

**SURVEY AND RESEARCH REPORT
ON
DEFIANCE SOCK MILLS**



- 1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Defiance Sock Mills is located at 520 Elliot Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.
- 2. Name and address of the present owner of the property:**

520 Elliot Street LLC
c/o Enventys
520 Elliot Street
Suite 200
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202
- 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 (Figure 4) depicting the location of the property.
- 5. UTM coordinate:** _____

6. Current deed book and tax parcel information for the property: The tax parcel number for the property is 07324219. The most recent reference to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 16786, pages 582-585, dated 17 February 2004.

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 property known as the Defiance Sock Mills does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. This judgment is based on the following considerations:

1) Built in 1918, Defiance Sock Mills was one of the first two hosiery mills constructed in the city and is the only one to survive. The production of socks was an important specialized type of textile production, especially during World War I when demand was high, and the mill represents the heyday of textile manufacturing and its related industries in Charlotte during the period;

2) Defiance Sock Mills is a good example of mill architecture with its heavy timber construction, brick walls, tall windows, and narrow form. Its location along the Piedmont and Northern interurban rail line also illustrates the importance of the railroads to industrial development before the era of trucking. Defiance is part of a small industrial district that emerged in the McNinchville neighborhood to take advantage of the proximity of the Southern Railway and the Piedmont and Northern.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association:

Like most textile plants, Defiance Sock Mills has had additions made since the construction of the original mill in 1918, but the middle section was added before 1929, during the historic period, and is part of the historic fabric of the building. Only the 1987 warehouse is a modern addition, and its location at the rear of the building makes it less visually obtrusive. Although a portion of the building has been stuccoed, and the window lights are replacements, the building retains the form, design, and workmanship of early twentieth century textile mills.

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 current total tax value of the building and features is \$270,400. The current tax value of the lot is \$954,600. The current total value is \$1,225,000.

11. Portion of property recommended for designation: The interior and exterior of the building and the property associated with the tax parcel are recommended for historic designation.

Date of preparation of this report: October 15, 2011

Prepared by: Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.

Historical Overview/ Summary Statement of Significance

Constructed in 1918, Defiance Sock Mills reflects Charlotte's rise as a textile manufacturing center and booming New South city during the early twentieth century. Erected as one of the city's first hosiery mills, the building was later a mattress factory and was eventually the home of a local roofing firm where asbestos goods were also produced and sold. Defiance Sock Mills arose amidst the rapid industrial development of Charlotte and the surrounding Piedmont. By World War I, there were over 300 textile mills within a 100-mile radius of the Queen City, and by the 1920s the Piedmont had surpassed New England as the leading textile producer in the world. Textiles, in turn, attracted other industries to Charlotte, and with the growth of manufacturing, the population of Charlotte skyrocketed from just 18,000 in 1900 to over 82,000 in 1929, becoming the largest city in the two Carolinas.

Defiance Sock Mills was sited within the McNinchville subdivision just west of downtown Charlotte. McNinchville took shape as a small streetcar neighborhood within the city's Third Ward with industries as well as middle-class and worker houses. But the area was strategically situated for industrial development because of its proximity to both the Southern Railway and the Piedmont and Northern Railway, an electric-powered interurban line completed in 1912 to connect Charlotte to the textile center of Gastonia, twenty-four miles to the west. With its low-pitched roof, brick exterior walls, and mill construction of heavy timber posts and beams, Defiance Sock Mills typifies the textile mills and factories built in Charlotte during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Historical Background

In 1915, Charlotteans Morehead Jones (president) and Kenneth S. Tanner (secretary) organized Defiance Sock Mills, makers of men's and women's hosiery. In August 1915, the new company purchased land from the Fabrik Development Corporation on the south side of the McNinchville subdivision in Charlotte's Third Ward (Figure 1). McNinchville had been platted in 1909, following Samuel McNinch's acquisition of the tract from Heriot Clarkson. Along with the nearby Woodlawn and Irwin Park neighborhoods, McNinchville became a small streetcar suburb on what was then the western periphery of the city. Laid out primarily for single-family houses, the area soon attracted industrial development as well. McNinchville was bounded by the Southern Railway to the east, the Piedmont and Northern (P&N) Railway to the south and the 1884 Victor Cotton Mill to the north. The freight yards and terminals for both the Southern and the P&N railways stood just several blocks away. In 1913, the Fabrik Development Corporation began buying a number of McNinchville parcels in anticipation of the area's growth. Two years later, Fabrik sold Lots 9-10, on Block 17 to Defiance Sock Mills for five hundred dollars. The lots were located alongside the P&N Railway at 520 Elliott Street. In 1918, Defiance Sock Mills purchased two adjoining parcels (Lots 11-12) for another five hundred dollars and constructed the mill (Figure 2). The brick mill included a concrete loading dock on the west side that was served by a P&N spur line (Mecklenburg County Map Book 230:46; Deed Books 144: 632; 302: 476; 345: 564; 391: 488; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Charlotte, 1929).

Defiance Sock Mills was one of many Piedmont mills that were formed or expanded to meet the growing demand for hosiery products after the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Although the United States did not declare war on Germany until 1917, the conflict was a boon for American manufacturers who made the clothing, tents, and other textile goods needed by the United Kingdom and its allies. The mill's name, "Defiance," probably expressed the resolve and sympathies of its owners, Jones and Tanner, in the war effort. In October 1917, the national textile publication, *Textile America*, announced that Defiance Sock Mills in Charlotte was planning to purchase knitting equipment, and in June 1918, near the end of the war, construction finally began. Charlotte contractor, P. N. Hunter, was hired to erect the new mill. Hunter was a major local builder whose important commissions included the 1912 Carnegie Library at Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith University)

in Charlotte. The front section of the mill was completed in 1918, and a seven-bay brick addition to the rear (now the middle section of the building) was constructed before 1929 (*Textile America* October 1917; Charlotte Building Permit, 7 June 1918; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Charlotte, 1929).

Defiance Sock Mills was soon in full operation. Manufacturing ladies stockings and men's half-hose, the knitting room contained eighty-one knitting machines and thirteen sewing machines. The company employed forty-three women, twenty-three men, and nine children. In 1918, Defiance Sock Mills purchased a series of house lots along streets adjacent to the mill and in the nearby Woodlawn subdivision, presumably to construct dwellings for its workers (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 391: 518-519; N.C. Department of Labor and Printing 1920: 75).

Defiance Sock Mills was one of only two hosiery mills in Charlotte at the time of its construction. The other was Charlotte Knitting Company (now gone), which had been established in the Dilworth neighborhood the same year. By the 1920s and early 1930s, however, hosiery manufacturing expanded in Charlotte and across the region. These new knitting mills reflected the growing diversification of the textile industry after World War I as well as the emerging demand for women's full-fashioned hose. The position of Charlotte as a textile center and the boom town of the Carolinas in the 1920s made it an attractive location for full-fashioned hosiery mills. By the early 1930s, the city contained five such textile plants. Charlotte Knitting Company; Larkwood Hosiery Mill; Hudson Silk Hosiery Mill; Okey Hosiery Mill; and the Nebel Knitting Mill were all concentrated along the Southern Railway in Dilworth's industrial section. Nebel was the largest of this group, employing some 250 workers by World War II (Hall et al. 1987, 237-288; Pickens and Mattson 1990).

While Charlotte's hosiery industry advanced during the 1920s, Defiance Sock Mills, suffering perhaps from the country's postwar economic slump, ceased operations in 1922. The property was purchased for \$10,000 by Charlotte businessmen, Felix and Henry Hayman. Owners of downtown meat markets, the brothers Hayman also invested in a variety of downtown buildings and business ventures after World War I. Felix Hayman bought the Philip Carey Building (now Dixie Tavern) on Seventh Street, and in 1919 he purchased Wearn Field on South Mint Street, becoming president of Charlotte's baseball team, the Hornets (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 470: 217; 481: 146; Spratt 1992: 244).

Under the Haymans' ownership in the 1920s, the building housed Dixie Waste Mills and Caro Bedding Company, which made mattresses and upholstery padding from the bales of cotton waste (Figure 3). By the mid-1930s, the building served as warehouse for Guy Beaty Roofing Company, which marketed asbestos insulation and shingles. The building remained a roofing supply warehouse until 1996 when the Beaty family sold the property. The building has subsequently been converted to professional offices (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company, Charlotte, N.C. 1929, 1951).

Architectural Description

The former Defiance Sock Mills is located in the Third Ward neighborhood of center city Charlotte on the north side of the former Piedmont and Northern Railway interurban line. Third Ward was one of four areas that comprised the original city of Charlotte, and by the early twentieth century, the area was developed with numerous mills, factories, and both worker and middle-class housing. Third Ward has undergone much redevelopment in recent years with the construction of a football stadium and Johnson and Wales University. Many of the mills and factories have been renovated for commercial use, and single-family houses, condominiums, and apartments have been built among the surviving early to mid-twentieth century dwellings.

Defiance Mills occupies a long, narrow parcel that slopes down from Elliot Street west towards Irwin Creek. Interstate 77 was built in the Irwin Creek stream bed and now roughly forms the western boundary of the parcel. Built in the mid-1920s, the well-preserved Armature Winding Company plant (local landmark 2003) stands across Elliot Street from the mill while a modern, multiple-story apartment building occupies the lot to the north.

The mill is a long, two-story building with brick walls laid in American bond, a low-pitched, gable roof with exposed rafter tails, and tall, segmental-arched windows. The windows have their original configurations, but fixed, single lights have replaced the original multiple-light windows and aluminum now covers the original wood sash. Because of the sloping topography, the main entrance facing Elliot Street opens onto the second floor. The building was constructed in three

phases, and only the warehouse (1987) to the rear breaks the otherwise rectangular plan of the mill. A spur line from the adjacent P&N ended at a concrete loading dock on the side (southwest) elevation of the building.

The original mill has an asymmetrical front elevation (east) with a replacement front door and stoop, flanked by the pairs of tall, segmental-arched windows found on the side elevations. There is also evidence of bricked-in, segment-arched windows on the lower floor. Now largely below grade, these windows may originally have opened onto light wells, but only the arch is currently visible. On the side (north) elevation of the original mill is a corrugated-metal shed roof that shelters the lower story windows and a loading bay that is now used as one of the principal entrances to the building. Beyond this entrance is a projecting stair tower. Original multiple-light, wooden-sash windows survive on the tower.

The opposite elevation, facing the P&N, is also punctuated by pairs of tall, segmental-arched windows as well as several loading bays that have segmental-arched transoms but replacement doors. The loading dock, and a later paved driveway and handicap ramp, sit on an area of fill that made the loading area on grade with the P&N and Elliot Street. As with the front elevation, the once ground level windows in this area are now largely below grade. Behind the dock, the terrain follows its natural slope, and the lower story is at ground level.

The middle section begins just behind the stair tower. This addition was altered during the 1988 renovation with a stucco veneer that obscures all but the transom portions of the upper story windows. On the side (south) elevation, the middle addition has brick walls, pairs of shorter, segmental-arched windows, and a loading bay that has been modified with a single-leaf door, sidelights, and transom. The rear warehouse is a prefabricated, metal building with a steel structure. A covered, concrete dock extends out from the north elevation to allow for truck loading.

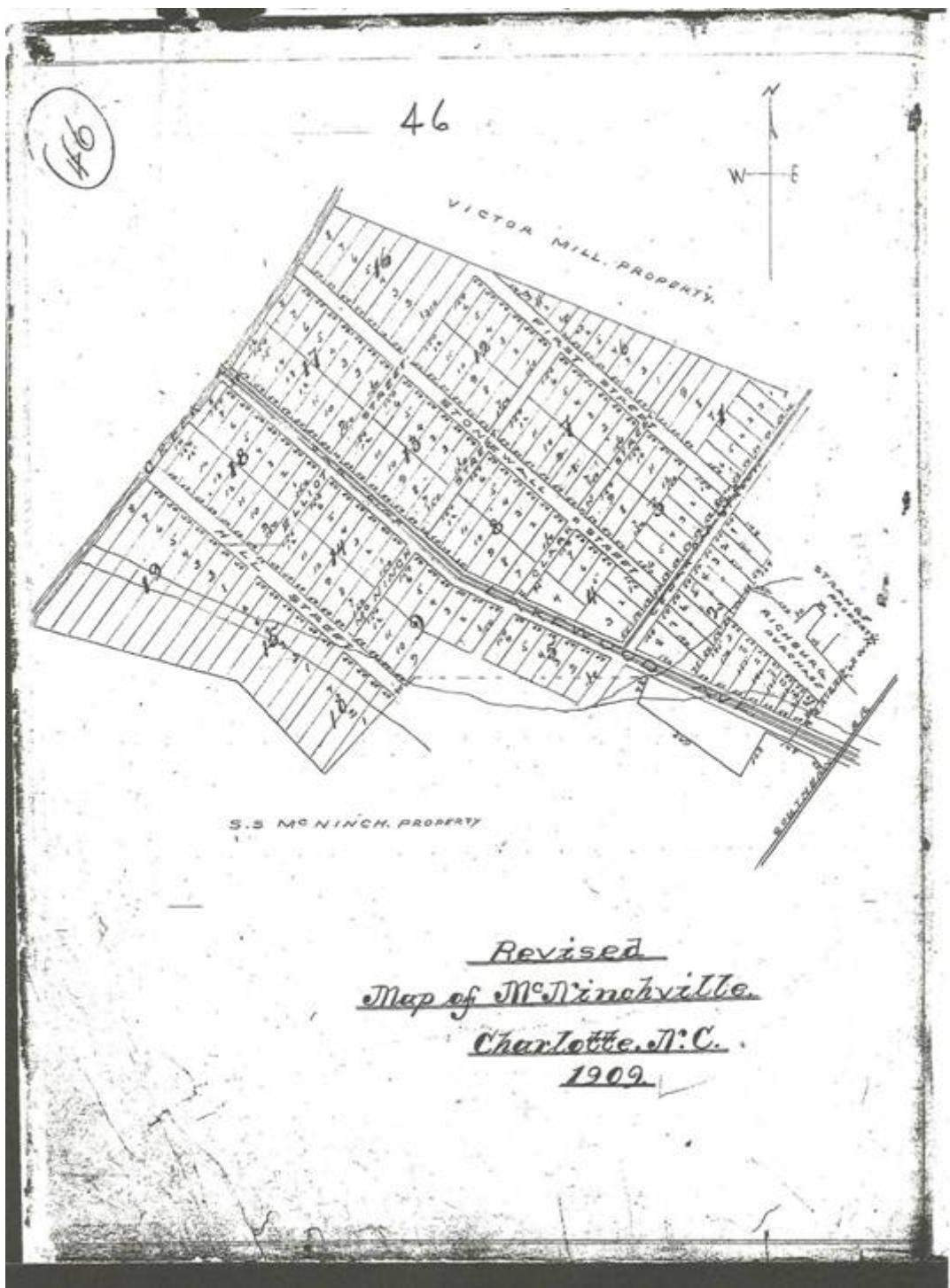
The interior of the original building reveals the characteristic mill construction of heavy timber piers and beams. The chamfered piers are capped by simple, timber capitals that deflect the loads. The exposed brick walls are unpainted. The interior has been partitioned into offices, and the original divided-light, wood-sash transoms are used as interior features. The once exterior rear wall of the original mill retains its windows. Here, the wood sash between the individual windows and transoms

appears original, but the steel-sash, reinforced-glass windows appear to date to a post-World War II renovation. The middle section also has heavy timber mill construction, but the piers are capped by steel collars that join the piers and beams. This section is also divided into offices and work spaces. A concrete block separates the rear of the middle section from the open interior of the rear warehouse.

Bibliographic References

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Figure 1
McNinchville Plat, 1909



Source: Mecklenburg County Map Book 230, page 46

Figure 2
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1929



Figure 3
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951

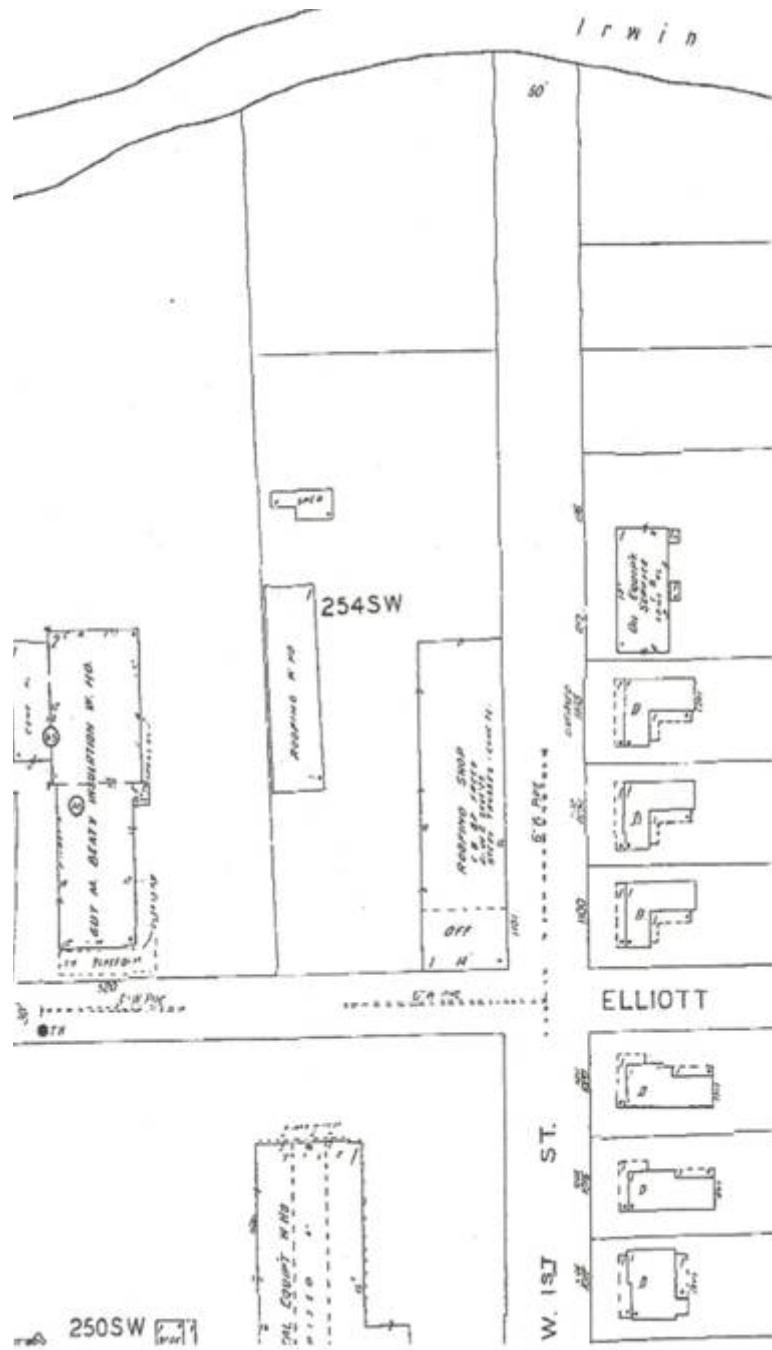


Figure 4

**Defiance Sock Mills (Tax Parcel Outlined in Black)
Location Map**



Source: Mecklenburg County Tax Map

Photographs



Defiance Sock Mills, Front (East) Elevation, Looking West.



Defiance Sock Mills, Side (North) Elevation, Looking Southwest.



Defiance Sock Mills, Side (North) Elevation of Original Mill Showing Loading Bay Entrance.



Defiance Sock Mills, Side (North) Elevation, Looking Southwest.



Defiance Sock Mills, Side (North) Elevation Entrance and Stair Tower, Looking South.



Defiance Sock Mills, Rear Warehouse, Looking East.



Defiance Sock Mills, Front and Side (South) Elevations, Looking West.



Defiance Sock Mills, South Elevation and Loading Dock, Looking Northwest.



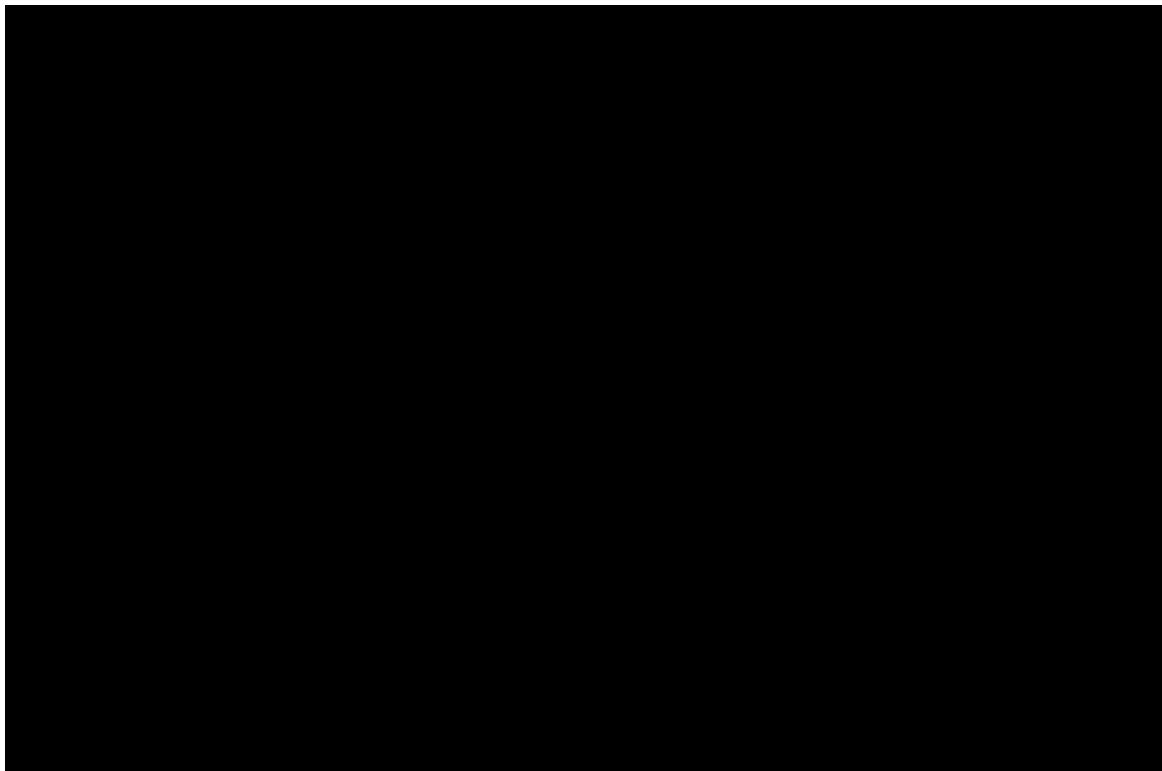
Defiance Sock Mills, South Elevation of Mid-section, Looking North from P&N Railway Line.



Defiance Sock Mills, Interior, Original Mill, Looking Toward Front (East).



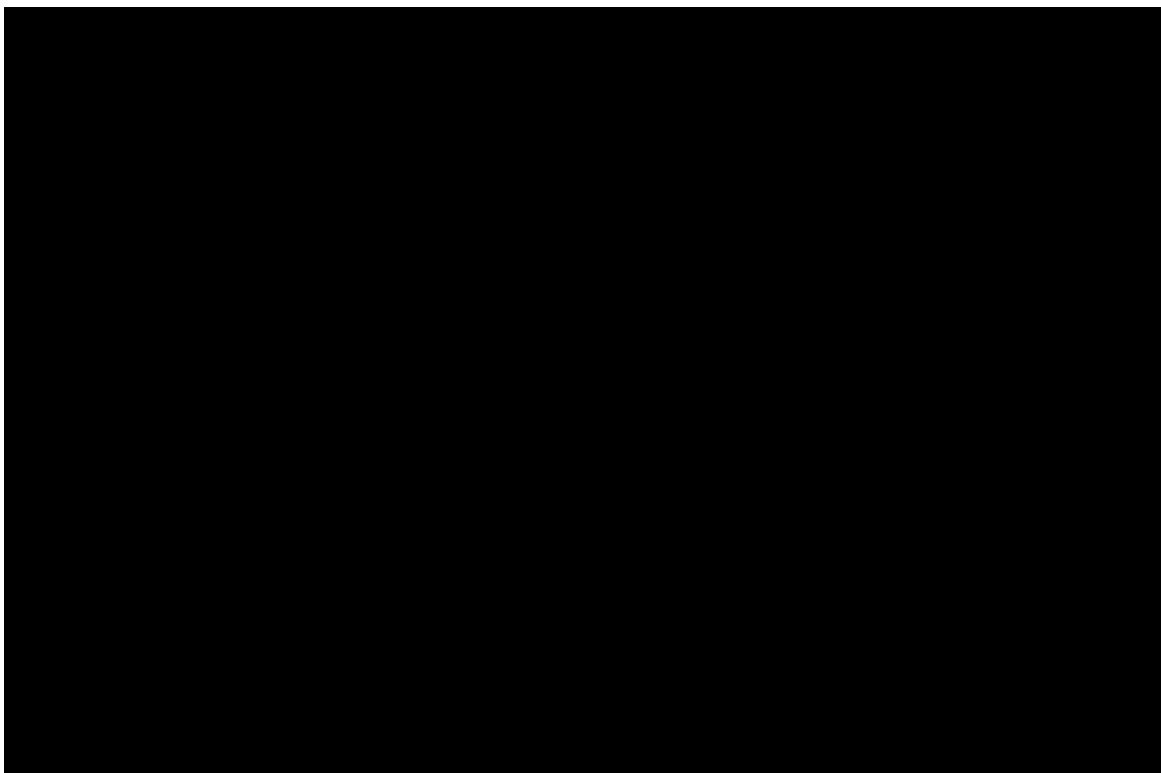
Defiance Sock Mills, Interior, Detail of Reused Original Transom Window.



Defiance Sock Mills, Interior, Original Window.



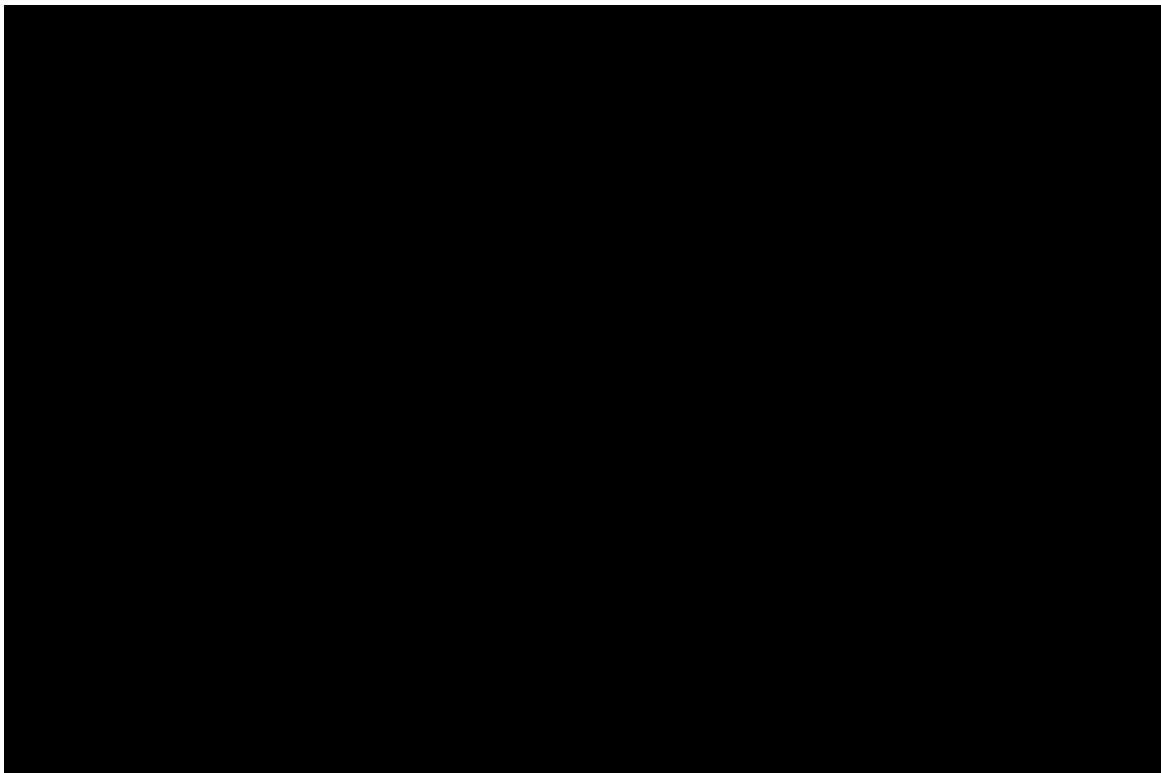
Defiance Sock Mills, Interior, Stairwell.



Defiance Sock Mills, Interior, Detail of Structural System in Original Mill.



Defiance Sock Mills, Interior, Detail of Structural System in Mid-section.



Defiance Sock Mills, Interior, Lower Level.



Defiance Sock Mills, Interior, Rear Warehouse.