

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

VLR Listed: 12/12/2019
NRHP Listed: 2/13/2020

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Sylvania Plant Historic District
Other names/site number: Sylvania Industrial Corporation; American Viscose Corporation; FMC Corporation; DHR ID 088-5545
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 11900, 11800, 11700 Blocks of Main Street
City or town: Fredericksburg State: VA County: Spotsylvania
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: X

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local
Applicable National Register Criteria:
X A ___ B X C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>19</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>9</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>29</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/Manufacturing Facility; Waterworks
COMMERCE/Business/Office Building
TRANSPORTATION/Rail-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURAL/SUBSISTENCE/Processing; Storage
COMMERCE/TRADE/Business/Office Building; Warehouse
RECREATION AND CULTURE/ Sports facility; music facility/dancehall
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/Industrial Storage; communications facility
VACANT/NOT IN USE

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

OTHER/Stripped Classicism

OTHER/Industrial

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; CONCRETE; GLASS; METAL;

Aluminum, Steel

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Sylvania Plant Historic District is a 40-acre industrial campus located in the northeast corner of Spotsylvania County just south of the Fredericksburg city line. The property features an intact collection of industrial and commercial buildings, warehouses, and other industrial resources that convey the development of one of the area's largest employers and one of the nation's largest manufacturers of cellophane from 1929 through 1978. The district is generally composed of one- to three-story masonry buildings representative of commercial vernacular, industrial commercial, and stripped classical style architecture with Art Deco influences, primarily constructed between 1930 and 1962 with some later additions and improvements. Several buildings in the district feature intact examples of the patented sawtooth roof technology designed by locally prominent architecture and engineering firm, The Ballinger Company. The district includes approximately 29 contributing resources, including 19 buildings, 1 site, and 9 structures, and 1 noncontributing resource, which are laid out on a grid-like pattern of streets. The Sylvania Plant Historic District is surrounded by the Rappahannock River to the east and Deep Run Creek to the north and west, and more recent light industrial development to the south. Evidence of railroad spurs connecting the plant to the Richmond, Fredericksburg, Potomac Railroad (RFPRR) remain on the site, forking at the southernmost point of the district and running north along Main Street and parallel to the east boundary. Since the plant's closure in 1978, the district has undergone several rehabilitations that converted the buildings to various uses and subdivided the property into several parcels. While much of the processing machinery was removed during this process, the

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

district retains its overall integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Sylvania Plant Historic District is a large, 40-acre industrial campus located in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, just outside the city limits of Fredericksburg. The district retains much of the historic setting and streetscape associated with its period of significance, which spans from 1929 to 1970. The industrial complex is surrounded on its north, west, and east sides by wooded tree lines near the Rappahannock River and Deep Run Creek, which historically served the plant. Minimal landscaping and street trees exist along Main Street, while very little vegetation exists along the southern and eastern edges of the district. The district has been subdivided into several parcels with different property owners. Currently buildings along the northern border serve as the manufacturing facilities, tasting room, and offices of Bowman Distillery, while other buildings throughout the district serve a variety of small businesses as warehouse and storage facilities, athletic and artistic spaces, and offices.

Architectural Analysis

The Sylvania Plant Historic District is generally comprised of one-to-three-story masonry buildings representative of commercial vernacular, industrial commercial, and stripped classical architecture with Art Deco influences, constructed along a grid-like street pattern. The original core of the district, completed ca. 1930, expanded in several phases in ca. 1939, 1943, 1946, 1954, and 1962. The original 1929-1930 complex included Buildings A (-0003), B (-0005), C (-0007), E (-0012), and a portion of F (-0010). These buildings, designed by The Ballinger Company, remain among the most architecturally and visually distinct buildings in the district. Buildings A, B, and C, as well as the ca. 1943 Office building, feature sawtooth roof construction that allows natural light to illuminate the interior spaces of the large industrial factories and warehouses. Sawtooth rooflines provided overhead natural light much like skylights, however, the windows project out at an angle that visually simulates the teeth of a saw blade. This construction method limited harsh, direct light, while still illuminating large open spaces. The use of sawtooth rooflines and/or sawtooth skylights continued as more buildings were added to the industrial complex, and remain visible on Building O (-0002), Building M (-0016), and the Plastics Building (-0015).

The district also includes several buildings with Modern and Art Deco design influences including the ca. 1943 Administrative Office, or Building O. The central entrance to Building O contrasts the primarily red brick exterior with its smooth concrete entrance bay, featuring recessed fluting above the door and cantilevered metal awning. The interior of Building O features remarkably intact Art Deco-style wood paneling and light fixtures. Building E also retains Art Deco and Moderne design influences such as its decorative tile accents, glass block windows, and the interior stair rail and scalloped wall motif. Other more subtle Art Deco

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

characteristics exist on the exterior of many of the buildings throughout the district, such as the vertical brick pilasters that create alternating planes.

Other prominent architectural features throughout the district include large, full-height bay openings with roll-up metal doors that allowed for storage of both raw materials and finished products for delivery and shipping. Many of the interior spaces feature large metal sliding fire doors designed to close automatically in the event of a fire emergency. Large concrete loading docks remain in several key locations, as well as evidence of external and internal connections for moving materials from one building to the next throughout the complex. Below-grade tunnels also provided connection between Buildings B and C, while Buildings A and B were connected via aboveground bridges. Large window openings originally designed to allow additional light into the workspaces have been infilled in many of the buildings; however, intact examples of original window openings and sash exist in Building A.

As the production needs of the Sylvania Plant increased and the plant changed hands, the complex expanded to the north and east. In addition to the construction of Building O to house the plant's administrative offices, Building F, which provided spaces for the coating processes, was expanded several times from the 1930s through the 1950s. Much of the expansion of the plant occurred on land to the east and south of the original buildings. At the far east edge of the district is a Filtration Plant constructed ca. 1954 to provide the Sylvania Plant with its own water and sewer treatment capabilities. The Filtration Plant building and the original clear well remain extant, though currently vacant. The Plant's sewage treatment facilities later expanded south of the ca. 1954 building, but this area has been altered for new uses by Spotsylvania County and has not been incorporated into the historic district boundary. Directly adjacent to the Filtration Plant is the tank yard, which has been an integral resource to the Plant since the 1930s, but has been updated and expanded throughout the period of significance. Along the southern edge of the district are several warehouse buildings that expanded throughout the period of significance to provide additional space for the growing spinning and finishing departments, and to provide additional pulp and chemical storage.

Integrity Analysis

The Sylvania Industrial Plant retains a high degree of each of the seven aspects of integrity. The Plant retains integrity of location nestled along the Rappahannock River and Deep Run Creek in Spotsylvania County. The Plant also retains integrity of setting with natural and manmade landscape features of the creek, dam, and river along the north, west and east edges of the district, and more open industrial setting near the southern border. The district retains integrity of design and workmanship, revealing the innovative industrial design features patented by The Ballinger Company. While some materials have been lost including original windows and doors, as well as rooftop and interior machinery, buildings throughout the district retain their original unpainted brick and concrete exteriors. In many instances, where windows have been removed, the original location has been infilled, preserving the building's design intent. The setting and architecture of the Sylvania Plant continue to evoke the feeling and association of the historic industrial facility. After the closure of the Plant in 1978, several resources were demolished,

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

including the Power Plant, the largest smoke stack near the center of the campus, and the water towers. The remainder of the historic buildings, however, remain intact with minor alterations or alterations that are reversible in many cases.

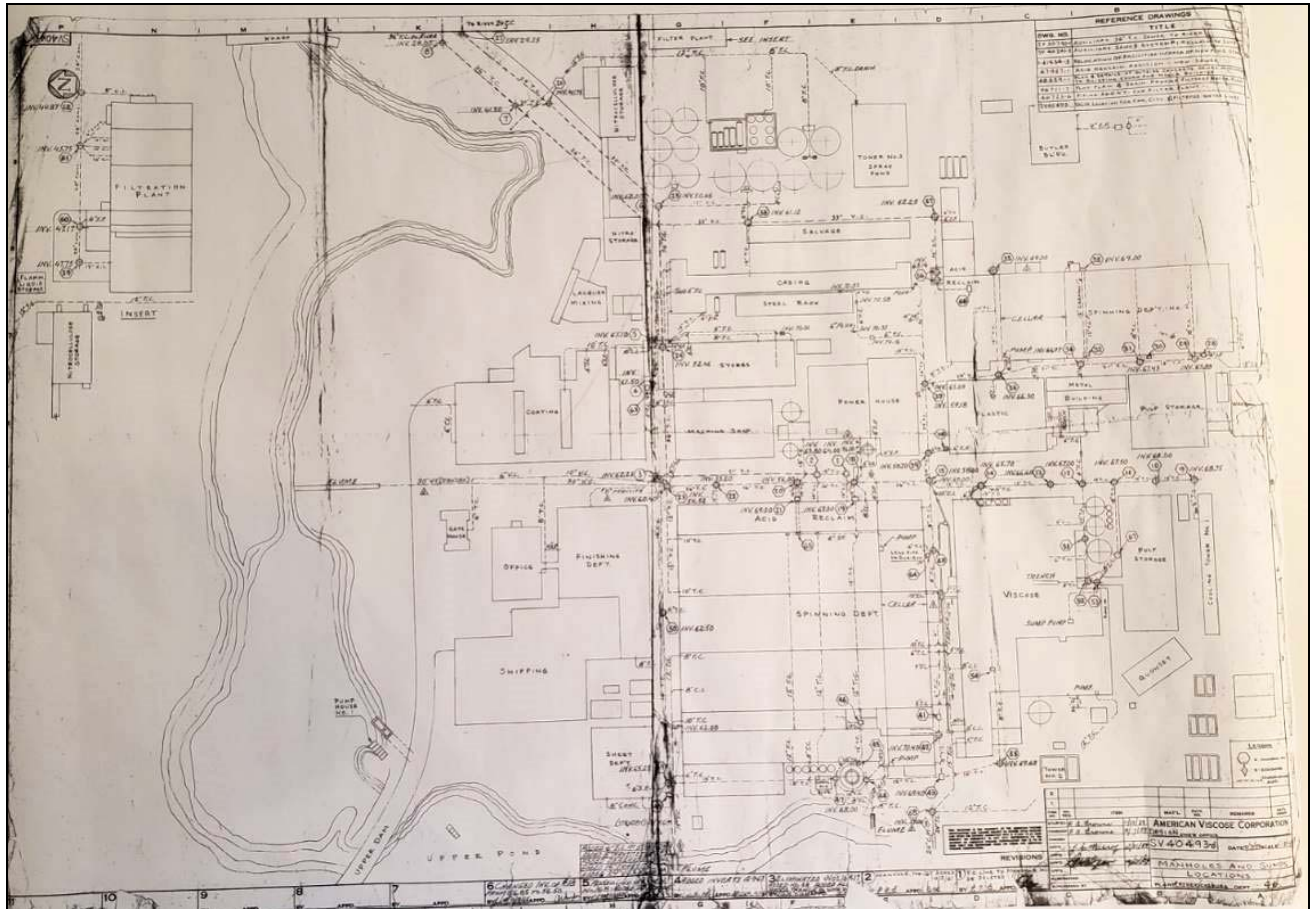


Figure 1: Plat Map of American Viscose Corporation, 1959

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

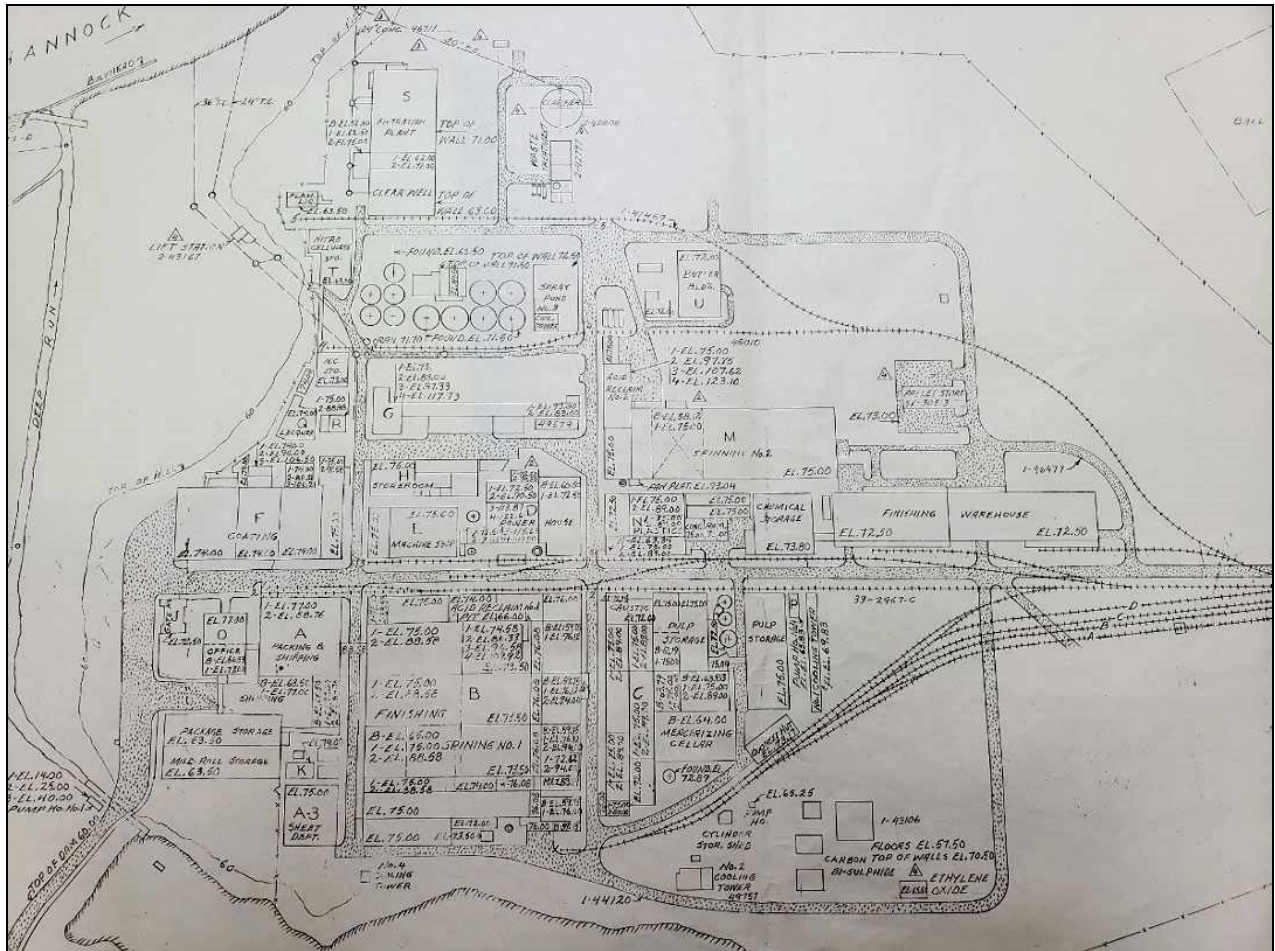


Figure 2: Plat Map of the American Viscose Corp. Sylvania Division, 1963

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

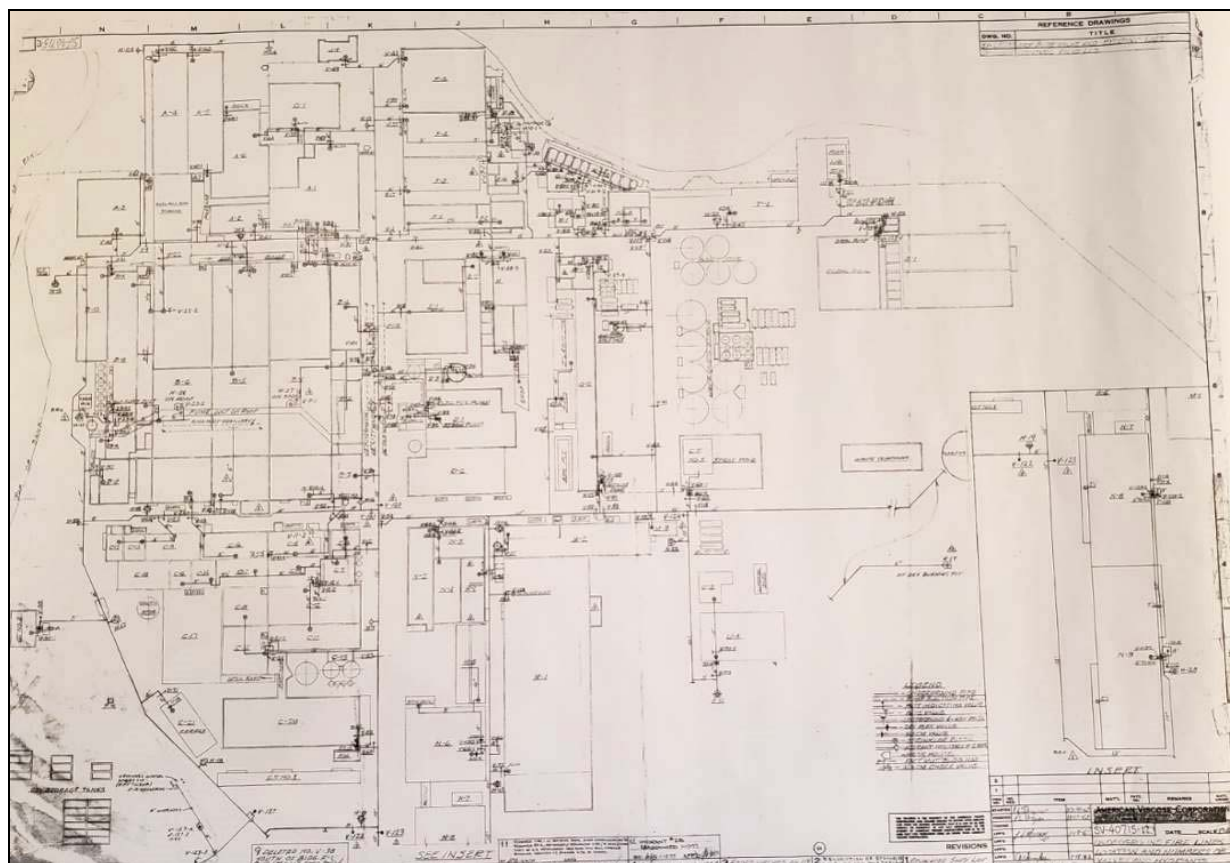


Figure 3: Plat Map of the American Viscose Corporation, 1964

Inventory

The following attached inventory is the result of reconnaissance level survey of the Sylvania Plant Historic District conducted in September 2019. Surveyors documented all resources within the district, including significant secondary resources. Because of the nature of the industrial district and its historic function, individual resources were surveyed according to their historic building and/or site footprint using the Functionally Related Structures guidance provided by the National Park Service. The 2019 survey resulted in the identification of 29 contributing resources, including 19 buildings, 1 site, and 9 structures, as well as 1 noncontributing building.

Each entry in the inventory below identifies the primary and secondary (where applicable) resource, the resource type (building, site, structure, or object), number of stories, architectural style, approximate construction date, and contributing or noncontributing status, and is organized by DHR ID (tertiary ID number used to key attached Sketch Map, i.e., -0001). Resources within the Sylvania Plant Historic District are considered contributing if they were constructed during the district's period of significance (1929-1970), are associated with the district's significance in the areas of Industry and Architecture, and retain architectural integrity. Alterations to contributing resources were evaluated based on the overall impact to the character-defining

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

features of the building and its ability to convey its historic associations. A detailed architectural description and surveyor assessment for each resource has also been prepared in conjunction with this nomination, and can be accessed via the Virginia Department of Historic Resources architectural survey archives and/or the Virginia Cultural Resource Information System (V-CRIS).

088-5545-0001

Primary Resource: Gate House (175 Bowman Drive). Stories 1. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1943. Contributing Building.

This former gatehouse is a one-story industrial commercial building with classical influences. It has an irregular form and three asymmetrical bays. It has a concrete and brick foundation with a concrete watertable. The brick veneer walls have a modified Flemish-bond with brick quoins located on the building corners, as well as on the face of the east elevation to emulate the corners. The roof is flat with a brick parapet and concrete coping. A shelf angle, covered by a concrete cornice, is located just below the parapet. Windows have primarily six-over-one wood-sash with concrete sills and soldier course brick lintels. Others include metal-sash with three stacked horizontal lights. Entrances include both single-leaf and double-leaf aluminum doors with transoms. Most of the openings feature steeply-pitched canvas awnings.

The hyphen, which is located at the west end of the south elevation, was added in the 1980s by Bowman Companies. Like the historic section of the building, this hyphen features modified Flemish-bond brick veneer walls with concrete coping. An octagonal enclosure, with stretcher-bond brick veneer walls, serves as a direct entrance to the hyphen. It features decorative brickwork resembling quoins, a soldier course brick lintel, an embedded concrete sign plaque, and prominent light fixtures.

088-5545-0002

Primary Resource: Administrative Office/Building O (11998 Main Street). Stories 1. Style: Stripped Classicism. Ca. 1943. Contributing Building.

This industrial commercial office building is most representative of the property's Stripped Classicism-style while containing numerous Art Deco characteristics. The one-story, seven-bay, rectangular building has a concrete foundation and a concrete watertable. The brick veneer walls have a modified Flemish-bond with brick quoins located on the building corners, as well as the pilasters on the south elevation. The roof is primarily flat with a brick parapet and concrete coping, but there are also small sawtooth roof sections toward the center of the building. A shelf angle, covered by a concrete cornice, is located just below the parapet. Windows have primarily six-over-one wood sash with concrete sills and soldier course brick lintels. Others include large, multi-light, steel windows, which are primarily limited to the west elevation. The prominent front entrance has concrete detailing and a steel awning characteristic of the Art Deco style. Concrete steps, which are flanked by stylized figure sculptures, lead to a single-leaf glass and aluminum door with a transom and

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

sidelights. A multi-light double-leaf steel door is located on the west elevation, and another double-leaf entrance is located within the southern hyphen. Like the main section of the building, the hyphen features modified Flemish-bond brick veneer walls with concrete coping.

088-5545-0003

Primary Resource: Packing & Shipping Complex (1 Bowman Drive; Building A; Package & Mill Roll Storage; Building K). Stories 1-3. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1930/1954/1962. Contributing Building.

The Packing and Shipping Complex is an irregular shaped building that has evolved over time and includes three sections with different building treatments. The easternmost section, which was historically called "Building A," is a two-story masonry section with modified Flemish-bond brick walls and a flat roof. The roof has a brick parapet, as well as sawtooth roof sections toward the center of the building. It has a concrete foundation, watertable, and beltcourse, in addition to the capped pilasters that mimic buttressing. Additionally, it has numerous openings, including limited glass block windows and historic window openings that have been infilled with EIFS panels. A few historic multi-light steel window sash remain on the north elevation. The northwest addition, which was the Package & Mill Roll Storage section, is a one-story, L-shaped section with modified Flemish-bond brick walls and a steel, segmental arched roof. Very large roof vents dominate the north and east portions of the roof. Openings are limited and include reeded-glass ribbon windows and single-leaf metal-slab doors. Additionally, there are two modified, storefront entrances, with double-leaf doors and a continuous band of sidelights and transom windows, that are framed in cast stone. The most recent addition, which was historically known as "Building K," is located at the southwest corner of the building. This three-story, steel-frame and concrete block box is clad in vertical aluminum siding and has a flat roof with metal coping. While it is completely devoid of window openings, it does have three loading door openings at the south end. A metal-clad bridge connects it to Building B (088-5545-0005) on the exterior, but is no longer internally connected.

088-5545-0004

Primary Resource: Finishing Building. Stories 1. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1943. Contributing Building.

This one-story, rectangular, industrial commercial building has five asymmetrical bays. It has a concrete foundation and concrete watertable. The brick veneer walls have a modified Flemish-bond with capped brick pilasters, which mimic buttresses, separating the window bays. The roof is flat with a brick parapet and metal coping. Projecting steel ribbon windows, with concrete sills and soldier course brick lintels, line the north elevation, as well as most of the west elevation. On the south elevation, east elevation, and remainder of the west elevation, these windows have been infilled. On the west elevation, a roll-up loading door, with a soldier course brick lintel, accesses a concrete loading dock and platform. A secondary

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

infilled loading door, as well as a single-leaf metal-slab pedestrian door, also access the loading dock. An additional roll-up loading door and single-leaf metal-slab pedestrian door are located on the east elevation.

A hyphen is located on the east elevation and connects to the southwest section (Building K) of the Packaging and Shipping Complex. Like the main section of the building, the hyphen features modified Flemish-bond brick veneer walls with a flat roof and concrete coping. Additionally, the hyphen contains single-row glass block windows. A single-leaf metal-slab door, with a concrete block-infilled transom, provides access to the hyphen on the interior of the building.

088-5545-0005

Primary Resource: **Building B. (11900 Main Street). Stories 2. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1930. Contributing Building.**

This resource is a two-story industrial commercial building with classical influences. As one of the larger resources on site, this building has fourteen asymmetrical bays and a generally rectangular form. It has a painted and parged brick and concrete block foundation and watertable. The brick veneer walls have a modified Flemish bond with capped brick pilasters, which mimic buttresses, separating the majority of the bays. The outer portion of the roof is flat with brick parapets and terra cotta coping. The majority of the interior section of the roof features sawtooth roofing with v-crimp cladding. The limited gable portions of the roof also have v-crimp roofing. Throughout the building, the windows have been infilled, although the majority retain their painted concrete sills and brick soldier course lintels. In most locations, smaller, modern, single-light, fixed, vinyl sash have been installed within the historic opening. Multiple loading door openings, of varying sizes, are located around the building. Some of these loading doors have been infilled. A combination of historic and modern-infilled single-leaf and double-leaf pedestrian entrances are located around the building. The remaining entries have historic double-leaf wood doors with soldier course brick lintels. Some transom windows remain intact, but have been painted over. Modern doors primarily include metal-slab and aluminum storefront doors that have been placed within larger openings. A large covered concrete loading dock is located at the southwestern corner of the building. Other smaller, covered and uncovered, loading platforms, stoops, and ramps are located around the building.

088-5545-0006

Primary Resource: **Chimney/Smoke Stack. (Cell Tower). Ca. 1939. Contributing Structure.**

The masonry smoke stack is concrete on the lower half and five-course common-bond brick on the upper portion. Modern cell tower satellites have been installed at the top of the smoke stack tower. Based on the height of surrounding buildings, as well as cell tower regulations, this tapered smoke stack appears to be between approximately one hundred feet and one-

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

hundred-fifty feet tall. The base of the structure is estimated to be approximately fifteen feet wide.

088-5545-0007

Primary Resource: Building C. (11812 Main Street). Stories 1-2. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1930. Contributing Building.

This resource is a one- and two-story industrial commercial building with classical influences. As one of the larger resources on site, this building has six asymmetrical bays and an irregular form. It has a painted and parged brick and concrete block foundation and watertable. The brick veneer walls have a modified Flemish bond with capped brick pilasters, which mimic buttresses, separating some of the bays. The majority of the roof is flat with brick parapets and terra cotta or metal coping. Sections facing Main Street have gabled parapets. Some interior sections of the roof feature sawtooth roofing. Throughout the building, the windows have been infilled, although the majority retain their painted concrete sills and brick soldier course lintels. In most locations, smaller, modern, single-light, fixed, vinyl sash have been installed within the historic opening. Multiple loading door openings, of varying sizes, are located around the building. Some of these loading doors have been infilled. A combination of historic and modern-infilled single-leaf and double-leaf pedestrian entrances are located around the building. The remaining historic doors are double-leaf wood doors with soldier course brick lintels. Modern doors primarily include metal-slab doors that have been placed within larger openings. Some transom windows remain intact, but have been painted over, while most have been infilled or covered. A large covered concrete loading dock is located at the southwestern corner of the building. Other smaller, covered and uncovered, loading platforms, stoops, and ramps are located around the building.

088-5545-0008

Primary Resource: Pulp Storage. (11800 Main Street). Stories 1. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1954. Contributing Building.

This one-story, one-bay, rectangular industrial commercial building has a steel-frame with a parged concrete block foundation and watertable. It has stretcher-bond brick veneer cladding at the base of the building, while the remainder of the walls are clad in corrugated metal siding. It has a front-gable corrugated metal roof with large roof ventilators. A narrow concrete loading platform/stoop is located at each of the two smaller, sliding-track loading door entrances along the facade, or east elevation. Two large, metal, sectional loading doors are located on the south elevation along with a double-leaf, metal-slab door pedestrian entrance. A single-leaf metal-slab pedestrian door and concrete stoop are located on the west elevation.

088-5545-0009

Primary Resource: Pump House. Stories 1. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1939. Contributing Building.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

This one-story, one-bay, masonry, rectangular industrial commercial building has a concrete foundation. It has stretcher-bond brick veneer walls, with the exception of the north elevation which has a modified Flemish bond. The building has a flat roof with a brick parapet and terra cotta coping. Windows have single-light steel sash. Additionally, there are three concrete block-infilled windows, with concrete sills, located on the north elevation. A single-leaf metal-slab door provides access on the south elevation. A brick infilled door is located on the north elevation.

088-5545-0010

Primary Resource: Building F. (3329 Bourbon Street). Stories 1-3. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1939/1943. Contributing Building.

Building F is a one-story, masonry, rectangular building with a three-to-four-story brick tower addition on the east elevation. The building has a concrete foundation, modified Flemish-bond brick walls, and six asymmetrical bays. The roof is flat with a brick parapet and metal coping. On the facade, or south elevation, the bays are separated by brick pilasters. The facade features two single-leaf entrances framed with glass block. Six rows of glass block sidelights frame the aluminum-and-glass door. A rectangular glass block transom is separated from the door by a row of soldier course bricks and a modern canvas awning. Overall, the building has numerous openings, including historic window openings that have been reduced in size and include EIFS infill panels. Multiple loading door and metal-slab pedestrian entrances line the east and west elevations as well. The tower addition features glass block windows within the taller tower sections. An angled corner section is connected to the north elevation of the tower addition.

088-5545-0011

Primary Resource: Building R. (3307 Bourbon Street). Stories 3. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1939. Contributing Building.

This three-story, two-bay, square industrial commercial building has a concrete foundation. It has modified Flemish-bond brick veneer walls and a flat roof with a brick parapet and metal coping. Windows are primarily filled with glass block and have concrete sills. Many of the windows have one-over-one storefront windows set within the larger glass block window. Steeply-pitched, modern-style, boxed awnings have been added onto several of the windows. A single-leaf aluminum storefront door is located on the west elevation.

088-5545-0012

Primary Resource: Building E. (11907-11919 Main Street). Stories 1. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1930. Contributing Building.

Building E is an industrial commercial building with Art Deco influences. This building consists of an eight-bay, one-story, rectangular section surrounding a smaller, rectangular, half-story, metal and glass clerestory section with an extremely low-pitched side-gable roof. The one-story roof section is flat with metal coping. The building has a concrete foundation

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

and modified Flemish-bond brick veneer walls. One of the more notable Art Deco influences is the presence of small, square sections of geometric mosaic tile designs that are located above the window bays. Large, infilled, window bays line each elevation. Within these window bays, which are unified by a continuous brick sill, single rows of glass block separate the stucco tile infill. The main entrance is another one of the more prominent Art Deco influences on the building. Set within a slightly recessed glass block window bay which is framed by brick headers, the entrance features double-leaf aluminum storefront doors with a tinted transom. The building name sign, which is done in Art Deco-style lettering, is located within the transom. Other single-leaf aluminum and glass storefront doors are located around the building. These other entrances feature steeply-pitched, modern-style, boxed awnings that appear to have been added at a later time.

088-5545-0013

Primary Resource: **Building H. (3310-3330 Gin Alley). Stories 1. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1939. Contributing Building.**

This rectangular, industrial commercial building has seven asymmetrical bays and is one story with varying roof heights. It has a concrete and brick foundation and watertable. The brick veneer walls have a modified Flemish bond. Capped pilasters, which mimic buttresses, are located at the corners of the northernmost building section. The roof is flat with a brick parapet and metal coping. Windows are filled with slightly-recessed glass block and have concrete sills and soldier course brick lintels. Many of the windows have one-over-one storefront windows set within the larger glass block windows. Openings are a combination of single-leaf and double-leaf storefront doors with transoms and segmental brick arches. In a couple of locations, elements of former loading door openings, such as metal framing and hardware components, remain in these openings. Two loading doors remain on the east elevation. A narrow concrete loading dock platform is located at the northeast corner of the building.

088-5545-0014

Primary Resource: **Building G. (3300-3308 Bourbon Street). Stories 1-4. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1939. Contributing Building.**

Building G is an irregular shaped building that seems to have evolved over time and includes three sections with different building treatments. The north section is a three-to-four story masonry section with modified Flemish-bond brick walls and a flat roof of varying heights. It has numerous openings, including historic window openings that have been reduced in size and include EIFS infill panels. The rear warehouse addition, which extends the length of the block, has a scoured concrete base and vertical metal panels on the upper portion of the walls. It has a flat roof, and multiple loading door openings line the west elevation. The southwest section is most characteristic of the Art Deco style with its varying setbacks, geometric forms, and glass block windows. This two-story section has stretcher-bond brick walls with brick quoins, and a flat roof with a brick parapet and terra cotta coping.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

088-5545-0015

Primary Resource: Plastics Building. (3321 Dill Smith Drive). Stories 2. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1943. Contributing Building.

This rectangular, industrial commercial building has seven asymmetrical bays and is two stories with varying roof heights. It has a concrete and brick foundation. The brick veneer walls have a modified Flemish-bond with capped brick pilasters that mimic buttresses. The roof is primarily flat with a brick parapet and terra cotta coping. Wide sawtooth roof sections are located on the west façade and south, central portions of the building. Multiple loading door openings are located on each elevation. Original light fixtures still flank the primary, and largest, loading door opening facing Dill Smith Drive. The minimal window openings are limited to the south elevation. This includes brick-infilled windows openings and three storefront windows. A covered concrete loading pad is located at the southwest corner of the building. On the rear, or east side of the building, there is a concrete block infill addition that has vertical metal siding on the second-floor level. Multiple loading door and single-leaf pedestrian door openings line the exposed concrete block first-floor level.

088-5545-0016

Primary Resource: Building M. (3300 Dill Smith Drive). Stories 1. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1939. Contributing Building.

This one-story, three-bay, industrial commercial building is rectangular with a concrete foundation and stretcher-bond brick veneer siding. It has a flat roof with metal coping and a stepped brick parapet on the facade. The roof also features three rows of individual sawtooth skylight roof sections. The facade features modern gooseneck lighting and multiple paired windows with nine-over-nine vinyl replacement sash with built-in vinyl sills and lintels. It also has a double-leaf storefront entrance with sidelights and a concrete lintel, as well as a single-leaf aluminum door within a modern vinyl frame. A large section of the composite brick veneer has been removed from the facade and has exposed the concrete block structure underneath. Multiple loading openings line the remaining elevations. Many have been infilled with metal panels surrounding modern vinyl sash. Original multi-light, steel, projecting windows appear to be intact on the rear elevation. Two one-story, one-bay lean-to additions have been added onto the west elevation. Additionally, a one-story, one-bay shed addition and one-story, two-bay gable-roof addition are located on the east elevation.

088-5545-0017

Primary Resource: Finishing Warehouse. (11741 Main Street). Stories 1. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1943/1963. Contributing Building.

This industrial commercial building consists of two rectangular sections with side-gable corrugated metal roofs. The two sections, which are lined with roof vents, are separated by a stepped concrete block parapet with terra cotta coping. Each section has corrugated metal panel walls and multiple loading door openings, which are primarily concentrated on the east and west elevations. Since a railroad spur runs right along the front of the building, both

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

sections have a loading dock and ramp on the west elevation. The facade features a small, concrete block, office entrance area that consists of a single-leaf aluminum storefront door and four two-light window sash. Other pedestrian entrances include single-leaf metal-slab doors.

088-5545-0018

Primary Resource: **Butler Building. (11765 Capital Lane). Stories 1. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1963. Contributing Building.**

This one-story, steel-frame building has one large, continuous rectangular footprint and concrete foundation with two front-gable roof sections. The building has vertically-oriented aluminum siding. On the southern bay of the facade, two single-light windows flank a metal-slab pedestrian entrance. Two additional square, single-light windows are located on the south elevation. Loading doors are located on the north and south elevations. A below-grade, drive down, loading dock is located at the northwestern corner of the building.

088-5545-0019

Primary Resource: **Tank Yard. Ca. 1930. Contributing Site.**

The site of the tank yard includes eight large aboveground storage tanks, a concrete building foundation, and remaining elements of a former storage or filtration feature. Each aboveground storage tank is roughly the height of a two-to-three story building. Six of the tanks are concentrated at the southwest corner and western border of the site. The remaining two storage tanks are situated at the northeastern corner of the site. The remaining concrete building foundation is located on the south side of the site immediately east of the larger concentration of storage tanks. The remaining elements of the former storage or filtration feature are concentrated in the center of the site. One element of this feature includes a rectangular brick structure with a flat corrugated metal roof. Just east of this element is one of the large, rectangular concrete ruins that sits below grade. A similar, but smaller, concrete ruin is located immediately north and is level with the ground.

Secondary Resources: **Tanks 1-8. Ca. 1930. Contributing Structures 8.**

Tank #1 is a two-to-three-story cylindrical metal tank with a flat, or slightly rounded, roof. The scuppers at the very top edge of the tank wall suggests that the roof may sit just below the top edge of the tank. A metal ladder is located on the west side of the tank. The tank is in poor condition.

Tank #2 is a two-to-three-story cylindrical metal tank with what appears to be a conical roof. Unlike Tank #1, the drainage elements are located at the top of tank instead of within the top portion of the tank wall. A metal ladder is located on the north side of the tank. The tank is in poor condition, and the rust level is particularly severe.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

Tank #3 is a two-to-three-story cylindrical metal tank with a flat, or slightly rounded, roof. The scuppers at the very top edge of the tank wall suggests that the roof may sit just below the top edge of the tank. A metal ladder is located on the west side of the tank. The tank is in poor condition.

Tank #4 is a two-to-three-story cylindrical metal tank with what appears to be a conical roof. Unlike most other tanks, the drainage elements are located at the top of tank instead of within the top portion of the tank wall. A metal ladder is located on the north side of the tank. The tank is in poor condition.

Tank #5 is a two-to-three-story cylindrical metal tank with a flat, or slightly rounded, roof. The scuppers at the very top edge of the tank wall suggests that the roof may sit just below the top edge of the tank. A metal ladder is located on the west side of the tank. The tank is in poor condition, and the rust level is particularly severe.

Tank #6 is a two-to-three-story cylindrical metal tank with a flat, or slightly rounded, roof. The scuppers at the very top edge of the tank wall suggests that the roof may sit just below the top edge of the tank. A metal ladder is located on the west side of the tank. The tank is in poor condition, and the rust level is particularly severe.

Tank #7 is a two-to-three-story cylindrical metal tank with a flat, or slightly rounded, roof. The scuppers at the very top edge of the tank wall suggests that the roof may sit just below the top edge of the tank. This tank appears to have a slightly smaller diameter than tanks #1-6. A metal ladder is located on the west side of the tank. The tank is in poor condition.

Tank #8 is a two-to-three-story cylindrical metal tank with a flat, or slightly rounded, roof. The scuppers at the very top edge of the tank wall suggests that the roof may sit just below the top edge of the tank. Like Tank #7, this tank appears to have a slightly smaller diameter than tanks #1-6. A metal ladder is located on the west side of the tank. The tank is in poor condition.

088-5545-0020

Primary Resource: **Shed Building. Stories 1. Style: No discernable style. Ca. 1994. Non-contributing Building.**

This one-story, one-bay, metal-framed, rectangular building has a concrete slab foundation. It has vertical aluminum siding and an extremely low-sloped shed roof. The facade features a central metal, sectional loading door, and a single-leaf metal-slab pedestrian door is located on the east elevation.

088-5545-0021

Primary Resource: **Flammable Liquid Storage Building. Stories 1. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1959. Contributing Building.**

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

This one-story, one-bay, metal-frame, rectangular building has a concrete foundation and corrugated metal walls. It has a moderately-pitched front-gable corrugated metal roof. On the facade, or south elevation, there is a metal loading door on a sliding track, as well as a covered window and an original gooseneck lighting fixture. Another metal sliding track door is located toward the rear of the west elevation. A ground-level concrete loading platform and below-grade concrete ramp are located on the south side of the building.

088-5545-0022

Primary Resource: **Filtration Plant. Stories 2. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1954. Contributing Building.**

The filtration facility contains one L-shaped building and several open air, concrete filtration reservoirs that are both below and above ground level. The front reservoir, which is located on the east side of the building, is the largest below grade concrete reservoir and historically served as the "clear well." A metal pipe railing borders the perimeter of the reservoir. Located immediately behind the building, to the east, are approximately eight concrete reservoirs of varying levels. A metal pipe railing surrounds the rectangular, exterior perimeter of all of the pools.

The L-shaped building is a one-room deep, two-story industrial commercial building with ten symmetrical bays. It has a concrete foundation, modified Flemish-bond brick walls, and a flat roof with a brick parapet and metal coping. The majority of the windows are multi-light steel pivot windows with concrete sills. A covered entrance, with double-leaf metal doors, is located on the northernmost section of the west elevation. A steel canopy covers the concrete entrance patio.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1929-1970

Significant Dates

1929

1978

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

The Ballinger Company (Architect)

Hughes-Foulkrod Company (Builder)

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Sylvania Plant Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Industry as one of America's most prolific manufacturers of cellophane products during the twentieth century. The popularity of packaged foods and commercial demand for the product allowed the company not to only survive, but grow and profit during the Great Depression. As the major employer in Fredericksburg, Virginia, during the 1930s, the Sylvania Plant's economic success during this period kept many local residents from the devastating financial impacts of the Great Depression. The long-term success of the Sylvania Plant is also representative of the evolution of consumer culture and the food packaging industry through the 1970s. The Sylvania Plant Historic District is also locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its association with the architecture and engineering firm, The Ballinger Company, and the use of super-span sawtooth construction. The Sylvania Plant Historic District has a period of significance ranging from 1929, when ground was broken for the construction of the first Ballinger-designed buildings, to 1970, when plastic film alternatives began to replace the use of wood-based cellophane. Sylvania Plant remained a significant contributor to Fredericksburg's industrial capacity, as well as the region's economy, until its closure in 1978.

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

Criterion C: Architecture

The Sylvania Plant Historic District is locally significant under Criterion C for its association with the prominent architectural and engineering firm The Ballinger Company, which was responsible for designing numerous industrial and commercial buildings and complexes across the mid-Atlantic and northeast regions. The Sylvania Industrial Plant was originally designed by The Ballinger Company in 1929. The Ballinger Company was formed by Walter Francis Ballinger in 1920 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Ballinger, not formally trained as an architect, joined the prominent Philadelphia firm of Geissinger & Hales in 1889, serving in a number of business-related positions. Upon Geissinger and Hales retirement, Ballinger partnered with Emile G. Perrot, chief draftsman, to form Ballinger & Perrot from 1902 to 1920. The company specialized in commercial and industrial architecture and engineering, and developed advancements in industrial design such as the "'Daylight Building,' which offered increased window area."¹ By 1920, Ballinger bought out Perrot's interest in the company, formally establishing The Ballinger Company.²

¹Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 22.

² Philadelphia Athenaeum, "The Ballinger Company," *American Architects and Buildings*, https://www.americanbuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22294 (accessed 13 May 2019).

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

Later that year, the company perfected and patented the “Super-Span” sawtooth roof design. Similar to the use of skylights, sawtooth roofs provided natural overhead light to large factory spaces. The sawtooth roof, however, set the skylight at an angle, creating a triangular projection in the roofline that was visually similar to the teeth of a saw blade. While earlier sawtooth designs sought to illuminate interior spaces and limit the number of columns required to support the structural frame, the “Super-Span” roof design utilized “lightweight longitudinal trusses...supported by transverse trusses, the top chord of which extended above the roof and tied together the ridges of several sawtooth forms” in order to support a building of up to 100 feet wide without the use of any interior columns.³ Spacing columns 60 to 88 feet apart allowed for even wider structures to take advantage of the light provided by the sawtooth roof. The purpose of the “Super-Span” sawtooth roof, as described by The Ballinger Company, was to provide more uniform natural lighting, which was difficult to achieve with windows as the direction of sunlight changed positions throughout the day and year. In addition to bringing in light through the ceiling, the sawtooth roofs were designed to “prevent the intrusion of direct sunlight” during the summer solstice and to provide additional ventilation for the factory floors.⁴ In addition to designing the original Sylvania Industrial Corporation buildings, including Building A (088-5545-0003), Building B (008-5545-0005), Building C (088-5545-0007), a portion of Building F (088-5545-0010), Building E (088-5545-0012), and the Power Plant (demolished), The Ballinger Company utilized its “Super-Span” roof construction in the design of the American Viscose Company buildings in Roanoke, Virginia, and Lewistown and Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania.⁵

The Sylvania Plant Historic District is also significant under Criterion C as an intact industrial complex that conveys the manufacturing process involved in the production of cellophane. Buildings were arranged on the site according to their various functions and were connected both internally via belowground tunnels and externally via aboveground pedestrian and freight bridges. The cellophane manufacturing process flowed from the pulp storage building (088-5545-0008) on the southern end of the district through the viscose production department in Building C (088-5545-0007), to spinning and finishing departments in Building B (088-5545-0005), and finally to packing and shipping departments in Building A (088-5545-0003). As demand for the product increased, Sylvania Plant expanded its cellophane production capacity, adding additional spinning, finishing, and storage warehouses near the southeast corner of the district. Buildings such as the former power house (located near the center of the district, but demolished in the 1980s) and the Filtration Plant (088-5545-0022) provided electricity and sewage treatment for the district, demonstrating the magnitude of production needs for Sylvania Plant.

In addition to conveying the industrial character and function of the district, the buildings within the Sylvania Plant Historic District also represent an intact collection of Industrial Commercial, Commercial Vernacular, and Stripped Classical style architecture with Art Deco influences. One

³ Bradley, *The Works*, 193.

⁴ The Ballinger Company, “*Super-Span*” *Saw-tooth Buildings*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Ballinger Company, 1924), <https://archive.org/details/super-spanSaw-toothBuildings/page/n1> (accessed 4-18-2019).

⁵ The Ballinger Company, “*Super-Span*” *Saw-tooth Buildings*.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

of the district's best examples of Stripped Classicism is the Administrative Office building or Building O (088-5545-0002). The central entrance to Building O contrasts the primarily red-brick exterior with its smooth, projecting concrete bay, featuring recessed fluting above the door and cantilevered metal awning. The interior of Building O features remarkably intact Art Deco-style wood paneling and light fixtures. Other more subtle Stripped Classicism and Art Deco characteristics throughout the district include vertical brick pilasters and corbeling that create alternating planes and differentiate structural bays.

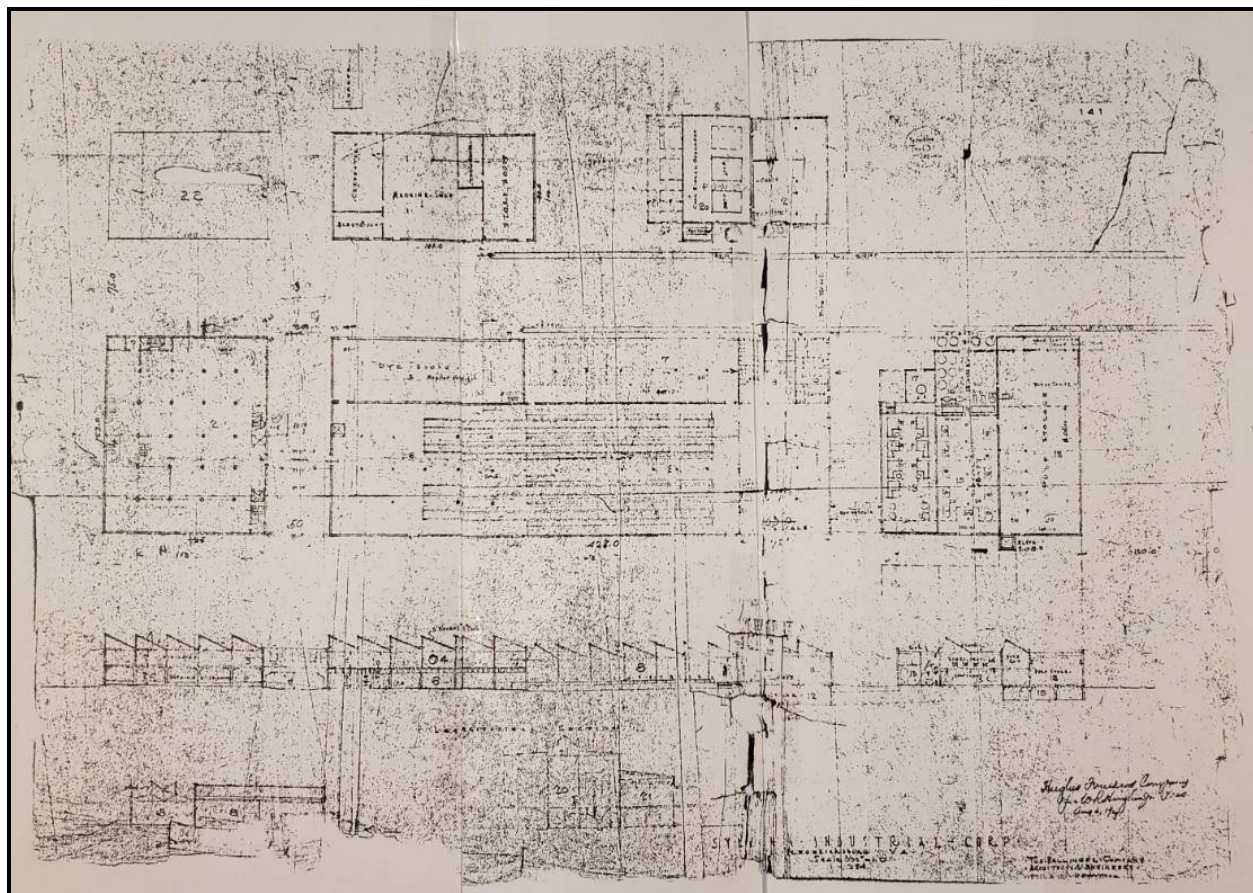


Figure 4: Floor Plan and Section Drawings of Sylvania Industrial Corporation by The Ballinger Company, 1929, Courtesy of the Spotsylvania County Register of Deeds

Criterion A: Industry

The Sylvania Plant Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Industry as one of America's most prolific manufacturers of cellophane products during the twentieth century. The Sylvania Plant was second only to DuPont in the production of cellophane, and in 1931, developed a patented moisture-proof cellophane that expanded the potential uses of the clear packaging material. The popularity of packaged foods and commercial demand for the product allowed the company not only to survive, but grow and profit during the

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

Great Depression. As the major employer in Fredericksburg, Virginia, during the 1930s, the Sylvania Plant's economic success during this period kept many local residents from the devastating financial impacts of the Great Depression. The Sylvania Plant also proved essential in the manufacturing of wartime products, earning itself the Army-Navy "E" Award for its production of vital wartime equipment and supplies, a feat only 5 percent of eligible companies achieved during World War II. As the market for cellophane expanded and commercial demand for the product increased in the postwar period, the Sylvania Plant expanded its operations, which as its height boasted the "world's largest cellophane plant, with 26 acres of floor space," with more than 2,500 employees that produced 100 million pounds of cellophane per year.⁶ The long-term success of the Sylvania Plant represented the evolution of consumer culture and the packaging industry through the mid-twentieth century. The plant remained a significant contributor to Fredericksburg's industrial capacity, as well as the region's economy, until its closure in 1978.

Historic Context

Sylvania Industrial Corporation and the "Depression Baby", 1929-1946

On April 5, 1929, the Sylvania Industrial Corporation organized in Delaware after obtaining patent rights to manufacture cellophane and other cellulose products from the Societe Industrielle de la Cellulose (SIDAC) in Belgium. Although company founder and vice president of manufacturing, Dr. Frank H. Reichel, preferred his hometown of Meadville, Pennsylvania, water quality issues forced the company to seek out a location with close proximity to plentiful, clean water. The nearly 205-acre site located on the banks of the Rappahannock River and Deep Run Creek just south of the city of Fredericksburg, Virginia, was selected for the future plant. By early August 1929, Sylvania Industrial Corporation hired The Ballinger Company to design the plant buildings using their patented "Super-Span" sawtooth roof construction method, and procured Hughes-Foulkrod Company as the project contractor. Similar to the use of skylights, sawtooth roofs provided natural overhead light to large factory spaces. The sawtooth roof, however, set the skylight at an angle, creating a triangular projection in the roofline that was visually similar to the teeth of a saw blade. The angle of the sawtooth roof limited harsh, direct sunlight traditionally let in by skylights and windows. The Ballinger Company's "Super-Span" design utilized an improved truss system that allowed for large open spaces, and eliminated or substantially limited the need for support columns. Later that month, on August 20, 1929, the Sylvania Industrial Corporation broke ground for the construction of what became known as the Sylvania Plant.⁷

Despite news of the stock market crash on October 29, 1929, the Sylvania Industrial Corporation pressed on, opening its doors for production in June 1930. While the Great Depression shuttered businesses and left most of the country in economic crisis, the production and sale of cellophane

⁶ Avisco, "We've changed our Name: What's in a name?" Brochure, undated; American Viscose Corporation, Stockholder's Bulletin, Feb 1, 1954.

⁷ Worth Wade, "Depression Baby: A Short History of Sylvania," *Avisco News*, 1953. Frank Trippett, "Sylvania Plant Ends Quarter of a Century; Little Fanfare There Marks Anniversary," *Free Lance-Star*, 27 August 1954.

Sylvania Plant Historic District

Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA

County and State

saw a slight increase. Product sales competition and the necessity for affordable, packaged foods made cellophane wrapping a desirable commodity. Clear cellophane was promoted as attractive packaging for foods that allowed consumers to see the actual product. In 1931, the Sylvania Industrial Corporation developed a heat sealing, moisture proof cellophane that promoted the “retention or exclusion of water vapor,” thereby prolonging product freshness.⁸

The financial success of the Sylvania Industrial Corporation’s during the Great Depression had a profound impact on the local economy. While most of the country experienced significant losses due to the stock market bust, Fredericksburg saw the “biggest industrial boom” in its history.⁹ According to historian Eric D. Powell, “Fredericksburg was the only city in Virginia in which both wages and overall employment rose during the worse [sic] years of the Depression.”¹⁰ Fredericksburg’s per capita retail sales doubled those in similar sized cities in the state. Local residents remembered the ease of getting employment with the Sylvania Plant at a time when jobs were hard to find in the surrounding area. Former employee Bill Watts moved to Fredericksburg from Richmond, stating, “If anybody wanted a job, he could get it... We didn’t have the horrible collapse.”¹¹ Sylvania Industrial Corporation did decrease wages and hours for a period during the Great Depression. Prompted by President Frank D. Roosevelt’s request for industries to “cut hours as a way to increase overall employment,” Sylvania Plant employees were transitioned from a 56-hour week to 48 hours. Ultimately, the company’s strategic financial decisions and ability to meet the demands of a niche market helped keep the cellophane plant in operation through the Great Depression.

During this period, Sylvania Industrial Corporation’s only competition in the United States was E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company. Du Pont began producing cellophane in 1924 in Buffalo, New York. When Sylvania Plant first started manufacturing moisture proof cellophane in 1931, du Pont began a series of copyright infringement lawsuits against the Sylvania Industrial Corporation. Over a ten-year period, the Sylvania Industrial Corporation fought its competition for rights to produce cellophane, until 1942, when the term “cellophane” was “declared a generic term.”¹² Antitrust litigation also allowed the two cellophane manufacturing tycoons to continue monopolizing the market by grouping the clear film with other flexible packaging materials.¹³

⁸ Wade, “Depression Baby;” Technical Services Department, “History of Cellophane—Properties and Application,” Unpublished report.

⁹ Warren Farmer, “Fredericksburg Has Produced some of American’s Greatest Men,” *Virginia and the Virginia County*, April 1953, 17.

¹⁰ Eric D. Powell, “Prosperity in Hard Times: Fredericksburg During the Great Depression,” *The Journal of Fredericksburg History*, Vol. 5, 2000, 13.

¹¹ Powell, “Prosperity in Hard Times,” 14.

¹² Wade, “Depression Baby;” Paul David Blanc, *Fake Silk: The Lethal History of Viscose Rayon*, Hartford: Yale University Press, 2016.

¹³ “Anti-Trust Law: The Impact of the Cellophane Case on the Concept of Market,” *Indiana Law Journal*, Spring 1957, Vol 32, Issue 3, pg. 374-385, <https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=2799&context=ilj> (accessed 10 May 2019).

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

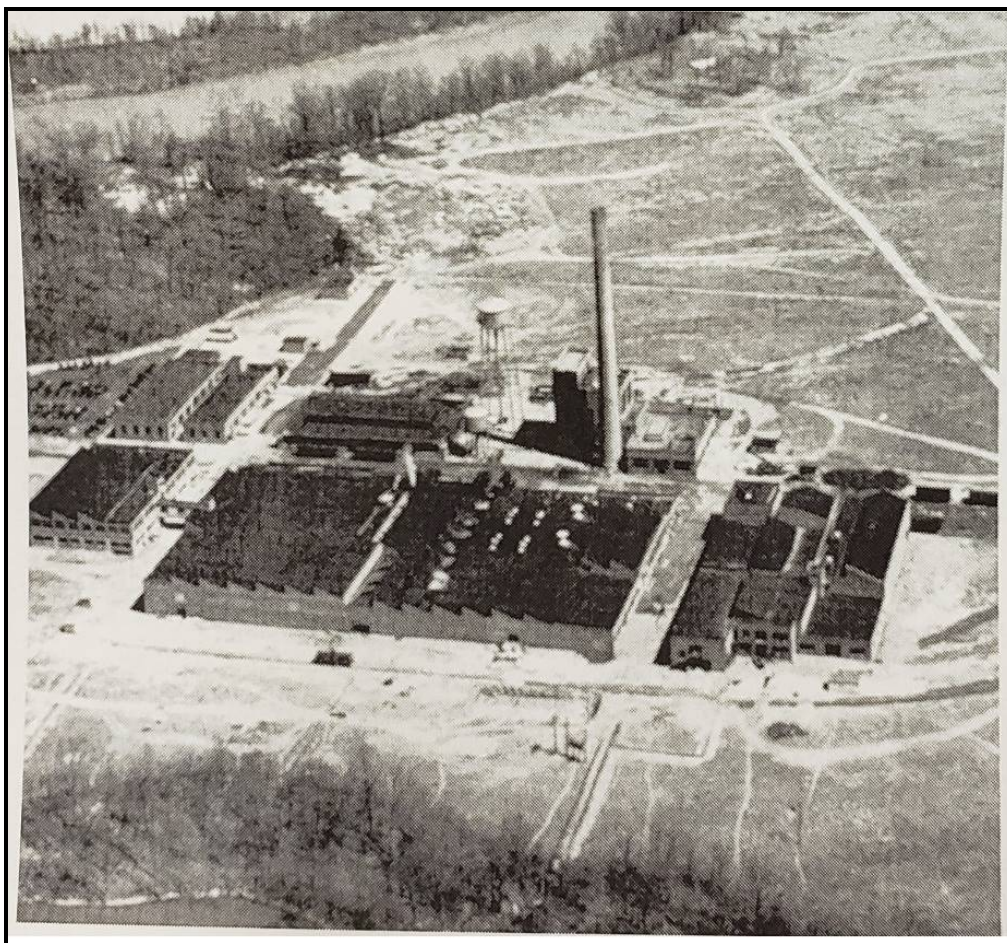


Figure 5: Aerial Photograph of Sylvania Plant Historic District, ca. 1930, Courtesy of the Fredericksburg Public Library

“Cellophane Goes to War”

During World War II, the Sylvania Plant was solicited by the United States government to develop a “special cellophane sheet impervious to mustard gas.”¹⁴ This request resulted in the creation of the “Sylvania anti-gas cape,” which became standard issue for all U.S. soldiers. The capes were designed to completely cover the soldier without hindering visibility.¹⁵ Sylvania Industrial Corporation also produced wrappers for “K-rations” and small ordnance parts. Advertisements highlighted the company’s diversification and adaptation to wartime needs, boasting: “Sylvania Means Cellophane...it Keeps Gas Out...Keeps Freshness In” and “Keeping the Powder Dry...Vital Job for Mr. Cellophane.”

¹⁴ Wade, “Depression Baby;”

¹⁵ Sylvania Cellophane 1945 Advertisement, <https://www.periodpaper.com/collections/vintage-advertising-art/products/1945-ad-wwii-war-production-sylvania-cellophane-anti-gas-cape-food-packaging-117268-fz8-093> (accessed 10 May 2019).

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

In January 1943, the Sylvania Industrial Corporation was issued an Army-Navy “E” Award for its production of essential wartime equipment and supplies.¹⁶ The E-Award, first developed in 1906, was an award made to individual plants that “achieved outstanding performance on war production.”¹⁷ Awards were made based on several factors including “overcoming of production obstacles, avoidance of stoppages, maintenance of fair labor standards, training of additional labor forces, effective management, record on accidents, health sanitation, and plant protection, and utilization of subcontracting facilities.”¹⁸ By the end of the war, only 5 percent of all eligible companies received the Army-Navy “E” Award.¹⁹ Sylvania Industrial Corporation’s contribution to and recognition for its wartime production is an outstanding example of the significance of the plant and cellophane products during this period.



Figure 6: Sylvania Industrial Corporation Advertisement, ca. 1945

¹⁶ Program for Army-Navy E-Award Presentation, January 22, 1943.

¹⁷ War Department Circular No. 228, 1942, Naval History and Heritage Command, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/a/army-navy-e-award.html> (accessed 10 May 2019).

¹⁸ War Department Circular No. 228

¹⁹ Press Release, 1945, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/a/army-navy-e-award.html> (accessed 10 May 2019).

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

The Avisco Film Division, 1946-1963

In 1946, the Sylvania Industrial Corporation merged with the American Viscose Corporation, and the Fredericksburg site became known as the Avisco Film Division. American Viscose was most well-known for its production of a variety of synthetic fibers including rayon, artificial silk, acetate, and, after acquiring the Sylvania Plant, cellophane. The company's headquarters, located in Philadelphia, oversaw operations of 8 plants throughout the mid-Atlantic, as well as a second cellophane plant in Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania. American Viscose also had district sales offices and distribution centers in major cities across the country including Boston, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, and Los Angeles.

Under the management of the American Viscose Corporation, the Sylvania Plant expanded its footprint and operations several times in the 1940s and 1950s. As the popularity of "self-service" shopping spread following World War II, the demand for cellophane increased. The first "self-service" grocery store, Piggly Wiggly, was established in Memphis, Tennessee in 1916. The new model forced shoppers to choose their own products rather than providing a list of items for the store clerk to gather.²⁰ This "revolution" in the supermarket industry increased the necessity for attractive packaging. The Avisco Film Division marketing specialists touted cellophane's general characteristics as the "ideal packages," stating: "It attracts because of its sparkle; it allows inspection of contents; it provides substantial and sanitary protection for the goods it wraps" and "Cellophane helps to give them [bread and baked goods] that appealing 'pick me up and try me look.'"²¹ By the mid-1950s, 75 percent of Avisco cellophane was used for food packaging, while the remaining 25 percent was used to wrap a wide-range of products including tobacco and cigarettes, textiles, paper products, toys, hardware, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics. In 1954, the company proudly boasted in its stockholder bulletin that "sales of Sylvania Cellophane [had] doubled" over a five-year period, and "produced enough cellophane in one year to run a 30 foot wide 'highway of cellophane' more than 3 ½ times around the world."²²

In an effort to continue to improve its products, the Avisco Film Division employed an entire department focused on research and product development and testing. The company claimed its "Quality, Service, and Research" were pillars of the Avisco name.²³ Its marketing materials stated: "Our research and development laboratories are constantly on the alert for new and better products and processes to serve the packaging industry. The extensive facilities which have made the corporation a leader in scientific research will continue to spark the progress of our Film Division."²⁴ Chemist Thomas J. Higgins, Jr., kept meticulous notes of chemical tests conducted throughout his employment at the Sylvania Plant. The 16 notebooks, dated from the 1930s

²⁰ Ashley Ross, "The Surprising Way a Supermarket Changed the World," *TIME*, 9 September 2016, <http://time.com/4480303/supermarkets-history/> (accessed 13 May 2019).

²¹ American Viscose Corporation, "Meet the Avisco Film Division: A Story of People, Communities, Products, Uses, History, and Future," Pamphlet, 1955; American Viscose Corporation, *Avisco News*, October 1953.

²² American Viscose Corporation, Stockholder's Bulletin, Feb 1, 1954.

²³ American Viscose Corporation, "We've Changed Our Name," brochure, undated.

²⁴ American Viscose Corporation, "We've Changed Our Name," brochure, undated.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

through 1961, provide a glimpse at the complexity of the scientific research and analysis conducted at the Sylvania Plant and the level of commitment the company had to testing new products and perfecting existing ones.²⁵ The diversification of the products manufactured at the Sylvania Plant—from heat-sealed packaging to freezer-proof wrapping—also demonstrated the company’s commitment to meeting consumer needs through its research and development division.



Figure 7: Avisco (American Viscose Corporation) Cellophane Advertisement, ca. 1958

In addition to its focus on quality products, the American Viscose Corporation invested in its employees and company culture. At its peak, the Sylvania Plant employed more than 2,500 individuals with an annual payroll of approximately \$8 million. The company provided its employees with a comprehensive benefits package to include health insurance, a pension plan, and paid time off. American Viscose also employed in-house journalists to report on company

²⁵ Thomas J. Higgins, Jr., Sixteen unpublished notebooks, 1930s-1961, donated to the Central Rappahannock Heritage Center.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

news. The newsletter, *Avisco News*, was published monthly and distributed to all of the company's plants and administrative offices across the country. The goal of *Avisco News*, "written by employees for employees," was to "(1) inform [employees] about their company and its people, products, operations, jobs, policies, suppliers, and customers; (2) recognize their individual achievements; and (3) publicize their communities and their contributions to community life."²⁶ The newsletter provided the company with an opportunity to highlight its success stories and promote community within individual plants.

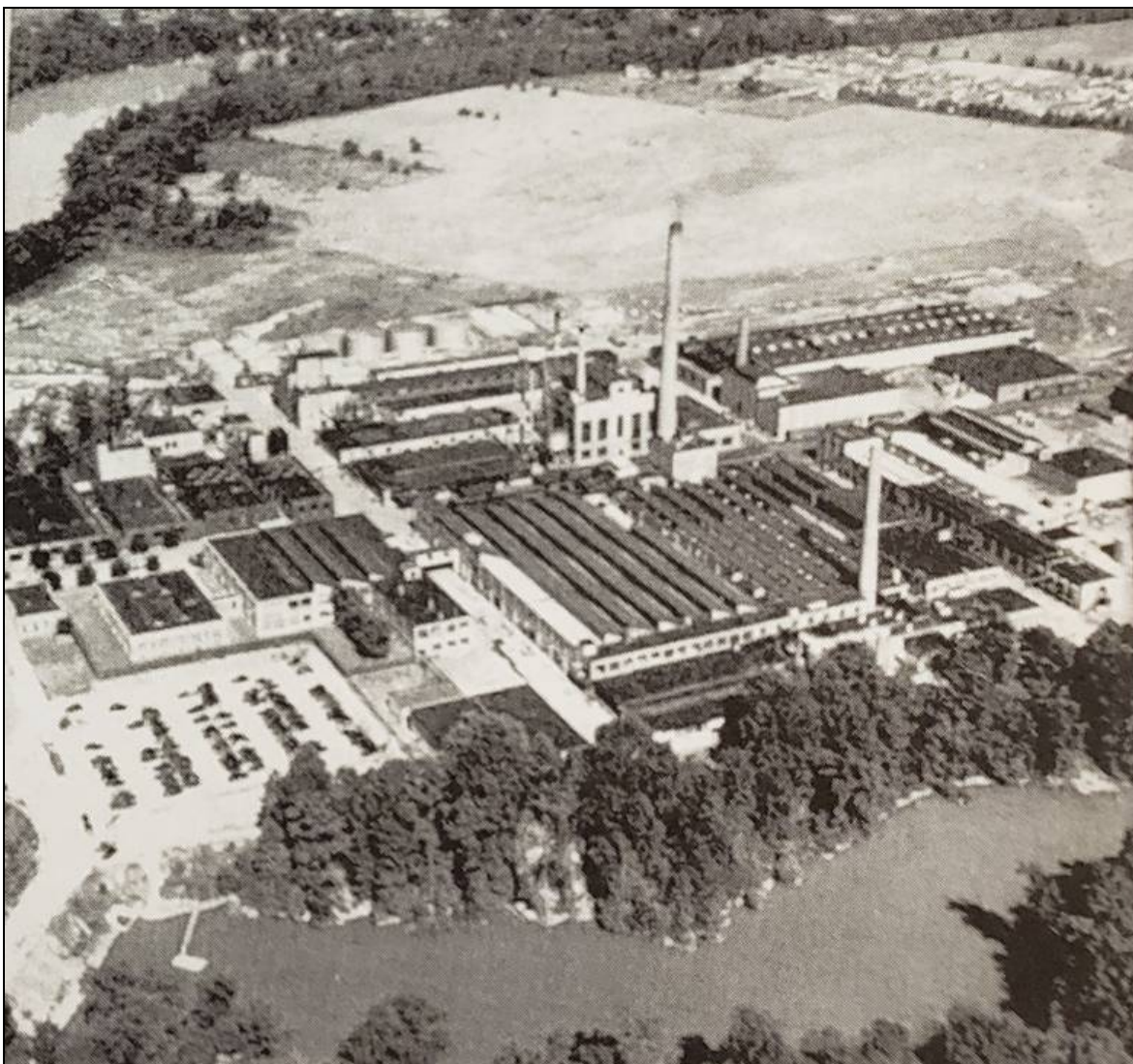


Figure 8: Sylvania Plant expands as Avisco in post-World War II period. Image courtesy of Fredericksburg Public Library, ca. 1953

Like many industries and workplaces, the mid-twentieth century was a period of slow transition for females and minorities working for the Sylvania Plant. Former employees, however,

²⁶*Avisco News: Handbook for Reporters*, undated.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

remembered the Sylvania Plant as one of the best opportunities for improving one's economic situation. The plant employed men and women, though not in equal numbers or job assignments. Women, for example, were primarily employed in clerical positions during the mid-twentieth century. Although the plant employed an integrated workforce, African-American employees were rarely offered upper-level positions. Richard Dandridge, a former African-American employee, remembered that it was "totally out of the question" for black employees to become supervisors.²⁷ He also remembered that although the workforce at Sylvania Plant was integrated, "when you left, you went to your separate, segregated communities."²⁸ Another former employee, William Mercer, reported working his way up from a position as a custodian to a machine operator. Mercer built one of the first homes in Mayfield, a neighborhood predominantly occupied by African-American families in Fredericksburg and a short distance to the Sylvania Plant.²⁹

FMC Corporation and the Decline of Cellophane, 1963-1978

In 1963, the Sylvania Plant changed hands again when the FMC Corporation bought out the American Viscose Corporation, taking over several of its manufacturing facilities. By the early 1970s, FMC Corporation remained one of only three manufacturers of cellophane in the United States, and was second only to du Pont in production and sales. During this period, however, the first petroleum and polyethylene-based plastic film alternatives to the wood-based cellophane were developed. From 1970 to 1977, the use of cellophane for meat packaging dropped from 60 million pounds per year to 6 million, and the baked-good packaging business was reduced by more than half. At the same time, rising costs of energy and production increased the overall cost of manufacturing cellophane by 70 percent.³⁰ This decrease in demand prompted closures by all of the major cellophane manufacturers in the United States, starting with du Pont in Old Hickory, Tennessee, followed by their plants in Buffalo, New York, and Richmond, Virginia, by 1976. FMC Corporation closed its cellophane plant at Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania, in early 1977, but reported a commitment to maintaining its operations in Fredericksburg. According to FMC Corporation, however, the Sylvania Plant "began to lose money during the second half of 1977."³¹ On February 13, 1978, the FMC Corporation issued notice to its current and former employees that the Sylvania Plant in Fredericksburg would close in March. The closure of the Sylvania Plant resulted in the layoff or relocation of approximately 1,100 employees, many of whom reported worked for the plant for their entire careers.

The late-twentieth century development in the flexible film market resulted in the gradual extinction of the wood-based cellophane manufacturing industry. Following the closure of the Sylvania Plant, du Pont converted or downsized its cellophane operations, and by 1986, closed

²⁷ Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc., *Pieces of Our Past: Richard Dandridge, Oral History*, (Fredericksburg, VA: Central Rappahannock Regional Library, 1997/98), 5.

²⁸ Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc., *Pieces of Our Past: Richard Dandridge, Oral History*, 5.

²⁹ Rob Hedelt, "Longtime Resident Credits Hard Work, Strong Moral Compass for Helping Him get to 100," *The Free Lance-Star*, 12 April 2018.

³⁰ Wilson Morris, "Va. Plant is Victim of Cellophane's Decline," *The Washington Post*, 28 February 1978.

³¹ Zack Dameron, Plant Manager, FMC Corporation to FMC Retiree, 13 February 1978.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

all of its remaining cellophane plants. The only other major cellophane manufacturer, Olin Corporation, kept its Brevard, North Carolina, plant open until 2002. All of the Olin buildings, however, have since been demolished.³²

³² Blanc, *Fake Silk*, 204-205.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Newspapers or Journals

Avisco News
Free Lance-Star
The Washington Post

Archival Collections

The Heritage Center, Fredericksburg, VA

Other Primary Sources

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Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

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Ross, Ashley. "The Surprising Way a Supermarket Changed the World." *TIME*, 9 September 2016, <http://time.com/4480303/supermarkets-history/> (accessed 13 May 2019).

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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: The Heritage Center; Fredericksburg Public Library; Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR No. 088-5545

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 40

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.281970 | Longitude: -77.450950 |
| 2. Latitude: 38.282370 | Longitude: -77.446960 |
| 3. Latitude: 38.278640 | Longitude: -77.445760 |
| 4. Latitude: 38.277320 | Longitude: -77.447660 |
| 5. Latitude: 38.278700 | Longitude: -77.449560 |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Sylvania Plant Historic District includes areas historically associated with the cellophane manufacturing plant. The district, located in northeast Spotsylvania County just south of the Fredericksburg city line, is bound by Bowman Drive to the North, Capital Lane to the East and South, and Main Street and Deep Run Creek to the West, and includes Bourbon Street, Russo Drive, and Dill Smith Drive. The attached Detailed Sketch Maps depict the true and correct boundary of the historic district.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the Sylvania Plant Historic District includes those properties which were historically associated with the significance of the cellophane manufacturing plant, and which retain sufficient integrity to contribute to the district. The boundary was selected based on available historic plats, drawings, and aerial photographs of the district, and, in some areas, is based upon current parcel lines. All known historic resources and the historic setting are encompassed by the boundary.

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kayla Boyer Halberg, Preservation Project Manager; Inventory and Architectural Descriptions by Victoria Leonard, Preservation Associate

organization: Commonwealth Preservation Group

street & number: PO Box 11083

city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23517

e-mail: kayla@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com

telephone: 757-905-4380

date: 9/25/2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Sylvania Plant Historic District

City or Vicinity: Fredericksburg Vicinity

County: Spotsylvania County State: Virginia

Photographer: Kayla Halberg (KH) and Ethan Halberg (EH)

Date Photographed: April 8, 2019 & September 13, 2019

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo Number of 30	Description	Camera Direction	Date	Photographer
1	Façade (east elevation) of Office Building/Building O	West	4/2019	KH
2	Oblique of Gate House	SW	4/2019	KH
3	Sidewalk view showing Office Building Hyphen to Building A	W	4/2019	KH
4	View of Bourbon Street showing Building A and B	W	4/2019	KH
5	View of Bourbon Street showing Building F and E	E	4/2019	KH
6	Façade of Building E	SE	4/2019	KH
7	East elevation of Building B showing Sawtooth roof	SW	4/2019	KH
8	East elevation of Building B showing Sawtooth roof	NW	4/2019	KH
9	Bourbon Street showing Finishing Building, Building K, and Building B	E	4/2019	KH
10	Smoke stack	N	4/2019	KH
11	West elevation Building C	E	4/2019	KH
12	West elevation Building C showing loading dock	NE	4/2019	KH
13	View of Main Street	N	4/2019	KH
14	West elevation of Finishing Warehouse	SE	4/2019	KH
15	South elevation of Finishing Warehouse	NE	4/2019	KH
16	Façade (north elevation) of Plastics Building	SE	4/2019	KH
17	View of train tracks and Butler Building	SE	4/2019	KH
18	Filtration plant and clear well	NE	4/2019	KH
19	Tank yard	SW	4/2019	KH
20	Oblique of Building G	SE	4/2019	KH
21	South Elevation of Building F	NW	4/2019	KH
22	Interior of Building B showing sawtooth roof	N	4/2019	KH
23	Interior of Building B showing sawtooth roof	E	4/2019	KH
24	Interior of Building B showing typical spinning room	S	4/2019	KH
25	Interior of Building B showing typical fire door	E	4/2019	KH
26	Typical Basement level	NE	4/2019	KH
27	Typical interior door of Office Building	SE	9/2019	KH
28	Typical interior office in Office Building	NE	9/2019	KH
29	Interior of Finishing Building	NW	9/2019	EH
30	Interior of Building A	NE	9/2019	EH

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Name of Property

Spotsylvania County, VA
County and State

Historic Images Log

Figure No.	Caption
1	Plat Map of American Viscose Corporation, 1959
2	Plat Map of the American Viscose Corp. Sylvania Division, 1963
3	Plat Map of the American Viscose Corporation, 1964
4	Floor Plan and Section Drawings of Sylvania Industrial Corporation by The Ballinger Company, 1929, Courtesy of the Spotsylvania County Register of Deeds
5	Aerial Photograph of Sylvania Plant Historic District, ca. 1930, Courtesy of the Fredericksburg Public Library
6	Sylvania Industrial Corporation Advertisement, ca. 1945
7	Avisco (American Viscose Corporation) Cellophane Advertisement, ca. 1958
8	Sylvania Plant expands as Avisco in post-World War II period. Image courtesy of Fredericksburg Public Library, ca. 1953

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Virginia Cultural Resource Information System

LOCATION MAP

Sylvania Plant Historic District

Spotsylvania County, VA

DHR No. 088-5545

Location Coordinates

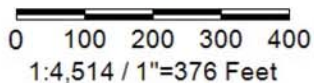
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Longitude: -77.450950
2. Latitude: 38.282370
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Longitude: -77.445760
4. Latitude: 38.277320
Longitude: -77.447660
5. Latitude: 38.278700
Longitude: -77.449560



Sylvania Plant Historic District Boundary



Feet



Title: Sylvania Plant Historic District Location Map (088-5545)

Date: 5/8/2019

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Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.



Sketch Map

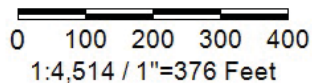
Sylvania Plant Historic District
Spotsylvania County, VA
DHR #088-5545

*Numbers indicate DHR tertiary ID. All resources contributed except where noted below as NC.

- 0001: Gate House, ca. 1943
- 0002: Office, ca. 1943
- 0003: Packing & Shipping Complex, ca. 1930/1954/1962
- 0004: Finishing Building, ca. 1943
- 0005: Building B, ca. 1930
- 0006: Chimney/Smoke Stack, ca. 1939
- 0007: Building C, ca. 1930
- 0008: Pulp Storage, ca. 1954
- 0009: Pump House, ca. 1939
- 0010: Building F, ca. 1939/1943
- 0011: Building R, ca. 1939
- 0012: Building E, ca. 1930
- 0013: Building H, ca. 1939
- 0014: Building G, ca. 1939
- 0015: Plastics, ca. 1943
- 0016: Building M, ca. 1939
- 0017: Finishing Warehouse, ca. 1943/1963
- 0018: Butler Building, ca. 1963
- 0019: Tank Yard, ca. 1930, and 9 tanks
- 0020: Shed Building, ca. 1994 (NC)
- 0021: Flammable Liquid, ca. 1959
- 0022: Filtration Plant, ca. 1954



Feet



Title: Sylvania Plant Historic District (088-5545)

Date: 9/23/2019

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Legend

DETAILED SKETCH MAP (1 of 4)

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Spotsylvania County, VA
DHR #088-5545

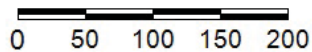
*Numbers indicate DHR tertiary ID. All resources contributed except where noted below as NC.

- 0001: Gate House, ca. 1943
- 0002: Office, ca. 1943
- 0003: Packing & Shipping Complex, ca. 1930/1954/1962
- 0004: Finishing Building, ca. 1943
- 0005: Building B, ca. 1930
- 0006: Chimney/Smoke Stack, ca. 1939
- 0010: Building F, ca. 1939/1943
- 0011: Building R, ca. 1939
- 0012: Building E, ca. 1930
- 0013: Building H, ca. 1939
- 0014: Building G, ca. 1939
- 0015: Plastics, ca. 1943
- 0016: Building M, ca. 1939

 District Boundary



Feet



1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet



Title: Sylvania Plant Historic District (088-5545)

Date: 9/23/2019

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Legend

DETAILED SKETCH MAP (2 of 4)

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Spotsylvania County, VA
DHR #088-5545

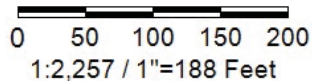
*Numbers indicate DHR tertiary ID. All resources contributed except where noted below as NC.

- 0010: Building F, ca. 1939/1943
- 0011: Building R, ca. 1939
- 0012: Building E, ca. 1930
- 0013: Building H, ca. 1939
- 0014: Building G, ca. 1939
- 0015: Plastics, ca. 1943
- 0016: Building M, ca. 1939
- 0018: Butler Building, ca. 1963
- 0019: Tank Yard, ca. 1930, and 9 tanks
- 0020: Shed Building, ca. 1994 (NC)
- 0021: Flammable Liquid, ca. 1959
- 0022: Filtration Plant, ca. 1954

 District Boundary



Feet



Title: Sylvania Plant Historic District (088-5545)

Date: 9/23/2019

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Legend

DETAILED SKETCH MAP (3 of 4)

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Spotsylvania County, VA
DHR #088-5545

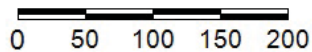
*Numbers indicate DHR tertiary ID. All resources contributed except where noted below as NC.

- 0007: Building C, ca. 1930
- 0008: Pulp Storage, ca. 1954
- 0009: Pump House, ca. 1939
- 0010: Building F, ca. 1939/1943
- 0015: Plastics, ca. 1943
- 0016: Building M, ca. 1939
- 0017: Finishing Warehouse, ca. 1943/1963
- 0018: Butler Building, ca. 1963

 District Boundary



Feet



1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet



Title: Sylvania Plant Historic District (088-5545)

Date: 9/23/2019

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Legend

DETAILED SKETCH MAP (4 of 4)

Sylvania Plant Historic District
Spotsylvania County, VA
DHR #088-5545

*Numbers indicate DHR tertiary ID. All resources contributed except where noted below as NC.

- 0005: Building B, ca. 1930
- 0006: Chimney/Smoke Stack, ca. 1939
- 0007: Building C, ca. 1930
- 0008: Pulp Storage, ca. 1954
- 0009: Pump House, ca. 1939
- 0014: Building G, ca. 1939
- 0015: Plastics, ca. 1943
- 0016: Building M, ca. 1939
- 0017: Finishing Warehouse, ca. 1943/1963

 District Boundary



Feet

0 50 100 150 200

1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet



Title: Sylvania Plant Historic District (088-5545)

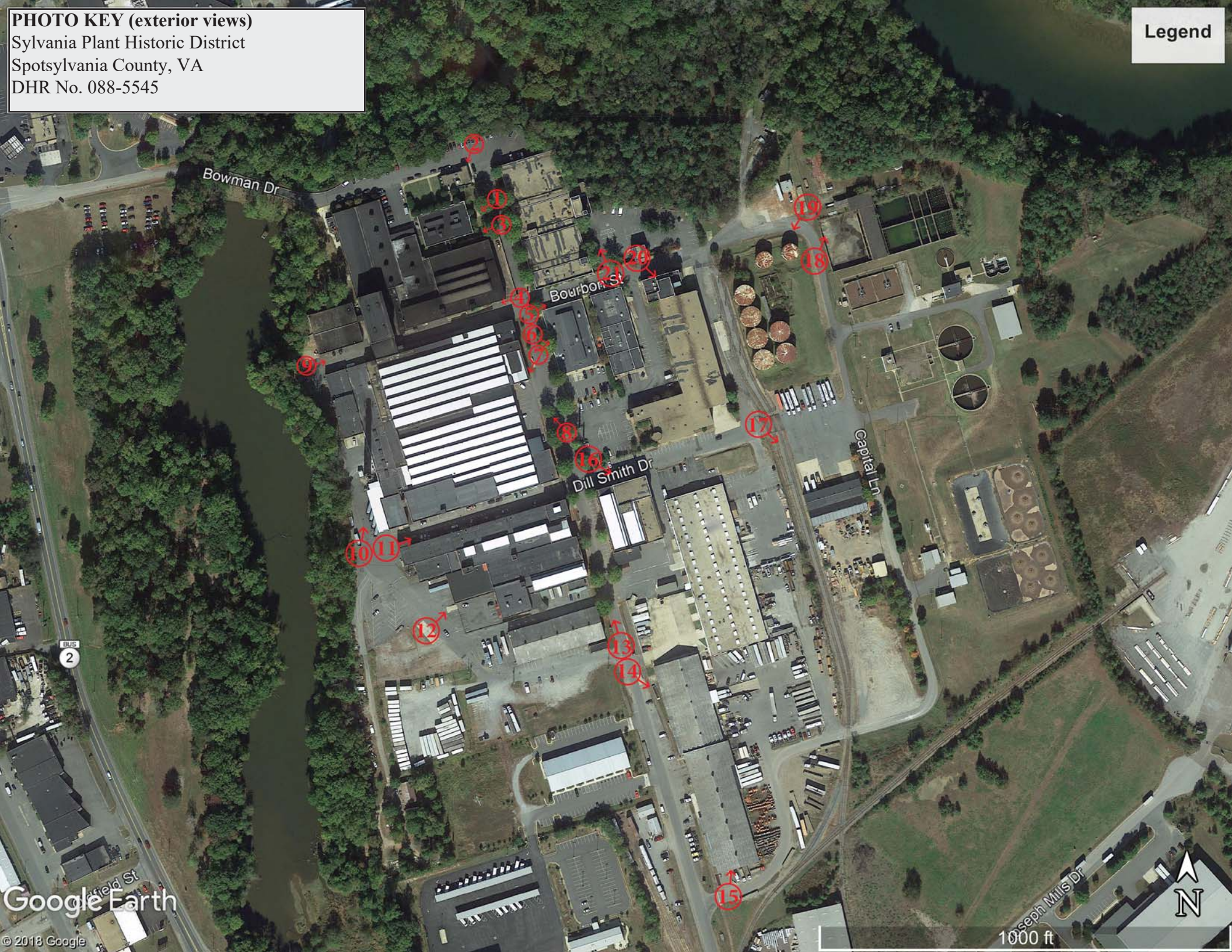
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PHOTO KEY (exterior views)
Sylvania Plant Historic District
Spotsylvania County, VA
DHR No. 088-5545

Legend



Google Earth

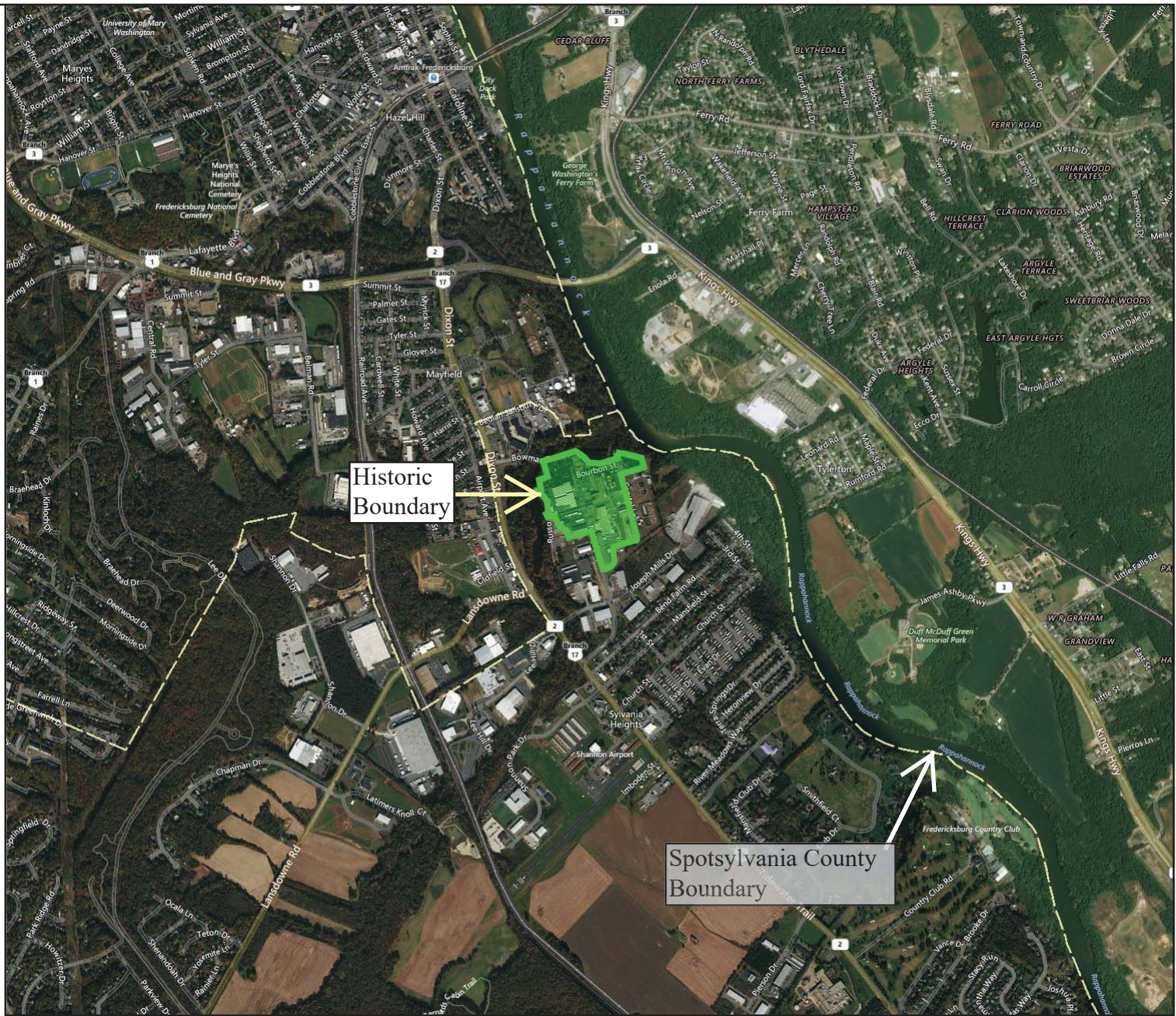
© 2018 Google

1000 ft





AERIAL VIEW - Vicinity
Sylvania Plant Historic District
Spotsylvania County, VA
DHR No. 088-5545



Historic Boundary

Spotsylvania County Boundary



Feet



0 600 1200 1800 2400
1:36,112 / 1"=3,009 Feet

Title:

Date: 12/31/2019

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