

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

other names/site number Ridgeview Cotton Mill

2. Location

street & number 2101 North Main Avenue

not for publication **N/A**

city or town Newton

Vicinity **N/A**

state North Carolina code NC county Catawba zip code 28658

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Signature of certifying official

Date

North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills
Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
5	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, NC
(Approved 04/27/1990; NR Ref# 64500352)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING: manufacturing facility

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING: warehouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Brick, concrete

walls: Brick

Concrete block

roof: Wood, asphalt

other: Steel (windows)

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills comprises two manufacturing buildings and three ancillary buildings on a flat, L-shaped parcel approximately 1.5 miles north of the Catawba County Courthouse in an industrial corridor that extends along the Norfolk–Southern Railroad between Newton and the town of Conover. To the east and west are residential neighborhoods consisting primarily of modest, one- and two-story dwellings of wood frame construction that likely housed workers in the nearby industrial plants. Adjacent to but excluded from the nominated property are two buildings constructed by Ridgeview Hosiery Mills in the late twentieth century that are non-historic and a 1916 office building that was substantially enlarged and heavily altered in the 1980s or 1990s. These three buildings occupy separate parcels that adjoin or are near to but physically and visually separate from the nominated property.

The main knitting mill is situated at the north end of the Ridgeview Hosiery Mills parcel. The building’s shell was begun in 1907 and completed in 1908 to serve as a cotton mill for Ridgeview Cotton Mills. It had a brick foundation, load-bearing brick walls, and heavy timber posts supporting the timber-framed roof with wood decking. The large window openings were filled with 30-light industrial steel sash, some of which remain in place. The newly organized Ridgeview Hosiery Mills acquired the property and completed the building in 1912. The company expanded the knitting mill in 1925 by doubling the size of the dye house, erecting a new boiler house, and nearly doubling the size of the production space. These alterations included the construction of rooftop monitors on the dye house and main mill. Although the monitor on the dye house was removed between 1966 and 1984, the monitor over the production space is extant. Small additions were constructed on the knitting mill in 1950–1951 and circa 1955. Additions that featured steel framing and brick walls were constructed on the west and east elevations in 1960 and 1980, respectively. The second building is a full-fashioned hosiery mill sited a short distance south of the knitting mill. In 1928, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills constructed the northern section of this building, which was 8,200 square feet in area with a roughly square footprint. In 1935, the company built an 11,000-square-foot addition that extended the mill to the south. The 1928 and 1935 sections of the full-fashioned hosiery mill have brick walls, a concrete floor, and iron posts that support a metal-clad sawtooth roof with north-facing clerestory windows. The large, square window openings on the west, north, and east elevations have been infilled with brick over the original 36-light industrial steel sash, which remain in place. This building was expanded again circa 1955 and in 1968 with a two-bay loading dock on the west elevation and a 10,000 square-foot addition with a roughly square footprint appended to the south elevation of the 1935 addition. The 1968 addition features steel posts, metal roof trusses, and brick exterior walls with no windows. An addition constructed between 1956 and 1966 that linked the knitting mill and the full-fashioned hosiery mill was demolished in 2020–2022. The nominated property includes three ancillary buildings: a circa 1920 warehouse, circa 1930 laboratory, and circa 1960 boiler house. All three are one-story tall with brick exterior walls. The property retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY

SETTING AND SITE

The Ridgeview Hosiery Mills is located at 2101 North Main Avenue in Newton, the Catawba County seat, approximately 1.5 miles north of the county courthouse. The property is situated within an industrial corridor that follows a spur of the Western North Carolina Railroad—later the Norfolk Southern—between Newton and Conover. The immediate area is heavily industrial and surrounded by numerous one- and two-story frame houses constructed from the 1920s through the 1950s, primarily for workers in the nearby manufacturing facilities. The property originally comprised a rectangular parcel

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

of 14.76 acres, with the railroad tracks to the east, East 22nd Street to the north, North Main Avenue to the west, and East 20th Street to the south. In 2021, the property was subdivided. The property on which the mill is located is now L-shaped and consists of 7.84 acres.¹ The railroad tracks define the east edge of the tax parcel, which is the long side of the "L." East 22nd Street borders the north side of the property. North Main Avenue Street borders the short edge of the "L" on the west. To the south is a separate, rectangular parcel with a one-story, steel frame knitting mill constructed by Ridgeview Hosiery Mills circa 1980.² To the northwest of the subject property, in the corner of the "L" are two parcels. The one closest to the nominated property is also L-shaped, with a one-story office building that was constructed by Ridgeview Hosiery Mills in 1916 and then substantially enlarged and heavily altered circa 1980. At the intersection of North Main Avenue and East 22nd Street, is a small parcel containing a one-story, brick-veneered childcare center constructed by Ridgeview Hosiery Mills in 1988.

The nominated property is generally flat. The mill complex comprises two brick industrial buildings, a laboratory/office building, a warehouse, and a boiler house. The original knitting mill, begun in 1907–1908, completed and occupied in 1912, and enlarged in 1925, is roughly rectangular and oriented parallel and close to the railroad. The second mill was constructed in 1928 as a full-fashioned hosiery mill and then expanded in 1935, circa 1955, and 1968. It is oriented parallel and proximal to the railroad just south of the original knitting mill. Constructed circa 1930, the laboratory/office is situated at the southwest corner of the original knitting mill. The circa 1920 warehouse abuts the northeast corner of the 1925 addition to the knitting mill. The circa 1960 boiler room is at the southeast corner of the original knitting mill. Near the west side of the 1925 addition to the original mill is a small electrical substation enclosed by a chain-link fence that is considered part of the setting and not counted. Between the substation and the mill are three tall power poles.

Two asphalt-paved drives provide access to the property. East 21st Street extends east from North Main Avenue as an asphalt-paved driveway that follows the north side of the short end of the "L." East 21st Street terminates just south of the 1916 office that is not part of the nominated property. The drive turns 90 degrees to the south and continues roughly parallel with the west side of the full-fashioned hosiery mill, where it provides access to a two-bay loading dock and concrete ramp to the basement at the south end of the 1935 addition. The area to the west of the full-fashioned hosiery mill is a large, rectangular, gravel lot that has become overgrown with grass. Although this lot is part of the L-shaped tax parcel, it is not part of the nominated property. The second asphalt-paved access drive extends a short distance south from East 22nd Street on the west side of the original hosiery mill. It widens to an irregularly shaped parking lot just north of the 1916 office that is not part of the nominated property.

The north and east sides of the property are wooded, with a thick line of trees screening the railroad tracks from the east side of the mill buildings. Additional trees dot the property to the west of the mill buildings.

Although the two mills were constructed separately as freestanding buildings, they were connected by the circa 1960 construction of a small, intermediate addition. The addition was demolished between 2020 and 2022.³ The addition consisted of brick walls around steel framing and roof trusses. The lower portion of the walls and the steel framing remain in place. Paint lines on the previously exterior walls of the two mill buildings further indicate the volume of the addition.

The two mill buildings produced ladies' hosiery. For the sake of clarity, the original mill, constructed in 1907–1908, occupied in 1912, and expanded in 1925, with smaller additions in 1951, circa 1960, and circa 1980, will be referred to as the Knitting Mill. The second building, constructed in 1928 and expanded in 1935, circa 1955, and 1968, will be called the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill.

¹ The nominated property consists of 4.78 acres of the 7.84-acre parcel.

² This parcel extends from North Main Avenue to the railroad tracks, with frontage on East 20th Street.

³ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 2020 Aerial Imagery (<https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>, accessed August 2025); see also Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 2022 Aerial Imagery (<https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>, accessed August 2025).

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

Following is a list of resources described below:

Knitting Mill (1908, 1912, 1925, 1951, circa 1955, circa 1960, circa 1980), Contributing Building
Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill (1928, 1935, circa 1955, 1968), Contributing Building
Laboratory/Office (circa 1930), Contributing Building
Warehouse (circa 1920), Contributing Building
Boiler House (circa 1960), Contributing Building

KNITTING MILL (1908, 1912, 1925, 1951, CIRCA 1955, CIRCA 1960, CIRCA 1980), CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

The oldest building within the complex, the knitting mill was begun in 1907 and mostly completed in 1908 under the ownership of the short-lived Ridgeview Cotton Mills. After four years of inactivity, the building was acquired in 1912 by the newly established Ridgeview Hosiery Mills. The one-story building measured 80'x160' and was of "regular mill construction." With the exception of the north wall, which was frame, the exterior walls were of load-bearing brick masonry.⁴ The walls were pilastered and its roof trusses supported by wood posts. The mill contained a knitting room, a finishing room, and a dye house.⁵ Between 1907 and 1912, a frame boiler house clad in iron on all sides was constructed south of the dye house.

In 1925, the company constructed three additions (**Figure 1**; see **Key to Building Evolution**). The production floor was expanded on its north end, nearly doubling its square footage to its approximate present dimensions of 80'x300'. This addition retained most of the frame wall at the north end of the 1907–1908 building. This wall was eliminated at the west side of the building to allow passage between the original section and the addition. The design and character of the 1925 addition were very similar to the original 1907–1908 knitting mill. At the same time, a wide monitor was added to the roof, running almost the full length of the building. The dye house was doubled in size by expanding this section of the building to the south to join an existing boiler house. Around the same time that the dye house was expanded, the original boiler house was demolished and rebuilt as an addition to the south end of the building.⁶

A series of additions were completed in 1950–1951, circa 1955, circa 1960, and circa 1980 (see **Figure 1**; see **Key to Building Evolution**). In 1950–1951, the company constructed small additions to the east side of the dye house and the west side of the 1925 addition.⁷ The former eliminated the east wall of the dye house and created a pass-through space between the dye house and the production floor to the north. Circa 1955, the company constructed a small addition on the west side of the 1925 addition south of and separated from the 1950–1951 addition.

Circa 1960, a long, slender addition was constructed on the east side of the mill. The addition extended all the way from the north end of the building to the dye house addition. This addition eliminated the east wall of the 1907–1908 building and 1925 addition, thus widening the production space by roughly 20 feet at the south end of the building and roughly 35

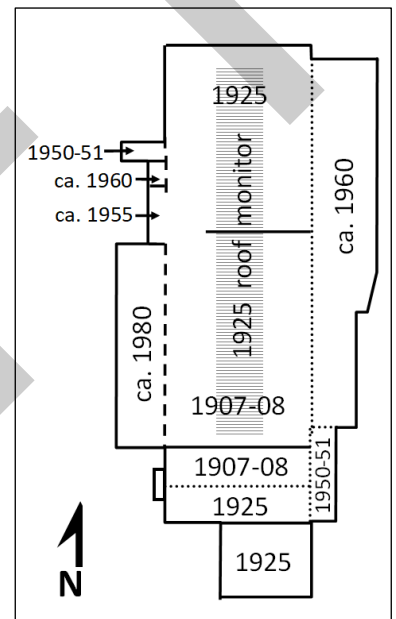


Figure 1. Evolution of the Knitting Mill from 1907–1908 to ca. 1980.

⁴ "For Sale: Ridgeview Cotton Mill Building," *The Newton Enterprise* (Newton, North Carolina), December 7, 1911, 2. The north wall was of frame construction, rather than brick. The reason for this difference in construction is unknown though may have indicated the company's anticipation of expansion.

⁵ Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Map of Newton, Catawba County, North Carolina* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1913), 4.

⁶ Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Map of Newton, Catawba County, North Carolina* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1924), 11; see also Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Map of Newton, Catawba County, North Carolina* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1932), 14.

⁷ Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Map of Newton, Catawba County, North Carolina* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1950), 14; see also Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1951 Aerial Imagery (<https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>, accessed August 2025).

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

feet at the north end of the building. Around the same time, the area between the two 1950s additions on the west elevation was filled in.⁸

Circa 1980, a second long, slender addition was constructed on the west side of the 1907–1908 section of the mill. This addition retained the west wall of the original hosiery mill. To facilitate access between the original knitting mill and addition, the company removed some of the windows and enlarged openings so that they extended to the floor.⁹ At the same time, the company constructed a small loading dock on the south end of the circa 1980 addition.

All sections of the Knitting Mill have red brick exterior walls. The main body of the mill has a low-pitched gable roof, with a single exposed rafter tail at the north end of the east elevation. A low-pitched gable roof also covers the dye house. The boiler house has a shed roof with exposed rafters on the south end. Shed roofs also cover the additions on the east and west elevations. All sections of the roof are covered in asphalt. The Knitting Mill does not have a façade or primary elevation. Its principal access is by doors that lead from the loading dock in the corner between the dye house and the circa 1980 addition into the south end of the 1980 addition. The dye house has a separate entrance from the loading dock into the west elevation. The building's components and elevations are described below and illustrated in **Figure 1** and on the attached **Key to Building Evolution**. The description begins with the south elevation of the boiler house at the south end of the building and continues counterclockwise around the perimeter.

Exterior

At the south end of the building is the 1925 boiler house. It has a shed roof that slopes to the south, concealed behind a stepped parapet on the east and west sides. The south elevation of the boiler house is mostly blind. It has only a double-leaf metal door below a horizontally oriented 10-light steel window with a rowlock sill at the east end of the elevation (**Photo 1**). The west elevation of the boiler house is similarly austere. A door opening that has been covered with plywood pierces the south end of the elevation. The north half of the elevation features a large roll-up metal garage door to the north beside a single-leaf metal door with glazing in the upper half to the south. Both of these doors appear to be mid-twentieth-century modifications. Above the garage door is a 15-light steel sash window (**Photo 2**).

The dye house is north of the boiler house (**Photo 3**). The south elevation of the dye house, which is visible to the west of the boiler house, is laid in six-to-one stretcher bond brick atop a poured concrete foundation. The elevation is visible above the roofline of the boiler house, where the corbelled, stepped parapet descends to the east and west following the profile of the low-pitched gable roof. Four large, 30-light industrial steel sash windows pierce the south elevation of the dye house west of the boiler house. Between the windows, pilasters rise from the thicker base of the wall and corbel back to meet the parapet above the window line. The pilasters roughly correspond to the parapet steps. The west elevation of the dye house has a centrally located projection that is shallow in profile and blind on the north and south sides. Four regularly spaced two-light steel windows with cast concrete sills pierce the upper part of the wall of this projection. Below the second window from the north is an early twentieth-century window opening with a two-course segmental arch of rowlock brick.¹⁰ The opening was infilled with brick at an unknown time. To the south of this projection, the west elevation of the 1925 addition to the dye house has a roll-up metal garage door next to a single-leaf metal pedestrian door with glazing in the upper half. To the north of the projection, a single-leaf metal door with glazing in the upper half pierces the west elevation of the 1907–1908 section of the dye house. In the mid-twentieth century, a poured concrete entrance deck was added to the west elevation of the dye house south of the projection. It is elevated above the ground and accessible by a

⁸ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1956 Aerial Imagery (<https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>, accessed August 2025); see also Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1966 Aerial Imagery (<https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>, accessed August 2025).

⁹ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1966 Aerial Imagery; see also Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1984 Aerial Imagery (<https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>, accessed August 2025).

¹⁰ This opening may date to 1907–1908 or to 1912. Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Map of Newton* [1913], 4.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

set of six poured concrete steps with tubular metal handrails that rise from west to east. Sheltering the deck and steps is a flat metal roof supported by slender, tubular steel posts below exposed steel framing.

The south elevation of the circa 1980 addition has only a double-leaf metal door with no windows (**Photo 4**). The doors open onto a raised deck with a poured concrete surface and brick facing. The deck is a loading dock whose outer edge is angled at 45 degrees from the elevation plane, facing southwest. A poured concrete ramp rises northward to the loading dock along the west side of the dye house. The ramp begins just north of the stairs that rise east to the south end of the dye house. The flat roof that covers the stairs and concrete deck continues over the loading dock, where it follows the same angled footprint.

The west elevation of the circa 1980 addition is blind (**Photo 5**). At the north end of the circa 1980 addition is a wood-framed, shed-roofed porch with square wood posts and tall lattice balustrade (**Photo 6**). It appears to have been added in the 1980s or 1990s. To the north of the porch, the mid-twentieth-century additions are heavily obscured by trees and thick foliage (**Photo 7**). Visible on the west elevation of these additions is a rectangular louvered metal ventilator. A short section of the 1925 addition's west elevation is visible north of the mid-twentieth-century additions. A double-leaf metal door with a 24-light steel transom window opens onto a concrete pad sheltered by a roof carried by slender steel columns. The transom window has been covered on the exterior but is visible on the interior. Corrugated fiberglass sheeting covers the north side of the porch.

The north elevation of the building is the north side of the 1925 addition to the hosiery mill (**Photos 8–9**). The walls are pilastered, with the space between the pilasters filled with large window openings that have been infilled with brick. The nine original 30-light industrial steel sash windows remain in place behind the brick infill. The north elevation of the circa 1960 addition is visible to the east of the 1925 addition. It has only a single-leaf metal pedestrian door accessed by a short set of poured-concrete steps (**Photo 10**).

The east elevation consists primarily of the circa 1960 addition. Large, rectangular metal vents are somewhat regularly spaced along the elevation (**Photo 11**). At the center of the addition is a collection of mechanical equipment within a deteriorating, wood-framed, shed-roofed enclosure (**Photo 12**). To the south of the 1960 addition is the east elevation of the 1950–1951 addition to the dye house and the east elevation of the boiler house (**Photo 13**). At the north end of the dye house is a 30-light industrial steel sash window with a cast concrete sill. To the north of this window is a small, square, louvered metal ventilator high on the wall. To the south of the window is another square opening that has been covered over with metal but which likely held a similar ventilator. South of the second ventilator is a 15-light steel sash window with a cast concrete sill. At the southeast corner of the dye house is a vertically oriented rectangular window opening with a cast concrete sill. It has been covered with plywood into which a louvered metal vent has been inserted (**Photo 14**). The 1950–1951 addition to the dye house projects east from the east elevation of the boiler house. The south elevation of the dye house addition has a double-leaf wood door set low on the wall to access the basement. The doors are less than 5 feet tall and capped by a rowlock lintel. Each leaf has two horizontal panels below a row of four lights (**Photo 15**). Roughly centered on the east elevation of the boiler house is a double-leaf metal door with a two-light steel transom window. To the south of the door is a 30-light industrial steel sash window (see **Photo 15**).

Interior

The interior of the Knitting Mill retains its original open plan and the majority of its original materials. The 1907–1908 section of the building has a brick foundation, wood flooring, wood columns, and heavy timber roof framing with chamfered corners. The original roof decking is visible above the framing. It consists of wide wood boards with a beaded edge. Original brick walls remain on the south and west sides of this section. The east wall was removed circa 1960 when the east addition was built. The west wall remains in place with original 30-light industrial steel sash windows remaining in some of the openings. Elsewhere on the west wall of the 1907–1908 mill, the steel window sash have been removed

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

and, in some cases, the openings lengthened to provide access between the original mill and the circa 1980 west addition. The north wall was originally frame and remains in place with plywood paneling. The framing members are not visible. The roof monitor that was added in 1925 remains in place. It is framed with heavy timbers and features openings on the east and west sides that are filled with four-light sash. A large section of the roof has collapsed in the southeast corner of the 1907–1908 mill. As a result, water infiltration led to failure of the floor framing and wood floorboards on the east side of the mill, where some of the flooring is gone. A section of flooring in at the south end of the 1907–1908 mill has been removed, exposing brick foundation piers that supported the floor framing (**Photos 16–19**).

The interior of the 1925 addition retains its open plan and most of its original materials. The wood floor, wood columns, heavy timber roof framing, and brick exterior walls remain in place. Most of its original 30-light industrial steel sash remain. The roof monitor continues from the 1907–1908 mill to the north end of the 1925 addition. Sections of the roof have collapsed in the northwest and northeast corners of the 1925 addition, but the original design, materials, and overall character are clearly apparent. Although the windows on the exterior walls have been infilled with brick on the exterior, the original 30-light industrial steel sash remain in place on the interior (**Photos 20–22**).

The circa 1960 east addition necessitated removal of the east wall of the 1907–1908 and 1925 sections of the Knitting Mill. The exterior walls of this section are brick and the framing consists of steel columns (see **Photo 19**).

The circa 1980 west addition is appended onto the side of the 1907–1908 mill, with some of the original window openings lengthened to facilitate access between the two sections. The addition has a wood floor, brick exterior walls, and metal roof trusses (**Photo 23**).

The dye house is adjacent to the south side of the 1907–1908 mill. It was originally connected to the mill by two interior doorways with fireproof doors in the east and west ends of a thick fire wall. Although the east doorway was removed during the late twentieth-century reconfiguration of the interior space, the west doorway remains in place. It is wider than a standard single-leaf doorway and is capped by a two-course segmental arch of rowlock brick. In the 1970s or 1980s, the doorway was partly infilled with wood to reduce the size of the opening. It holds a single-leaf wood door in a square-edged wood frame. The dye house was built in 1907–1908 and enlarged in 1925, when it was extended to the south and doubled in size. Evidence of the expansion exists on the interior in the form of ghost lines in brick of the east and west wells and a wide seam in the concrete floor (**Photos 24–26**). The dye house was expanded to meet the previously freestanding boiler room, which was not accessed.

FULL-FASHIONED HOSIERY MILL (1928, 1935, circa 1955, 1968), CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

Situated approximately 40 feet south of the Knitting Mill's boiler house, the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill was constructed in 1928 and enlarged in 1935, circa 1955, and 1968 (**Figure 2**; see **Key to Building Evolution**). Richard C. Biberstein was the likely architect of the 1928 section of the building and his son, Herman V. Biberstein likely designed the 1935 addition.¹¹ According to the 1932 Sanborn fire insurance map, the original 1928 section had a roughly square footprint, pilastered brick walls, concrete floor, iron columns, and sawtooth roof that retains original glazing.¹² Each elevation of the oldest

¹¹ The records of the architectural firm Biberstein, Bowles, Meacham & Reed are housed in Special Collections at the J. Murray Atkins Library at the University of North Carolina–Charlotte. As of July 2025, the library is undergoing a major renovation, and the Biberstein, Bowles, Meacham & Reed collection is not available for research during construction. Information on the collection indicates that Richard C. Biberstein and/or his son, Herman Biberstein, may have designed additions to the original knitting mill, if not the mill, itself, as well as the 1928 full-fashioned hosiery mill. The subsequent firm Biberstein, Bowles, Meacham & Reed likely designed the 1935 addition to the full-fashioned hosiery mill. The collection's records on the property date from at least 1927 to 1940, and collections information indicates that some of the firm's records were lost to deterioration and building demolition.

¹² Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Map of Newton* [1932], 14.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

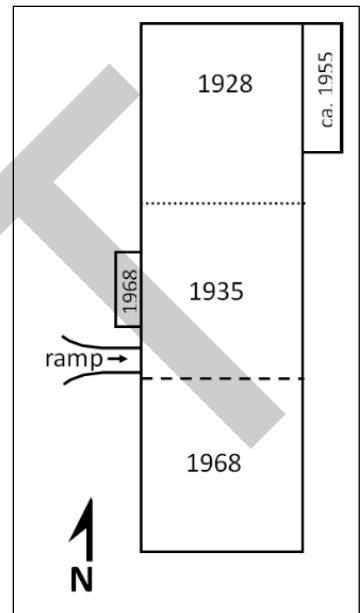
Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

section is brick laid in a five-to-one common bond and divided into nine bays by shallow brick pilasters. The 1935 addition closely resembles the exterior of the first section, including the sawtooth roof, but with subtle changes in brick color and bond. Circa 1955, a small brick addition with a slender, rectangular footprint, low-pitched shed roof, and exposed rafter tails was constructed on the east elevation of the 1928 building flush with its north elevation.¹³

Between 1956 and 1966, the company built a small, square addition to the north elevation of the 1928 building, connecting the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill to the west elevation of the Knitting Mill's boiler house. The addition was one-story tall with steel framing and brick exterior walls.¹⁴ This addition was mostly demolished between 2020 and 2022, with only the lower half of the west wall and the steel framing remaining extant.¹⁵

In 1968, the mill was expanded to the south. Plans for the 1968 addition were drawn by the firm Architectural Design of Newton.¹⁶ This addition has brick exterior walls and a flat roof on a poured concrete foundation. Concurrent with the large addition to the south end of the building, the company added a small loading dock to the west elevation of the 1935 addition. To the south of the loading dock is a ramp that descends to the lower level of the 1935 building.



The exterior description below begins with the west elevation and proceeds clockwise around the building.

Exterior

The west elevation of the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill is divided roughly into thirds. The northern third is the original 1928 building (**Photo 27**). The central third is the 1935 addition (**Photo 28**). The southern third is the 1968 addition. The 1928 building and 1935 addition have pilastered walls with slightly recessed panels between the pilasters. Each of the recessed panels between the pilasters has a brick-infilled window opening whose original 30-light industrial steel sash remain in place behind the brick. Mid- to late twentieth-century modifications to this section of the east elevation include the retrofit of a roughly square metal louvered vent near the northwest corner of the building and a double-leaf metal door in the fifth bay from the north. In 1968, a two-bay loading dock with a flat roof was built onto the west elevation of the 1935 addition, near its southwest corner. A short set of poured concrete stairs with a tubular metal handrail leads to a single-leaf metal door in the north elevation of the loading dock addition. On the west elevation of the loading dock are two roll-up garage doors sheltered by a shallow metal awning (**Photo 29**). The south elevation of the loading dock is blind. To the south of the loading dock, a concrete ramp flanked by brick wing walls with cast concrete coping descends to a metal roll-up garage door in the lower level of the 1935 addition. The west elevation of the 1968 addition has no windows (**Photo 30**). Its only architectural detail is a horizontal band of brick detailing just below the roofline. It consists of 10 courses of projecting rowlock brick that creates repeating vertical lines spaced roughly 1 to 2 feet apart.

Pilasters divide the north elevation of the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill into nine bays (**Photo 31**). Although the rectangular window openings have been infilled with brick, the original 30-light industrial steel sash remain in place. The north-facing sawtooth roof is framed in wood with 18 window openings. At the east end of the elevation is the north end of the circa 1955 addition (**Photo 32**). A single-leaf metal door and large, 15-light industrial steel sash window with a cast concrete sill pierce the north elevation of the circa 1955 addition. A small, wood-framed, gable-roofed ventilator rises from the top of the circa 1955 addition. It has an asphalt-shingled roof and wood siding.

¹³ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1951 Aerial Imagery; see also Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1956 Aerial Imagery.

¹⁴ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1956 Aerial Imagery; see also Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1966 Aerial Imagery.

¹⁵ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 2020 Aerial Imagery; see also Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 2022 Aerial Imagery.

¹⁶ "Broughton Bids," *Hickory Daily Record* (Hickory, North Carolina), May 11, 1968, 8.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

The east elevation of the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill consists of the circa 1955 addition, 1928 building, 1935 addition, and 1968 addition. Seven large, rectangular, 15-light industrial steel sash windows with cast concrete sills pierce the east elevation of the circa 1955 addition (**Photo 33**). South of the 1955 addition, the east elevation of the 1928 mill and 1935 and 1968 additions display the same treatment as the west elevation. The 1928 mill and 1935 addition have pilastered walls and brick-infilled windows with the original 30-light industrial steel sash remaining. Two large, rectangular window openings with multi-light industrial steel sash light the basement level of the 1935 addition. They are concealed behind a poured-concrete window well. (**Photo 34**). The east elevation of the 1968 addition is blind with the same ornamental brick treatment below the roofline.

The south elevation of the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill is the south elevation of the 1968 addition. It has the same solid brick wall and projecting rowlock brick detail at the roofline as the east and west elevations of this addition (**Photo 35**).

Interior

The interior of the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill is largely intact, with its open floor plan interrupted only by a structural framework of iron posts and beams that support the wood-framed sawtooth roof with its original glass panels. The exposed brick walls are painted. The floor is an unfinished concrete slab (**Photos 36–37**). The low-sloping section of the sawtooth roof has tongue-and-groove wood boards laid horizontally over the wood framing. The south wall of the 1935 addition remains in place with large openings in place of the original windows. Although a pile of building debris is prominently located within the 1935 addition, its source is not known, for the roof remains largely intact. Deterioration and loss of some glazing in several areas has led to water infiltration and pooling on the floor. In 1968, the windows in the south elevation were removed and the openings lengthened to facilitate passage between the 1935 and 1968 additions (**Photo 38**). The interior of the 1968 addition has an open plan, concrete floor, steel framing, and metal roof trusses supporting the metal roof decking (**Photo 39**).

LABORATORY/OFFICE (circa 1930), CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

Exterior

The Laboratory/Office is a small, one-story, white-painted, brick building with a rectangular footprint situated at the southwest corner of the Knitting Mill (see **Photo 4**). It is roughly 28 feet wide by 20 feet deep with 12-foot-tall walls and a hipped roof covered with a standing-seam metal roofing system that was installed after 2000. The primary elevation faces south and has a roughly central entrance below a gabled hood supported by wood brackets with an open, triangular profile. The entry has a replacement single-leaf door covered in plywood. Flanking the door are two window openings. To the west is a tall, rectangular window with a rowlock sill and replacement wood sash composed of a horizontally oriented hopper window below a tall fixed pane. This is the typical replacement window in the building. To the east is a wider window opening filled with a pair of typical replacement windows with a shared surround and two-row header sill. Between the door and the east window is a small, rectangular sign that says "PERSONNEL OFFICE."¹⁷ The east elevation is blind. The north (rear) elevation is lit by two 24-light industrial steel sash windows with rowlock sills. The west elevation has two typical replacement windows with rowlock sills equally spaced across the wall (**Photo 40**).

Interior

¹⁷ The building is labeled on the 1924 Sanborn Map as a laboratory. It is not currently known when the building's use changed, though it likely coincided with the cosmetic changes on the interior, which date to the 1970s or 1980s.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

The interior of the Laboratory/Office was cosmetically altered in the late 1970s or 1980s. Thin wood paneling was applied to all the perimeter walls, covering the 24-light industrial steel sash on the north wall. At this time, a frame partition wall was constructed to divide the interior into east and west rooms. The floor is carpeted, and the ceiling is finished with a suspended acoustical tile system.

WAREHOUSE (circa 1920), CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

Exterior

Situated at the northeast corner of the 1925 addition to the Knitting Mill is a one-story brick warehouse that is 33 feet wide by 43 feet deep with 18-foot-tall walls. It has a flat roof shielded by a low parapet. The circa 1960 east addition to the knitting mill abuts the south elevation of the warehouse. The west and north elevations are blind (see **Photo 10**). A double-leaf metal door is slightly off-center to the north on the east elevation. It is elevated roughly 5 feet above grade with no porch. The double-leaf door appears to be a mid-twentieth-century change to the original door opening, which is evidenced by a two-course segmental arch of rowlock brick. Flanking the door are two large, rectangular metal vents (**Photos 41–42**). According to Sanborn maps for Newton, the warehouse was constructed between 1913 and 1924. When constructed, it was not sprinklered. Sprinklers were added by 1924.¹⁸ The interior was not accessed.

BOILER HOUSE (circa 1960), CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

Exterior

Situated at the southeast corner of Knitting Mill is a one-story, brick boiler house that is 22 feet wide by 35 feet deep. It has a flat roof behind a low parapet. It faces south with a tall, metal roll-up door positioned west of center on the elevation (**Photo 43**). To the right (east) of the door is a rectangular metal vent placed low on the wall. The east and north elevations are blind (see **Photo 13**). A single-leaf metal door pierces the north end of the west elevation near the northwest corner. At the south end of the elevation, near the southwest corner, is a rectangular metal vent low on the wall. The interior was not accessed.

INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

Location and Setting

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills retains integrity of location and setting. It has occupied the same property since 1908, and all of the buildings are situated on their original foundations. The setting within the parcel is largely unchanged. Outside the property boundary, the setting remains highly intact. To the east are the extant tracks within the railroad right-of-way. Farther east, and to the north and south, are industrial properties historically unrelated to the Ridgeview Hosiery Mills but whose presence reinforces the industrial character of the immediate area. To the west, on the west side of North Main Avenue and opposite the mill, are historic dwellings that likely served as worker housing. Although many of these buildings have experienced non-historic alterations such as the application of alternative siding materials, replacement of windows, and changes to their front porches, the general uniformity of their size, scale, massing, and setback from the street conveys their historic use. Additional worker housing of similar design may be found around the perimeter of this industrial node.

Design, Materials, and Workmanship

¹⁸ Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Map of Newton* [1913], 4; see also Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Map of Newton* [1924], 11.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

The Ridgeview Hosiery Mills retains strong integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, despite the deteriorated condition of some parts of the Knitting Mill and Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill. Integrity of design is reinforced through the identifiable construction phases in each building. The Knitting Mill retains its original open floor plan and original exterior wall materials, framing, windows, and wood flooring, all of which are character-defining features of the building. A prominent character-defining feature of the Knitting Mill is the roof monitor, which retains its original design and materials—particularly its original windows. The collapsed sections of the Knitting Mill’s roof are in the 1907–1908 building and 1925 addition. Despite these collapsed portions of the roof, most of the roof and nearly all of the monitor remain intact. The collapsed roof has resulted in the loss of some of the flooring in the 1907–1908 mill; however more than half the floor in this area remains in place. Although the circa 1960 addition on the east side of the Knitting Mill eliminated the original 1907–1908 east wall, the original west wall remains intact to represent the original design and construction of this section of the building. The framed north wall of the 1907–1908 building remains in place and covered in plywood. The different construction phases of the dye house, on the south end of the Knitting Mill, are evident in seams in the concrete floor and brick walls.

Similarly, the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill retains sufficient integrity of design, materials, and workmanship despite the failure of the roof in some areas. The building retains its open floor plan and original exterior materials, windows, concrete floor, structural framing, and roof decking, all of which are character-defining features. A significant, character-defining feature of the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill is the sawtooth roof of the 1928 and 1935 sections of the building, which is largely intact. Although a pile of building debris is prominently located within the 1935 addition, its source is not clear, for the roof remains largely intact. Deterioration and loss of some glazing in several areas has led to water infiltration and pooling on the floor. Important character-defining features of both the Knitting Mill and the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill are the numerous original multi-light industrial steel window sash that remain in place behind the brick infill. These windows convey the importance of abundant lighting to the operation of the mill.

The circa 1920 warehouse, circa 1930 laboratory/office, and circa 1960 boiler room reinforce the property’s overall integrity of design and materials.

Association and Feeling

Although it is no longer used for manufacturing, the Ridgeview Hosiery Mills retains sufficient integrity of association and feeling. The property’s strong integrity of setting reinforces its historic use as a textile mill, which reinforces its integrity of association. Because it retains strong integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, and some integrity of association, the property retains integrity of feeling.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills
Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: N/A

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry

Period of Significance

1912–1975

Significant Dates

1925, 1928, 1935, 1939, 1950–1951, ca. 1955, 1962, 1968

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Biberstein, Richard C., architect (attributed)

Biberstein, Herman V., architect (attributed)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Industry for its significant association with the industrial development of Newton, in Catawba County, North Carolina. The property's Period of Significance begins in 1912, when Joseph Albert Gaither established Ridgeview Hosiery Mills, acquired a one-story, brick cotton mill constructed in 1908, and adapted it for use as a knitting mill that produced cotton hosiery for women. To meet changing demands in the consumer market, the company shifted to production of rayon hosiery in the 1920s. The company doubled the size of its original knitting mill with a large, one-story brick addition in 1925; constructed a second one-story, brick plant for the production of full-fashioned hosiery in 1928; and doubled the size of the full-fashioned plant in 1935 with a one-story, brick addition. In 1939, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills shifted to production of nylon hosiery. With the advent of stretch yarns in the late 1950s, the company ended its production of full-fashioned hosiery in favor of exclusively producing ladies' circular-knitted, seamless hosiery. As demands for its products increased during the post-World War II period, the company again expanded the former full-fashioned hosiery plant with another one-story, brick addition in 1968. The Period of Significance ends in 1975. In 1976, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills acquired Servco, a small enterprise that produced athletic socks and related items, substantially expanding its manufacturing to include athletic leisurewear. Ridgeview Hosiery Mills continued to operate through the 1980s and 1990s, adding plants in New York, Tennessee, and Ireland, before filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy and closing in 2000. The period from 1975 to 2000 is associated with a volatile period of corporate mergers and industrial diversification in the textile industry in response to international competition and decreasing market share. These high-level corporate exchanges and their impact on production are less than 50 years old, and their significance has yet to be determined. The plant has been vacant since 2001, when Ridgeview Hosiery Mills sold the property as part of bankruptcy proceedings. Ridgeview Hosiery Mills meets the registration requirements for the Industrial Buildings property type under the Multiple Property Document Form (MPDF) "Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, North Carolina," which was approved by the National Park Service on April 27, 1990 (Reference #64300352).¹⁹

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND INDUSTRY CONTEXT

The Settlement and Early Industrial Development of Newton and Catawba County to 1885

Located in the western Piedmont region of North Carolina, Catawba County was founded in 1842 from neighboring Lincoln County to the south. The Catawba River forms the county's northern and eastern boundary as it winds a circuitous route into South Carolina from headwaters in the South Mountains in neighboring Burke County to the west. Numerous small rivers and creeks feed the Catawba River. The abundant flow of water from the surrounding area generates substantial waterpower that fueled the county's industrial growth from the nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. In 1845, Newton was laid out at the center of the county to serve as the seat of government.²⁰

¹⁹ Barbara M. Kooiman, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, North Carolina," Multiple Property Document Form prepared for the National Park Service, 1990. <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/nr/CT1299.pdf>, accessed June 2025, E18–E23.

²⁰ Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 454; see also Brent D. Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1992), 5; see also Barbara M. Kooiman, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, North Carolina," Multiple Property Document Form prepared for the National Park Service, 1990. <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/nr/CT1299.pdf>, accessed June 2025, E18–E23

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

The western Piedmont region was sparsely settled and its economy largely agricultural in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with diverse crops grown on farms that averaged roughly 150 acres. Cotton and tobacco comprised the main cash crops. The population consisted primarily of Scots, who had emigrated to America after their loss at the 1746 Battle of Culloden, and Protestant immigrants such as the German Moravians and English Quakers.²¹ The 1793 invention of the cotton gin and the wide availability of cotton in the Piedmont and eastern North Carolina set the stage for development of the textile industry in the early nineteenth century. In 1813, Michael Schenck and Absolom Warlick constructed the first cotton mill in North Carolina roughly 2 miles south of Lincolnton, Lincoln County, on the South Fork of the Catawba River. They rebuilt it three years later after the first building was destroyed in a flood. Although early industrialists established manufacturing facilities along the Catawba River during the first half of the nineteenth century, numerous factors limited industrial growth until the Reconstruction era. Chief among them were a heavy reliance on waterpower, inadequate transportation networks, high labor costs, insufficient capital, and a brief agricultural decline in the 1840s and 1850s.²²

Chartered in 1855, the Western North Carolina Railroad (WNCRR) connected the city of Salisbury, in Rowan County, to the mountain region. Construction began in 1858 and, by 1860, the WNCRR had reached Catawba County. Industrial development in the region stalled during the Civil War. By 1867, the partnerships of Powell & Shuford and Powell & Tate had established two cotton factories at Catawba Station, near the WNCRR on the eastern edge of the county near the Catawba River.²³ Within a couple years, H.F. Carpenter had established a cotton gin at Newton. In fact, Newton's economy was heavily industrial during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1869, the town boasted an iron shop, two saddle & harness factories, three shoe manufacturers, four tanneries, one tinnery, two carriage factories, and a manufacturer of threshing machines. By comparison, Catawba Station had cotton mills and lime factory, and the community of Jacob's Fork had only an iron shop and cabinet maker. At that time, Hickory's only industry was one tannery.²⁴

By the mid-1880s, at the dawn of North Carolina's "cotton mill campaign," 75 cotton mills operated across the state.²⁵ Even after rail lines improved access to transportation and freight shipping across the state, most of these early textile mills relied on waterpower to generate electricity. For this reason, railroad sidings had to be constructed to provide freight access to ship raw materials in and products out. One of these early textile plants was the 1882 Newton Cotton Mills, near the heart of Catawba County's seat of government. Newton Cotton Mills stood apart from most of its contemporaries when it began operating in 1883 for its location next to the railroad line near downtown Newton (**Figure 3**).²⁶ When the Carolina & Northwestern Railway was built from Chester, South Carolina, to Lenoir, North Carolina, the first freight it carried was a lot of 10 bales of cotton for the Newton Cotton Mills.²⁷

Industrial Growth in Newton and Catawba County, 1885–1907

North Carolina's textile industry boomed in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Between 1885 and 1905, the cotton mill campaign saw nearly 200 cotton mills erected across the state.²⁸ Employees of these mills primarily spun coarse yarns

²¹ Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina*, 5.

²² Holland Thompson, *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill: A Study of the Industrial Transition in North Carolina* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1906), 45–46; see also Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina*, 7–8. Holland alternately writes Warlick's first name as Abraham; see also Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina*, 12–15.

²³ Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory for 1867–8* (Raleigh: Branson & Jones, Publishers, 1868), 27; see also Kooiman, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, North Carolina," E19–E20. Although the town name "Catawba Station" was later shortened to "Catawba," for the purpose of this nomination, the original place name "Catawba Station" will be used throughout the narrative to refer to the town and distinguish it from Catawba County.

²⁴ Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory for 1869* (Raleigh: J.A. Jones, Publisher, 1869), 34–35.

²⁵ Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina*, 24–27.

²⁶ "Spirits Turpentine," *The Morning Star* (Wilmington, North Carolina), May 21, 1882, 4; see also "State Industrial Items," *The New South* (Wilmington, North Carolina), December 24, 1882, 1; and "Proceedings of the Legislature," *Statesville Record and Landmark* (Statesville, North Carolina), January 12, 1883, 2.

²⁷ "Local Paragraphs," *The Newton Enterprise*, July 7, 1883, 3.

²⁸ Thompson, *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, 1; see also Glass, *The Textile Industry In North Carolina*, 30.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

from cotton that was locally sourced. The local availability of cotton reduced freight costs and fostered symbiosis between agricultural and industrial interests.²⁹ Catawba County prospered in the economic bubble created by the textile boom. In addition to Newton Cotton Mills, there were five other cotton mills across the county by 1896. The Turner brothers operated the Granite Shoals Cotton Mill in Monbo and Brown & Company had the Long Island Cotton Mill in Catawba Station. In Maiden, the Carpenter family operated the Maiden, Providence, and Union cotton mills.³⁰

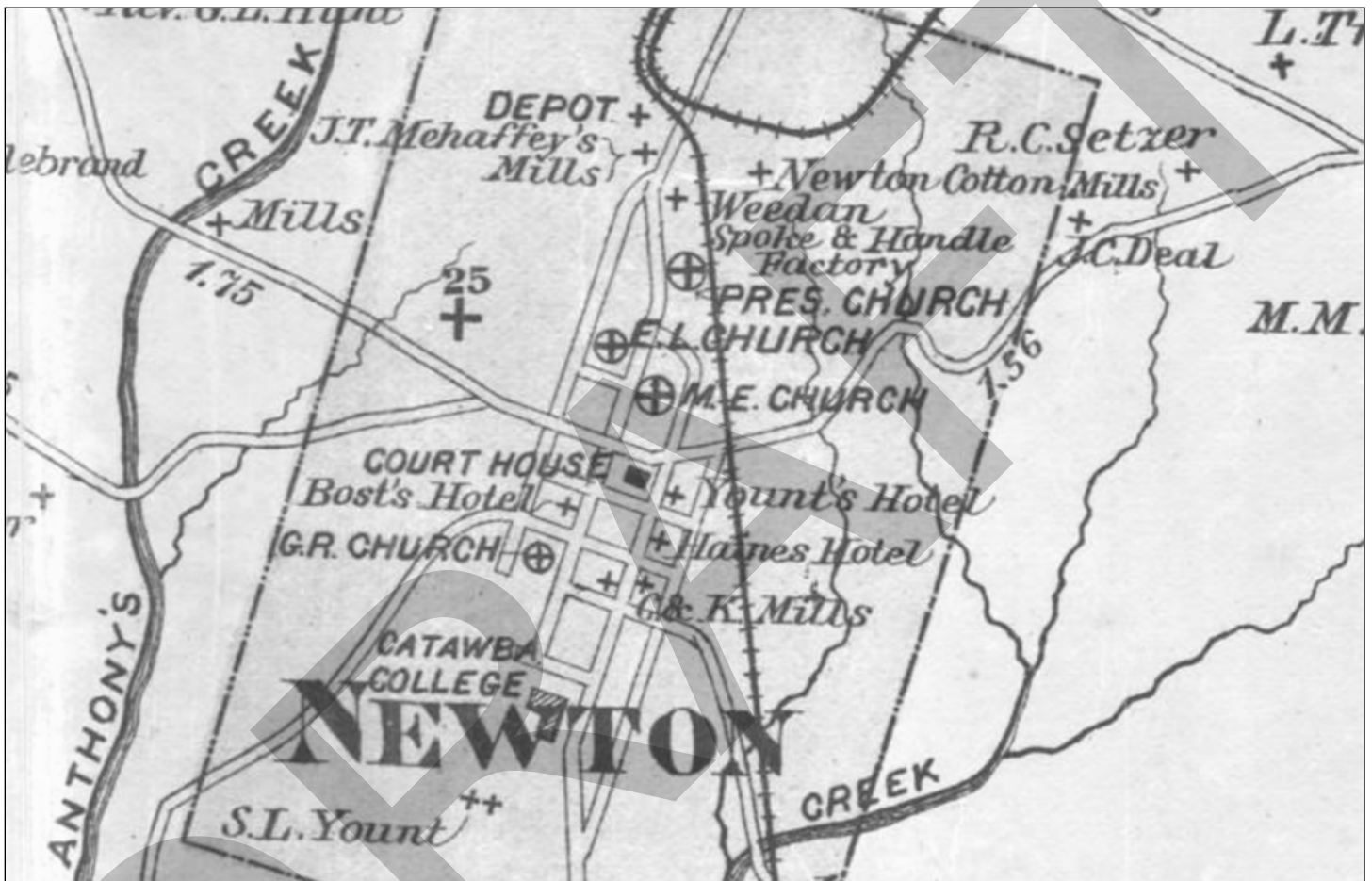


Figure 3. Detail of the 1886 *Map of Catawba County* by Robert Anderson Yoder and Gaylord Watson. Newton Cotton Mills is shown near the top of the map at the center.

The textile industry was divided into different sectors, depending on the raw material and finished goods. Cotton production dominated textile manufacturing in North Carolina. Jobs in cotton production could be dirty. Workers handling the raw materials and processing cotton into yarn and thread often experienced respiratory problems. Continued exposure to cotton dust caused byssinosis, or “brown lung disease.”³¹ In contrast, producing finished projects with yarn and thread was typically a cleaner job. Some plants only produced various gauges of yarn and/or thread, while others incorporated weaving into their production. In addition to weaving, the production of knit goods was a significant part of the textile industry, beginning with the introduction of hosiery mills in Durham in 1894.³² Although the machinery was still dangerous to use, working in hosiery production reduced exposure to cotton dust, making it a somewhat cleaner job.

²⁹ Thompson, *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, 271–272.

³⁰ Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory, 1896* (Raleigh: Levi Branson, Publisher, 1896), 170.

³¹ Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina*, 93.

³² Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina*, 44.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

In 1895, Junius Robert Gaither, a merchant in Newton, was one of seven local businessmen who organized the county's first hosiery mill. The business failed, and George A. Warlick—one of its organizers—was named receiver. D.J. Carpenter—another of the original organizers—acquired the property around 1900 and expanded its production, soon producing hosiery under the brand name “Black Crow.”³³

By 1903, John P. Yount opened the Catawba Cotton Mills in Newton.³⁴ Within 10 years, two more textile mills were opened in the town. Clyde Cotton Mills and Fidelity Hosiery Mills were built along the railroad tracks on the north side of town between Newton and Conover. Although not involved in the manufacture of textiles, a bobbin factory had also been established to manufacture wood bobbins for winding thread and yarn.³⁵ Construction of the bobbin factory signaled the emergence of a textile-adjacent industry, indicating a moderate degree of economic diversification in the small community.

The industrial boom that fostered rapid growth in Newton benefited Hickory as well. Abel Shuford established a textile mill and J.A. Cline established the town's first hosiery mill in 1906. In 1909, Abel Shuford founded the A.A. Shuford Mill in nearby Highland. The following year, J.D. Elliott established the Elliott Knitting Mill with members of the Lyerly family, who were heavily invested in the textile industry.³⁶

The Panic of 1907 and the Rise and Fall of Ridgeview Cotton Mills, 1907–1912

The early twentieth century saw continued growth in textile manufacturing statewide until the Panic of 1907 shook the industry's foundations in October of that year. In August 1907, 20 local businessmen organized the Ridgeview Cotton Mills, Inc. for the purpose of manufacturing “cotton of every grade into yarn and cloth.” At 40 shares, L.M. Setzer was the largest investor, followed by H.F. Smith, J.P. Yount, and E.P. Shrum, each of whom purchased 20 shares.³⁷ It was capitalized at \$100,000, and its shareholders immediately approved plans for a building, seeking bids for the brickwork based on the “wagon count.”³⁸ The mill was “located on the railroad about half a mile above the depot in an oak grove on the lands of Messrs. Eli and Will Fry.” Powered by electricity purchased from the Southern Power Company of Charlotte, the mill would start with 2,500 spindles.³⁹ The company even planned to build houses for workers and completed construction of two.⁴⁰

The financial crisis that began on Wall Street crippled industrial production nationwide, reducing output by more than any previous economic panic.⁴¹ By November 1907, the economic crisis had infiltrated North Carolina's textile industry. Nearly all the mills in the state—and apparently across the southeastern United States—had reduced their output by one-third.⁴² In Newton, the first hosiery mill, organized by Junius R. Gaither, dissolved in 1909, likely due to the panic. Newton Cotton Mills and Clyde Cotton Mills reduced their operation to three days a week. The Catawba Cotton Mill closed to install new machinery. J.P. Yount, owner of the Catawba Cotton Mill, recalled in 1910 that “The last four years have been the hardest

³³ Charles J. Preslar, Jr., *A History of Catawba County, Compiled and Published by Catawba County Historical Association, Inc.* (Salisbury, North Carolina: Rowan Printing Company, 1954), 486. The mill burned around 1910, and Fidelity Hosiery Mills was later constructed on the site.

³⁴ The News and Observer, *North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* [1903] (Raleigh: The News and Observer, 1903), 155.

³⁵ The News and Observer, *North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* [1913] (Raleigh: The News and Observer, 1913), 140. Fidelity Hosiery Mills was originally constructed as Newton Hosiery Mills. The News and Observer, *North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* [1910] (Raleigh: The News and Observer, 1910), 133.

³⁶ Clay Griffith, “Hickory Survey Update: Summary Report,” Unpublished survey report prepared for the City of Hickory, 2015. <https://www.hpo.nc.gov/media/572/open>, accessed July 2025, 14–15.

³⁷ “Locals,” *The Newton Enterprise*, September 5, 1907, 3; see also “Three Companies Given Charters,” *The Raleigh Evening Times* (Raleigh, North Carolina), August 20, 1907, 7.

³⁸ “Locals,” *The Newton Enterprise*, September 19, 1907, 3; see also Untitled advertisement, *The Newton Enterprise*, October 10, 1907, 2.

³⁹ “Ridgeview Cotton Mill,” *The Newton Enterprise*, August 1, 1907, 3; see also Untitled article, *Hickory Democrat* (Hickory, North Carolina), October 10, 1907, 5.

⁴⁰ “For Sale: Ridgeview Cotton Mill Building,” *The Newton Enterprise*, December 7, 1911, 2.

⁴¹ Robert F. Bruner and Sean D. Carr, *The Panic of 1907: Lessons Learned from the Market's Perfect Storm* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), 141.

⁴² “Catawba Clippings,” *Lincoln County News* (Lincolnton, North Carolina), November 19, 1907, 1.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

ever experienced by cotton textile manufacturers." According to one account, the Panic of 1907 effectively ended the South's cotton mill boom.⁴³

The Panic of 1907 was over within a year, and industrial production was restored by the end of 1909.⁴⁴ Though short-lived, the economic crisis could not have come at a worse time for Ridgeview's investors. The building was largely finished by March 1908, but the company delayed the installation of machinery "until the milling business improves and there is a prospect of running at a profit."⁴⁵ Whether the textile industry took longer to recover than investors had anticipated or they were financially unable to acquire and install machinery is unknown. It is possible that high cotton prices, labor shortages, and decreased demand that characterized the period between 1907 and World War I caused a general constriction within the textile market, limiting the mill's viability.⁴⁶ Contractor Pierce Moser had constructed the mill's brick exterior, and Miles Sigmon completed the woodwork. The building was complete by early March 1908.⁴⁷ All of the improvements to the property had cost \$10,750,⁴⁸ yet no machinery was ever installed, and the building was never placed into use. According to the newspaper, the Panic of 1907 was directly responsible for the endeavor's failure.⁴⁹

The building is new and has never been used. It was built for a cotton mill, but the panic in the milling business coming on, the company abandoned the purpose and sold the property at auction and dissolved the company.⁵⁰

By 1909, several textile plants were operating in Newton. The largest was Newton Cotton Mills, which had \$150,000 in capital and ran 8,000 spindles. The Catawba Cotton Mill had \$60,000 in capital and ran 6,100 spindles. With only \$32,000 in capital, the Clyde Cotton Mill ran 5,120 spindles. All three mills produced cotton yarns. The Catawba Woolen Mill was a much smaller company, with only \$6,000 in capital spinning wool yarns on 168 spindles. The Newton Knitting Mill, under the leadership of D.J. Carpenter, had 312 knitting machines and was the only knitting enterprise in town.⁵¹

Ridgeview Cotton Mills remained a vacant shell for four years after it was completed. In 1910 or 1911, shareholder W.R. Fry led a group of plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the company.⁵² After failing to pay taxes on the property for at least two years, the property was offered for sale at public auction in August 1910:⁵³

For Sale: Ridgeview Cotton Mill building, two tenant houses and 17 acres of land, near Newton depot, between Newton and Conover; building 80 by 160 feet, brick, regular mill

⁴³ Preslar, *A History of Catawba County*, 486; see also Gary R. Freeze, *The Catawbans, Volume Two: Pioneers in Progress* (Newton, North Carolina, Catawba County Historical Association Press, 2002), 85; see also David L. Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880–1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 213.

⁴⁴ Bruner and Carr, *The Panic of 1907*, 143.

⁴⁵ "Locals," *The Newton Enterprise*, March 5, 1908, 3.

⁴⁶ Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880–1920*, 249–250.

⁴⁷ Untitled notice, *The Newton Enterprise*, October 17, 1907, 3; see also "Locals," *The Newton Enterprise*, March 5, 1908, 3. According to a retrospective account, the building lacked windows and a floor in 1912. It seems unlikely that the newspaper would announce that the building was ready for machinery if it lacked these two important features. It is entirely possible that the windows and flooring were removed and sold as part of the lawsuit or to settle back taxes "45-Year Stint At Ridgeview Comes To An End," *Hickory Daily Record*, December 21, 1959, 24.

⁴⁸ "Locals," *The Newton Enterprise*, December 14, 1911, 5.

⁴⁹ "Receiver for the Ridgeview," *The Charlotte Evening Chronicle* (Charlotte, North Carolina), September 2, 1911, 4.

⁵⁰ "Local And Personal," *Hickory Democrat*, December 5, 1912, 2.

⁵¹ The News and Observer, *North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* [1909] (Raleigh: The News and Observer, 1909), 31, 133; see also "Tar Heel Topics," *The Lenoir News* (Lenoir, North Carolina), September 28, 1908, 1. At the time of the News and Observer's survey of mills, the Catawba Cotton Mill was reported as not operational. This is likely because it had temporarily closed for upgrades and the installation of new machinery.

⁵² "Civil Calendar, Superior Court," *The Newton Enterprise*, February 1, 1912, 3.

⁵³ "Sale of Land and Personal Property for Taxes," *The Newton Enterprise*, August 11, 1910, 2; see also "Sale of Land for Taxes," *The Newton Enterprise*, March 16, 1911, 3.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

construction, in grove along public road and two railroads, desirable location and valuable property....⁵⁴

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills and Industrial Prosperity in Newton, 1912–1927

The Newton Land & Loan Company purchased the property for \$6,000 on Tuesday, December 12, 1911. Joseph Albert Gaither, Secretary-Treasurer of the Newton Land & Loan Company, then organized Ridgeview Hosiery Mills in 1912. Born on April 5, 1872, Gaither was principally involved in real estate and insurance through the Newton Land & Loan Company until development of the Ridgeview Hosiery Mills.⁵⁵ Ridgeview Hosiery Mills was organized with Luther Freeman Long, President; John A. Isenhour, Vice-President; and Joseph Albert Gaither, Secretary-Treasurer. G.A. Warlick and W.B. Gaither were two additional directors. Additional stockholders who were not officers or directors of the company were W.R. Fry and P.E. Isenhower. Company President Luther Freeman Long was a director of the Carolina & Northwestern Railway and served on the Newton City Council.⁵⁶

The 1913 Sanborn Map for Newton clearly illustrated the brick building's early form and arrangement (**Figure 4**).⁵⁷ The one-story mill was sited close to the railroad siding to facilitate freight transportation. Its form, materials, and overall design were typical of small textile mills constructed in the early twentieth century. The east and west walls were 12 inches thick, while the south wall was 17 inches thick. Pilasters that were 4 inches deep by 16 inches wide provided structural reinforcement. The north wall was of frame construction with iron cladding. On the exterior, a wood cornice wrapped around the west, south, and east elevations. Large, rectangular windows lined the east and west walls to illuminate the interior. The interior framing incorporated 8-inch round wooden posts spaced 20 inches by 26 inches apart. Exposed timber trusses supported the low-pitched gable roof. Two sets of fire doors in a 12-inch-thick masonry wall separated the dye house at the south end of the building from the open production space to the north. A small dust vault projected from the west side of the dye house. The wall dividing the dye house from the rest of the mill rose above the roofline to form a 12-inch-tall parapet. Automatic sprinklers protected the entire mill. The building had electric light and was heated with steam. A short distance to the west was a 20,000-gallon water tank of cypress elevated 40 feet above ground on a steel tower.⁵⁸ To the south of the dye house was a small, iron-clad, wood-frame boiler house.⁵⁹

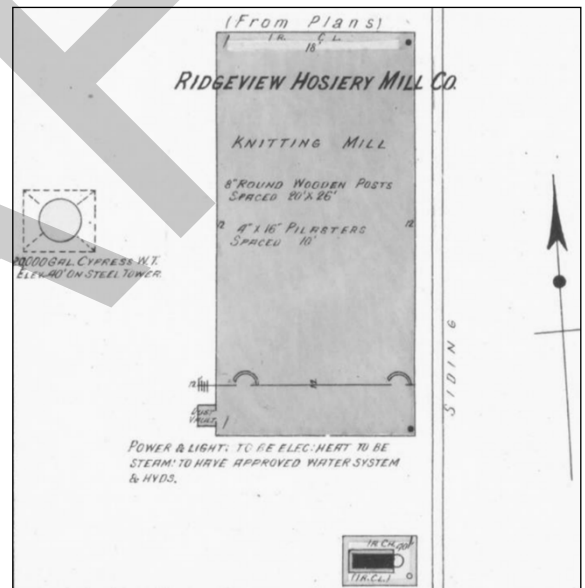


Figure 4: Detail of Sheet 4 of the 1913 Sanborn Map for Newton, showing the original knitting mill and the original frame boiler house.

At this time, Newton outshone Hickory as the nucleus of Catawba County's knitting industry. At the dawn of 1912, Hickory had only two knitting companies: Elliott Knitting Mills and Hickory Hosiery Mills. Both were small concerns. With 65 knitting

⁵⁴ "For Sale: Ridgeview Cotton Mill Building," *The Newton Enterprise*, December 7, 1911, 2.
⁵⁵ "Locals," *The Newton Enterprise*, December 14, 1911, 5; see also "Local And Personal," *Hickory Democrat*, December 5, 1912, 2; see also "Progressive Items," *The Charlotte Evening Chronicle* (Charlotte, North Carolina), August 3, 1912, 3. Joseph Albert Gaither was the son of Junius Robert Gaither, the Newton businessman who had established the county's first hosiery mill in 1895.
⁵⁶ "Representative Men Of North Carolina," *The Charlotte Observer* (Charlotte, North Carolina), July 3, 1914, 8.
⁵⁷ Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Newton* [1913], 4.
⁵⁸ The water tower is no longer extant.
⁵⁹ The boiler house is no longer extant.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

machines, Hickory Hosiery Mills was the larger of the two. Elliott Knitting Mills had only 12 machines. By contrast, Newton was home to Fidelity Knitting Mills with its 200 machines, and Ridgeview Hosiery Mills.⁶⁰

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills began with \$21,000 in capital and announced on December 1, 1912, that it would begin operations “as soon as the machinery could be shipped and placed.”⁶¹ Although it appears that Harrold Yount was hired to serve as the plant’s Superintendent, Marion Morrison ultimately ended up with the position. Morrison had worked at Lillian Mills in Albemarle, in nearby Stanly County. He assisted in founding and setting up Ridgeview Hosiery Mills, particularly in completing construction of the incomplete building first constructed for Ridgeview Cotton Mills.⁶² The company began with 50 200-needle knitting machines.⁶³ All the machinery was in place by February 1913, when the company began training workers on how to use it.⁶⁴ Ridgeview Hosiery Mills officially opened in mid-May 1913, producing a “high grade of hosiery,” specifically cotton knee socks for boys. The first year was overwhelmingly successful. The company sold all of its products and took in more orders than it could fulfill.⁶⁵

The company prospered in its first 10 years. Only two years after opening, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills installed 20 new knitting machines, which “significantly increased production.”⁶⁶ In early January 1916, the company’s shareholders held an annual meeting, at which they re-elected the officers, expanded the board of directors, and discussed future plans. Shareholders approved construction of a separate office building and laid plans for additional worker housing. The office building was under construction by April, when the news reported that it had a vault and sprinkler system.⁶⁷ One of the main issues that hindered production during the late 1910s was the lack of dyestuffs.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the company maintained steady output, with its products sold to retailers through the New York-based company Cannon Mills, which served as the selling agent.⁶⁹

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills added more machinery and built additional worker housing in 1917.⁷⁰ By 1918, the company was producing women’s cotton hosiery on 240 knitting machines, with an additional 5 sewing machines for finishing work. It operated an average of 293 days per year and converted 300,000 pounds of materials into \$276,613 worth of goods. By contrast, the nearby Fidelity Hosiery Mill had only 115 knitting machines and four sewing machines. At 151 days of operation, Fidelity was open less than half the year and produced only \$85,000 worth of goods from 239,000 pounds of material.⁷¹

In the late 1910s, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills ran two shifts. The daytime shift was 11 hours, while the night shift was 12 hours long, and employees worked 60-hour weeks. Ridgeview’s 95 employees comprised 28 men, 51 women, and 16 children. The highest paid male workers made \$4/hour, while the highest paid women earned only \$2.50/hour. The lowest paid men

⁶⁰ “Growth Of Knitting Mills, 1911–1926,” *Southern Textile Bulletin* (Charlotte, North Carolina), March 4, 1926, 32, 118.

⁶¹ “Notes of Newton,” *The Charlotte Observer*, December 1, 1912, 2; see also “New Knitting Business,” *The Charlotte Evening Chronicle* (Charlotte, North Carolina), November 27, 1912, 4.

⁶² “Newton News Events,” *Greensboro Daily News* (Greensboro, North Carolina), February 1, 1913, 6; see also “Locals,” *The Newton Enterprise*, February 13, 1913, 3; see also “45-Year Stint At Ridgeview Comes To End,” *Hickory Daily Record*, December 21, 1959, 24.

⁶³ “Mill News Items Of Interest,” *Southern Textile Bulletin*, January 9, 1913, 12.

⁶⁴ “Newton Items,” *The Charlotte News*, March 13, 1913, 10.

⁶⁵ “Newton Industries Had Splendid Year,” *Greensboro Daily News*, January 4, 1914, 8; see also “45-Year Stint At Ridgeview Comes To End,” *Hickory Daily Record*, December 21, 1959, 24.

⁶⁶ “Local Items,” *The Newton Enterprise*, May 25, 1915, 3.

⁶⁷ “Juniors Present Flag And Bible To Catawba School,” *Greensboro Daily News*, April 2, 1916, 14.

⁶⁸ “Local Items,” *The Newton Enterprise*, May 25, 1915, 3; see also “Ridgeview Mills Did Fine Business,” *Greensboro Daily News*, January 9, 1916, 8; see also “Local Items,” *The Newton Enterprise*, January 11, 1916, 3; see also “Special Service,” *The Charlotte Observer*, May 19, 1913, 5. An investigation of the number, type, and location of worker houses is outside the scope of this nomination and not necessary to establish the historic significance of the mill.

⁶⁹ North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Thirty-First Report of the Department of Labor and Printing*, 83.

⁷⁰ “Record-Breaking Year Indicated For Newton,” *Greensboro Daily News*, January 7, 1917, 18.

⁷¹ North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Thirty-First Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina, 1917–1918* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., 1918), 88–89.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

and women made \$1/hour. All employees were paid weekly. Although it was a much smaller operation with only a single daytime shift of 10 hours, Fidelity Hosiery Mills' employees also worked a 60-hour week. Interestingly, the company employed a staff of 115 comprising 40 men, 60 women, and 15 children whose output was substantially lower than that of Ridgeview Hosiery Mills. The highest paid wage earners made \$3.50/hour (men) and \$2.50/hour (women). The lowest wages paid were \$1.50/hour (men) and \$1.35/hour (women).⁷²

During this period, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills was one of 132 knitting mills across North Carolina and, by some measures, the largest of the seven in Catawba County. Although Fidelity Knitting Mills and Elliott Knitting Mills had more employees, at 115 and 104, respectively, Ridgeview's output had the greatest value. Although it was the third-largest employer among the county's knitting mills, it employed the largest number of children—16—which likely contributed to its second-lowest employee literacy rate of 92.5%. Only the Hickory Hosiery Mill, which appears to have employed no children, had a lower literacy rate at 90%.⁷³

Catawba County's textile industry continued to grow in the late 1910s and 1920s. The Yount Cotton Mill was constructed in 1917 between Newton and Conover. With the additional housing constructed for Ridgeview Hosiery Mills as well as the new mill, newspapers reported that the two towns were nearly becoming "a continuous town five miles long."⁷⁴ Merchant E.E. Garvin and attorney R.J. Shipp built Newton's City Cotton Mill in 1920, and the J.R.G. Hosiery Plant was established in the early 1920s.⁷⁵ In an *Asheville Citizen* feature on Catawba County, the textile mills of Newton were touted for their favorable working conditions and the absence of "strikes and disorder" because the workers weren't unionized. The fact that the mill workers were dependent upon the mills was thought to encourage good work habits that resulted in a "very high grade of manufactured goods."⁷⁶

The 1920s saw substantial improvements to Ridgeview Hosiery Mills. During this period, the company significantly expanded its square footage, production capacity, and consumer products. In 1921, the mill employed 93 people who worked an average of 60 hours per week processing 200,000 pounds of raw materials annually with an estimated output of \$200,000.⁷⁷ In 1924, the company installed 25 new knitting machines.⁷⁸ The following year, the company completed a large addition that doubled its production footprint and capacity and added another 30 new knitting machines.⁷⁹ Illustrated in the 1932 Sanborn Map of Newton (Figure 5), the addition extended the building's footprint to the north and introduced a large roof monitor (extant) that was 30 feet wide by 227 feet long—nearly the entire length of the

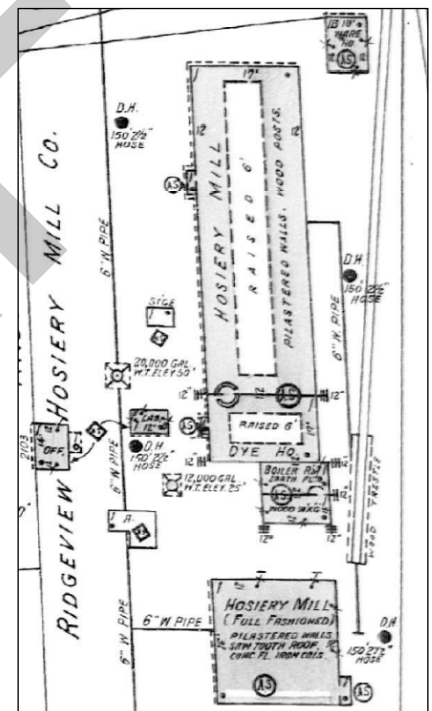


Figure 5. Detail of the 1932 Sanborn Map, showing the 1925 addition to the knitting mill (top) and the 1928 full-fashioned hosiery mill (bottom).

⁷² North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Thirty-First Report of the Department of Labor and Printing*, 94–95. There is no separate information on the children's wages; one may presume that they were grouped by gender. During World War I, the company's workforce was predominantly female. Gary R. Freeze, *She Is Not Yet Finished: A History of Newton, North Carolina* (Newton, North Carolina: Newton Sesquicentennial Committee, 2005), 61.

⁷³ North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Thirty-First Report of the Department of Labor and Printing*, 94–95.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Freeze, *She Is Not Yet Finished*, 70.

⁷⁶ "Catawba County Takes its Name from Catawba Indians: Newton Rapidly Progressing," *The Asheville Citizen* (Asheville, North Carolina), November 30, 1921, 37.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ "Clark's Annual Knitting Machine Increase List," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, January 29, 1925, 16.

⁷⁹ "Mill News Items Of Interest," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, February 19, 1925, 20; see also "Clark's Annual Knitting Machine Increase List," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, March 4, 1926, 23.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

building—to provide additional light and improved ventilation. The addition also extended the dye house to the south, where it connected to the boiler room.

The prolific architectural firm of Richard C. Biberstein may have designed the knitting mill addition.⁸⁰ Based in Charlotte, Biberstein had studied mechanical engineering at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts from 1879 to 1882. Upon graduation, he worked for industrial firms in Newark, New Jersey, and Indianapolis, Indiana, before moving to Charlotte in 1887. He was first employed at the Mecklenburg Iron Works before working for the Charlotte Machine Company in the 1890s.⁸¹ Biberstein's work in mill design began as early as 1895, when he and Charlotte Machine Company president H.S. Chadwick designed and oversaw construction of a mill in Gaffney, South Carolina. By 1899, Biberstein had started his own firm in Charlotte, R.C. Biberstein & Co., which he advertised as "mill architects & engineers." Two years later, Biberstein sold the firm to Stuart W. Cramer, whose engineering company "handle[d] cotton mill machinery." In 1903, Biberstein left Cramer's company to reestablish his own eponymous architecture and engineering firm.⁸²

With 305 machines, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills was the largest of the three knitting mills in Newton by the end of the 1920s. Fidelity Knitting Mills, which was established earlier than Ridgeview, had 200 knitting machines, while the small J.R.G. Hosiery Mill had only 20. Although Hickory had outpaced Newton's growth as a center for knitting—with 891 knitting machines across four plants—textile manufacturing was nevertheless a significant economic and employment sector in the small county seat.⁸³

Conversion To Rayon Hosiery and Twentieth-Century Growth, 1927–1943

Production at Ridgeview Hosiery Mills exploded in the late 1920s, especially as the company shifted from production of cotton to rayon hose. In 1927, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills engaged the Bibersteins to design a second mill on the site to house its new full-fashioned hosiery division, which started out with eight new hosiery machines. The new building was roughly square and featured brick walls and a sawtooth roof (see **Figure 5**). Full-fashioned knitting machines were large, complex systems with thousands of moving parts. Each machine was roughly 40 feet in length and weighed several tons. Because these machines were so complex, their operation and repair required good lighting. The building's sawtooth roof, which incorporated tall clerestory windows, flooded the entire building with abundant natural light. Large, 36-light industrial steel sash windows filled the west, north, and east sides of the building.⁸⁴ In 1929, the company added another eight full-fashioned knitting machines, bringing its total to 16, as part of a \$125,000 machinery and plant enlargement.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ See Footnote 9. The records of the architectural firm Biberstein, Bowles, Meacham & Reed at Special Collections at the J. Murray Atkins Library at the University of North Carolina—Charlotte cover the period 1927–1940. The collection overview indicates, however, that some records may be missing. Given that the firm is documented as having done contract work with Ridgeview Hosiery Mills in the late 1920s, it is reasonable to conclude that the firm may have also completed plans for the 1925 addition to the knitting mill

⁸¹ Thomas W. Hanchett and William H. Huffman, "Biberstein, Richard C.," in North Carolina Architects and Builders, A Biographical Dictionary (blog), 2009. <https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000383>, accessed July 2025.

⁸² "Mill News," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 2, 1896, 1; see also "R.C. Biberstein & Co.," *The Morning Post* (Raleigh, North Carolina), September 6, 1899, 3; see also "Increased Business: The Firm of Stuart W. Cramer, of this City, Establishes a Branch Office in Atlanta, Ga.," *The Charlotte Observer*, July 22, 1901, 6; see also "Mill Architects and Engineers," *Daily Industrial News* (Greensboro, North Carolina), February 27, 1907, 6; see also "R.C. Biberstein Dies Here Of Heart Attack," *The Charlotte News*, September 12, 1931, 12.

⁸³ "Growth Of Knitting Mills," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, March 4, 1926, 32, 118.

⁸⁴ It is likely that the south elevation also featured the same or similar windows, but no supporting documentary evidence is known to exist. The addition constructed in 1935 completely eliminated the south wall.

⁸⁵ "45-Year Stint At Ridgeview Comes To End," *Hickory Daily Record*, December 21, 1959, 24; see also Gary R. Freeze, *The Catawbans, Volume III: Boomers & Bypasses* (Newton, North Carolina: Catawba County, 2016), 16; see also "Increase in Southern Mill Equipment in 1928," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, January 31, 1929, 58; see also Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 255–257; see also "Location of Full Fashioned Hosiery Mills in the South," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, January 30, 1930, 28; see also "Ridgeview Hosiery Mills Put in Eight Machines," *Charlotte Observer*, December 8, 1929, 58. Confirmation of which Biberstein was responsible for design of the mill requires material in Special Collections at the J. Murray Atkins Library at the University of North Carolina—Charlotte, which is closed for construction and not available for research until Spring 2026. By the late 1920s, either or both Richard

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

The 1932 Sanborn Map illustrated the arrangement of ancillary buildings on the property. In addition to the 1916 office (extant), the company had constructed a one-story laboratory (extant) circa 1930 between the office and the hosiery mill. A garage (non-extant) of frame construction was situated to the south of the laboratory. To the north of the laboratory was a one-story frame storage building (non-extant). At the northeast corner of the hosiery mill was a one-story brick warehouse (extant) that the company had constructed circa 1920.

The working environment in a hosiery mill was typically cleaner than that of a cotton mill. Eunice Austin, a former employee in Ridgeview Hosiery Mills' full-fashioned hosiery department, later reported on working conditions at the company. She was one of about 150 men and women employed in the full-fashioned hosiery plant. Austin, whose job involved "topping" the hose, explained that women primarily worked in finishing work after the hosiery was produced on knitting machines operated by men.⁸⁶

There was different steps they had to take in running those machines, and it was kind of heavy work. They had to lift these gears.... [I]t was a hard job for a woman. But during the War they did teach women to do it.

Austin also reported that the work in the full-fashioned hosiery plant paid better than work on the circular knitting machines because it was harder. She earned \$25/week for full-time work after a six-week training period during which her reduced pay was only \$2.50/week.

Newton's textile industry felt the blows of the Great Depression during the summer of 1930, when Catawba Mills was forced to temporarily close before reopening just before Christmas with a reduced workforce of 80 people. The Yount Mill closed as well, and the Newton Cotton Mills was sued by the county for back taxes.⁸⁷ Although the Great Depression's impact on Ridgeview Hosiery Mills was not reported in local newspapers or other outlets, it likely had to limit production for at least a short period of time before the economic recovery efforts of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. New Deal legislation governing textile manufacturing profoundly impacted local companies.

As part of the National Industrial Recovery Act, the United States Congress passed the Code of Fair Competition for the Cotton Textile Industry, which was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on July 9, 1933. Colloquially known as the Cotton Textile Code, the new legislation substantially changed the heretofore unregulated industry. The Cotton Textile Code abolished child labor, limited the number of weekly "machine hours" to 80, reduced the number of daily shifts from three to two, established a new 40-hour work week, and set a new minimum wage of \$12/week (\$0.30/hour) in Southern textile mills.⁸⁸

Despite the fact that the Cotton Textile Code was developed with substantial input from industry leaders nationwide, local mill authorities in Newton complained about the new regulations, stating that these would increase overhead and curtail production. In Newton, City Cotton Mills, Clyde Fabrics, and the Mid-State Cloth Mills all came under the new code, and their leaders expressed frustration with the impact of the regulations on decreased production and increased overhead. Because they worked not with cotton but with rayon, Fidelity and Ridgeview mills initially expected to operate as they had

C. or Herman V. Biberstein could have been involved in the design. When the elder Biberstein died in 1931, his son assumed management of the company.

⁸⁶ Eunice Austin, Interview with Jacquelyn Hall, Documenting the American South (Interview H-0107, Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), 2 July 1980), np. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/H-0107/H-0107.html>, accessed July 2025. Eunice Austin's pay of \$25/week is equivalent to \$580/week in 2025. Austin did not specify in the interview the exact time period when she was earning \$25/week, but from the context of the interview it appears as though it was in the 1930s.

⁸⁷ Freeze, *She Is Not Yet Finished*, 75–76.

⁸⁸ Janet Irons, *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 49–62. The \$0.30/hour minimum wage in 1933 is equivalent to \$7.44 in 2025.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

for the past couple of decades, and it was announced that both companies “were operating on the old basis.” This changed just a few weeks later, when the federal government expanded the regulations to apply to other areas of the textile industry, including rayon and silk production.⁸⁹

Because the Cotton Textile Code limited the number of shifts and hours per work week, mills that wanted to maintain their pre-code production were forced to add new machines and increase their staffing. Perhaps anticipating this need, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills installed new equipment, including four full-fashioned knitting machines, over the course of four months in early 1933. The work was completed by Alfred Johnson, who temporarily relocated to Newton from Reading, Pennsylvania, with his wife from January to April.⁹⁰ Likely in response to the new legislation, Ridgeview added four more full-fashioned knitting machines in February 1934. One year later, the company built a 100-foot by 75-foot addition to its full-fashioned knitting mill that more than doubled the production area. The firm of Biberstein, Bowles, Meacham, and Reid—established after the death of Richard C. Biberstein in 1931—designed the addition.⁹¹ Constructed by local contractors Herman-Sipe, the addition was remarkably similar in design to the original 1928 building, replicating the pilastered walls and sawtooth roof. An important change to the building was the installation of air conditioning. The addition housed another eight new full-fashioned knitting machines, making it one of the largest hosiery plants in Catawba County. The company continued growing in 1936, when it installed 41 new circular knitting machines in the main hosiery mill.⁹²

In the mid-1930s, Catawba County was one of the state’s leading textile producers. Its 16 hosiery mills employed a total of 2,414 people, of whom nearly 70 percent were women.⁹³ Ridgeview Hosiery Mills had 350 workers, making it the second-largest industrial employer in Newton, behind only Clyde Fabrics.⁹⁴ By 1935, only two years after passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act and the Cotton Textile Code, Newton was a productive textile town. In addition to Ridgeview Hosiery Mills, the town’s largest employers were the Clyde Fabric Company, Fiber Manufacturing Company, Mid-State Cloth Mills, New City Mills, and Fidelity Hosiery Mills.⁹⁵ Two years later, the owner of the Catawba Ice and Fuel Company, Horace Isenhour, got in on the textile boom and established Newton Knitting Mills near Ridgeview Hosiery Mills. When completed, the plant had a workforce of nearly 40 people.⁹⁶

Although the labor disputes of the 1930s impacted textile mills across the western Piedmont region, plants in Newton appeared to weather the decade largely unscathed. The General Strike of 1934, which shut down numerous plants in early September, did not affect any of the mills in Newton.⁹⁷ Established in 1937, the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) targeted Shuford Mills in Hickory, where union officials Seth P. Brewer and Floyd Stanton met with mill owner A. Alex Shuford, Jr. Shuford refused to sign a contract that allowed the Textile Workers Organizing Committee (TWOC) to engage in collective bargaining. Although Shuford claimed that the mill operated at a loss, employees complaining about being overworked contradicted Shuford’s assertion. At Hickory Spinners in Longview, 140 of the 150 employees walked out in

⁸⁹ “Claim Production Is Cut By Code,” *The Charlotte News*, July 19, 1933, 9.; see also National Recovery Administration, *Code of Fair Competition for the Cotton Textile Industry, as Approved on July 9, 1933, by President Roosevelt* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 20.

⁹⁰ “PA. Couple In Newton,” *Hickory Daily Record*, January 10, 1933, 2; see also “Return to PA,” *Hickory Daily Record*, April 10, 1933, 6; see also “Clark’s Annual Full-Fashioned Machine Increase List,” *Southern Textile Bulletin*, February 15, 1934, 41.

⁹¹ Thomas W. Hanchett and William H. Huffman, “Biberstein, Richard C.” in North Carolina Architects and Builders, A Biographical Dictionary (blog), 2009. <https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000383>, accessed July 2025, np.

⁹² “State Retains Lead In Hosiery Making,” *Greensboro Daily News*, February 23, 1934, 9; see also “Mill Addition Operating,” *Hickory Daily Record*, June 21, 1935), 7; see also “Big Expansion Made In Local Hosiery Mills,” *Hickory Daily Record*, March 5, 1936, 1; see also “Annual Machinery Increase Figures,” *Southern Textile Bulletin*, March 5, 1936, 114; see also “Circular Knitting Machine Increase,” *Southern Textile Bulletin*, February 11, 1937, 8.

⁹³ Hickory Mills Not Expecting Any Walkouts,” *Hickory Daily Record*, September 10, 1934, 1.

⁹⁴ “2,000 People On Mill Rolls,” *Hickory Daily Record*, October 30, 1936, 7; see also “Vacation Planned By Hosiery Mills,” *Hickory Daily Record*, July 30, 1937, 8.

⁹⁵ “Visiting the Mills,” *Southern Textile Bulletin*, June 27, 1935, 26.

⁹⁶ “Planning New Hosiery Mill,” *Hickory Daily Record*, October 14, 1937, 1.

⁹⁷ “Hickory Mills Not Expecting Any Walkouts,” *Hickory Daily Record*, September 10, 1934, 1.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

October 1937. The strike then spread to the cordage plant at Granite Falls in neighboring Caldwell County.⁹⁸ Ridgeview Hosiery Mills appears to have been unaffected by the disputes arising in other mills in Catawba and surrounding counties.

By 1938, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills had a total of 28 full-fashioned knitting machines and 341 circular knitting machines producing seamless and full-fashioned hosiery for women. In that year, the company announced another expansion, likely involving its 1939 conversion from rayon to nylon hose production.⁹⁹ Except for a brief period during World War II, when Ridgeview produced seamless cotton socks for the Army, the company continued to produce nylon hosiery into the late twentieth century.¹⁰⁰

Joseph Albert Gaither died on April 19, 1943. He was President of Ridgeview Hosiery Mills at the time of his death and had served as President of the Shuford National Bank in Newton before ill health necessitated his resignation in 1942. His sons, Junius Robert Gaither and William Cowles Gaither, were mill executives and assumed leadership when their father died.¹⁰¹ Junius Robert Gaither became President and Treasurer, while W. Cowles Gaither took on the dual role of Vice-President and Secretary. Junius Gaither's son, Robert Gaither, was appointed Assistant Secretary and Treasurer, providing support to both his father and uncle.¹⁰²

Post-World War II Industry and Second-Generation Leadership, 1943–1976

North Carolina's textile industry—and hosiery manufacturing, in particular—evolved to meet the changing demands of the post-World War II market. Despite its popularity from the 1930s to the 1950s, full-fashioned hosiery was slow and complicated to make, requiring the extra steps of finishing the flat panel with a toe, heel, and seam. This production method had the further disadvantage of requiring that full-fashioned hosiery be sized for the wearer. These features of full-fashioned hosiery made it difficult to mass produce, limiting hosiery companies' output and, ultimately, profits. The development of stretch yarns in the 1940s enabled the production of seamless, circular-knit, fine-gauge hosiery to fit a broader range of sizes. Locally, the Hickory-based manufacturer Regal began making elastic yarns in 1956, supplying local hosiery plants that included Ridgeview Hosiery Mills.¹⁰³ The 1959 development of pantyhose—which joined two hosiery legs with a panty at the top—revolutionized the hosiery industry.

The post-World War II period eventually saw a shift in ownership of hosiery mills that paralleled other segments of the textile industry. Larger national corporations had begun acquiring small hosiery companies. Despite this national shift, hosiery mills in Catawba County largely remained independent. By 1962, there were 67 knitting companies in Hickory, three in Catawba, three in Claremont, two in Conover, and five in Newton. In 1959, they joined together to organize the Catawba Valley Hosiery Club, which held its first trade show in Hickory in 1960. In 1966, the organization partnered with the City of Hickory and the Catawba County Chamber of Commerce to build a civic center in Hickory that would host the organization's annual Hosiery Fair and other events.¹⁰⁴

Under the leadership of the second generation of the Gaither family, production at Ridgeview Hosiery Mills followed the production pattern that was occurring across the state. After World War II, Ridgeview installed 400 new fine gauge needle machines.¹⁰⁵ Between 1950 and 1951, the company added onto the knitting mill. In 1955, the company built additions on the knitting mill and full-fashioned hosiery mill, increasing its capital from \$500,000 to \$1,250,000 with a plan to expand

⁹⁸ Freeze, *The Catawbans, Volume Two*, 349.

⁹⁹ "Mill News Items," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, April 21, 1938, 32; see also Freeze, *The Catawbans, Volume III*, 16.

¹⁰⁰ Freeze, *The Catawbans, Volume III*, 16.

¹⁰¹ "J.A. Gaither, Newton Mill Head, Is Dead," *Hickory Daily Record*, April 19, 1943, 1.

¹⁰² "Neighboring Notables," *Hickory Daily Record*, April 14, 1955, 1.

¹⁰³ "Regal To Cut More Than 100 Jobs," *Hickory Daily Record*, January 8, 2004, 11.

¹⁰⁴ "City Altrusa Club Meets," *Hickory Daily Record*, February 24, 1983, 17; see also "Hosiery Men Told Future Bright Despite Problems," *Hickory Daily Record*, April 6, 1966, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Freeze, *The Catawbans, Volume 2*, 457.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

production over the next two years. Two years later, the company added 120 knitting machines for the production of seamless nylon stockings.¹⁰⁶ The company continued to produce both seamless and full-fashioned hosiery until 1962. In that year, Ridgeview sold its full-fashioned hosiery machines and shifted to only ladies' seamless hosiery production. Around this time, the company constructed another addition between and connecting the two mills.¹⁰⁷ Ridgeview Hosiery Mills exclusively produced women's pantyhose from the 1960s to the mid-1970s. At that time, the company employed 280 workers with a total annual payroll of \$1 million. Ridgeview's products, including its Air-Genic line of pantyhose, were distributed to wholesalers, chain stores, and large department stores like Belk's.¹⁰⁸ Around 1966, the company opened an outlet store at the mill.¹⁰⁹

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills remained in continuous operation after World War II. During this period, it remained family-owned and -operated, with the second and third generation of Gaithers in charge of the company. William Cowles Gaither (1900–1984) was President of Ridgeview Hosiery Mills and his brother, Junius Robert Gaither, Sr. (1898–1977), was Chairman of the Board of Directors. The latter's son, Junius Robert Gaither, Jr. (1923–2013) was the company's Vice-President and Treasurer. William's son, Albert Cowles Gaither (1931–2019) served as Secretary.¹¹⁰ Ridgeview Hosiery Mills expanded again in 1968 with an addition to the former full-fashioned hosiery mill. The firm Architectural Design of Newton developed the plans.¹¹¹ The addition was typical of the time and featured brick exterior walls with no windows. The only ornamental detail was a continuous band of vertical rows of projecting brick at the top of the west, south, and east walls.

In 1970, J.R. Gaither was president of the mill and J. Robert Gaither, Jr. was Vice-President.¹¹² In that year, J. Robert Gaither, Jr. was appointed to the board of the National Association of Hosiery Manufacturers.¹¹³ By 1970, the company employed 360 workers with an annual payroll of \$1.6 million.¹¹⁴

Diversification and Decline, 1976–Present

The late 1970s saw the hosiery industry evolve from primarily producing women's pantyhose to the production of athletic socks.¹¹⁵ The same stretch yarns that enabled development of seamless hosiery in earlier decades also revolutionized the sportswear market during the fitness boom of the late twentieth century. As with ladies' hosiery, it allowed manufacturers to produce athletic socks that fit a larger range of sizes for men, women, and children.¹¹⁶ During this period, the hosiery market was so strong in Catawba County that unemployment was virtually unknown.¹¹⁷

Despite periods of strong sales, the market for ladies' hosiery fluctuated with changing consumer tastes. Ridgeview Hosiery Mills experienced cyclical highs and lows, leading executives to look for ways to diversify its product line and consumer base for increased stability and profits. In 1976, Ridgeview acquired Servco, a small, Conover-based company that

¹⁰⁶ Area Population To Gain Rapidly," *The Charlotte News*, December 30, 1955, 15.

¹⁰⁷ This addition was demolished in 2020–2022.

¹⁰⁸ "Newton Mill in 53rd Year of Service," *Hickory Daily Record*, September 9, 1965, 29; see also "Newton Firm Makes It Big In Socks, Hose," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 3, 1987, 21; see also "Hosiery Industry Moves To Meet Fitness Boom," *Durham Morning Herald*, September 22, 1978, 7; see also "Call Quest," *The Charlotte News*, February 22, 1974, 1.

¹⁰⁹ "Ridgeview, Soffe Combine For Outlet Venture," *Hickory Daily Record*, August 11, 1994, 15.

¹¹⁰ "They Head Ridgeview," *Observer-News Enterprise* (Newton, North Carolina), January 27, 1964, 1.

¹¹¹ "Broughton Bids," *Hickory Daily Record*, May 11, 1968, 8.

¹¹² "Bank Official Sees Waning," *Hickory Daily Record*, February 10, 1970, 9; see also "Selected For Hosiery Board," *Hickory Daily Record*, April 30, 1970, 12.

¹¹³ "Selected For Hosiery Board," *Hickory Daily Record*, April 30, 1970, 12.

¹¹⁴ "Company In Business Since 1912," *Hickory Daily Record*, June 6, 1970, 80.

¹¹⁵ "Hosiery Industry Moves To Meet Fitness Boom," *Durham Morning Herald*, September 22, 1978, 7.

¹¹⁶ "Hosiery Industry Moves To Meet Fitness Boom," *Durham Morning Herald*, September 22, 1978, 7; "Booties to Toppers; They Sock It to You," *Winston-Salem Journal*, October 29, 1978, 63.

¹¹⁷ "N.C.'s Loom Boom: The How Of Hosiery," *Durham Morning Herald*, October 8, 1978, 27.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

manufactured and distributed athletic socks.¹¹⁸ This was a major step for the company, which immediately expanded its offerings from ladies' hosiery to include athletic socks and accessories such as sweat bands and elbow and knee pads. Its new socks were produced in lines developed for different sports, like jogging, tennis, and golf. The company also produced men's dress socks and work socks as well as novelty socks and styles evocative of vintage fashion, such as argyle-patterned socks. This diversification allowed the company to reach a wider market. Women's hosiery knit during this period was white and then dyed after production in one of 1,500 different shades. A set of pantyhose took a couple minutes to produce, while the machinery could knit knee-highs at the rate of one every 30 seconds.¹¹⁹

After several years of declining health, Junius Robert Gaither, Sr. died on Tuesday, May 17, 1977, passing on leadership of the company to Hugh Gaither. By that time, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills employed 450 people on three shifts. The following year, company executive Al Gaither described the firm as a "small-to-medium-sized private label hosiery operation," meaning that Ridgeview produced hosiery for other companies to sell under their branding.¹²⁰

The late 1970s and 1980s saw explosive demand for Ridgeview Hosiery Mills' products, necessitating additional production space. Circa 1980, the company constructed a one-story, steel-frame building on a concrete foundation south of the full-fashioned hosiery mill. Banked into the sloping hillside that rose to the north from East 20th Street, the new plant had metal-clad walls above a masonry-veneered lower level that was exposed on the south end. In 1983, the company began a direct-to-consumers advertisement campaign through ESPN that cost the company "several hundred thousand dollars."¹²¹ Around 1985, Ridgeview became the official supplier of socks for the National Basketball Association.¹²² One year later, Ridgeview produced 32 million pairs of socks and hosiery. By that time, the company employed 560 people and had expanded production to plants in Johnson City, Tennessee, and Tralee, Ireland.¹²³

In the mid-1980s, most of Ridgeview Hosiery Mills' 400 employees at the Newton plant were women making close to minimum wage, while men employed by the company earned more for the same or similar work.¹²⁴ Many of the employees had babies and small children for whom childcare costs could be unaffordable. In an effort to improve employee morale, lower childcare costs, and compete with other industrial employers, company executives polled the employees to learn if they would like on-site childcare. Many parents replied affirmatively. In 1988, Ridgeview constructed a separate 3,000-square-foot building at the northwest corner of its property to house a day care and child development program for its workers. The program, called "A Child's View," began in 1989 and cared for children from birth to school age, with teachers employed by the mill with full company benefits.¹²⁵

In 1995, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills paid \$7 million to purchase a knitting mill in Seneca Falls, New York. In 1996, the company's stock went public, raising \$11.2 million in an initial stock offering. Three years later, Ridgeview bought Tri-Star Hosiery, of Mebane, North Carolina, for \$5 million. This rapid expansion and borrowing extended the company's reach and financial risk. When the Seneca Falls facility failed in 1999, the company closed the plant, taking a tax charge of \$1.3 million.¹²⁶

¹¹⁸ "Fitness fad helps Ridgeview grab giant 'toehold' in athletic socks," *The Charlotte News*, April 20, 1983, 8.

¹¹⁹ "N.C.'s Loom Boom: The How Of Hosiery," *Durham Morning Herald*, October 8, 1978, 27; see also "Booties to Toppers; They Sock It to You," *Winston-Salem Journal*, October 29, 1978, 63.

¹²⁰ "Newton Business, Civic Leader, Junius R. Gaither, Is Dead At 78," *The Charlotte Observer*, May 18, 1977, 9; see also "N.C.'s Loom Boom: The How Of Hosiery," *Durham Morning Herald*, October 8, 1978, 27.

¹²¹ "Ads will 'sock' it to consumers," *The Charlotte News*, April 20, 1983, 8.

¹²² "Newton Firm Makes It Big In Socks, Hose," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 3, 1987, 21.

¹²³ Freeze, *The Catawbans*, Volume III, 410.

¹²⁴ "Area Residents Air ERA Opinions On Air," *Hickory Daily Record*, April 15, 1982, 23.

¹²⁵ "Ridgeview Inc. To Provide Day Care," *Hickory Daily Record*, July 23, 1988, 12; see also "Families make up fiber of hosiery plants," *The Charlotte Observer*, September 22, 1996, 240; see also "Mill Keeps Workers' Children Near," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 19, 1989, 248.

¹²⁶ "Rise and fall of Ridgeview tied to life in Newton," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 28, 2001, 209–210.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

Historian Gary R. Freeze characterized the last decades of the twentieth century for the textile industry as an “endlessly changing chain of ownership.”¹²⁷ The second half of the twentieth century saw scores of corporate mergers within the manufacturing sector as companies braced themselves against international competition fueled in part by cheaper labor costs overseas, particularly in Asia and Southeast Asia. Demand for new products drove a mill’s success, and those that could not keep up with competition fell behind. Responding to international competition in 1982, Hickory-based Regal, a manufacturer of stretch yarns and supplier to Ridgeview Hosiery Mills, closed its sportswear operation.¹²⁸ In 1991, Newton Cotton Mills was acquired by Carolina Associated Mills, which was owned by a Tennessee firm. By 1991, Newton Cotton Mills employed fewer than 100 people.¹²⁹ The 1994 passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which eliminated trade barriers among Mexico, Canada, and the United States, was another blow to the textile industry. These global shifts in manufacturing and trade set off a domino effect within the United States’ manufacturing sector. Many U.S.-based companies downsized or closed by the early 2000s. In the 1990s and early 2000s, international competition, driven in part by cheap overseas labor and combined with a decrease in market demand, overran the American market for socks and hosiery.¹³⁰

In 1999, the Ridgeview Hosiery Mills employed a total of 970 people. Although profits in the third quarter of 1999 were ahead by 8.7%, the company appeared to be struggling financially. Plans in late 1999 and 2000 to sell off all or parts of the company, including an arrangement to sell the ladies’ hosiery division to one of Ridgeview’s executives, never came to fruition. Ridgeview ultimately filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in August 2000 and liquidated its assets in 2001.¹³¹

In May 2001, the company subdivided its Newton property into four lots (**Figure 6**).¹³² Over the next two years, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills sold all its Newton property. The first tract sold was Lot 4. On June 21, 2001, the company conveyed the circa 1980 building to A.C. Woody, who headed the Catawba Valley Knitting and Finishing Company since 1966.¹³³ Shawn and Gloria Corpening of Lenoir, Caldwell County, bought Lot 1 in March 2002.¹³⁴ In October 2003, Ridgeview sold Lots 2 and 3, to Willard G. Black of Hickory.¹³⁵

¹²⁷ Gary R. Freeze, *The Catawbans, Volume III*, 411.

¹²⁸ “Regal To Cut More Than 100 Jobs,” *Hickory Daily Record*, January 8, 2004, 11.

¹²⁹ Gary R. Freeze, *The Catawbans, Volume III: Boomers & Bypasses* (Newton, North Carolina: Catawba County, 2016), 410.

¹³⁰ “Rise and fall of Ridgeview tied to life in Newton,” *The Charlotte Observer*, January 28, 2001, 210.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Catawba County Register of Deeds, “A Minor Subdivision for Ridgeview, Inc.,” May 22, 2001, Plat Book 54, 2. Lot 1, containing 0.81 acres and the 1988 childcare center, was situated on the southeast corner of the intersection of North Main Avenue and East 22nd Street. Lot 2, a vacant lot containing 0.80 acres, was immediately south of Lot 1 and had frontage on North Main Avenue. Lot 3, which was L-shaped and totaled 9.07 acres with frontage on North Main Avenue and East 22nd Street, held the original mill building, full-fashioned hosiery mill, historic laboratory, two warehouses, and the original office. Lot 4, containing 4.08 acres and the circa 1980 plant, was at the south end of the property and had frontage on North Main Avenue and East 20th Street.

¹³³ Catawba County Register of Deeds, June 21, 2001, Deed Book 2292, 1515; see also “Newton Finishing Firm Dissolved,” *Hickory Daily Record*, June 6, 1966, 4; see also “Firm, Fraternity Become Incorporated; Merger Set,” *Hickory Daily Record*, June 14, 1966, 15; see also “A.C. Woody: A private man of character,” *Hickory Daily Record*, July 25, 2005, 4. The building remains in use as a sock factory.

¹³⁴ Catawba County Register of Deeds, March 5, 2002, Deed Book 2345, 89.

¹³⁵ Catawba County Register of Deeds, October 30, 2003, Deed Book 2528, 525.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills
 Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina
 County and State

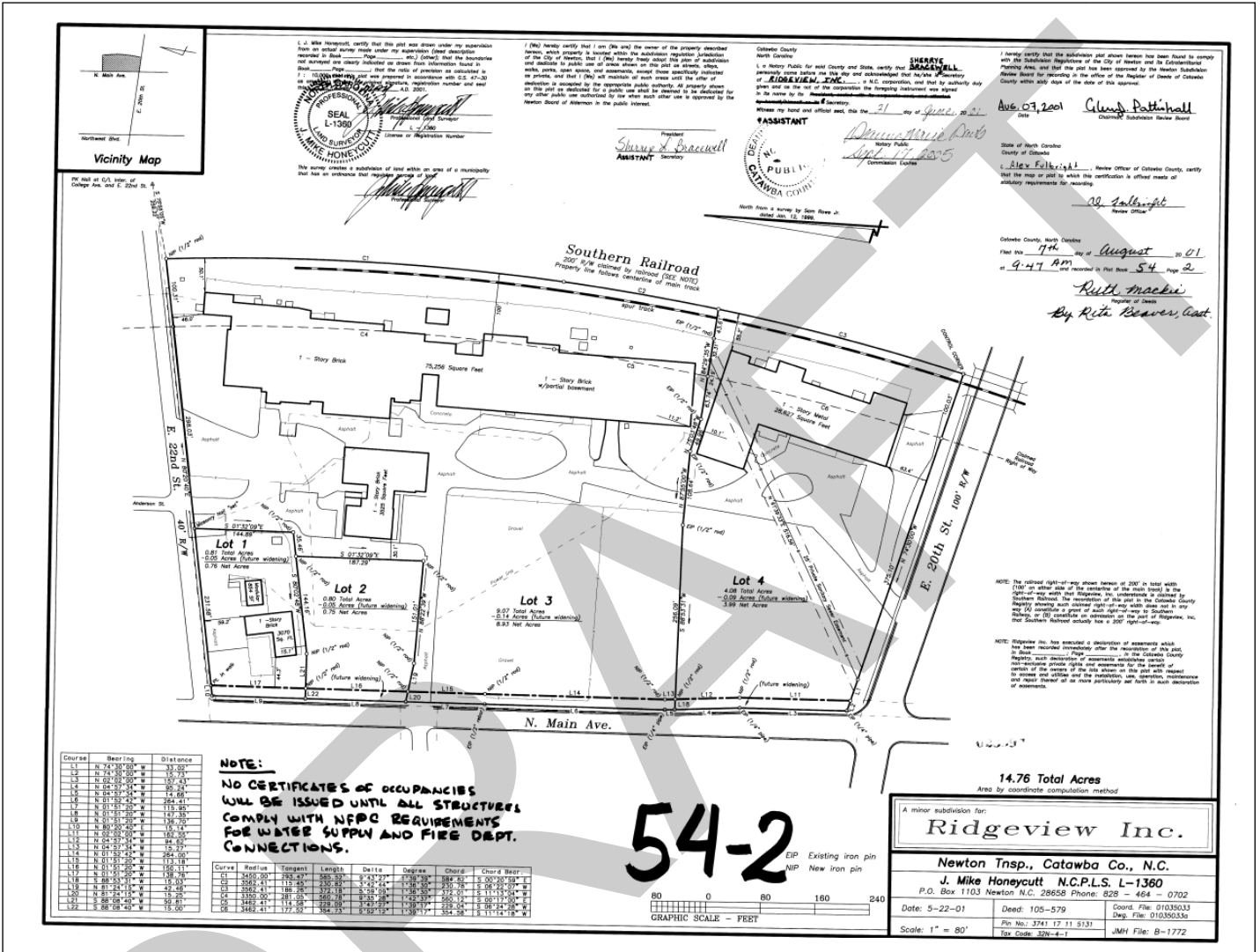


Figure 6: "A minor subdivision for Ridgeview Inc.," dated May 22, 2001.

In January 2004, Willard G. Black completed a boundary adjustment for Lots 2 and 3 (Figure 7).¹³⁶ The adjustment transferred 0.98 acres from Lot 3, including the 1916 mill office, and added it to Lot 2, making it a 1.78-acre parcel and reducing the size of Lot 3 to 7.84 acres. Retaining ownership of Lot 3, Black then sold Lot 2 to Shawn and Gloria Corpening, who had previously purchased Lot 1.¹³⁷ In 2020, Black sold Lot 3 to Matthew J. and Deanna L. Tornow of Statesville.¹³⁸

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills' decline was not unique. In fact, it was typical of textile manufacturers across Catawba County and North Carolina. By October 2004, so many plant closures had occurred in the western Piedmont region that a four-county region including Catawba County saw the highest unemployment rate in the state.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Catawba County Register of Deeds, "A boundary adjustment for Willard G. Black," January 22, 2004, Plat Book 59, 180.
¹³⁷ Catawba County Register of Deeds, April 19, 2004, Deed Book 2572, 898. Lots 1 and 2 are now in the possession of Corpening Holdings of NC, LLC.
¹³⁸ Catawba County Register of Deeds, June 4, 2020, Deed Book 3576, 654.
¹³⁹ "Jobless ranks drop in Hickory region," *The Charlotte Observer*, December 31, 2004, V1.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills
 Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina
 County and State

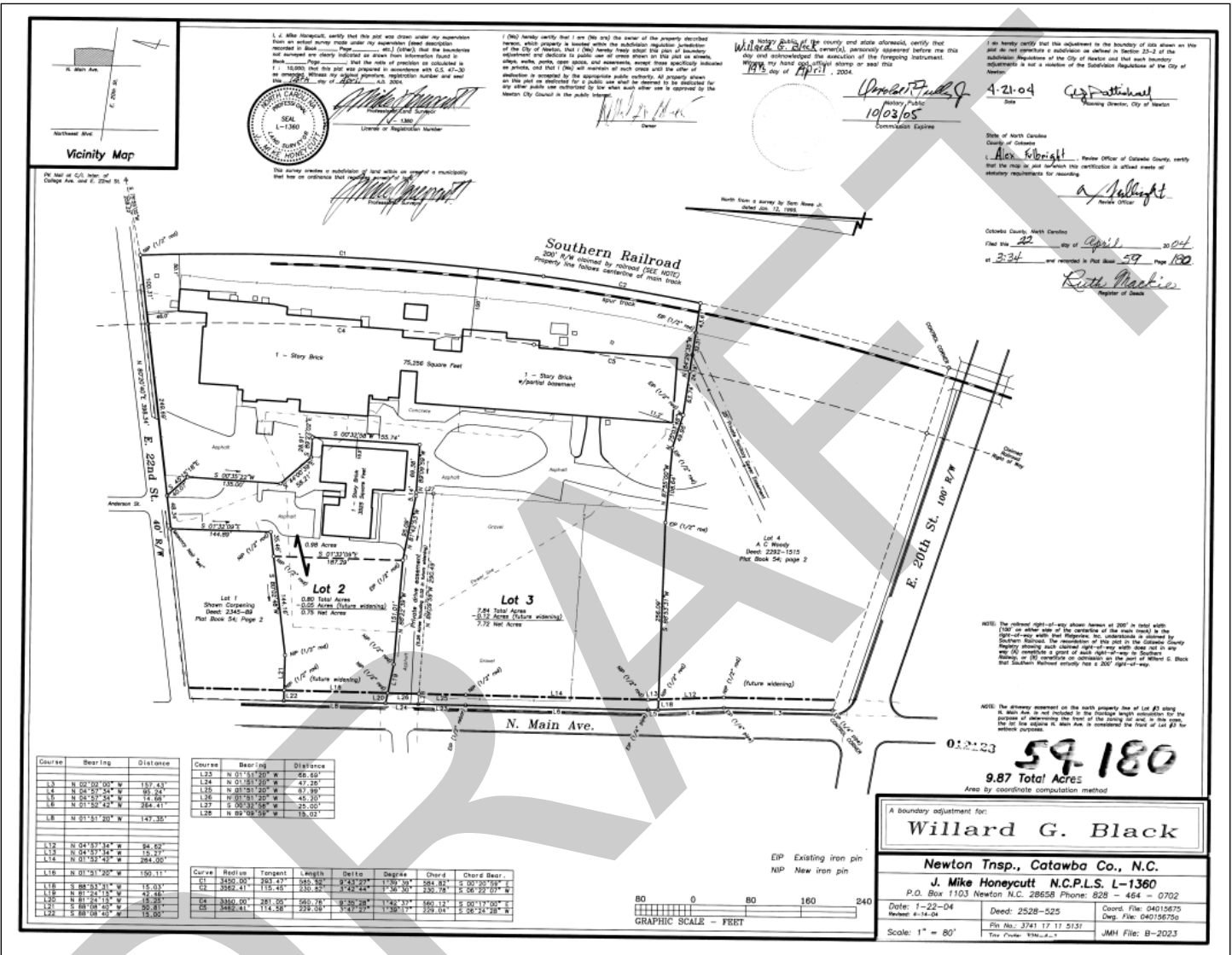


Figure 7: "A boundary adjustment for Willard G. Black," dated January 22, 2004, and revised April 14, 2004.

Postscript: The State of Newton's Textile Mills in 2026

Once heavily industrial, most of Newton's manufacturing facilities had closed by 2010, and some of the buildings were demolished. Brookford Mills (circa 1933) was demolished between April 2014 and December 2015. Catawba Cotton Mill (circa 1903) was demolished between 2014 and 2016. The two-story Clyde Cotton Mills (circa 1905), at the intersection of North Main Avenue and East 15th Street, was typical of many cotton mills constructed across North Carolina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was demolished and rebuilt circa 1960.¹⁴⁰

Three extant textile mills are associated with the historically significant theme of industrial progress in Newton from the early establishment of the textile industry through the late twentieth century. Newton Cotton Mills began production in

¹⁴⁰ "Clyde Mill, One Of Newton's Most Substantial Enterprises," *The Charlotte News*, February 21, 1917, 30.
 Section 8, Page 30

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

February 1883.¹⁴¹ The company enlarged the building twice by February 1888, and operated 3,040 spindles.¹⁴² An addition was constructed in the summer of 1888 to accommodate another 1,800 spindles, followed by two more additions by 1893.¹⁴³ Likely owing to the Panic of 1893, the company went into receivership in August of that year. The mill was sold at auction on April 2, 1894, where it was acquired by the Heath Brothers of Charlotte. The Heath Brothers upgraded the mill, built a 1,200-square-foot addition, and installed new machinery.¹⁴⁴ Mecklenburg Mills, a company based in Charlotte, acquired the property in the early twentieth century. Additions constructed during the first half of the twentieth century extended the building's footprint south. Chattanooga-based Dixie Yarns owned the property in the late twentieth century and sold it to Pillowtex Corporation in 1995. Pillowtex closed its plant in the early 2000s.¹⁴⁵ The property is now owned by Schwarz & Schwarz, LLC, a subsidiary of the Asheboro, North Carolina-based real estate company Schwarz Properties. Today, the Newton Cotton Mills building appears to be largely intact. The original 1883 mill remains and has numerous additions and alterations constructed through the mid-twentieth century. Nearly all of the windows have been infilled with brick. Because of the extensive alterations over a 70-year period, the form of the original mill is not discernable from the outside.

The Warlick Manufacturing Company was established in 1925 for the production of rayon cloth. The company constructed its textile mill on North College Avenue between East 4th Street and East 5th Street and built an addition in 1930 to house additional looms.¹⁴⁶ The Warlick Manufacturing Company went into receivership in the summer of 1932.¹⁴⁷ John Cilley, Jr., who had been receiver of the Warlick Manufacturing Company's defunct rayon plant, was the President of Mid-State Cloth Mills. In 1933, Mid-State Cloth Mills constructed a large, two-story, brick addition to house the winding division. The plant was enlarged again in 1939 with the construction of a two-story, 25,000-square-foot addition.¹⁴⁸ In January 1940, Greensboro-based Burlington Mills acquired the Mid-State Cloth Mills plant in Newton.¹⁴⁹ It appears as though textile manufacturing on the property ceased in the mid-1980s. Today, the building is a self-storage facility with the interior partitioned by an extensive network of metal storage units.

Established in 1916, the Newton Glove Manufacturing Company manufactured cotton and leather work gloves.¹⁵⁰ The company moved into a new plant in 1926.¹⁵¹ During World War II, the company manufactured poison gas-resistant gloves for the Army. During the 1940s, the company expanded its footprint by the construction of an office building and a large addition to its manufacturing space.¹⁵² In 1950, the Newton Glove Manufacturing Company announced plans to construct a new factory at North Ashe Avenue between West 10th Street and West 11th Street.¹⁵³ The following year, the company

¹⁴¹ "State News," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 13, 1883, 4.

¹⁴² "Newton Cotton Mills are Booming," *The Charlotte Observer*, June 18, 1887, 1; see also "North Carolina's Cotton Mills," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 8, 1888, 2.

¹⁴³ "Local News," *The Newton Enterprise*, February 17, 1893, 3.

¹⁴⁴ "State News," *The Statesville Record and Landmark*, August 24, 1893, 1; see also "Notice! Public Sale of Newton Cotton Mills!" *The Charlotte Observer*, February 27, 1894, 1; see also "Pithy News Items," *The Marion Record* (Marion, North Carolina), May 18, 1894, 2; see also "The Newton Cotton Mill," *The Charlotte Observer*, September 7, 1894, 4.

¹⁴⁵ "City's got the power to prosper," *Hickory Daily Record*, January 25, 2004, 7.

¹⁴⁶ "Charters Issued By The Secretary," *The Asheville Citizen*, January 1, 1926, 11; see also "More Looms," *The Charlotte Observer*, August 3, 1930, 31.

¹⁴⁷ "Jno. Cilley, Jr. Made Receiver For Silk Mill," *Hickory Daily Record*, July 18, 1932, 6.

¹⁴⁸ "Cilley Heads Company," *Hickory Daily Record*, November 21, 1932, 1; see also "N.Y. Men Purchase Newton Concern," *The Charlotte News*, November 21, 1932, 1; see also "Newton Mill Raises Wages, Adds To Plant," *Hickory Daily Record*, May 21, 1933, 3; see also "Mid-State Mill To Be Doubled," *Hickory Daily Record*, February 21, 1939, 8.

¹⁴⁹ "Unit At Newton Sold To Burlington Mills," *Greensboro Daily News*, January 9, 1940, 16.

¹⁵⁰ "Newton Glove Factory In Full Operation," *The Charlotte Observer*, June 2, 1916, 2.

¹⁵¹ "Newton In 1926 Had Good Steady Growth," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 13, 1927, 55. The location of this plant is not presently known.

¹⁵² "Newton Notes Much Moving, Some Building," *Hickory Daily Record*, February 19, 1942, 8; see also "Executives Plan To Invest Greater Sum In Carolina's Mills," *Durham Morning Herald*, September 29, 1945, 3; see also "Newton Glove Maps Addition," *Hickory Daily Record*, August 2, 1946, 5.

¹⁵³ "Newton Glove Company Is Planning Expansion," *Hickory Daily Record*, October 13, 1950, 12.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

more than doubled the building's size by constructing a large addition that extended south toward West 9th Street.¹⁵⁴ Newton Glove continued to operate as an independent company until 1973, when it was acquired by the Massachusetts-based Norton Company.¹⁵⁵ The property is now home to Newton Coley, a manufacturer of upholstered furniture. The property retains the overall size and form that it had in the 1950s but has been substantially altered since the 1970s. Most of the windows have been infilled with brick, and a loading dock has been added to the west elevation along Ashe Street. On the north end of the building, it retains five large window openings that are filled with glass block that appears to date to the early 1950s construction.

Like Ridgeview Hosiery Mills, all three of these firms operated from the early 1900s to the last decades of the twentieth century. Each property represents a different segment of the textile industry—yarn production, rayon cloth making, and glove manufacturing—and each was an important part of Newton's industrial history.

Each has been altered in a manner similar to Ridgeview Hosiery Mills. Newton Cotton Mills was built in 1883 and expanded over several construction phases in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Warlick Manufacturing Company—Mid-State Cloth Mills—Burlington Mills building was built in 1925 and expanded in 1930 before new additions were built by its subsequent owners. These additions were completed as production at both mills expanded and evolved to meet changing market demands and to accommodate more and newer machinery. The Newton Glove Manufacturing Company stands out as a mill that was constructed in the 1950s, as the company accommodated the need for increased production space by building an entirely new plant rather than adding onto its original building. Its addition was built within two years of completion of the 1950 building. Each of these properties highlights the constant change within industrial settings. Like Ridgeview Hosiery Mills, the Newton Cotton Mills building is currently vacant. The Newton Glove Manufacturing Company was adapted for use as a furniture factory in the late twentieth century. The Warlick Manufacturing Company—Mid-State Cloth Mills—Burlington Mills building has been substantially altered by its conversion to a self-storage facility.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills is locally significant and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significant association with textile manufacturing in Newton, Catawba County, from 1912 to 1975. In comparison to three extant textile mills in Newton, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills is a remarkable example of a company that remained in its original ownership from its 1912 founding through the late 1900s. It continued to manufacture ladies' hosiery throughout its history and only expanded production into athletic socks in the late 1970s, after the Period of Significance. Particularly in comparison to the Warlick Manufacturing Company—Mid-State Cloth Mills—Burlington Mills building, which is now used as a self-storage facility, Ridgeview Hosiery Mills retains stronger integrity of design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling. Its integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is favorably comparable to that of Newton Cotton Mills and the Newton Glove Manufacturing Company.

¹⁵⁴ "New Plant Newton Glove Company," *Hickory Daily Record*, February 15, 1952, 5.

¹⁵⁵ "Norton Co., Massachusetts, Acquires Newton Glove Inc." *Hickory Daily Record*, June 1, 1973, 1.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

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Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

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Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

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County and State

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Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

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Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

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Catawba County, North Carolina

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: **Office of Archives & History;**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): CT1836

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills
Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.78 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum, if other than WGS

A 35.684681 -81.216941
Latitude Longitude

B _____
Latitude Longitude

C _____
Latitude Longitude

D _____
Latitude Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The National Register boundary of the Ridgeview Hosiery Mills is illustrated by the heavy black line on the accompanying "National Register of Historic Places Boundary Map," created by Annie Laurie McDonald on 20 July 2025, using the plat map titled "A boundary adjustment for Willard G. Black," dated January 22, 2004, and revised April 14, 2004, and found in Plat Book 59, page 180, at the Catawba County Register of Deeds. The boundary encompasses 4.78 acres of tax parcel #374117115131.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries of the nominated property encompass 4.78 acres and include most of the buildings historically associated with Ridgeview Hosiery Mills during the Period of Significance of 1912–1975. The boundaries include five buildings—the original Hosiery Mill, the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mill, the circa 1920 laboratory/office, a circa 1930 warehouse, and a circa 1960 boiler room—that retain integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to the Period of Significance. The boundaries exclude the 1916 office because it was substantially enlarged and heavily altered circa 1980 and no longer retains sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship, association, or feeling. The boundaries also exclude a circa 1980 mill to the south of the nominated property and a 1988 childcare center to the northwest of the nominated property. Although these two buildings were constructed by Ridgeview Hosiery Mills, they were constructed after the Period of Significance and do not contribute to the property's historic significance and integrity.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Annie McDonald and Debbie Bevin, Senior Architectural Historians
organization Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc. date May 4, 2026
street & number 525 Wait Avenue telephone 540.454.3163
city or town Wake Forest state NC zip code 27587
e-mail amcdonald@rgaincorporated.com

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

City or Vicinity: Newton

County: Catawba County

State: North Carolina

Photographer: Debbie Bevin, Richard Grubb & Associates

Date Photographed: April 8, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Photo 1 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0001

View northeast of the south elevation (right) and west elevation (left) of the boiler house.

Photo 2 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0002

View east of the west elevation of the boiler house, showing the south elevation of the dye house at the left.

Photo 3 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0003

View northeast of the south elevation (right) and west elevation (left) of the dye house.

Photo 4 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0004

View north of the south elevation of the circa 1980 addition and loading dock, showing the circa 1920 laboratory/office at the left.

Photo 5 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0005

View northeast of the west elevation of the circa 1980 addition.

Photo 6 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0006

View east of the porch at the north end of the circa 1980 addition.

Photo 7 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0007

View northeast of the 1950s additions to the west elevation of the mill.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

Photo 8 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0008

View southeast of the north elevation of the 1925 addition.

Photo 9 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0009

View southwest of the north elevation of the 1925 addition.

Photo 10 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0010

View south of the north elevation of the circa 1960 addition to the east elevation, showing the west elevation of the circa 1920 warehouse at the left.

Photo 11 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0011

View northwest of the east elevation at the north end of the circa 1960 addition to the east elevation.

Photo 12 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0012

View west of the equipment shed on the east elevation.

Photo 13 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0013

View southwest of the east elevation of the 1950–1951 addition to the dye house, showing the circa 1960 boiler room at the left.

Photo 14 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0014

View west of the east elevation of the 1950–1951 addition to the dye house.

Photo 15 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0015

View northwest of the east elevation of the boiler room (foreground), showing the south elevation of the 1950–1951 addition to the dye house in the background.

Photo 16 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0016

View southwest of the interior of the 1907–1908 mill, showing the 1925 roof monitor and original windows on the west wall.

Photo 17 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0017

View west showing intact 30-light industrial steel sash windows alternating with enlarged window openings to allow passage between the 1907–1908 mill and circa 1980 addition.

Photo 18 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0018

View southeast of the south end of the 1907–1908 mill.

Photo 19 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0019

View east from the 1907–1908 mill toward the circa 1960 addition.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

Photo 20 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0020

View south from the 1925 addition to the 1907–1908 mill.

Photo 21 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0021

View east along the north wall of the 1907–1908 mill, showing the south end of the 1925 addition.

Photo 22 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0022

View northeast of the 1925 addition to the 1907–1908 mill.

Photo 23 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0023

View southeast of the circa 1980 addition to the 1907–1908 mill.

Photo 24 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0024

View southwest of the west side of the dye house.

Photo 25 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0025

View southwest of the south wall of the dye house.

Photo 26 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0026

View east toward the 1950–1951 addition to the dye house.

Photo 27 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0027

View northeast of the west elevation of the 1928 full-fashioned hosiery mill.

Photo 28 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0028

View northeast of the west elevation of the 1935 addition to the full-fashioned hosiery mill, showing the 1928 building in the background at the left.

Photo 29 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0029

View east of the 1968 loading dock addition to the west elevation of the 1935 addition to the full-fashioned hosiery mill.

Photo 30 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0030

View northeast of the west elevation of the 1968 addition at the south end of the full-fashioned hosiery mill.

Photo 31 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0031

View southeast of the north elevation of the 1928 full-fashioned hosiery mill, showing the remains of a mid-twentieth-century addition that was demolished between 2020 and 2022.

Ridgeview Hosiery Mills

Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina

County and State

Photo 32 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0032

View southeast of the north elevation of the 1928 full-fashioned hosiery mill, showing the circa 1955 addition in the foreground at the left.

Photo 33 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0033

View northwest of the circa 1955 addition to the east elevation of the 1928 full-fashioned hosiery mill.

Photo 34 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0034

View west of the east elevation of the 1935 addition to the full-fashioned hosiery mill.

Photo 35 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0035

View northeast of the south elevation (right) and west elevation (left) of the 1968 addition to the full-fashioned hosiery mill.

Photo 36 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0036

View north from the 1935 addition into the 1928 full-fashioned hosiery mill.

Photo 37 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0037

View northeast of the 1935 addition to the full-fashioned hosiery mill, showing the sawtooth roof.

Photo 38 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0038

View east of the 1935 addition to the full-fashioned hosiery mill, showing the exposed roof decking and the south wall of the addition at the right.

Photo 39 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0039

View southwest from the 1935 addition into the 1968 addition to the full-fashioned hosiery mill.

Photo 40 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0040

View southeast of the north elevation of the circa 1930 laboratory/office.

Photo 41 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0041

View northwest of the east elevation of the circa 1920 warehouse.

Photo 42 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0042

View southwest of the east elevation of the circa 1920 warehouse.

Photo 43 of 43.

NC_Catawba_RidgeviewHosieryMills_0043

View northwest of the south elevation (left) and east elevation (right) of the circa 1960 boiler house.