INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Roberde1 Hill No. 1 Company Store

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
1106 Roberde1 Rd.

CITY, TOWN
Rockingham

STATE
North Carolina

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY
DISTRICT
BUILDING(S)
STRUCTURE
SITE
OBJECT

OWNERSHIP
PUBLIC
PRIVATE
BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

STATUS
OCCUPIED
UNOCCUPIED
WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
YES RESTRICTED
YES, UNRESTRICTED
NO

PRESENT USE
AGRICULTURE
MUSEUM
COMMERCIAL
PARK
EDUCATIONAL
PRIVATE RESIDENCE
ENTERTAINMENT
RELIGIOUS
GOVERNMENT
SCIENTIFIC
INDUSTRIAL
TRANSPORTATION
MILITARY
OTHER STORAGE

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Harold B. Rainwater

STREET & NUMBER
1104 Roberde1 Rd.

CITY, TOWN
Rockingham

STATE
North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE
Richmond County Courthouse

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

STREET & NUMBER
114 E. Franklin Street

CITY TOWN
Rockingham

STATE
North Carolina

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Heather M. Hallenberg

ORGANIZATION
Consultant for

ARCHIVES AND HISTORY, SURVEY AND PLANNING BRANCH

STREET & NUMBER

CITY OR TOWN
Raleigh

DATE
May 31, 1981

TELEPHONE
(919) 733-6545

STATE
North Carolina

28379
**DESCRIPTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>CHECK ONE</th>
<th>CHECK ONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXCELLENT</td>
<td>UNALTERED</td>
<td>ORIGINAL SITE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOOD</td>
<td>Ruins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIR</td>
<td>ALTERED</td>
<td>MOVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ALTERED</td>
<td>XUNEXPOSED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DESCRIPT THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Roberdel Mill No. 1 Company Store, located at 1106 Roberdel Road three miles northeast of the commercial center of Rockingham, is for its region unusually well preserved and unaltered late nineteenth century commercial structure. The Roberdel Mill No. 1 began operations in 1884 and local tradition maintains that the company store was constructed in the same year.

The Roberdel Company Store is a one story brick structure featuring identical three-bay divisions of the front and rear elevations. Sixteen over eight sash windows set within segmentally arched openings flank central double door entries with four pane transoms. Brick denticulated courses follow the raking cornices of the broadly pitched gabled tin roof. The west elevation is pierced by five evenly spaced, segmentally arched clerestory windows. The east elevation is plain. The one room interior, now used for storage, retains several of the original display shelves and counters.

The company store stands on the west bank of the Roberdel Mill No. 1 pond and the shell of the mill, burned in October of 1970, stands on the east. A footbridge once connected they two.
## SIGNIFICANCE

**National**  
**State**  
**Local**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>PREHISTORIC</em></td>
<td><em>ARCHAEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>1400-1499</em></td>
<td><em>ARCHAEOLOGY-HISTORIC</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>1500-1599</em></td>
<td><em>AGRICULTURE</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>1600-1699</em></td>
<td><em>ARCHITECTURE</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>1700-1799</em></td>
<td><em>ART</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>1800-1899</em></td>
<td><em>COMMERCED</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>1900-1999</em></td>
<td><em>COMMUNICATIONS</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPECIFIC DATES</th>
<th>ca. 1885</th>
<th>BUILDER/ARCHITECT</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Roberdel Mill No. 1 Company Store, built in ca. 1884, is architecturally the most significant of the eleven company stores that at one time served the mill villages in the Rockingham vicinity. The others have been lost to fire, demolition or repeated remodelings.

### CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

A. The Roberdel Mill No. 1 Company Store is associated with the life of Robert L. Steele, Sr., principal promoter of the textile industry in Richmond County and founder of the Roberdel Mill No. 1.

B. The Roberdel Mill No. 1 Company Store is associated with the powerful textile based economy of Richmond County. By the early 1920s, eleven textile mills were in full operation in the Rockingham vicinity, making Richmond County one of the leading textile producers in the state.

C. Roberdel Mill No. 1 Company Store is an excellent example of late nineteenth century commercial construction.
Robert L. Steele (1821-1895) was the son of Thomas and Judith Mosely Leak Steele of Steele's Township near Little River. He married Hannah Pickett Leak (1824-1893) and had moved to Rockingham by ca. 1850.¹

Robert L. Steele, Sr. who has been called the main entrepreneur and engineer of the textile industry in Richmond County, was not only a promoter of Great Falls Mill in 1869, but was also the driving force behind the founding of Pee Dee Mill in 1876, Roberdel Mill in 1882, and Steele's Mill in 1895.² These mills were strategically placed along Hitchcock Creek by Steele in order to take best advantage of the available hydraulic power.

The Roberdel Mill Dam is located at the site of the dam first built between 1860 and 1880 by Robert L. and Thomas J. Steele for the operation of a grist and saw mill.³ In April of 1882 Thomas J. Steele sold his interests in their twenty-six acre holdings to his brother, Robert L. Steele, Sr. The area was known as Steele's Mill at the time.⁴ On January 31, 1883 Robert L. Steele, Sr. sold the property for $7,500 to the newly formed Roberdel Manufacturing Company.⁵

Roberdel was named for Robert Steele Leak, son of textile promoter, T. C. Leak, Sr. Robert L. Steele, Sr. sent the baby a silver cup engraved "From Old Robert L. to Young Roberdel;" hence the name.⁶

The mill and a new rock dam were built between 1882 and 1883, and the mill was manufacturing cloth by 1884. The dam broke during a flood of 1890, but was rebuilt and is still standing.⁷ The mill tragically burned on October 15, 1970, however, its shell, reflected in the large mill pond, provides a picturesque setting for the Roberdel Mill No. 1 Company Store.

The Company Store served an important role in the life of the mill village community. Workers purchased basic necessities at the local gathering place from the shelves stocked with food, clothing, hardware and other sundry items.

On December 18, 1929 the mill was sold to Entwistle Manufacturing Company and its name was changed to Entwistle No. 3.⁸ The Company Store was sold by the mill to Alma and Harold Rainwater in 1949, who utilize the building for storage.⁹

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. The Isaac S. London Papers, located in looseleaf notebooks at the Richmond County Office of the Superior Court, hereinafter cited as the Isaac S. London Papers, Richmond County Courthouse.

2. The Isaac S. London Papers, Richmond County Courthouse.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

A | 1,7 | 6 | 1,4 | 6,1,0 | 3,7,4 | 4,2,0 |

B | ZONE EASTING NORTHING |

C | D | VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All of lot 74, Map 56, Rockingham Township, consisting of a four sided lot measuring 175' x 78'.

The property being nominated includes the building and the lot on which it stands.
Footnotes (Continued)


6. Isaac S. London Papers, Richmond County Courthouse.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


London, Isaac S., The London Papers are found in three separate collections housed at the North Carolina State Archives, the Richmond County Office of the Superior Court, and the Richmond County Library. Only the notes at the State Archives are loosely indexed according to general subject headings. The other two collections are not indexed.


Richmond County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Richmond County Courthouse, Rockingham, N. C.
SOURCE: TRACED FROM "ROBERDEL MILL VILLAGE SURVEY" BY GRAHAM & LILES SURVEYORS, AUG. 9, 1948.

TRACING BY ROCKINGHAM PLANNING DEPT. AUG. 1981

SCALE: 1" = 200'

ROBERDEL MILL #1
COMPANY STORE
1126 ROBERDEL RD
RICHMOND COUNTY
ROCKINGHAM, N.C

LOT #74, ROBERDEL MILL VILLAGE,
ROCKINGHAM TOWNSHIP