

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Washington Mills - Mayodan Plant

other names Mayo Mills; Washington Group - Mayodan Plant; Tultex Corporation - Mayodan Plant

2. Location

street & number 7801 NC Highway 135 not for publication N/A
city or town Mayodan vicinity N/A
state North Carolina code NC county Rockingham code 157 zip code 27027

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey Crows SHPD
Signature of certifying official

2/25/05
Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register _____
 ___ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register _____
 ___ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register _____
- removed from the National Register _____
- other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 4 </u>	<u> 6 </u> buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
<u> 6 </u>	<u> 6 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

N/A

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1895-1954

Significant Dates

1895-1896, 1897, 1899, 1900,
1910-1911, 1916, 1921, 1931, 1934,
1936, 1941, 1954

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Builder: Fogle Brothers of Winston-Salem, NC

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

[See continuation sheets, Section 8]

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: INDUSTRY/PROCESSING

Sub: Manufacturing facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE

Sub: N/A

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE

Sub: Office

Cat: INDUSTRY/PROCESSING

Sub: Warehouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH and EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

OTHER: Heavy Timber Mill Construction

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Brick, Concrete

Roof Asphalt

Walls Brick, Wood

other _____

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

[See Continuation Sheets, Section 7]

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)
[See continuation sheets, Section 9]

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: 10.8 acres

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

Zone	Easting	Northing
1 <u>17</u>	<u>592760</u>	<u>4029760</u>
2 <u>17</u>	<u>592860</u>	<u>4029740</u>
3 <u>17</u>	<u>592700</u>	<u>4029420</u>
4 <u>17</u>	<u>592565</u>	<u>4029440</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.)

[See continuation sheets, Section 10]

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Evelyn D. Causey, Historian, and Kathryn Gettings Smith, Senior Architectural Historian

organization History Matters, LLC date December 15, 2004

street & number 2605a P Street, NW telephone 202-333-8593

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20007-3063

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets [Sections 7, 8, 9, 10, Photo List]

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Spruce Place, Inc.

street & number P.O. Box 554 telephone 336.548.2714

city or town Madison state NC zip code 27025

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Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant
Mayodan, Rockingham County, NC

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant is the preferred name for the mill. In the narrative description, historic names are used when describing the mill at a particular point in time. From its founding in 1895 until 1921, the mill was called Mayo Mills. When Washington Mills purchased the mill in 1921, the company changed the name of the textile mill in Mayodan to Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant. This name remained in use until 1972, when it was renamed Washington Group – Mayodan Plant to reflect the new name of the mill's parent company. From 1982 until the mill's closure in 1999, the mill was called Tultex Corporation – Mayodan Plant.

Setting

The Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant occupies a ten-acre property on the west side of the Mayo River within the corporate limits of the town of Mayodan, North Carolina. The property is bounded on the southeast by the Mayo River, on the south and southwest by North Carolina Highway 135 (NC 135), and on the northwest by the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks. The property contains a complex of two main buildings and several ancillary buildings and structures. Among these are two large, turn-of-the-twentieth-century, brick textile mills; a freestanding transformer house; two altered cotton storage warehouses; a former blacksmith shop (now a woodshed); a circa 1960, concrete-block shed; and a series of identical, circa 1980 hydrant houses. The two main buildings, the mills, are oriented with their short ends facing northeast and southwest and their longitudinal flanks running generally parallel to the Mayo River and the railroad tracks (see attached Sketch Site Plan). The complex of close-set buildings occupies a level site that falls partly within the 100-year flood plain of the Mayo River. To the west and north of the railroad tracks, the land rises up a small bluff to Second Avenue in the town of Mayodan. The property is enclosed by a seven-foot-tall chain-link fence on three of its four sides, excluding portions of its exposure along NC 135. Immediately southeast of the Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant complex, NC 135 crosses the Mayo River on a modern concrete bridge. The immediate surroundings contain open space, several non-historic warehouses on the south side of NC 135, and a 1954 YMCA recreational center located immediately northwest of the railroad right of way. There are no immediately adjacent residential or commercial districts.

1895 Spinning Mill – contributing (C)

The primary resources on the property are the original 1895 spinning mill, built to house the company's yarn spinning operation, and the 1911 knitting mill, which expanded the company's output to include finished fabric products. Originally constructed as separate, freestanding buildings, the two are now connected by a circa 1970 passageway and a five-story freight elevator tower. The 1895 mill consists of a three-story, rectangular brick structure with a low-pitched gable roof. The building, with its several additions, is a total of forty-one bays long (approximately 442 feet) and approximately 102 feet wide. The masonry walls of the original mill and its additions consist of five-course American bond brickwork and each exterior bay is defined by a single, segmental-arch window opening. The interior contains three heavy timber-framed floors, each with a three-room plan.

The original 1895 spinning mill encompassed the central seventeen bays of the current building and incorporated a five-story, brick combination stair and water tower that anchored the mill's west corner. The uppermost two stories of the tower have been removed. The remaining three stories feature paired, elongated window openings with segmental-arch lintels at each level and a corbelled brick cornice at the roofline. A second tower, located near the east corner of the 1895 mill, remains fully intact. This tower is a one-bay-wide, four-story, brick structure with an open belfry at the top. Now located at the junction of the 1895 mill and an 1897 addition, the belfry tower features a single segmental-arch window at each story

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and paired arched openings in the belfry. A low-pitched hipped roof caps the tower.

When it opened in 1896, two water wheels powered Mayo Mills. A canal, two-thirds of a mile in length, brought water from upstream on the Mayo River to the mill where it passed beneath the building and turned two waterwheels. The tailrace extended south of the building where it reconnected to the river.

The canal and tailrace were filled in during the 1970s. The only trace of the tailrace is a fragment of its stone lining that remains near where the race exited from the building on the southeast side (see Sketch Site Plan).

The original seventeen-bay-long mill was expanded several times between 1897 and 1954. The first expansion took place in 1897 when eleven bays (approximately 120 feet) were constructed at the northeast end of the 1895 mill. This addition is three stories tall and features a frame end wall. The use of frame end walls was common on mill buildings because it facilitated future expansion. The frame end wall is currently clad in vinyl siding and has no window openings. The 1897 addition included a three-story, brick elevator tower at its east corner. The tower projects approximately ten feet from the main wall of the building and is approximately twenty feet wide. A series of single, segmental-arch window openings pierce its elevations. The tower's first-story, southeast bay holds one of only a few remaining historic exterior doors in the building. The door consists of a double-leaf, diagonal-board door hung on strap hinges.

In 1899, the company completed a second addition to the original mill. Consisting of a four-bay-long, three-story section plus a four-bay-long, one-story section, the 1899 addition elongated the original mill to the southwest by another eight bays and replicated its original design. Circa 1910, the one-story portion of the 1899 addition was raised to a full three stories. The 1899 addition incorporated two four-story, brick towers that functioned as dust chimneys. They have since been removed.

The final historic expansion of the original mill occurred in 1954 when a five-bay, three-story brick addition was built at the southwest end of the 1899/circa 1910 addition. The 1954 addition also replicates the bay divisions of the original mill. Unlike the other nineteenth-century additions, the 1954 addition sits atop a partially exposed basement.

In 1900, the Mayo Mills Company built a boiler room and engine house addition to the original mill. Located on the southwest side of the mill, the new power plant was originally built as a freestanding building connected to the mill by a one-story passageway. A 125-foot-tall brick smokestack was erected next to the boiler room. The boiler room and engine house remain with only a few alterations, while the smokestack has been removed. The boiler house measures approximately 45 feet by 112 feet and consists of a one-story, brick building with a low-pitched sloping roof and bracketed overhanging eaves on its northeast and southwest ends. The roof height of the central portion of the boiler house has been raised to accommodate a row of steel, multi-light clerestory windows. The engine house stands adjacent to the northeast elevation of the boiler room and consists of a one-story-plus-basement, brick structure. The structure's gable roof features decorative wood brackets in the eaves. The area that once separated the boiler room and the engine house from the main mill has been infilled by a one-story brick addition.

Possibly built at the time of the 1897 mill addition, the machine shop/wheelhouse extends from the southeast elevation of the 1897 extension. This one-story-plus-basement, brick appendage features a low-pitched sloping roof, overhanging eaves with decorative wood brackets, and seven segmental-arch window bays across its southeast elevation.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Washington Mills Company added modern mill and air conditioning equipment to the spinning mill. Much of this new equipment is housed in a series of non-historic additions that extend from the northwest, northeast, and southeast elevations of the building. The smallest of these additions - a one-story, circa 1960, brick addition - stands just northeast of the machine shop/wheelhouse. A circa 1970, three-story, brick elevator tower was appended to the northeast end of the

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1897 addition and a series of 1970s air-conditioning additions stand along the northwest flank of the 1895, 1897 and 1899 sections of the spinning mill. The latter additions consist of three three-story, brick additions with rectangular vented openings and flat, parapet roofs.

A 1970s raised concrete and steel loading dock runs along the southeast elevation of the spinning mill (see Sketch Site Plan). The open loading dock connects the spinning mill to the cotton warehouses that stand southwest of the building. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from 1925 and 1934 show that the present concrete and steel loading docks replaced a series of wooden loading platforms.

As was typical of turn-of-the-twentieth-century textile mill architecture, the 1895 spinning mill and its series of additions are relatively undecorated, industrial buildings. The original detailing was confined to the stair tower and to the eaves. Although the stair tower is missing its top two stories, the decorative corbelling that adorned its third story is still intact, while the buildings' original bracketed, overhanging eaves have been removed. Other architectural details that remain include the brick, segmental arches that form the lintels above each of the window and door openings. The building displays brick window sills in the vast majority of cases, with some stone and wood sills used on additions and in specialized locations.

The interior of the spinning mill is divided into three main rooms at each floor level. The 1895 section retains its original open plan and is now the center room in the current building. The 1897 and 1899 additions lie on either side of the 1895 section, with the original brick end walls of the 1895 section now serving as partition walls. Each room was originally laid out as an open space and incorporates three aisles defined by three rows of octagonal wood support columns. The columns, which diminish in circumference from the first through the third floors, sit directly on the floor. Cast metal pintles connect the columns to the support beams and allow the columns above to rest their weight directly on the columns below, instead of on the joists. The pintle is not visible at the column base, but takes the form of a metal bracket visible at the cap of the column where it is bolted to the joist.

The interiors of the spinning mill are simply finished. The floors are three-inch- to four-inch-wide hardwood planks and the walls are painted brick. The ceilings consist of the beaded underside of the sub-floor above. The floor support structure, consisting of the octagonal wood columns and large-section, wooden joists, are exposed throughout. A few separate rooms have been partitioned off from the main open workspaces. Serving as offices and specialized storage areas, these small rooms are constructed of non-historic, light-frame partition walls clad with particleboard.

The open workspaces on each floor level were originally used for the various operations associated with spinning cotton yarns. Since the mill's original insurance records do not survive, it is impossible to know the exact location of the different processes that were involved in spinning. However, a 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance map gives some indication of the various activities that took place in the spinning mill. The maps indicate that the carding and spinning occurred on the first floor of the building, while the spooling of the thread happened on the second and third floors. Other specialized additions to the mill housed the engine room, boiler house, wheelhouse and machine shop.

Located in the projecting stair/water tower, the only stair in the spinning mill rises three stories from the first floor. This historic staircase is configured as an open, hollow-newel staircase with a closed stringer and quarter landings at the end of each flight. The newel posts are simple, five-inch-by-five-inch, square posts that terminate in a shallow pyramid shape. A molded railing and solid tongue-and-groove paneling make up the balustrade. The stair's risers are wood with textured metal treads.

A series of elevators provide the only vertical access between floors other than the stair tower. Two historic elevators and one non-historic elevator remain in the spinning mill. One historic elevator is located in the 1897 elevator tower at the building's east corner. The other stands in the east corner of the 1899 addition. The two historic elevator shafts feature segmental-arch entrances and metal-clad, wooden fire doors that hang from overhead incline tracks. The third elevator occupies a projecting tower that was added to the northeast

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end wall circa 1970.

No carding, spinning, or spooling machinery remains in the mill today. The only historic equipment that remains is one former coal-burning boiler in the boiler room. Manufactured by the Combustion Engineering Company of New York in 1945, the C-E Boiler - Type VM, was converted from coal-burning to oil-burning in the early 1970s.

The spinning mill remains in good condition. Its exterior walls are solid with only limited areas of mortar deterioration. The interior wood structure is also in good condition, although additional support has been added to some of the support columns. Typically, this has been accomplished by sistering a second wood column or a steel post to the original column. The flooring, walls, and ceilings have suffered from the normal wear of industrial use.

In addition to the upper two stories of the stair/water tower, there are several other historic features missing from the spinning mill. The 1899 addition included two dust chimneys that were removed after 1954. In the 1920s or 1930s, monitors were added to the roof of the spinning mill; evidence of these can be seen in the ceiling of the third floor of the mill. The monitors were removed prior to the closure of the plant in 1999. The 1900 smokestack that stood adjacent to the boiler room was taken down after 1983.

Historic photographs of Washington Mills show that paired, double-hung, wood windows filled the window bays of the original 1895 mill and its 1897 and 1899 additions. A six-light, segmental-arched transom surmounted each of the nine-over-nine windows. By the time of the 1954 addition, steel windows had become the norm for industrial architecture, thus the windows were thirty-light steel windows that incorporated operable, six-light awning sections. All of these windows have been removed and the segmental arched window openings have been filled with concrete block and brick on the exterior. The infill is configured so that a reveal remains.

1911 Knitting Mill – contributing (C)

The 1911 knitting mill is similar in design and construction to the 1895 spinning mill and has been substantially enlarged by several historic additions. The building consists of a rectangular, brick structure with low-pitched, gable roofs and overhanging eaves on its southeast elevation and a brick parapet on its northwest elevation. The exterior masonry walls of the 1911 section are constructed of five-course American bond brickwork, while the three historic additions feature a brick bond in which a single Flemish bond course occurs after every seven courses of stretchers. The original 1911 knitting mill consisted of a twenty-two-bay-long (200 feet), four-story-plus-basement section and a twelve-bay-long (ninety-eight feet), two-story-plus-basement section. Both sections are seventy-five feet wide and incorporate open floor plans divided into three aisles by rows of wooden and concrete columns. As with the 1895 mill, the exterior elevations are defined by a series of bays, each of which contains a single, segmental-arch window opening. Between 1931 and 1941, the 1911 knitting mill was extended three times on its southwest end by brick, four-story-plus-basement additions that lengthened the building by thirty-two bays (approximately 289 feet). All three additions measure ninety-nine feet in width and remain intact. As it stands today, the overall size of the knitting mill is approximately 489 feet long and between seventy-five and ninety-nine feet wide.

The 1911 knitting mill occupies the northeastern half of the existing building. When built, the 1911 building housed the Mayo Mills Company's new knitting and sewing operations. By 1916, the company's fabric dyeing operation had moved into the two-story section of the 1911 mill. As built, the 1911 knitting mill incorporated a number of features that differentiated it from the spinning mill. The building was twenty-seven feet narrower than the spinning mill and rose four stories atop a basement instead of the three of the original mill. The knitting mill also incorporated an original roof monitor (since removed) and featured two T-shaped, projecting towers on its southeast elevations. These towers housed employee washrooms on each floor. On the interior, the building had an internal staircase as opposed to the separate stair tower built at the 1895 mill. The

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interior bay width was also reduced from ten feet in the 1895 spinning mill (necessary to accommodate spinning mules) to eight feet.¹

In 1931, twenty years after the construction of the knitting mill, the company - now the Washington Mills Company - decided to expand the building. A ninety-nine-foot by ninety-nine-foot (eleven-bay-long), four-story-plus-basement, brick addition was built at the southwest end of the 1911 knitting mill. The eleven-bay-long addition continued the bay divisions of the earlier mill, but departed from the original design in several other features. Instead of five-course, American bond brick walls, the addition has seven courses of stretchers followed by a course of Flemish bond. The structure continued the existing roof monitor, but departed from the 1911 design in its overall width and structural elements. The interior floor structure was supported by metal columns and steel I-beams, rather than the wood columns and joists used in the 1911 section.

In 1934, the company constructed another brick addition at the southwest end of the 1931 section. The 1934 addition was identical in size and design to the previous extension. Seven years later, the knitting mill plant was expanded one last time. The 1941 addition added another ten bays to the southwest end of the mill. Its design copied the 1931 and 1934 additions, but terminated at NC 135 with a solid brick end wall.

Historically, a series of wood and metal platforms and covered loading docks extended along the northwest elevation of the knitting mill. Today, a nearly continuous, partially covered, concrete-and-steel loading dock runs the length of the northwest elevation and wraps around to cover approximately half of the southwest end of the building. This loading dock has been rebuilt and modified a number of times, most recently during the 1970s.

Only small exterior additions have been made to the knitting mill since the end of the period of significance (1954). These include a circa 1960, one-story, brick loading dock that stands near the east corner of the dye house. The covered loading dock incorporates a flat-roofed, twenty-foot by thirty-foot structure with two loading doors that face southwest. Another circa 1960, brick addition extends from the northwest elevation of the dye house, near its north corner. Measuring seventeen feet wide and twenty-five feet long, this one-story extension housed a paint shop. The last of the knitting mill additions stands just southwest of the paint shop. Built in the 1990s, this one-story frame extension housed a carpenter's shop and measures fifteen feet wide and sixty-five feet long. The addition features a shed roof and corrugated metal cladding.

Like the 1895 spinning mill, the knitting mill design avoided extraneous architectural decoration. The brick, segmental arches that serve as window and door lintels constitute the main form of architectural elaboration on the exterior. The roofline also incorporates a modest level of decorative detailing in the shaped rafter tails that are exposed beneath the southeast eaves. Unlike the 1895 towers, the two 1911 washroom towers that stand along the southeast wall of the four-story section of the 1911 mill have little architectural embellishment.

The interior of the knitting mill is divided into two main spaces: the knitting and sewing mill, which is housed in the four-story segments, and the two-story portion of the building. The original function of the two-story section is not known. After 1916, it housed the dye house in the basement and on the first floor and a box-making facility on the first and second floors. Physical evidence suggests that the two-story section was substantially renovated in 1916 when the dyeing equipment was installed. Unlike the 1911 knitting mill, which features a timber-framed floor and roof structure, the dye house has concrete floors, poured concrete

¹ Invented in the 1770s, spinning mules consist of mule spindles that draw out and spin yarn by traveling five feet on a carriage. As the carriage returns to its original position, the yarn is wound onto the spindles. See Gary Saxonhouse and Gavin Wright, "Technological Evolution in Cotton Spinning, 1878-1933," Stanford Economics Working Paper, January 2000 [Online], <http://www-econ.stanford.edu/faculty/workp/swp00005A.html>.

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support piers, and partially concrete ceilings.

The interior spaces of the knitting mill conform to typical textile mill design. Each floor comprises open workspaces with no intervening walls. These large spaces are divided by rows of support columns that run parallel to the length of the building. Two rows of tapered wood columns divide the seventy-five-foot width of the 1911 section into three aisles. The 1911 columns have no decorative capitals, but are secured to the overhead wooden crossbeams by metal brackets or pintles. In the 1931-1941 additions, three rows of columns support the floor and roof structure and divide the ninety-nine-foot width into four aisles. The structural system of these later additions departs from the heavy-timber design seen in the 1895 and 1911 mills.

Instead of wooden structural elements, the post-1930 additions made use of steel columns and I-beams to support the floors and roofs. The columns throughout the 1931-1941 knitting mill additions are round steel posts that hold the weight of steel I-beam joists that run above the posts. The posts were manufactured to connect directly to the post above with a spliced I-beam bolted to either side of the connecting post.

In keeping with its industrial use, the interior of the knitting mill was simply adorned. It remains so today. The walls consist of exposed, painted brick. The three-inch to four-inch-wide plank floors remain intact and feature several layers of varnished finishes. The ceilings consist of the beaded undersides of the sub-floors above.

The internal staircase in the 1911 mill is well preserved. It consists of a dog-legged stair with a half landing between each floor. Located in a brick enclosure that is fireproofed with historic fire doors, the stair is similar in design to the 1895 mill stair. Its newel posts consist of six-inch by six-inch square posts that terminate in a rounded pyramid shape, and the balustrade is composed of solid, tongue-and-groove paneling capped by a molded wood railing. The treads and risers are wood; metal plates have been added to the treads for reinforcement. A second, similar staircase was added along the northwest wall of the building when the 1934 addition was constructed. Nearly identical in design, the 1934 stair design differs only in the cap detail of the newel posts and in the squared-off profile of the handrail. Instead of the pyramid-shaped cap, two incised lines near the top of the posts adorn the 1934 newels.

The knitting mill also includes several historic elevators. The oldest of these is probably the one located adjacent to the 1911 staircase. Set within a brick-enclosed shaft, the elevator consists of a freight cab, a wooden gate, a segmental-arch lintel, and a historic, metal-clad fire door that is hung from an inclined overhead track. Three other historic elevators exist within the knitting mill, all within the 1931-1941 series of additions. These elevators differ from the earlier model in that they have straight lintels and overhead, roll-down fire doors.

The vast majority of the historically open floor space remains in the knitting mill. Particularly on the first floor, some areas have been divided off by non-historic frame partitions. Most notable of these is the enclosure of a laboratory in the west corner of the first floor of the knitting mill. A series of offices were also added in the southeastern aisle of the 1931 and 1934 additions. The latter of these two non-historic spaces is finished with circa 1970 faux-wood paneling and wall-to-wall carpeting. Small office and storage areas have been created on the upper floors, but they are not extensive and do not compromise the historic character of the interiors of the mill. As with the spinning mill, no significant historic industrial equipment remains within the knitting mill. Floor scales that remain fixed in several locations are the only remaining historic equipment.

The knitting mill's footprint, height and details remain substantially intact. Some deterioration has taken place in recent years as the mill has remained essentially vacant. Water has damaged some of the floors and some areas of brickwork have experienced mortar loss.

Missing features include the original windows, all of which have been removed and the openings filled with concrete block and brick on the exterior. A reveal remains to suggest where the opening existed. Photographic evidence shows that the 1911 section of the knitting mill possessed double-hung wood sash

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windows with a ten-over-ten light pattern and a ten-light, pivoting transom. In the 1931-1941 additions, the builders installed thirty-light steel windows that incorporated operable, six-light awning sections. The four-story segments of the knitting mill all featured original roof monitors that included four-foot-tall clerestory windows. These have been removed, although physical evidence of them remains in the ceilings on the fourth floor. A monitor that was added to the roof of the two-story dye house prior to 1930 has also been removed.

Outbuildings and Related Structures

Transformer House (C)

Built circa 1900, the one-story, brick transformer house measures approximately ten feet by twelve feet. The masonry walls of the building consist of five-course, American bond brickwork and incorporate a single segmental-arch window on the northwest, southwest and southeast elevations. A double-leaf door with a segmental-arch lintel occupies the northeast elevation. A low-pitched, hipped roof with overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails covers the building. Louvered vents have been added to some of the window openings, which originally contained a six-light, fixed wood sash topped by a pivoting, three-light transom.

Railroad Underpass (C)

In 1946, an underpass was built underneath the railroad to provide direct access from the mill to the mill office, which stood just northwest of the spinning mill on the opposite side of the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks.² The tunnel consists of poured concrete retaining walls with no significant decorative features. Its date of construction is stamped in the lintel above the underpass opening.

Railroad Spur (C)

A single-track railroad spur runs at grade east from the main Norfolk Southern Railroad line across NC 135 and between the cotton warehouses and the knitting mill. Built in 1895 or 1896, the spur now terminates where the spinning mill and the knitting mill are joined by a circa 1970 addition. Before the coal-fired boilers were converted to oil-burning units in 1972, the rail line continued between the spinning mill and the boiler house, where railcars stopped to deliver coal. Portions of the spur's tracks are covered with earth, however long segments are still visible.

Cotton Storage Warehouses (NC)

By 1925, two cotton storage warehouses existed at Washington Mills. Both structures were built using standard, turn-of-the-twentieth-century techniques for storage warehouses. They consisted of a series of long, narrow storage bays divided by brick firewalls. Each storage bay was enclosed on its short end by frame end walls. These light-frame end walls provided for quick access to the contents of the bay in case of fire. Both warehouses still stand, but have lost their integrity due to a series of significant alterations.

Built circa 1898, the southwest cotton warehouse originally consisted of a one-story, five-bay brick and frame building capped by a nearly flat roof. Today, after several non-historic alterations, the building is a one-story, brick and frame structure with four parallel bays whose widths do not correspond exactly to the building's original bay widths. The exterior walls of the southwest and southeast elevations have been entirely rebuilt. The southeast elevation once consisted of a series of frame walls set between the brick firewall bays. Circa 1970, the original frame end walls on the southeast elevation of the building were removed and replaced by a continuous, six-course, American bond brick wall punctuated by oversize vehicle bays.

When originally constructed, the one-story, northeast cotton storage warehouse had a nearly flat

² Built in 1899, the mill office was demolished by a private owner in 2000.

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roof and four brick firewalls running parallel to the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks. A brick end wall terminated the southwestern end, and the remaining three walls were frame and clad in board-and-batten siding. Today, the building retains its original footprint, but substantial alterations have transformed the exterior design and interior configuration. The northwest and northeast frame walls have been reclad in corrugated metal and all of the original window openings along the southwest wall have been significantly altered. Large sections of the four original brick firewalls have been removed on the interior and new structural beams and columns have been added to create an entirely new interior configuration. Only one of the five original storage bays remains intact. Circa 1970, a two-story, brick "penthouse" structure was added to the southwest end of the building when the warehouse was converted for use as a rebaling facility. Additional floor support was also added at this time to accommodate the new use.

Wood Shed (C)

The one-story, front-gable, frame wood shed was likely built prior to 1920 and may incorporate portions of a frame blacksmith shop that once stood on the site. Located southeast of the spinning mill, the wood shed stands on a brick, common-bond foundation and features board-and-batten cladding and a low-pitch, front-gable roof. The southwest wall has been removed and two metal posts added to support the gable. Boarded-up windows open on the three remaining sides and a doorway pierces the northwest wall. No original window sashes remain and the interior has been cleared for storage space.

Hydrant Houses (NC)

Three circa 1980 hydrant houses stand near the northwest and northeast walls of the spinning mill. These diminutive buildings house fire-suppression equipment and water hydrants within square frame structures with low-pitched hipped roofs and poured concrete foundations. The two hydrant houses that appear along the northwest side of the spinning mill are set into the berm that carries the Norfolk Southern Railroad, and thus feature poured concrete retaining walls on three sides.

Concrete Block Storage Building (NC)

A circa 1960, one-story storage building stands adjacent to the wood shed on the southeast. Built of unfinished concrete block, the building features a sloped parapet roof and a single garage opening on its southwest elevation.

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SUMMARY PARAGRAPHS

Founded in 1895 by North Carolina's Francis Henry Fries on the west bank of the Mayo River in Rockingham County, North Carolina, Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant was a well-capitalized textile factory that remained in operation until 1999. Washington Mills is significant locally, under Criterion A for its association with the industrial development of Rockingham County. The property contains a complex of two main mill buildings and several ancillary buildings that were built using standard mill design. The two mills include a three-story, brick spinning mill built in 1895 and a four-story brick knitting mill completed in 1911.

The spinning mill at Mayodan began producing yarn for hosiery and underwear when it opened in 1896. The installation of the knitting and sewing machinery in a new building in 1911 enabled the plant to produce cotton underwear. Originally named Mayo Mills, the Mayodan mill became known as Washington Mills after Fries consolidated his various textile mills in 1921. Despite difficult economic times for the textile industry in the 1920s and 1930s, Washington Mills at Mayodan continued to operate, with the notable exception of six weeks in 1936, when a labor strike shut down the mill. Corporate takeovers, foreign competition, and a decline in the textile industry in North Carolina set the stage for the closure of the Mayodan plant in 1999.

The period of significance begins with the founding of the mill in 1895 and ends in 1954. Although the mill continued to operate after 1954, it is not of exceptional significance.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Construction & Early Years of Mayo Mills, 1895-1900

Chartered in 1895, Mayo Mills began operating as a spinning mill in the spring of 1896. The mill, which produced yarns for hosiery and underwear, is connected to several economic developments in Rockingham County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, namely the expansion of railroads, the growth of towns, and the early stages of the shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy.¹

The founder of Mayo Mills, Francis Henry Fries of Salem, North Carolina, came from a family of textile manufacturers and had several years' experience in the business before starting his own mill. In 1876, Fries became a partner in F & H Fries, the textile company established by his father and his uncle in 1846. From 1881 to 1887, he served as superintendent of Arista Mills in Salem, a textile mill owned by F & H Fries.²

Fries began exploring the possibility of establishing a textile mill on the Mayo River in the late 1880s while surveying the route for a railroad that would connect Salem, North Carolina to Roanoke, Virginia. Fries was a partner in the Virginia and North Carolina Construction Company, which financed and directed the construction of the railroad. In 1891, he became president of the railroad company,

¹ "Historic and Architectural Resources of Rockingham County, North Carolina, ca. 1799-1953," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2003, Section E, pp. 43, 46-51 and Section F, p. 136 (hereafter cited as Rockingham County MPDF).

² "Francis Henry Fries," *The National Cyclopedic of American Biography*, vol. 27 (New York: James T. White & Company, 1939), pp. 303-304. On the textile mills of Francis Levin Fries, see Brent D. Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1992), pp. 11-12, 15.

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initially known as the Roanoke and Southern Railway.³ Between 1880 and 1900, the amount of railroad track in North Carolina more than doubled, thanks in large part to businessmen such as Fries who were eager to develop and profit from the state's industrial potential. By facilitating the movement of raw materials and finished products, railroads played a pivotal role in the commercial and industrial development of rural areas and small towns in Rockingham County and throughout North Carolina. As it made its way from Salem to Roanoke, the Roanoke and Southern Railway traversed western Rockingham County, and its presence sparked industrial development along the Mayo River.⁴

As Fries explored the planned route for the railroad in 1888 and 1889, he found an attractive site for a textile mill at the falls of the Mayo River, located north of the small town of Madison and upriver from the confluence of the Mayo and Dan Rivers. Once the railroad was completed, the site would be connected to national markets via the nation's rail networks. Of equal importance, the Mayo River represented a cheap and effective source of power. Although textile mill owners in North Carolina increasingly chose steam power and urban locations for their mills in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, water-powered mills in rural settings remained a common choice for textile entrepreneurs such as Fries.⁵ In 1889, Fries commissioned a study of the Mayo River's potential for power generation. The results were encouraging, and he quickly began acquiring land and water rights in the area surrounding the Mayo River falls.⁶

In 1892, the same year that the Roanoke and Southern Railway was completed, Fries leased the new railroad to the Norfolk and Western Railroad. A year later, he organized the Wachovia Loan and Trust Company in his hometown of Salem.⁷ Fries's railroad and banking connections, as well as his family connections to the textile industry, likely helped him meet and attract investors in his textile mill venture. On June 21, 1895, the Mayo Mills Corporation was chartered with \$300,000 of capital stock, making it the most heavily capitalized textile mill in Rockingham County at the time. Five investors held over half of the 3,000 shares in the company. With 500 shares apiece, Fries and James Hipken Ruffin, a textile manufacturer from Rocky Mount, were the largest shareholders. Other major investors included tobacco magnates Washington Duke and George Washington Watts of Durham, and C.W. Grandy, a banker from Norfolk, Virginia.⁸

Construction of Mayo Mills began in 1895. Local newspapers reported that as many as 400 men were employed in building the spinning mill, warehouses, dam, and canal that made up the original mill complex. At the same time, construction began on dwellings in the new town of Mayodan, which the company built to house mill workers.⁹ In April 1896, Mayo Mills began operations with two water wheels, 15,156 mule spindles, and 150 employees.¹⁰ By 1900, Fries had expanded the mill buildings and added

³ Michael Perdue, "Colonel Fries' Legacy: The Mill That Made Mayodan," *The Journal of Rockingham County History and Genealogy* 25 (June 2000), p. 5; Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "Virginia and North Carolina Construction Company Record Book Inventory (#5030-z)," [Online], <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/htm/05030.html>.

⁴ Rockingham County MPDF, Section E, p. 46; Glass, pp. 30-32.

⁵ Glass, pp. 26-29, 32, 42.

⁶ Perdue, p. 5.

⁷ *National Cyclopaedia*, vol. 27, pp. 303-304.

⁸ Perdue, p. 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Invented in the 1770s, spinning mules consist of mule spindles that draw out and spin yarn by traveling five feet on a carriage. As the carriage returns to its original position, the yarn is wound onto the spindles. See Gary Saxonhouse and Gavin Wright, "Technological Evolution in Cotton Spinning, 1878-1933," Stanford Economics Working Paper, January 2000 [Online], <http://www-econ.stanford.edu/faculty/workp/swp00005A.html>.

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over 5,000 spindles. Like many North Carolina textile mills, Mayo Mills marketed its product – yarn for hosiery and underwear – to northern cities.¹¹

Mayo Mills is representative of the industrial development that took place in Rockingham County and in the state as a whole in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the mid-1880s, many prominent North Carolinians embraced the vision of a “New South” and believed that manufacturing rather than agriculture was the key to the state’s economic prosperity. This vision, combined with the construction of railroads and a tradition of textile production in North Carolina, encouraged entrepreneurs such as Fries to invest in textile mills.¹² In Rockingham County, the number of textile mills rose significantly between 1895 and 1920, reflecting the shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy in the county.¹³

The labor force at Mayo Mills also reflects the decline of agriculture and the growth of industry in Rockingham County. The mill lured white farm families from northwest Rockingham County and northeast Stokes County, where the land was difficult to farm. The rise of agricultural tenancy in the county also contributed to farm families’ willingness to work in the textile mill despite the loss of independence that came with factory work.¹⁴ Workers included men, women, and children as young as ten. All of the mill operatives were white, though the mill hired African-Americans for manual labor.¹⁵

Mill workers lived in company-owned houses in the town of Mayodan. Incorporated in 1899, Mayodan’s establishment and growth reflects a county-wide trend towards settlement in towns and a pattern in the textile industry of building mill towns in rural areas.¹⁶ Mayo Mills Corporation took an active role in the community of Mayodan. The company built a school, organized recreational activities, and subsidized medical care. Mill officials often served in political offices in the town, and Fries himself helped organized the Moravian church in Mayodan.¹⁷

Expansion & Improved Technology, 1900-1930

With access to large amounts of capital, Fries was able to expand and improve the mill at Mayodan, thus keeping it competitive and profitable. Fries’s continued investment in Mayo Mills is evident in the increase in the capitalization of the mill, from \$300,000 in 1910 to \$650,000 in 1915.¹⁸ The continued success of textile mills such as the one in Mayodan brought prosperity to Rockingham County in the early decades of the twentieth century.¹⁹

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Fries invested in new technology and expanded the mill and its operations. Although Mayo Mills continued to use water power well into the twentieth century, Fries added steam boilers circa 1900. Between 1915 and 1920, he replaced the mule

¹¹ “The Blue Book” *Textile Directory of the United States and Canada*, 1896-1897 and 1899-1900, s.v. “North Carolina: Mayodan.” The sales agents for the mill were usually located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania or New York City.

¹² Glass, pp. 30-32.

¹³ Rockingham County MPDF, Section F, p. 136; *North Carolina Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Statistics* (1896): 53; Dan L. Morrill, “Cotton Mills in New South Charlotte,” [Online], <http://www.cmhpf.org/educationtextilehistory.htm>.

¹⁴ Rockingham County MPDF, Section E, pp. 46, 50; Glass, pp. 44-49.

¹⁵ United States Bureau of the Census, Population Census for Mayodan Village, Madison Township, Rockingham County, N.C., 1900 and 1910.

¹⁶ Rockingham County MPDF, Section E, pp. 47-51; Glass, pp. 40-42.

¹⁷ Perdue, pp. 25-26; Rockingham County MPDF, Section E, p. 53.

¹⁸ “The Blue Book,” 1910-1911 and 1915-1916, s.v. “North Carolina: Mayodan.”

¹⁹ Rockingham County MPDF, Section E, p. 63.

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spindles with ring spindles, which operated more quickly and with fewer interruptions than mule spindles.²⁰

In the early 1910s, Fries began investing in improvements that would allow Mayo Mills to produce a finished product. The construction of Avalon Mills two miles north of Mayodan on the Mayo River in 1899-1900 reflected Fries's early strategy of expanding by increasing his capacity to produce a single, unfinished product – yarn for hosiery and underwear.²¹ Fries's announcement in 1910 of plans to build a knitting mill at Mayo Mills heralded a new expansion strategy. With the construction of the knitting mill and the purchase of knitting and sewing machinery, Mayo Mills became capable of producing cotton ribbed underwear as well as the yarn used to make the garments. In 1916, Fries dismantled the dyeing equipment at Avalon Mills after a devastating fire in 1911 destroyed the majority of the mill, and he installed the equipment at Mayo Mills. He also added box-making machinery, enabling the plant to package its products on site.²²

Growth and expansion at the mill, fueled in part by increased demand during World War I, meant more workers. Between 1915 and 1920, the number of employees at Mayo Mills rose from 375 to 875, and the population of Mayodan increased from 1,500 to 2,300.²³ In the early 1920s, the mill financed several improvements to the town of Mayodan, including electricity in homes, sand-clay paving for the streets, and concrete sidewalks on primary streets.²⁴

In December 1921, Fries consolidated his mill holdings by merging Mayo Mills with Washington Mills, a textile mill that Fries established on the New River in Grayson County, Virginia in 1903. Located in a town named after its founder, Washington Mills produced sheeting, coarse linen, and twills. The new company, named Washington Mills Corporation, had its headquarters in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.²⁵

The merger occurred during a financial crisis that affected most of the textile industry in North Carolina during the 1920s. Washington Mills appears to have weathered the crisis well, though few additions or improvements were made to the plant between 1921 and 1930. While the precise reasons for the mill's stability during this period are unclear due to the lack of company records, the plant at Mayodan had at least two advantages over other North Carolina textile mills. Because the plant controlled production from spinning the yarn to sewing the garment, little of the company's profit went to middlemen. The plant's focus on underwear also made it resistant to the adverse effects of rising hemlines in women's fashion, which hurt other textile mills in the state that produced cloth only. North Carolina mill owners' efforts to cut production and labor costs in response to the crisis in the industry provoked labor unrest at several mills in the state. Washington Mills appears to have made few efforts to cut labor costs in the 1920s and as a result avoided pitched battles with workers such as those in nearby Danville, Virginia and Gastonia, North Carolina in the late 1920s.²⁶

²⁰ "The Blue Book," 1905-1906, 1910-1911, 1915-1916, and 1920, s.v. "North Carolina: Mayodan." See also, Glass, pp. 21, 27. In contrast to mule spindles, ring spindles spin while the carriage remains fixed. See Gary Saxonhouse and Gavin Wright, "Technological Evolution in Cotton Spinning, 1878-1933," Stanford Economics Working Paper, January 2000 [Online], <http://www-econ.stanford.edu/faculty/workp/swp00005A.html>.

²¹ Perdue, pp. 9-10.

²² *Ibid*, pp. 10-11; "The Blue Book," 1915-1916, s.v. "North Carolina: Mayodan."

²³ "The Blue Book," 1920, s.v. "North Carolina: Mayodan"; *North Carolina Year Book, 1915*, reprinted in *The Journal of Rockingham County History & Genealogy* 25 (June 2000), p. 52. On increased demand for North Carolina textiles during World War I, see Glass, pp. 56-57.

²⁴ Perdue, pp. 12, 14, 22; Glass, p. 63.

²⁵ Perdue, p. 12.

²⁶ On the crisis in the textile industry during the 1920s, see Glass, pp. 59-62. On Washington Mills during the 1920s, see "The Blue Book," 1920, 1925, and 1930, s.v. "North Carolina: Mayodan."

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Economizing: The Great Depression and a Change in Leadership, 1931-1940

The early years of the 1930s brought economic uncertainty and changes in leadership to the mills at Mayodan. The stock market crash of 1929 precipitated a nationwide economic depression that lasted until the United States entered World War II in 1941. "In general, Rockingham County's economy stayed afloat throughout the Depression," though some textile mills in the county cut wages and hours and laid off employees.²⁷ On June 5, 1931, Francis Henry Fries, the founder and president of Washington Mills, died in Winston-Salem.²⁸

Despite the onset of the Great Depression and the death of Fries, the textile mill at Mayodan appeared to prosper in the early 1930s. Agnew Bahnson, who succeeded Fries as president of the Washington Mills Corporation, was related to the Fries family and had served as vice-president of the corporation since at least 1925. Under Bahnson's leadership, the company expanded the plant at Mayodan in the early 1930s, constructing two additions to the knitting mill. While other mills were cutting hours and employees, Washington Mills extended its operating hours, hired new workers, and expanded its product line to include athletic shirts and union suits.²⁹

At the same time that the Mayodan mill was growing, many North Carolina textile mills struggled to stay open, and the labor unrest that had begun fermenting in the late 1920s spread. Labor disputes at other mills in Rockingham County in the early 1930s turned violent, but Mayodan seems to have avoided major labor conflicts during the same period. In September 1934, the Textile Workers of America (TWUA), a union affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations, organized a general strike that shut down most textile mills in North Carolina.³⁰ Historians of Washington Mills have yet to uncover any evidence that workers at Mayodan participated in the general strike.

However, two years after the 1934 strike, Mayodan textile workers went on strike over the same issues that had provoked strikes at other mills in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In the spring of 1936, Bahnson attempted to cut labor and production costs at Mayodan by implementing a new wage system designed to improve worker efficiency. Under the new efficiency plan, workers had to meet a production quota in order to earn the standard hourly wage, and efficiency experts at the plant closely monitored the amount of time employees spent working. On June 11, 1936, mill workers at Mayodan walked off the job, demanding that the mill's management abolish the new efficiency system. Trusting mill officials' promises to address the workers' demands, the employees returned to work. On June 15th, after learning that the efficiency system would not be abolished, the workers went on strike.³¹

The strike lasted six weeks. Representatives from the United Textile Workers of America, a union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and a rival of the TWUA, arrived in Mayodan to help organize the strike. In addition to the abolition of the efficiency system, the workers demanded an eight-hour workday, a forty-hour work week, the right to collective bargaining, and a promise that the mill owners would not retaliate against striking workers or union members. Bahnson was willing to wait until the striking workers capitulated and consequently refused to compromise with his employees.³²

²⁷ On the Great Depression in Rockingham County, see Rockingham County MPDF, Section E, p. 79. On the impact of the Great Depression on the textile industry, see Glass, pp. 74-77.

²⁸ Perdue, p. 15; *National Cyclopedia*, vol. 27, p. 304.

²⁹ Perdue, p. 15; *The Blue Book*, 1940, s.v. "North Carolina: Mayodan."

³⁰ Glass, pp. 75-77; William S. Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 488.

³¹ Perdue, pp. 16-18.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

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Like other textile workers before them, the employees of the Mayodan mill lost their battle with management. On July 22nd, disheartened strikers agreed to return to the mill without achieving any of their goals. Over the next two years, the union protested that Washington Mills violated labor laws by refusing to re-hire fifty-seven workers who were union members and who had actively participated in the strike. Under pressure from the federal government, the mill re-hired the workers in April 1937. Although the union won the battle over re-hiring the workers, it lost its war with Washington Mills. The company laid off the re-hired workers in 1938, and by 1940, there was little if any union activity in Mayodan.³³

World War II and New Markets, 1941-1954

The United States' entry into World War II in 1941 revived the national economy, including the textile industry in Rockingham County. Production at Mayodan increased during the war, as the mill produced underwear for the armed forces. A 1941 addition to the knitting mill helped the mill accommodate the expanded production. At the same time, young male employees left their jobs to serve in the military, leading the mill to increase work hours and work loads to maintain high production levels with fewer employees.³⁴

The increased production pace during the war took its toll on the machines, and after the war ended in 1945, Washington Mills replaced much of the machinery at the Mayodan plant. In 1954, the company constructed a 5,000-square-foot addition to the original 1895 spinning mill. The new machinery and building helped Washington Mills expand its market with the creation of a new clothing line of men's and boys' underwear, shirts, and sleepwear called Mayo Spruce. The company marketed the Mayo Spruce line nationally, purchasing advertising space in national magazines and soliciting endorsements from well-known athletes. The company also continued to invest in amenities for its employees in the post-war years, constructing a 600-acre park in Mayodan in 1948 and a recreational facility for the local Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in 1954.³⁵

Corporate Consolidation and the Closing of Washington Mills, 1955-2004

Washington Mills experienced dramatic changes between the mid-twentieth century and the beginning of the new century. In 1955, Washington Mills sold over 140 of its mill houses to mill employees. This decision followed a trend that started in North Carolina the mid-1930s as mill owners determined that high housing maintenance costs, improved roads that allowed workers to commute from remote locations, and federal minimum wage and child labor laws rendered mill villages outmoded.³⁶ One year after selling its employee housing, Washington Mills discontinued its medical program that had provided virtually free health care to mill employees and their families since the 1890s.³⁷

Under the direction of Winston-Salem native R. Arthur Spaugh, who succeeded Bahnson as president of the Washington Mills Company in 1951, the company continued to expand its facilities and operations through the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1959, the company built an additional 60,000 square feet of warehouse space on the southwest side of NC 135. Two years later, it started a new line of children's knitted outerwear.³⁸ After Spaugh retired in 1964, new company president Walser A. Blackwood made further upgrades to the plant. Improvements made during the late 1960s and early 1970s included the installation of more automated

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 18-21.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 21.

³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 26-27, 29

³⁶ Glass, pp. 84-85.

³⁷ Perdue, pp. 25, 27.

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 27, 29.

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machinery, modern air conditioning systems, and oil-fired boilers, as well as the construction of additional warehouse space.³⁹

Despite these improvements, by the 1970s the company was ailing financially. During the 1970s, increasing foreign competition began to erode profits in North Carolina's textile industry. This situation made the company ripe for a corporate takeover, a common occurrence in the southern textile industry during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1972, Smith Bagley, grandson of tobacco magnate R.J. Reynolds, and food store entrepreneur James R. Gilley purchased a controlling share in the Washington Mills Company. They merged the mills with their other businesses to form the Washington Group.⁴⁰

Bagley and Gilley attempted to change the direction of the company by moving from the production of underwear to "fashion sportswear." The transition proved disastrous, as excessive production costs and low profits drove the Washington Group into bankruptcy. In June 1977, the company closed its plants and laid off 2,500 workers for three weeks, including approximately 900 employees in Mayodan. Although the plant reopened in July 1977, it never regained its economic footing in an increasingly competitive industry.

After being released from receivership in 1982, the Washington Group was sold to the Tultex Corporation, a sportswear manufacturer based in Martinsville, Virginia. Following the acquisition of the Washington Group, Tultex combined and consolidated the functions of its various plants and eliminated the knitting, dyeing, and cutting operations at the Mayodan plant, leaving just yarn production and sewing. The workforce at Mayodan gradually decreased from approximately 800 in 1981 to fewer than 150 in 1999.⁴¹

In December 1999, Tultex announced that it would focus on the distribution of fleece products and eliminate its production plants. Shortly after the announcement, the Mayodan textile mill closed. Mayodan was the sixth plant closing or major layoff within a two-year period in Rockingham County's textile industry.⁴²

In 2000, a group of local investors purchased the mill complex. Plans are underway to rehabilitate the buildings as a multi-use entertainment, residential, office, and retail destination.

³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 27, 29-30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 30-31. For a discussion of North Carolina's textile industry in the 1970s and 1980s, see Glass, pp. 96-97, 100-101.

⁴¹ Perdue, pp. 34-35.

⁴² *Ibid*. See also, Rockingham County MPDF, Section E, p. 87.

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Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant
Mayodan, Rockingham County, NC

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The accompanying base map, titled "Rockingham County Tax Department" shows the boundary for the nominated Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant property. The nominated area includes all of Rockingham tax parcel number 164234 (Parcel Identification Number: 791607599384), as well as a section of a railroad spur (no parcel number assigned) that extends from Norfolk Southern Railroad into tax parcel 164234. Norfolk Southern Railroad has abandoned this section of the railroad spur to the current owners of tax parcel 164234.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the remaining acreage that surrounds the original mill complex and is directly associated with manufacturing at the site. The boundary corresponds to the legal boundary of Rockingham tax parcel number 164234 (Parcel Identification Number: 791607599384). Two 1960s warehouses that are associated with the mill stand on a separate parcel located south of NC Highway 135; this parcel has been excluded because it contains only non-historic elements of the mill complex.

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Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant
Mayodan, Rockingham County, NC

Photo List _____ Page 18

PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

The following is the same for all photographs:

Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant

Town of Mayodan, Rockingham County, North Carolina

Photographer: Megan Glynn for History Matters, LLC

Date of Photographs: April 27, 2004

Negatives filed at North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC

Photo 1 of 11

View: General view of mill complex looking northeast.

Photo 2 of 11

View: Southeast elevation of spinning mill showing belfry tower and 1900 engine house.

Photo 3 of 11

View: Northwest and northeast elevations of spinning mill showing frame end wall.

Photo 4 of 11

View: Northwest and southwest elevations of spinning mill showing 1954 addition with frame end wall.

Photo 5 of 11

View: Southeast elevation of spinning mill.

Photo 6 of 11

View: Northwest elevation of knitting mill.

Photo 7 of 11

View: Southwest elevation of knitting mill.

Photo 8 of 11

View: Southeast elevation of knitting mill.

Photo 9 of 11

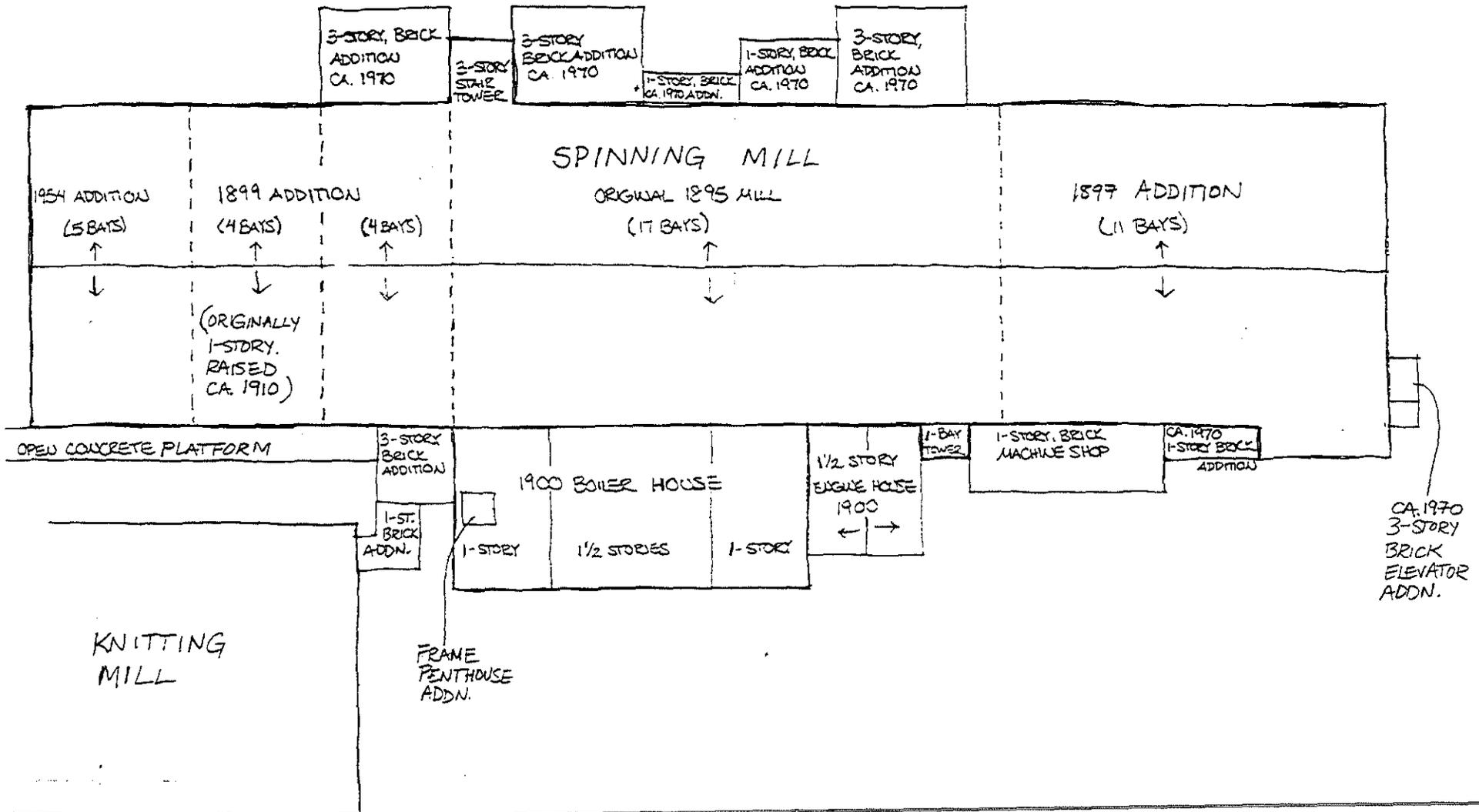
View: Southeast and northeast elevations of knitting mill showing the two-story dye house and projecting washroom towers.

Photo 10 of 11

View: Typical interior view of spinning mill showing octagonal column, pintle header, joists, flooring and ceiling.

Photo 11 of 11

View: Typical interior view of knitting mill showing original round wood columns, wood joists, flooring and ceiling.




Washington Mills – Mayodan Plant
Mayodan, Rockingham County, North Carolina
Spinning Mill – Detailed Building Plan
(Not to scale)