Name: Historic: Irene Mill Finishing Plant

Location: West side of Buford St. between Liberty St. and Logan St.

Common: Cherokee Finishing Company

Classification: Building

Owners: Southern Powell
Gaffney, S. C.

Representation in Existing Surveys: South Carolina Inventory of Historic Places, 1985

Description: The Irene Mill Finishing Plant is a large, rectangular, one-story, brick building with a gable roof with exposed support beams. Brick is five-course common bond with a header row of glazed brick. The building features nine-over-nine-over-nine, triple-sash windows. Circa 1950 brick additions are located on the southeast end of the building and on the northern end of the rear (southwest) elevation. A more recent brick addition is attached to the ca. 1950 southeast addition. The area in front of the Irene Mill Finishing Plant is paved with brick. Two small, square, brick structures with pyramidal roofs covered with pressed metal shingles stand in front of the building. On a 1918 map a building which appears to be one of the structures is labeled, "gas machine building."(69)

Significance: The Irene Mill Finishing Plant is significant for its association with the Irene Mill, a textile firm which played an important role in the development of Gaffney in the early twentieth century. The Irene Mill was founded in 1904 by Hiram D. Wheat, the former treasurer and president of the Gaffney Manufacturing Company. The mill produced damask which was shipped to New England for finishing. In 1915-16 Wheat constructed the Irene Mill Finishing Plant. In the finishing plant the cloth was washed, soaked, boiled, bleached, and calendered (made glossy), enabling the mill to produce finished damask products. By 1917 the Irene Mill employed around 150 workers and annually produced approximately 500,000 tablecloths, 600,000 napkins, and 60,000 towels. In that year the local newspaper, the Gaffney Ledger, boasted that the Irene Mill had the only damask finishing plant in the South.(70)

Acreage: Approximately 2.7 acres

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary of the Irene Mill Finishing Plant nomination is shown as the dark line on the accompanying Cherokee County tax map 81-15, which is drawn at a scale of 1'=100'. The nominated property includes the plant, its associated outbuildings, and its setting.

UTM Reference Point: 17/441340/3881300

Other Information: The original building associated with the Irene Mill is located adjacent (to the northwest) to the finishing plant. It is not included in this nomination because it has been extensively altered.

Level of Significance: Local