

**Survey and Research Report  
on  
The Cole Manufacturing Company Plant  
Charlotte, North Carolina  
November, 2002**



1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Cole Manufacturing Plant is located at 1318 Central Avenue in Charlotte, North Carolina.

2. Name, address and telephone number of the current owner of the property:

Plaza Industries, Inc.

John Cole Hatcher, President

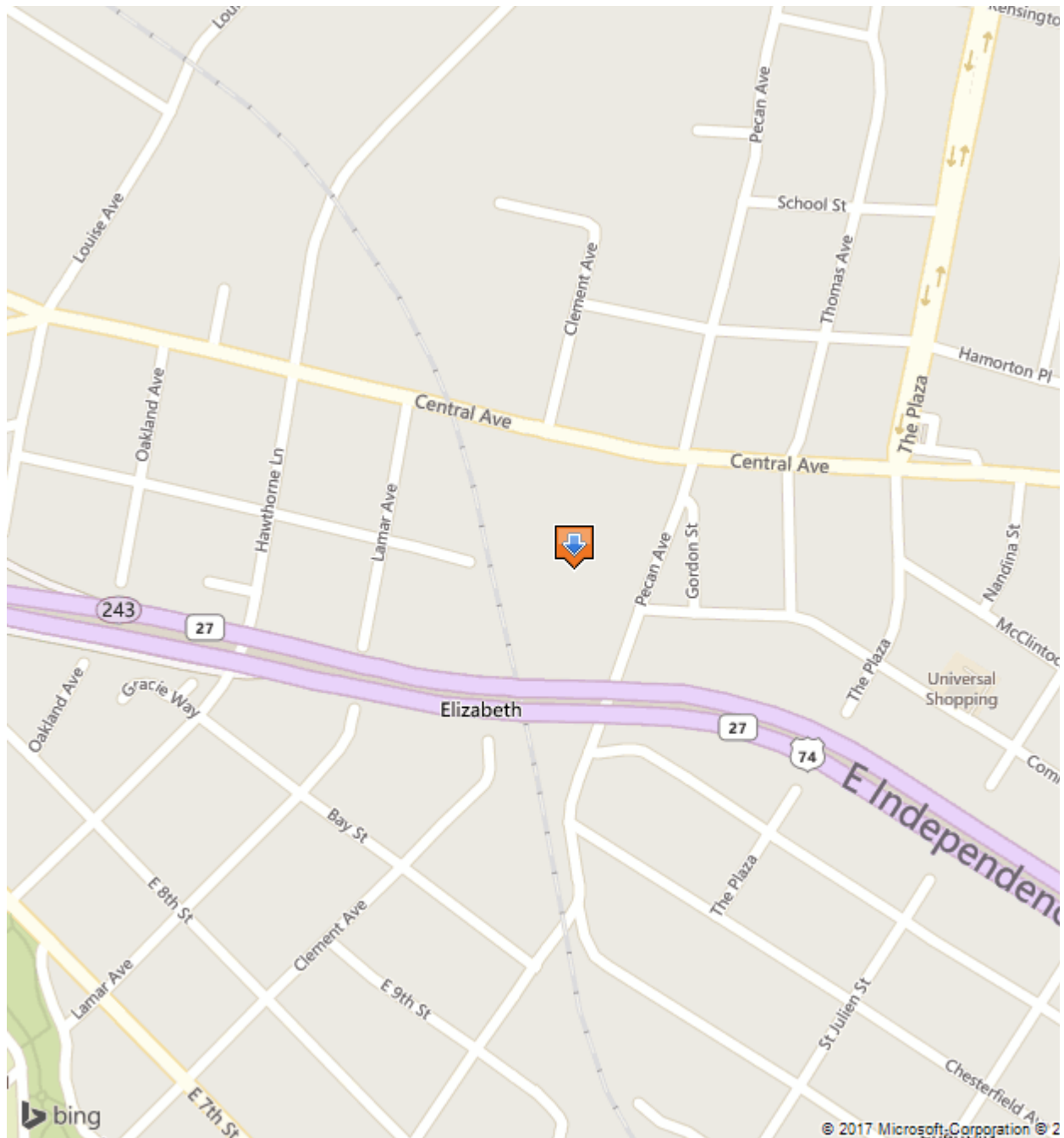
1318-F Central Avenue

Charlotte, North Carolina 28205

Telephone: (704) 375-8515

3. Representative photographs of the property: This report contains representative photographs of the property.

4. A map depicting the location of the property: The report contains a map depicting the location of the property. The UTM Coordinate is 17 516788E 3897112N.



5. Current tax parcel number: 081-177-22.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by John A. Morrice.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in North Carolina General Statute 160A-400.5.

a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance. The Commission judges that the property known as the Cole Manufacturing Plant possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1. The 1909 Cole Manufacturing Plant is a significant and well-preserved example of Charlotte's early 20<sup>th</sup> century manufacturing complexes.
2. The Cole Manufacturing Plant was designed by noted local architect Charles Christian Hook and reflects his affinity for the classical style.
3. The Cole Manufacturing Plant, built in the Romanesque Revival Style and featuring advanced concrete structural components, demonstrates both the power of traditional design and progressive building technology.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission contends that the architectural description included in this report demonstrates that the property known as the Cole Manufacturing Plant meets this criterion.

Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that "historic landmark" designation allows the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the ad valorem taxes on all or any portion of the Property. The current appraised value of the historic buildings is \$435,530. The current appraised value of the 1.34 acres of land is \$117,260.

Date of Preparation of this Report: November 25, 2002

Prepared by: Stewart Gray

## **Statement of Significance**

**Summary:** The 1909 Cole Manufacturing Company is historically significant as a tangible reminder of the beginning of the diversification of Charlotte's early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial development. The company did not supply a product used directly by the region's cotton mills; instead it was among the businesses drawn to Charlotte to take advantage of the cities superior railway access and the available investment capital generated by the thriving mill economy. The plant was designed by noted local and regional architect Charles Christian Hook, whose affinity with the classical style is reflected in the plant's buildings. Despite its traditional design, the

buildings utilized modern concrete structural technology. A substantial amount of the original plant survives, and as a group the buildings are an important example of Charlotte's early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial complexes

### **Historical Sketch by John A. Morrice, December 2001**

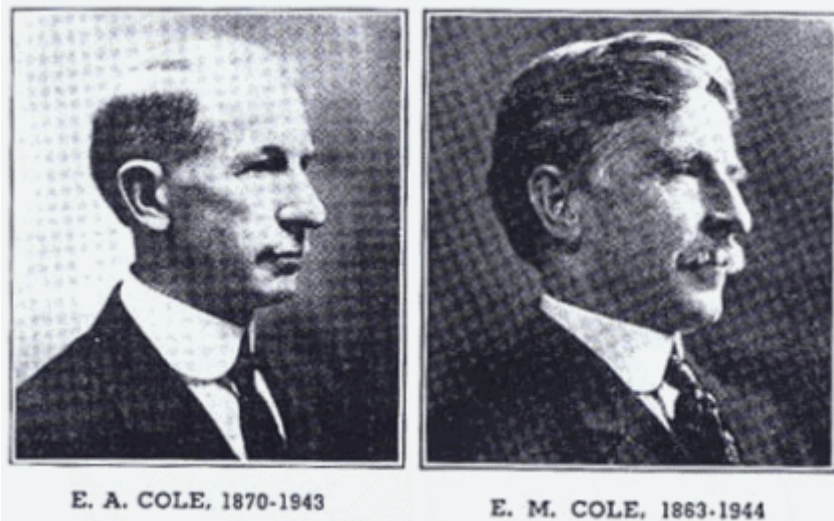
The Cole Manufacturing Company was incorporated on October 12, 1900, as a producer of agricultural equipment, principally a cotton planter and a guano sower.<sup>1</sup> Cole's cotton planter was truly innovative, and its uniqueness made it eligible to receive patent protection from the United States Patent Office.<sup>2</sup> The pioneering nature of its cotton planter notwithstanding, the Cole Manufacturing Company most likely would not have existed in Charlotte but for the economic growth stimulated by the New South textile mill development in the Piedmont, which encouraged the creation of a substantial number of other supply, finance and textile-related businesses.<sup>3</sup> Many of ". . . the new businesses spurred by the textile industry were cotton related industries."<sup>4</sup>



**D. A. Tompkins**

Mecklenburg County was flourishing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ". . . driven by the New South theories of D. A. Tompkins and others . . ." to 'Bring the Mills to the Cotton.'<sup>5</sup> Mecklenburg County was the third highest cotton producing county in the State of North Carolina in 1850 and became the largest cotton producer in the state in 1910 at 27,466 bales ginned.<sup>6</sup> D. A. Tompkins sparked Charlotte-Mecklenburg's transition from being merely a cotton trading center to being the center of textile manufacturing in the Southeast.<sup>7</sup> In the 32 years following the organization by Tompkins of his own factory design, contracting and machine business in 1884 (the D. A. Tompkins Company), Tompkins built over 100 cotton mills, fertilizer works, electric light plants and ginneries and converted the region's

cotton oil from a waste product to a major industry by constructing about 200 processing plants.<sup>8</sup> By 1906, one quarter of the textile mills in the United States were located in North Carolina, primarily in the central or west central sections where mills were the "thickest."<sup>9</sup>

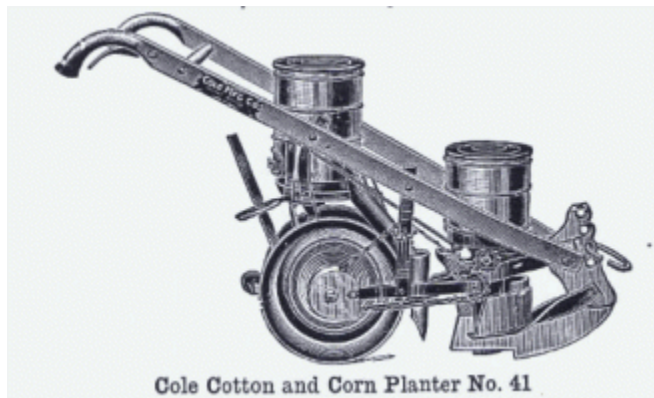


The original offering of Cole stock was purchased by some of the then leading Charlotte industrialists: textile mill owners and businessmen W. B. Holt, J. S. Spencer, B. D. Heath, John M. Scott, Henry McAden, J. H. Weddington and the Belk brothers.<sup>10</sup> But it was the Cole brothers who were responsible for the creation of this enterprise. E. A., E. M., E. W. and E. O. Cole, were born in Chatham County, North Carolina, reared on a farm in Moore County near Carthage, and began making seed planters for their neighbors, beginning as a small business, and eventually obtaining the U.S. patent.<sup>11</sup> The brothers each received 30 shares of common stock for his in-kind contribution of the patent and other personal property to the Company.<sup>12</sup> The balance of the capitalization, as demonstrated above, came in cash for preferred shares issued to others who had made their fortunes by direct or indirect affiliation with the success of the textile mills.<sup>13</sup>

Placing the Cole Manufacturing Company in Charlotte was no accident. The large number of textile mills in Mecklenburg County and its environs generated the capital needed for industrial and commercial diversification. Many of these ancillary industries benefited from one of the same factors that had spurred mill development in Charlotte -- the "multiple rail connections" which "kept transportation prices low and helped Charlotte's economy expand."<sup>14</sup> Road improvements and existing rail connections provided the means for Charlotte to become one of the leading New South cities.<sup>15</sup> Southern Railway was created in 1894, and it controlled four of the six tracks passing through Charlotte (it routed the Washington to New Orleans mainline through the city); the Seaboard Air Line bought the other railroad tracks in Charlotte



in 1900.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, new tracks for the Norfolk and Western and the local Piedmont and Northern Railroad (a projected 150-mile local line with the motto "A Mill to the Mile") provided additional impetus to the industrial and distribution economy in Charlotte and its environs.<sup>17</sup> The rail lines promoted vigorous economic growth in the southern Piedmont region of North Carolina. For example the Cannon family purchased cheap farm land along the Southern Railway to establish Kannapolis and Cannon Mills. In Gaston County, completion of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad and the existing Southern Railway "set the stage for a remarkable expansion of the textile industry, resulting in the construction of 23 mills between 1887 and 1904 and the growth of Gastonia as a commercial and manufacturing center."<sup>18</sup> The Cole Manufacturing Company, located on the Seaboard Air Line, used its rail access to distribute planters throughout this region and even beyond. Farm implements were sold wholesale to hardware supply stores and shipped by rail.<sup>19</sup> By 1926, the Cole Manufacturing Company was said to have been the largest factory in the world devoted exclusively to the manufacture of seed planters and guano sowers.<sup>20</sup>



The first Cole Manufacturing factory was located near the intersection of Lawyers Road (now Central Avenue) and the Seaboard Air Line Railway, across Central Avenue from its present site. Per Walsh's 1902 directory of the City of Charlotte, Eugene M. Cole (listed as Secretary of Cole Manufacturing), Eusebuis A. Cole (listed as President and Treasurer) and E. W. Cole (listed as Bookkeeper) all maintained residences near the first plant on Central Avenue. The first factory abutted a Seaboard Air Line Railway siding adjacent to Barnhardt Manufacturing Company and the Charlotte Casket Company. Although it was listed as having 40 employees in the 1905 Sanborn Maps, the plant had no watchman since the "owner sleeps in building."<sup>21</sup> Per company correspondence, demand for planters grew quickly during the first few years of the Company's existence; and around 1902 or 1903, the Cole brothers developed a guano ("fertilizer") distributor.<sup>22</sup> The introduction of the fertilizer, Peruvian guano, had led to a tripling of the number of bales of cotton ginned in Mecklenburg County between 1860 and 1880.<sup>23</sup> Production had increased from 6,112 bales in 1860 to 19,129 bales in 1880. Increased production presumably fueled

both the growth of the mills and the demand for agricultural implements which would make cotton production more efficient, including a guano distributor.

The Company outgrew its first plant. On September 6, 1906, it purchased approximately 14 acres of property across Central Avenue from its first plant; the western boundary of the property was the Seaboard Air Line Railroad. The land was bought from the Oakhurst Land Company (which developed the Elizabeth neighborhood) the president of which was textile magnate B. D. Heath, one of the original Cole investors.<sup>24</sup> About 1909, Charlotte architect Charles Christian Hook (1870 – 1938) was retained to design the new plant.<sup>25</sup>



[C. C. Hook](#) was one of Charlotte's most influential architects. In 1909, when retained by Cole, he practiced independently, having previously formed the firm of Hook and Sawyer which operated from 1902 to 1907. Hook would establish the firm of Hook and Rogers, with Willard G. Rogers, in 1912.<sup>26</sup> C. C. Hook was born in Wheeling, West Virginia on February 18, 1870, received his degree from Washington University in 1890 and came to Charlotte as the teacher of manual training and mechanical drawing in the Old South School on the corner of East Morehead and South Boulevard.<sup>27</sup>

In 1893, he began practicing architecture.<sup>28</sup> Plans were drawn in Hook's offices for many of the then most important buildings in North Carolina. These buildings include the 1925 Charlotte City Hall on East Trade Street, the Richmond County Courthouse, and dormitories at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University. His work would include many notable residences in Charlotte, including the Van Landingham Estate, the James B. Duke Mansion and the Belk House on Hawthorne Lane; residences also included the Lineberger House in Belmont, North



Carolina and the Hambley House in Salisbury, North Carolina. He introduced the Colonial Revival style to Charlotte.<sup>29</sup>

"His designs encompass shingled, gambrel-roofed cottages, as well as big columned mansions, Gothic and Romanesque Revival churches, Jacobean and Richardsonian Romanesque commercial and civic buildings, and red brick neoclassical collegiate structures. His practice radiated from Charlotte into the thriving industrial towns of the Piedmont, where he found patronage among the new magnates of textiles, mining, and railroading."<sup>30</sup>

The firm of Hook and Sawyer published a small book advertising and illustrating the breadth of its work.<sup>31</sup> In addition to designing many of the Colonial Revival residences in Dilworth, C. C. Hook also fashioned the Trouser Company which was built on South Boulevard by Edward Dilworth Latta in 1893.<sup>32</sup> The Colonial Revival style became fashionable and was the choice of many of Charlotte's successful businessmen, including B. D. Heath for his mansion (Heathcote) at the corner of Central Avenue and Louise Avenue; Heath, once again, was an original investor in The Cole Manufacturing Company and was the primary owner of the Oakhurst Land Company which sold the land to the Cole Manufacturing Company for construction of the new facility.



Construction began in 1909 – 1910 and was almost complete in 1911. The 1911 Sanborn Map, with respect to the old facility, states that the plant would shortly be abandoned entirely, "although parts are used at present."<sup>33</sup> The new facility, though not quite finished in 1911, included a state of the art automatic sprinkler system manufactured and installed by the Grinnell Company.<sup>34</sup> The new facility contained

six buildings, two of which were separated from the main grouping by a Seaboard Air Line spur track (which has now been removed). The Company became extremely successful; by 1960 it had sold more than 2,000,000 seed planters, fertilizer distributors and grain drills.<sup>35</sup>

By 1945, the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce reported more than 200 non-textile industrial plants in the County producing products valued at \$50,000,000 per year.<sup>36</sup> Use of the capital generated from textiles created the other industries that laid the foundation for a post World War II economic prosperity not based on textiles.<sup>37</sup> Charlotte surpassed Wilmington, in 1910, as the largest city in the State; the significance of its development was not only in the 13 mills built between 1889 and 1908, but also in the creation of a "true urban infrastructure" that included engineering firms, department stores, financial institutions, the home office of the Southern Power Company (later Duke Power Company) and a thriving machinery manufacturing industry economy, offering mills a local alternative to the dependence upon northern suppliers.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, by 1931, when the Cole Manufacturing Company charter was drafted anew (since the original charter provided for a corporate life of 30 years), E. A. and E. M. Cole were the only two family shareholders, apparently purchasing the shares of their siblings. By 1930, E. A. and E. M. Cole owned 1,199 shares between them, and W. H. Belk, Charlotte's department store magnate, owned individually, or through affiliated entities, 477.5 shares.

The Company continuously occupied the manufacturing facility from 1911/1912 until 1982. By 1976 one-fifth of the Company's gross revenues were generated from exports.<sup>39</sup> The urbanization of Charlotte-Mecklenburg all but eliminated cotton farming, and the last Charlotte textile mill closed in 1975.<sup>40</sup> "Cole Manufacturing, once profitable, became a Charlotte casualty of the recession that has fairly depressed the nation's farm equipment industry" in 1982.<sup>41</sup> Company assets (not including the property) were sold to the Rowe Corp. for about \$1,300,000.<sup>42</sup> Rowe is still manufacturing planters and other agricultural implements under the Cole trade name; as part of the sale, the Cole Manufacturing Company changed its name to Plaza Industries, Inc.

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1. The Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds, Book of Corporations, Book 1, Page 191. John Morrice as a student in a graduate historic preservation course at UNCC in 2001. This historical essay was part of his responsibility for that class.

2. E. M. and E. A. Cole patented the "Coles Combination Planter" on July 17, 1900 (Letters Patent Number 653660) which expedited and simplified the planting process for cotton seed.

3. Sarah A. Woodard, Sherry Joines Wyatt and David E. Gall, "Industry, Transportation and Education, the New South Development of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County," September 2001, Page 11.
4. Ibid.
5. Woodard, Wyatt and Gall, Page 2.
6. Ibid.
7. Dr. Dan L. Morrill, "Survey and Research Report on the Hoskins Mill," 1988.
8. Ibid.
9. Woodard, Wyatt and Gall, Page 6, citing Thomas W. Hanchett, "Charlotte Textile Heritage: An Introduction." Hanchett's report provides a general overview of Charlotte-Mecklenburg textile mill development. See also Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Growth of Charlotte: A History."
10. See Endnote 1.
11. The Charlotte Observer, June 27, 1944, Section 2, Page 1. See also The Charlotte Observer, February 10, 1943, Section 2, Page 1. These are the obituaries of E. M. Cole and E. A. Cole, respectively. Both men were civic leaders and active in their churches (locally and regionally).
12. See Endnote 1.
13. Ibid.
14. Thomas W. Hanchett, Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), Page 90.
15. Woodard, Wyatt and Gall, Page 3.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid, Pages 4 and 5.
18. Brent D. Glass, The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1992), Page 43.
19. Interview by this author of John Cole Hatcher, grandson of E. A. Cole, on November 26, 2001.
20. Edgar T. Thompson, Agricultural Mecklenburg and Industrial Charlotte Social and Economic (Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1926), Page 162.
21. Insurance Maps of Charlotte, North Carolina (Sanborn Map Company, New York 1905).
22. Letter from Jean Cole Hatcher, President of The Cole Manufacturing Company, dated March 6, 1959, to Charles R. Brockmann, archivist, Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.
23. Woodard, Wyatt and Gall, Page 2.

24. Dr. William H. Huffman and Thomas W. Hanchett, Unpublished note, "Cole Manufacturing Complex, Central Avenue," on file with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, completed June, 1985.

25. Ibid. See also Thomas W. Hanchett, "[Plaza Midwood Neighborhood Guide](#)." Mr. Hanchett cites an interview with Dr. Dan L. Morrill in footnote 23 to the Guide (Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Interview with Thomas W. Hanchett at Charlotte, North Carolina, November, 1981). Surviving members of the Cole family also confirm C. C. Hook's design of the plant (see endnote 19).

26. [The Charlotte News](#), September 17, 1938, Section 1, Page 1.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Catherine W. Bishir, [North Carolina Architecture](#) (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), Page 423.

See also Thomas W. Hanchett, "[Charlotte Architecture: Design Through Time](#)," (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission).

See also Hanchett, [Sorting Out The New South City](#), Page 159.

See also Catherine W. Bishir, Charlotte V. Brown, Carl R. Loumbury and Ernest H. Wood III, [Architects and Builders in North Carolina: A History of the Practice of Building](#) (The University of North Carolina Press, 1990) Page 301.

30. Bisher, [North Carolina Architecture](#), Page 423.

31. C. C. Hook and F. M. Sawyer, [Some Designs by Hook and Sawyer](#) (Charlotte: Queen City Printing and Paper Co., 1902).

32. Hanchett, [Sorting Out The New South City](#), footnote 67 to Chapter 2, citing [The Charlotte Observer](#), December 9, 1893, Page 16.

33. Insurance Maps of Charlotte, North Carolina (Sanborn Map Company, New York, 1911).

34. Ibid.

35. Legette Blythe and Charles Raven Brockmann, [Hornets Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County](#) (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), Page 275.

36. Woodard, Wyatt and Gall, Page 11.

37. Ibid.

38. Glass, Page 45.

39. [The Charlotte Observer](#), September 26, 1976, Page 5C.

40. Woodard, Wyatt and Gall, Page 10.

41. [The Charlotte Observer](#), November 22, 1982, Section D., Page 1.

## Architectural Description by Stewart Gray



Constructed in 1909-1911, the Cole Manufacturing Plant is most significant architecturally as an example of the industrial complexes found in Charlotte and its environs in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The plant's three surviving early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings are themselves significant as well preserved examples of Charlotte's early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings. Built in the Romanesque Revival Style, these brick edifices incorporated an advanced structural design, utilizing a poured concrete frame, floor and roof system. As was typical for large commercial complexes in Mecklenburg County, the plant sits adjacent to a railway on an essentially flat lot, surrounded by raised landscaping. The plant is in good condition, and retains a high degree of integrity in regards to its original design and materials.

A substantial portion the Cole Manufacturing Plant has survived. Of the six original buildings designed by C. C. Hook, three remain. They are: the Assembly Building, the Machine Shop, and the Heating Plant. The long, two-story Assembly Building is oriented roughly north/south, and sits parallel to the Seaboard Airline Railway, about

50' from the track. The one-story Heating Plant is the smallest of the three original buildings and is attached by a late 20<sup>th</sup> century addition, to the southern end of the Assembly Building. Perpendicular to the other buildings but separated from them by an alley once occupied by a rail spar, the two-story Machine Shop is oriented roughly east-to-west and forms a "T" with the Assembly Building. The buildings are surrounded by a continuous black asphalt parking lot, which obscures evidence of significant landscape features such as the former rail spar and gives the plant a somewhat sterile, office-park appearance.

On the property there is no visible evidence of the three other original Cole Manufacturing Plant buildings designed by C. C. Hook. In 1985, Thomas W. Hanchett visited the site and described what remained at that time:

The square, hip-roofed foundry building that once stood south of the Machine Shop/Assembly Building has been demolished, though its concrete floor may still be seen. East of it the one-story Grinding Building survives in a somewhat altered form. It was originally nine bays long and only one bay deep under its hip roof. The long side featured three arched doorways alternated with a total of six smaller arched window openings. Heavy corbeling forms three belt courses; one above the window line, one at the bases of the arches, and one at the bottoms of the windows. Today the building has lost its northern-most bay. Two of the entrances have been widened, harming the original brickwork, and all other openings have been bricked in. Inside the building is divided into one small room and one big room by a brick bearing wall, as shown on early maps. The roof is not concrete but rather a wooden truss. Inside the small room a single cast-iron pulley wheel hangs from the ceiling beams.

The fifth of the surviving original buildings has been even more altered. The Woodworking Shop stood to the north of the Machine Shop/Assembly Building. It was a one-story structure with arched windows and corbeled red brick, and a concrete skeleton just like the main buildings. Today the structure is part of a larger metal and brick building. The concrete frame and roof remain, but all the walls except the east one have been removed. 1

## **The Assembly Building**





The two-story red-brick Assembly Building is the largest of the surviving buildings. It is five bays wide and nineteen bays deep. The north elevation of the building, which faces Central Avenue, is symmetrical. Each of the five bays contain a two-story semi-circular arched opening. The central bay is slightly wider than the others and contains a modern metal entrance door with an aluminum-framed plate glass surround. Above the door, a concrete panel fills the opening at the level of the second-story floor system. A concrete windowsill is integrated into the top of the panel. A rectangular aluminum frame window sits on the concrete sill. The remaining half-round section of the opening is glazed with a single semi-circular plate of glass. In each of the four remaining bays, a large single-light aluminum framed window rests on a sill formed by a corbelled belt course. Simple recessed brick architraves surround all five of the openings. The recessed nature of the openings gives the brickwork between the openings the appearance of a classical column. This effect is reinforced by two tiers of corbelling that form capitals between the openings on the second-story level. The semi-circular arches spring from these capitals and are accentuated by corbelled archivolt and prominent cast-concrete keystones. Above the keystones a corbelled cornice projects from the wall. The cornice is interrupted over the center opening by a raised panel of corbelled brick. The top of the brick wall is wrapped with metal. Presently the extremely low-pitched roof forms a low gable. Notches in the corbelling and broken fasteners associated with downspouts around the center bay may indicate that a parapet once existed over the entrance. The south elevation appears to have been identical to the north. A brick addition, which now connects the Assembly Building to the Heating Plant, obscures about a third of the elevation. Only two windows, the two easternmost in the second-story level, pierce the south elevation, with the other openings either obscured by the addition or filled with brick.

The Assembly Building's nineteen-bay deep east elevation is also symmetrical and incorporates the same architectural details described for the north elevation. The east elevation features three prominent entrance bays, each of these separated from each other and from the ends of the building by groups of four windowed bays. All of the bays feature the semi-circular arches, the low belt course, the keystones, and the distinctive corbelling found on the north elevation. However, above each of the entrance bays on the east elevation, the corbelled panel is incorporated into a small brick parapet. Originating at the parapets, rainwater downspouts flank the entrance bays. There are no corbelled cornices on the east elevation. Metal stairs and an elevated walkway have been added to the east elevation giving access to several doors that have been incorporated into former window openings on the second floor. The addition of these doors has necessitated the destruction of sections of the concrete panels that separated the openings. Three doors have also been incorporated into former window openings on the ground floor, which has necessitated the destruction of sections of the lower belt course. The Assembly Building's west elevation appears to have been identical to the east elevation. The building has been converted to shops and offices, and the east elevation now contains the service entrances for the different businesses. Many of the window openings have been bricked in, and again doors have also been incorporated into former window openings on the ground floor, which has necessitated the destruction of sections of the lower belt course. A garage-type overhead door was inserted into one bay, requiring the removal of a substantial amount of brick.

A frame box with a gable roof is perched on the buildings roof and may shelter an opening from a former skylight.

The Assembly Building utilizes a poured concrete frame consisting of square posts supporting concrete beams. Rough graining from the wood boards used to form the framing is visible in the concrete. The beams support the concrete floor of the second story. Posts on the second floor support the building's concrete roof.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Machine Shop**



The symmetrical two-story Machine Shop is eleven bays wide and five bays deep. It appears to share all of the original architectural details found on the Assembly Building. It also features the same exterior materials: red bricks with concrete accents. The two buildings also share the same poured concrete post-and-beam structural system, floors, and roof. <sup>3</sup> The building's eleven bay wide north elevation features just one central entrance bay, which is topped by a parapet. Metal stairs covered by an awning now give access to the second-story where a door has been incorporated into the window opening above the entrance, which necessitated the destruction of part of the concrete panel that separated the original openings. The building's south elevation appears to have been identical to the north elevation. Again stairs protected by awnings give access to the second floor through a former window opening. Nearly half of the window openings in the south elevation have been filled with brick.



The Machine Shop's five bay deep west elevation is somewhat wider than the five bay wide north elevation of the Assembly Building. This allows for wider sections of corbelled brickwork, which separate the windows. This also allows for a wider central bay with a corresponding larger half-round arch. The Machine Shop's extremely low-pitched roof forms a low gable on the building's east and west elevations. The west elevation may have been the building's only asymmetrical elevation. Corbelling and shortened concrete panels may indicate that a large door existed in the two southernmost bays of the west elevation. The west elevation does feature a corbelled cornice like that found on the Assembly Building. Electrical boxes and panels are mounted on this elevation, and several of the openings are infilled with brick.

The spacing of the openings and the brick details found on the Machine Shop's west elevation are reflected on the east elevation. On this elevation, however, the corbelled cornice and the asymmetrical door opening are missing. Again, openings have been infilled with brick.

### **The Heating Plant**

The smallest of the surviving original buildings is the brick construction, one-story, hipped-roof, Heating Plant. Decorative corbelled arches accented with concrete keystones adorn this small building and tie it architecturally to its larger neighbors. Now a real estate office, the building has lost its smokestack and some of its corbelled detailing. A shower room added in the 1950's connects the Heating Plant to the Assembly Building. A frame room appears to have been added to the shower room on the east elevation.

A one-story, flat-roofed, masonry building, which may have been part of the Cole Manufacturing Company, sits directly to the east of the Machine Shop. Mecklenburg County tax records indicate this building was constructed in 1963.

### **Significance of The Architectural Features of the Cole Manufacturing Plant in Term of the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County**



The Cole Manufacturing Plant is significant as a substantial and relatively unaltered collection of industrial buildings designed by a single architect. These buildings were built together for the single purpose of producing farm equipment. While the buildings may be individually significant, viewed together, they convey much more about the ways of industry in Charlotte in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Other significant historical industrial complexes in Charlotte such as the Charlotte Cotton Mills, Ford Motor Company Plant, Parks-Cramer Mill, and Armature Winding Company generally reflect changes over time with expansions, and buildings of various ages and designs.

The Cole Manufacturing Plant is also significant in that its buildings possess many of the architectural elements of the Romanesque Revival Style employed extensively in late 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial building, while at the same time featuring elements of a modern structural design. It is not surprising that C. C. Hook, who was known to favor classical restraint over Victorian exuberance, chose elements of classical architecture for the Cole Manufacturing Plant.<sup>4</sup> In Charlotte, a good example of the Romanesque Revival Style can be seen in the 1908 Philip Carey Building, and elements of the style can be seen in half-round arches of the Southern Public Utilities Streetcar Barn and in the 1901 Alpha Cotton Mill. All three of these buildings relied on traditional brick construction, with bonded brick walls bearing the loads of the roof and upper stories. While outwardly resembling these other buildings, the Machine Shop and the Assembly Building instead relied on a poured concrete frame to bear most of the load. The traditional corbelled brickwork simply filled in and covered the concrete frame.

By the 1920's it appears that more modern styles were being utilized for Charlotte's industrial concrete-framed buildings. Instead of disguising the modern structural elements of the buildings, architects embraced these elements and incorporated them into the design of the buildings. In Charlotte, the architects of the 1928 Great A&P

Tea Company Warehouse and the 1926 Carolina Transfer and Storage Building incorporated the buildings' exposed concrete frames as element of the exterior design. The Cole Manufacturing Plant reflects the staying power of traditional design. It also may demonstrates the inevitability of the adoption of improved building techniques.

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1. Dr. William H. Huffman and Thomas W. Hanchett, "Cole Manufacturing Complex, Central Avenue," on file with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, June, 1985.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Lisa Bush Hankin, "Charles Christian Hook," on file with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.