

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Margrace Mill Village Historic District**

Kings Mountain, Cleveland County, CL0350, Listed May 6, 2009

Nomination by Davyd Foard Hood

Photographs by Davyd Foard Hood, October 2007



100 Block of Water Oak Street



100 Block of Fulton Drive

**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 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 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: Margrace Mill Village Historic District

other names/site number: N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 101-117, 102-120 Cloninger St.; 101-113, 102-116, 200 Fulton Dr.;  
145 Ark St.; 101-107, 102-114 Water Oak St.; & 500, 600 Margrace Rd. not for publication N/A  
city or town Kings Mountain vicinity N/A  
state North Carolina code NC county Cleveland code 045 zip code 28086

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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  
\_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
\_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
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 commenting or other official                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register _____ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
_____ determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
_____ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
_____ determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
_____ removed from the National Register	_____	_____
_____ other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Name of Property

Cleveland County, North Carolina  
County and State

**5. Classification**

<b>Ownership of Property</b> (Check as many boxes as apply)	<b>Category of Property</b> (Check only one box)	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b> (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>57</u>	<u>14</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>57</u>	<u>19</u> 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**  
N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling  
COMMERCE department store  
SOCIAL clubhouse

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling  
OTHER storage

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: one-story mill house  
Bungalow/Craftsman  
Commercial Style

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick  
roof asphalt  
walls wood  
brick  
other wood  
metal

**Narrative Description**

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

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Name of Property

Cleveland 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**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Community Planning and Development

Industry

**Period of Significance**

1919-1956

**Significant Dates**

1919

1920

1956

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**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 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: \_\_\_\_\_

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Name of Property

Cleveland County, North Carolina  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreeage of Property** approx. 9.6 acres

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing  
1 17 466640 3897760  
2 17 466950 3898080

Zone Easting Northing  
3 17 467120 3897830  
4 17 466740 3897600  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Davyd Foard Hood

organization:

date: 3 April 2008

street & number: Isinglass, 6907 Old Shelby Road

telephone: 704/462-1847

city or town: Vale state: North Carolina zip code: 28168

**12. Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**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.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 1

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Margrace Mill Village Historic District is a residential district located at the southwest edge of the city of Kings Mountain, at the extreme east side of Cleveland County where the town's east boundary is coterminous with Cleveland County's boundary with Gaston County. With a population of 9,693 in 2000, Kings Mountain is second in size to Shelby, the Cleveland County seat. The Margrace Mill Village is about two miles southwest of central Kings Mountain and about three and three-quarter miles north of the North Carolina/South Carolina border. The town takes its name from Kings Mountain, the site of a critical Revolutionary War battle, which is commemorated at the Kings Mountain National Military Park located just inside the South Carolina border. The village's name reflects a combination of the name of Margaret (1907-1995) and Grace (1910-1999) Neisler, the eldest of three daughters born to the Margrace Mill founder, Charles Eugene Neisler (1868-1931). Forty-six of the forty-eight primary contributing resources in the district are one-story frame mill houses. The Margrace Mill Clubhouse, a stone masonry building, and the two-story brick Margrace Mill Company Store are two additional principal resources. The district also includes nine contributing domestic outbuildings erected during the period of significance, 1919-1956. The twenty-nine noncontributing resources include twenty-three outbuildings that were either constructed in the period of significance and have lost integrity or were erected after 1956, the house at 101 Fulton Drive that was built in 2004 on the site of a lost mill house, and five post-1956 metal carports. The contributing and noncontributing resources are fully described hereinafter.

All of the principal resources in the district were erected by the Neisler family textile company and housed employees of the nearby Margrace and Patricia mills that were operated here by the family from 1920 into 1955 when they were sold to the Horvath Mills, Incorporated. The mill houses and the clubhouse were sold by Neisler Brothers, Incorporated, mostly to residents, in autumn 1956.

The Margrace Mill Village Historic District lies on the northwest side of Margrace Road, a two-lane paved road that carries generally parallel with and on the northwest side of the double-tracked Norfolk and Southern Railway. Margrace Road is a secondary road that leads off Battleground Avenue (NC 216), which carries generally parallel with the railroad along its southeast side, about a quarter-mile northeast of the village. Margrace Road and Battleground Avenue reconnect about two miles north of the point where NC 216 crosses into South Carolina and continues into the national park.

The arrangement of the parallel roads and railroad is evident in an aerial view of the Margrace and Patricia mills and the companion Margrace Mill Village. A photocopy of that photograph of ca. 1940 is included in this nomination as Exhibit A. Margrace Road carries horizontally through

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 2

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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the center of the photograph. The textile manufacturing complex housing the Margrace and Patricia mills is located on the southeast side of Margrace Road, between it and the railroad line. The mill village, with its houses standing on each side of three streets leading northwest off Margrace Road, is also well represented. All but four of the district's forty-six mill houses are visible in the photograph. The houses standing at 102 through 108 Cloninger Street are cropped from view at the extreme right edge of the image. The next parallel street, moving from right to left, is Fulton Drive, which continues across Ark Street into the countryside northwest of the village as Fulton Road. Next, to the left, is Water Oak Street. The district streets are contained between Margrace Road and the path of Ark Street which carries in an arc from the right into the near center of the photograph where it joins Margrace Road. The Margrace Mill Clubhouse stands in the north corner of that junction. All of the mill houses visible in the photograph are included in this district except for three that have been lost (#s 118, 101, and 115 Fulton Drive) and the house at 109 Water Oak Street that has been greatly overbuilt. Also lost are the mill's boarding house and two four-unit apartment houses that appear in the photograph facing onto Ark Street along its southwest side. The Margrace Mill Company Store, also included in this nomination, appears immediately beside the boarding house, to the left. It fronts on Margrace Road with little set-back. The topography of the district is relatively even, but with some slight changes in grade, most noticeably on Cloninger Street where the grade drops about mid-block and then rises to the general level consistent in the district.

The ca. 1940 photograph represents the district during its period of significance, 1919 to 1956, and in a setting that has mostly changed in the closing decades of the twentieth century. During the years since 1984, when Kelly Bunch bought the deteriorated mill complex for its salvage value, most of the factory and processing buildings have been demolished. In short, the once-flourishing textile complex is now a landscape of industrial ruin inside a woven wire fence. The former Macedonia Baptist Church, visible in the lower right corner of the photograph, and where villagers attended services, was replaced in 1956 with a new church edifice. The open pastures, fields, and meadows, extending to the northwest, west, and southwest of the residential village have been largely built up as part of the suburban development of Kings Mountain in the later twentieth century. Development has also occurred northeast of the village. The company-owned boarding house and the two adjoining apartment buildings were lost in the 1980s. Since then one-story public housing units have been built on vacant lots fronting on Ark Street between the apartment buildings and the mill house at 145 Ark Street. The buildings of the Neisler-owned dairy farm, located southwest of the company store, stand vacant, unused, and deteriorating at present.

With the dramatic changes in the fortunes of North Carolina's textile economy in the late twentieth century, and more particularly in Kings Mountain during that period, the survival of the Margrace Mill Village and its remarkable degree of integrity as an industrial community is

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 3

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

all the more significant. In 1956 as the sale of the mill housing was advancing, a plat of the Margrace Mill Village was prepared by Pickell and Pickell, Engineers, of Greenville, South Carolina. A photocopy of that plat is included as Exhibit B in this nomination. It reflects the layout, organization, and density of the mill village together with the sizes of the four house types in the village, (defined by the number of rooms in each house), their distribution, and the size of the lots. Third, Second, and First streets on the plat are today known as Cloninger Street, Fulton Drive, and Water Oak Street, respectively, and the Old Grover Road is today's Margrace Road.

The boarding house and the two apartment houses are defined as lots one through three. Five vacant lots, numbered four to eight, facing on Ark Street, were defined on Ark leading up to the five-room mill supervisor's house at 145 Ark Street. That house (#9 on the plat) is one of the fifty-one mill houses (#s 9-10, and #s 12-60) and the Margrace Mill Clubhouse (#11) that were put up for sale in 1956. The Margrace Mill Village Historic District includes all but five of those original fifty-one houses. The house at 101 Fulton Drive (#31 on the plat) was lost to fire ca. 2000 and replaced by a house of similar scale in 2004; it is included as a noncontributing resource. Two four-room houses at the end of the 100 block (#s 24 and 32 on the plat), 115 and 118 Fulton Drive, became deteriorated and were torn down; their lots were acquired by the owners of the adjoining lots, 113 and 116 Fulton Drive, respectively, and incorporated into their grounds. Two houses, located at 109 Water Oak Street (#16 on the plat) and at 400 Margrace Road (#60 on the plat), have been extensively altered and have lost their integrity.

The aerial photograph and the plat represent the character, composition, density, and appearance of the historic district except for certain landscape features and both contributing and noncontributing outbuildings that were erected since ca. 1940. Few trees and plantings are apparent in the photograph, however, both chinaberry trees, a staple in mill villages, and maples have been described as standing in the village. After the Neisler family acquired Oakland Plantation in Bladen County in 1941, oak saplings of several varieties were brought from Bladen County to the village and planted along its three streets in a generally uniform fashion. In the sixty years or so to the present, they have matured and now hold a strong presence in the landscape, shading the village streets, lawns, and houses. Other trees, mostly deciduous, and flowering shrubs have been added by homeowners since 1956 to ornament their lawns. The most developed grounds and plantings, largely foundation plantings, occur at owner-occupied houses. Virtually all of the acreage in the district is grass-covered lawn, except for the asphalt paved streets and simple, mostly gravel driveways carrying to the sides of houses, to informal parking areas or carports, or to the back of houses to a few garages.

The district has no public sidewalks along its streets, however, many houses, owner-occupied and rental alike, have concrete or brick walks leading from their front porches to the streets. Several lots have low stone curbs along the lot front, particularly where slight shifts of grade



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 4

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

occur and particularly on Cloninger Street where the front and side yards of several houses have low yet noticeable masonry retaining walls of mortared stone. Some few residents continue to have summer vegetable gardens, including Mrs. Sarah Jones at 106 Water Oak Street and Jeffrey Scott Hovis who lives at 113 Fulton Street and has a sizable vegetable garden on the adjoining lot (#24 on the 1956 plat) where a mill house was lost.

The outbuildings in the district comprise three principal types; garages, shop buildings, and storage buildings. Nine contributing outbuildings date largely to the final decade of the period of significance and are of frame construction, with weatherboard or German siding, or are built of concrete blocks. All are one-story in height, generally rectangular in plan, and unobtrusive, usually located in a rear corner of their respective lots. Twenty-three noncontributing outbuildings in the district are also generally unobtrusive and are mostly located in rear corners of lots. This group comprises mostly small, gable-front prefabricated buildings used for household and lawnmower storage. Only in one instance, at 112 Cloninger Street, where four storage units of varying materials are aligned along the lot edge, can the modern storage buildings be described as intrusions, because of their number and position. The district also includes five less-than-fifty-year-old carports, noncontributing structures whose presence is also unobtrusive. Small portable or impermanent outbuildings or structures, mostly of recent date and most often on the lots of houses that are renter-occupied, are not included in the resource count.

The forty-six mill houses in the Margrace Mill Village comprise four principal types and all are of frame construction and covered with either side-gable or hip roofs. All had plain weatherboard siding and featured four-over-four window sash in plain board surrounds. The original roofing was either wood or asphalt shingles and all are covered with asphalt shingles today except for two houses with metal roofing. Today, forty-one of the forty-six houses are covered with asbestos, aluminum, composition, or vinyl siding, which was applied directly on top of the weatherboards. When sold in 1956 they were all sheathed with weatherboards. The earliest manufactured sidings were asbestos shingles (104 Cloninger Street), typical of the 1950s and early 1960s, and wide aluminum siding that came into popular use in about the mid 1960s. Wide composition siding is of about the same date. Both were succeeded by conventional width aluminum siding and vinyl sidings which replicate both plain weatherboards and German siding. Twelve of the forty-six mill houses retain their original four-over-four wood sash.

The replacement sidings and windows reflect changes to the mill houses, however, their impact on the appearance and integrity of the district is mitigated by the extraordinary survival of the village streetscape and the strong character of sameness and repetition that defined its original appearance and which retains its power in setting the Margrace village apart today. The integrity of the district is strengthened by two additional factors. Since its construction the village has lost only three houses, all at the edges of the village, and only two other houses, also at the edges of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 5

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

the district, have been extensively altered. The house at 101 Fulton Drive was replaced in 2004 by a similar house while the grounds of two lost houses at the end of the block have been absorbed into those of the adjoining lots. The two extensively-altered houses stand at 400 Margrace Road and 109 Water Oak Street. The district boundary is drawn to exclude them. Thus, the village character has remained remarkably intact for a mill community that is now approaching ninety years of age. The second remarkable feature of the Margrace Mill Village is that the essential form and footprint of the mill housing have remained largely unaltered. Except for the sizable additions to 109 Water Oak Street, which have subsumed the original mill house in an expansive edifice, any additions have been entirely minimal in their impact and they have occurred at the rear of houses and behind the original block, as at 112 Water Oak Street. In two instances homeowners created additional interior space by enclosing the shed-roof front porches of their houses. This occurred at 106 and 118 Cloninger Street, where the original houses included only one bedroom. Portions of the front porches at 108 and 110 Cloninger Street were enclosed as shed rooms to provide additional interior, probably bedroom, space. Other efforts to individualize houses also occurred on front porches, where the original square-plan posts were replaced by simple decorative metal posts and railings or turned wood posts. In some few instances decorative blinds were added. Overall, the Margrace Mill Village Historic District retains good historic integrity in terms of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The following four types of mill housing date to the original construction of the village in 1919-1920, and they appear on the 1925 Sanborn map. These types also include the houses that do not appear on the 1925 map but are believed to be contemporary.

Type A -- The ten Type A mill houses are located on the northeast side of Cloninger Street at 102 through 120 Cloninger Street. They are one-story, three-room frame dwellings comprising a two-room main block with a one-room kitchen ell flanked on its northwest side by a shed that incorporates a bathroom and service porch. The houses stand on brick piers that were later infilled with common bond brick. Their elevations are sheathed with plain weatherboards framed with simple cornerboards. The dwellings' asphalt shingle side-gable roofs have overhanging eaves featuring exposed rafter ends and purlins and simple triangular brackets in their apexes. The houses have symmetrical three-bay facades featuring an off-center entrance flanked by windows, which are sheltered by shed roof porches supported by square-plan wood posts. Original windows feature four-over-four sash set in plain board surrounds with shallow drip caps. Interior brick chimneys rise on the wall linking the main block with the ell where they provide heat sources to the living room and kitchen. These three-room houses contain a living room, a bedroom, a kitchen, and small bathroom. The most intact example of the Type A house stands at 116 Cloninger Street.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 6

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

Type B -- The district's seven Type B houses are located at 101 through 109 and 115 and 117 Cloninger Street. These houses appear on the 1956 plat as six-room houses, however they were originally built as three-room duplexes paired under expansive hip roofs that also engaged full-façade porches. In 1956 the duplexes were simply adapted as single-family residences by closing one of the two front entrances and opening doors in interior partition walls between rooms. The Type B house/duplex is a rectangular frame building standing on brick piers with later brick infill, sheathed with plain weatherboards finished with simple cornerboards, and covered by low hip asphalt shingle roofs with exposed rafter ends. Brick interior chimneys rise near the center of each house and originally supplied heat sources to both sides of the now single house. Type B houses/duplexes have four-over-four sash windows in plain board surrounds with shallow drip caps. The house at 109 Cloninger Street most closely reflects the original appearance of the Type B house. Its three-bay façade recalls its earlier symmetrical four-bay appearance minus the closed-up entrance to the unit in the northwest half of the duplex. The triple-pile plan of each unit can be read in the three-bay side elevations where conventional window openings in the front and center bays are joined by paired horizontal four-pane windows in the back bay which illuminate(d) bathrooms. The rear elevation of this duplex also retains ghost marks that reflect the inset corner porches on each duplex that have all been enclosed as protected porches.

Type C -- Type C mill houses are the predominant dwelling unit in the Margrace Mill Village and comprise twenty-four houses standing at 111 and 113 Cloninger Street; 104 through 116, and 103 through 113 Fulton Drive; and 104 through 114, and 103 through 107 Water Oak Street. These four-room single-family houses are one-story weatherboarded frame dwellings covered by expansive asphalt shingle hip roofs pierced by near-center interior brick chimneys. These houses also stand on brick piers with brick infill and are sheathed with plain weatherboards framed by simple cornerboards. Their low hip asphalt shingle roofs have exposed rafter ends on the overhanging eaves. Four-over-four window sash are set in plain board surrounds with shallow drip caps. The houses occupy a rectangular footprint and comprise paired offset tiers of rooms which appear in reverse on opposite sides of both Fulton Drive and Water Oak Street. For example, the house at 106 Water Oak Street has an inset corner porch in its right bay (when viewed facing the house), behind which are located the living room, kitchen (now dining room), and back porch (now kitchen). The left tier of rooms has bedrooms in the front and center spaces, and a bathroom at the rear in the space beside that formerly occupied by the back porch. The "center" bedroom in each of the Type C houses is illuminated by paired four-over-four windows except for the two houses at 111 and 113 Cloninger Street. The house at 105 Water Oak Street, opposite #106, has a reverse plan with the front porch inset in the left front corner, facing the house, and so forth.

Type D -- The Margrace Mill Village contains five surviving houses of the six built for supervisors at the factories on the south side of Margrace Road. These Type D houses, standing

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 7

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

at the heads of Fulton Drive and Water Oak Street and on the northwest side of Ark Street at its junction with Fulton Drive, were built on five-room plans except for the houses at 101 and 102 Water Oak Street which contain six rooms. The sixth of the supervisor's houses stood at 101 Fulton Drive and was lost to fire about 2000. In appearance Type D houses are very similar to Type C houses. The weatherboarded frame, one-story houses stand on brick piers with brick infill, and are covered with low hip asphalt shingle roofs. Their window openings are fitted with four-over-four sash. The principal difference between Type C and Type D houses is the addition of one or two rooms to the plan which are contained in visible rear ells that are also covered with low hip roofs of a lower pitch. The other difference between the two residential house types is a slight degree of individualization of the porches and related finish on Type D houses. The inset corner porch on 101 Water Oak Street is essentially the same as that of Type C houses, however the houses at 102 Water Oak and 102 Fulton Drive have decorative gables centered above their front elevations. The paired houses at 145 Ark Street and 200 Fulton Drive have more pronounced treatments with shallow projecting corner porches protected by gable front roofs with brackets in their apexes.

### Inventory

The following inventory list provides basic information for all properties in the Margrace Mill Village Historic District. The entries for the forty-six mill houses in the district, representing one of four residential property types heretofore discussed, include each property's name, address, approximate date of construction, contributing or noncontributing status, property type, and information on architectural features which are different from those described in the respective property type. The entries for the Margrace Mill Clubhouse and the Margrace Mill Company Store also include the basic information and a longer description that addresses the particular character, materials, and appearance of those two non-residential buildings. This nomination and these entries are based on field recording in October 2007 and research undertaken in the months of January through March 2008 by this writer.

Buildings, sites, structures, or objects that add to the historic associations or historic architectural qualities for which the district is significant, were present during the district's period of significance, are related to the documented significance of the district, and possess historic integrity are contributing resources. Those buildings, sites, structures, or objects that do not meet the above criteria or no longer possess historic integrity are noncontributing resources.

All of the district properties are located northwest of Margrace Road, on streets that carry off the road, except for the clubhouse and store that have Margrace Road addresses. The inventory is organized alphabetically by street name, with the even-numbered side of the street presented prior to the odd-numbered side.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 8

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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### ARK STREET

Mill House: 145 Ark Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type D one-story house with wide 1960s aluminum siding, original four-over-four sash windows, and enclosed front porch glazed with two-over-two horizontal sash windows.

#### --Shop Building

Ca. 1950-56, Contributing building  
Small rectangular one-story frame shop with concrete block foundation, wide German siding, asphalt shingle front-gable roof, door on front, and windows on other three elevations.

### CLONINGER STREET Northeast Side

Mill House: 102 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Type A one-story frame house with ca. 1960 wide aluminum siding, triangular brackets on eaves, one-over-one sash windows, and replacement metal porch posts.

Mill House: 104 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Type A one-story mill house with ca. 1960 asbestos shingle siding, triangular brackets on eaves, one-over-one sash windows, and wood porch posts linked by a railing.

#### --Shop

Ca. 1960s, Noncontributing building  
Small one-story rectangular concrete block building with asphalt shingle side-gable roof.

Mill House: 106 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Type A one-story mill house with "German" style vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, enclosed front porch, and relocated entrance on southeast gable end.

#### --Storage building

Ca. 1990, Noncontributing building  
Small rectangular, one-story frame building with wood siding and shed roof.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 9

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

Mill House: 108 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Type A one-story mill house with vinyl siding, two-over-two sash windows, enclosed shed room on northwest half of front porch with wood posts, and shed roof frame carport on southeast gable end.

--Storage building  
Ca. 1960s, Noncontributing building  
Small rectangular, one-story concrete-block building with asphalt shingles on front-gable roof and gable ends.

Mill House: 110 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Type A one-story mill house with vinyl siding, six-over-six sash windows, and enclosed shed room on northwest half of front porch with wood posts.

Mill House: 112 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Type A one-story mill house with painted weatherboard elevations, two-over-two sash, triangular brackets on eaves, wood porch posts with lattice railing, and wood deck extensions with blind railing at rear connecting to a hot tub.

--Storage Block  
Ca. 1990s, Noncontributing building  
Four rectangular, one-story storage units of varying materials are aligned and linked in a row on northwest side of the lot.

Mill House: 114 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1930, Contributing building  
Type A one-story mill house with vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, and enclosed shed room on northwest half of front porch with metal posts.

Mill House: 116 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1930, Contributing building  
Type A one-story mill house, remarkably intact, with painted weatherboard elevations, triangular brackets on eaves, original four-over-four sash windows, and square posts on front porch.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 10

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

Mill House: 118 Cloninger Street

Ca. 1919-1930, Contributing building

Type A one-story mill house with vinyl siding, one-over-one and two-over-two sash windows, enclosed front porch with door in its northwest shed end, and small wood deck on rear.

--Storage Building

ca. 1990s, Noncontributing building

Rectangular prefabricated storage building of manufactured materials comprised of a gable front unit to which a like shed-roof addition was made. Both have doors with decorative battens facing the street.

Mill House: 120 Cloninger Street

Ca. 1919-1930, Contributing building

Type A one-story mill house with vinyl siding, original four-over-four sash windows, metal supports on front porch, and addition on northwest side of ell behind main block.

--Storage Building

Ca. 1980s-1990s, Noncontributing building

Small one-story pre-fabricated building with manufactured horizontal sheathing, asphalt shingle gable-front roof, and two-leaf door.

### CLONINGER STREET

Southwest side

Mill House: 101 Cloninger Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type B one-story house with "German" style vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, wood porch posts linked by a wood railing, and an added decorative louvered front gable.

Mill House: 103 Cloninger Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type B one-story house with vinyl siding, corrugated sheet metal roof, six-over-six sash windows, a porch with wood posts linked by a wood railing that retains its weatherboard elevation and tongue and groove ceiling, and an enclosed room on northwest half of original full-facade porch.

--Storage Building

Ca. 1980s-1990s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular, one-story pre-fabricated building with wide siding and asphalt shingle

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 11

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

front-gable roof.

Mill House: 105 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Type B one-story house with vinyl siding, original four-over-four sash windows, and wood porch posts linked by a wood railing.

--Garage  
Ca. 1960s-1970s, Noncontributing building  
Rectangular frame building with manufactured sheet siding, asphalt sheet roof, and overhead garage door on southeast gable front.

Mill House: 107 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Type B one-story house with wide aluminum siding, two-over-two sash windows, metal posts and railing on porch that retains tongue and groove ceiling with metal mounts for porch swing.

Mill House: 109 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Remarkably intact Type B one-story house with painted weatherboard sheathing, cornerboards, original four-over-four sash windows in original surrounds with drip cap, and porch with tongue and groove ceiling and wood posts linked by a wood railing.

Mill House: 111 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, and wood porch posts linked by a wood railing.

Mill House: 113 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building  
Type C one-story house and wide composition siding, nine-over-nine sash windows, and original tongue and groove ceiling on porch with replacement turned posts and wood railing. Shed roof porch added on rear.

Mill House: 115 Cloninger Street  
Ca. 1919-1930, Contributing building  
Type B one-story house with vinyl siding, original four-over-four sash windows, metal



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 12

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

posts and railing on front porch, and ca. 1956 shed porch added on rear with wood sheathed apron and screening.

--Storage building

Ca. 1956, Contributing building

Small rectangular gable-front building with wide German siding and asphalt shingle roof. Reused five-panel door and vertical pane window.

Mill House: 117 Cloninger Street

Ca. 1919-1930, Contributing building

Type B one-story house with "German" style vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, and square-plan wood posts on porch that appear original or very early replacements with later wood railing.

--Storage Building

Ca. 1950-1960, Contributing building

Small rectangular, one-story, weatherboarded frame shed-roof building linked by a shed-roof cover for lawnmower to later, smaller rectangular side-gabled pack house of manufactured materials. Doors to both on their northwest fronts.

### FULTON DRIVE

Northeast side

Mill House: 102 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type D one-story house with vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, and simple turned porch posts. One of five surviving supervisor's residences.

Mill House: 104 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with original painted weatherboard siding, corner boards, and window surrounds, but with metal four-over-four sash windows and metal porch posts.

Mill House: 106 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with one-room deep extension at rear on concrete block foundation with wide composition siding, six-over-six and two-over-two sash windows, metal porch posts and railing, and "back" door relocated to southeast side.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 13

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

### --Outbuilding

Ca. 1960s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular, one-story, gable-front frame building with wide composition siding and center door with flanking windows on front.

### Mill House: 108 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding (added in 2007), one-over-one sash windows, wood porch posts, and rear door relocated to southeast side with wood deck.

### Mill House: 110 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, original four-over-four sash windows in original surrounds, and metal porch posts.

### Mill House: 112 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, and square wood posts and railing on porch.

### Mill House: 114 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, and front porch enclosed with ca. 1960s metal jalousie windows. Glazed passage links house with one-story, rectangular, gable-front garage with overhead door, vinyl siding at rear.

### --Carport

Ca. 1960s, Noncontributing structure

Open, rectangular flat-roof structure with V-shaped metal supports at corners.

### Mill House: 116 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, square wood porch posts, and a wood deck on rear.

### --Storage Building

Ca. 1980s-1990s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular, one-story pre-fabricated building with horizontal sheathing and asphalt gable-front roof. Essentially identical to outbuilding at 103 Cloninger Street.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 14

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

Mill House: 200 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1930, Contributing building

On the 1925 Sanborn map this house appears to be a Type C four-room dwelling. It apparently was expanded or rebuilt soon thereafter with a projecting, bracketed gable-front porch and a hip-roof rear ell to a five-room house to be occupied by a supervisor. It has vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, enclosed, glazed front and rear porches, and a wood deck on the northeast side.

--Storage Building

Ca. 1950-56, Contributing building

Small, one-story, rectangular frame building with concrete floor, wide German siding, asphalt shingle gable-front roof, door on front and windows on other three sides.

FULTON DRIVE  
Southwest Side

Champion-Ware House: 101 Fulton Drive

2004, Noncontributing building

The lot on which this house stands was the location of a five-room supervisor's house of ca. 1919-1920, which burned ca. 2000. The lot was purchased in 2003 by Kings Mountain builder Jody W. Champion (b. 1970) and Kevin C. Rand. Mr. Champion built this one-story vinyl-sided frame house on speculation in 2004 and in 2005 sold it to Hannah Ware, the present owner. The house generally replicates the outline, size, and form of mill house Type C except that it is covered with an L-shaped gable roof rather than a hip roof.

Mill House: 103 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, replacement four-over-four sash windows, and a screened front porch.

--Carport

Ca. 1990s, Noncontributing structure

Metal poles support the Tudor-arch metal roof structure.

Mill House: 105 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, original four-over-four sash windows, and metal porch supports. On the rear a partially glazed hyphen connects to a single-car garage with vinyl

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 15

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

siding, asphalt roof, and overhead door on its southeast gable front.

Mill House: 107 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, original four-over-four sash windows, and columnar porch supports.

--Storage Building

Ca. 1990s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular, one-story pre-fabricated building with manufactured siding and asphalt shingle gable-front roof.

Mill House: 109 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with wide aluminum siding added by present owners, the McKinneys, replacement two-over-two sash windows, and metal porch piers. John and Mary McKinney bought the house in 1984 from the widow of Clifford Kircus, who purchased it in 1956 from the Neisler Brothers, Inc.

--Storage building

Ca. 1980s-1990s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular prefabricated building of manufactured materials with paired doors on gable front and low gable roof.

Mill House: 111 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, original four-over-four sash windows, and metal porch supports.

--Storage building

Ca. 1980s-1990s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular prefabricated building that is of same materials and appearance as above at 109 Fulton Street.

Mill House: 113 Fulton Drive

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with original painted weatherboard siding, original four-over-four sash windows, and bracketed turned post porch supports with railing.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 16

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

--Dependency

Ca. 1980s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular, one-story frame domestic shop building erected by present owner with manufactured sheet siding and asphalt shingle gable-front roof. Interior is finished and equipped with a lavatory.

--Storage building

Ca. 1990s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular, one-story prefabricated building with manufactured siding, metal roof, and low ramp to broad front door.

--Storage building

Ca. 1990s, Noncontributing building

A smaller rectangular, one-story building with manufactured siding, metal roof, and a low ramp to its front door.

### MARGRACE ROAD

(former) Margrace Mill Clubhouse, 500 Margrace Road

Ca. 1933, Contributing building

This picturesque Craftsman-style stone masonry building was erected about 1933 as a clubhouse for Margrace Mill Village residents and employees at the Neislars' Patricia and Margrace mills. The one-and-a-half story building has asymmetrical elevations, however, in plan the main block is essentially a rectangle enhanced with projecting gable-front ells on the front and rear elevations. On the Margrace Road front, the masonry of the ell engages a chimney and is balanced by a small one-story shed roof block at the end of an open stoop that carries across the front and connects the two features. The fenestration varies widely in size and material, from a tall multi-pane metal window in the front ell, illuminating the clubroom, to large twelve-pane jalousie windows, to conventional windows and dormer windows that were added when the building was adapted for residential use in 1956-1957 and thereafter. Several of the window openings are enhanced with brick sills while others have concrete sills. The clubhouse was sold on 5 October 1956 for \$3,500 to Millard Caldwell.

--Storage building

Ca. 1980s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular prefabricated building of manufactured materials with low gable front roof and paired doors on front.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 17

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

### Margrace Mill Company Store, 600 Margrace Road

Ca. 1930-1940, Contributing building

This large rectangular, two-story brick commercial building occupies the site of the mill's original company store, which was a one-story frame building. The store is laid up in one-to-six bond and covered with a parapet roof recessed behind side walls that taper in height from front to back. The distinguishing feature of the store is a one-story Mission-style porch, centered on the Margrace Road facade, where thick brick piers support an almost flat, front-gable roof with exposed rafters and purlins. The porch shelters the principal entrance, a large three-part display window, and a metal ramp for loading. The facade's second story has a symmetrical four-bay arrangement while the side elevations are five bays deep with corresponding windows on each level with minor exception. A loading dock is positioned near the back of the northeast side and adjoins the interior service elevator whose tower rises above the store roof. The large rectangular window openings are fitted with multi-pane metal windows, which remain in place behind metal screens. The interior is essentially one large trading floor, with a stair to the second story. The store was operated successively, beginning in the 1940s, by Monroe Rhea, Joe Lee Woodward, and last by John Caveny (1913-1990) who discontinued the grocery line in about 1962 and focused his efforts on drapery and upholstery fabric sales. The building is now used for storage.

### WATER OAK STREET

Northeast Side

#### Mill House: 102 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type D one-story house, six-room variant, with "German" style vinyl siding, one-over-one and single-pane windows, and wood porch posts with railing.

#### --Storage building

Ca. 1990s, Noncontributing building

This small prefabricated building of manufactured materials and a low gable-front roof is essentially of the same design and appearance as those at 109 and 111 Fulton Drive.

#### --Storage building

Ca. 1980s-1990s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular prefabricated building of manufactured materials with low gambrel-front roof. It stands immediately beside above storage building.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 18

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

Mill House: 104 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with "German" style vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, and columnar porch supports. This house was purchased in 1956 by Lawrence Webb Ledford (1906-1978) and remained a residence and property of his family until 2000 when Harold Lee Ledford sold it to Leonard G. Wright, the largest owner of rental property in the district, and his wife. It was renovated and occupied by the Wrights until 2004, when his parents occupied it.

--Shop Building

Ca. 1956, Contributing building

Small rectangular, one-story frame building with 5-V sheet metal sheathing and asphalt roof. Paired board and rail doors on southwest gable front.

Mill House: 106 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with wide aluminum siding, two-over-two sash windows, metal porch supports with metal railing, and wood deck on rear. This house was purchased on 5 October 1956 by Clannie Wall Jones (1909-1982), an employee of the Neisler mill, and remains the home of his widow, Sarah Hamrick Jones (b. 1923).

--Carport

Ca. 1970s-1980s, Noncontributing structure

Metal poles support a Tudor-arch shaped metal roof; prefabricated with concrete floor.

--Storage building

Ca. 1960s-1970s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular, deteriorated prefabricated storage building of manufactured materials with low roof and paired doors facing the street.

Mill House: 108 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with aluminum siding, two-over-two sash windows, metal porch supports with metal railing, temporary wood handicap ramp up to front porch, and wood deck on rear.

--Shop Building/Garage

Ca. 1950-56, Contributing building

Rectangular, one-story frame building with vinyl siding and asphalt shingle gable-front

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 19

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

roof, reused five-panel door on front, two six-over-six sash windows on northwest side, and shed-roof, rectangular garage addition on southeast side with paired plywood doors.

Mill House: 110 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with wide ca. 1960s aluminum siding, two-over-two sash windows, and square-plan wood porch posts that are possibly original.

--Garage

Ca. 1956, Contributing building

Rectangular frame building with wide German siding, asphalt shingle gable-front roof, overhead garage door to street, and reused five-panel door into pack room in northeast end of building.

Mill House: 112 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, corrugated metal roofing, one-over-one sash windows, metal porch posts, and single-pile, full-width gable roof addition on rear.

Mill House: 114 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with "German" style vinyl siding, two-over-two sash windows, metal porch supports with railing, and "back" door relocated to southeast side. Harold Lee Ledford (b. 1935) was born in the mill-owned apartment building on Ark Street, grew up at 104 Water Oak Street, and bought this house in 1963, where he continues to live.

--Garage

Ca. 1956, Contributing building

Rectangular gable-front concrete block building with broad opening to Ark Street infilled and fitted with paired plywood doors by Mr. Ledford, and asphalt shingle front-gable roof.

--Storage Building

Ca. 2000, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular, one-story pre-fabricated building with manufactured sheet siding, asphalt shingle gable-front roof, and paired doors opening to house and Water Oak Street. Bought by Mr. Ledford directly from the manufacturer in Clover, SC.

--Carport

Ca. 2005, Noncontributing structure



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 20

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

Rectangular metal frame structure with Tudor-arch openings to Ark Street and opposite end, and metal sheathed top and sides.

### WATER OAK STREET

Southwest Side

Mill House: 101 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type D one-story house (misabeled as a four-room house on the 1956 plat) with textured aluminum siding, two-over-two sash windows, and metal porch posts.

--Carport

Ca. 1970s-1990s, Noncontributing structure

Poured concrete floor with metal pipe supports to asphalt shingle gable-front roof and sheathed gable ends.

Mill House: 103 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, metal columns on porch, and very small shed-roof utility addition on rear.

--Garage

Ca. 1950-56, Noncontributing building

Large rectangular frame garage with wide German siding, deteriorated asphalt sheet gable-front roof, and paired plywood doors to Water Oak Street.

Mill House: 105 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, original four-over-four sash windows, and metal porch supports with metal railing.

--Storage Building

Ca. 1950-56, Contributing building

Small rectangular one-story frame building with wide German siding and asphalt shingle gable-front roof, reused five-panel door on northwest front, and small windows on long sides.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 21

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

Mill House: 107 Water Oak Street

Ca. 1919-1920, Contributing building

Type C one-story house with vinyl siding, one-over-one sash windows, square-plan wood porch posts, and relocated "back" door opening onto wood deck at rear of southeast side.

--Storage building

Ca. 1990s, Noncontributing building

Small rectangular prefabricated building of manufactured materials with flat roof and wide door on front.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 22

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### Summary

The Margrace Mill Village Historic District, an enclave of one-story frame mill housing, together with the village's stone clubhouse and a brick company store, occupies an important, unique place in the twentieth-century history of Kings Mountain. Located at the southwest edge of the city and on the northwest side of the Southern Railway Company tracks that carried the Neisler mills' products to a national market, the locally significant district satisfies National Register Criterion A in the areas of industry and community planning and development and National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture. The village was erected to provide housing for workers at Margrace Mills and its companion Patricia Mills facility which were completed and placed in operation in 1920. The houses, fronting on three principal streets leading off Margrace Road, comprise three principal house forms, with a fourth, larger house type erected for supervisors. Most of the houses are thought to have been built by 1921, when the village's "tenement houses" are cited in a deed, and all were standing before 1930. The small three-room houses, a group of three-room duplexes, and the larger four-room houses, all with bathrooms, together with the larger five- and six-room residences for supervisors are typical of mill housing erected in the Piedmont from the turn of the twentieth century through the 1920s. What sets this village apart in both Kings Mountain and Cleveland County is the remarkable survival of all but three of the community's houses and the unexpectedly high degree of integrity the village retains to the present.

The Margrace Mill Village is also the chief surviving reflection of the remarkable role of the Neisler family in the industrial development of Kings Mountain. Charles Eugene Neisler (1868-1931), whose father was a pioneer textile industrialist in antebellum Cabarrus County, came to Kings Mountain in 1893 to manage the town's first textile mill, the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company, established in 1888 by Freno Dilling and brothers William Andrew and Jacob Simri Mauney. Having married Ida Pauline Mauney (1870-1964), the eldest daughter of William Andrew Mauney, in 1892, Mr. Neisler soon occupied a critical position in the expanding family-related textile industry and exercised an unparalleled role as owner of the Neisler-family mills until his death. He placed the Pauline Mills in operation in 1910 and expanded his production of table linens and domestic fabrics in 1920 at the companion Margrace and Patricia mills. The operation of the three mills was consolidated as Neisler Mills, Incorporated, in 1927 and the company remained in the ownership and management of Mr. Neisler's four sons until 27 October 1955 when the company's plants were sold to Horvath Mills, Incorporated. The Neisler family's forty-five-year ownership of its mills reflected a degree of success and prosperity enjoyed by no other in Kings Mountain. The houses in the Margrace Mill Village were sold by Neisler Brothers, Incorporated, in Fall 1956, and nearly all

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 23

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

to the then-present occupants. The period of significance begins in 1919 when construction began and ends in 1956 with the severance of ties between the Neisler family, its mills, and the houses built for their employees. By the late 1970s, production in the former Pauline, Margrace, and Patricia mills had ceased and in 1984 the property of all three mills was sold for salvage value. The major mill buildings were fully or partially demolished over time, with incidental buildings left standing in landscapes of industrial ruin. Today, the Margrace Mill Village Historic District survives as the chief reflection of the Neisler family's role in the industrial development of Kings Mountain.

### Historical Background and Industry Significance

In a manner unique to several of the smaller towns in the North Carolina Piedmont that came into being in the later decades of the nineteenth century, their history is virtually inseparable from the industrial development that brought prosperity and growth. This is particularly true for the mill towns that developed along the newly-built network of railroad lines that came to lace the region, including Gastonia and Belmont in Gaston County, that embraced the textile industry and became important centers of production. The construction of the Atlanta and Richmond Air Line Railway line through the countryside adjoining the border of Cleveland and Gaston counties in 1872 gave birth to the town of Kings Mountain. The railroad, providing the first direct link between Charlotte, North Carolina, and Atlanta, Georgia, opened in 1873 and greatly facilitated trade between these two emerging Southern commercial capitals. It also provided a remarkable impetus to growth and industrial development at every stop along its path.<sup>1</sup>

The railroad construction attracted enterprising men to the place then known as White Plains. The new settlement was incorporated as Kings Mountain in 1874 and named for the mountain that gave its name to the critical Revolutionary War Battle of Kings Mountain fought a few miles to the south, across the North Carolina/South Carolina border, on 7 October 1780. Foremost among them were three men who in 1888 would found the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company, the town's first textile mill. Captain Freno Dilling (1839-1924), the eldest of the three, came first, in about 1870. He moved his saw milling operations from Cherryville, a small town located about ten miles northwest in Gaston County, to a spot on the east side of today's North Piedmont Avenue in Kings Mountain. There he milled cross ties for the railroad company and lumber for other new arrivals in the town.<sup>2</sup> Brothers William and Jacob Mauney, sons of David and Frances Mauney, left their farms in the Muddy Creek community of eastern Cleveland County, southwest of Cherryville, and came to Kings Mountain in spring 1873. Here they acquired acreage on the east side of the railway line, built houses, jointly operated a mercantile store, and became leaders in every aspect of civic and commercial life. William Andrew Mauney (1841-1929) was Kings Mountain's first postmaster and in 1876 became its first mayor. Jacob Simri Mauney (1846-1936) and his elder brother, prospered quickly as

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 24

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

merchants and, after occupying two frame buildings as stores, erected the first brick store in Kings Mountain in about 1878.

In the 1880s Captain Dilling and the Mauney brothers, among others, became increasingly cognizant of the profits accruing to owners of textile mills in Gaston and Mecklenburg counties and they soon joined a group who invested in mills in a multi-county area stretching from Charlotte to Rutherford County on the west, north in lower Caldwell County, and northwest through Cabarrus and Rowan counties into Davidson County. The Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company was both the first mill in Kings Mountain and one of the four oldest known textile mills in Cleveland County.<sup>3</sup>

Captain Dilling and Messrs. Mauney erected their brick textile factory on the site of Dilling's former saw mill on North Piedmont Avenue and put it in operation in 1888. It prospered, and in 1892, Erskine Falls and William Oates Ware built and placed in operation the Enterprise Mill, which was located a few hundred feet south of his Merchant Mills complex and also on the west side of the railroad tracks. The next year Freno Dilling assembled other investors and began construction of the Dilling Mill, which was completed and put in service in 1894. It, too, was located beside the tracks of the rail line that was consolidated with others in 1894 as the Southern Railway Company. The Dilling Mill stood northeast of the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company. Captain Dilling and the Mauney brothers remained owners and operators of their respective mills until their deaths, however, in 1892 they were joined by another figure whose name would rise to prominence locally and nationally in the textile industry.

Charles Eugene Neisler (1868-1931), the son of Joseph Rankin and Margaret Ellen (Phillips) Neisler, was born in Concord, North Carolina, on 3 February 1868.<sup>4</sup> Joseph Rankin Neisler (18\_\_-1903), with Caleb Phifer (1819-1879), founded Rocky River Cotton Mill(s), the second of two antebellum cotton mills that laid the foundation for the Cabarrus County textile industry (Kaplan,14). This pioneering textile mill produced cloth for the Confederate government during the Civil War.

In 1880 Joseph Rankin Neisler relocated his family to Rock Hill, South Carolina, where he assumed superintendency of the Rock Hill Cotton Mill and lived until his death. Charles Eugene Neisler was educated in Rock Hill schools and Gaston College at Dallas, North Carolina, where he graduated in 1888. He returned to Rock Hill and worked with his father in that city's mill. In 1892 he returned to Dallas to become superintendent of the newly-completed Dallas Cotton Mills which opened in 1891 with 2,000 spindles and sixty looms (Bregle, 117). Mr. Neisler's tenure in Dallas was short. On 21 December 1892 he married Ida Pauline Mauney (1870-1964),

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 25

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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the eldest of three children born to William Andrew Mauney and his first wife Susan Ramseur (1841-1886), and the following year Mr. Neisler and his wife relocated to Kings Mountain.

Charles Eugene Neisler came to Kings Mountain as superintendent of the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company, holding that office until 1918, and he was associated with the city's textile development until his death in 1931. During the first seventeen years of this period he held managerial offices in the several mills in which William Andrew Mauney held interests.<sup>5</sup>

One of these mills was the Bonnie Mills, given the name of Bonnie Eloise Mauney (1897-1976), the eldest child of William Andrew Mauney's second marriage. The Bonnie Mills were located on the south side of Gold Street, at its intersection with Cherokee Street, and a block east of the railroad line. It was one of the three mills organized in Kings Mountain in 1900 which bore the names of kinswomen of the founders.

The Cora Mills, an investment of Mr. Dilling, Dr. Oliver Green Falls (1857-1930), and others, occupied a plant built on the northwest side of the railroad line, a short distance northeast of the Dilling Mills factory. The mill was named for Freno Dilling's daughter Cora (1872-1954), a child of his second marriage to Sarah Ann Falls, a sister of Dr. Falls. The Lula Mills, owned by Philip Sylvanus Baker (1848-1907) and others, was near the Cora mill.<sup>6</sup>

By 1900 Kings Mountain boasted six textile mills that produced mostly cotton yarn. The growth in the town's population was commensurate. In 1880, six years after incorporation, the population was 337. By 1900 the population had increased to just over 2,000 citizens. In the first decade of the twentieth century the population rose to 2,601.

In 1910 Kings Mountain gained its seventh mill, the Pauline Mills, that continued the Neisler's family's long association with cloth production that began at the Rocky River mill in Cabarrus County. Named for Ida Pauline (Mauney) Neisler, this mill was the first of the family's Kings Mountain mills that produced cotton damask and it was the basis of the Neisler family's fame as weavers and finishers in the textile industry that was expanded by the operations at Margrace and Patricia mills. The Pauline Mills was the first of the city's textile manufactories that located at some slight remove from the railroad line. It occupied a tract of about seven acres, assembled in lots, between Walker Avenue and Waco Road, two blocks west of North Piedmont Avenue.

A short notice of the Pauline Mills damask was published in the "Locals" column in the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* on 19 November 1914.

Guess you have already seen it but if you haven't sometime when you are passing along by the store of W. A. Mauney & Brother take a look at the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 26

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

display of table damask in the window. This goods [sic] was made by C. E. Neisler's mill, the Pauline, in Kings Mountain and it is just as nice as anybody's make. Table damask is rapidly taking the place of linen on the dining tables in the homes in the land. Even the most fastidious Germans are said to be rapidly adopting it.

The table linens produced at the Pauline Mills were indeed successful and within a year Mr. Neisler was adding a new factory at the Pauline plant to facilitate production. The new plant was announced in the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* on 15 July 1915 under the heading "C. E. Neisler is to build another Cotton mill."

Kings Mountain is to have another cotton mill. C. E. Neisler, one of the industrial leaders not only of Kings Mountain but of Western North Carolina, is the builder and owner. The Kiser Lumber Company has closed the contract for a turnkey job on the building and will begin work right away. Mr. Neisler hopes to have the mill in operation by October first. The mill will be situated right beside Mr. Neisler's other mill, the Pauline, and will do the spinning for the Pauline mill which weaves damask exclusively. The new mill will do spinning only and will be equipped with 2,000 spindles. The building will be 80 x 90 feet and well constructed and two stories high.

The construction of the new facility at the damask mill proceeded quickly, and its completion was noted in the *HERALD* on 11 November 1915. "The new cotton mill built by Mr. C. E. Neisler, or the spinning annex to the Pauline, has been finished and is ready for the machinery. The machinery is arriving and Mr. Neisler thinks it will be ready for operation late in December."

In the July 1915 article in the *HERALD* announcing the proposed new spinning mill, the Pauline Mill was described as "one of a very few damask mills in the South." The cotton damask table linens produced at the Pauline Mill met with wide acceptance and soon Mr. Neisler added another domestic line to production. The *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* included a short notice in the "Locals" column in its edition of 24 April 1919. "Mr. C. E. Neisler is installing 21 machines for the production of bed spreads in the Pauline mill. This will be a unique spread. It will be known as the 'ripolette' spread. It is a dimity with a seersucker stripe."

The reception gained by the firm's new bedspread line and the continued demand for cotton damask table linens encouraged Mr. Neisler to increase production. In part, no doubt, because of the small acreage at the Pauline Mill and the fact that its grounds were surrounded on every side

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 27

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

by houses largely occupied by its employees, his options were limited at the existing plant. Mr. Neisler looked to acreage south of Kings Mountain that lay on the west side of the now double-tracked lines of the Southern Railway Company. As Ida Pauline Neisler (1912-2002), his youngest daughter, was the namesake of her mother and thus also honored in the name of the Pauline Mill, Mr. Neisler combined the names of his two elder daughters, Margaret Sue (1907-1995) and Grace (1910-1999) Neisler, into a single word. The new textile plant would be called Margrace.

The new mill was announced in the lead article in the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* on 4 September 1919.

Mr. C. E. Neisler, proprietor of the Pauline mill, is breaking ground and getting ready to erect the Margrace mill on property which he recently bought from Mr. W. A. Morris just across the railroad from the Sevier mill just south of town. Mr. Neisler bought the magnificent farm of Mr. Morris consisting of seventy-odd acres and then bought enough from Mr. S. S. Weir to make out about eighty acres all of which makes one of the best mill sites in this whole section. The Margrace will be 120 feet by 300 feet and will have 5000 spindles and 100 looms to begin with and will manufacture goods probably in a class with that at present manufactured by the Pauline, table damask, napkins and bedspreads. Mr. Neisler has not decided definitely just what goods he will make at the new mill. Mr. Neisler hopes to have the mill in operation by January first provided he can get labor and material on time. In addition to the mill Mr. Neisler will build twenty five tenant houses all of which will be modern living quarters with all modern conveniences. He will drive his own wells and have his own water and sewer systems. The lay of the land is ideal there being natural drainage from the mill site and the residential section alike. When this mill and village is completed it will doubtless be one of the best appointed in the community.

The Margrace Mill property comprised about 76.80 acres and would include the site of the mill, the residential village, the mill boarding house, two apartment houses, the company store, and two later-built residences occupied by Charles Eugene Neisler and his brother Hunter Ramseur Neisler (1904-1982).<sup>7</sup>



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 28

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

Two deeds dated 18 October 1921 confirm the construction of the Margrace Mill complex which included a second manufacturing plant known as Patricia Mills. That day Mr. Neisler and his wife conveyed the acreage purchased in summer 1919, excepting a 1.30-acre parcel, to Margrace Mills, Incorporated. The property was described as "being the land upon which are Located the Cotton Mills, Store and Tenament Houses of said Margrace Mills, Inc." (Cleveland Deeds, 3J/141). The 1.30-acre quadrangular parcel, bound on the north by a sand-clay road (Margrace Road) and on the south by the Southern Railway Company right of way, was conveyed by the couple to the family-owned Patricia Mills, Incorporated, and described as "Land being that upon which is located the Cotton Mill of said Patricia Mills, Inc." (Cleveland Deeds, 3J/140). Throughout their ownership by the Nesiler family, Margrace and Patricia mills were operated as complimentary weaving mills but with different looms. The Patricia Mill produced table linens and smaller domestic wares while the Margrace Mill had larger looms on which bedspreads and domestic fabrics could be woven. The products of both weaving mills were finished at facilities added in 1927 at the Margrace complex. Over time the identity of the Patricia Mill was subsumed under the Margrace name. At this distance the reason for placing the Patricia Mills on a separate parcel is unknown. The Margrace and Patricia mills occupied a long rectangular tract between the Southern Railway Company's right of way along its double-track line and a sand-clay road that is today's Margrace Road. The Margrace Mill store and residential village were located on the north side of Margrace Road. In this area south of Kings Mountain, the newly built Margrace and Patricia mills joined an earlier textile mill on the south side of the railroad and the parallel road (today's Battleground Avenue) leading southwest to Grover, North Carolina. It was the plant of the Sevier Cotton Mills and a part of the Alamance County-based Holt-Family textile operation, which was sold in 1919 to the Park Yarn Company of Charlotte (see Cleveland Deeds, EEE/227-28).

At this distance it is unclear how many "Tenament Houses" had been built by October 1921 when the mill complex passed into corporate ownership. The "Big Kings Mountain and Cleveland County Special Development Edition" of the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* of 15 November 1922 carried an eight-paragraph account of the Margrace Mills in section three of the newspaper. Readers learned that it employed "125 skilled employees regularly" in the production "of a superior line of bedspreads known as 'Novelite.'" The article continued and informed readers that "the workers are skilled in their art and receive high wages. They are surrounded by the most sanitary and improved working conditions as well as living conditions, and the firm takes a deep interest in the welfare of its workers. 5,184 spindles and 96 looms are operated." A two-paragraph article on the Patricia Mills followed on the same page and noted that "It is engaged in the production of 'Nikpan' napkins and damask products. The Patricia is a modern brick mill, 85 x 160, capitalized at \$200,000, operating 175 Jacquard looms. It employs 35 of the highest skilled textile workers." Given their combined employment of 160 workers on

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 29

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

a daily basis, it appears likely that most of the surviving mill houses, if not all, had been built by that time to provide housing for the two plants.

Margrace Mill is represented on the Sanborn Insurance Map of Kings Mountain for the first time in 1925. It shows all of the surviving mill houses except for 112, 114, 116, 118, and 120 Cloninger Street, which are built on the same plan as the five houses at 102 through 110 Cloninger Street and are likely contemporary if undocumented on the map; 115 and 117 Cloninger Street that are identical to 101 through 109 Cloninger Street; and 400 Margrace Road. An undated photograph of the mill houses on Fulton Drive was published in the "Sesqui-centennial Rotogravure Number" of the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* of 7 October 1930. It is accompanied by photographs of the Margrace, Pauline, and Patricia mills, and another of the stone residence of Charles Eugene Neisler, Jr. (standing today at 3600 Margrace Road). A paragraph-length caption accompanying the photographs states that "About six hundred people are employed in these three plants, and 125 more in the Bonnie Mill, a yarn plant also in Kings Mountain, which is now under the Neisler management."

The number of employees is one important indication of the role and success of the Neisler mills in Kings Mountain, and so, too, is an article published in the *CHARLOTTE OBSERVOR* in 1923 which analyzed the operations of the company, its investment in advertising and promotion of its products, and the wide appreciation for its cotton damask linens. It applauded the decision of Margrace Mills to run a full page advertisement for its "Novelite" bedspreads in the December 1922 issue of *THE WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION*, at a cost of \$9,500, and the appearance of the same (or similar) advertisements in the pages of *THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL*, *GOOD HOUSEKEEPING*, and other leading women's magazines of the 1920s. Excerpts from the article place the operations of the Neisler mills in context.

"To begin with it must be remembered that Margrace Mills were the pioneers in the lightweight colored bedspread field....

Naturally the buying public had to be educated to an item of such radical departure from the beaten trail and here is where the advertising campaign came in. ...

The mills intend to add new styles to the line from time to time, so that women already having 'Novelites' in their homes can buy new ones that will be entirely different in style and design....

A. W. Baylis company of New York city are the selling agents, and handle the entire output not only of the Margrace Mills but of the Patricia Mills which with possibly one exception is the largest manufacturer of napkins in the United States....

The Patricia Mills, as stated, is the largest manufacturer of napkins

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 30

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

with one possible exception in Rhode Island in the United States, making 10,000 dozen per week. The famous 'Nikpan' napkin which has been advertised extensively and which is carried by retailers all over the United States, is a product of this mill. Many designs are made, in sizes from 15 to 24 inches. The Patricia furnishes large orders of large sized napkins to South America.

Another article on the Margrace Mills published in the *CHARLOTTE OBSERVOR* at about the same time appeared under a headline "Make 5,000 'Novelite' Bedspreads Each Week at Kings Mountain."

In addition to the advertisements in the pages of women's magazines, Mr. Neisler promoted his domestic linen lines with well-designed, illustrated booklets and pamphlets. The Neisler family archives hold copies of these, including "Table Settings" that promoted the Nikpan line of napkins, table runners, scarves, tea towels, etc., and three brochures for "Novelite" bedspreads including "Novel Embroidery Designs for Novelite Spreads" written by Frances A. Harris and issued in 1923. Mr. Neisler also advertised the use of "Novelite" bedspreads in 1924 in furnishing all 1,000-plus rooms of the Roosevelt Hotel on Madison Avenue in New York City.

The construction of the Margrace and Patricia Mills in 1920 and the employees they attracted were critical factors in the extraordinary population growth in Kings Mountain between 1920 and 1930. The Federal census recorded 3,639 residents in 1920 and by 1930 the population had grown to 5,362.<sup>8</sup> In 1930 the three Neisler mills employed 600 people, most of whom were probably Kings Mountain residents. The parallel increases in employment and population came in part due to the addition of finishing facilities at the Margrace complex in 1927, which enabled every stage of the production process to be completed at this one location.

The success of the companies, the rising involvement of Mr. Neisler's sons in the management and operation of the Neisler mills, and the business advantages of a consolidated, centralized administration also prompted the reorganization of the family's textile holdings into a single company, Neisler Mills, Incorporated. By three deeds, all dated 2 July 1927, Charles Eugene Neisler Sr., president, respectively, of Patricia Mills, Incorporated, Margrace Mills, Incorporated, and Pauline Mills, Incorporated, conveyed the real estate holdings of the mills, their buildings and related facilities to the newly-organized company (Cleveland Deeds, 3T/319-22).<sup>9</sup>

William Andrew Mauney, who had exercised a critical role in the textile industry of Kings Mountain since 1888, died on 15 May 1928 and was buried in Mountain Rest Cemetery. The patriarchal mantle descended to Charles Eugene Neisler, but this singular status would be short-lived. On 14 April 1931, Mr. Neisler died near Bessemer City while en route to Kings Mountain

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 31

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

from Gastonia, where he had attended the first board meeting of the reorganized First National Bank of Gastonia. The *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* obituary appeared under the headline "Pioneer Mill Man" and described him as "one of the leading cotton manufacturers of the Carolinas." His obituary in the *GASTONIA GAZETTE* appeared under a heading identifying him as a "Leading Carolina Manufacturer." The *DAILY NEW RECORD*, the national textile manufacturers' daily published in New York, likewise lauded him as a "prominent cotton manufacturer of the Carolinas" and, more particularly, and authoritatively a "Southern Pioneer in Fancy Jacquard Weaving."<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Neisler died intestate. Paul Mauney Neisler (1897-1973), his second son, was appointed administrator of his estate. The settlement was complicated in the summer of 1932 by the death of Hugh Neisler (1902-1932), the fourth son. In the event Paul Neisler administered both estates which were settled in September 1933.<sup>11</sup>

The settlement stipulated that the Neisler family's Pauline, Margrace, and Patricia Mills would remain in the ownership of Neisler Mills, Incorporated, under the management of the Neislers' four surviving sons until 1955. Charles Eugene Neisler Jr. (1895-1966) served as president of the family-held company while his younger brothers, Paul Mauney Neisler, Joseph Andrew Neisler (1899-1983), and Hunter Ramseur Neisler (1904-1982), held other principal offices. A highly-developed managerial system was in place at each of the company mills. During this period, after 1935, the firm acquired and operated three spinning mills to produce yard for its own use; these were Palmetto Yarn Mills in Pageland, South Carolina, Mayo Mills in Mayo, South Carolina, and Belmont Mills in Shelby, North Carolina. In about 1943 a mill in Ellenboro, North Carolina, was acquired and equipped with looms to produce pile fabrics. Between 1931 and 1935 a stone masonry clubhouse was erected at the southwest edge of the village, facing on today's Margrace Road. The present two-story brick company store, also on Margrace Road, was built soon thereafter.

Early in this period, in the 1930s, the drapery and upholstery fabric lines introduced in the 1920s would take an increasingly important role in the company's operations. In about 1944, when the large stage curtain in Radio City Music Hall in New York City was replaced, the fabric for the new curtain was woven by Neisler Mills. *ESSO OILWAYS*, a promotional organ published monthly by the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey and other petroleum companies, carried an illustrated article, "Raising the Curtain on Neisler," in its February 1945 issue.

Six thousand spectators in New York's huge Radio City Music Hall leaned forward in their seats as the 65-piece orchestra, seated on the mammoth elevator, rose slowly from the pit. Arms moving with sharp precision, Erno Rapee, tall, lean conductor, stood silhouetted against

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 32

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

the curtained stage as he led his musicians through excerpts from Offenbach's "Orpheus." Then, from the spotlights, broad shafts of light began to play over the satin-smooth surface of the huge curtain, which rose in graceful folds.

And so, as the curtain opens on a Music Hall production, we open the curtain on Neisler Mills, Inc., Kings Mountain, N.C., who wove the facing material of the Music Hall curtain, believed to be the largest in the world.

Most Music Hall spectators would probably say that the color of curtain is "golden" and that it is made of velvet or satin. Actually, as Neisler officials will tell you, the part of the curtain visible to the audience is made from fire-resistant rayon and cotton. The warp is orange rayon; the filling is green cotton. About 2,000 yards of this cloth, 50 inches wide, were required for the curtain, which hangs behind the proscenium arch which measures 60 feet high and 100 feet wide at the base. With its fireproof backing and steel control cables, it weighs almost 3 tons.

Theatrical curtains play only a very minor part in Neisler peacetime production, for most of the company's fabrics go into homes. Of its annual output of 10,000,000 yards of textiles, about 60 per cent is in upholstery and drapery fabrics. Included in this group are damask, tapestry and pile fabrics. Pile fabrics, however, make up less than 10 per cent of Neisler's total production. In addition to drapery and upholstery fabrics, Neisler makes fancy ticking, finished tablecloths and napkins, bedspreads and a small amount of clothing material.

The article continued with an account of the firm's war work, much of which was produced by residents of the Margrace Mill Village.

At present the company is making large quantities of 13-ounce duck for the Army and Navy. The Navy and Maritime Commission buy Neisler drapery and upholstery fabrics, as well as 90 per cent of the company's output of white cotton-damask napkins. These napkins, which are 22 inches square, are woven and hemmed at the Neisler plant but are bleached and mercerized elsewhere. In addition to the weaving which Neisler does for government agencies, approximately half of the yarn which it spins is turned over to other mills for use on government work.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 33

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

The article continued with an account of the firm's history and its processing operations. It concluded with a statement noting the use of Esso products as lubricants for the Neisler company's looms and spindles.

It was also during this period of sibling management that the Neisler mills entered into an arrangement with Cannon Mills, Incorporated, for the marketing of table linens. The Neisler family archives holds copies of two promotional pieces and related print material. One line was marketed as "En Famille" durene damask table napkins. The other is for breakfast, luncheon and bridge sets "Styled and Loomed by Margrace."

The article published in *ESSO OILWAYS* in 1945 documented both the weaving of fabric for the curtains of the Radio City Music Hall and the Neisler company's war-time work. It also serves another important historical function. With the absence of any critical, overarching study of North Carolina's textile industry beyond the preliminary effort of Brent Glass in 1992, or of its constituent, often family-held manufacturing companies, the article provides valuable insight into the operation and production of this particular concern. Production of drapery and upholstery fabrics for an expanding American market became an increasingly important part of the Neisler company's domestic textile operations during the interwar period, and the trend continued after World War II. In 1930 the company's Kings Mountain factories employed about 600 people. By 1955 the number increased to 1,225, with probably no more than a quarter or a fifth of that number living in the Margrace Mill Village and the company-owned housing at its Pauline Mill. This increase occurred through both the addition and expansion of finishing operations during the interwar period (and afterward) and the addition of extra shifts which also greatly enlarged the company's output. After the War the Neisler brothers considered further expansion of their operations at Margrace. A plat was drawn for a major enlargement of the Margrace Mill Village, to the northwest of the original village, by Clarence M. Leemon, a landscape architect. It is dated November 1947.<sup>12</sup> The Neisler brothers' decision not to proceed with this project, which would have provided housing for a majority of those employed at the Margrace complex, remains unexplained. In hindsight that action was an omen of events to come.

The decision to sell the family-owned mills in 1955 occurred through a combination of personal, family, and economic circumstances, and it appears to have been made about mid-year in 1955. In January of that year the family had increased its production capacity by taking a lease on a yarn spinning plant at Double Shoals, in Cleveland County, from the Slater Brothers textile firm. The *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* announced the sale on 3 November 1955 with a story which appeared under a headline, "Neisler Sells Mills to Horvath Firm," that carried in bold letters fully across the front page. The sale was of critical concern to the City of Kings Mountain in that the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 34

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

Pauline and Margrace plants employed 1,225 persons described as “about one-fourth of Kings Mountain’s employment and one-third of its textile employment.” The sale included the Pauline and Margrace mills in Kings Mountain, the Belmont Mills in Shelby, the Ellenboro Mills in Rutherford County, North Carolina, and the two plants in Pageland and Mayo, South Carolina. The Horvath firm also assumed the lease of the Double Shoals plant. Except for a “weekend cessation for inventory” the mills continued in operation with no changes in employment or plant management. Altogether the plants employed 1,675 people in the two states.

A lead editorial in the same issue of the *HERALD* lamented the sale, describing it as “a shock to Kings Mountain citizens” and “a source of regret to most Kings Mountain folk, particularly those who, through the years, have seen Neisler Mills grow from one plant erected in 1910 . . . to the present six and in turn become a major textile enterprise of the nation, as well as Kings Mountain’s largest employer.” The newspaper readily lauded Neisler as “a responsible industrial citizen” and that “there have been few civic accomplishments here in which Neisler has not had a sizeable part. The sale of the Kings Mountain plants and real estate at \$600,000 were made by a deed dated 27 October 1955 (Cleveland Deeds, 7D/99).<sup>13</sup> The monies realized in the sale of Neisler Mills, Inc., was then invested in stock held by a new successor family firm, Neisler Brothers, Incorporated, in which the seven surviving children held shares.

The sale of the Neisler mills in October 1955 was a cause of alarm not just for city officials and community leaders, but also for the families who occupied houses in Margrace Mill Village and company housing at the Pauline Mills. On 27 February 1956 notices were posted in the Margrace and Pauline mills carrying the heading “Village Houses to Be Sold.” The notice had two purposes. The first was to advise residents that surveyors would be working in the village to prepare “a Subdivision Plat of all houses owned by Neisler Brothers.” The second paragraph stated that “Employees of Neisler Mills now living in the houses will have first opportunity to buy the houses on very liberal terms. Any houses not purchased by present occupant(s) will be offered to employees living elsewhere.” A front-page story on the sale of the mill housing appeared two days later, on 1 March 1956 in the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* under the heading, “Neisler To Offer Homes For Sale.” The plat of the Margrace Mill Village was prepared by the firm of Pickell & Pickell, Engineers, of Greenville, South Carolina. Sixty lots were defined in the Margrace village. The boarding house and two apartment houses (#s 1,2, and 3) and five vacant lots (#s 4 through 8) lay on the west side of today’s Ark Street. Lots #9 through #60 were the grounds of fifty-one frame mill houses and the stone Margrace Club House (#11).<sup>14</sup> Today all of those buildings stand except for the houses at the intersection of Fulton Drive and Ark Street, 115 and 118 Fulton Drive, where family circumstances resulted in deterioration and eventual demolition, and 102 Fulton Drive which was destroyed by fire and replaced by a one-story frame house. The Margrace Mill Company Store was not included on the 1956 plat, and its sale was handled separately.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 35

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

---

All of the Margrace Mill Village houses and the former clubhouse were sold on 5 October 1956 except for the houses at 103 and 105 Cloninger Street that were sold on 22 October and 26 November 1956, respectively. The prices reflected the sizes of the houses and some apparent slight variation in either their condition or enhancements. With three minor exceptions the ten three-room houses standing at 102 through 120 Cloninger Street were sold for \$2,850. The majority of houses in the village, twenty-nine in number, were four-room dwellings and they were sold for prices between \$3,300 and \$3,600 with some few exceptions. The four-room stone clubhouse was sold for \$3,500. The four five-room houses built for supervisors were sold within the range of \$4,000 to \$4,250. The six-room house at 102 Water Oak Street, also a supervisor's house was sold for \$4,450. The seven duplexes in the village, 101 through 109, 115 and 117 Cloninger Street, built as attached three-room dwellings, were adapted as six-room single-family houses and sold for prices ranging from \$4,300 to \$4,500 (Cleveland Deeds, 7Q/1-15, 35-72, 76, and 102). On 4 October 1956 an article on the sale appeared in the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* under the caption "Most Neisler Houses Sold." Paul Mauney Neisler noted "Virtually all Neisler-owned residences at Pauline and Margrace have been sold to present occupants."

With the sale of the houses in Margrace Mill Village and those adjoining the Pauline Mills, comprising twenty frame houses and its stone clubhouse, the connections between the Neisler family, its former mills, and the houses where many of its employees lived were severed in legal and practical terms. The long historical associations of family and place have held, however. Initially, the Pauline and Margrace mills were operated as the Neisler Mills division of Massachusetts Mohair Plush Company, a holding in the Horvath textile empire. From the 1960s through the next decades, the former Pauline and Margrace mills as well as the other textile mills in Kings Mountain experienced the evolutions in management, ownership, production, sales, and finally decline experienced throughout the textile industry in the North Carolina Piedmont and the South.

In retrospect the Horvath company's purchase of the Neisler family mills did not prove to be a successful, long-term investment. It was not until February 1956 that a general manager for the division was in place. He was William Ford, who had held management positions with the Deering-Miliken textile company in South Carolina from 1941 to 1953 and had worked with Burlington Industries, the North Carolina textile giant that would also operate plants in King Mountain. A few weeks later, on 1 March 1956, the federal minimum wage increase to \$1 per hour affected the local textile industry. Then, on 28 June 1956, the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* carried a news story under the caption "Pauline Plant Being Cleared." Mr. Ford announced that the plant was being emptied of its 130 Jacquard looms, with seventy being moved to the Margrace plant and sixty being "junked." The Pauline mill was to be re-equipped.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 36

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

The demise of the former Neisler mills and the end of the Margrace Mills plant can be traced forward from two deeds of trust executed on 21 November 1963 (Cleveland Deeds of Trust, 637/371-466). In the first deed, a new company known as Neisler Mills, Incorporated, together with the Massachusetts Mohair Plush Company, the Talbot Mills, and the Michael Mills placed the plants and grounds of the Pauline, Margrace, and Belmont mills in Cleveland County and the mill at Ellenboro in Rutherford County, as security for a loan of \$4,284,000 from the Trustees of the Central States, Southeast and Southwest Areas Pension Fund. The equipment of the four mills was also placed under mortgage.

The borrowers' default on this loan precipitated a chain of events that stretched over the course of eight years. On 5 June 1972 the four mills and their equipment were sold at auction at the door of the Cleveland County Courthouse. The trustees of the Central States, Southeast and Southwest Areas Pension Fund were the highest bidders at \$2,250,000 for the real property and \$1,000,000 for the equipment (Cleveland Deeds, 14-F/308-381). The pension fund trustees conveyed the mills to a new company, Neisco Properties, Incorporated, on 10 September 1974 for \$905,000 (Cleveland Deeds, 15-B/462-68). On 29 December 1975, Neisco Properties and its parent company, Ruco Corporation, executed two deeds of trust, with the Pauline and Margrace mills in Kings Mountain and the Michael Mills at Boiling Springs as security for a loan of \$3,000,000 from the above-named pension fund (Cleveland Deeds of Trust, 837/285-323). Another default occurred and the property was put up at auction at the door of the Cleveland County Courthouse a second time, on 29 September 1980. The trustees of the pension fund bid the property in at \$665,000 and received title in October 1980 (Cleveland Deeds, 17-G/139-47). By this time the mills had long since been shuttered and silent.

The former Neisler family mills, that had flourished under their management and floundered under other owners in the last decades of their operation, stood neglected for four years. The buildings continued to deteriorate. On 27 December 1984, the trustees of the Central States, Southeast and Southwest Areas Pension Fund executed a quitclaim deed for the former Pauline and Margrace mills and adjoining property to Bunch, Incorporated, of Kings Mountain for a consideration of \$250,000 (Cleveland Deeds, 18-T/233-38). The property had been bought for its salvage value. Kelly Abbott Bunch (b.1928), the owner, had resided on the opposite side of Margrace Road since 1959, in the stone house built by Hunter Ramseur Neisler. Meanwhile, he had purchased the Margrace Mill Company Store in 1982 from Neisler Brothers, Incorporated (Cleveland Deeds, 17-T/652-53).

During the period since 1985, the Pauline Mills complex has been demolished except for its small brick freestanding office in the southeast corner of North City and Walker streets and a rectangular frame warehouse, now covered with sheet metal, in the northeast corner of North City Street and Waco Road. The much larger Margrace Mills complex, occupying about thirty

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 37

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

acres, is now an industrial ruin. Fire, neglect, and demolition have resulted in the complete loss of some buildings, including the original blocks of the Patricia and Margrace mills, and the partial demolition of others. Passersby traveling on Margrace Road can look through woven metal fencing onto the wasted scene, where only the tall deodora cedars stand as reminders of the once-proud appearance of the plant.

The fate of the Margrace Mill Village has been a very different story. At the end of 1956 all of its residents were the owners of their houses and many initially continued in the employ of the new owners of the Neisler mills. The camaraderie of mill village life, celebrated in 1987 in *LIKE A FAMILY* by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall and others, shaped the character of the community for many years. Some residents retired and others sought employment elsewhere in Kings Mountain but remained resident in the mill village while the fortunes of the namesake mill declined. For many, the Margrace Mill Village was home. Harold Lee Ledford (b.1935), the son of Lawrence Webb (1906-1978) and Janette (Wallace) Ledford (1908-1987), was born here, in the apartment his parents were then renting in the buildings that stood immediately beside the boarding house. In a few years they moved to the house at 104 Water Oak Street, which they bought in 1956 and occupied until their deaths. Mr. Ledford was twenty-one when his parents bought their mill house and soon joined the United States Army, as often did the sons of mill families in his generation. After his discharge, he came back to Margrace with his wife and in April 1963 he bought the house at 114 Water Oak Street where, a widower, he lives to the present (Cleveland Deeds, 9-Y/556-58). Mrs. Sarah (Hamrick) Jones (b.1923), his neighbor a few houses away, came to the house at 106 Water Oak Street as the bride of Clannie Wall Jones (1909-1982) in about 1941, when both were working in the Neisler mills. In 1956 Mr. Jones bought the house, where he and his family were living, and Mrs. Jones remains there today, the only living resident of those who purchased houses when the village was sold. As older residents have died, and others moved elsewhere, local investors began buying houses in the village and using them as rental property. Today twenty Margrace mill houses and the former clubhouse are owner-occupied and twenty-six are held as rental property.<sup>15</sup> Of that number eleven are owned by Leonard G. Wright (b. 1972), who lives nearby at 406 Fulton Road (the extension of Fulton Drive) and whose parents occupy 104 Water Oak Street.

### Architecture and Community Planning and Development Significance

The role of the textile industry in the commercial and population growth of the city of Kings Mountain, from 1888 through the mid-twentieth century, had a parallel influence in the physical development of the city and its appearance throughout the period. The large one- and two-story brick mills, erected in succession by the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company, and the owners of the Enterprise, Dilling, Cora, Lula, Bonnie, Pauline, Margrace, Patricia, and Sadie mills and their villages between 1888 and 1920, dominated the landscape of the young city.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 38

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

Those that survive remain the largest buildings in Kings Mountain to the present, joined in the second half of the twentieth century by other factories, larger consolidated schools, and some few civic and institutional buildings. The wealth accruing to the owners of these mills found its expression in a series of impressive houses and churches, principally along King Street and Piedmont Avenue, and in small multi-block neighborhoods, such as the Central School Historic District (NR, 2001) and along West Mountain and West Gold streets on the west side of the Southern Railway Company tracks that carry through the center of Kings Mountain. Beginning in about 1878 with the construction of the town's first brick store by William Andrew Mauney and his brother, the commercial center of Kings Mountain developed in a several block area between King and Gold streets, principally on the east side of the railroad line, with the Mountain View Hotel and two east-facing commercial blockfronts on the west side of the track. Smaller scale commercial and residential buildings, and some smaller industrial operations, including lumber yards and a cotton seed oil facility, were built in the encircling blocks. This city-scape, the landscape of a small industrial city, remained largely intact until the construction of the US 74 bypass in 1976 to 1978 claimed the homes of mill owners and operatives alike.

The builders of Kings Mountain's textile mills generally followed a directive Daniel Augustus Tompkins made in 1899 in his landmark text, *COTTON MILL, COMMERCIAL FEATURES, A TEXT-BOOK FOR THE USE OF TEXTILE SCHOOLS AND INVESTORS*. Mr. Tompkins (1851-1914) was a highly influential and successful textile engineer and the founder in 1887 of the D. A. Tompkins Company in Charlotte, which specialized in the construction and equipping of textile mills throughout the two Carolinas and beyond. He brought long and valuable experience to his writing.

In organizing a new company, the people who subscribe to the stock, often do so not only as an investment but as a help to the town in which they live. In pursuance of this thought, they frequently argue for locating the mill within the incorporated limits of the town or city.

On the whole, it may be considered good advice for a new mill not to be located within the limits of a city or town. If the matter of building up a town is to be considered, a mill located just outside the incorporate limits will escape city taxation and other disadvantages, and at the same time contribute to the city's trade (Tompkins, 34).

In Kings Mountain, the investors in the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company, the Dilling Mills, and their successors, may have followed this advice as much by necessity as by deliberate choice. The town limits of Kings Mountain were drawn with a short radius, and there was simply insufficient land inside its boundaries, adjoining the railroad tracks, for these large

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 39

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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industrial plants. Later expansion of the city limits brought the mills and their villages into the city.

The population of the small, young town did not include a sufficient labor force to work in the mills nor was there sufficient housing. To remedy both deficiencies, the investors in nearly all of the early mills erected housing as a necessary inducement to residents of farms and villages in Cleveland and Gaston counties, and the surrounding region, including South Carolina, to come to Kings Mountain to live and work. Doing so they followed the well-established precedents seen in Gaston, Cleveland, and Mecklenburg counties. Houses were generally rented to employees at a weekly or monthly rate calculated according to the number of rooms in the house. The cost was deducted from their paid wages.

Mr. Tompkins included a chapter entitled "Operatives' Homes" in his book, together with plans, elevations, photographs, and building instructions for two-, three-, four-, five-, and six-room tenement houses. "There is a rough rule," he noted, "that the house ought to furnish one operative for each room in the house." He continued, "Factory houses are usually built around the mill, and form a little village to themselves. This seems at present the most satisfactory plan in the South, for both the mills and the operatives. They seem disposed to live to themselves and attend their own schools and churches even when the mill village is in a city" (Tompkins, 116). Mr. Tompkins also advocated a certain degree of variety in the appearance and finish of the houses. "It was formerly the custom to build for operatives long rows of houses exactly alike, and in most cases adjoining one another. But it has transpired that this is not the best plan. Different families have different tastes, and as operatives grow in intelligence and prosperity, this differentiation in taste becomes more marked" (Tompkins, 116). In the event, however perceptive and well-intentioned, this last admonition was one that mill owners usually ignored, while honoring another that was also based on experience: "The ideal arrangement is to preserve the general conditions of rural life and add some of the comforts of city life" (Tompkins, 117).

In Kings Mountain the earliest mill housing that was built systematically and on a village plan appears to have been erected in the 1890s and 1900s by the Enterprise Mill, south of the town center, and at the Dilling and Cora mills, northeast of central Kings Mountain. Although the Sanborn Map Company published one-sheet maps of the town in 1902 and 1908, and a three-sheet map in 1919, the town was not completely mapped until 1925, when the then extant mill housing could be discerned in both the arrangement of residential streets near the mills, and the repetitive placement and plan of houses along those streets. Mill villages with ordered rows of one-story frame house on parallel streets or lanes adjoined the Enterprise (then Mason), Dilling, and Lula (then Phenix) mills as well as the Cora mills where asymmetrical-plan cottages bear a resemblance to those advocated by Mr. Tompkins. The Bonnie Mills appear to have had no factory housing, while the streets around and near the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 40

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

and the Pauline Mills featured houses of mixed character and with little repetition. All or part of seven houses in the small, now lost village adjoining the Sadie Mills are represented on the map. The Margrace Mill Village was represented in a nearly complete state in 1925.

While the run of the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* is missing from October 1919 through 1934, when the houses in Margrace Mill Village were built, insight into the community attitudes toward mill housing can be discerned from short notices concerning other such housing in the earlier surviving issues of the newspaper. On 1 July 1915 the *HERALD* published a short account of improvements to the tenement houses at the Sevier (by 1925 Park Yarn) plant, south of Kings Mountain. "The Sevier mill village has come out in a brand new summer suit which is both elegant and attractive. Supt. Claude A. Hamilton has had the houses of the village painted. It is not a one color monotonous appearing sight either. The colors on the different house varies and the trimmings are artistic and well in keeping with the good tastes of Mr. Hamilton who takes great interest in his people and town." Six months later, on 20 January 1916, the *HERALD* published a short, front-page notice of new construction in the Cora Mill Village. "The contract has been let for ten new tenant houses at the Cora Mill and as soon as these can be provided and labor can be secured the mill will start on night time." This is one of the earliest mentions of the operation of a second, night shift at the mills in Kings Mountain, a practice that had been put in place about a week earlier at the Klotho mill by Mr. Neisler, who was then its superintendent. Progress on the Cora mill houses was reported to readers of the *HERALD* in its 9 March 1916 edition. "About five new houses at the Cora Mill are finished. New help are coming in. The mill started on night time Monday night." Electricity, utilized for night-time operation, was also installed in existing rental houses in the 1910s. On 5 December 1918 a short sentence appeared in the "Locals" column in the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD*. "We understand that the Sevier mill authorities will in the near future install electric lights in all their tenant houses also street lights."

The improvements by several mills to their tenant houses in this period gives rise to the question of whether mill superintendents were undertaking this work to make their houses more appealing and desirable in an effort to attract better workers in a competitive labor market. The *HERALD* announced a village-wide effort at the former Enterprise Mill that was known for a period as Klotho and by 1919 was operated as the Mason Mills. "Mr. J. C. Mason, President and Manager of the Mason Mills, has just finished remodeling all his tenant houses and has let the contract to Mr. J. L. Julian for installing electric lights both on the streets and in the houses. Mr. Mason will grade out his streets and sidewalks. He is rapidly bringing his village to the front as a first class mill community. He bought flower seeds and has assisted his people in plowing their yards and gardens." A week later, 19 June 1919, readers learned that the superintendent of the Sevier Mill was undertaking further improvements and that "all the tenant houses are being screened. The

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 41

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

back porches and all doors and windows are being screened.” Mill staff at the Sevier Mill had also plowed the resident employees’ gardens earlier in the spring.

In Summer 1919 other amenities were added to mill housing, namely indoor plumbing and sewerage. On 17 July 1919, the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* reported “The Phoenix Mill Company is finishing up five nice eight room houses. These houses are modern and equipped with water, lights and sewerage.” A week later the “Locals” column in the *HERALD* opened with a notice on new houses at the Neisler family’s Pauline mill. “We understand that Mr. C. E. Neisler is building three new tenement houses at the Pauline mill. These houses will be like all the rest of Mr. Neisler’s houses, up-to-date and equipped with water, lights and sewerage.”

The attention paid to improvements in mill housing by the local press reflect the role of company housing to growth of town and industry alike. These selected quotations also suggest the type of coverage that probably attended the construction of the Margrace and Patricia mills and the Margrace Mill Village in late 1919, 1920, and thereafter. Given the need to have resident employees in the village to operate the Margrace and Patricia mills, when they were placed in service in 1920, it is likely the forty-three houses that appear on the 1925 Sanborn Map Company map of the village, inset at the bottom of map page ten, were virtually all built in 1919-1920. Of that number forty survive and are included in the district. The 1925 map does not show the five houses standing at 112 through 120 Cloninger Street, which are built on the three-room plan of those standing at 102 through 110 Cloninger Street, nor does it represent the duplexes at 115 and 117 Cloninger, which are built on the model of those standing at 101 through 109 Cloninger Street. However, the placement of the inset on the page and their identical appearance to other houses on the street, offer the possibility that they were standing but simply not represented on the map.

The appearance of the Margrace Mill Village differs from the mill village housing that preceded its construction in Kings Mountain. The Margrace houses are closely spaced to each other on small rectangular lots that are clearly smaller than those in the earlier villages. On average the lots had a width of sixty feet and depths that ranged from 117 to 137 feet. The even setbacks seen in the other villages is repeated here. This proximity and dense spacing contributes to an obvious “village” character that is reinforced by the clear separateness from the community’s mostly rural surroundings. When built the village stood, as now, on the northwest side of today’s Margrace Road, and it was flanked on the southeast by the Margrace and Patricia mills. The village was enclosed by Ark Street on the southwest and northwest that set it apart from the rural countryside, stretching away in both those directions and to the northeast. The residential village’s nearest neighbors were the mill’s boarding house and two apartment buildings, on the west side of Ark Street and the one-story frame store that stood immediately beside the boarding house, to the southwest, where it was replaced by the present two-story brick store. In short, the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 42

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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Margrace Mill Village was a compact residential enclave by the side of the mill. Today it remains visually distinct in the suburban landscape that now links it with central Kings Mountain.

From the outset, the residents of the village enjoyed the advantages of a community store. While some villagers tended their own vegetable gardens, a majority purchased vegetables along with other staples, clothing, hardware and other necessary goods at the store. Milk (and eggs) could be purchased from the Neisler's dairy farm which was located to the west of the store, between it and the handsome Tudor Revival-style house built by Hunter Ramseur Neisler at 3000 Margrace Road. The Cora mill village included a frame store, which stands to the present on Church Street. The company store at the older Dilling Mill complex was closed in 1916, when it went into receivership. The *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* reported the change in its edition of 17 February 1916. "The receivers of the Dilling Cotton Mills have decided to discontinue the Company store as they have discovered that it doesn't pay. They expect to close out the stock to some individual or private firm this week." The Margrace Mill Company Store was an exception and offered a grocery line to village residents into the early 1960s.

While many mill villages in the Piedmont included churches in their boundary, the Margrace Mill Village did not. Instead, many of the villagers attended the nearby, contemporary Macedonia Baptist Church, which was organized in October 1920. The church occupied a sanctuary erected on the former grounds of the Weir family farm and fronting on today's Battleground Avenue, south of the mill complex. The larger Cora mill village boasted both Methodist and Baptist congregations whose later buildings stand today in those neighborhoods, while the Dilling mill village had a Baptist mission. None of the Kings Mountain mill villages had their own schools, however Park Grace Elementary School was erected in the 1920s nearby to serve residents of both the Margrace and Park Yarn company villages.

The village clubhouse was another feature that set the Margrace Mill Village apart in Kings Mountain while following the precedent seen in larger mill villages in the Piedmont. In about 1933 the mill company erected a one-and-a-half story stone masonry clubhouse in the northwest corner of Margrace Road and Ark Street. A similar stone clubhouse was erected for the employees of the Pauline Mill in the southeast corner of Walker and Cansler streets where it survives as well. The Margrace clubhouse was used for both mill-sponsored community events and those hosted by employees and residents of the village, including the Margrace Woman's Club. The club's meeting at the clubhouse on 5 July 1956, reported in the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* on the twelfth, was possibly that last before the building was sold on 5 October 1956 to Millard Caldwell, who occupied it as a residence. The clubhouse included a large meeting room, a kitchen, auxiliary spaces, and a barber shop served by a separate front door opening off the stoop overlooking Margrace Road. The Margrace Mill Village never had its own baseball field,

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 43

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

as did some large Piedmont villages, but employees at the Margrace, Patricia, and Pauline mills joined together to play as the Neisler mills team locally and in the region. Accounts of games appeared regularly in the local press in the 1930s, up to World War II.

The weatherboarded frame, one-story houses in the Margrace Mill Village reflect house forms, plans, and sizes seen in the region in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. They remain a remarkable presence because of their survival, their integrity, and their dense repetition on six principal block fronts. Today all but three of the forty-three houses represented on the 1925 Sanborn Map survive as do seven others that appear to be contemporary. Except for six houses occupied by supervisors, the houses are built on either a three- or four-room plan. All were fitted originally with simple bathrooms served by a company-owned sewerage system and furnished with electric lights.

The size of the houses reflects their accommodation of small families in which both the husband and wife and one or more of the older children worked in the mill. Ten identical three-room cottages (Type A in this nomination inventory), comprising 102 through 120 Cloninger Street stand in an unbroken row on the northeast side of the street. They comprise principal two-room blocks, covered by side-gable roofs, with one-room kitchen ells. Their symmetrical three-bay facades are sheltered by shed roof porches. In form and finish they were virtually identical to small tenant houses erected on North Carolina farms from the 1880s through the 1910s. Their appearance would have been familiar to many who left just such houses as tenants and came to work for a guaranteed, hourly wage. But with indoor plumbing, rather than outdoor, free-standing privies, they represented a distinct increase in status. With the house occupying a smaller portion of the lot than others in the village, these houses had ample space for vegetable gardens. The seven duplexes (Type B in the inventory) standing on the opposite, southwest side of Cloninger Street (#s 101-109, 115-117) were also three-room dwellings. They are covered with hip roofs and originally featured paired doorways under a shared front porch. The twenty-five four-room cottages (Type C in the inventory) in the district represent the dominant mill house form in the Margrace Village. They, too, were covered by a hip roof and featured inset corner porches on their front elevations. Six residences for mill supervisors (Type D in the inventory), built on either a five- or six-room plan appear on the plat prepared for the 1956 sale of the village. Five of the six, excepting only 101 Fulton Drive, which was lost to fire, survive. Like the four-room houses, they comprised paired offset tiers of rooms.

The sale of the Margrace Mill Village houses in autumn 1956 reflected an industry-wide practice in the 1950s. Such sales were handled either in one effort, as here at Margrace, or over an extended or phased period as at the Erlanger Mill in Lexington, Davidson County, where the sale occurred over a decade from 1953 to 1963. Pricing of the houses and their sales were handled for the Neisler family by the Drew Real Estate Company of Anderson, South Carolina, which was



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 44

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

described in the newspaper announcement on 1 March 1956 as “one of the few firms specializing in the sale of residential realty owned by industrial firms.” Now, a half century after the sale, the Margrace Mill Village survives as the most intact and best preserved mill village in the city of Kings Mountain, and it alone retains the character of a village in the cityscape, whose resident population in 2000 had reached 9,693. Mill village housing erected by the Dilling, Cora, and Lula mills survives, and groups of houses can be identified as “mill houses” along the streets near those plants, however, losses, extensive remodelings and compromising changes, and new or replacement construction have altered their character and integrity. Entirely lost are the houses erected on lots and streets adjoining Kings Mountain’s two oldest textile mills, the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company and the Enterprise Mills. Lost also are the houses in the small village adjoining the Sadie Mills on East Gold Street.

### Endnotes

1. For a fuller discussion of the interrelationship of the construction of the railroad and the growth of Kings Mountain see the National Register nominations for the King Street Overhead Bridge and the Southern Railway Company Overhead Bridge prepared by this author.
2. While Captain Dilling’s saw mill is arguably the first industrial concern in Kings Mountain, it was superseded about 1882 when William Oates Ware(1833-1918) put in operation a steam saw and grist mill named Merchant Mills. It was located near the center of the new town, on the south side of today’s West Gold Street, at the head of the street and southwest of the point where it crosses the railroad track and continues as East Gold Street. In time Mr. Oates’s concern included a cotton gin which served the farmers who grew cotton as a cash crop and sold it to the area mills.
3. A mill at Double Shoals, put in operation in 1872, was succeeded the next year by a mill owned by the Schenck family built north of present-day Lawndale. The Schenck family relocated their mill to Lawndale and rebuilt it in 1888 as Cleveland Mills. Meanwhile, in 1887, the Belmont Mills were placed in operation south of Shelby, off today’s South Lafayette Street.
4. Mr. Neisler’s childhood was spent in the handsome Italianate-style family house at 117 Cabarrus Avenue West in Concord which is known as the Foil house. Members of the Foil family were later owners and occupants of the house. A short architectural analysis of the house and a photograph appear on page 103 of *THE HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE OF CABARRUS COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA*(1981).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 45

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

5. In Lincoln County, he was an officer at the Long Shoals Cotton Mills, organized in about 1891 by the Mauney brothers and David Hunter Mauney(1877-1942), Mrs. Neisler's younger brother. In about 1899 Mr. Neisler was the principal investor in the organization of Indian Creek Manufacturing Company in Lincolnton with Samuel Augustus Mauney(1874-1952), the eldest son of Jacob Simri Mauney, and served as president until both men sold their interests in 1907. He also would hold positions in Kings Mountain's Klotho (later Mauney) Mill and the Anna Mill, nearby in Gaston County.
6. Nothing exists of the Bonnie Mills plant today. The grounds of the mill are now the location of the Kings Mountain City Hall. The Cora Mills were later acquired and operated by Craftspun Yarns, Incorporated. The 1900 mill, boasting its name on its facade, still stands and is largely encircled with later expansions. The Lula Mills, apparently located near the Cora Mills plant, is said to have been incorporated into the Cora Mills company.
7. As the newspaper article states, the site of the Margrace Mill was made up of acreage purchased by Mr. Neisler from W. A. Morris and Samuel Sylvester Weir from farm lay alongside today's Battleground Avenue. The larger purchase of 72.20 acres was made on 25 June 1919 of W. A. and Georgia Morris (Cleveland Deeds, FFF/203). It comprised four apparently adjoining tracts on the northwest side of the Southern Railway Company line. The largest of the four (46.60 acres) was a Morris family holding that Mr. Morris expanded by the purchase of three tracts of the Alexander Franklin Weir (1838-1898) estate. Mr. Weir's residence, fronting on Battleground Avenue, stood on the grounds now occupied by Macedonia Baptist Church, where many residents of the Margrace Mill Village would attend services (*HERITAGE*, 596). The second purchase, made of Samuel Sylvester Weir (1867-1955) on 12 July 1919, was a 4.60-acre parcel beside the tracks including the right of way held by the Southern Railway Company (Cleveland Deeds, FFF/225).
8. To a very real extent the history of these mills and the larger history of textile manufacturing in Kings Mountain for the period from 1919 through 1934 remains elusive, and is yet to be thoroughly documented and understood. Surviving issues of the *KINGS MOUNTAIN HERALD* begin with the issue of 8 January 1914 and continue with little interruption to 9 October 1919. From that date to 3 January 1935, no issues of the local newspaper survive except for commemorative editions published on 16 November 1922 and 7 October 1930 held by the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The representation of Kings Mountain's textile history in Lee B. Weathers' 1956 Cleveland County history, *THE LIVING PAST OF CLEVELAND COUNTY: A HISTORY*, and Dave Baity's

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 46

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

*TRACKS THROUGH TIME: A HISTORY OF THE CITY OF KINGS MOUNTAIN, 1874-2005*, was earlier compromised by this loss. The principal resources for this critical period, when the Margrace Mill and its adjoining village were built and operated for fifteen years, are the Cleveland County public records, the Sanborn Map Company's insurance maps for the city, the two commemorative editions of the newspaper, and the family and corporate papers of the Neisler family held in the offices of Neisler Brothers, Incorporated, 148 West Mountain Street, Kings Mountain.

9. The next year Mr. Neisler was involved in the reorganization of another of Kings Mountain's major textile concerns. The Enterprise Mills, Kings Mountain's second oldest textile manufacturer, which had operated as the Klotho Mills beginning in 1913 and next as the Mason Mills, went into receivership in 1927. In December 1927 the assets of the company were put up at auction and bid in at \$125,000 by William Andrew Mauney and conveyed to him on 24 January 1928 (Cleveland Deeds, 4A/571-72). That same day Mr. Mauney conveyed the property to Mr. Neisler, his brother Jacob Simri Mauney, and two of his own children, David Hunter Mauney (1877-1942) and Virginia Eileen (Mauney) Herndon (1900-1997) for \$151,000 (Cleveland Deeds, 4A/573-74). Through the third deed recorded in succession, the above members of the Mauney/Neisler textile family conveyed the former Mason Mills buildings and real estate to Mauney Mills, Incorporated for \$225,000 (Cleveland Deeds, 4A/575-76).
10. The *CLEVELAND STAR*, the leading Cleveland County newspaper, published in Shelby, published a death notice in the center of its front page on 15 April 1931 under the headline "Chas. E. Neisler Kings Mtn. Mill Magnate Dies."
11. Paul Neisler sold 272 shares of Neisler Mills stock, at \$100 per share, to raise liquidity for indebtedness, to honor a gift of \$5,000 to Davidson College, and to acquire a family plot and to erect a family monument in Mountain Rest Cemetery. Two-thousand shares of stock in Neisler Mills, with a very conservative valuation of \$200,000, were divided equally between the seven surviving children. The family residence at 510 North Piedmont Avenue, other real estate holdings in Cleveland County, together with stock shares in the Long Shoals Cotton Mills, First National Bank of Kings Mountain, the Mauney-Steele Company, Pyramid Life Insurance Company, and the Hilton Head Agricultural Company, which actually comprised owner/member rights in the hunting club that then owned the South Carolina island, were assigned to Mr. Neisler's widow without any stated valuation (Cleveland Record of Settlements, 5/466-67).
12. A copy of the plat is located in the Neisler family archives, Kings Mountain.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 47

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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13. A deed of the same date conveyed the Belmont Mills property for \$85,000 to Horvath Mills (Cleveland Deeds, 7D/105).
14. Street names in the Margrace Mill Village have changed through time. On the Sanborn insurance map "Jewel, Constantia, and Vienna" appear as the names of today's Cloninger Street, Fulton Drive, and Water Oak Street, respectively. Today's Ark Street was then named "Leona," while today's Margrace Road was "County Road." On the 1956 plat Margrace Road was labeled "Old Grover Road," and Ark Street had its present name. Water Oak Street, Fulton Drive, and Cloninger Street were labeled "First Street, Second Street, (and) Third Street," respectively. When the streets gained their present names is unconfirmed.
15. In 1956 the plat of the Margrace Mill Village included fifty-one houses and the clubhouse. Since then, three houses have been lost. The house at 101 Fulton Street burned and was replaced in 2004 by a similarly-sized one-story frame house. The grounds of the houses at 115 and 118 Fulton Drive, which were demolished, are vacant, grass-covered lawns which have been incorporated into the ownership and grounds of the adjoining houses at 113 and 116 Fulton Drive, respectively. Those two lots and the house at 101 Fulton Drive are included in the historic district. Two of the remaining forty-eight houses, at 400 Margrace Road and 109 Water Oak Street, which have suffered both expansion and remodeling and stand at the edges of the district, would have been noncontributing resources, and are not included in the district. The district includes the forty-six surviving mill houses, the infill house at 101 Fulton Drive, the former clubhouse that is now a residence, and the company store.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9 Page 48

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9 Page 49

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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13 March 2008.

Jones, Sarah Hamrick (b.1923), widow of Clannie Wall Jones, resident owner of 106 Water Oak Street, 1 March 2008.

Ledford, Harold Lee (b. 1935), resident owner of 114 Water Oak Street, 13 March 2008.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9 Page 50

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 10 Page 51

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Margrace Mill Village Historic District is indicated by the dotted line on the enclosed map prepared by the Kings Mountain Planning Department.

#### Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Margrace Mill Village Historic District is drawn to encompass the cohesive group of mill houses that retain their historic and architectural integrity, together with the associated Margrace Mill Clubhouse and the Margrace Mill Company Store, which occupy contiguous lots of the larger mill property owned by the Neisler family from 1919 to 1955-1956.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number    Photos    Page    52

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

### PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Name of property: Margrace Mill Village Historic District
2. County and state: Cleveland County, North Carolina
3. Name of photographer: Davyd Foard Hood
4. Date of photographs: 27-30 October 2007
5. Location of original negatives: North Carolina Division of Archives and History,  
Raleigh, North Carolina

#### Schedule of Photographs

- A. Overall view, looking south on houses on the southwest side of Fulton Drive, with 113 Fulton Drive in the foreground.
- B. Type A mill house, 116 Cloninger Street, looking northeast.
- C. Type B mill house, 101 Cloninger Street in the foreground, looking northwest.
- D. Type B mill house, 109 Cloninger Street, looking northwest.
- E. Rear view of houses on the southwest side of Cloninger Street, showing the general uniformity and integrity of these Type C and Type B mill houses, looking southeast with the lattice-trimmed porch of 113 Cloninger Street on left and #s 111, 109, and 107 receding to the right.
- F. Type C mill house, 104 Fulton Drive in left foreground, with Type D mill house at 102 Fulton Drive in background on right, looking east/southeast.
- G. Landscape view, looking southeast on Fulton Drive from position in center of street in front of 116 Fulton Drive.
- H. Type C mill houses, looking northwest with 103 Fulton Drive in center foreground.
- I. Landscape view, looking southwest between 107 and 109 Fulton Drive with rear elevations of 108 and 110 Water Oak Street (and outbuilding at #108) in center background.
- J. Type C mill houses on northeast side of Water Oak Street, looking north with 106 Water Oak Street in right foreground.
- K. Shop building/garage at 108 Water Oak Street, at center, with garage at 110 Water Oak

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number    Photos    Page    53

Margrace Mill Village Historic District  
Cleveland County, North Carolina

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Street partially visible on left and rear elevation of 109 Fulton Drive partially visible on right, looking north.

- L.    Type C mill houses on northeast side of Water Oak Street, looking south/southeast with 114 Water Oak Street in foreground.
- M.    Type D mill house at 101 Water Oak Street, looking northwest.
- N.    Type C mill house at 105 Water Oak Street, looking west/southwest.
- O.    (former) Margrace Mill Clubhouse, looking northwest.
- P.    Margrace Mill Company Store, looking northwest.