

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Stephenson Underwear Mill

other names/site number 141-597-36349

2. Location

street & number 322 E. Colfax Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town South Bend N/A vicinity

state IN code IN county St. Joseph code 141 zip code 46417

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be consider significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Paul R. Rabb 6/30/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) _____ _____ _____	_____	_____

Stephenson Underwear Mill
Name of Property

St. Joseph, IN
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	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

20TH CENTURY INDUSTRIAL

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
CONCRETE
roof COMPOSITE
other STEEL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more sheets.)

Stephenson Underwear Mill
Name of Property

St. Joseph, IN
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 the 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, 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.

Areas of significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1916-1929

Significant Dates

1916

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Criteria Considerations

(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 of age or achieved significant within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination if 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:

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section No. 7

Page 1

Stephenson Underwear Mill

The Stephenson Underwear Mill is located between the St. Joseph River and the waterway known as East Race, on the south side of Colfax Avenue in South Bend. The site was historically contained within the village of Lowell, which was on the east side of the river, across from South Bend. Lowell was annexed to South Bend in 1866.

Two races, the east and west, were constructed in the 1840s. The East Race has always been the more important of the two in relation to industry. There were factories on both sides of the East Race in the 19th Century. After about 1870, the races lost their importance as a power source, though many industries remained. The races were abandoned and filled in sometime after 1945. In 1984, a reconstruction of the East Race was completed by the City.

The A.C. Staley Woolen Mill was built on the East Race in 1863. The 1917 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows that the property, by then known as Stephenson Underwear Mills, contained nine buildings used for functions such as dyeing, spinning, storage, and shipping. Building No. 6, the subject of this application, was used for carding, sewing, spinning, cutting and knitting. The Michigan Central Railroad was located to the east of the race. The freight depot for the line was just east of the tracks, south of Colfax Avenue. There were two additional Stephenson buildings, located between the race and the railroad, used as warehouses. The railroad line has been moved, and the depot no longer exists. Of the buildings associated with the Stephenson Underwear Mills, only Building No. 6, constructed in 1916, remains. The 1917 Sanborn Map also shows a flume on the Stephenson property, running between the river and the East Race. This has been removed.

The Stephenson Underwear Mill faces north onto Colfax Avenue and is located just west of the East Race. It is a three-story, reinforced concrete frame building with brick curtain walls. There is concrete coping atop parapet walls. The roof is flat, composition roof. The building is rectangular in plan, with a rectangular extension on the west side. Windows were originally large, multi-paned, steel pivot windows, typical of factories of the era. These windows, which were extensively deteriorated, were replaced as part of a recent rehabilitation. New aluminum windows closely approximate the originals in appearance.

The main (north) facade is nine bays wide (photo 1). There are three door openings, one in the center (photo 2), and one at each end. These openings have the historic paneled wood and glass doors. One of the few decorative elements of the building are concrete panels on each side of the front corners of the building, above windows. Panels above third floor windows extend slightly above the roof line and arch at the top.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section No. 7

Page 2

Stephenson Underwear Mill

The west (left in photo 3) and east (photo 5) facades of the building are 20 bays wide. The west side of the building has a door opening in the seventh bay from the north. There is a three-story, rectangular extension near the south end of the this facade. There was historically a loading dock at this location, which has been removed. On the east facade there is a door in the seventh bay from the south. The southernmost bay is detailed like the end bays of the north facade, with concrete panels (photo 4).

The south facade is nine bays wide (right in photo 3). Prior to the recent rehabilitation, the concrete framework was filled with clay tile blocks not normally used for a permanent exterior finish material. It is likely that an addition to this side of the building was originally planned. A new steel frame finish was added to this facade as part of the rehabilitation. The steel was colored to resemble elements of the other facades.

Inside, the building was largely open historically, with few partitions. Partitions have been added for apartments (see typical floor plan). The corridor (photo 9) was placed in the center of the building with apartments on each side. The apartments have an open character, and original materials have been kept in place, including exposed concrete and brick walls, and wood plank ceilings. Typical treatments are seen in photos 6, 7 and 8. In keeping with the industrial character of the building, ductwork is exposed. In the extension, the original concrete stairway remains in place (photo 10). Another wood stair at the front of the building was deteriorated and has been replaced.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section No. 8

Page 1

Stephenson Underwear Mill

The Stephenson Underwear Mill is significant for its association with South Bend industry for the period extending from 1890 to 1929. This period, one of particular prosperity, ended with the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The building is also an example of an early 20th century industrial building.

South Bend has historically been an important industrial center in Indiana. Its position on the St. Joseph River, an early transportation route and power source, was a key factor in encouraging settlement and industry. Nearby forests, as well as other natural resources, also contributed to industrial growth. Development increased in the 1840s, after two races were built, one each on the east and west sides of the river, to provide power for mills. Many of the early and important industries were located along these races. Construction of railroads, first built through South Bend in the 1850s, also encouraged industrial growth.

The period extending from about 1860 to 1890 has been identified as one of the transition, in which South Bend grew from a small rural community to an established industrial city. The Civil War resulted in railroad expansion, as well as in the growth of markets. Other factors including technological improvements, and a growing labor pool, also contributed to industrial development. By 1890, there were 140 factories in the city.

The period between 1890 to 1929 was one of the exceptional growth and prosperity for South Bend. Between 1890 and 1930, the population grew from 21, 819 to 104,193. By 1926, the number of manufacturing concerns had reached 400. These factories were an important part of the city's success. Several industries were the largest of their kind anywhere. Many shipped products all over the world. There were manufacturers of all types of products: wagons, agricultural implements, furniture, clothing, automobiles, machine tools, and many more. Small factories coexisted with large complexes. Many local industries were related through production. There were concentrations. of factories throughout the city.

This period was one of change in labor. Faced with a shortage of workers, manufacturers encouraged larger numbers of women to work in factories. Clothing factories were particularly thought to be suitable for women workers. As such, there were generally more women workers in factories of this type than men. Women were desirable as workers because they could be hired for a lower wage than men. Also, employers reasoned, with women working, the family income would be increased and there would be less chance of strikes. In fact, there was little labor unrest in South Bend until the 1930s.

World War I gave an important boost to South Bend industry. Many local companies were engaged in producing products for use by the armed forces. Because of severe labor shortage during the war, women became even more important in industry. The momentum started by the war continued in the 1920s, when an unprecedented demand for consumer goods resulted in boom years for South Bend manufacturers.

The stock market crash of 1929 and the economic depression of the 1930s had a devastating effect on South Bend industry. Many companies were forced to cut back significantly. Many others failed, leaving vacant buildings. Industry did not fully recover until the onset of World War II, when many companies were converted to defense industries and received military contracts. After a brief slow down after the war, a demand for consumer goods resulted in a revival of the economy. In 1963, the closing of Studebaker, the city's largest employer, marked the beginning of a downward turn in industry.

The site on which the Stephenson Underwear Mill is located is associated with one of the early industries of South Bend, the A.C. Staley Woolen Mill, established on the East Race in 1863. The mill grew, and had become a complex of several buildings by 1889, the year of Staley's death. The company was carried on by Staley's son, Marion, and other stockholders. Among these stockholders were the four Stephenson brothers, who had started as salesmen for the company. In 1888, A.C. Staley began to make men's wool underwear and overshirts, which were sold throughout the northern half of the United States.

In 1907, the Stephenson brothers became the sole owners, and the name of the company was changed to the Stephenson Underwear Mills. A new line of women's underwear, sold throughout the United States, was introduced. The company prospered, and became a leading industry in South Bend. The building which is the subject of this nomination was constructed in 1916. Known as Building No. 6, it was used for carding, spinning, sewing, cutting, and knitting. Building No. 6 was constructed in anticipation of producing underwear for the armed forces.

As one of the largest manufacturers of underwear in the country, Stephenson Underwear Mills was an important supplier to the U.S. military during World War I. A Citizen's Historical Association article on the mill states that the Stephensons were "especially prosperous during the World War, as they received large contracts for war garments."¹

¹Citizens Historical Association, "Stephenson Underwear Mills," n.d.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section No. 8

Page 3

Stephenson Underwear Mill

Other South Bend companies manufactured products for military use during the war. Studebaker made wagons, harnesses, saddles, and cannon wheels for some European countries, but suffered a setback in automobile production when the U.S. became involved in the war. Oliver Chilled Plow sold plows to European countries who were forced to compensate for the loss of farm labor with mechanization. H.D. Lee Mercantile Company established a plant in 1917 which supplied "union alls" to the armed forces. This company occupied the old Singer Building (extant) on the East Race. The South Bend Woolen Company made uniforms and blankets for the military.

In 1916, at the time Building No. 6 of the Stephenson Underwear Mills was constructed, women were discriminated against in industry. The few women who were hired for industrial jobs were generally paid lower wages than men for the same work. During U.S. involvement in World War I, women were became more important in the work force, as employers were forced to replace men who had joined the military.

The Stephenson Underwear Mills was a major South Bend employer in the early 20th century, and one of the largest employers of women workers. Though there are no known company records to support this statement, there is sufficient evidence form other sources. In September of 1916, when the building which is the subject of this nomination was under construction, an article appeared in a local publication which described the operations of Stephenson Underwear Mills. The mill at that time employed over 300 garment workers. In addition, there would have been carders, spinners, weavers, supervisors, managers, packers, shippers, box makers, and other types of workers. The article stated that the management of the mill expected to hire a large number of new workers when the building then under construction was completed.² So, on the eve U. S. involvement in World War I, the company had several hundred employees.

Most of the 300 garment workers would have been women. The 1920 U.S. Census recorded 890 women working in clothing industries. This, which did not include women who did piece work in their homes, was the largest number of women in any industry. A total of 93 men were employed in clothing industries.³ Females were preferred as garment workers because they didn't need much training. It was a matter of course that girls learned how to sew as part of their education. Women and girls, whose husbands or parents were expected to be their primary support, would work for lower wages, and, thus, were attractive employers.

²South Bend Today, "Stephenson Underwear Mills," September 1916.

³U.S. Census of Population, 1920.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section No. 8

Page 4

Stephenson Underwear Mill

Wilson Brothers Shirt Company was another South Bend industry which was a large employer of female workers. The company was in business for about 100 years beginning in the 1870s, and is represented by a complex of buildings on W. Sample Street. The property is identified as "significant" in the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory.

In the early 20th century, women were most commonly employed in industries where dexterity was necessary, and the operation of heavy equipment was not. Women worked in laundries, cigar factories, and box factories, for example. Heavy industries such as Studebaker and Oliver, employed relatively few women in their factories. The Campbell Paper Box and Tag Company, identified as "significant" in the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, is an industry which probably had a large number of women among its employees.

The Stephenson Underwear Mills appears to have had continued prosperity in the years following World War I, up to the time of the stock market crash. A 1919 publication named Stephenson Underwear Mills sixth in a list of "the most important and oldest business enterprises in South Bend."⁴ In the 1920s, the Stephensons phased out the manufacturing department and began to function as jobbers and wholesalers. During the late 1920s, the company bought out two other underwear manufacturers and expanded its line. In 1929, when the stock market crash came, the Stephensons were over extended, and the company failed. The buildings of the company remained vacant for some time. They were later home to several manufacturing operations, including South Bend Plating and Polishing Company, Westinghouse Electric Manufacturing Company, and the Opelika Company.

Most of the buildings which comprised the Stephenson Underwear Mills in 1917 are still shown on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1945. By 1988, when the property was surveyed for the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, only the 1916 building and one of the old Staley buildings remained. This Staley building has now been removed, and the 1916 building is the only remaining representation of the Stephenson Underwear Mills.

The Stephenson Underwear Mill is an important local representation of early 20th century industrial architecture. It is a reinforced concrete structure with brick curtain walls, and is a typical example of a factory of the period.

⁴Pictorial Souvenir of South Bend, Indiana (Chicago: J.J. McVicker, Publisher, 1919).

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section No. 8

Page 5

Stephenson Underwear Mill

Several important industrial buildings and complexes remain intact in South Bend from the 1890-1929 period, but a larger number have been destroyed by fire, extensively altered, or demolished. One of the reasons for the demolitions is that many of South Bend's industries closed or relocated in the 1960s and 1970s. The remaining buildings were thought to be difficult to adapt for other purposes, and many were torn down. In their place are parking lots or new construction. The remaining buildings have significance as a collection of resources which convey the historic importance and diversity of industry in the city.

As previously stated, there were approximately 400 manufacturers in South Bend in 1926. The South Bend Summary Report identifies only seven individual industrial sites and two industrial historic districts which date from the period between 1890 and 1929, and received a rating higher than "contributing." These are:

- Winkler Brothers/Bendix (site 24262), 401 Bendix Drive, built 1902-30, rated "significant;"
- South Bend Lathe (site 29360), 425 Madison Street, built 1870-1947, rated "significant;"
- O'Brien Electric Priming Company (site 32026), 2001 Washington Avenue, built 1882-1970, rated "significant;"
- Wilson Brothers Company, (site 41001), 1000 Sample Street, built 1887-1920, rated "significant;"
- Campbell Paper Box and Tag Company (site 42006), 903 Main Street, built 1899, rated "significant;"
- South Bend Sanitary Milk Company, (site 42058), 1225 Main Street, built 1915, rated "significant;"
- South Bend Foundry (sites 42163-65), 1533 Lafayette Boulevard, built 1889-1915, rated "significant;"
- Studebaker Industrial Complex Historic District (sites 33900-33999), built 1885-1928; and
- Oliver Chilled Plow Industrial Complex Historic District (sites 34950-34999), built 1881-1966.

Of these resources, the only manufacturer of clothing was Wilson Brothers Company, which made shirts.

The I & M Electric Company (site 36318) at 401 Colfax Avenue, built in 1911, and rated "significant;" and the I & M Electric Company Garage (site 36316) at 312 LaSalle Avenue, built in 1929, rated "significant", are among other resources associated with

industry. These structures, however, were for power generation, rather than manufacturing.

In the context of South Bend industry for the period 1890-1929, the Stephenson Mill is significant is one of the few extant local resources which represents women workers and the local garment industry. The mill is also an important representation of the river/race industrial complex of the late 19th and early 20th century.

The building was recently rehabilitated for use as apartments by the Alexander Company of Madison, Wisconsin. The project was approved by the Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology and the National Park Service for historic preservation tax credits, and received an award in 1994 from the Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology as an outstanding tax act project.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section No. 9

Page 1

Stephenson Underwear Mill

Bibliography

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Goldstein, Deborah May. "The History of Industrial Architecture in South Bend, Indiana." Masters Thesis, Cornell University, 1980.

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. South Bend Summary Report. South Bend: Historic Preservation Commission of South Bend and St. Joseph County, 1993.

Mullen, Marsha and Linda Newton. "Stephenson and Staley Underwear Mills," prepared for the Studebaker National Museum, South Bend, Indiana, n.d.

Taylor, Robert Jr., et al. Indiana: A New Historical Guide. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1989.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, Maps for South Bend, Indiana, 1917, 1945.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section No. 10

Page 1

Stephenson Underwear Mill

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of East Colfax Avenue and the East Race; thence south along the west side of said race approximately 210 feet to a point 10 feet south of the southernmost point of the Stephenson Underwear Mill; thence southwest along a line parallel with the south side of the Stephenson Underwear Mill approximately 130 feet to a point 10 feet beyond the westernmost point of the Stephenson Underwear Mill; thence northwest along a line parallel to the west side of the Stephenson Underwear Mill to the south side of East Colfax Avenue; thence east along the south side of said avenue to the point of the beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes only the building itself and small buffer zones on the west, south, and east sides. The rest of the original Stephenson Underwear Mills property was excluded because there are no other extant resources associated with the company.