

American Tobacco Co. Plant

Durham, North Carolina

Introduction

This Part 1 Application updates an earlier application approved by the National Park Service on March 1, 1991. The earlier application, based on a 1985 National Register nomination that was never submitted to the National Park Service, claimed contributing status for most resources built up to the late 1930s. The current application seeks contributing status for the final 1940s-1954 construction campaign that produced the Fowler Building (1939); the Strickland Redrying Plant (1946), the Crowe Building (1953), and the Lunch Room (1954), as well as a small ca. 1950 office. All of these buildings reflect the national company philosophy that each plant be self-sufficient, with storage, stemming and manufacturing facilities as well as office and personnel spaces. They were of essential significance to the ongoing cigarette plant production. It also seeks contributing status for the Noel Building (ca. 1930), the Water Tower (ca. 1930), the Power Plant (1929-1939), and the Garage (ca. 1935). These buildings and structures retain basic architectural integrity and fall within the plant's period of historic significance, 1874-1954.

Note: Photographs are keyed to descriptive text and to site map. Resources are dated using cornerstones and the series of ten Sanborn Maps from 1884-1979, included as an appendix.

Description of physical appearance:

The large American Tobacco Company Manufacturing Plant is compressed into a single very long wedge-shaped block bounded by Willard, Carr, W. Pettigrew and Blackwell Streets. Its skyline of tall towers, flat-roofed factories and chimney-potted warehouses dominates the view toward Durham's downtown from the East-West Expressway and the thoroughfares of S. Roxboro and S. Duke Streets. The most striking visual quality of the complex is its telescoped presentation of the development of industrial architecture from the 1870s to the 1950s. This effect is especially apparent along Blackwell Street, where the tall buildings crowding the sidewalk provide a three-dimensional "time line." (Photo Y) Here, the Italianate 1874 W. T. Blackwell and Company Factory (Bull Durham Factory) (National Historic Landmark-1977) marks the north end of the block, turn-of-the-century warehouses and factories featuring ornamental brickwork stand in the middle and huge mid-twentieth century factories with curtain walls and expanses of windows stretch southward toward the Durham Expressway.

The block rises gently and steadily as it extends from its narrow southern end to the tall railroad embankment at W. Pettigrew Street that separates it from the

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Durham central business district. The concentration of eleven primary buildings, nine of which front the street, is dense, with the perimeter having only a few clear spaces and the open middle of the block being interrupted by railroad tracks, the Power Plant, a water tower and miscellaneous equipment. All of the buildings along W. Pettigrew and Blackwell streets abut the sidewalk. Four of the buildings on Blackwell Street are attached to each other end to end, creating a high wall more than 900 feet long. Elsewhere, strips of grass and narrow paved loading areas separate the buildings and public sidewalks. Typical of heavy industrial complexes, all of the open spaces are paved, and there is no foliage, except for the small grassy areas near the street. A tall chain-link fence topped with strings of barbed wire and coils of concertina wire delineates all open spaces at the perimeter of the block.

The oldest buildings in the complex are located at the north end and along Carr Street, while the more recent ones are at the south end and along Blackwell Street. The position of the large W. T. Blackwell and Company Factory on the most highly-elevated portion of the block draws attention to the handsome Italianate design of its unaltered south and west wings. Built from 1874-1880, with the south wing added in 1904, it was begun when the Italianate style was at the height of its popularity in Durham and the country for residential and commercial architecture. Described as "a well-planned functional structure with a pretentiously stylish exterior," the building consists of four wings, all originally four stories tall, arranged around an open courtyard. The east and half of the north wings were lowered to two stories about 1920 and remodeled in the Classical Revival style. During the 1950s the present fiberglass screen was erected around both them and the remainder of the north wing, but the facades appear to be largely intact behind the screens (Photos A-H).

Constructed at the turn of the century, Hill Warehouse (1900) Washington Warehouse (1902-07) (Photos O-S), the Lucky Strike Building (Photo X) and Reed Warehouse (Photos Y-BB) (1901-02) were part of American Tobacco Company's ten-year building campaign that yielded twelve similar storage warehouses and tobacco processing buildings in Durham. These buildings, and eight others that were added to the W. Duke Sons & Company complex a few blocks to the northwest, have the same slow-burn, mill construction as the W. T. Blackwell & Company Factory, with its thick, brick exterior walls and heavy timber interior structure. However, the newer buildings feature the Romanesque Revival style expressed entirely by decorative brickwork. The bands of dogtooth brickwork, machicolation, corbelling, recessed panels and squat, highly-ornamented chimney stacks on stepped parapets are identifying stylistic features

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of their medievalizing style--variously termed Romanesque Revival or Norman Revival. All are executed in the same muted brownish-red brick covered with an orange-red wash. A grid of evenly spaced brick pilasters divides their elevations, the recessed panels between them having segmentally-arched openings. All of these buildings have very shallow gable roofs punctuated by stepped or gabled parapets above the fire and end walls and each is unique in the degree of its ornamentation.

The much-altered Noell Building (ca. 1902, remodeled 1930s) (Photo T) in the center of the complex represents a transition from the highly-ornamented Norman Revival of the earlier buildings to the more streamlined decoration of the later ones, as does the Power Plant and Engine House (1929-39) (Photos U-W) with its restrained Classical Revival style in smooth red brick and limestone. The Power Plant's large chimney stack, however, is ornamented with white, red and black brick that spell out "Lucky Strike" and the product logo.

At the south end of the complex, the three later buildings, Fowler (1939) (Photos FF-II), Strickland (1946) (Photos CC-DD), and Crowe (1953) (Photo EE) all reflect the contemporary Art Moderne style of the late 1930s and 1940s as well as a progressively more functional approach to factory design. Unlike the earlier buildings with their profusion of ornament that mediates the blockiness of their forms, these massive structures have almost completely flat elevations into which rectangular windows are cleanly-incised, and they use limestone belts only as lines to accentuate horizontal or vertical elements.

With the exception of the Garage (ca. 1935) (Photo HH) and a small office (Photo I), the subsidiary structures in the middle of the block are metal-clad. The largest of these is the rectangular, steel-framed coal shed (Photo N) between Hill Warehouse and the Washington Building. Connecting Unit 3 of the Washington Building and the Crowe Building at its second story, a one-level lunchroom (Photo JJ) forms a bridge over the railroad spurs in the center of the complex. The roofs and inner sides of the buildings are connected and festooned with cooling towers, passageways (including an extremely long one from the Crowe Building to the Lucky Strike Building), steam and water pipes and conveyors. In the middle of the plant there is a tall water tower painted with the red and white Lucky Strike logo (Photo W).

Inventory List Key

C = Contributing N = Noncontributing S = Structure

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C 1. W. T. Blackwell & Company Factory (Bull Durham Tobacco Factory) (NHL 1977). 1874, 1880, ca. 1904, ca. 1920. (Photos A-H) Large brick building of slow-burn mill construction consisting of four wings with courtyard in center. The north wing (facing railroad) was built in 1874, the east and west wings were added ca. 1880. All were originally four stories on a raised basement, distinguished by alternating projecting four-bay pavilions with quoined corners, closely-spaced segmentally-arched windows with shouldered architraves, and sheet metal Italianate cornices. Drawings indicate that the main, north elevation had a tall stepped and curved central parapet which contained life-sized paintings of the company's three partners, William T. Blackwell, John R. Day and Julian S. Carr. In the main elevation is a round-arched tunnel to the courtyard. The north block housed company offices, sales and shipping departments, a tobacco storage facility, and packing and labelling operations. The east wing was used for cutting, bolting and drying tobacco, and the west wing housed a cutting and stemming operation, another tobacco storage facility, and a sorting, packing and finishing operation.

After the American Tobacco Company acquired the Blackwell firm in 1899, it added the south wing ca. 1904 to create the present form of the building. It has plain rows of segmentally-arched windows and lacks the ornamental cornice. About 1920 the east half of the north wing and all of the east wing were reduced to two stories and remodeled to Classical Revival-style appearance, including segmentally-arched windows with voussoirs and a classical cornice with projecting sheet metal corona and parapets. In the 1950s or 1960s the two-story section and remainder of north wing were covered with fiberglass panels attached to a steel framework to give the office section of the plant an up-to-date appearance.

C 2. Hill Warehouse, 1900. (Photos J-M) One-story with basement, double gable-roofed brick tobacco warehouse. The ornate Romanesque Revival end walls have stepped parapets with machicolation, corbelled-capped chimneys with paneling, and dogtooth courses; walls are divided by paneled pilasters into two-bay panels with (on west half of building) segmentally-arched windows and machicolation. Hill is the most distinctive of the turn-of-the-century buildings because it consists of two attached gable units, each with unusually tall free-standing parapets at both gable ends, displaying a panelled chimney pot on each step and cornices of corbelled pendants and bands of mousetoothing. Hill, named for Percival S. Hill, was built as a storage warehouse after acquisition by American Tobacco Company. The interior is structurally deteriorated, but the exterior walls are sound.

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C S-1. Standpipe, 1922 (Photo I). Cylindrical, 150,000 gallon steel standpipe with low conical roof; built by Chicago Bridge and Iron Works.

C S-2. Coal Shed, ca. 1950 (Photo N). Large, semi-open coal shed with steel frame structure partially covered by corrugated steel; concrete block foundation; attached steel car shed.

C 3. Washington Building, 1902-1907, ca. 1915 (Photos O-S). Long row of connected, two-story (one-story on west elevation), Romanesque Revival style tobacco warehouses; originally blocks of seven and four units constructed between 1902 and 1907 by American Tobacco Company; Unit 5 (from south) built ca. 1915. Due to the terrain, each unit is one-story with a basement that is an additional full, ground-level story on the east elevation. Each unit steps down approximately two feet from neighbor to north. All have wall surfaces divided by pilasters into panels with machicolation across the top and continuous cornices of dogtoothing. The gable ends of each building originally had stepped, shouldered parapets with machicolation and ornately-corbelled and paneled chimney caps. All of the parapets except one between Units 3 and 4 have been reduced to low gables; most of the segmentally-arched windows with iron shutters have been altered—either bricked in or enlarged to square, multi-pane windows, as have the segmentally-arched doors; and modern metal awnings have been added to the west elevation, a continuous metal awning and loading dock to the east elevation. These were built as hoghead storage warehouses of slow-burn mill construction, and were probably named after Washington Duke, founder of American Tobacco Company.

C 4. Noell Building, ca. 1902; 1930s (Photo T). Austere, one-story brick building with basement; side elevations divided by pilasters into panels with corbelling at top; parapetted end walls. The multi-pane metal windows appear to have been added in the 1930s when the building's function changed. Brick-veneered and metal-clad second story additions have been made. However, the building largely retains its overall form and finish. It was built as a re-ordering plant with a cooperage in the basement, and later used for re-drying tobacco. (Sanborn Map indicates bldg. here by 1902, as Re-Ordering Plant, by 1937 it is called Noell Building.)

C 5. Power Plant and Engine House, 1929-1939 (Photos U-W). Two-story, flat-roofed brick power plant and engine house with one-story north wing and semi-detached brick smokestack with Lucky Strike logo. The severe Classical Revival exterior features limestone belt courses and keystones and concrete water table

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and steel factory windows. The north end room and engine room are largely gutted, but boilers remain. There are modern metal additions to east side, a large coal chute on roof, and a cocoon of steam and water pipes. Building built 1929 with addition at northwest corner in 1939.

C S-3. Water Tower, ca. 1930 (Photo W). Cylindrical 100,000 gallon metal water tank with conical cap, raised 150 feet on steel legs; painted white with Lucky Strike logo.

C 6. Cigarette Factory (Lucky Strike Building) 1901-1902, 1913-1937 (Photo X). Four story, five-bay deep brick building with basement and shallow gable roof in restrained Romanesque Revival style; original eight bays constructed in 1901-02 as stemmery with cooperage on first floor; three bays added to south end between 1913 and 1937 and converted to cigarette factory; one or two segmentally-arched windows occur in each of the bays, which are divided by brick pilasters with small panels at top. Corbelled brick courses define floors. Cornices are of corbelled brick. On north are blind end bays. Stepped end parapets have corbelling.

C 7. Reed Warehouse, 1901-1902 (Photos Y-BB). Two-story, Romanesque Revival style brick warehouse, with basement, of slow-burn mill construction. Street elevation is divided into three sections of five bays each by pilasters with recessed panels and by corbelled pendants; the top of each bay is machicolated and there is a corbelled string course between floors, as well as a corbelled and dogtoothed cornice. The three segmentally-arched doorways and square window openings on the first floor and segmentally-arched windows on the second floor are bricked up. Built as a storage facility for American Tobacco Company.

C 8. Strickland Redrying Plant, 1946 (Photos CC-DD). Long, rectangular, flat-roofed three-story building with basement in austere Moderne style; fireproof concrete construction with brick curtain walls. End pavilions project slightly and have vertical window strips outlined in limestone; horizontal window strips are also outlined in limestone belts, as is water table. Most original multi-pane steel windows have been bricked or replaced by small windows or louvers. Built as redrying plant, later functioned as a cigarette factory.

C 9. Crowe Building, 1953-1954 (Photo EE). Tall, blocky, six-story building with basement of fireproof concrete construction with brick curtain wall; constructed as annex to adjacent Strickland and Fowler Buildings. Street elevation has slightly-projecting central bay with vertical strip of windows, limestone-trimmed

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entrance; horizontal belts of limestone at water table and cornice level are only other elements on unornamented, brick facade. Large metal cooling tower on roof, metal-sheathed passageway exiting from north side.

C 10. Fowler Building, 1938-1939 (Photos FF-II). Large, flat-roofed, five-story factory building with basement and penthouse level in restrained Moderne style, of fireproof concrete construction with brick curtain walls. Main street and rear elevation filled with horizontal rows of large windows (now with modern bronze glass), joined by common limestone sills. End pavilions are taller and project slightly, with vertical rows of single windows (with replacement bronze glass), and square limestone grill courses at top. Plain limestone belt courses define water table and slightly-recessed cornice level of end pavilions. One-story loading dock at rear with metal-clad shed roofs. Built as cigarette plant for American Tobacco Company.

C 11. Lunch Room, 1954 (Photo JJ). This metal-clad, one-story, steel frame structure connects first full story of Crowe Building with upper level of Unit 3 of Washington Building; forms bridge across rail line and open space between the buildings.

C 12. Garage, ca. 1935 (Photo HH). One-story, rectangular brick building with flat roof and stepped gable ends; line of tall, metal rolling doors along north elevation. This building is present on 1937 Sanborn Map.

C 13. Brick Office, ca. 1950. (Photo I) Small, one-story brick office with flat roof.

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Statement of Significance

The American Tobacco Company Manufacturing Plant symbolizes the history of the tobacco industry in Durham through its evolution from W. T. Blackwell & Company, to the American Tobacco Company trust which absorbed the Blackwell firm in 1899, through the reorganized American Tobacco Company formed when the trust was dissolved in 1911. At the northeast corner of the complex, the distinctive Italianate Bull Durham Factory (NHL) was begun in 1874 by W. T. Blackwell & Company, which originated from the first successful tobacco manufacturing company in North Carolina. Four of the ten other primary structures in the plant were constructed by the American Tobacco Company trust, which controlled 89 percent of the United States cigarette market when it was formed by J. B. Duke in 1890, and which diversified to dominate virtually all other tobacco markets by 1910. These massive brick warehouses and factories, with their slow-burn mill construction and decoration evocative of medieval architecture, reflect the power and success of the trust. After 1911, the reorganized American Tobacco Company remained as the industry's powerhouse through the 1950s, its continued growth requiring construction of a new power plant and three starkly modern factories at the southeast end of the complex. Altogether, the American Tobacco Company Manufacturing Plant is an important landmark to Durham's original *raison d'être*, the manufacture of tobacco products, and a major monument of North Carolina's primary twentieth century industry. The complex has local, state and national significance as a shrine of tobacco history containing both the oldest tobacco factory in Durham and successive phases of growth of the American Tobacco Company during the first half of the twentieth century.

The historic industrial context for the significance of the American Tobacco Company Manufacturing Plant may be found in "Historic Resources of Durham (Partial Inventory: Historic Architectural Properties)," (specifically in section B-1, "Historical Development," pages 8/5-10, 8/13-14, and 8/20-22.) The historic architectural context for the district appears in "Historic Resources of Durham," section C, "Durham's Architecture," under the heading "Industrial Buildings: Monuments of Tobacco and Textiles" (pages 7/4-7). The district's period of significance begins in 1874 with the construction of the Bull Durham Factory and extends to 1954, when the Lunch Room, the final building in the complex, was built by the American Tobacco Company. Since the entire plant continued to operate into the 1980s, the district retains a remarkable level of integrity, with all of its resources contributing to the area's historical significance.

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Historical Background

According to Nannie May Tilley in *The Bright Tobacco Industry*, prior to 1856 tobacco manufacturing in Durham was limited to the shredding of small lots of leaves by farmers who then peddled it throughout North Carolina.¹ In that year, Robert F. Morris moved from Granville County to Durham, where he recognized the prospects for growth presented by the railroad. He bought land on the south side of the tracks close to the depot (today the north end of the American Tobacco Plant), built a small frame factory and began manufacturing smoking tobacco under the brand name "Best Flavored Spanish Tobacco." For reasons unknown, four years later Morris sold his healthy business to John R. Green, a recent arrival from Person County.²

Green kept Morris's brand, but he also was the first to cater to the "fastidious tastes of University students" in nearby Chapel Hill.³ Green's factory operated through the Civil War, and though the factory was ransacked by Union and Confederate troops following the surrender of General Johnston at Bennett Place, that served only to spread the reputation of his products.⁴ Mr. Green was quick to see his advantage and immediately christened his tobacco "Durham" and selected the Durham bull as his trademark. This was the first tobacco manufactured in Durham branded with the words "Durham Smoking Tobacco," the first to use the bull as a trademark.⁵ The emblem is said to have been inspired by the bull's head on the jars of Coleman's mustard, manufactured in Durham, England.⁶

Green's business boomed and in 1867 he found an able partner to help him manage it in William T. Blackwell, a Person County merchant, manufacturer and peddler of smoking tobacco during the war years and most recently the proprietor of a tobacco shop in Kinston. Green died in 1869, and shortly thereafter

¹Nannie May Tilley, *The Bright Tobacco Industry: 1860-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 548.

² Wyatt T. Dixon, "Fight Still Goes On," *The Durham Sun*, 20 April 1984.

³ Tilley, 548.

⁴Hiram V. Paul, *History of the Town of Durham, North Carolina* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1884), 20.

⁵ *Durham Tobacco Plant*, 28 April 1874, Vol. IV, No. 12.

⁶ Tilley, 548.

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Blackwell formed a business association with James R. Day. At Green's estate sale in 1870, Blackwell purchased the "Tobacco Factory lot, fixtures, machinery, trade mark, copy right and good will of the establishment at Durham used by John R. Green for the Manufacture of Smoking and Chewing Tobacco" for \$10,292.⁷ In 1871, Blackwell and Day acquired a third partner, Julian Shakespeare Carr, a member of a well-established Chapel Hill mercantile family. In 1873 the three men recorded a contract that formalized their equal partnership, W. T. Blackwell & Co.⁸

Blackwell, Day and Carr went on to expand the firm into the first great tobacco empire in Durham as it grew from some dozen employees in 1869 to about 900 in 1884.⁹ The triumvirate had acted to prevent the use of either the bull or names like "Durham Smoking Tobacco" or "Original Durham Tobacco" on other brands. After fifteen years of litigation, the company was able to obtain exclusive rights to the bull trademark.¹⁰ Despite continuing expense and harrassment of suits and countersuits over the trademark, Blackwell & Company also moved to establish Durham as North Carolina's first tobacco market with their opening of a sales warehouse, located next to the Bull Durham factory, where it conducted its first sale in 1871.¹¹ An 1872 issue of the *Durham Tobacco Plant* called "Genuine Durham Smoking Tobacco" the "most popular brand of smoking tobacco in the United States."¹²

The growth of the company was dramatically expressed in 1874 by the construction of a large, four-story brick Italianate factory on the site of the original buildings. Over the next several years, the addition of two wings to the building attested to the company's continued success. In 1884 historian Hiram Paul called it "the most attractive smoking tobacco factory in the world" and "the shrine of all pilgrims to Durham."¹³ In his description of the plant, Paul wrote:

⁷ Orange County Register of Deeds (DCRD), Deed Book 40, pp. 451-452.

⁸ Paul, 105; DCRD, Deed Book 42, p. 30.

⁹ *Durham Tobacco Plant*, 14 March 1877, Vol. VI, No. 6.

¹⁰ W. K. Boyd, *The Story of Durham* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1925), 61, 72.

¹¹ Tillely, 206-7; Boyd, 69.

¹² *Durham Tobacco Plant*, 14 February 1872, Vol. I, No. 6.

¹³ Paul, 73.

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Within the grounds, there are all kinds of supplementary structures, such as storage houses for leaf tobacco and other things, printing establishments, box making factories, machine shop, fire apparatus, etc. In addition to the buildings in the enclosure, the company has several other large warehouses used for storing leaves. They constantly carry from three to five million pounds of leaf tobacco adapted to their requirements.¹⁴

Located atop the 55-foot tower on Blackwell Street, the distinctive whistle that imitated the bellow of a bull summoned workers to the plant from the dozens of tenement houses the company built nearby.¹⁵ Blackwell & Co., is the only tobacco manufacturing firm in Durham known to have built worker housing; these have all been removed.

After Blackwell sold his interest in the firm in 1882 in order to establish the Bank of Durham, Julian S. Carr became W. T. Blackwell & Company's president. In the course of building the company's tobacco empire, Carr helped direct a revolution in the technology of the industry, from manufacturing to packaging. He mechanized the manual flailing operation in the new Bull Durham factory by installing the Smith machine, a variation on a wheat thresher, used in Virginia. When the new equipment expelled the crushed tobacco too rapidly for hand packing, employee L. W. Lawrence developed the first "Smoking Tobacco packer."¹⁶ Financed by Julian S. Carr, inventor William H. Kerr developed a tobacco bag machine that could produce thousands of bags a day.¹⁷

A significant factor in the success of "Bull Durham" smoking tobacco was Carr's genius for advertising. In 1877, he began a national campaign to promote the Bull. The familiar symbol was displayed in various publications in several moods and poses. Between 1883 and 1887, a nationwide newspaper campaign was launched and accompanied by cash premiums for empty tobacco pouches, gifts to dealers, and testimonials by noted personages such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Thomas Carlyle. Four teams of painters working under the supervision of North Carolina artist J. Gilmer Koerner were kept busy supplying the country with signs and trademarks. The Bull even appeared in foreign countries and signs

¹⁴ Paul, 74.

¹⁵ Paul, 73.

¹⁶ Boyd, 71; Tilley, 500-02.

¹⁷ Tilley, 549-550.

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proclaiming "Bull Durham" the world's most popular smoking tobacco were seen decorating the pyramids of Egypt.¹⁸

Blackwell & Company's domination of the loose smoking tobacco market prompted James B. Duke to turn to the manufacture of cigarettes. W. Duke Sons & Company became a leader in cigarette manufacturing. In 1890, James B. Duke created the American Tobacco Company, a conglomerate that dominated the country's cigarette industry. Soon, the trust diversified as it sought control of the other branches of tobacco manufacturing. At the end of an intense struggle that lasted from 1894 to 1898, the American Tobacco Company controlled the nation's plug manufacturing, as well as being the largest producer of smoking tobacco in the country.¹⁹

It was Duke's preoccupation with the plug trade that led to the trust's purchase of his old rival, W. T. Blackwell & Company. A group of New York financiers, incorporated as Union Tobacco Company, had acquired control of the Blackwell firm and National Cigarette and Tobacco Company of New York. Aware of Duke's interest in plug, they also had obtained an option on an interest in the St. Louis plug maker, Liggett & Myers Tobacco Company. In purchasing Union Tobacco in 1899, Duke also got the Blackwell company's manager since 1892, Percival S. Hill, who eventually brought his son, George Washington Hill, into the business.²⁰ By 1900, The American Tobacco Company had become a giant trust with approximately three-fifths of the nation's smoking and chewing tobacco business.²¹

American Tobacco Company retained both the Bull Durham and W. T. Blackwell Company names. The striking Romanesque Revival style Hill Warehouse of 1900 and Reed Warehouse of 1901/02, evidence of the growth of Bull Durham Tobacco under the guidance of the trust, have the words "Blackwell's Durham Tobacco Company" inscribed on their cornerstones. Built about the same time, the Cigarette Factory, originally a stemmery, and Washington Building, constructed as a series of warehouses, also attest to the company's continued

¹⁸ Paul, 62.

¹⁹ Tilley, 557.

²⁰ "Sold American!"—*The First Fifty Years*, privately printed by the American Tobacco Company, Inc., 1954, 23-24. Copy located at the Durham Public Library.

²¹ "Sold American!"—*The First Fifty Years*, 26.

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health. The Washington Building was probably named for Washington Duke and Hill Warehouse certainly for Percival S. Hill.

The United States Government brought suit against the American Tobacco Company for combination in restraint of trade in July, 1907, but the case did not come to a climax until November 16, 1911, when the Supreme Court ruled that the trust had to be dissolved. One of the "Big Four" companies created from Duke's dissolution plan, the substantially reorganized American Tobacco Company, with Percival S. Hill as its president, was parred to \$98 million in assets that included the Durham plant and the trust's cigarette factories in Richmond and New York City. Naturally the new American Tobacco Company retained Bull Durham Tobacco, then considered the most popular smoking tobacco in the world. It remained so popular that during the last years of World War I its entire output was sent to Gen. Pershing's forces in France.²²

The new American Tobacco Company also retained a 37 percent share of the nation's cigarette market, all of it in domestic tobacco, which was to grow tremendously over the next several years under the increasing influence of Hill's son. At Butler-Butler, one of the trust's subsidiaries merged to form the new company, George Washington Hill had concentrated on the production of cigarettes, and particularly one brand, Pall Mall, which the new American Tobacco's Durham plant began to produce in the 1910s. In 1913 American also shifted production of its major brand, Sovereign, from New York to Durham.²³

The younger Hill took over the marketing and sales of American Tobacco's cigarettes, and led the development of a new standard brand for American, introduced in 1916 under the name "Lucky Strike." Lucky Strikes were produced in the New York, Richmond and Durham plants. George W. Hill succeeded his father as president of American Tobacco in 1925, pushing Lucky Strikes to the number one position by the beginning of 1928, ahead of R. J. Reynold's Camels and Liggett & Myers' Chesterfields.²⁴

The American Tobacco Company remained the leading tobacco manufacturer through the 1950s. Although cigarette consumption declined during the

²² Tilley, 615.

²³ "Sold American!", 40, 42; Joseph C. Robert, *The Story of Tobacco in America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), 125.

²⁴ Susan Wagner, *Cigarette Country, Tobacco in American History and Politics* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 51; "Sold American!", 75.

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Depression, this slump was countered by an increase in Bull Durham's sale of loose tobacco. In 1939, American Tobacco introduced its Pall Mall brand as the first king-sized cigarette. Later they introduced Tareyton, which, with Pall Mall, helped the firm capture 90 percent of the king-size market by the early 1950s. In a single year during World War II, more than one-half of Lucky Strike's volume of almost 200 billion was sent to American troops overseas. In 1946, domestic sales of Lucky Strikes increased by 32 billion, surpassing all other one-year increases in the history of tobacco.²⁵ In January 1949, Lucky Strike brand was the top seller in the country. These soaring figures reflected the need for larger facilities. In accordance with Hill's policy that each major location be a complete unit with leaf storage, stemming and manufacturing, the Durham plant underwent considerable expansion between 1930 and the early 1950s with the construction of a new power plant and the Strickland, Fowler and Crowe buildings.²⁶ This final phase of construction at the Durham plant marks the peak of American Tobacco's tobacco operations. Since 1958, when R. J. Reynolds Company replaced American Tobacco as the largest seller of cigarettes, the company has been in a steady decline.²⁷

Concern about the health effects of smoking swept the country during the 1950s and 1960s, profoundly changing the legal and economic climate for the Big Six tobacco manufacturers. *Reader's Digest* published a series of articles about the health hazards of smoking in 1954. In 1964, the U.S. surgeon general announced that cigarette smoking was a serious health hazard. Sales slowed and the market stagnated. Although American Tobacco Company remained one of the largest cigarette manufacturers in the country, during the 1960s it began to look for new areas of investment in response to the U. S. Surgeon General's stand against cigarette smoking. In the 1960s the firm reorganized with the creation of a new parent company, American Brands, Inc., of which the American Tobacco Company is now one of many divisions. By the early 1980s, the Durham plant was producing Lucky Strike and Pall Mall cigarettes and small cigars, while the Richmond and Reidsville factories produced cigarettes as well as all of the company's smoking tobacco, including Bull Durham.²⁸ In August of

²⁵ "Sold American!," 76, 84, 88, 96, 112.

²⁶ Robert, 272-273; "Sold American!," 82.

²⁷ William R. Finger, *The Tobacco Industry in Transition: Policies for the 1980s* (North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, Inc.: 1981), 183.

²⁸ Claudia Roberts Brown's telephone interview with Ben Roberts (27 April 1984) and Carl Allen (7 May 1984), executives with the American Tobacco Company, Durham.

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1987, production stopped at the Durham plant, and in December of 1988 the plant was sold to ABD Associates Limited Partnership, a North Carolina entity that includes local developer Adam Abram.

A number of different adaptive-use proposals have been considered for the plant throughout the 1990s. The plant's central location between Durham's central business district and the Durham Expressway makes it prime real estate. Construction of a new baseball stadium for the Durham Bulls in the mid-1990s adjacent to the plant increased the plant's appeal. The plant is currently under option to Capitol Broadcasting Company, which is formulating a plan to convert the plant's fifteen acres of structures into a mixed-use office and retail development using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. If the plan is carried out, this will be the largest commercial development in central Durham in many years, with enormous visibility due to its role as a gateway to downtown Durham.

Criteria Consideration G

The two buildings in the American Tobacco Company Manufacturing Plant that are not yet fifty years old, the Crowe Building (1953) and Lunch Room (1954), contribute to the district because they fall within the period of significance when American Tobacco Company's cigarette production was still at peak capacity. The 1950s were the final decade of domestic expansion before the decades of decline that began in the 1960s with government anti-smoking campaigns that resulted in reduced demand for their products and a gradual corporate diversification. The majority of the district's buildings were completed by 1950. The Crowe Building, built to link the Strickland Redrying Plant and the Fowler cigarette factory building, filled in the last gap in the Blackwell Street streetscape. The following year the Lunch Room was built as an elevated annex between the Crowe Building and the Washington building. Neither building is of exceptional significance; rather they are integral elements of the final expansion phase of the plant, of Moderne design like the earlier buildings in the phase. Neither building has been significantly altered since construction.