



Textile Mill Supply Company



This report was written on July 1, 1998

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Textile Mill Supply Company is located at 1300 South Mint Street in Charlotte, North Carolina.

2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner of the property: The owner is:

Triple Mint, Inc.

1229 Greenwood Cliff

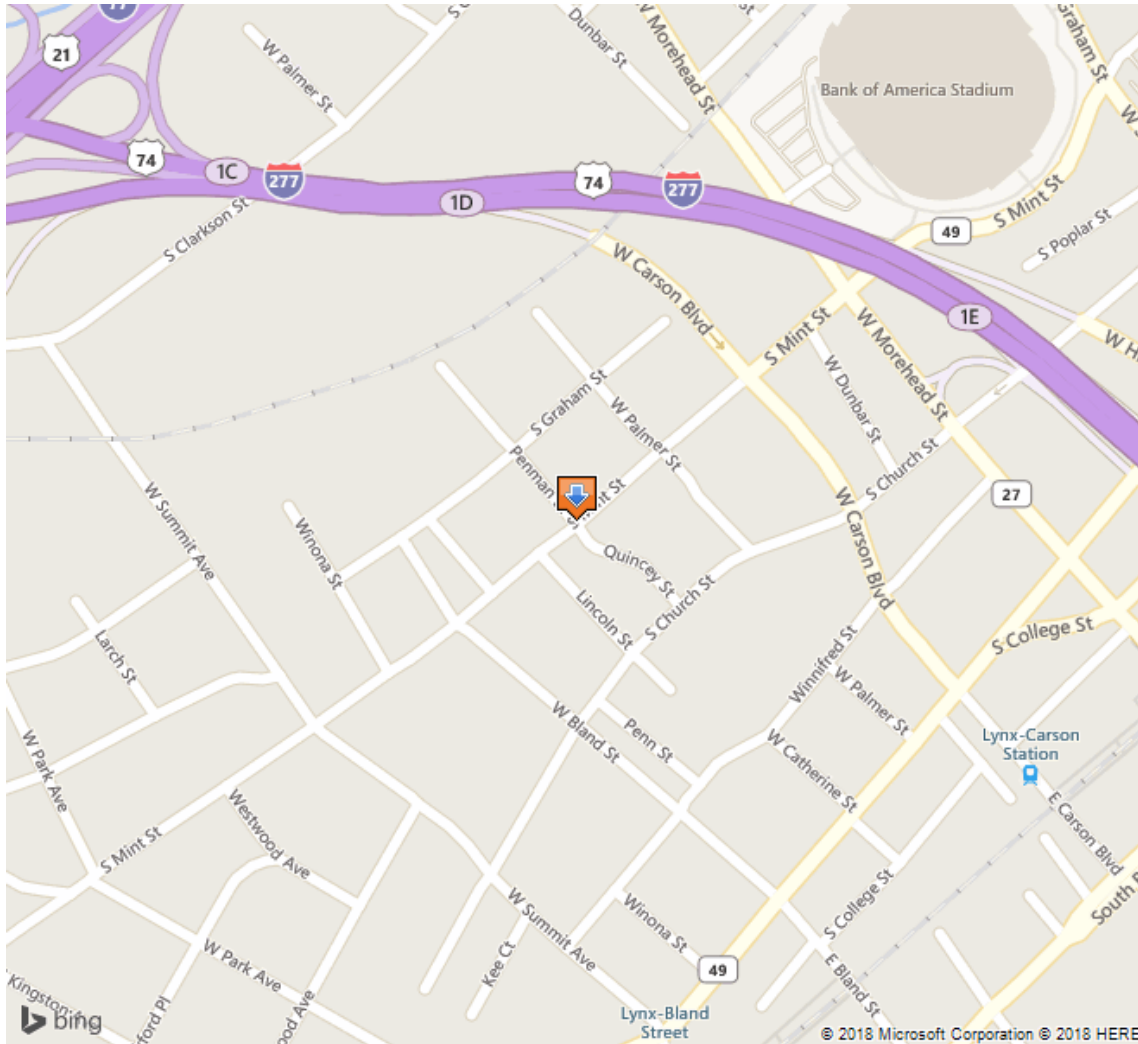
Number 340

Charlotte, NC 28204

Telephone Number: (704) 333-8881

3. Representative Photographs of the property: This report contains interior and exterior photographs of the property.

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



5. Current deed book references to the property: The most recent deed to the Textile Mill Supply Company is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 9364 at Page 917. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 073-265-05.

6. A brief historical description of the property: This report contains a historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains an architectural description of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

8. 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 history, architecture, and cultural

importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the Textile Mill Supply Company does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the Textile Mill Supply Company, designed by Lockwood Green & Co., illustrates the essentially conservative values which underlay Charlotte's industrial and commercial architecture in the 1920's; 2) the Textile Mill Supply Company was an important component of the industrial and commercial infrastructure which allowed Charlotte to become a major textile center of the two Carolinas in the early twentieth century; and 3) the Textile Mill Supply Company is an important remnant of an industrial district which arose in the early 1900's between the Wilmore streetcar line and the tracks of the Southern, now Norfolk Southern Railroad.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and

association: The Commission contends that the architectural description by Dr. Dan L. Morrill demonstrates that the Textile Mill Supply Company meets this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The current Ad Valorem tax appraisal for the improvements is \$365,810. The current Ad Vorem tax appraisal for the 1.453 acres of land is \$110,400. The total Ad Valorem tax appraisal for the parcel is \$476,210. The property is zoned I-2.

Date of Preparation of this Report: July 1, 1998

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill

Charlotte - Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission

2100 Randolph Road

Charlotte, N.C. 28207

Historical Overview

Summary Paragraph The Textile Mill Supply Company Building, erected in 1922, is a structure that possesses local historic importance because it housed enterprises that made significant contributions to Charlotte's emergence as a major textile manufacturing and distribution center in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Textile Mill Supply Company sold and distributed supplies essential to the operations of textile mills in the Piedmont sections of the two Carolinas. Items sold included pulleys, shafts, bearings, lubricants, couplers, spinning rings, ball bearings, electric motors, pumps, casters, and metal shelving, to name just a few of the products in the

company's inventory. The only other Charlotte structure associated with the textile mill supply business, the Charlotte Supply Company Building, was torn down in the mid 1990's to make way for Charlotte's Ericsson Stadium, home of the NFL Carolina Panthers. The Charlotte Manufacturing Company, which leased space on the third floor of the Textile Mill Supply Company Building from 1922 until 1956, likewise participated in Charlotte's development as a textile center. It produced and shipped card clothing and loom reeds, also indispensable supplies for the textile industry.

Without the support of firms like the Textile Mill Supply Company and its tenant, the Charlotte Manufacturing Company, cotton mills could not have proliferated in the Piedmont sections of the two Carolinas in the early twentieth century. The Textile Mill Supply Company Building, designed by Lockwood Green & Company, also possesses local historic importance because it is a representative example of a type of commercial and industrial structure constructed in Charlotte in the 1920's. Like the Charlotte Supply Company Building and the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building (1925), both fashioned by Lockwood Green & Company, the Textile Mill Supply Company Building is essentially revivalistic. Such elements as the regularly punctuated fenestration, the stepped-parapet roofline with concrete coping, concrete lintels and sills at the windows, a decorative diamond in each end bay on the eastern elevation, the corbeled string courses in brick just below the cornice of the Mint St. side of the building, and the symmetrical massing of the building's front facade, hearken back, however obliquely, to Classical concepts of beauty. These revivalistic structures are reflective of the conservative philosophy that characterized the political, social and economic thinking of Charlotte's business elite in the 1920's.

Commerce and Industry Context and Historical Background Statement

The Textile Mill Supply Company Building, erected in 1922, housed enterprises that contributed to Charlotte's emergence as a major textile manufacturing and distribution center in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. "Among all of North Carolina's cities, Charlotte enjoyed the most sustained growth and by 1910 had surpassed Wilmington as the largest in the state," writes historian Brent D. Glass. "The significance of Charlotte's development," says Glass, "lay not only in the thirteen textile mills built between 1889 and 1908 but also in the creation of a true urban infrastructure that included engineering firms, financial institutions, and department stores."¹ Incorporated on October 7, 1898, by four former employees of the rival Charlotte Supply Company, the Textile Mill Supply Company was involved in "buying, selling and dealing" in textile mill machinery and supplies.² The company sold such items as pulleys, shafts, bearings, lubricants, couplers, spinning rings, ball bearings, electric motors, pumps, casters, and metal shelving, to name just a few of the products in its inventory.³ Moreover, until 1956, the Charlotte Manufacturing

Company, makers of card clothing and loom reeds, leased space on the third floor of the Textile Mill Supply Company Building.⁴ Elements of line shafting used by this industrial enterprise remain in the building. Without the support of firms like the Textile Mill Supply Company and its tenant, the Charlotte Manufacturing Company, cotton mills could not have proliferated in the Piedmont sections of the two Carolinas in the early twentieth century. Thomas Bigham (1925 -), who first went to work for the Textile Mill Supply Company in 1941, traveled as a young boy with his father, Roy Bigham (1886-1953), who had become a salesman for the company in 1906. They drove by automobile to textile mills throughout North Carolina and parts of South Carolina. "Go every place you see a smokestack," the elder Bigham was told. Business was conducted on a more personal basis in the 1920's and 1930's. Roy Bigham would visit with the mill superintendents, get their permission to ascertain the needs of the stock room managers, write up the orders for the superintendents' review, and then take the orders back to Charlotte, from where the goods would be shipped by rail and later by truck to the customers. "The superintendents would often ask Dad to have supper at their houses," Thomas Bigham remembers.⁵

On May 30, 1958, the Textile Mill Supply Company merged with the Industrial Hardware and Supply Company to become the Industrial and Textile Supply Company.⁶ By 1967, the company had opened a distribution facility on West Franklin Avenue in Gastonia and another on Main Avenue Place in Hickory.⁷ Gradually the textile share of the Industrial and Textile Supply Company's business diminished as a greater variety of industrial customers was developed and as the number of textile mills in the region declined. In July, 1997, the Industrial and Textile Supply Company vacated its headquarters in Charlotte at 1300 South Mint Street and moved to the Arrowood Industrial Park in southern Mecklenburg County.⁸ Although presently empty, the Textile Mill Supply Company Building stands as a compelling reminder of the importance of the textile industry in Charlotte and its surroundings in the early and middle years of the twentieth century. The only other Charlotte structure associated with the textile mill supply business, the Charlotte Supply Company Building, was torn down in the mid 1990's to make way for Charlotte's Ericsson Stadium, home of the NFL Carolina Panthers.⁹ Happily, a group of investors is converting the Textile Mill Supply Company building into office condominiums.

Architecture Context and Historical Background Statement

The location of the Textile Mill Supply Company Building is intimately bound up with the laying of an electric streetcar track along South Mint Street to connect the Wilmore neighborhood with Charlotte's central business district. The rapid increase of Charlotte's population in the early 1900's heightened the demand for housing. "With the booming economic growth came tremendous physical expansion," says Thomas W. Hanchett.¹⁰ In 1914, real estate developer F. C. Abbott responded to the

vigorous local housing market by laying out lots in a new streetcar suburb named Wilmore, and the trolley line was built down Mint Street from uptown Charlotte to serve the neighborhood. The Wilmore streetcar line paralleled and was only about a block and a half east of the Southern Railroad tracks that connected Charlotte and Gastonia.¹¹

It was virtually inevitable that the area between Mint St. and the railroad would become a major industrial district. With excellent railroad and improving highway connections to communities in the Piedmont sections of the two Carolinas, Charlotte became the logical place in the early 1900's from which to ship supplies to the ever increasing number of textile mills in the region. "Many new demands have come upon Charlotte Realtors during the past year for locations for building of warehouses, because Charlotte has come to be known in the sales organizations of national manufacturers throughout America as the best point in the Southeast for the distribution of products and for the location of branch plants," proclaimed the *Charlotte Observer*. "Some realtors here have become specialists in finding such locations to suit varying requirements, and almost every available foot of railroad frontage has been analyzed and compared in price." The newspaper noted that "proximity to street cars, freight stations, express offices and retail districts commands the higher prices."¹² Originally located in rented space at the corner of East Fourth and South College Streets in center city Charlotte, the Textile Mill Supply Company had a three-story, brick store, warehouse and manufacturing building erected in 1922 next to a Southern Railroad spur line that terminated at South Mint Street.¹³

Designed by the South Carolina architectural and engineering firm Lockwood, Green & Company and erected by the E. H. Clements Company of Durham, the building is situated just south of the center city and just north and west of Charlotte's Wilmore neighborhood.¹⁴ According to the *Charlotte Observer*, more than 50 firms submitted bids for the "construction, plumbing, heating, elevator, lighting, etc." "Plans have been so drawn," the newspaper continued, "that the plant to be built may be duplicated at any time, making the structure just twice as large as it will be as contemplated."¹⁵ Lockwood, Green & Company predicted that the building would be completed by October 1st.¹⁶

Lockwood, Green & Company, headquartered in Greenville, S. C., was one of the principal contractors that specialized in the construction of textile mills and other industrial type buildings in the Charlotte area in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁷ Among the Charlotte structures the firm designed was the Charlotte Supply Company Building (1923) at 500 South Mint Street (torn down in the early 1990's to make way for Ericsson Stadium), and the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building (1925), which is located at 421 Penman Street or less than one block west of the Textile Mill Supply Company Building.¹⁸ Architecturally, the Textile Mill Supply

Company Building, like the Charlotte Supply Company Building and the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building, is essentially revivalistic. Such elements as the regularly punctuated fenestration, the stepped-parapet roofline with concrete coping, concrete lintels and sills at the windows, a decorative diamond in concrete on each end bay on the eastern elevation, the corbeled string courses in brick just below the cornice of the Mint St. side of the building, and the symmetrical massing of the building's front facade, hearken back, however obliquely, to Classical concepts of beauty. These principles of design are also strikingly evident in architect/engineer Richard C. Biberstein's Nebel Knitting Mill (1927- 1929) on Camden Road in Charlotte, which has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

These revivalistic structures are reflective of the conservative philosophy that characterized the political, social and economic thinking of Charlotte's business elite in the 1920's. During this decade of unprecedented growth, when Charlotte's population increased by 78 percent to 82,675, there was little interest in experimentation or boldness. This hesitancy to be daring stood in sharp contrast to the attitudes of Charlotte's business community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "The generation of New South leaders, including D. A. Tompkins, Edward Dilworth Latta, and George Stephens, who had taken enormous risks to turn the Piedmont into a major industrial region, were passing their power to a new generation," explains Hanchett. "The new leaders," Hanchett continues, "seemed much less adventuresome, willing to follow in the directions set by their predecessors. Their homes and offices reflected this increased interest in tradition over innovation, in social correctness than risk-taking."¹⁹

Notes

¹ Brent D. Glass, *The Textile Industry In North Carolina. A History* (Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department Of Cultural Resources, 1992), p. 44.

² Mecklenburg County Book of Corporations 1, p. 87. The initial stockholders were W. H. C. Rose, A. J. Crampton, F. B. Ferris, and J. J. Farnan. Rose, from Baltimore, Md., had been general manager of the Charlotte Supply Company. Farnan, also from Baltimore, had been head bookkeeper. Crampton, from Syracuse, N.Y., had been a traveling salesman, as had F. B. Ferris, who was from Providence, R.I. B. D. Heath was president of the Textile Mill Supply Company, W. C. Heath vice-president, Farnan secretary and treasurer, and Rose the general manager. Ferris and Crampton were traveling salesmen. *Charlotte Observer* (October 8, 1898), p. 6. Charlotte's first

cotton mill was the Charlotte Cotton Mills, established by the R. M. Oates and D. W. Oates. In 1880-1881. The pace of textile industrialization quickened in Charlotte and its environs after the founding of the D. A. Tompkins Company in 1884.

³ Interview of Thomas Schroder Bigham by Dr. Dan L. Morrill (December 14, 1997). Hereinafter cited as Interview.

⁴ Charlotte City Directory 1923-24, p. 223. Charlotte City Directory 1955, p. 128. Charlotte City Directory 1956, p. 131.

⁵ Interview.

⁶ Mecklenburg County Book of Corporations 45, p. 201. The members of the original Board of Directors of the Industrial and Textile Supply Company were E. G. Glover, A. K. Glover, J. H. Bobbitt, J. R. Allison, R. K. Allison, and H. J. Allison.

⁷ Catalog E. Industrial & Textile Supply Company (1967).

⁸ Interview.

⁹ For a history and description of the Charlotte Supply Company building, see Dr. Dan L. Morrill, "Survey And Research Report On The Old Charlotte Supply Company Building." (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1983).

¹⁰ Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Growth Of Charlotte: A History." (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1985), p. 27.

¹¹ For a map of Charlotte's streetcar system, see Ibid.

¹² *Charlotte Observer* (June 29, 1925), p. 2.

¹³ The original location of the Textile Mill Supply Company is shown on the Sanborn Insurance Map of Charlotte, N.C., 1911, p. 5.

¹⁴ Charlotte Building Permit No. 3807. The application for the permit was received by the Charlotte Building Inspector on June 20, 1922; and the permit was issued on June 23, 1922. The E. H. Clements Company, headquartered in Durham, did have a Charlotte office. For a photograph of E. H. Clements, see Cathertine W. Bishir, Charlotte, V. Brown, Carl R. Lounsbury 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), p. 341. Lockwood, Green & Company was extremely active in the Charlotte building industry in the 1920's and had a local office. Other

Charlotte projects included the Charlotte Central High School and the Poplar Apartments.

¹⁵ *Charlotte Observer* (June 25, 1922), Sec. 2., pp. 1-2.

¹⁶ The initial home of the Textile Mill Supply Company was condemned and torn down to widen East Fourth Street.

¹⁷ Bishir, Brown, Lounsbury and Wood, p. 267.

¹⁸ Dan L. Morrill, "Survey and Research Report On The Charlotte Supply Company Building". *Charlotte News* (June 30, 1925). Charlotte Building Permit No. 6204.

¹⁹ Thomas W. Hanchett, "Charlotte Architecture. Design Through Time." (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1985), p. 34.

Architectural Description

Location Description

The Textile Mill Supply Company Building is a three story, ten bay wide by five by deep, red brick structure with a full basement. It is situated on a sloping, rectangular lot on the southwestern quadrant of the intersection of South Mint and Penman Streets, just south of center city Charlotte and just north and west of the Wilmore neighborhood.¹ Initially served by a streetcar line on Mint Street and located roughly one and one-half blocks from the main line of the Norfolk Southern Railroad (then Southern Railroad), the site was well suited in 1922 as the place for a distribution warehouse and textile manufacturing facility. The Textile Mill Supply Company Building borders the sidewalk on the eastern edge of the property and faces Mint Street. An abandoned railroad spur parallels the property on the south and terminates near the rear of the building. Three auxiliary buildings, no longer extant, stood on the western edge of the lot. One was used to store goods unloaded from freight cars on the railroad spur, and the others as garages for delivery trucks. The 1300 block of South Mint St., once filled with industrial buildings, now has only one older structure remaining -- the Textile Mill Supply Company Building.

Architectural Description

As expected in a building designed by Lockwood, Green & Company, the Textile Mill Supply Company Building exhibits characteristics typical of early twentieth century "mill construction." It has a slightly sloping, essentially flat roof of tar and gravel, brick exterior walls laid in Common Bond, large rectangular windows with metal muntins and small hopper inserts, pine post-and-beam framing throughout the interior, and wooden floors, except for a cement floor in the full basement.

A central entrance with replacement glass doors (boarded up during on-going renovations), regularly punctuated fenestration, and slightly projecting end bays contribute to the symmetrical massing of the Mint Street elevation of the building. The windows have cement sills and lintels. Corbeled detailing decorates the front facade, which also has a stepped-parapet wall in concrete. A decorative diamond in concrete embellishes the upper portion of the shallow, corbeled bays on each end of the front facade and those at the front of the northern and the southern elevations of the building. Corbeled string courses extend just below the cornice across the Mint Street front and along both sides of the building. Original pairs of wooden doors are located near the front and rear of the northern facade, and a replacement metal door penetrates the southern side of the building. The wood-framed western or rear wall of the Textile Mill Supply Company Building has been removed during on-going renovations, as have its rectangular windows with metal muntins and small hopper windows. The windows will be replaced as part of the upfit of the building. A major addition is being attached during on-going renovations to the western facade to accommodate new office condominiums. The interior of the building is mostly warehouse space. The northwest corner of the building contains a wooden stairway with a solid wooden partition wall on the open side that is surmounted by a wooden handrail that terminates at newels of simple or restrained design. An elevator shaft on the southwestern corner of the building is being closed during on-going renovations, and the car will be placed permanently at the basement level. The top floor contains remnants of a line shafting system, replete with shaft and pulleys, which was used by the Charlotte Manufacturing Company, a tenant from 1922 to 1956, to power the machinery that made loom reeds and card clothing. On-going renovations also involve the erection of partition walls on all floors to divide the interior space into hallways, offices, and auxiliary facilities.

Conclusion

The Textile Mill Supply Company was the home for more than 70 years of an important component of Charlotte's industrial heritage. Especially with the destruction of the Charlotte Supply Company, the Textile Mill Supply Company is the only extant edifice that documents this significant part of the history of textiles in this community.

Moreover, because the building is largely intact, it reflects an important era in the evolution of the building arts in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.