



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper
Secretary Susi H. Hamilton

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

January 23, 2018

Erin Schotte
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
PO Box 9026
Hickory, NC 28603

erin.schotte@wpcog.org

RE: Demolish former Drexel Heritage Plant 1, Drexel, Burke County, ER 18-0075

Dear Mr. Schotte:

Thank you for your January 5, 2018, letter concerning the above-referenced proposed demolition. We have reviewed the information that you provided and determined that the former furniture plant lacks integrity and is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, no further review is required for this project.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-807-6579 or environmental.review@ncdcr.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Renee Gledhill-Earley".

for Ramona M. Bartos



Received: 01/12/2018
State Historic Preservation Office

January 5, 2018

ER 18-0075

Ms. Renee Gledhill-Early
State Historic Preservation Office
4617 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4617

Due -- 1/30/18

*ER Letters
Pete*

H- *No Properties
lack integrity*

Dear Ms. Gledhill-Early:

Please find enclosed pictures and corresponding maps for the Drexel Heritage Plant 1 Demolition Project located in the Town of Drexel in Burke County. The Town of Drexel proposes to use CDBG funds to demolish and remove a vacant, dilapidated furniture plant located in the center of town. Please also find enclosed a document detailing the history of the Drexel Heritage company and Plant 1 facility through 1986, as well as an update discussing the property ownership and usage post-1986.

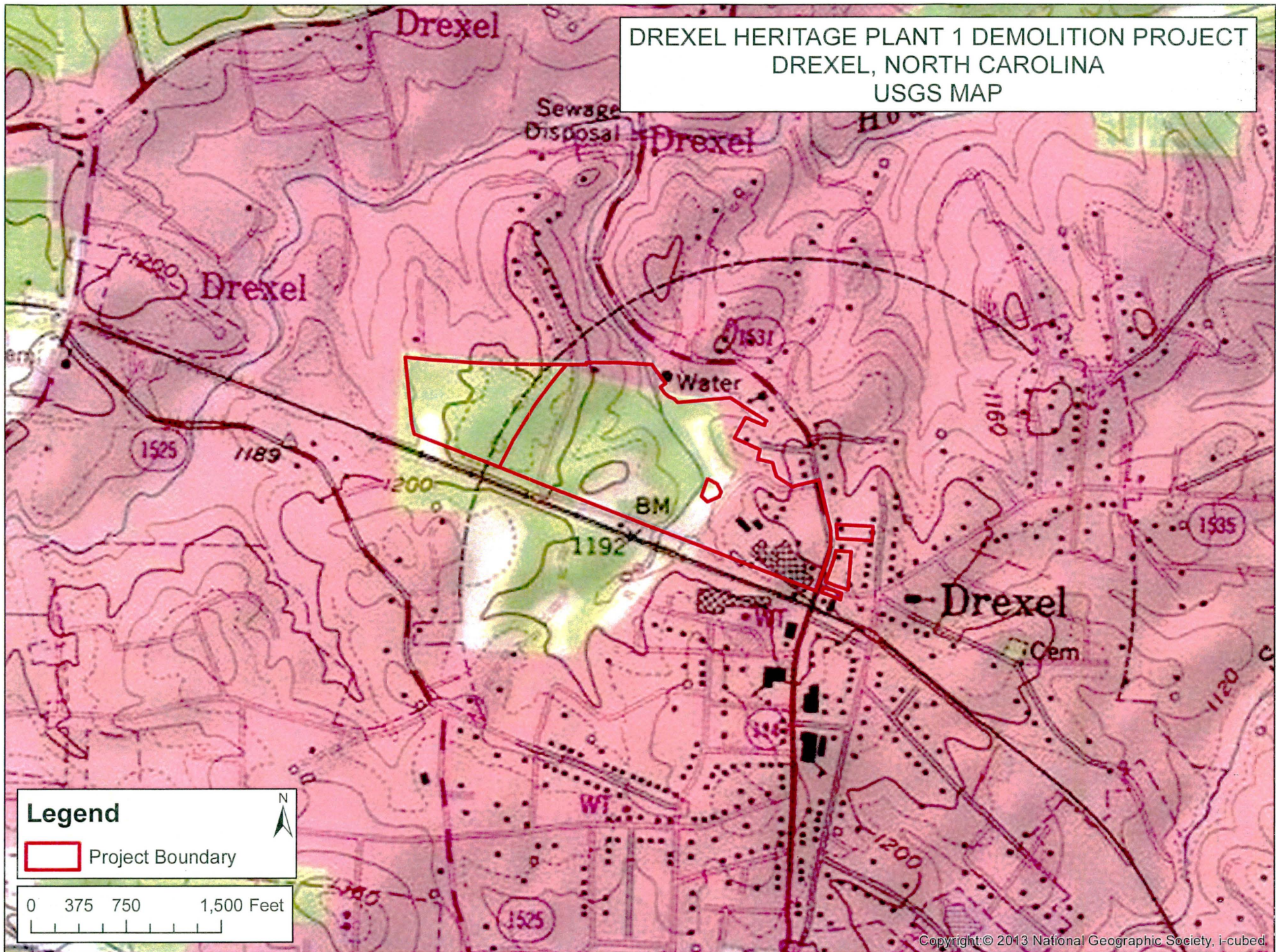
The project area is comprised of mixed commercial and residential pre-1960's development. There are no known historic or archaeological features on the site. The project will be taking place entirely within an area that has been previously disturbed.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (828) 485-4240 or erin.schotte@wpcog.org.

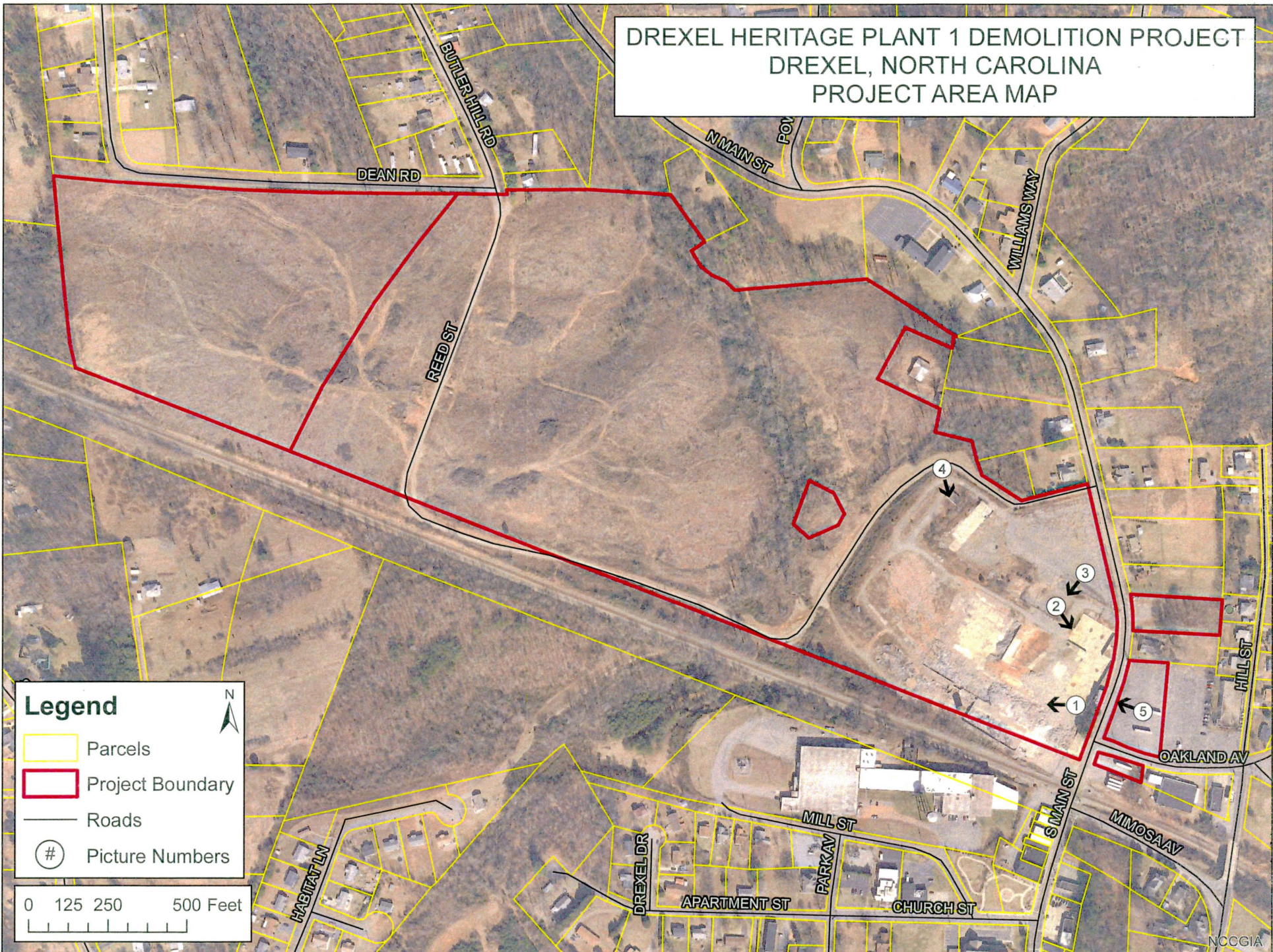
Sincerely,

Erin Schotte
Community Development Administrator

DREXEL HERITAGE PLANT 1 DEMOLITION PROJECT
DREXEL, NORTH CAROLINA
USGS MAP

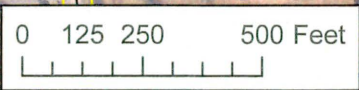


DREXEL HERITAGE PLANT 1 DEMOLITION PROJECT DREXEL, NORTH CAROLINA PROJECT AREA MAP



Legend

- Parcels
- Project Boundary
- Roads
- # Picture Numbers





Drexel Heritage Plant 1
Demolition Project

Town of Drexel
Burke County, NC

Picture #1—Looking west from
North Main Street toward
southern boundary of project
property and railroad track



Drexel Heritage Plant 1
Demolition Project

Town of Drexel
Burke County, NC

Picture #2—Looking southeast
toward project site



Drexel Heritage Plant 1
Demolition Project

Town of Drexel
Burke County, NC

Picture #3—Looking south
from upper parking lot toward
project site



Drexel Heritage Plant 1
Demolition Project

Town of Drexel
Burke County, NC

Picture #4—Looking south
from Reed Street toward
project site



Drexel Heritage Plant 1
Demolition Project

Town of Drexel
Burke County, NC

Picture #5—Looking west
across North Main Street
toward project site

Chapter X

Drexel Furniture Company

On November 7, 1903, Samuel Huffman, David B. Mull, J. S. Abernethy, W. C. Erwin, P. W. Patton, and J. D. Boger met at the home of Andrew Milton Kistler in Morganton. At this meeting, over which Mr. Kistler presided, a Board of Directors was chosen and a manager was elected. This was the first stockholders meeting of Drexel Furniture Company and the beginning of Drexel Heritage Furnishings, Inc. Mr. Kistler was elected Chairman and Mr. Abernethy, Secretary-Treasurer and manager. The company was incorporated in North Carolina on November 10, 1903, and one week later, the stockholders met again to draw up by-laws.

The first building of Drexel Furniture Company began immediately after the stockholders meeting with the construction of a railroad side track at the site selected for the plant on the northeast side of the railroad. Two buildings were erected: A machine and cabinet room and a finishing and shipping room. When an order came in to the shipping room, it was written out, carried across a footbridge to the machine room, and work began. Work began at 7 A.M. and stopped at 6 P.M. with an hour for lunch.

On the night of December 7, 1906, a pile of shavings started a fire that burned the plant to the ground. The next morning, the stockholders met at the scene. In the middle of the smoke and floating ashes, they voted to rebuild at once. That same day, the heat-warped machinery was sold to a junk dealer from High Point, North Carolina, and carted away on railroad flat cars. Workers began to clear the site for the new plant. Completed in only two weeks, the

buildings had the same floor plan, consisting of 26,600 square feet of space. Both the plant and the new machinery were bought from the fire insurance company receipts of approximately \$25,000.00.

In its infancy, Drexel Furniture Company manufactured bedroom furniture of native oak. At that time their solid oak three-piece bedroom suite, which included a bureau, washstand, and double bed, sold for \$14.50. Despite the crude production methods and clumsy old machinery, the business prospered. Drexel has progressed to become one of the largest and best known manufacturers of quality living room, dining room and bedroom furniture in America.

Electric power was installed in March 1917. In 1918, another 20,000 square feet were added to the plant at Drexel, and in that same year, the Blue Ridge Furniture Company of Marion, North Carolina was purchased for cash. In 1923, the company purchased the plant of Morganton Manufacturing and Trading Company in Morganton. A further addition was made in 1930 by the purchase of the Teague Furniture Company in Marion, North Carolina. This plant was combined with the Blue Ridge Furniture Company Plant to form one plant for Drexel Furniture.

Misfortune struck the company when Mr. Kistler, President since December 7, 1906, died suddenly on July 5, 1931. Mr. S. R. Collett, long time a director of the company, was chosen to succeed Mr. Kistler. When Mr. Collett's untimely death occurred on June 27, 1932, Mr. F. O. Huffman was elected President on October 10, 1932.

Tragedy struck again during the midst of the depression when F. O. Huffman died in Chicago on May 12, 1935. He was the third president

to die within four years. Mr. R. O. Huffman was selected as President of the company on June 1, 1935. He held that position for thirty years until his retirement in 1965. He continued on the Board until 1968. F. O. Huffman and R. O. Huffman were both sons of Samuel Huffman, a co-founder of the company.

In January 1951, Drexel purchased for cash all of the outstanding stock of Table Rock Furniture Company in Morganton. During 1957, Heritage Furniture Company of High Point, North Carolina, and Mocksville, North Carolina was acquired by an exchange of stock. The company's expansion continued in January, 1961, when Southern Desk Company, with headquarters in Hickory, North Carolina, was acquired by an exchange of stock. A new plant was built in Hildebran for this company.

After the acquisition of these three companies, the decision was made to set up a new form of organization. Therefore, in 1960, all three companies were merged into Drexel Furniture Company. The corporation's name was changed to Drexel Enterprises, Inc.

By 1963, the little company which started 63 years earlier had become one of the great furniture companies of America, operating some 15 plants and doing an annual volume approaching sixty million dollars.

The furniture industry is vital to Burke County, and is the county's largest single employer. The company employs about 5,000 persons in twenty manufacturing facilities, primarily in North Carolina, with a large concentration in Burke County.

After a long record of continuous growth and profits, in 1968, Drexel Enterprises, Inc. was acquired for an exchange of stock by the multinational corporation of U.S. Plywood, Champion Papers, Inc. The market value of the transaction was \$100 million.

In 1973, the Drexel Heritage Furnishings Division of Champion International, as it was then designated, employed 2,500 to 3,000 people in Burke county and Howard H. Haworth was president. He served as president and chief executive officer of the company from 1972 to 1983, and was chairman of the board from 1983 to 1985.

The Dominick International Corporation of New York purchased Drexel Heritage Furnishings from Champion International in 1977.

Finally, Drexel Heritage Furnishings was acquired by MASCO Corporation from Dominick International Corporation. The acquisition agreement was reached September 19, 1986, by directors of the two companies and announced by Drexel Heritage President Fred Copeland.

Drexel Heritage Furnishings Company still maintains its corporate offices on North Main Street in downtown Drexel.

Drexel Heritage Furniture UPDATE

After the Drexel Heritage Plant 1 closed its doors in 2001, the property was sold to a different furniture company and remained in production until the great recession hit. In 2008, the entire property was purchased by a private individual, the back acreage deforested, and the plant demolished for salvage value. All that remains now is the old foundations, an estimated 800 tons of rubble, and a few thousand square feet of standing buildings. The site is adjacent to downtown, and anyone who comes to Drexel is greeted with a gruesome picture of the denigration of the furniture industry in the community.