operations and leased the factory. Currently, the (Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex is undergoing renovations and restoration for a mixed-used facility accommodating a variety of retail and office spaces.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9. Page 1

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Bibliography

Bradbury, Tom. *Dilworth, The First 100 Years*. Charlotte, N.C.: The Dilworth Community Development Association, 1992.

Charlotte Daily Observer, 23 October 1895; 31 January 1896; 9 October 1919; 10 October 1928.

Charlotte Observer, 10 October 1928; 19 April 1986..

Charlotte, The Center. Charlotte, N.C.: Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, 1930.

Cramer, Stuart Warren. *Useful Information for Cotton Manufacturers*.
Charlotte, N.C.: Stuart W. Cramer, 1906.

Deed Book 269, p. 200; Deed Book 409, p. 288, Register of Deeds, Mecklenburg County, Charlotte, N.C.

Glass, Brent D. *The Textile Industry in North Carolina, A History*. Raleigh, N.C.: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1992.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, et al. *Like A Family, The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987.

Hanchett, Thomas W. "Charlotte: Suburban Development in the Textile and Trade Center of the Carolinas." In *Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs in North Carolina*. Eds., Catherine W. Bishir and Lawrence S. Early. Raleigh, N.C.: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1985, 68-76.

-----, "Charlotte and Its Neighborhoods: The Growth of a New South City, 1850-1930." Charlotte, N.C., 1986. (Typewritten.)

Huffman, William H. "Survey and Research Report on the Atherton Cotton Mill." Charlotte, N.C.: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1988.

Ingels, Margaret. *Willis Haviland Carrier*. Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1952.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9. Page 2

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Leask, H.N. "Ventilation and Humidification of Textile Factories." *Engineering* 112 (July 29, 1921): 202-204.

Lefler, Hugh, and Albert Newsome. *The History of a Southern State: North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1954.

McLaughlin, Glenn. *The Growth of American Manufacturing Areas*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1938.

Miller's Official Charlotte, North Carolina City Directory. Asheville, N.C.: E. H. Miller, 1920, 1929.

Mitchell, Broadus, and George Sinclair Mitchell. *The Industrial Revolution in the South*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1930.

Morrill, Dan L. "Survey and Research Report on the Park Manufacturing Company." Charlotte, N.C.: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1980.

----- "Edward Dilworth Latta and the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company (1890-1925): Builders of a New South City. *The North Carolina Historical Review* 62 (July 1985): 293-316.

Oswald, Virginia. "National Register Nomination for the Dilworth Historic District." Raleigh, N.C.: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1987.

Powell, William S. ed. *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*. Vol. I. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979.

Southern Textile Bulletin. 15 October 1919, p. 157.

Sanborn Map Company. *Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina*. 1929, 1946, 1953.

Textile World, 21 May 1927, p. 179.

U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population*, vol. 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9. Page 3

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Who's Who in North Carolina. Vol. I. Chicago, Il.: Larkin, Roosevelt and
Larken, LTD, 1947.

Wyatt, S. "Humidity: Its Effects on Yarns and Workers." *Textile World*, 21
May 1927, p. 99.

Young, Marjorie W. ed. *Textiles Leaders of the South.* Columbia, S.C.: R.C.
Bryan Company, 1963.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10. Page 1

(Former) Parks-Cramer Company Complex
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

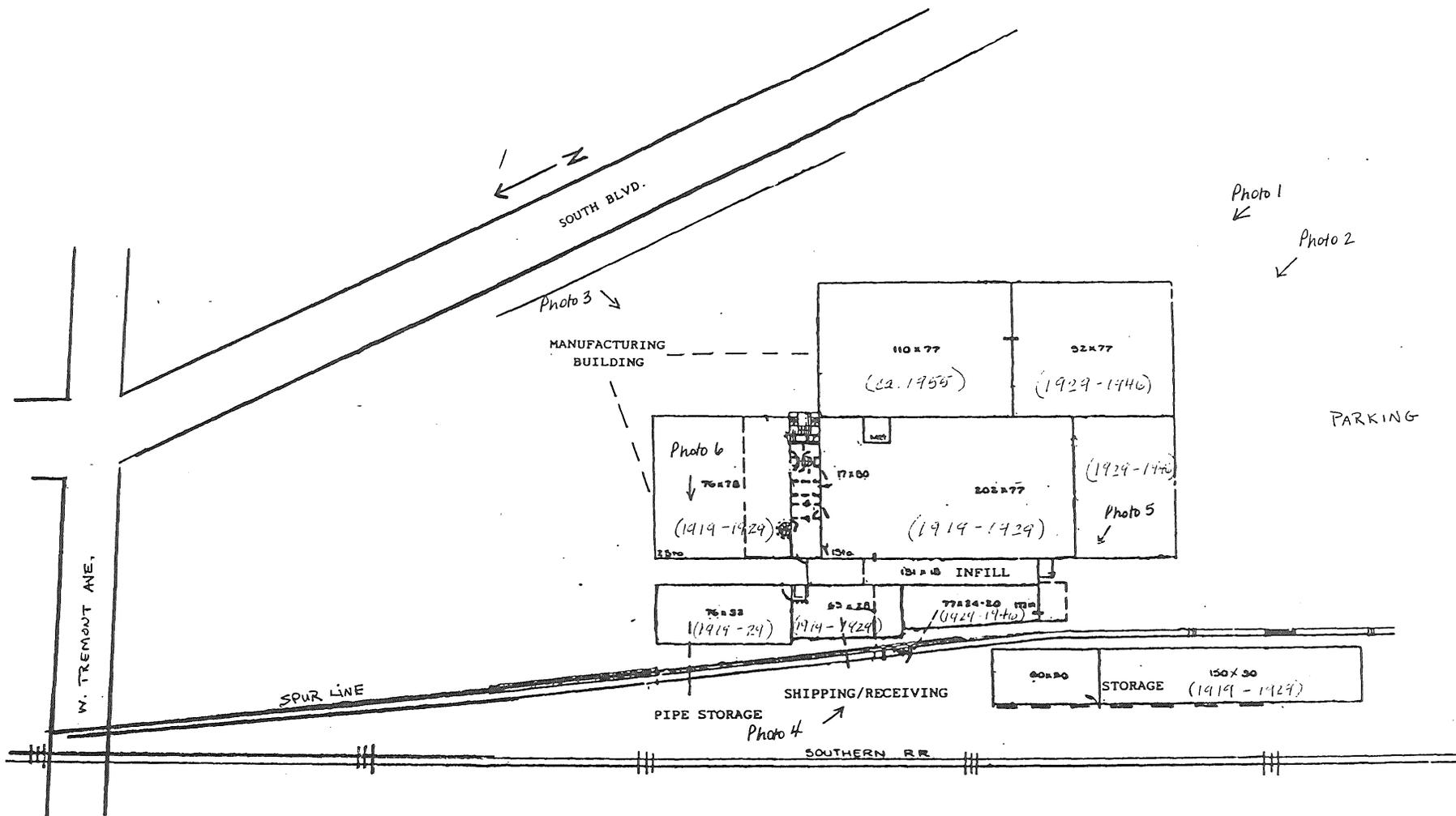
10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The property being nominated is lot 9 on Mecklenburg County Tax Map - Book 121, Page 03 - in the city of Charlotte, North Carolina.

Boundary Justification

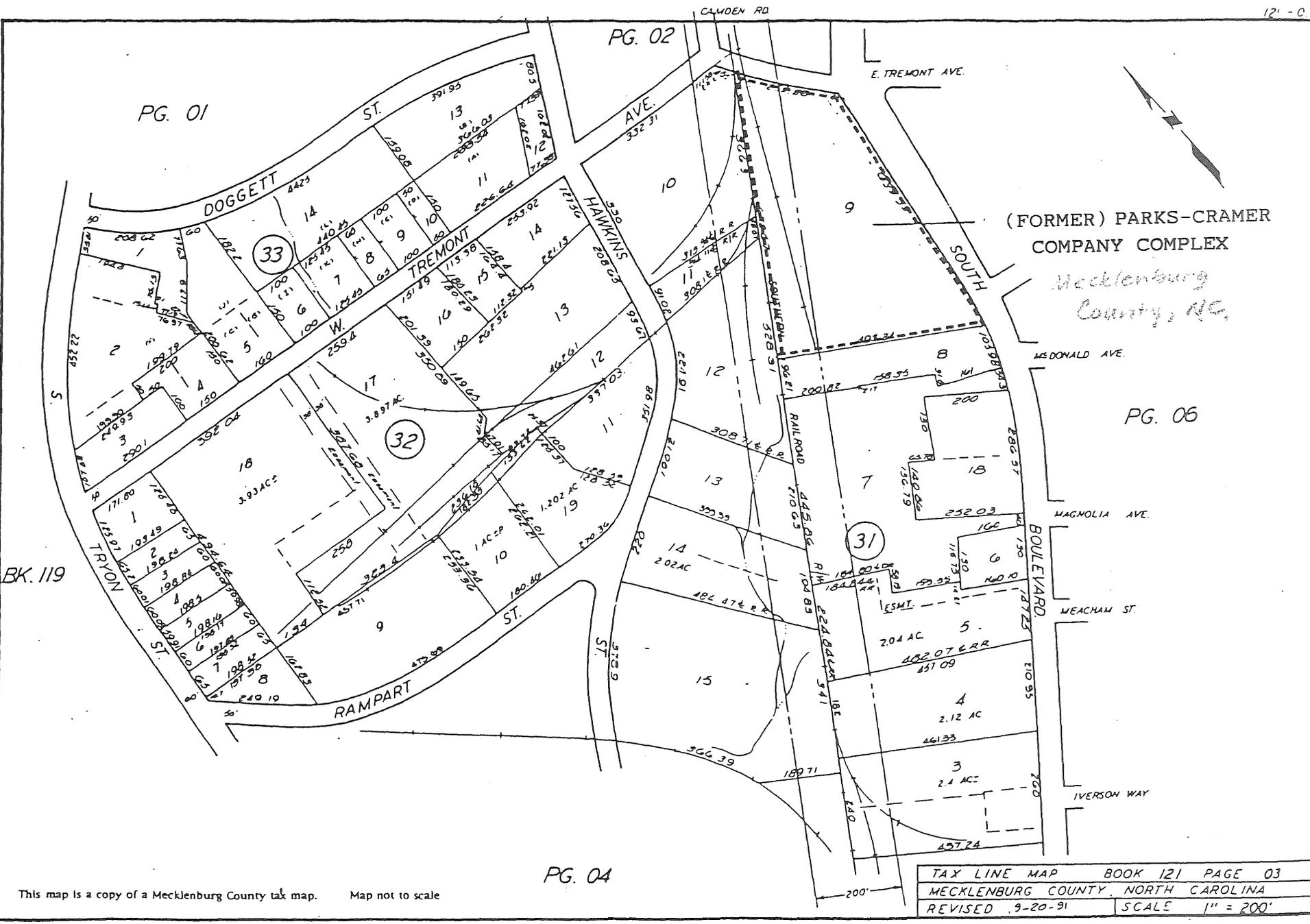
The property being nominated consists of the original five acre tract on which the Parks-Cramer Company Complex was constructed. The contributing buildings are found on this parcel.



(FORMER)
 PARKS-CRAMER COMPANY COMPLEX
 (no scale)

Mecklenburg County, NC.

EXHIBIT A



(FORMER) PARKS-CRAMER
COMPANY COMPLEX
Mecklenburg
County, N.C.

TAX LINE MAP		BOOK 121	PAGE 03
MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA			
REVISED 9-20-91		SCALE 1" = 200'	

This map is a copy of a Mecklenburg County tax map. Map not to scale

FOR TAX PURPOSES ONLY

15

BK. 119

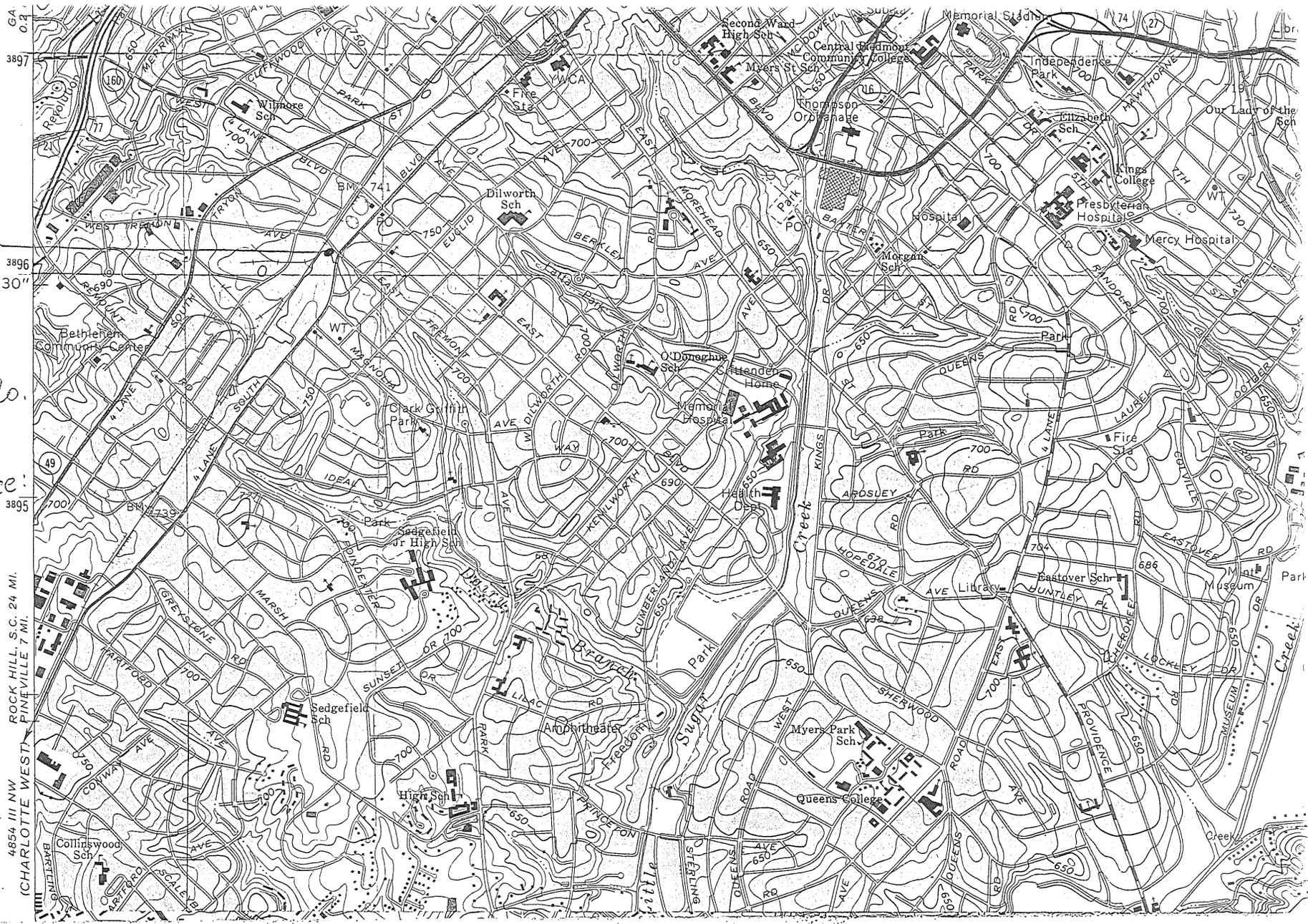
PG. 02

PG. 01

PG. 04

PG. 05

(Former)
Parks-Cramer
Company
Complex
Charlotte
Mecklenburg Co.
NC
UTM Reference:
E 512640
N 3896100



4854 III NW
CHARLOTTE WEST
ROCK HILL, S.C. 24 MI.
PINEVILLE 7 MI.

