

SURVEY AND RESEARCH REPORT
ON
The Davidson Cotton Mill



1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Davidson Cotton Mill is located 209 Delburg Street, Davidson, North Carolina.

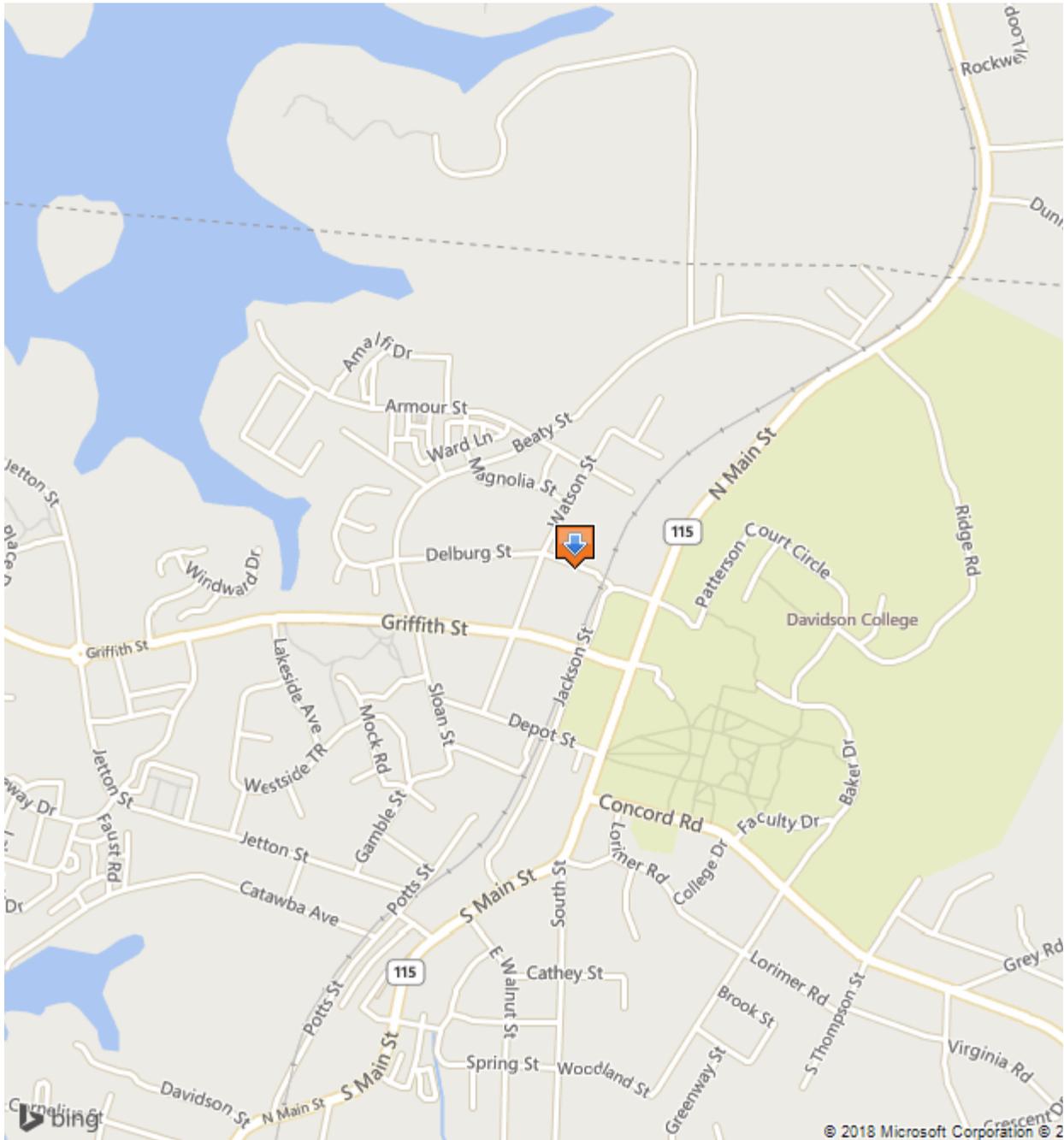
2. Names and addresses of the present owners of the property:

**Davidson Cotton Mill LLC
PO Box 2270
Davidson, NC 28036**

**Duke Power Company
Tax Department PB05B
422 South Church Street
Charlotte, NC 28242-0001**

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

4. Maps depicting the location of the property: This report contains a map depicting the location of the property.



5. UTM coordinate: 17 513713E 3928945N

6. Current deed book and tax parcel information for the property:

The Tax Parcel Number for the Davidson Cotton Mill Milling Building is 00326108. The most recent reference to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg Deed Book 08463 – 650.

The Tax Parcel Number for the Transformer House associated with the Davidson Cotton Mill is 00326219. The most recent reference to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg Deed Book 02248-305.

7. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property.

8. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the property.

9. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets criteria for designation set forth in N. C. G. S. 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 Davidson Cotton Mill does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

- 1) The Delburg Cotton Mill, the forerunner to the Davidson Cotton Mill, represented a new era of industrial development in Davidson that occurred concurrently with similar development within Mecklenburg County as a whole.**
- 2) The Delburg Cotton Mill formed part of the newly-diversified economic base in turn of the 19th-20th century Mecklenburg County. The new diversified economy rested on agriculture, manufacturing and processing, marketing and distribution, and banking; pillars that accelerated the growth that made Mecklenburg County the booming financial center of the Carolina Piedmont.**
- 3) The Delburg Cotton Mill and the the Davidson Cotton Mill, like other industrial and manufacturing endeavors in Davidson, encouraged rural to urban migration, increasing the town's population and offered an alternative to cash crop farming in the area**
- 4) The Davidson Cotton Mill Milling Building is among the best preserved cotton mill buildings in Mecklenburg County, and is significant as a well-**

preserved example of the mill buildings associated with the small towns in Mecklenburg County.

- 6) The Southern Power Company Transformer House appears to be one of the few surviving examples of an early 20th century power transmission buildings in Mecklenburg County.
- 5) The Davidson Cotton Mill Milling Building demonstrates the innovations in terms of architecture, power, and transportation that evolved in cotton mill design in first half of the 20th century.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission contends that the physical and architectural description which is included in this report demonstrates that the Davidson Cotton Mill Milling Building meets this criterion.

10. Ad Valorem tax appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a designated "historic landmark."

The Milling Building: The current total appraised value of the improvements is \$3,682,300. The current appraised value of the lot is \$405,100. The current total value is \$4,087,400

The Transformer House: The current total appraised value of the improvements is \$11,000. The current appraised value of the lot is \$17,100. The current total value is \$28,100.

Date of preparation of this report: February, 2004

Prepared by: Stewart Gray and Dr. Paula M. Stathakis

Historical Overview



Contextual Statement: The Development of the Cotton Manufacturing Industry in Mecklenburg County.

In the ante-bellum period, Mecklenburg County possessed a variety of underdeveloped natural resources that ultimately formed the building blocks for the county’s economic maturity. Cotton agriculture, infrastructure improvement through railroads and bridges, inexpensive labor, and proximity to the waterpower of the Catawba River laid the foundation that supported the county’s transition into the economic hub of the Carolina Piedmont. However, the potential of these resources were not fully realized until the late nineteenth century. Historians of Mecklenburg County agree that that its location in the Piedmont region was a principal aspect in its transformation from a small hinterland courthouse town to the primary industrial center of the region.^[1]

Cotton processing and manufacturing concerns were rare in the county in the ante-bellum period. Industrial development was largely hindered by a lack of capital and subscribers, and was overridden by the region’s focus on agriculture. Only a few textile mills existed in the area before the Civil War. The first textile mill built in Mecklenburg in 1848 by William Henry Neel along the Catawba. The Rock Island Manufacturing Company was also organized in 1848, but both mills closed before the Civil War.^[2]

In 1856, geologist Ebenezer Emmons recommended that entrepreneurs and industrialists consider the section of the main trunk of Catawba River between the Tuckasegee Ford and the great Horse-Shoe bend for the great potential of water power. At this location, a high island divides the river. The fall at Mountain Island was twenty-two feet, “sufficient to secure the most important advantages to such manufacturing establishments as its favorable position may demand.” Emmons recommended improvements such as locks and dams up

river from the Horse-Shoe bend to enlarge the possibilities for river trade and water power for manufacturing sites located along this stretch of the water.^[3]

In spite of this endorsement, industry was slow to develop in Mecklenburg County and in the Piedmont region as a whole, because the wealthy were not inclined to invest it in manufacturing; they preferred to put it in agriculture and export trade.^[4] In the decades after the Civil War, economic recovery was slow and painful, and it was not until the 1880s that local investors and entrepreneurs began to capitalize on the county's natural attributes and resources.

This change in the county's economic fortune occurred slowly; and even at the height of its manufacturing output, the county remained largely agricultural and rural in character. Although Charlotte made significant advances in the post-Civil War period, it did not develop to the extent as much as other southern cities. In 1870 there were no major manufacturing concerns in Charlotte even though two major railroad lines converged in the city.^[5] In a general report about the state's economic prospects, Vice-Consul H.E. Heide wrote, "The majority of the cotton and woolen manufacturing manufactories are situated in the central portion of the State, where numerous rivers and water courses furnish almost unlimited water power. Nearly all the industries of the state are in a very backward condition owing to the want of capital to develop its great natural resources. The greater part of the available capital the State possessed was lost in the late civil war."^[6]

This economic languor would soon give way in the wake of an outpouring of entrepreneurial and manufacturing initiatives that were based in agriculture, the primary pillar of the county's economic base. Cotton was the core from which most of Charlotte's new economic enterprises of the late nineteenth century developed. Cotton would be stored, marketed, and processed in and around Charlotte. Textile engineering and machinery firms with legions of blue and white-collar workers would find jobs in Charlotte. Railroads transported cotton products out of the area; and some of the profits from all of these activities would be seen in the development of the downtown area, of new streetcar suburbs, in the increase of the retail and service sectors, and in the growth of new industrial zones on the margins of the city.

By the late nineteenth century, Mecklenburg farmers, like most Piedmont farmers, devoted a substantial part of their crop to cotton -- a marked shift in agricultural patterns from the ante-bellum period during which most small farmers practiced subsistence agriculture. By 1896, over one-half of the cotton produced in North Carolina was grown in 28 counties, and most of it was grown in and around Mecklenburg.^[7] In addition to the proximity of a healthy cotton crop, Charlotte began to develop the other essential components that would support the new economic reality that was apparent by the late 1870s. Railroad lines destroyed during the war were restored; and two new lines were added to the network that served the county by 1873, making six operational lines by mid-

decade.^[8] By this time Charlotte already had five banks, making it a regional financial center.^[9] By the early 1880s, Charlotte mayor Col. William Johnston introduced a program to pave, or macadamize city streets. Concurrent with this program, county agencies began a similar plan to improve county highways. New taxes paid for most of these programs, and convict labor was used for the construction.^[10]

Thanks in part to improvements in agriculture, banking, and infrastructure, Charlotte began to assemble its manufacturing base. By 1873, the city had 36 manufacturing establishments, and the number of these increased to 66 as early as 1877. However, city leaders lamented that in spite of this progress, Charlotte still had no textile mill. In an attempt to encourage the addition of textile mills to the city's industrial landscape the Board of Aldermen passed an order in 1873 stating any cotton or woolen mill built in Charlotte would be tax exempt.^[11] The Aldermen got their wish in 1880 when R.M. and D.W. Oates established the Charlotte Cotton Mills. In contrast to the earlier cotton mills in Mecklenburg, Charlotte Cotton Mills was a substantial factory with 6240 spindles. The *Daily Charlotte Observer* hailed it as a "new departure" from the factory style usually seen in Charlotte and predicted that it would not only contribute to the city's fortunes, but that it was a harbinger of things to come.^[12]

By the early 1880s, industrial growth in Charlotte became more assertive, and this expansion was inspired and directed largely by entrepreneurs who were not Charlotte natives, but who became synonymous with Charlotte in its new identity as a New South City. The new movers and shakers in town were educated entrepreneurs who understood how to capture Charlotte's potential, and more importantly, how to finance it.

Notable among this new breed of civic leaders were Edward Dilworth Latta and Daniel Augustus Tompkins. Both Latta and Tompkins redirected Charlotte's disorganized enthusiasm for change, growth, and progress. They understood the necessity of breaking the region's reliance on farming, especially on an agricultural system that operated largely through crop liens and tenancy. Instead they emphasized industrialization, urbanization, and scientific agriculture as the viable alternatives of a prosperous future.^[13]

Tompkins opened a branch of the Westinghouse Machine Company of Pittsburgh in Charlotte in 1883, and by 1884 opened the D.A. Tompkins Company, a premier manufacturer of textile machinery, and a principal supplier of textile equipment to southern textile mills.^[14] Tompkins wore many hats in Charlotte; he was an engineer and a businessman; he owned three newspapers; and he wrote extensively on the topic of cotton, cotton processing, the construction and management of textile mills, and how to raise the capital to build new factories. In his how-to manual for aspiring mill investors, Tompkins contended that the "average Southern town underestimates its ability to raise capital to build a cotton factory. Cotton mill property like all other property is cumulative. No town

could raise the money at once to pay for all the property in it. When the author first went into business in Charlotte, N.C., in 1884 there was but little cotton manufacturing in the South, and in Charlotte but one mill. The author at once formulated a plan for enabling small towns to raise capital for manufacturing.” [15]

By the early twentieth century Mecklenburg County had grown in prominence as a major marketing, manufacturing, and distribution center of regional significance. In 1924, the number of spindles in Mecklenburg cotton mills ranked third behind Gaston and Cabarrus Counties.^[16] Mecklenburg County entered the twentieth century with a much stronger and more diversified economic base than it had in 1870, and clearly change had come rapidly and perhaps dramatically to the region. Certainly by the turn of the century one sees fewer complaints of war related impoverishment and more interest in the hustle of the new pace of life that was first evident in town by the 1890s. The hum of the mills became part of the rhythm of life in Charlotte and in the smaller surrounding towns and villages of Davidson, Cornelius, and Pineville. Mecklenburg never had as many mills as some neighboring counties, such as Gaston and Cabarrus, but the cotton and textile industry were an essential component of the county's and the city's economy.

Cotton Manufacture in the town of Davidson and the Delburg/Davidson Cotton Mill.

The small town of Davidson, a rural hamlet and home to Davidson College (established 1837), was incorporated on February 11, 1879 under the name of Davidson College. In 1891, the town shortened its name to Davidson. Davidson is situated in the northern part of Mecklenburg County and at the turn of the twentieth century was separated from Charlotte by 22 miles of railroad track or by 20 miles of county road. The gulf between the two towns was filled with farms and long stretches of empty road.^[17]

Like much of the rest of Mecklenburg, the town economy of Davidson was initially based on agriculture and shop keeping. Davidson College also supplied a number of professional and service jobs for the town. In the late nineteenth century, the small town branched into industrial production with the establishment of the Linden Cotton Factory in 1890 (later operating under the name of the Linden Manufacturing Company and the Carolina Asbestos Company).^[18]

The success of the Linden Mill was an inspiration. During this period in the South, the construction of any industrial or manufacturing complex was a visible and tangible sign of progress. Townspeople typically responded to the addition of such buildings to the landscape with approval. According to the *Davidson College Magazine*, local businessmen were pleased with the prospects of this mill and were immediately anxious to build another.^[19] Within a year, the magazine reported happily in an article titled “Our Village is on a Boom” that the new

cotton mill had been built by the depot, and had necessitated widening the streets. The subsequent opportunities for employment meant that there was not a vacant house to be found in the town.^[20] This enthusiasm was reaffirmed in the next month's issue, in which the magazine asserted in an article titled "Our Cotton Mills are Still Booming" that the town had 2008 spindles and more on the way.^[21] By 1893, the magazine reported that the Linden Mills were working to capacity and that a new cotton gin would be built on Concord Avenue.^[22]

The town's desire for industrial expansion was satisfied, although slowly. The Southern Cotton Seed Oil Company opened its doors in 1899.^[23] By 1900, Davidson could boast of a handful of manufacturing and processing businesses. The Linden Manufacturing Company was in full operation with 7000 spindles and 70 employees. In addition to the Southern Cotton Oil Mill, the Davidson Milling Company (a flour mill) formed part of the town's new economic landscape.^[24]

Two thousand bales of cotton were sold at Davidson annually in the first years of the twentieth century.^[25] As the Linden Mill operated successfully, investors soon organized to build another mill. The Delburg Cotton Mill Company filed a Certificate of Incorporation on July 8, 1907. The mill was organized to buy and sell cotton, wool, and other raw materials and to manufacture these into yarns for clothing and other fabrics. The corporation was also authorized to develop water, steam, and other types of power and to develop pole lines for the transmission of electric power and to utilize and sell power. The capital stock of the corporation was \$100,000.00 and was divided into 1000 shares. The corporation could organize and begin business when \$11,000.00 of shares had been subscribed. This was accounted for by the sale of 55 shares to J.P. Munroe, 50 shares to W.R. Greg, and 5 shares to A.B. Young. The corporation was limited to 30 years.^[26]

The *Davidson College Magazine* anticipated the completion of the new cotton mill (the Delburg, later known as the Davidson Cotton Mill), which was under construction near the depot at the intersection of Delburg and Watson Streets and would open its doors in January 1908.^[27] *The Charlotte Daily Observer* noted in January 1908 that the mill was still under construction and when completed the mill would be a modern facility with the most up-to-date equipment, using electric power, automatic fire extinguishers and water hydrants outside the mill. The mill also had a 140,000-gallon water tank that it would share with the Linden Mill.^[28] The mill was initially serviced entirely by rail, and early Sanborn Maps show no roads leading to the mill. Loading docks were oriented toward the rail lines.

In the previous month, the magazine had published an article titled "Cotton Mills and the South." This article weighed the merits of the recent spate of industrial development in Davidson and in the region as a whole and questioned the long-term value of increased emphasis on cotton manufacturing. "We feel the Southland is awakening from her long sleep..." and that two dangers lurked in

the midst of progress. The first is that too many mills were being built too quickly, or faster than the acreage of cotton, or the “demand for cotton goods will justify.” Secondly, the promises inherent in rapid industrialization would result in a flight from the fields to the mills, making “...farms deprived of hands and at the same time the children who would grow up in the country are brought to the cotton mill to the almost utter destruction of their hopes for the future.”^[29]

In Davidson, as in mill communities across the South, the Linden and the Delburg filled with many workers seeking a change from the hardscrabble farm life. The majority of small farmers in the region were hostage to the whim of global cotton market prices and were tethered to the land by the cycle of debts they owed to local merchants, bankers, and factors. Many farm laborers left the fields for the factories in hopes that regular hours and cash wages would improve their standard of living. Life in any mill was always hard. Hours were as long as work on the farm. Mills were hot in the summer and cold in the winter; the air was always full of lint; and the din of machinery was incessant. Unlike farm labor, which varied according to the season, the pace and pattern of mill labor was monotonous and the mill hand's day was governed by the clock and the whistle. Although mill workers were usually paid in cash and mill companies often provided housing, a laborer's wages rarely covered the bare necessities of living expenses.

Mill life proved to be as difficult as farm life, but mill workers formed communities that were the source of their religious and cultural worlds as well as their working world. Mill hands lived in company housing and often had their own gardens in the summer. Some kept cows, hogs, and chickens. Baseball was a major summer pastime for mill workers, and they met for games on Saturday afternoons at a ball field near the present Sadler Square. Many were loyal Davidson College sports fans.^[30]

The Delburg Mill expanded with the construction of an addition in 1914.^[31] An amendment filed in 1920 shows that the Board of Directors adopted a resolution on June 10, 1920, to increase the authorized capital to \$1,000,000.00 to be divided into 10,000 shares worth \$100.00 each. The thirty-year limit to the corporation was changed to an unlimited period.^[32] Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps show the mill had doubled in size by at least two additions by 1925.

By 1923, the Linden Mill and the Delburg Mill merged, creating the Delburg-Linden Company. As of 1923, the capital stock of the company was \$240,000.00, and the company operated as the spinners of high-grade knitting and tire fabric yarns.^[33] In July 1923, J.P. Munroe, president of Delburg-Linden Mills, sent a letter to the stockholders informing them he was negotiating with Martin Cannon with reference to selling him the mill. Munroe did not think that he would be able to sell the mill for what the property was worth, but he believed that it was worth it to sell the mill at any price owing to “...conditions in the mill business are such with labor conditions uncertain, money commanding high rates of interest,

cotton constantly fluctuating in price, yarn buyers comparatively scarce and hard to please, that considering all these things, I myself am willing and anxious to sell at some price even though that price be considerably below par.”^[34]

The post World War I economic boom of the 1920s was deceptive. In the years immediately following the war, the transition to a peacetime economy resulted in a chaotic period during which soaring inflation undermined the stability of the early twenties. By 1922, the general economy appeared to be in recovery if not in an unprecedented boom. However, looming beneath the surface of the prosperity of the Roaring Twenties were several “sick industries” among them, agriculture and textiles. These so-called sick industries never recovered during the boom years of the 1920s and were harbingers of the Depression years before the economic catastrophe occurred.

Stockholders of the Delburg –Linden Mill were notified of a special meeting to be held on August 23, 1923 to determine if the company should be sold to Martin Cannon. The arrangement was for Cannon to purchase the mill for \$242,500.00 of which \$42,000.00 to be paid in cash and the remainder in preferred stock of the prospective corporation. Cannon and associates would pay \$100,000.00 into the prospective corporation.^[35]

After Cannon purchased the mill, the name was changed to The Davidson Cotton Mill. The mill’s officers were Martin L. Cannon; president, J.F. Connor; vice-president, E. Sanvam; secretary; J.G. Barnhardt; buyer, and D.W. McLemore; superintendent. The old Linden Mill facility was closed and used as a cotton warehouse. Davidson Cotton Mill was incorporated in 1923 and by 1924 had 14,688 spindles and 39 cards, and capitalized stock of \$325,000.00.^[36]

The Davidson Cotton Mill struggled through the Great Depression and into the 1940s. A letter from the company secretary and treasurer, C.W. Byrd, to former Davidson College professor Dr. Henry Louis Smith illustrates a measure of the mill’s problems. Dr. Smith, a stockholder, had written to the mill inquiring when dividends would be paid. Byrd answered that in 1936, the company had a deficit of \$125,000.00 and according to North Carolina law; no dividends could be paid until the deficit was wiped out. By 1941, the company had a surplus of \$26,753.00, but did not anticipate paying dividends because of projected heavy taxes.^[37]

The mill enjoyed a run of post World War II prosperity and was owned by some local businessmen including a Mr. Potts. But the mill closed in 1950. The building lay idle until Bridgeport Fabrics, a Connecticut company, purchased it around 1954. Bridgeport Fabrics operated in the old milling building until around 1962 and produced webbing and zipper backing. When Bridgeport Fabrics closed operations in the old milling building, the company began producing other

products in a new facility that incorporated parts of the cotton mill's warehouse/dye house across the Delburg Street.^[38]

The mill building was quiet for many years, serving mostly as a warehouse. Davidson College purchased the property in the 1970s and used it for storage.^[39] In 1996, an investment group, Davidson Cotton Mill, LLC purchased the property. The milling building has been renovated for high-end shops, offices, and restaurants. A condominium complex has been built adjacent to the project.^[40]

Architectural Description

The Davidson Cotton Mill consists of several brick industrial buildings located on Delburg Street north of the historic center of the Town of Davidson. The mill is located between Watson Street and the Norfolk Southern Railroad line that runs north-and-south through the town from Charlotte to Statesville. The mill began as the Delburg Mill, and was built in 1907 adjacent to the rail line. The site slopes away from the rail line to the south and the west. A neighborhood of frame houses associated with the mill is located along Watson and Delburg Streets to the north and west of the mill.

The Delburg Mill was originally composed of two principal buildings. The larger of the buildings was the proper mill, and to the north was a smaller warehouse building. The milling building is generally intact and has been incorporated into the larger mill building associated with the Davidson Cotton Mill. The one-story masonry mill building is tall despite having a very low-pitched roof, and its brickwork is laid in American Bond with five rows of stretchers for each row of headers. The building is six bays wide and was originally twenty-two bays deep. The gabled façade is symmetrical and consists of six large segmental-arch windows. The milling building was divided into two sections with a shallow “picker house” room at the front of the building, and a large open floor in the rear that contained the machinery for winding, reeling, and carding. The picker house and the rest of the building are separated by a brick firewall that projects in steps above the roof. On the north elevation extensive corbelling was required to extend the firewall past the eaves. The original entrances to the mill are located in the first and fourth bays of the north elevation. The entrance in the first bay opened into the picker house, and the second entrance opened into the milling area. Both entrances are distinguished by round-arch openings with decorative corbelling. The roof is supported by large timber rafters, set about six feet apart, with rounded ends that extended past the exterior walls to support the eaves. Two rows of chamfered wood posts run the length of the building, supporting the roof framing. This heavy type of timber framing came to be known as “slow burn” construction. During a fire massive timber framing tended to char but retain much of its strength, whereas iron framing would more easily

fail in a hot building fire. Slow burn construction was promoted by the New England Mutual Fire Insurance Companies and was popularized in North Carolina by the influential mill builder and designer D.A. Tompkins. Timber purlins connect the rafters and support beaded plank roof decking. In the front picker house, purlins project past the façade to support the front eave. A small room is attached to the center of the buildings south façade that may have contained toilets.



North Elevation Detail



Original Entrances on the North Elevation



Corbelled Firewall

Access between the picker house and the rest of the building is limited to a single doorway originally equipped with iron doors on a tilted tracks, designed to seal-off either section of the building in case of a fire. One of these doors remains in place. It appears that the interior walls were coated with stucco.

A small brick wing extends from the milling building's south elevation, setback one bay from the façade. The wing housed a machine shop, and at one time an office. Because of the sloping topography of the site, a basement room could be constructed under the office housing the heating plant. A firewall separates the machine shop from the rest of the wing, and again the firewall forms a parapet that extends past the eaves on the wing's east and west elevations. Unlike earlier mills, the Delburg Mill was designed as an electric powered mill, and required a relative small boiler for heating. The furnace chimney (demolished) was located on the wing's west elevation. A wooden platform (demolished) extended from the Machine Shop to the railroad tracks.

The cotton warehouse to the north of the milling building has been greatly modified. A 1915 Sanborn Map Company map shows a simple rectangular building with a small "opener room" attached to the building's east elevation. A single parapet wall on the west side of the present building may be the only vestige of the original building. A smaller cotton waste building (demolished) was located to the south of the milling building.



Cotton Warehouse (Altered)

To the north of the warehouse sits the only other original building from the era of the Delburg Mill, a two-story power transformer building. The 1915 Sanborn Map lists the building as the “Southern Power Company Transformer House.” This tower-like Romanesque Revival Style building features two tall segmental arched openings on the south elevation, with three smaller round-arched window opening perched above and highlighted with corbelled brick work. The east elevation faces the railroad tracks and is pierced with three low segmental arched openings, a doorway centered between two windows, at ground level, and five round vents near the eave. The building is sheltered by a hipped roof, topped with a metal ventilator.



Transformer House

The Delburg Mill was expanded greatly between 1907 and 1924, when it was sold and renamed the Davison Cotton Mill. The first addition appears to have been an extension of the milling floor with the construction of eight additional bays extending from the mill's west elevation. The construction and materials of this first addition appear to be nearly identical to those used for the original building. Again, large timber rafters extend past the brick walls, which are regularly pierced by segmental-arch window openings. But whereas the original mill building was constructed over a crawlspace, the sloping topography of the site allowed for a full basement level under the first addition. The only variance from the original design of the mill building was the addition of a large monitor roof to both the addition and the original building. The four-foot tall twelve-light windows of the monitor were mechanically operated and probably did much to illuminate the interior of the mill and ventilate the space. The lack of furring strips along the top of the rafters in the addition, and their presence on the rafters in the original section, would indicate that the monitor roof was installed when the addition was added.



North Elevation Detail of Different Window Opening Types

A second larger expansion, probably completed before 1924, added another eighteen bays to the west elevation of the milling building. A full basement level was constructed under this addition, nearly doubling the size of the mill. The basic construction method of thick solid masonry walls laid in American Bond continued, and again the same large-timber roof system was employed. However, gone were the segmental-arched window openings, replaced by openings that ended at the roof deck on the side elevation, and flat-topped openings that relied on metal lintels in the west elevation and the basement level. It is likely that the windows from the original building and the first addition were replaced during the second expansion. The windowsills on the older sections of the building appear to have been raised to the level of the newer windows. Steel framed twenty-four light windows with operable vent-sections may have replaced the original wooden double or triple hung windows. In contrast to the low-gabled east elevation, the new six-bay-wide west elevation is a full two stories with a step-parapet wall. More toilets and an elevator shaft protrude as a tower from the south elevation of the new section. By 1925 a conveyer belt connecting the picker house to the cotton warehouse had been added. Change had also occurred around the machine shop. The earlier chimney had been demolished on the west elevation, and a new chimney (since demolished) had been constructed on the east elevation. A large flue, perhaps for a forge, was also added. The office by this time had been moved to its own building, since destroyed, north of the mill building. A second warehouse (demolished after 1996) was erected to the south of the milling

building. The new warehouse was of frame construction, covered with metal siding, and topped with a hipped roof.



Detail of South Elevation



West Elevation

Sanborn maps indicate that by 1925 a loading dock was located on the west elevation. This would have indicated a change in the nature of transportation associated with the mill. While the original Delburg Mill may have depended solely on the railroad for the transportation of manufactured goods, it is likely that by 1925 some of the product of the mill was being carried by trucks.

While the milling building underwent modifications throughout the 20th century, by 1925 the building had generally been developed into its present form. Change, however, did continue at the Davidson Cotton Mill with a radical alteration of the cotton warehouse between 1925 and 1937. The warehouse was expanded to the north, and was divided to create a “dye house” that shared the space. The office building shown on 1925 Sanborn Maps had been demolished and replaced by a new frame construction office building to the west of the original site.^[41] The only change to the milling building itself was the addition of a now-demolished one-story shed addition to the south elevation adjacent to the elevator and toilets. Sometime after 1937 a low shed-roofed brick addition was added to the south elevation of the machine shop wing.

By the 1950's the complex was no longer operating as a cotton mill. Around 1954 Bridgeport Fabric began using the milling building to produce webbing and the fabric backing used in zippers. At this time the lower section of the milling building was used for shipping, receiving, and as a warehouse. All materials and products entered and left the building through the loading dock on Watson Street via trucks. Production of these materials ended around 1962. Bridgeport Fabrics continued other operations across Delburg Street at a new facility that incorporated parts of the old cotton warehouse/dye house.^[42] The only extant early 20th century features of the cotton warehouse/dye house are parapeted fire walls that rise out of the sprawling mix of later additions.

The milling building was used as a warehouse until 1996 when the building was purchased and the process of rehabilitation began. The machine shop wing, the picker house, and part of the main floor were converted to a restaurant. During this process the deteriorated floor of the picker house was replaced with concrete. The remainder of the milling building was converted to offices on the main and basement levels. Office partitions have been built in such a way that the timber frame of the building is exposed and highlighted. The floors in the rest of the mill building were also in a deteriorated state and have been skimmed with a light-weight concrete. At the time the building was purchased in 1996, all of the windows had been covered in plywood. The metal-framed windows installed sometime before 1925 were removed and replaced with insulated divided-light windows that replicated the configuration of the lights in the ca. 1925 windows. No original exterior doors survived. Before the renovation several industrial door openings had been cut into the brickwork. One of these openings was glazed and used as an entrance to the restaurant area. Other openings were restored back to the original fenestration. A mid-20th century loading dock on the south elevation adjacent to the machine shop has been replaced with stairs; and a wheelchair ramp, and an exterior stair tower has been attached to the building's south elevation between the elevator tower and the southwest corner of the building.

Architectural Significance

The milling building associated with the Davidson Cotton Mill is significant as one of the best preserved early-20th century cotton mill buildings in the small towns of Mecklenburg County. The only other cotton mill in Davidson is the Linden Cotton Mill, which has been significantly altered. Other mills, such as the Chadwick-Hoskins Mill No. 5 in Pineville, have been so altered that they can no longer be easily interpreted as an early 20th century cotton mills, while other mills such as the Cornelius Cotton Mill have been altogether lost. The Anchor Mill in Huntersville is perhaps equally significant in terms of the development of the county's small towns; however at this time the Anchor mill is in a deteriorated state.

As the Delburg Mill, the mill was among the earliest in the county to be designed as an electric powered mill. Highland Park #3, built in Charlotte a few years earlier, was touted to be the first in the area to be designed to be powered by electricity and not coal fired steam. While retaining much of the historic material associated with its early incarnation as the Delburg Mill, the milling building demonstrates the development and expansion of cotton milling in the first half of the 20th century. The Davidson Cotton Mill also demonstrates the evolution of industrial transportation in this county. Built specifically in 1907 to be service by the rail lines, the factory had by 1925 been modified to accommodate the new mode of industrial transportation, trucking.

[1] See, for example, Thomas W. Hanchett, *Charlotte's Textile Heritage*, available on line at www.cmhpf.org/educationhanchetttextile.htm; Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998; Dan L. Morrill, *Cotton Mills in New South Charlotte*, available on line at www.cmhpf.org/educationtextilehistory.htm; Morrill, *A History of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County*, available on line at www.danandmary.com.

[2] Hanchett, *Charlotte's Textile Heritage*.

[3] Ebenezer Emmons, *Geological Report for the Midland Counties of North Carolina. North Carolina Geological Survey*, (New York: George P. Putnam and Co., Raleigh: Henry D. Turner, 1856), pp. 7-9. North Carolina Collection, available on line at www.docsouth.unc.edu

[4] Hanchett, *Charlotte's Textile Heritage*.

[5] Carolyn F. Hoffman, The Development of Town and Country: Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 1850-1880, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1988), p. 201.

[6] R.E. Heide, Report of Vice-Consul Heide, on the Resources, Trade and Commerce of North Carolina, (Wilmington, N.C., 1875), pp. 9-10. North Carolina Collection.

[7] North Carolina Board of Agriculture, North Carolina and Its Resources, (Winston: M.I. and J.C. Stewart, Public Printers and Binders, 1896), p. 158. North Carolina Collection.

[8] Morrill, *A History of Charlotte and Mecklenburg*, Chapter 7.

[9] Hanchett, Sorting Out the New South City, p. 24.

[10] Daniel Augustus Tompkins, Cotton Mill. Commercial Features. A Text-book for the Use of Textile Schools and Investors. With Tables Showing Cost of Machinery and Equipments for Mills Making Cotton Yarns and Plain Cotton Cloths. (Charlotte, N.C. Published by the Author, 1899), p. 144

[11] Hoffman, The Development of Town and Country, pp. 202-203. According to Dan Morrill, *A Survey of Cotton Mills in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County*, July 1997. www.cmhpf.org/essays/cottonmills.html, cotton mills were built in the county in the Steel Creek township in the 1850s, and in the Providence township in 1874; the first textile mill in Charlotte was not built until 1880-81.

[12] Morrill, *Survey of Cotton Mills*, p. 2.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[15] Tompkins advocated selling shares in an installment plan, a scheme that he had worked out in his days as a machinist at the Bethlehem Iron Works in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He published this plan in several manufacturers' periodicals, such as the *Manufacturers' Record*, and was able to demonstrate that several southern cotton mills were established through this system.

[16] Edgar Thompson, Agricultural Mecklenburg and Industrial Charlotte. Social And Economic. (Charlotte: Queen City Press, 1926), p. 137.

[17] Daniel Augustus Tompkins, A History of Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte. From 1740-1903, vol. II. (Charlotte: Observer Printing House, 1903), p. 195.

[18] Mary Beaty, Davidson: A History of the Town from 1835-1937. Contracting part of the words Iredell and Mecklenburg created the name Delburg.

[19] *Davidson College Magazine*, March 1890, vol. V no. 7, p. 41.

[20] *Ibid.*, October 1891, vol. VII, no. 1, p. 28.

[21] *Ibid.*, November 1891, vol. VII, no. 2, p. 61.

[22] *Ibid.*, October 1893, vol. IX no. 1, p. 33.

- [23] **Beaty, Davidson.**
- [24] **Tompkins, A History of Mecklenburg, p. 196.**
- [25] **Ibid.**
- [26] **Mecklenburg County Courthouse, Record of Corporations Book 2 Page 256.**
- [27] ***Davidson College Magazine*, December 1907, p. 202.**
- [28] ***Charlotte Daily Observer*, January 13, 1908.**
- [29] **Ibid., November 1907, pp. 113-114.**
- [30] **Bill Brannon, *Mecklenburg Gazette*, “The Way It Was,” nd.**
- [31] **Thompson, Agricultural Mecklenburg, p. 144.**
- [32] **Record of Corporations Book 6 Page 187.**
- [33] **Special Collections, Davidson College Library, Folder: Linden Manufacturing Company, Davidson N.C.**
- [34] **Ibid., Letter, July 31, 1923 from president J.P.Munroe to stockholders.**
- [35] **Ibid., Notice of Special Meeting of Stockholders of the Delburg-Linden Company, August 23, 1923.**
- [36] **Thompson, Agricultural Mecklenburg, p. 144.**
- [37] **Special Collections, Davidson College Library, Folder: Davidson Cotton Mills, 1933-1943. Letter from C.W. Byrd to Dr. Henry Louis Smith, October 21, 1941.**
- [38] **Interview, Stewart Gray with former mill employees John Fisher and Ruben McIntosh, February, 2004.**
- [39] **Amy Ledbetter, *Mecklenburg Gazette*, “Mill to Get a Facelift,” February 19, 1997.**
- [40] **Doug Smith, *Charlotte Observer*, “Historic Davidson Cotton Mill to be Offices, Shops, Condos,” March 2, 1996, p. 2D.**
- [41] **Interview with John Fisher who worked at the mill in the 1950’s, 2-29-04.**
- [42] **Interview with Rubin McIntosh who worked at the mill in the late 1950’s, 2-29-04.**

