HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF FLORENCE MILL

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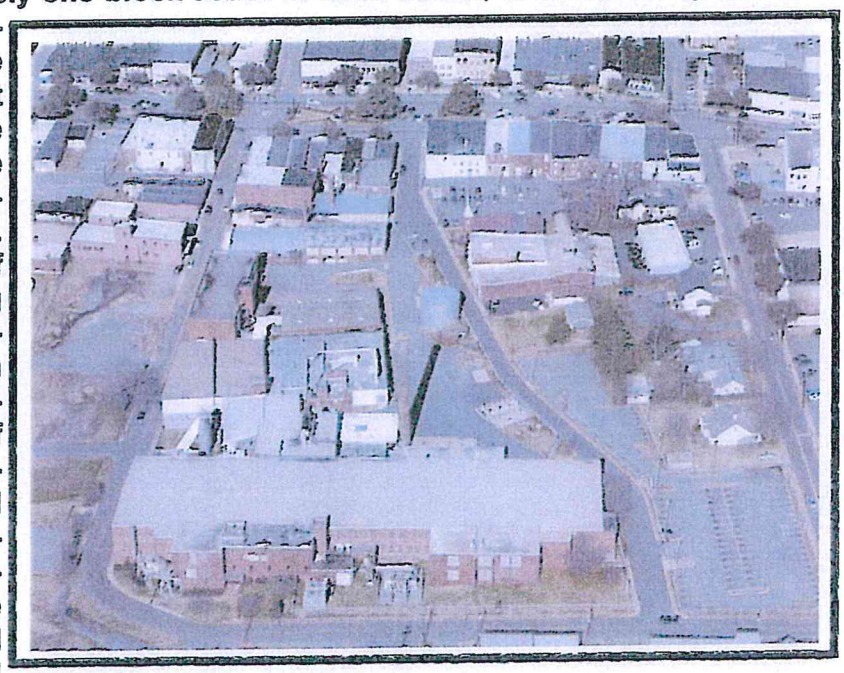
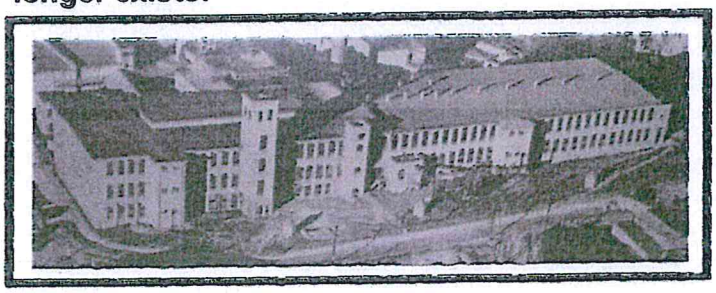
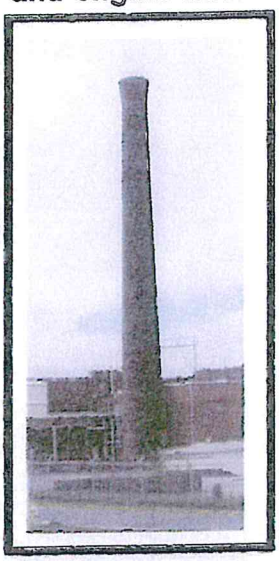
The Florence Mill is comprised of a complex of buildings covering approximately seven acres, dating from 1896 through the early 1940s. The site, located approximately one block south of Main Street, is bordered by Mill Street on the East, Florence Street on the South, Depot Street on the West, and the property boundary on the North. The grouping of buildings relating to the mill is located just south of the main commercial core of Forest City, recently designated as a National Register historic district. Just to the south of the mill are the railroad tracks which fulfilled much of the early transportation needs of running the mill. Originally there was a mill village associated with the mill, but this no longer exists.

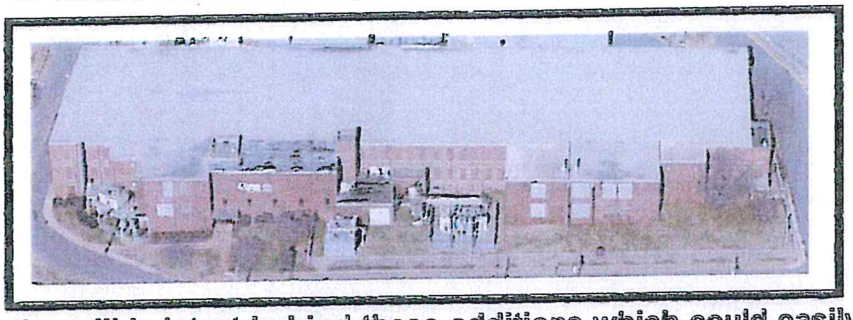




The original three-story main mill building was constructed in 1896, and is built of brick which was probably made on site. Windows are arched, typical in industrial buildings, and are all in filled with brick. Decorative brick

Corbelling is still intact at the cornice. The original boiler and engine house are still remaining at the rear. Adjacent to the boiler house is the original 125 foot tall brick smokestack. There is a small addition to the rear of the building, dating from 1925 (see Section 3 Demolition for description of removal of this added section), and some modern additions along the front of the building built in the 1970's and 1980's primarily to house mechanical systems. The original front wall of



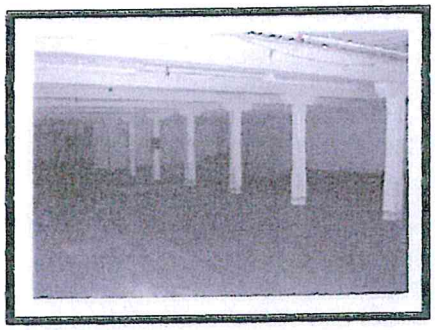


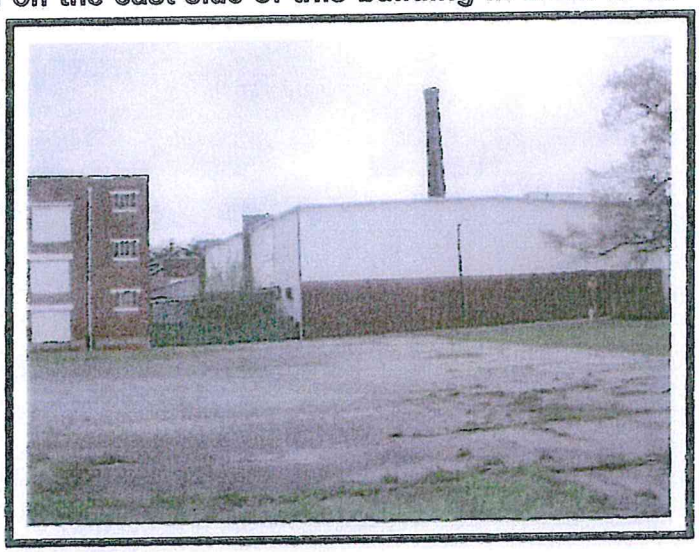
the mill is intact behind these additions which could easily be removed in the proposed renovations to expose the original façade of the building (see Section 3 Demolition for description of front façade renovation). An enclosed loading dock was also added to the rear of the building in the 1980's (see Section 3 for description of removal of this added addition). The interior of the main building is highly intact, with the original open space running from east to west, and including maple floors, plank board ceilings, and an exposed structural system of massive posts and beams. Originally there was a skylight, but this was removed.

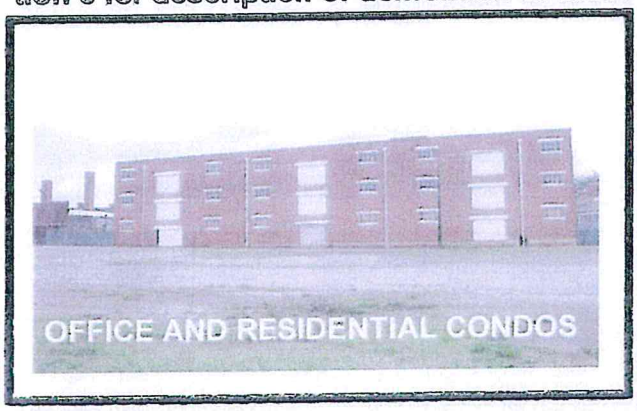
Tracks are still visible in the engine house, where a spur line from the railroad delivered coal into the building. The 1940s boiler is still intact in the boiler house.

As operations expanded, additional buildings to house machinery and warehouse were added at the north side of the property. The first of these later buildings is a two-story grouping from the 1922 to 1923, which is a brick and wood frame structure. Much of the original German siding remains on the

building, with some additions of vinyl siding in recent times. In the 1990s, a portion of the roof was raised on the east side of this building in order to accommodate new machinery. The interior of this building included beaded board ceilings, wide board floors, and massive posts and beams, as in the main building (see Section 3 for description of demolition of these buildings).



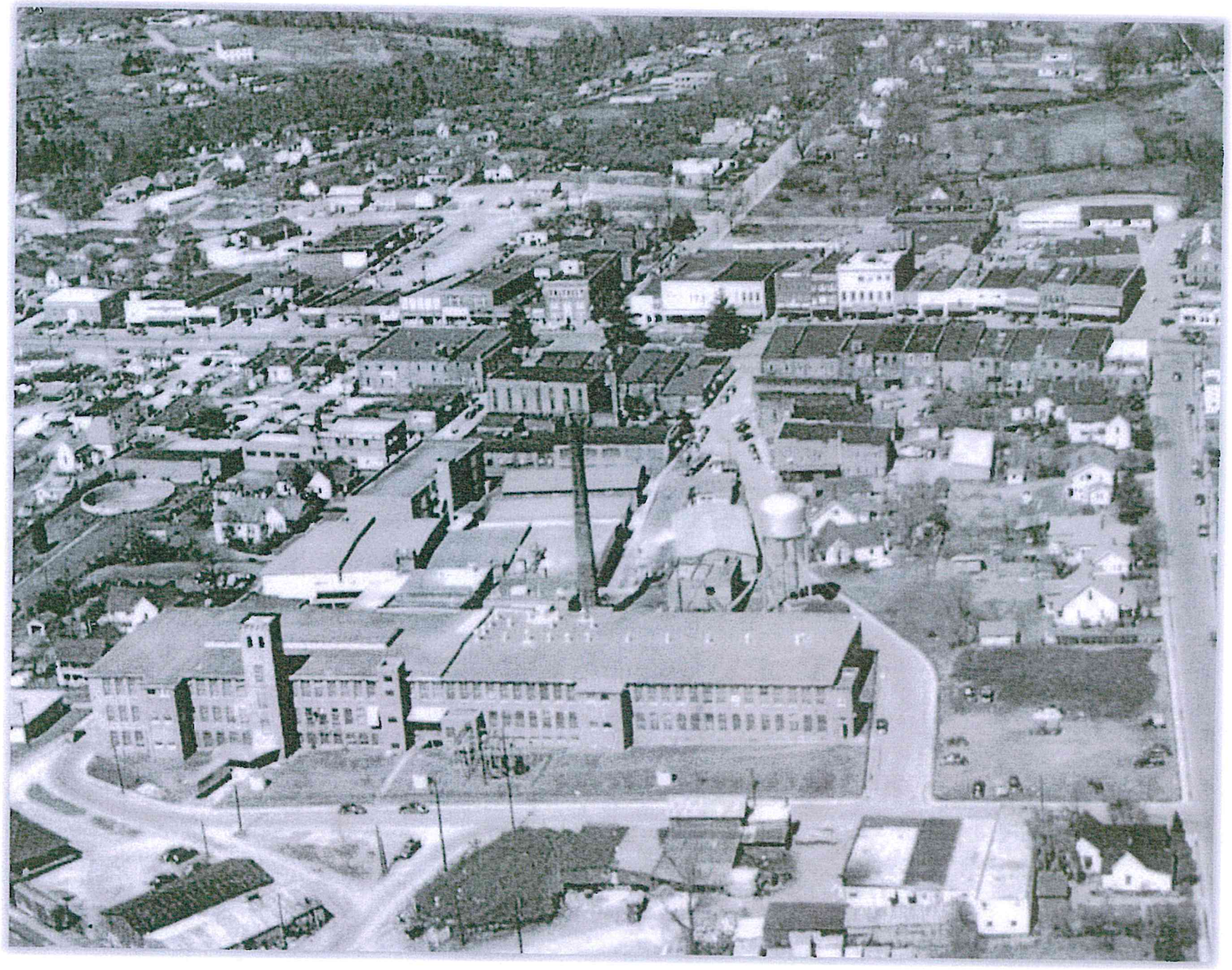




Two additional buildings were constructed in the early 1940s. One of these is a three-story brick building located on the western property boundary, dating from 1941. The windows in this building are multi-light metal frame industrial windows. The interior mimics the construction within the main mill building, with massive heart pine posts with steel gusset plates and steel-reinforced beams. Interior brick pilasters on the perimeter walls help to carry the weight of the buildings.

While the Florence Mill is not the only existing mill in this industrial county, it is one of the oldest mills in the county and is a highly intact example of the industrial mill building operations which were so important to the county's economy. Florence Mill continued to employ over three hundred people in the town until quite recently. Like most mills in the south in recent years, it has shut down under competition of overseas labor and materials which can produce goods at a lower price.

Currently the Florence Mill site and some adjoining property is under development into a complex that will remain as a viable part of the community.

FLORENCE MILL PROPOSED USES

Florence Mill *A new life for the 21st Century*