1. NAME AND LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Charleston Cigar Factory

Other Name/Site Number: American Cigar Company Building

Street and Number (if applicable)**:** 701 East Bay Street

City/Town: Charleston **County:** Charleston **State:** SC

Designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior September 2, 2024.

2. SIGNIFICANCE DATA

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Criteria Exceptions: N/A

NHL Theme(s): V. Developing the American Economy
4. workers and work culture
5. labor organizations and protests

Period(s) of Significance: October 1945 – March 1946

Significant Person(s) (only Criterion 2)**:** N/A

Cultural Affiliation (only Criterion 6)**:** N/A

Designer/Creator/Architect/Builder: Lockwood, Greene & Co.

Historic Contexts Rachel Donaldson and Walter Licht, "American Manufacturing: Sites of Conflict," *Labor History in the United States: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*, National Historic Landmarks Program (2022).

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement. We are collecting this information under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467) and 36 CFR part 65. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to evaluate properties nominated as National Historic Landmarks. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned Control No. 1024-0276.

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3. WITHHOLDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Does this nomination contain sensitive information that should be withheld under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act?

___ Yes

_X_ No

4. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. **Acreage of Property:** 4 acres

2. **Latitude/Longitude Coordinates** (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)**:**
Datum if other than WGS84:

Latitude:	32.796856	**Longitude:**	-79.934747
	32.798415		-79.935521
	32.798729		-79.934634
	32.797174		-79.933844

3. **Verbal Boundary Description**:
According to the original plat of the property dated August 7, 1899, in plat book D, page 80, the entire parcel of land on which the factory building and its additions sit is bounded by East Bay Street to the east, Columbus Street to the south, Drake Street to the west, and Blake Street to the north.

4. **Boundary Justification:**
The boundary includes all the extant resources associated with the Charleston Cigar Factory along with the sidewalks on which the picketers demonstrated for the duration of the strike.

5. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

From October 1945 through March 1946, striking cigar workers who were members of the Food, Tobacco, and Allied Workers union (FTA) picketed in front of the Charleston Cigar Factory after launching a spontaneous sit-down strike. The five-month-long work stoppage, primarily led by African American women, was part of a larger strike that involved two other American Cigar Company plants in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Trenton, New Jersey. This interregional effort exemplified the national strike wave of 1945-46, the largest in US history. Additionally, the strike in Charleston served as a critical precursor to a large-scale campaign to organize southern workers led by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).[1] The CIO launched the effort, dubbed "Operation Dixie," during the waning months of the strike, and FTA locals played an important role in efforts to organize southern workers and subsequently influenced the larger history of the CIO. Finally, the strikers at the Charleston Cigar Factory closed each day of picketing in front of the site by singing a song commonly sung in African American churches and during labor disputes involving Black workers, "I'll Overcome Someday." The striking cigar workers adapted the lyrics, changing the song to "We Will Overcome," which they later taught to other labor and civil rights activists. It was through them that the song that came to be known as "We Shall Overcome" became an anthem of the modern civil rights movement.

The strike at the Charleston Cigar Factory illustrates the nationally significant strike wave and its immediate aftermath. The strike also proved to be a significant precursor to a massive, though ultimately failed, effort to organize southern workers into the CIO. Perhaps most importantly, the strike formed a nexus between the labor and civil rights movements, an intersection that shaped the trajectory of labor activism during the second half of the twentieth century. As such, the Charleston Cigar Factory has exceptional national significance under National Historic Landmark Criterion 1.

The period of significance for the Charleston Cigar Factory extends from October 22, 1945, when members of FTA local 15 joined the strike at the American Cigar Company, to March 30, 1946, when the strike concluded at the Charleston factory.

Synopsis

For five months over the winter of 1945-46, low-wage workers at the Charleston Cigar Factory picketed daily outside of the building, the largest plant owned by the American Cigar Company (ACC), a subsidiary of the American Tobacco Company (ATC). The workers, most of whom were African American women, were demanding that their employer agree to an hourly wage increase, nondiscrimination clauses in hiring and firing decisions, medical benefits, and a closed (union) shop. Their actions exemplified the primary themes of civil rights activism during the Depression and World War II era when activists linked labor rights with civil rights.

In going on strike, the tobacco workers in Charleston joined an interregional work stoppage that began at another ACC plant in Philadelphia. Shortly after Charleston workers voted to go on strike, workers at a third ACC factory in Trenton voted to join as well. The striking workers at all three plants belonged to the FTA,

[1] The Congress of Industrial Organizations was an umbrella union consisting of several trade and industrial unions that organized skilled workers along with low-wage workers in mass production. It formed in 1935 as a committee within the American Federation of Labor (AFL) before breaking away in 1938. The CIO merged back with the AFL in 1955 to form the AFL-CIO, which still operates today.

which was affiliated with the CIO. The FTA, which began in 1937 as the United Cannery, Agricultural, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA-CIO), was a leftwing union staunchly committed to organizing low-wage, racially marginalized workers. The founder of the union, Don Henderson, and several of the organizers were affiliated with the Communist Party of the Unites States of America (CPUSA). In the South, the CPUSA was one of the staunchest supporters of African American civil rights and labor rights and, as such, made strong inroads among Black workers. The FTA's success in organizing tobacco workers at sites like the Charleston Cigar Company led CIO officials to make them the union to organize tobacco workers. As such, they became an initial key player in the CIO's major campaign to organize southern workers, "Operation Dixie," that began in 1946. Yet, what had made the FTA successful in organizing Black workers in the South also led to their downfall in the organized labor movement as the Red Scare began to heat up during the late 1940s.[2] Two years after the Cigar Factory Strike, the FTA was expelled from the CIO along with ten other leftwing unions. As such, the strike led by the FTA Local 15 in Charleston illustrates a critical chapter in the history of the labor movement in general and the history of the CIO more specifically.

Charleston's Cigar Factory strike made a nationally significant contribution to the larger culture of the labor movement and the civil rights movement while illustrating the intersection of both. Historically, music has played a critical role in sustaining morale on picket lines during work stoppages. In Charleston, the FTA strikers adapted a song composed by Philadelphia-based Methodist minister Charles Albert Tindley that had been circulating in Black churches and among Black strikers since the early twentieth century called "I'll Overcome Someday." The strikers closed each day of picketing by singing this song. After the strike ended, some strike veterans taught their adaptation of the song— "We Will Overcome"—to members of a workshop at Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee. The song became a mainstay at Highlander, often sung at workshops for labor and civil rights demonstrations. It subsequently became the anthem for civil rights activists of the 1950s and 60s, known today as "We Shall Overcome."

To adequately explain the significance of the Charleston Cigar Factory in American labor history, this nomination begins with a brief overview of the rise of industrialization in the South, which led to the construction of the building as a textile mill before its transition to a cigar manufacturing plant. It then outlines how the laws and practices of racial discrimination operated at southern industrial sites like the Cigar Factory and shaped the trajectory of the labor movement among low-wage workers in the South, detailing why the CPUSA became a strong player in southern labor organizing before delving into the history of the FTA (and its predecessor, UCAPAWA). The context then transitions to labor activism during the period of, and immediately after, World War II in order to explain the foundation of the Cigar Factory Strike, which is then explored in its entirety. In order to provide a holistic explanation of the significance of the strike to the larger labor movement of its era, the context then outlines the rise and fall of Operation Dixie and how the Red Scare contributed to the failure of this organizing campaign as well as the FTA, irrevocably altering the historical trajectory of the CIO. It concludes by tracing the history of the song that would become "We Shall Overcome" in the strike, concluding with how strike veterans brought it to the rest of the labor and Civil Rights movements.

[2] The term Red Scare is used to refer to eras when the government, law enforcement agencies, and private citizens vilified and oppressed leftwing groups and activists. During these periods, political radicalism was treated as being intrinsically subversive. The first Red Scare occurred during the aftermath of the First World War (a period that also coincided with a rise of militant labor activism). The second, and more famous, Red Scare began in the aftermath of the Second World War when the government and law enforcement, with the aid of private citizens' groups, suppressed Americans' civil liberties in the attempt to "root out" past and present Communist Party members and sympathizers.

PROVIDE RELEVANT PROPERTY-SPECIFIC HISTORY, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND THEMES. JUSTIFY CRITERIA, EXCEPTIONS, AND PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE LISTED IN SECTION 2.

National Background

Although the Charleston Cigar Factory's period of significance is during the mid-twentieth century, the history of the site began well beforehand. The factory is an illustration of the rise of southern industrialization that occurred during the late nineteenth century. After the Civil War and during the period of Reconstruction, pro-business Republicans and "New South" Democrats banded together to build up industry in the South. Although the South was not devoid of industry prior to the war, it did lag substantially behind northern industrial powerhouses. The result of this push led to the wholescale creation of industrial cities that had not existed in the antebellum era, like Birmingham, and reshaped existing cities like Atlanta into centers of industrial production. By the end of the nineteenth century, extractive industries producing lumber, turpentine, and coal joined new and expanding manufacturing sites producing phosphate fertilizer, textiles, and steel. The South still remained largely agricultural, but industrial centers in large cities, small towns, and the countryside drew Black and White farm families seeking to escape crop failures, fluctuating prices, dependance on credit, and the crippling oppression and poverty of sharecropping and farm tenantry.

In Charleston, South Carolina, one of the oldest of the "Old South" cities, trade and commerce had dominated the economy since the eighteenth century. Cash crops of indigo, rice, and cotton produced by enslaved workers were shipped from the port of Charleston, while light manufacturing and construction trades developed within the city to support residents. Prior to the Thirteenth Amendment, Charleston's economy also relied heavily on the trafficking of enslaved people—which continued well after the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. After the war, the city, which had been damaged during the fighting, had to rebuild both physically and economically.

By 1880, Charleston, with a population of less than 50,000, was the largest urban area on the East Coast south of Baltimore, but its size and scale paled in comparison to the port cities of the North. At a time when industrial expansion relied increasingly on rail transportation, industrial development in the city lagged because railroad shipping of goods came late and railroad lines remained largely unorganized until the turn of the twentieth century. As a result, a significant percentage of regional commerce bypassed Charleston for other port cities along the Eastern Seaboard. Despite these obstacles, some light industries did develop in the city. Rice milling continued from the antebellum era, and the new phosphate fertilizer industry, which began in 1867, grew into a $10 million enterprise with six fertilizer sites in the region. Despite this modest growth, Charleston was anything but a New South city; rather, it lost its prominence in the state, outpaced by the Upcountry where cotton mills boomed during an era of industrial expansion.[3] This situation, however, would begin to change by the following century.

An Industry Takes Shape

One of the light industries that developed in Charleston during the post-Reconstruction era was cotton textile manufacturing. In 1880 the South Carolina state legislature incorporated the Charleston Manufacturing Company (CMC), directed by George Walton Williams, a local banker and industrialist. Two years later, the CMC constructed a cotton mill on the east side of the city that produced thread and woven fabric from raw

[3] Jamie W. Moore, "The Lowcountry in Economic Transition: Charleston since 1865," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (April 1979): 159.

cotton.[4]

The CMC building, designed by Lockwood, Greene & Co., closely resembles other factories that the firm designed from Massachusetts to Alabama. Lockwood, Greene & Co. began designing textile mills in the 1870s and eventually became a significant industrial engineering firm, particularly for textile mills in the South.[5] The CMC mill, like others in the region, exemplified slow-burning heavy timber construction. This building technique, which first began in New England mills, was designed to "provide textile mills with a maximum amount of fire protection at a minimal cost," according to historian Sara E. Wermiel. Rather than being fireproof, the slow-burn construction system used building materials traditional to factories including masonry walls, girder and plank floors, and timber framing, but organized the layout in such a way as to minimize the effects of a fire by subdividing open spaces with firewalls and including a "fire-extinguishing apparatus" such as sprinkler systems (which were introduced in the 1870s). The absence of ceilings kept the frame exposed and omitted the use of flammable finishes. One other notable feature was that girders and squared posts had chamfered corners because corners tended to splinter and thus were more apt to ignite.[6] Flat or nearly flat roofs also replaced pitched ones by the latter decades of the nineteenth century. "Instead of tall, narrow structures with attic spaces, by the 1890s, mills were typically lower and wider in form with nearly flat roofs"—design elements that were intended to further reduce the potential spread of fire, historian Lisa P. Davidson explains. In the textile mills of South Carolina, this type of mill roofline is exemplified by the Hickman Mill and the original CMC mill, both of which feature almost flat side-gabled roofs. A final notable element of slow-burn construction as applied to late nineteenth-century textile mills was the separation of the picker house from the main factory, which was a notable aspect of the original construction of what would become the Charleston Cigar Factory. [7]

Not long after textile production began on site, a series of economic problems forced the CMC to ally with other companies and reorganize. Despite these efforts, the plant was eventually taken over by another mill. The plant's era as a textile mill ended when the American Cigar Company (a subsidiary of the American Tobacco Company, headquartered in Durham, North Carolina) leased the building in 1903. The company purchased the site in 1912, by which time the former cotton mill had become established as the Charleston Cigar Factory.[8]

From 1903 until 1973, workers at the Charleston Cigar Factory stripped tobacco leaves (pulling the dried leaves from the large stems), assembled cigars, sorted the rolled cigars into boxes made on site, and shipped them via trucks and freight trains. The Charleston Cigar Factory was not only the largest of three factories owned by the American Cigar Company (ACC), but by the mid-1930s had become the "largest industrial unit" in the city, employing 2,600 at its peak in 1933. In 1935, in the midst of the Depression, the factory still operated at a strong pace, although the workforce was reduced to 1,800 people, 1,400 of whom were women, producing thirteen brands of cigars that were sold in approximately thirty states. Production at this site centered on the

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[4] Susan Millar Williams, Charleston's Cotton Factory, 1880-1900, Lowcountry Digital History Exhibit, "The Factory Opens," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/charlestons-cotton-factory/the-factory-opens.

[5] Robert Behre, "Cigar Factory's New Life," Post and Courier (no date), Folder: CVF Businesses (IND) American Tobacco Co. B. 16, the South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston SC; Lisa Pfueller Davidson, "Stark Mill," Historic American Engineering Record (HAER No. GA-117, 1998), 2. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[6] Sara E. Wermiel, "Heavy Timber Framing in Late-Nineteenth-Century Commercial and Industrial Buildings," *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology* 35, no. 1 (2004): 55-56, 58.

[7] Lisa Pfueller Davidson and Robert Stewart, "Graniteville Mill," Historic American Engineering Record (HAER No. SC-27, 1998): 33. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Lisa Pfueller Davidson, "Loray Mill," Historic American Engineering Record (HAER No. NC-45, 2000): 9. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[8] W. David Chamberlain, "Cigar Factory," Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina. (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1980), 3. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC.

widely popular five-cent Certified Cremo and the ten-cent Roi-Tan cigars. Locally, the factory was referred to as "Cremo College" because of the brand and the fact that the factory employed a high number of young workers.[9]

According to a newspaper article from 1931, the creation of each cigar took a peripatetic route around the five-story building. The process began in the basement leaf processing department where workers stripped the tobacco leaves, preparing them for casing and filling the cigars before they moved up to the third floor for finishing work.[10] The finished cigars then went back down to the second floor where they were "shaded" (organized by shades of brown so that all packaged cigars were of the same shade). Workers constructed the boxes on the fifth floor, and the finished boxes were then packaged and shipped via a railroad loading area behind the factory and in trucks along a loading area on Columbus Street and Drake Street.[11] The machine shop, operated by a staff of thirty men which maintained and repaired rolling machines, was located on the first floor. Also located on this floor was the cafeteria for White workers; the amenity that reflected management's embrace of welfare capitalism—a strategy of improving aspects of working conditions in order to thwart the spread of unionism—that became widely popular in the 1920s. Other onsite illustrations of welfare capitalism included an assembly and meeting room for workers with a piano, along with a paid nurse on staff.[12]

While welfare capitalism benefitted some, it did not reach all workers in a southern plant like the Charleston Cigar Factory, where the laws and customs of Jim Crow segregation dictated all onsite interactions between workers. As the South industrialized, most jobs were segregated by race. For instance, the textile industry was notorious for almost exclusively hiring White families to take advantage of the labor of women and children. In Charleston, certain jobs like longshore work, which had largely been relegated to enslaved and freed Black men prior to the Civil War, continued to be dominated by Black men from Reconstruction through the twentieth century.[13]

In southern factories that employed both Black and White workers, employers enforced segregation through the layout of the buildings themselves. Each floor of the Charleston Cigar Factory was generally restricted to one race or the other. According to former employee and labor organizer Isaiah Bennett, the fifth floor was all Black, as was the fourth floor; the third floor was all White; and the basement—the "preparation department"—was all Black. Even if they were making the same cigars, White and Black workers were largely prohibited from operating machines on the same floors. According to Lillie Mae Doster, an employee at the Cigar Factory during this period, in some instances, "on one floor they had people doing the same thing as they were doing on the other floor."[14]

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[9] "Cigar Plant Here Largest in World," *News and Courier*, 6 Oct. 1935, Folder CVF Businesses (IND) American Tobacco Co. B. 16, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Library, Charleston, SC; Dwana Waugh, "Historical Background of Cigar Factory," *Charleston's Cigar Factory Strike*, 1945-1946, Lowcountry Digital history Initiative exhibit (May 2014), accessed May 2021, https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/historic_background_cigar_fact.

[10] "Local Cigar Factory Hires 25 New Workers Each Week," *News and Courier* (27 June 1931), Folder CVF Businesses (IND) American Tobacco Co. B. 16, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC.

[11] William Chris Walton interview with Isaiah Bennett (5 March 1990), transcript edited June 11, 2020, p. 4, South Carolina Historical Society, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston.

[12] Waugh, "Historical Background of Cigar Factory," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/historic_background_cigar_fact; "Cigar Plant Here Largest in World" *News and Courier* (6 Oct. 1935), Folder CVF Businesses (IND) American Tobacco Co. B. 16, South Carolina Room, Charleston Public Library, Charleston, SC.

[13] Leah Worthington, Rachel Donaldson, and Kieran Taylor, "Making Labor Visible in Historic Charleston," *Labor* (Feb. 2020) 17 (1): 56.

[14] Interview with Lillie Marsh Doster by O. Jennifer Dixon, 25 June 2008, U-0386, in the Southern Oral History Program Interview Database, https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/sohp/id/5770

Excluding Black workers from higher-paying jobs and segregating them from White workers was common in the tobacco manufacturing industry in the South. Black men were often employed in flavoring and transporting tobacco leaves while Black women were primarily hired for the dirtiest and hardest work of sorting, drying, and stemming. "Cleaner" jobs, including inspecting and packing the final products, were largely restricted to White women.[15] Segregated jobs went hand-in-hand with segregated workspaces. Some tobacco manufacturers such as the Liggett Myers Tobacco Company segregated Black and White workers in separate buildings whereas the ATC separated workers on racially designated floors in their factories in Charleston and Durham, North Carolina.[16] In the Charleston factory, according to Isaiah Bennett, the only floor that was racially mixed was the second floor, which was the packing and shipping department. Otherwise, segregation marked all aspects of work and work culture at the factory, as Bennett recounted:

> We had separate restrooms, we had a separate water fountain, we had a separate cafeteria. See, the White cafeteria was on the second floor. The Black cafeteria was what we called the cedar mill—we used to throw all the boxes in, and all that stuff and you had to go through that to go to the restaurant.[17]

Along with having to endure separate facilities, Black workers were forced to accept those that were far from equal to those of their White coworkers.

In the South, race and labor were interlocked, which had profound consequences for all wage workers. One of the main recruitment tactics for industries to move to the South was the fact that wages were lower there than in other industrializing areas of the country. Low wages went hand-in-hand with racial oppression, according to historian Michael Honey, for the primary means of enforcing the strict racial hierarchy based on white supremacy that dominated the region after Reconstruction was through low wages. The southern caste system not only denied Black citizens basic rights, but it also ensured that economic opportunities generated by mass industrial production benefitted White workers over Black ones. Better positions, opportunities for advancement, and job security in the new factories were strictly relegated to White employees. This hierarchy was reinforced by almost all systems: policing, courts, electoral politics, and even the church. Southern Democrats, for instance, worked hard to successfully exclude domestic and agricultural workers—most of whom were Black—from New Deal pro-labor legislation that would have improved their wages.[18] Because racial inequality contributed to the notoriously low wages of southern industries, maintaining segregation was not in the economic best interests of White workers. At the same time, historian Robin D. G. Kelley argues that racism "was nonetheless a very 'real' aspect of White working-class consciousness." In the South, class identity and even class interests were inextricably tied to race such that, while White workers were making low wages, they were still in a privileged position as compared to Black workers and would resort to "racist terror and intimidation" to maintain that position. Jobs were divided along racial lines, with those restricted to White

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[15] Beverly W. Jones, "Race, Sex, and Class: Black Female Tobacco Workers in Durham, North Carolina, 1920-1940, and the Development of Female Consciousness," *Feminist Studies* 10, no. 3 (1984): 443.

[16] Jonathan Adler, "'Brown Skin, Bright Leaf,' and Brand Image: Racial Discrimination and Public Relations at the P. Lorillard Tobacco Company, 1956–1970," *The North Carolina Historical Review 95*, no. 4 (2018): 408.

[17] Interview with Isaiah Bennett William by Chris Walton, 5 March 1990, transcript edited June 11, 2020, p. 4, South Carolina Historical Society, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston.

[18] Michael K. Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing" in *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture*, Robert W. Cherny, William Issel and Kieran Walsh Taylor, eds. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 221. After the end of Reconstruction, southern Democrats were elected to office, often by using tactics of intimidation and violence to keep Black men away from the polls. They initiated a period referred to as "Redemption" in which they eliminated any of the political gains that African Americans had made during Reconstruction and ushered in the era of Jim Crow segregation marked by state and local legislation designed to relegate African Americans to second-class citizenship.

workers being superior to those relegated to Black workers.[19]

Conditions at the Charleston Cigar Factory exemplified these practices. Isaiah Bennett explained that before the civil rights gains of the mid-1960s, there was a clear ceiling for Black workers. For instance, male workers would have to train new White workers for jobs they had been doing for years, and "six months later he'd become your foreman." This was common practice to ensure that White workers maintained a privileged position, as Bennett noted, "We know, they couldn't show us no law in the book that a White could have a better job than you have when you have the same qualifications. They couldn't show it, they say the common system, past practice, you know ain't [going to] make him look less than anybody else."[20] As such, any chance of success in organizing southern workers hinged on the extent to which the White working class understood—or could be taught to understand—the connection between low wages across the region and segregation.[21]

Black Women in Tobacco Work

Discrimination in employment negatively affected both Black men and women throughout the country, but the systemic inequality manifested in different ways depending on the industry and the region. Light manufacturing in tobacco production, for instance, became one of the few avenues for wage work outside of domestic work for southern Black women. Women, therefore, made strong inroads into the industry wherever it developed, even in the North. In Philadelphia, one of the two other cities in which the ACC operated, Black women had secured employment in the industry by the early twentieth century. According to a study of the employment of Black women in Philadelphia conducted right after World War I , Black women had been employed in tobacco industries for a "longer time than any other industry," mostly working in low-wage positions as strippers (removing the center rib from tobacco leaves, which was the first step in the manufacturing of cigars). Although employers noted this was the lowest skilled position, it was not easy work, as the job required a good deal of "dexterity and speed." The authors of the report explained that the work was "extremely monotonous and is usually done in dark and crowded rooms, where the workers sit on low stools and boxes." Employers noted that they did hire some White women as strippers, but they preferred Black women because they had developed skills in the position. Some Black women were able to secure positions as banders (putting paper bands around the cigars—another low-wage position). Others could gain employment as packers—sorting the cigars by shade and packing them, which was a higher wage position, but none worked in the highest-wage position open to women in tobacco manufacturing —that of "makers."[22] Contemporary commentators observed the implications of racism and gender inequality as revealed through the report, with one observer concluding:

> It is a Truism that newcomers usually make their entrance into industry through the least desirable trades or processes. This is especially true of [N]egro women, who in securing their footing had to overcome a discrimination based on sex as well as race. By far the largest group, 6,411, or 52.2 per cent, were working in tobacco and tobacco products, more than one-half being in the occupation known as "stemming" or "stripping."[23]

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[19] Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (Jun3 1993): 100-101.

[20] Interview with Isaiah Bennett by William Chris Walton, transcript p. 8.

[21] Michael Honey, "Operation Dixie: Labor and Civil Rights in the Postwar South," *The Mississippi Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Fall 1992): 400.

[22] "Colored Women as Industrial Workers in Philadelphia," (Philadelphia: Consumers' League of Eastern Pennsylvania, 1920), adapted from the original in the US Department of Labor Library, Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, "The Black Woman Worker" in *The Black Worker* Volume 6, "The Era of Post-War Prosperity and the Great Depression, 1920-1936" (1981), 144-45.

[23] "Women in Industry," *Monthly Labor Review*, 29 (September 1929): 54–56 in Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, *The Black Worker*, Volume 6, "The Era of Post-War Prosperity and the Great Depression," 1920-1936 (1981), n.p.

Racial discrimination in industrial employment clearly extended to various industrial centers in the country.

Southern tobacco factories reflected and enforced hierarchies of race and gender. Black women were forced into low-paying positions that offered little to no room for advancement. In fact, Black tobacco workers, regardless of sex, earned some of the lowest wages in the country during the early twentieth century.[24] Based on a series of oral histories conducted with former tobacco workers from the 1930s and 40s in Durham, North Carolina, oral historian Dolores Janiewski notes that the only jobs that were open to Black women were the hardest, lowest paying forms of manual labor. Furthermore, their jobs were more precarious, as Black women were often hired in seasonal employment. In industries that employed both Black and White women such as tobacco manufacturing, Black women suffered more acutely from "impersonal, often brutally exploitative forms of labour discipline," according to Janiewski. These workers could be punished for various "infractions" even being fired for working too hard and "stemming more tobacco leaf than their foremen wished them to do." Although both Black and White women were subject to gender discrimination, racial discrimination ultimately determined what positions were open to which workers in southern tobacco factories, which rendered Black women workers an especially exploited labor force. According to Janiewski, the gender and racial hierarchy in the tobacco industry often broke down as follows: "White men monopolised the supervisory, skilled, and semi-skilled jobs down to the making machine operative positions; [W]hite women filled the other semi-skilled jobs; [B]lack men worked as labourers in work gangs; [B]lack women stemmed and stripped the leaves in the pre-machine processes. Wages followed the same structured hierarchy."[25] Black women also labored in the worst workspaces in tobacco factories—areas that were "unbearably hot, dry, dark, and poorly ventilated," according to Robin D. G. Kelley. "The coughing and wheezing, the tragically common cases of workers succumbing to tuberculosis, the endless speculation as to the cause of miscarriages among co-workers, were constant reminders that these black women spent more than a third of the day toiling in a health hazard. If some compared their workspace to a prison or a dungeon, then they could not help but notice that all of the inmates were black women like themselves."[26]

Indeed, the segregation of workers had profound consequences for shaping workplace social dynamics. Because the tobacco industry hired both Black and White workers, the factories themselves were racially shared spaces, but managers did everything they could to enforce segregation on the shop floor. In factories like the Charleston Cigar Factory, where jobs were divided along racially specific floors, racial segregation indelibly marked how workers perceived one another. Janiewski explains, "The segregation practices in the factories, which served to keep black and white women further apart than any other group did not encourage white women to think very much about black women's position in the factory, even if they had not believed in the tenets of white supremacy." In Durham, Janiewski argues, "racial hostilities and suspicions prevented not only a fully united working class…but also a sense of common sisterhood between women workers. White women shared with white men a vested interest in the very structures which divided them from black women," a racial identity that superseded any semblance of a common class identity.[27]

Hard work, low wages, and sexual exploitation made labor practically unbearable for Black female tobacco workers, but the shared misery also fostered strong social bonds. Workers created networks of solidarity in which they referred to their coworkers as "sisters," and these networks extended beyond the shop floor to shared

[24] Jones, "Race, Sex, and Class," 445.
[25] Dolores Janiewski, "'Sisters under Their Skins?': The Effects of Race upon the Efforts of Women Tobacco Workers to Organise in Durham, North Carolina," *Oral History*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1979): 33.
[26] Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem,'" 97.
[27] Janiewski "'Sisters under Their Skins?,'" 34, 39.

neighborhoods, community spaces, and churches. The women looked out for each other, raised money for when workers became sick or died, and celebrated birthdays, according to Kelley.[28] As Kelley notes, these "networks of solidarity" among Black women tobacco workers, "were indispensable for organizing tobacco plants" wherever union campaigns arose. In fact, these bonds would prove enormously important during times of labor strife such as the Charleston strike of 1945-46. But, to improve conditions across the board, workers at the Charleston Cigar Factory, like workers throughout the region, had to overcome centuries of strict—and brutally enforced—racial hierarchy.

Organizing Southern Workers

Workers in the South had acted in solidarity to improve their working conditions for decades prior to the 1940s. Even enslaved workers used work stoppages as a means of protesting their conditions.[29] Organizers from mainstream umbrella trade unions like the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and radical industrial unions like the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) had attempted to organize workers in the South at various points dating back to the late nineteenth century. Besides the prospect of building a bigger labor movement and assisting a labor force that was notoriously underpaid and subject to brutal conditions in the growing coal mines, turpentine and lumber camps, textile mills, and tobacco plants, the region's low wages could have an impact on workers throughout the country. Not only could—and did—factories "runaway" to the South, but the unorganized southern labor force also represented a real threat to the leveraging power unions had gained by organizing workers in northern plants.

Even though it lacked the level of industrial development of other large southern cities, Charleston was not devoid of industry or labor organizing activity. For example, low-wage male longshore workers, many of whom had been enslaved just a few years prior, went on strike in 1867 demanding higher wages and organized into the Longshoreman Protective Union Association the following year. In 1933, low-wage Black female workers at the Charleston Bagging and Manufacturing plant initiated their own wildcat strike demanding access to the minimum wages established by the National Recovery Administration. The foundation of labor activism was strong by the time women at the Cigar Factory launched their own direct action for better wages, working conditions, and equal treatment.

Unlike prior examples of labor activism among Charleston workers, which were important to the labor movement primarily on the local level, the Charleston Cigar Factory Strike of 1945-46 is nationally significant for illustrating the intersection of two critically important streams in the history of the labor movement in the United States: the intertwining of labor rights and civil rights and the history of Communism in, and the subsequent impact of the Red Scare on, organized labor. This action, in fact, is exceptional for illustrating how important leftwing White and Black labor organizers were for expanding labor activism to include low-wage Black workers in the South, for shaping the early history of the CIO, and for illustrating the devastating consequences the anticommunist fervor of 1940s and 50s had on the overall labor movement.

United Cannery, Packing, and Allied Workers of America

Since its founding in 1919, the Communist Party of the Unites States of America (CPUSA) had adopted various strategies of entering the labor movement, although they did not make an effort to organize southern workers until 1929. A year prior, the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International determined that the nature of segregation in the South and the tactics of racial terrorism employed to maintain white supremacy kept African

[28] Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem,'" 97-98.
[29] Erik Loomis, *A History of America in Ten Strikes* (The New Press, 2018), 37-42.

Americans in a subjugated position even though they had the statistical majority in most rural counties of the Deep South. This, in fact, rendered them an "oppressed nation within a nation;" as such, they had the right to self-determination. The possibility of organizing southern African Americans caused northern Communist organizers to turn their gaze southward, and indeed, they found southern Black workers to be far more receptive to their efforts than members of the White working class. Even though the organizers were White themselves, most southern White workers spurned them as "foreigners" whose interest in civil rights meant that they wanted to start a race war.[30]

Rather than shunning Black workers in an effort to gain more traction with White workers, many leftwing organizers continued to work with and among the most marginalized Black workers in the South: agricultural workers, sharecroppers, and tobacco workers. For instance, members of the leftwing Southern Negro Youth Congress, many of whom came from the CPUSA-affiliated National Negro Congress, assisted a wildcat strike of Black workers in Richmond, Virginia, and helped establish the Tobacco Stemmers and Laborers Union (TSLU) in 1937.[31] In fact, as historian Michael Honey argues, the CPUSA during the 1930s became one of the strongest forces that combined organizing for labor and civil rights. Honey writes that a number of leftwing unions "made equal rights a core part of their educational programs and organizing agenda." Organizers of these unions in the South knew from experience that unions had to fight both white supremacy and employers' methods of using race to divide workers in order to have any chance of success in the region.[32]

By the late 1930s, the union dedicated to organizing marginalized, low-wage workers in the South and across the country was the United Cannery, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA). The primary force behind the founding of UCAPAWA was Don Henderson, a former economics instructor at Columbia University and Communist Party member who was ousted from his job in 1933 for supporting radical politics and movements. After leaving academia, Henderson joined the labor movement with the specific goal of organizing agricultural workers. UCAPAWA formed in 1937 and quickly became a chartered member of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the young challenger to the AFL. It was an interracial, multiethnic union from the outset, representing a variety of low-wage workers in agricultural fields and factories. The union largely reflected Henderson's political views, and many organizers were also affiliated with the CPUSA.

Initially operating in the Northeast, Midwest, and West, the union had achieved some early success organizing Mexican, Black, Asian, and White workers on the West Coast. By the late 1930s, the union moved directly into the agricultural fields of the South, working with other regional groups including the socialist Southern Tenant Farmers Union, attempting to organize some of the most exploited workers bypassed by the mainstream labor movement and excluded from New Deal labor protections. As the only alternative to the white-only Tobacco Workers International Union (TWIU-AFL), it faced an uphill battle organizing workers in sectors dominated by migratory labor patterns, politically marginalized groups, labor surpluses, and fiercely antiunion employers. Denied legal protections and succumbing to the internecine fighting between Socialists and Communists, UCAPAWA began moving away from organizing workers in the fields and towards organizing those in food production factories in 1940. This shift in strategy led to more gains than they ever made in organizing agricultural workers.

In 1941, after a string of successes in different processing plants, UCAPAWA started organizing workers in

[30] Kelley, Hammer and Hoe, 13-14, 30.

[31] Robert Korstad, "United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America," *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History Vol. III* , Eric Arnesen, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1415; Erik S. Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 80-102.

[32] Michael K. Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing," 218.

tobacco plants, achieving its most noteworthy success at the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. In the Reynolds plant, UCAPAWA Local 22 was an early example of how organizing tobacco workers in the South illustrated the intersection of labor rights and civil rights. While UCAPAWA was one of the most diverse, "left-led" unions in the United States, UCAPAWA Local 22 was particularly known for training Black members in leadership roles and encouraging participation and leadership among Black women. Moranda Smith, the first Black woman to become an executive leader of any union in the United States, was first a leader of UCAPAWA Local 22. Furthermore, the UCAPAWA Local 22 became a powerful political force, registering thousands of Black voters and enabling the election of a Black representative to the Winston-Salem Board of Aldermen, the first to defeat a White candidate.[33] The UCAPAWA Local 22 would be connected to Charleston not only because workers at both sites were represented by the same union, but also because the same organizers moved between both sites.

The gains that UCAPAWA had made in organizing tobacco workers led the CIO to put it in charge of organizing the tobacco labor force. The union's success in Winston-Salem galvanized workers in the industry, leading to a host of new affiliates and eventually leading UCAPAWA to change its name to the Food, Tobacco, and Allied Workers of America (FTA) in December of 1944.[34] Workers at the Charleston Cigar Factory were part of this wave, voting to join UCAPAWA/FTA in 1943, organized as FTA Local 15. The Charleston Local illustrated the leftwing character of the union as a whole, notably through its leadership. Another one of the key leftwing unions in the CIO at the time was the National Maritime Union (NMU), which also had a presence in Charleston. Reul Stanfield, a veteran organizer who cut his teeth as one of the leaders of the 1934 Maritime Strike in Los Angeles, came to the city to head the Charleston NMU Local before becoming the president of FTA Local 15. Stanfield himself was a member of the Communist Party and reflected the racial progressivism of the CPUSA.[35]

Despite the difficulties of organizing exploited, low-wage workers subject to the strictures of second-class citizenship in the segregated South, FTA Local 15 began to gain traction by 1945 and got the attention of other progressive Whites like Karl Korstad, who volunteered with different unions in town. As a political progressive originally from rural Minnesota, Korstad believed in the power of the labor movement to generate social, political, and economic change in the South. He wrote:

> If unions could continue to increase their numbers, if they could forge a stronger unity between blacks and whites, between men and women, along all religious and nationality groups, they could be crucial in moving America down the road we envisioned: the fulfillment of the social programs of the New Deal, and end to colonialism, and a beginning of free independent nations worldwide. Moreover, if workers in the South could build this kind of unity in their unions and in their community struggles, they would be able to free themselves from poverty and the deprivations forced upon them by the Southern elites. We wanted to be a part of that effort.

He began to volunteer primarily for FTA Local 15, writing leaflets, teaching literacy and writing classes to

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[33] Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 155-56; Korstad, "United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America," 1415; Peter Lau, *Democracy Rising: South Carolina and the Fight for Black Equality Since 1865* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2006), 148; See also Nannie M. Tilley, *The R. J. Reynolds Company* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

[34] Korstad, "United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America," 1415.

[35] Waugh, "Escalating Tensions Before the Strike," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/escalating_tensions_before_the; Redmond, *Anthem*, 148.

members, and drafting press releases on the union's activities.[36]

Workers at the Charleston Cigar Factory had numerous grievances that led them to vote to affiliate with the FTA, many of which centered on unequal wages and treatment based on race. Irene Reid, one of the workers who went on strike in 1945, explained how the pay discrepancy affected her personally:

> Since our 5 [cent] raise, my take-home pay is $25 a week, but it isn't enough. I have to care for mother. Rent is $17 a month; insurance, $10. Groceries cost me $40 a month now. Then there's clothes and everything else. When I get a full supply of groceries one week, I have to cut down the next week, in order to keep within my budget. The colored girls in our plant get 2 or 3 [cents] less than the others. Before the war, only the lowest paid work was for Negro people.[37]

The ATC disproportionately hired Black women in low-paying positions, a point that was illustrated in their publicity book, *Sold American*. The images in this publication showed "Black women's compromised and degraded positions within the company," according to historian Shana Redmond.[38] Overseen exclusively by White supervisors, Black workers were also often subject to arbitrary disciplinary actions or even summarily fired without ever knowing why. Talking back to a foreman or missing work because of illness—regardless of how long they had been on the job—were just some of the reasons for the dismissal of Black workers. Black employees, most of whom were women, only had access to the most difficult, dirtiest, and most dangerous positions. Subject to intense heat in the summer and dank, drafty conditions in the winter, these workers were susceptible to respiratory illnesses; despite this, one woman remembered, the company would not let her wear a sweater on the job.[39] The union provided one of the only means of challenging the rampant inequality.

According to Stephen P. Graham, an organizer for FTA Local 15, Black workers led the struggle to gain traction in the FTA and comprised 95 percent of the union membership. This is particularly important for shaping the kinds of demands the union made. Because they took home the lowest weekly pay, wage increases were the first demand from organized Black workers at the ATC. Shortly after workers voted to join the union, its officials charged that Black workers were "being discriminated against in wage scales as compared to white workers," Edwin McCrea, international UCAPAWA representative, wrote in a letter to the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC). McCrea then elaborated that "500 [N]egro wrappers are receiving approximately 85 cents per thousand while white wrappers are getting about 95 cents for the same amount of work." He also claimed that "other differentials exist in the whole plant between [N]egro and white workers."[40] The union kept up these demands throughout the war years and into the postwar era. Just before the sit-down strike, the union called for a 15-cent raise for hourly workers. While the officials negotiated with management, union members moved beyond the walls of the factory and initiated a campaign to win support from the wider community of Charleston, beginning with a strong leaflet campaign in October.[41]

FTA Local 15, however, was not the first union to operate at the factory; the AFL had already established a

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[36] Redmond, *Anthem,* 149-50; Robert Korstad, "Black and White Together: Organizing in the South with the Food, Tobacco, Agriculture & Allied Workers Union (FTA-CIO), 1946-1952" in *The CIO's Left-Led Unions*, Steve Rosswurm, ed. (Rutgers University Press, 1992), 72-73. See also Robert R. Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[37] Quoted in Redmond, *Anthem*, 157, 167.

[38] Redmond, *Anthem*, 157-58, 167.

[39] Lau, *Democracy Rising*, 146-47.

[40] "Negro Workers' Complaint Made," 12 Feb. 1943, unknown newspaper, Folder: CVF Businesses (IND) American Tobacco Company Strike B. 16a, Charleston Archive, Charleston Public Library, Charleston, SC.

[41] Redmond, *Anthem*, 160.

presence there with the Tobacco Workers International Union (TWIU), as the company noted in its own publicity. In an attempt to present a positive public image of work inside the Charleston Cigar Factory, the ATC started a PR campaign in 1940, publishing the tract *The American Tobacco Company and Its Service to the Public* that emphasized a harmonious relationship between management and workers in order to counteract any claims to the contrary coming from workers and the FTA. In addition to claiming that they maintained "reasonable" work hours and a "healthy environment in our plants," ATC specifically stated, "[W]e believe in paying—and do pay—fair and liberal wages." The pamphlet also claimed that the company discussed work concerns with employee representatives while also meeting with representatives from the TWIU from 1938-1940, even renewing agreements with the union. However, TWIU was "racially exclusive," so Black employees had little recourse in negotiating with the company, which again showed the need for the FTA.[42]

The Second World War and the Postwar Strike Wave

The growth of the FTA in the tobacco industry in plants like the Charleston Cigar Factory took advantage of the gains organized labor had made through New Deal legislation. Among the most important was section 7a of the Wagner Act, which protected workers' organizing rights and established the National Labor Relations Board to provide federal oversight in labor issues. But many employers actively sought to override those gains and actively thwarted workers' organizing efforts, particularly in the South. While the New Deal provided opportunities for the expansion of unions, World War II provided even more momentum for organizing southern industrial centers. The war disrupted employers' longstanding ability to thwart unionization and provided more federal oversite through different federal agencies, including the War Labor Board (WLB). Through government contracts, federal agencies including the WLB created a baseline for minimum wages, provided security for unions, and established "minimal job rights in southern factories," all of which succeeded in promoting labor organizing in the region even more than the Wagner Act had done. These conditions fostered a rapid growth in CIO membership, with numbers reaching 400,000 in the region by the end of the war.[43] The WLB also entered directly into labor disputes involving race. In 1943, for example, it mandated an end to wage differentials in collective bargaining contracts based solely on race. This decision was in response to a case in Texas, which the WLB used to seek an end to the classification of workers as "white laborer" and "colored laborer," which corresponded to wage discrepancies.[44] Not coincidentally, the rise of labor activism coincided with a rise in civil rights activism during the war years.

The modern phase of the Civil Rights Movement began well before the well-known court cases and direct-action campaigns of the 1950s, starting "dramatically and decisively" during the World War II era when the pull of industrial jobs in the wartime economy drew African American migrants to urban centers in the North and South. The two factors that generated the rise of civil rights activism—the war and industrial unionism—worked hand in hand. National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) elections provided Black workers the opportunity to cast a vote in a region marked by de jure racial disenfranchisement; industrial unions of the CIO enabled Black workers to join the mainstream labor movement from which they had often been excluded prior to the 1930s; and the wartime propaganda that emphasized "American" civic values of democracy, freedom, and egalitarianism provided the ideological backdrop for an increasing push for civil rights. All these factors,

[42] Redmond, *Anthem*, 156-57. It is unsurprising that ATC officials touted their positive relationship with the AFL for, according to historian Barbara Griffin, the AFL often worked with employers and made strong organizing gains from 1937-1941 "by offering itself as a cooperative alternative" to the CIO. (Barbara S. Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor: Operation Dixie and the Defeat of the CIO* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 157.)

[43] Michael Honey, "Operation Dixie," 441; Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing," 216-17.

[44] Gordon H. Cole "WLB Orders Equal Pay for Negro Workers," *PM* (7 June 1943), Folder 8, Box 1, Scrapbook Labor Newsclippings January 11, 1943-November 9, 1944, Georgia State University Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein argue, "generated a rights consciousness that gave working-class black militancy a moral justification in some ways as powerful as that evoked by the Baptist spirituality of Martin Luther King, Jr., a generation later." In terms of labor organizing, Black workers were drawn far more heavily towards the industrial unionism and general interracialism of the CIO, and the 500,000 workers who joined CIO unions were, according to Korstad and Lichtenstein, in "the vanguard of efforts to transform race relations."[45]

Contemporary observers and activists had hoped that the expansion of labor rights in the South would usher in a new era of advancing civil rights, namely through the rise of integrated unions. According to activists like W. E. B. DuBois, the CIO, which at that time was the largest integrated organization in the country, was best equipped to secure the path forward. Although individual locals had a mixed record on both integration and advancing civil rights, on the national level, the CIO "had fully committed itself to integration," according to Honey. During the war, the union had made cracks in the system of white supremacy, at least in the labor sector. Hostility to integrated unions began to decline to a degree among White workers, and Black workers had become the strongest supporters of CIO unions in the region, to the extent that unions would not succeed unless they had the support of Black employees. This, in turn, led CIO members and Black workers to see "the cause of civil rights for black people and the right of workers to organize as inseparably bound in the South," Honey explains.[46] Even before the rise of the modern phase of the Civil Rights Movement, observers recognized that the advancement of civil rights went hand-in-hand with labor rights—a recognition that was not restricted to the South.

The war prompted a civil rights victory even before the United States entered it. Spurred by President Roosevelt's failure to integrate the army or ensure that African Americans would find jobs in the wartime industries, A. Philip Randolph, a civil rights activist, political radical, and labor leader, began to organize a March on Washington Movement calling for African Americans to protest economic inequality by marching in the nation's capital during the Fourth of July weekend in 1941. When Franklin D. Roosevelt's tactics to force the cancellation of the march failed to sway Randolph, he eventually issued executive order 8802 on June 25. The order prohibited racial discrimination in unions, federal agencies, and industries receiving government contracts, and established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to ensure compliance. Despite this, employers, particularly in the South, worked to circumvent the order, and civil rights activists initiated a grassroots campaign to use the war to promote the advancement of civil rights at home. Dubbed the "Double V Campaign" by the *Pittsburgh Courier*, an influential Black newspaper, the campaign was a push to fight against racism abroad and racism at home, which restricted African Americans from advancing politically and economically.[47]

While civil rights activists continued their struggle during the war, organized labor became more muted on both civil rights and labor militancy. With war looming on the horizon after breaking out in Europe, a divide began to grow between workers and union leaders—between official and unofficial actions. During the war, CIO leadership put the push for full labor rights on hold to support the war effort, agreeing (with varying degrees of adherence) to a no-strike pledge. Even Communist organizers adhered to this policy, quieting their demands for racial equality and supporting the no-strike pledge in order to maximize wartime production. Congress then passed the Economic Stabilization Act, which froze wages to the rate they were on September 15, 1942. This meant that wages could not go down, but they could not go up either, and unions had agreed to give up the one

[45] Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (December 1988): 786-87.

[46] Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing," 217-18.

[47] Vincent Harding, Robin D. G. Kelley, and Earl Lewis, "We Changed the World: 1945-1970," in *To Make Our World Anew Vol. II; A History of African Americans from 1880*, Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 167-265.

means of protesting low wages: the ability to strike.

With both unions and employers supporting the no-strike pledge, workers often took it upon themselves to engage in "quick, unofficial strikes independent of and even against the union stricture on a far larger scale than ever before," according to labor historian Jeremy Brecher. These wildcat strikes grew during the summer of 1942, and in 1944, before the end of the war, "more strikes took place than in any other year." As predicted, the rise in strikes surged in the year following the end of the war and showed no signs of abating. With over 2,970,000 workers engaged in work stoppages, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics referred to the first half of 1946 as "the most concentrated period of labor-management strife in the country's history." Industrial workers, white collar workers, service workers all walked off the job at different points from 1945-46 such that by the end of the year, over 4.6 million workers had participated in a work stoppage.[48]

Strike at the American Cigar Company

The events that led to the initial strike at the Charleston Cigar Factory in 1945 illustrate significant features of this national strike wave. During the war, FTA Local 15 upheld the no-strike pledge and even agreed to management's offer of wage increases that would be on hold until the war ended. White workers were promised an hourly rate of 65 cents, whereas black workers were to go from 25 cents an hour to 40 cents. Management could have made good on that promise, as profits soared after the war. The demand far exceeded the supply, driving the price of cigars from 3 to 8 cents apiece. Furthermore, the company benefitted enormously after Congress ended the excess profit tax, leading to large repayments after the war. The ATC alone received a payment of over $1.3 million, none of which went towards improving worksites or workers' salaries. At the ATC Cigar Factory in Charleston, FTA Local 15 began to demand that managers raise wages and provide back pay. Workers signaled their approval by renewing the contract with the FTA in September 1945. The following month, the National War Labor Relations Board mandated that the ATC pay workers all wages that had been withheld because of the war, but company officials ignored both the union contract and the governmental ruling.[49] As such, workers' anger over wages that were already low and marked by racial disparity grew.

The issues at the ATC reflected many of the key issues and characteristics of the strike wave. As historian Jeremy Brecher argues, rather than just being about wages or hours, many of the strikes during this period stemmed from issues specific to certain industries or particular work sites. For instance, strikers at an auto plant in Detroit engaged in work stoppages in the attempt to mount "protests against discipline, protests against certain company policies, or protests against discharge of one or more employees."[50] Like other strikes of the era, the strike in Charleston began with a personnel matter. The catalyst came on October 1, 1945, when Harold F. McGinnis, the manager of the Charleston Cigar Factory, summarily fired a Black male worker after a White female supervisor accused him of "taking familiarities" with other black female workers. The accusation and the lack of due process reflected patterns of both gender and racial discrimination that were entrenched in the factory, particularly in the hiring and firing processes. This episode became the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back, illustrating the complete and unquestioning control that White supervisors had over Black employees. On October 3, 1945, over one hundred Black women at the Charleston Cigar Factory joined the wave of wildcat strikes that had been sweeping the nation since 1944, sitting down at their jobs from 11 am until the plant closed for the evening. This was the second sit-down strike that workers had waged that year. At

[48] Jeremy Brecher, *Strike*! Rev. Ed. (Oakland: PM Press, 2014), 209-10; Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing," 218-19.

[49] Waugh, "World War II and Labor Activism," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/world_war_11_and_labor_activis and "Escalating Tensions Before the Strike," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/escalating_tensions_before_the

[50] Brecher, *Strike!*, 212.

this point, the union intervened, but when company officials refused to meet with union representatives, all nine hundred of the Black workers who came to work the following day themselves refused to enter the factory. This action spurred company officials to enter talks with the union about the grievances Black workers had at the factory.[51]

While this was happening, tensions were brewing in other American Cigar Company factories up the East Coast. Responding to their own set of grievances, members of FTA Local 186 at the ATC plant in Philadelphia went on strike on October 15. FTA Local 15 members joined that strike on October 22, and FTA Local 56 members in Trenton, New Jersey, followed suit on October 25. By the end of October, the strike involved over 2,500 workers. The strikers at all three plants issued a set of demands that included a nondiscrimination clause in hiring and firing, a closed (union) shop, and an increase in wages including a $0.65 minimum wage and a $0.25 hourly increase. In a letter to union officials, the FTA described the stakes of the strike that encompassed worksites in the North and South as follows: "The workers are determined to win equal wages for plants on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line. They are fighting together, Negro and white, for equal and just treatment for all."[52]

The strikers in Charleston brought the fervor of the postwar strike wave to the South; as the largest of the American Cigar Company factories, they played a significant role in shaping the nature of the interregional strike. Initially, 1,000 workers participated, but that number was not sustained throughout the strike as a whole. While Stanfield had hoped that 1,200 would join the picket lines, only about two hundred did. While they were part of the same effort, workers picketed in segregated lines with about seventy-five White and two hundred Black participants. Furthermore, as the strike continued through the winter, morale began to flag. Machinists, the highest paying position that was all-White and all-male, refused to act in solidarity with the striking women. In addition to crossing the picket line, some went out of their way to antagonize the strikers, including one man who spat on the leg of a striking woman. When she swore at him as she cleaned her leg, she was arrested for disorderly conduct, though a judge later dismissed the case.[53] Furthermore, the picketers were subject to almost constant police harassment throughout the cold wet, winter. When the National Labor Relations Board sent Thomas V. Smith to investigate the situation in Charleston that November, he saw firsthand how the police and white supremacists attacked the nonviolent demonstrators, including a knife attack on Stanfield at the union's headquarters. The police refused to file charges against the four men involved in that attack.[54]

Even though the numbers did not reach the level that Stanfield had hoped, that did not diminish one of the most significant aspects of this strike: the fact that it was an interracial effort during a time of entrenched segregation and racial discrimination. Following the convention of Jim Crow segregation, FTA Local 15 initially held alternating, segregated meetings. But, a mere four days into the strike, the Local held its first integrated meeting. While segregation continued to dominate both inside and outside the factory walls, the strike provided a moment of integration decades before the civil rights gains of the mid-1960s. Workers at the factory knew that

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[51] Waugh, "Escalating Tensions Before the Strike," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/escalating_tensions_before_the; Lau, *Democracy Rising*, 147.

[52] Letter to FTA International Vice Presidents, Regional Directors, International Representatives and Organizers, Presidents of Locals, CIO National and International unions; City, County and District IUC's, Folder 1-10 "Tobacco Workers' Strike (1945)," Box: AMN 1056, Isaiah Bennett Papers, Avery Research Center, Charleston, SC.

[53] Redmond, *Anthem,* 163; Waugh "The Charleston Strike," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/the_charleston_strike. Violence also broke out on February 5 in Philadelphia when a clash erupted between a group of strikers who were voting on whether to return to week and those who wanted to stay on strike. In the aftermath, the FTA announced that it was filing charges with the NLRB of "unfair labor practices, strike breaking, and refusal to bargain collectively," according to a United Press article.

[54] Lau, *Democracy Rising*, 152; Waugh, "The Charleston Strike," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/the_charleston_strike.

they needed to come together for any chance of success.[55] Furthermore, they drew on support from White and Black community members beyond the strike zone.

Strikes can be long, protracted events that require the support of local communities. The CIO launched a campaign to educate workers about the strike demands and the wider community about why the strike was necessary.. As one of the organizers explained to a local newspaper, "We have learned that the workers in the northern plants are making between, $85 and $96 a week. Compare this with the wages around here. If a worker averages $30 a week, she is doing well."[56] Understanding the need for the strike and the support it required, the National Maritime Union (NMU), another leftwing CIO union, actively supported the striking tobacco workers. The NMU port agent, Anthony Lucio, gave preferred jobs to those who joined the FTA picket lines.[57] Other community groups that had supported civil and labor rights became involved as well. The Morris Street Baptist Church hosted a particularly large strike meeting during which Osceola E. McKaine, an editor of a Black newspaper in Columbia informed the attendees of the "meeting of approximately 125 White people and 350 [N]egroes" that they were "making history" with the integrated audience.[58]

Elements of the interracial solidarity during the strike even crossed class lines. Middle-class progressive Whites including Karl and Francis Rodgers Korstad tapped into a network of like-minded White southerners through the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW). Through the SCHW, Virginia Durr and Clark Foreman helped to create the Emergency Committee to Aid Families of American Tobacco Company Strikers. Out of this, a Charleston chapter of the SCHW formed, with the president of the Avery Normal Institute, John Potts, as the president. Sid Fishman and Karl Korstad organized a lecture series called "The New South" through the CIO's Political Action Committee, holding the integrated public lectures in an AME church to sustain support for the strike during the winter of 1945-46. Guest lecturers included Aubrey Williams, former director of the National Youth Administration; Dr. Charles S. Johnson, a renowned sociologist from Fisk University; and Rev. Kelley Barnett from Chapel Hill. Attendance of White Charlestonians numbered upwards of over a hundred for each lecture; the number of Black Charlestonians ran from four hundred to five hundred per meeting. FTA Local 15 leaders emphasized the importance of maintaining an integrated effort, viewing interracial solidarity as a key to organizing workers in the city. In a union newsletter, African American representative Marie Hodges summarized the benefits of an interracial union by asserting that the FTA-CIO Local 15 represented "one of the world's greatest institutions in the breaking down of racial, religious and national prejudices."[59]

From the outset of the strike, FTA leaders worked to generate support and publicity from local communities and national sympathizers for the strikers at all three cigar plants. In a letter from November 15, 1945, Harold Lane, the FTA Secretary Treasurer, wrote, "We are asking for your support in the current FTA strike at American Tobacco, in the interests of tobacco workers throughout the country and the CIO's fight for decent wages." He requested funds for food assistance for the strikers and donations for Christmas baskets (noting that the strike would likely continue into 1946 given the surplus revenue the ATC had on hand from excessive profits during the war). Furthermore, they asked for union sympathizers to donate one hour's pay a week to the strike fund, which would be divided between the three strike centers. FTA officials also called for the implementation of

[55] Lau, *Democracy Rising*, 150.

[56] "Larsen Says 152 Workers Still on Job" 26 Oct. 1945, Unknown NP, Folder: "Clippings" South Carolina Historical Society, Addlestone Library, Charleston, SC.

[57] Redford, *Anthem*, 160.

[58] "Columbia Man Hails Mixed Strike Meeting," (27 October 1945), folder: Clippings, Box 1 Research on the Cigar Factory, South Carolina Historical Society, Addlestone Library, Charleston, SC.

[59] Robert Korstad, "Black and White Together: Organizing in the South with the Food, Tobacco, Agriculture & Allied Workers Union (FTA-CIO), 1946-1952," 73; Waugh "The Charleston Strike," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/the_charleston_strike.

one of the few tactics unions could employ to exert pressure on a recalcitrant employer: a boycott. Specifically, the FTA called for a boycott not just of American Cigar products, but of all ATC products, including the widely popular Lucky Strike cigarettes. FTA officials requested that allies remove American Tobacco products "from counters…[and] vending machines in cafeterias, especially in plants where we have CIO contracts." Lane painted the necessity of the boycott in stark terms: "I cannot find adequate words to explain to you the importance of the intensification of this boycott. This is the only place where we can demonstrate to a national corporation and one of America's largest and most profitable corporations, the combined power of the CIO members, their families and friends."[60]

As the strike dragged on through the winter, FTA officials sent Korstad to Washington, DC, to raise more funds. He set up shop in the Washington office of the SCHW. Soon after, Virginia Durr, who was married to Clifford Durr of the Federal Communications Commission and was sister-in-law to future Supreme Court justice Hugo Black, lent her support to the SCHW's efforts in assisting the strikers. Other notable figures who also became involved included Aubrey Williams, Senator Claude Pepper, Rep. Helen Gahagan Douglas, Frank Porter Graham, Leon Henderson, and Mary McLeod Bethune. The strike gained further national exposure when eighty women from the national FTA demonstrated in front of the White House in support of the strikers in Charleston, Trenton, and Philadelphia in what they called a "tobacco strike parade."[61]

Despite these efforts, morale on the picket lines began to flag. The strike was especially hard for the Charleston workers because most of the women involved were the primary income earners for their families. At one point, FTA Local 15 president Reul Stanfield issued a plea for more support, noting, "Our workers are suffering and need help badly. They will be forced to return to work, thereby causing all workers in the South and the nation to lose, if they do not get help quickly."[62] The strike limped on as workers began to trickle back to their jobs until March 30, when FTA Local 15 agreed to an 8-cent raise (a 15 percent increase), which was a fraction of what the strikers had demanded.[63] According to historian Shana Redmond, the stakes of the strike had been high:

> Local 15's relationship with and strike activity alongside sister Locals 186 and 56 and their coordinated efforts with the Teamsters and NMU put into practice a national solidarity with the potential to significantly grow union strength and density across industries. A successful job action in Charleston therefore carried with it both local and national consequences.[64]

The company's paltry wage increase, along with its refusal to accept a closed shop and establish a nondiscrimination clause was a bitter pill to swallow for workers who had held the line for over five months. The strike in Philadelphia was settled shortly thereafter on April 3. Workers had demanded 25-cent-an-hour rate increase and improved working conditions but were forced to agree to a 12-cent-an-hour increase. This plant was the last holdout, as the strike in Trenton had settled two days prior to tentative agreement in Philadelphia.[65]

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[60] Letter to FTA International Vice Presidents, Regional Directors, International Representatives and Organizers, Presidents of Locals, CIO National and International unions; City, County and District IUC's, Folder 1-10 "Tobacco Workers' Strike (1945)," Box: AMN 1056, Isaiah Bennett Papers, Avery Research Center, Charleston, SC.

[61] Korstad, "Black and White Together," 74; Redmond, *Anthem*, 166.

[62] Redmond, *Anthem*, 168.

[63] Lau, *Democracy Rising*, 152. The strike in Philadelphia was settled April 3, 1946. Workers had demanded 25-cent-an-hour rate increase and improved working conditions but were forced to agree to a 12-cent-an-hour increase. This plant was the last holdout, as the strike in Trenton had settled two days prior to tentative agreement in Philadelphia.

[64] Redmond, *Anthem*, 168.

[65] *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 4 Apr. 1946, Page 5.

Although the strikers gained only a fraction of what they demanded, historian Diana Waugh argues that the strike in Charleston was not a complete failure, for, as she notes, the striking workers' "efforts drew the support of the federal government and forced the Cigar Factory management to make at least some concessions, which was previously considered impossible by many workers."[66] Success from the strike also came in other forms not tied directly to strike demands. The action that the largely female workers engaged in over the winter of 1945-46 bucked the conventions of racial segregation while also challenging the subordinate role that Black working-class women were forced into in the South and elsewhere. In Charleston, Black women became strike leaders and would maintain their position as the strike dragged on through the winter months. One picket captain was Lillie Martin, a mother and grandmother; Lucille Simmons, another strike leader, garnered support from the wider community by canvassing in Black neighborhoods. Martin, along with other Black men and women, represented the union in negotiations with the ATC after being elected to the Executive Committee. Nineteen-year-old Celestine Bunch, another Black employee, was elected as vice president of the Local.[67]

Another significant aspect of the strike was that it included both White and Black workers during the time of entrenched segregation. Even though the number of White strikers was substantially smaller than that of Black strikers, the strike was an interracial affair (even if the picket lines remained segregated). White workers even came to the defense of Black coworkers. For instance, when one of the strikers was arrested for causing a disturbance after she swore at a White machinist for spitting on her leg, two White women picketers stood up for her, even testifying at her hearing. On the witness stand, one declared, "That scab spit on this sister's leg, and she swore only once. If it had been me, I'd have done a whole lot more than just swear."[68] Episodes of overt racial solidarity like this are especially noteworthy for the era. In the staunchly segregated South, crossing the color line could—and often did—have profound consequences for whomever did it, even for White southerners. Robin D. G. Kelley explains, "Except for radicals and other bold individuals willing to accept ostracism, ridicule, and even violence, expressions of friendship and respect for African Americans had to remain part of the 'hidden transcript' of White workers. White workers had to disguise and choke back acts and gestures of antiracism," for if they publicly supported civil rights, or even if they were merely outed as supporting Black workers, the results could be deadly.[69] Historian Barbara Griffith also argues that acts of solidarity during the strike revealed a "subtle truth about race relations in the South," mainly that the possibility of interracial solidarity came after workers were unionized. This was because owners could no longer play the race card—destroying worker solidarity along racial lines through hearsay and spreading false rumors. Such tactics had a harder time gaining traction among White workers once Black and White workers began working together for the same cause.[70]

Yet, the flame of interracial working-class solidarity that the strike ignited was ultimately not as strong in reaching all workers in the factory, and the lack of it ended up hurting the effectiveness of the work stoppage. While the strike galvanized nearly all of the Black labor force, support for the strike among White workers was far less substantial. White supervisors and White men in skilled positions did not participate, and the only White workers who did join were close to two hundred women who worked in the same positions as Black women—leaf strippers and cigar rollers—though in separate departments. Although the NMU-CIO supported the strike, none of the White AFL locals became involved. However, it was a start, and the end of the strike coincided with the beginning of the CIO's most significant effort to organize the South—an effort that had the potential to build from the work that organizers and strikers established through the Charleston Cigar Factory Strike.

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[66] Waugh, "Strike Ends," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/the_strike_ends.
[67] Lau, *Democracy Rising*, 152.
[68] Waugh, "Gathering Support," https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/cigar_factory/gathering_support.
[69] Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem,'" 102.
[70] Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor*, 82.

The Aftermath: Operation Dixie, the FTA, and the Red Scare

In early 1946, as the Cigar Factory strike continued, the CIO announced the launch of Operation Dixie, a massive campaign for which the CIO directed a million dollars to organize southern workers in thirteen states. The CIO's decision to launch a large-scale organizing drive in the South was spurred by the need to secure recent gains that labor had made during the World War II era and to prevent the flight of unionized shops in the North to southern states. The vast majority of organizing success during the New Deal and World War II eras occurred in the North—successes that were threatened by the overwhelmingly unorganized southern industries.[71]

To embark on such an expansive campaign, the CIO needed the assistance of activist groups that shared an interest in labor and civil rights organizing. Fortunately, they were able to tap into the support of a progressive coalition of unionists, civil rights advocates, and liberals that had formed prior to the war in the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW). Between 1945 and 1946 the SCHW grew to upwards of ten thousand members. Working in concert with the Political Action Committee of the CIO, the SCHW developed a voting bloc of African Americans, White liberals, farmers, and unionized workers with the intention of voting reactionary, racist members of Congress out of office. Another critically important partner for the campaign was the NAACP, which had grown dramatically over the course of the war. "Even in a citadel of white supremacy such as South Carolina, NAACP membership jumped from 800 in 1939 to over 14,000 by 1948," Michael Honey writes. The CIO's third partner—whose very existence seemed to indicate that the South was ready for a stronger labor movement—was Highlander Folk School. This interracial labor school in rural Monteagle, Tennessee, had already "trained thousands of CIO members in trade union philosophy and action," and would become a major contributor to training civil rights activists in the next two decades.[72]

The initial results of the drive were mixed. Chief among the success stories was the growth of the FTA, which continued the work that started with UCAPAWA. "The FTA," Honey writes, "expanded the CIO's organizing among the poorest and most neglected southern workers" in the tobacco and cotton textile industries, most of whom were Black. Of all the CIO unions in the South, the FTA "created the most dynamic postwar movement in the CIO." It not only recruited thousands of Black workers by advancing a message of "civil rights unionism," but it also enabled Black organizers to advance into leadership positions.[73] After successfully organizing the R. J. Reynolds plant in Winston-Salem, Moranda Smith, one of the strike leaders who moved up the ranks of the FTA, became the southern Regional Director of the union. This was, according to historian Barbara Griffith, "the highest position any [B]lack woman held up to that time in the American labor movement." The FTA also helped to introduce integrated picket lines during Operation Dixie, the roots of which Griffith traces back to the Charleston Cigar Factory strike, noting, "The possibilities for overcoming entrenched racial custom afforded by such efforts were vividly revealed in 1946 at the American Tobacco Company in Charleston, South Carolina."[74]

Because the long history of social and political inequality along racial lines was reinforced by economic inequality, emerging Black civil rights activists continued to advance labor rights and expected the labor movement to reciprocate. For the CIO to have any chance of successfully organizing the South, it needed the

[71] Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor*, xiii.
[72] Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing," 219.
[73] Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing," 228.
[74] Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor*, 81.

support of Black workers and thus had to demonstrate strong support for civil rights.[75] Politically progressive organizers made more of an effort to organize Black workers than politically conservative union members in the South, and the same held true on the larger scale: the more politically progressive CIO did more to organize Black workers than the conservative AFL. Unlike the CIO, the AFL followed a policy of "local autonomy" wherein local organizers would avoid organizing racially mixed or all-Black workforces, such that it was common knowledge that AFL unions were White unions.[76] This was the primary reasons why Black workers at the Charleston Cigar Factory voted to join the CIO rather than stay in the AFL Tobacco Workers Union. On the surface at least, CIO leaders recognized that the union's position on racial equality set it apart from the AFL, and they used this to their advantage. They sold Operation Dixie as more than just a drive for labor rights, but rather "as a crusade against poverty, racism, and bigotry," even if their actions on the whole failed to live up to that description.[77]

Despite the FTA's successes in organizing low-wage southern workers, trouble loomed on the horizon for it and other leftwing unions. The relationship between organized labor and the federal government had become more strained during the outset of the more conservative, or at least less-liberal Truman administration, but the Republican sweep of the congressional election of 1946, truly signaled the end of "federal support for southern labor organizing." Conservative media, business groups, and elected officials began a barrage of antiunion messaging, which often linked unionism to Communism in the wake of the postwar wildcat strike wave—a tactic that had helped propel Republicans into office. This was a marked turn from the New Deal and World War II era when the president and Congress were at least sympathetic to the cause of organized labor.[78] Events in the larger labor movement in the years immediately following the strike effectively ended the very things that made the Cigar Factory strike not only noteworthy, but also possible. Chief among these was the passage of the antiunion Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. Section 14b of the Act enabled states to outlaw union shops, which stymied any gains the CIO had made in organizing food processing and other low-wage industries in the South. It also forbade secondary boycotts and mass picketing, which effectively ended a major organizing strategy wherein large unions could deploy their "organizational muscle" to aid weaker unions such as those in retail and agriculture.[79] These were two strategies that the FTA had relied on during the Cigar Factory strike.

Attacks against the CIO—and the FTA in particular—also came from within the labor movement. In their competition with the CIO, the AFL announced its own organizing drive in the South and even tried to reach out to Black workers. But one of the AFL's primary strategies was to attack CIO unions that had Black leaders, like the FTA, as being Communist sympathizers in order to make inroads with southern White workers. When William Green announced the AFL's retaliatory campaign in Asheville, North Carolina, he stated "Let me give southern industry this warning—grow and cooperate with us or fight for your life against Communist forces."[80] For many Black workers who did not care if a union was literally or ideologically connected to the CPUSA, the AFL's red-baiting tactic failed, but it was successful in steering White workers away from CIO unions. Anticommunist propaganda in the South emphasized the CPUSA's advocacy of integration and Black civil rights such that by being explicitly anticommunist, many White workers came to see the AFL as a conservative

[75] Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing," 221-22; "Labor Drives South" *Fortune* (Nov. 1946), 230, Folder 11, Box 1, CIO Magazine Articles, Georgia State University Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

[76] Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor*, 67-8. One exception to this were International Longshoremen Associations (ILA-AFL). In cities like Mobile, Alabama and Charleston, Black longshoremen organized ILA locals in the late nineteenth century. They continued to support these locals throughout the twentieth century, even favoring them against the interracial NMU-CIO.

[77] Honey, "Operation Dixie," 445.

[78] Honey, "Operation Dixie," 224.

[79] Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO In World War II* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 239.

[80] "Labor Drives South," 229.

segregationist organization and favored it as such.[81]

Perhaps seeing how antiunion (and union) forces wielded the charge of Communist sympathizing against the CIO, the leaders of Operation Dixie focused on hiring southern organizers—and preferably World War II veterans—to stymie any charges that they were un-American and/or outside agitators. For instance, in June 1946, CIO leaders announced that as part of the southern organizing campaign, six organizers, three of whom were Black, were assigned to the Wilson-Rocky Mount area of eastern North Carolina to organize approximately fifty thousand Black tobacco workers in cooperation with the FTA. R. C. Thomas, "formerly of Erwin," a town not far away, was assigned to lead the organizing effort—illustrating the emphasis on selecting local leaders. The three Black organizers included William Deberry (who organized R. J. Reynolds's plant in Winston-Salem among others) and Elijah Jackson (an organizer with the Shipbuilding Workers Union who had experience organizing southern shipyards).[82] This was replicated throughout the region, and the tactic was well-known; according to one contemporary observer, it was "no accident" that most of the 350 hired organizers were southerners and 95 percent were war veterans.[83]

Despite these efforts, the CIO could not fend off the accusations of Communist infiltration, and the escalation of anticommunist rhetoric during the burgeoning Cold War factored decisively into the fracturing of the CIO in general and the downfall of Operation Dixie specifically. One of the cornerstones of the campaign was the alignment with sympathetic groups in the South, including Highlander and the SCHW, and conservative southern Democrats made it a mission to convince voters that both were Communist-run and thus subversive organizations that supported integration. The CIO, at least initially, defended them. Unionists—both White and Black—saw the red baiting of these groups for what it was: a tactic to divide and crush the labor movement. But the effects of this campaign were brutal, as rightwing organizations like the KKK intimidated, beat, and even murdered organizers and striking workers throughout the region.[84]

Although historians disagree about exactly why or precisely when it happened, the CIO itself began to embrace a rhetoric of anticommunism. This was devastating to many who had supported the CIO from its inception, but it was especially detrimental to the cause of organizing in the South—particularly organizing Black workers. According to Michael Honey, Van Bittner, the leader of Operation Dixie and head of the Southern Organizing Committee (SOC), was an avowed anticommunist who essentially barred leftists and excluded Black organizers from key leadership positions in the operation—both of which were the strongest supporters for interracial unionism and advancing civil rights in the region. Bittner also called for southern organizers to sever connections to the CIO Political Action Committees, which had a strong degree of Communist involvement. Rather than engage in social issues, the southern organizers were to remain solely focused on bread-and-butter issues of "wages, hours, and working conditions." Even contemporary observers noted that Bittner was a "practical" man, meaning that he eschewed idealism. According to one journalist, "Men like Bittner believed in the economic approach rather than the approach of idealism. They believe that the question 'You want your pay raised, don't you?' is a more effective gambit than a long talk about human equality and idealism."[85] In the South as in the North, however, racial inequality was inextricably linked to economic inequality, and to ignore race in favor of economics meant losing out on both.

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[81] Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing," 223.

[82] *The Greenville News*, Greenville, South Carolina, 20 June 1946, Page 5; *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, North Carolina, 20 Jun 1946, Page 1.

[83] Milton MacKaye, "The CIO Invades Dixie," *Saturday Evening Post* (20 July 1946) 12, Folder 11, Box 1, CIO Magazine Articles, Georgia State University Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

[84] Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing," 220, 224-25.

[85] MacKaye, "The CIO Invades Dixie," 12.

Regardless of any potential fallout from his actions, Bittner turned against any individual or group that advocated for civil and labor rights. Bittner made enemies with the left in the CIO for actions like "disavow[ing] a New York movement calling itself Help Organize the South," which had Adam Clayton Powell as chairman;[86] and when unions like the FTA continued to push for civil rights, SOC officials accused them of undermining the organizing drive. At the CIO convention in 1946, during the first year of the campaign, Bittner went so far as to attack former allies by publicly excoriating the SCHW for "living off the CIO." By severing ties with any politically progressive group for fear of seeming soft on communism, the CIO cut itself off from its support network in the region, which also "alienated and marginalized potential African American recruits," according to Honey.[87] While the FTA cautiously continued to support the organizing drive, they became one of the first victims of the Red Scare in the labor movement.

In 1948, the CIO voted to expel eleven leftwing unions, including the FTA, which had been a bulwark of "interracial southern organizing since the 1930s."[88] The ejection of Communist organizers and left-wing unions like the FTA irrevocably altered the CIO. This was not, historian Nelson Lichtenstein explains, because Communists would have been able to take over leadership of the CIO, but rather because the expulsion ousted "several hundred thousand workers," thus splitting and weakening the industrial union movement that the CIO represented. It also severely damaged the organizing efforts in industries where those unions had gained traction and "foreclosed the possibility of a militant organizing drive in the South."[89] Operation Dixie, though largely moribund by the end of 1946, continued to limp along until it was finally terminated in 1953.

"We Shall Overcome"

As labor historians have noted, the Charleston Cigar Factory strike was a precursor for Operation Dixie, and its affiliation with a union that lay at the heart of the campaign (before becoming a victim of the Red Scare) made this strike a significant moment on the timeline of the national labor movement in the 1940s and the overall history of the CIO. But this was not the strike's only national legacy. In one more respect, the Charleston participants of the Cigar Factory Strike helped to shape the culture of both the labor movement and the civil rights movement—further illustrating the intersection of these two movements—through song.

Before the modern phase of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 60s, a period of activism in which music was an integral tool for alleviating fears and sustaining morale among activists, music had served an important role in labor activism.[90] Religious music, for instance, was integral to Black organizing efforts in the South. This is unsurprising, given that Black church leaders often played important roles in civil rights and labor activism. This does not just include high profile figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph Abernathy; regular community members who served in leadership roles in smaller churches like Morris Brown AME church in Charleston played pivotal roles in advancing these movements. Furthermore, the churches themselves became important venues for musicians who adapted well-known religious songs into tools for other struggles, including labor activism. In Birmingham, for instance, Black male workers formed quartets in which they sang religious songs imbued with pro-union messages in addition to explicitly union songs. During a two-month work stoppage in the Birmingham coal district in 1908 over proposed wage cuts, Black and White members of the United Mine Workers sang "I'll Overcome Someday." Written by Reverend Charles Albert Tindley in 1900, the song was illustrative of much of Tindley's canon, which included songs that often spoke to the concerns and

[86] MacKaye, "The CIO Invades Dixie," 12.
[87] Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing," 226-27.
[88] Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor*, 232.
[89] Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home*, 239.
[90] Guy Carawan and Candie Carawan, *Sing for Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs*, Smithsonian Folkways, 1990.

struggles of Black Americans and could be easily adapted "into mobilizing texts for social or political issues." Tindley's songs, such as "I'll Overcome Someday," often included choruses that promoted congregational participation—a necessary feature for any song sung on a picket line.[91] This song would serve a similar role in the Charleston Cigar Factory strike.[92]

When reflecting on the significance of "I'll Overcome Someday," Janie Hunter, a resident of nearby Johns Island, recounted: "I've been singing that song for a very long time…It is an old song from generation to generation. My father and mother sang that song. It is a [B]lack song. They didn't learn the song from the books; they learned it from the old people."[93] Much like the workers in local industries like the Cigar Factory, the song moved from the rural area of Johns Island before making its way into the urban strike zone. It was during the strike that workers adapted the lyrics to reflect and strengthen the solidarity of the picket line by changing the lyrics from "I will overcome" to "We will overcome."[94]

"Charleston," according to Shana Redmond, "was nestled in an area of the country where labor radicalism and Black music culture converged."[95] The most powerful illustration of this nexus, Redmond argues, was the music of the picket line of the Cigar Factory strike, particularly the collective singing of "We Will Overcome." Lillie Mae Doster, a picket line captain, described the importance of the song for the striking women as follows:

> It was a nasty strike, through five and a half months of a rough, rainy and cold winter. It began with 500 to 600 people, mostly Negroes, picketing every day from 7:30 in the morning 'till 6:30 at night. Eventually people got tired and morale became low…To keep up morale, the remaining pickets would 'sing themselves away' some days. We sang, "I'll be all right…we will win our rights…we will win this fight…we will organize…we will overcome." We sang it with a clap and a shout until sometimes the cops would quiet us down.[96]

Several strike veterans specifically credit Lucille Simmons as the "picket line architect" for "We Will Overcome" and possibly for teaching it to others at Highlander. Doster, for instance, recounted how Simmons rallied the women with this song in particular, noting:

> Lucille, every afternoon when the strike was over…would sing—she used to sing in the Jerusalem Baptist Church choir. She liked to sing. But every afternoon, and we used to fuss with Lucille. We would complain. We'd be out there all dead. Lucille would come out there in the afternoon…a half hour

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[91] Redmond, *Anthem*, 143, 147, 150; Ethan J. Kytle and Blain Roberts, "Birth of a Freedom Anthem," *New York Times* (14 March 2015), SR p. 5; see also Ethan J. Kytle and Blain Roberts, *Denmark Vesey's Garden: Slavery and Memory in the Cradle of the Confederacy* (New Press), 259-91.

[92] Another important property associated with the song and Tindley is his church in Philadelphia, known as Calvary United Methodist Church during his life. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2011 at a national level of significance under its current name. See Emily T. Cooperman, "Tindley Temple United Methodist Church," National Historic of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2011).

[93] Guy and Candie Carawan, "We Shall Overcome – An American Freedom Song" Talking Union, no 7, Aug 1983 (Draft June 1983), Folder: "Notes on "We Shall Overcome" (1945 Strike Song), South Carolina Historical Society, Addlestone Library, Charleston, SC.

[94] Redmond, *Anthem*, 148. Zilphia Horton, the music director at Highlander Folk School, became an avid fan of the song. Musician and activist Pete Seeger learned of it while attending a workshop at the school. He is largely credited for changing the lyrics from "will" to "shall." As Highlander became a civil rights training center, activists and workshop attendees including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. learned of the song. Guy Carawan, the music director after Horton, also played an important role in spreading the song, particularly among young activists during the early 1960s.

[95] Redmond, *Anthem*, 164.

[96] Carawan, "We Shall Overcome," 1.

before time to go home. Lucille would start singing. That's how it started, Lucille Simmons.

Even outside observers recognized how important music was to the strike effort. Almost three months into the strike, the police department issued an order for the singing to cease on the picket lines, an order that both the FTA and the NMU fought in court.[97]

According to FTA member Stephen Graham, "We Will Overcome" became the union's "theme song." Graham recollected, "As far as Charleston was concerned, we were the first to use it…We would meet at one house and someone would say, boy I don't know how we are going to make it but 'We'll overcome someday.'" The song became so important to the FTA directly because of the women who sang it during the Charleston strike. In 1946, after the strike, and again in 1947, strike veterans traveled to Monteagle, Tennessee, to participate in workshops at Highlander Folk School. There, they joined with FTA members around the country in these interracial meetings. Music was a key feature of the Highlander workshops, as the act of collective singing had long provided a means of generating solidarity in the labor movement. Furthermore, the songs shared at these workshops became, according to Redmond, "a form of oral history as the workers learned the context of the songs and took them back to their locals across the South."[98]

"We Will Overcome" is more than just a song that was sung on a picket line. Redmond argues that it qualifies as an anthem "precisely because it was tied to a movement for justice and fervently used by those most impacted as a method of protest at the site of struggle." The legacy of this song is yet another important outcome of the strike. Again, although the strikers did not win all, or even most, of their demands, the strike did not end in failure. As Redmond explains, "The Black women of labor created social justice on the lines where none existed in the factory." The songs they sang like "We Will Overcome" flowed out from the Eastside neighborhood of Charleston, "beyond the South, and into a movement that would radically change the political and social landscape of the nation and the world." [99] As a song adapted by Black activists challenging inequality in wages and job opportunities that fell along racial lines, "We Will Overcome," subsequently changed again to We Shall Overcome, was a cultural product created at the intersection of labor and civil rights activism. Indeed, it illustrates historian Peter Lau's claim that many of the "most promising" moments of both the Civil Rights Movement and the labor movement happened when the two came together, "forged alliances, and waged battles together."[100] This song is a powerful reminder of the struggle working people have waged and continues to be adapted by movements seeking justice and equality into the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

As the site of a five-month-long interracial strike, the Charleston Cigar Factory is exceptional for illustrating the demands for economic justice that lay at the heart of civil rights activism on the eve of, and during, the modern phase of the Civil Rights Movement. As the largest factory of three that were involved in the strike, this property illustrates the necessity labor organizers and activists saw in organizing southern workers, not only for

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[97] Redmond, *Anthem*, 164-65.

[98] Redmond, *Anthem*, 170, 172. Highlander Folk School Library Building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2022 at the national level of significance. See Philip Thomason, et. al., "Highlander Folk School Library Building," (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2022).

[99] Redmond, *Anthem*, 176-77. Veterans of the Cigar Factory strike taught the song to Zilphia Horton, the music director of Highlander, who turned the song into a staple of the collective singing, which was a critical aspect of Highlander workshops. It was there that Pete Seeger learned of the song and changed the "will" to "shall" to generate a more open vocalization. Although Seeger and Guy Carawan are known for spreading the song among civil rights activists, Redmond credits the Black women of the Charleston strike as the "central actors" in transforming the song from a "strike ballad into a civil rights anthem" (142).

[100] Lau, *Democracy Rising*, 145-46.

the region, but also for the nation as a whole and served as an immediate precursor to the CIO's southern organizing campaign., The fate of those involved in the strike, as members of FTA-CIO 15, also reveals the devastating effect that the Red Scare had on the labor movement generally and on the treatment of southern Black workers specifically. Finally, the striking workers at Charleston Cigar Factory transformed a song of Black struggles for labor and civil rights into an anthem that continues to inspire social justice activists around the world, further cementing the national significance of this site.

Comparison of Properties

Currently, there is no other National Historic Landmark that represents the 1945-46 strike wave or that specifically illustrates the intersection of the labor movement and Civil Rights Movement in the South.[101] Comparative analysis indicates that Charleston Cigar Factory is the most appropriate property to outstandingly illustrate this period and aspect of labor history. The following properties, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are associated with the American Cigar Factory Strike of 1945-46:

American Cigar Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (National Register (NR), 1984)
Located at 1135 Washington Avenue, this property is a contributing property to the Washington Avenue Factory District. Nominated for its architectural merit, no mention of the tobacco workers' strike from 1945-46 is provided in the National Register nomination. Although the East Coast strike originated at this site, there are few details about the events of strike activity at this location in the historical record. Furthermore, this location did not have a connection to the CIO's postwar southern organizing campaign and thus does not strongly illustrate the intersection of the labor movement and civil rights movement or the effects of the Red Scare on the labor movement.

American Cigar Company Building, Trenton, New Jersey (NR, 2011)
Established in 1902, the American Cigar Company Building in Trenton was the third location of the strike from 1945-46, and the second worksite to settle in April 1946. Nominated for its association with industrial architecture and American Movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, presumably the labor movement, the nomination details the work processes conducted there during the early twentieth century but does not reference the strike. This site also was not involved in the CIO's postwar southern campaign and thus does not illustrate the intersection of the labor and civil rights movements or the effects of the Red Scare on the labor movement, unlike the Charleston Cigar Factory.

R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company Factory Complex 64, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Although this property is not individually listed on the National Register, it is part of the Winston-Salem Tobacco Historic District (NR, 2009) and designated as a Local Historic Landmark (#126, 2012). Although it is not associated directly with the American Cigar Company Strike of 1945-46, this was another important site for organizing Black low-wage workers in the South into UCAPAWA/FTA. The success of a strike in 1943 led to the formation of FTA Local 22, which enabled the union to make stronger inroads organizing the predominantly Black, female workforce of tobacco plants, establishing a foundation that led to the organization of workers at the Charleston Cigar Factory.

Other National Register-listed properties of note that are associated with the labor and Civil Rights movements

[101] Nationally significant properties related to Mary McLeod Bethune can also be said to illustrate this labor/Civil Rights intersection, but the National Historic Landmark nomination for the Mary McLeod Bethune Home in Daytona Beach, FL (NHL 1974) does not dis this aspect of her career. Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site in Washington, DC is not an NHL but was added to the National Park system in 1995.

are Clayborn Temple AME (NR, 1979, 2018) and Rock of Ages Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (NR, 2017) in Memphis, Tennessee, for their associations with the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike, and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) Museum in Tyronza, Arkansas, which is located in the Mitchell-East Building in the Tyronza Commercial Historic District (NR, 2010). National register-listed properties associated with the song later famous as Civil Rights anthem “We Shall Overcome” include Tindley Temple United Methodist Church in Philadelphia, PA (NR, 2011) and Highlander Folk School Library in Monteagle, TN (NR, 2022).

6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

Ownership of Property	**Category of Property**
Private: X	Building(s): X
Public-Local:	District:
Public-State:	Site:
Public-Federal:	Structure:
	Object:

Number of Resources within Boundary of Property:

Contributing		**Noncontributing**
Buildings:	1	Buildings:
Sites:		Sites:
Structures:		Structures:
Objects:		Objects:
Total:	1	Total:

PROVIDE PRESENT AND PAST PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF PROPERTY
(Please see specific guidance for type of resource[s] being nominated)

The Charleston Cigar Factory is located in the Eastside neighborhood of downtown Charleston. The building fronts East Bay Street and is bounded by Columbus Street to the south, Drake Street to the west, and Blake Street to the north. The property is separated from East Bay Street by a surface parking lot spanning the width of the main building and its additions. Designed by Lockwood, Greene & Co. and constructed from 1881-1882, the original factory began as a textile mill before being repurposed as a cigar manufacturing plant in 1903.

As a former industrial property that is currently used as a commercial and educational facility, the factory underwent significant alterations in the 1930s, 1960s-1980s (with many alterations occurring in 1979), 2004, and again in 2013-15.[102] The latest phase of work on the property removed noncontributing exterior additions to the main building and rebuilt a small addition that was partially demolished. Previous alterations had removed all original windows, and the current property owners have since replaced all nonhistoric replacement windows and many brick infilled openings to restore the fenestration to original size. They also installed replacement windows designed to replicate the original fenestration based on an artistic rendering of the property from 1882; the current windows also match images of the windows during the period of significance for this nomination (1945-46). The infrastructure surrounding the site remains intact from the period of significance.

[102] During the 1960s, additions were made to the main structure to modernize the factory itself. During the 1970s and 80s, the property owner made further alterations to adapt the building for offices and classrooms. In 2007, former owners of the property began work to adapt the building for condominiums. The current owners, working with NPS and the South Carolina SHPO, continued the adaptive reuse of the property. Much of their work removed nonhistoric alterations to the building's exterior and renovating the interior and mechanical systems. It is currently used as a commercial property and houses the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at Clemson University.

Main (Mill) Building

The main factory building is a five-story, twenty-seven-bay structure (uninterrupted on the west façade) topped by a very shallow side gable roof. The main structure and six additions feature a 5:1 common bond. The original design intended the factory to be a four-story building, but because it is situated on soft, semi-marshy land, the building was constructed atop pilings driven into the ground that created a raised basement, adding another level to the structure.[103] Because the site slopes slightly from the west to east, there is a half-story difference between the west and east sides of the main building.[104]

The interior of the main mill building has undergone over forty years of alterations for reuse as classrooms, offices, condominiums, and retail spaces. In 2013, just prior to the current phase of adaptive reuse, the interior was largely open space with metal-bracketed heavy timber columns supporting exposed timber framing. The floor was poured concrete dating back to the period of ownership by the American Tobacco Company. In 2004, the previous owners removed nonhistoric features including dropped ceilings and air-handling systems.[105] For the property's adaptive reuse as retail space, new partition walls situated between the windows have been added on the first floor. Another new feature is a lobby space with an elevator stack in the center of the building, close to the central tower. The elevator floor openings were created during a prior phase of adaptive reuse.

The second floor has been divided into office space for a single tenant (currently it houses the Clemson University Historic Preservation Program). Wood flooring from 1950 was installed atop original wood flooring. The current owners took care to use existing door openings wherever possible to minimize new openings cut into historic walls; only two—one on the north end and one on the south end—were added to improve mobility around the floor. The existing stairwells in the northeast and southeast corners were retained, with a new stairway installed near the new elevator shaft. All ceilings remain exposed in corridor areas, and the perimeter walls have been left in an unfinished state. The floors have been covered by a thin layer of concrete topped by a new layer of wood flooring. The floor and wall treatments for the third, fourth, and fifth floors are the same. These floors are partitioned for office space as well. The current owners also replaced the roof of the main building.

East (Front) Façade

The east-facing front façade is divided by a single-bay tower extending one story above the roofline of the building. As was common for mills of the era, the architects oriented the rest of the structure around this tower, which initially held an elevator and water closets.[106] In the tower there are fourteen segmental arched, double-paned, sash windows (nine lights per sash), with the upper-most window opening bricked over (this appears to have been done at the time of construction). The windows are situated within a wide blind arch, and each window opening is topped by a triple-row brick arch. Narrow decorative blind arches line the north and south sides of the tower. The overhanging eaves of the low pyramidal roof are supported by brackets situated atop a brick entablature featuring a double-row cornice line with a frieze and triple-row architrave, displaying

[103] Susan Millar Williams, Charleston's Cotton Factory, 1880-1900, Lowcountry Digital History Exhibit, "Building the Factory, 1881-1882" https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/charlestons-cotton-factory/building-the-factory--1881-82.

[104] "National Park Service Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 2 – Phase 1," prepared by MacRostie Historic Advisors LLC (September 2013), 32.

[105] "National Park Service Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 2 – Phase 1," 10. All information on interior space prior to the current renovations are culled from this application.

[106] Williams, "Building the Factory, 1881-1882"; National Register form, 2. The nomination form also mentions a windowless, four-story addition to the water tower. This noncontributing feature had subsequently been removed.

elements of Italianate design adapted to industrial buildings.[107]

The rest of the east façade mirrors the design of the tower. The windows on the front façade are the same 1:1 sash, with nine lights per sash, each topped by a three-row segmental arch in a header bond and a header sill below. The southern-most first- and second-floor windows are bricked over.[108] Each vertical row of windows is slightly recessed, with blind arches flanking the north and south sides of the east façade. These shallow arches, the depth of a brick line, add visual appeal to the otherwise unadorned exterior of the building. A flat, metal awning spanning either side of the entrance overhangs the ground floor of the building, providing signage for the businesses occupied therein. Six window openings on this level have been converted to entryways for tenants, with doorways matching the rest of the fenestration. Because the door openings are the same size, shape, and style as the window openings on the ground level, this alteration did not diminish the original architectural design.

South (Side) Façade
The south façade does not feature the entablature of the east façade, although it does have similar blind arches flanking the east and west sides. The three western-most bays on each floor remain bricked-over to accommodate a staircase that had been installed behind them. During the renovations completed in 2015, the owners installed a low brick wall featuring two gated entryways to a parking area and one pedestrian gate. This wall separates the property from the adjacent sidewalk.

North (Side) Façade
Ten windows on the north façade of the main factory building were bricked over during a prior period and remain so. The remaining fenestration matches that of the rest of the property. Previous owners demolished a loading ramp on the northwest corner constructed in 1975.[109]

Between 1886 and 1889, a two-story, eight-bay addition, topped with a flat roof, was constructed on the north side of the main mill building. A metal staircase leads down from a replacement metal door (which itself is topped by a small, double-paned window) cut into a bricked-over window opening on the east side. All fenestration matches the rest of the main building, although the second window in from the east side retains brick infill from an undated period. A narrow parking lot separates this side of the building from the sidewalk adjacent to Blake Street. Several frame dwellings present in 1944 have been removed, replaced by the current surface parking lot.

Prior to recent renovations the interior of the building was primarily open space, with exposed timber framing supported by a series of timber columns. The floor was concrete and the ceiling was finished with beadboard. The interior retains these features and remains largely unpartitioned, except for a partition on the east side creating a corridor and space for bathrooms and mechanical equipment.

West (Rear) Façade
The uninterrupted twenty-seven bay façade features fenestration matching the rest of the property, with the ground floor half-windows retaining brick infill from an undated period (these openings illustrate the half-story difference from the front (east) façade). A fire escape that was noted in the National Register nomination has

[107] During the early 1960s, the American Tobacco Company constructed a steel frame addition to the north side of the tower. A matching addition was constructed on the south side sometime thereafter. These noncontributing factors have since been removed.
[108] The variation in the bricks as well as the brick bonds indicates that the southern-most window openings on the first and second floors were bricked over at a later date rather than structured as blind arches at the date of construction.
[109] "National Park Service Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 2 – Phase 1," 2.

been removed. The window openings on the south and north sides of the first floor remain bricked over. Historic doorways on the north and south sides now feature replacement metal fire doors that open to concrete staircases leading to short walkways that connect to the sidewalk adjacent to the property. On the west façade of the northern addition, the second floor features the only fenestration. Nine windows match the fenestration of the rest of the building, and a new doorway has been cut into a center window opening with a concrete staircase leading to the sidewalk. Two semi-enclosed low brick walls flank either side of the staircase.

Additions

Connected to the main building on the north end are two brick masonry structures that were former engine houses, both of which are two-story brick masonry buildings topped by almost flat roofs. The engine houses were constructed in phases between 1881 and 1904. All visible fenestration is on the south side, with the windows on the second floor being taller and thinner than the segmented arch windows on the first floor. The roofline on the southern structure features a parapet uncharacteristic of the rest of the property. In 1944, according to Sanborn maps, this building had been repurposed as a scrap room. Situated in front of the former engine room on the northern side is a square brick smokestack that tapers at the top. The former engine room on the south side connects the main building to another masonry structure of similar design that previously served as a boiler house.[110] This two-story, four-bay building is topped by a very shallow gable roof. All fenestration is the same as the rest of the main building, but two storefront entrances have been cut into what had originally been arched loading entrances.

The interior space of the engine houses was open with a brick wall running east-west through the structure, presumably separating them into two rooms. A door was cut into a former window opening of the north wall to facilitate entry into the adjoining "Building 8." All heavy timber columns remain intact, as do the historic beadboard ceilings of the boiler room.

In 1935, the American Tobacco Company constructed another addition, referred to as "Building 8." This two-story brick masonry building topped by a flat roof adjoins the north addition of the main building, extending that façade by eight bays. It also connects to the former engine room on the north side, extending past it on the front (east) side. There is no fenestration on the first floor of the north façade, but the fenestration on the second floor matches the segmented arch window openings of the rest of the property, as does the fenestration on the first and second floors of the east façade . The east façade features a bracketed metal awning between the first and second floors, stylistically similar to that of the main building. In 2013, the interior of the space was open with visible timber framing supported by square timber columns.[111] The space was left largely unpartitioned and the heavy timber columns retained.

On the south side of the main building is another two-story brick masonry structure, attached to the main mill building by a two-story, single-bay connector. The seven-bay addition was originally constructed as a picker house when the factory operated as a cotton mill but then served as a tobacco drying room during the period when the site operated as a cigar factory. The north façade features an absence of fenestration on the first floor, although a segmented arched doorway topped by a bracketed metal awning now leads into the ground floor of the building. The eastern-most window opening on the second floor of the north façade remains bricked-over. The concrete staircase leading to the second floor on the east façade, a replacement from the renovations in 2013, is situated in the same location and with the same orientation as an original staircase (see illustration). This façade features a new doorway cut into the ground floor along with three short, wide window openings,

[110] W. David Chamberlain, "Cigar Factory," National Register (1980): 3.
[111] "NPS, HPCA Part 1, Cigar Factory/Charleston Manufacturing Company," 4.

each featuring a set of six-pane, side-by-side, fixed windows. As with the other additions, both floors of the picker house were largely open space with exposed beams and heavy timber columns supporting the ceilings. All ceilings and timber framing remain exposed on the second level but were repainted; the existing beadboard ceilings on the first floor were retained and repainted.

Connected to the northwest corner of the former picker house/tobacco drying room and the south side of the main building was a former office that the American Tobacco Company also constructed in 1935. This two-story building was partially demolished prior to 2013. All interior features along with the roof were destroyed, leaving only the exterior walls and window openings (which had been bricked over with small replacement openings cut in the centers of each). The current property owners reconstructed the roof and included matching fenestration.[112] On the west façade, two of the three window openings remain bricked over and a door opening has been cut into the southern-most one. In it, a replacement metal door opens to a concrete staircase leading directly to the sidewalk adjacent to Drake Street.

Non-Extant Property Features

A wood-frame tobacco storage shed, constructed in 1907, adjacent to Columbus Street and East Bay Street is no longer extant. A twenty-foot-high suction tank on the northern end of the property has also been removed, as has a thirty-five-foot-high concrete water tank, located adjacent to a cinderblock conditioning room that was formerly attached to the north end of the tobacco drying room (see below). A metal-clad frame fuminator adjacent to the central tower on the north side and a twenty-foot concrete suction tank situated to the northeast of the property pictured on the 1946 Sanborn map are also no longer extant.

Integrity

The Charleston Cigar Factory maintains overall high integrity through its location, setting, materials, workmanship, and association to convey the nationally significant history of the 1945-46 strike. Even though this industrial property underwent several decades of alterations, recent improvements have now removed many incompatible and noncontributing features. The property still has a strong degree of integrity of design workmanship, and feeling that contribute to the assessment of overall high integrity to the period of significance for the strike.

Location: The Charleston Cigar Factory is situated on the original property, with the main mill building and all associated additions from the period of significance remaining extant. It is bounded by all streets from its period of construction, and little has changed in terms of its orientation to the surrounding urban infrastructure.

Setting: The Charleston Cigar Factory property retains almost all of its surrounding setting from 1945-46 in relation to streets, sidewalks, and other elements of urban infrastructure, although outbuildings associated with the manufacturing of cigars, along with former rail tracks, were removed during the different phases of the adaptive reuse of the property. Frame dwellings that were adjacent to the property on Drake Street to the north and Columbus Street to the South, as noted in the 1944 Sanborn map, have also since been removed.

Design: The orignial exterior design of the factory from its period of significance remains remarkably intact

[112] Richard Sidebottom, "The Cigar Factory/Charleston Manufacturing Company Historic Preservation Certification Application, Part 2: Description of Rehabilitation" (17 September 2013), 6. Because this small addition located at the rear and side of the main mill building represents a small portion of the property and its extant historic fabric, NHL Criteria Exception 6 (reconstructed properties) does not apply.

regarding the main mill and additions. Recent renovations to the main mill and additions removed nonhistoric exterior features, restoring the buildings' facades to their historic appearance. However, because the property currently operates as an educational and commercial facility, the interior spatial arrangements have changed to suit contemporary uses. Notably, some areas of open space have been subdivided to accommodate different commercial tenants, as is typical for adaptive reuse of factory buildings. At the same time, the renovations also removed nonhistoric interior features such as drop ceilings, restoring the visible girders and flooring common among mills of slow-burn heavy timber construction of the late nineteenth century.

Materials: The Charleston Cigar Factory retains the original brick in the main mill building and additions (only the small office addition has been partially rebuilt with new materials mimicking the original brick). At some point during its operation of the facility, the American Cigar Company poured concrete floors over the original wood (see historic images). This has been replaced in sections, along with damaged subflooring, during the recent renovations. Nondamaged original framing materials remain intact.

Workmanship: The main mill and additions of the Charleston Cigar Factory property retain many of the key features of slow-burn heavy timber mill construction of the late nineteenth century. The flooring below each floor remains exposed and visible from below due to a lack of ceilings. The side gable roofline—shallow to the extent that it is almost flat—is retained and the roof was resheathed with new materials in 2013. Original chamfered structural posts are also still visible. Recent alterations attempted to mimic original styles, particularly regarding replacement wood fenestration. Some windows on the first floor have also been replaced with entry doors for the different commercial spaces, but the door frames remain the same size and scale as the surrounding fenestration. Elsewhere recent renovations restored the original fenestration pattern through reopening bricked-in windows and replacing nonhistoric window frames with appropriate reproductions.

Feeling: Beginning in the 1960s, the Charleston Cigar Factory property underwent a series of alterations as the American Cigar Company adapted to changing technologies of cigar production. The changes to the buildings and surrounding property continued as the site served various nonindustrial uses in the period from 1973 to the present day. During the latest phase of renovations (completed in 2015) many nonhistorical features were removed, reestablishing an high level of feeling in relation to the property's period of significance, particularly as experienced on the exterior. Partitions have been added in the interior to create separate commercial spaces on the first floor, which has altered the interior space from its period of significance as a cigar factory.

Association: As the primary property associated with nationally significant historic event of the October 1945 to March 1946 FTA strike, Charleston Cigar Factory retains a very high degree of association. Location of the picket line on the sidewalks importantly extends the historical association to the exterior setting of the property. Because work conditions inside the factory spurred the work stoppage, it is also important that the main mill—where the strikers labored—remains intact. The loss of outbuildings does not significantly affect the historical association of this property with the strike.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

_X_ Previously listed in the National Register (fill in 1 through 6 below)
__ Not previously listed in the National Register (fill in **only** 4, 5, and 6 below)

1. NR #: 80003658
2. Date of listing: 11/25/1980
3. Level of significance: Local
4. Applicable National Register Criteria: A_X_ B__ C_X_ D__
5. Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__
6. Areas of Significance: Architecture and Industry

__ Previously Determined Eligible for the National Register: Date of determination:
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark: Date of designation:
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: HABS No.
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: HAER No.
__ Recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey: HALS No.

Location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office: X
Other State Agency:
Federal Agency:
Local Government:
University: X
Other (Specify Repository):

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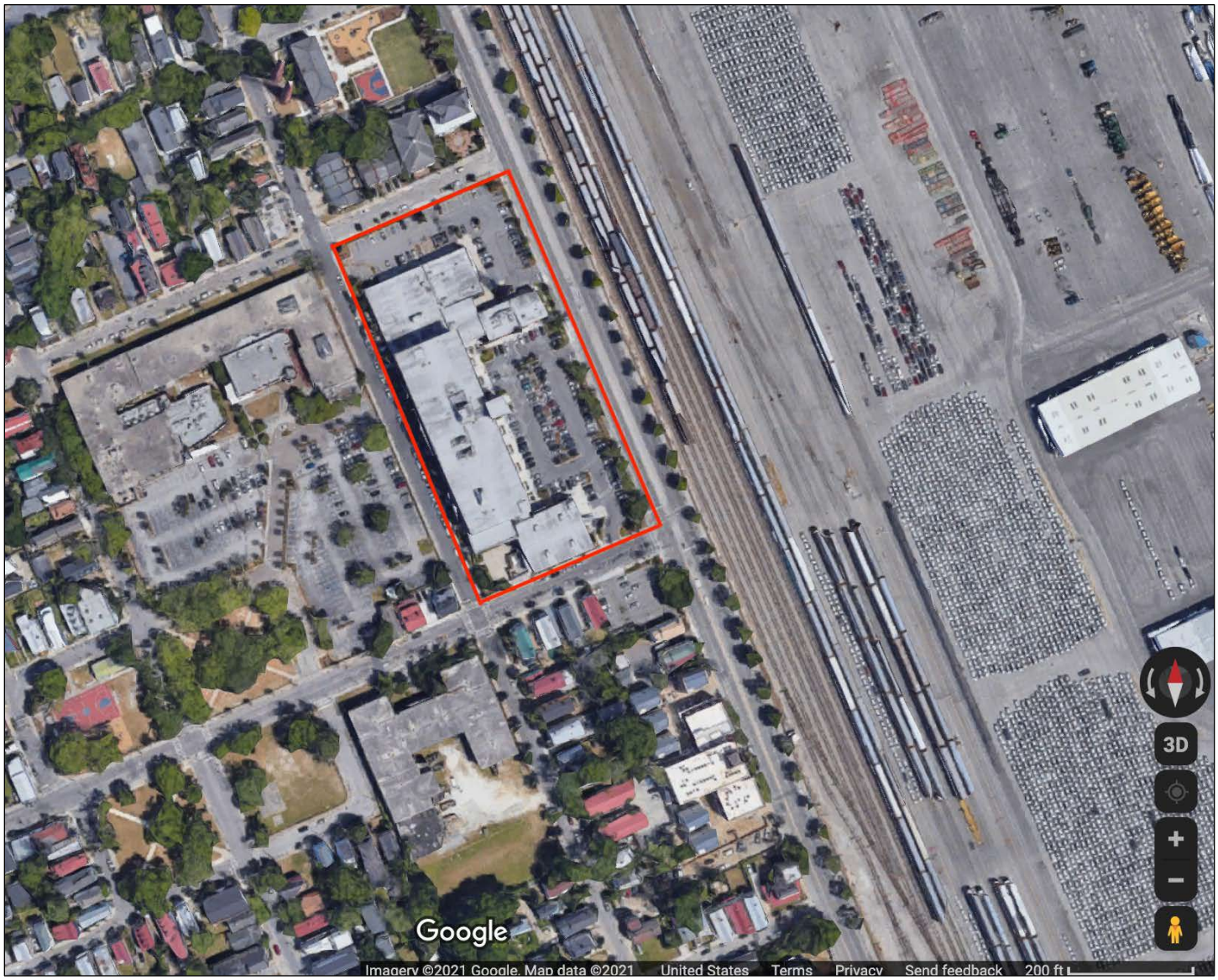
FIGURES

Figure 1. Charleston Cigar Factory with proposed NHL boundary in red. Charleston Mapnet, https://gis.charleston-sc.gov/interactive/mapnet/.



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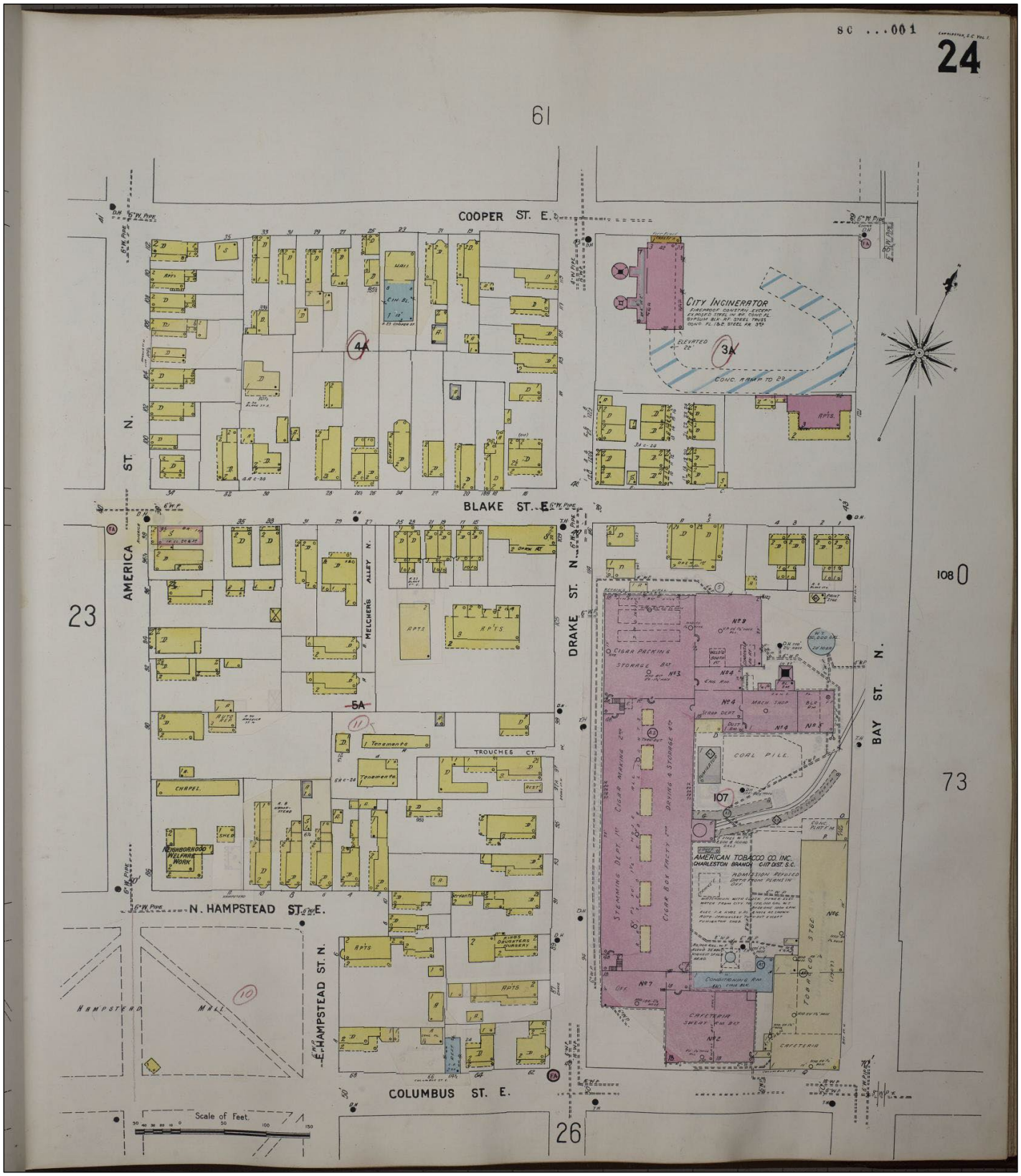

Figure 3. Charleston Cigar Factory, 701 East Bay Street. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina*. Sanborn Map Company, 1902 - Feb.1951 Vol. 1, 1951. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08124-006/.

Figure 4. Artistic rendering of the Charleston Cotton Mill shortly after construction was completed. *Charleston News & Courier*, public domain, December 29, 1882.

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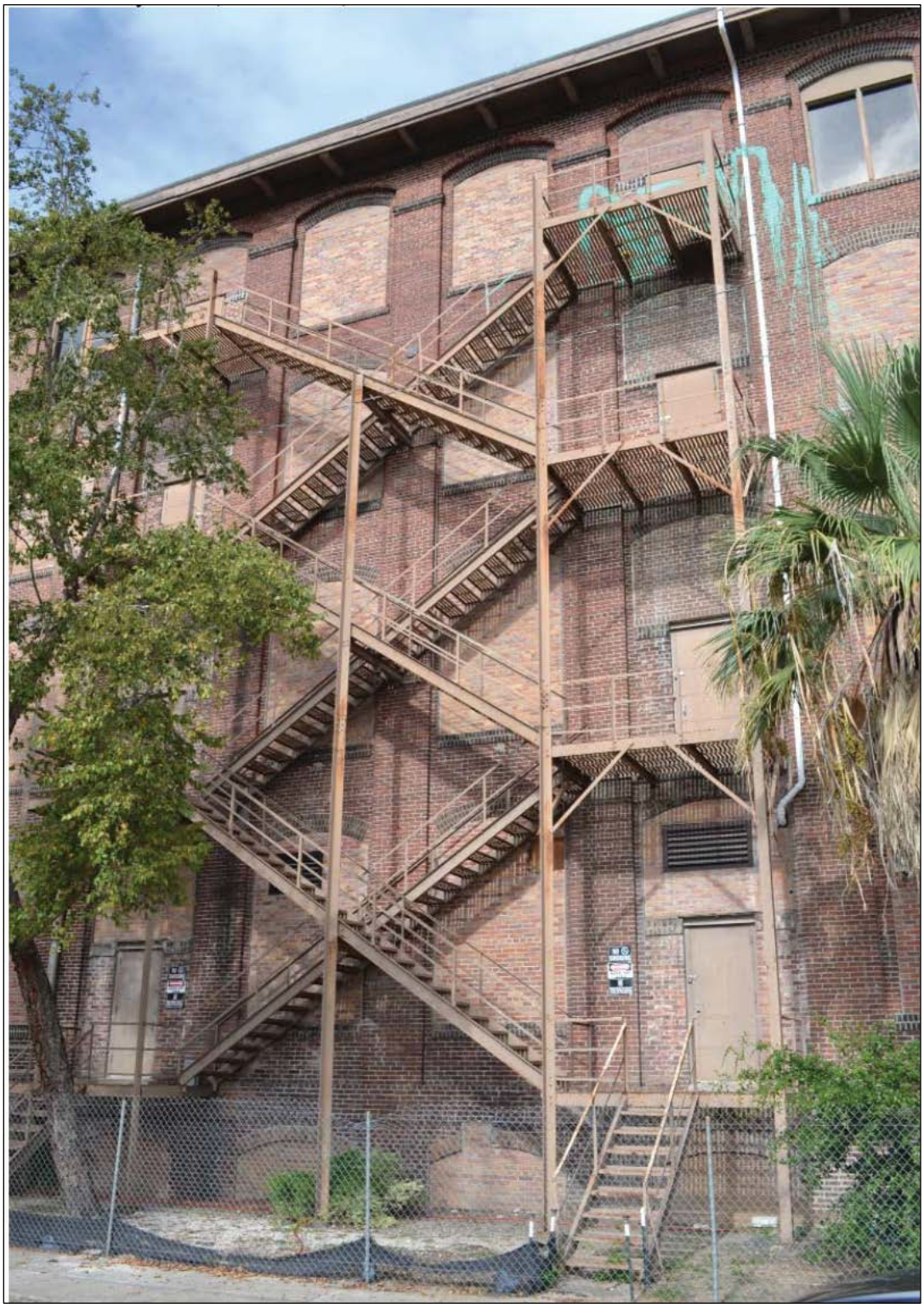
Figure 8. Charleston Cigar Factory, 2013. Image courtesy of Wecco Development, LLC.

Figure 9. Main Mill, central tower, 2007. Image courtesy of Wecco Development, LLC.



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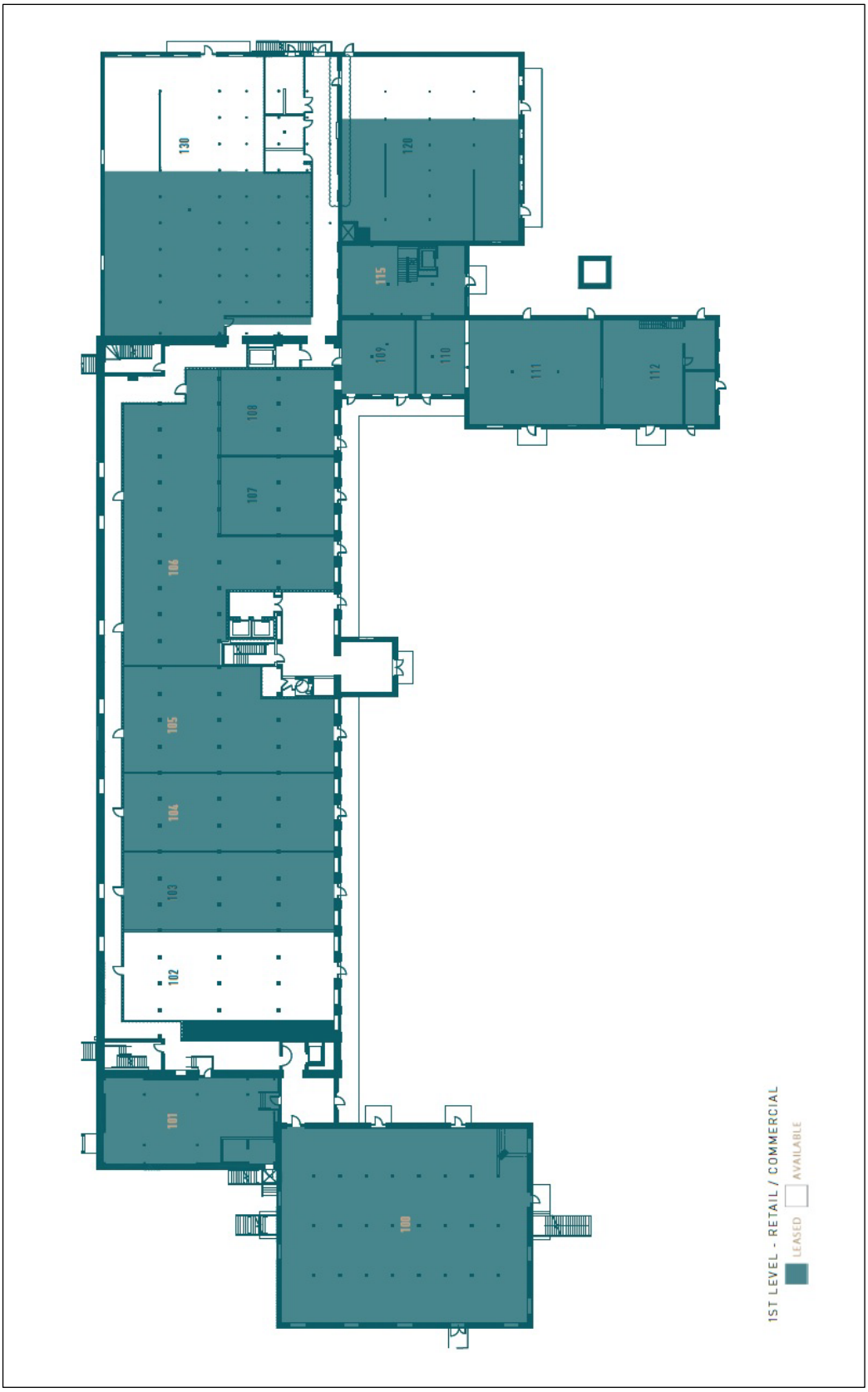

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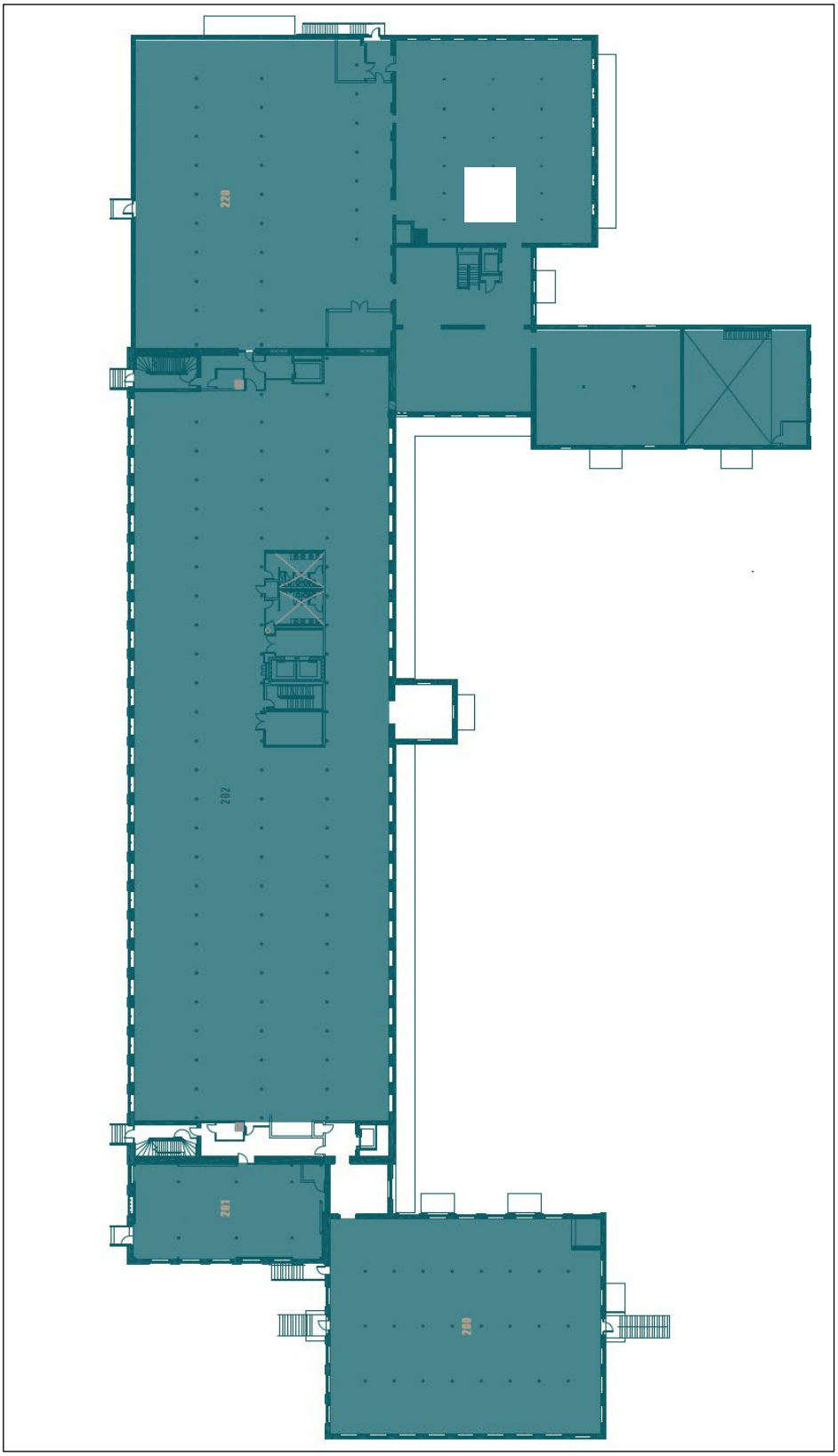

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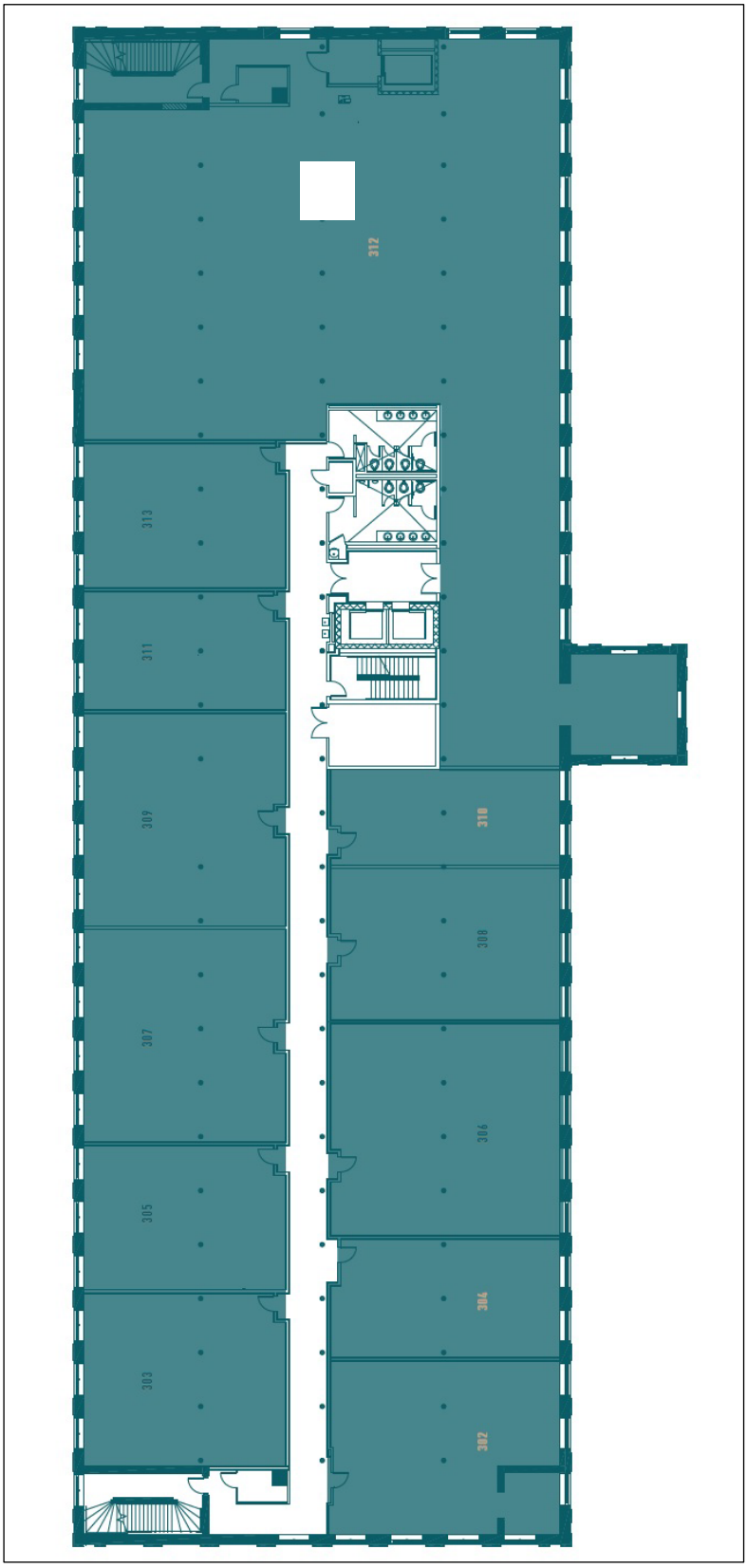

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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Name of Property: Charleston Cigar Factory
City or Vicinity: Charleston
County: Charleston County
State: South Carolina
Photographer: Rachel Donaldson (author) and Wecco Development, LLC
Date: As indicated

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Photo 3: Hyphen to former Picker House. Photograph by Rachel Donaldson, November 22, 2021.

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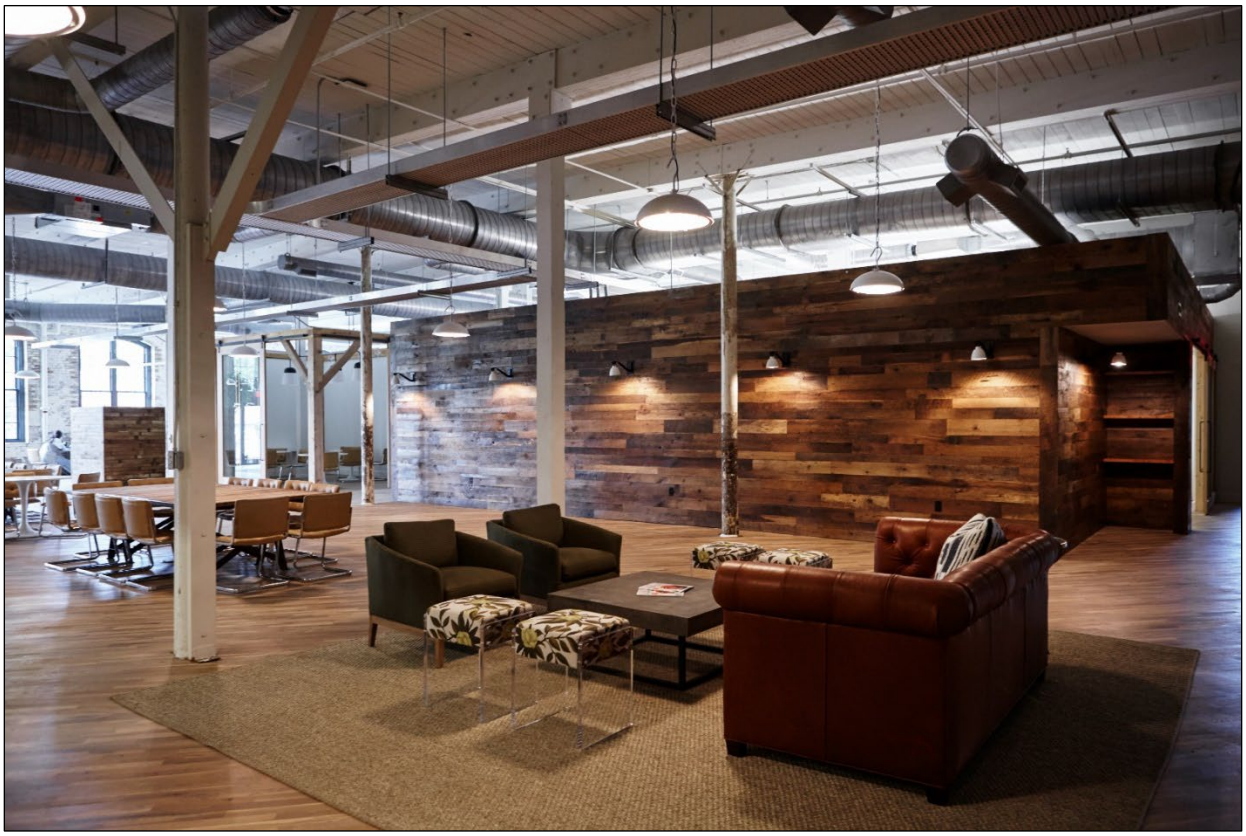
Photo 21: First floor, Main Mill, looking south. Note the chamfered post corners and absence of a ceiling, both elements of slow-burn mill construction. Photograph by Wecco Development, LLC, 2013.



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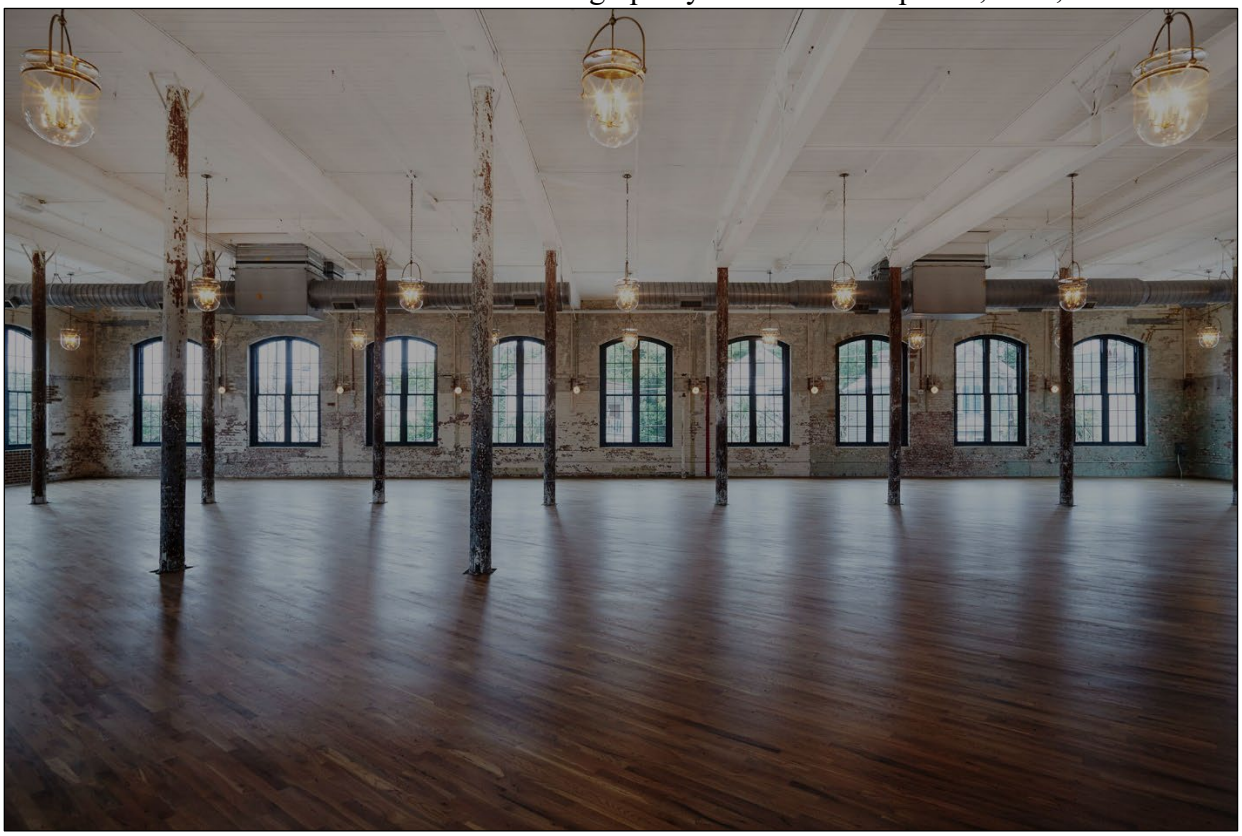

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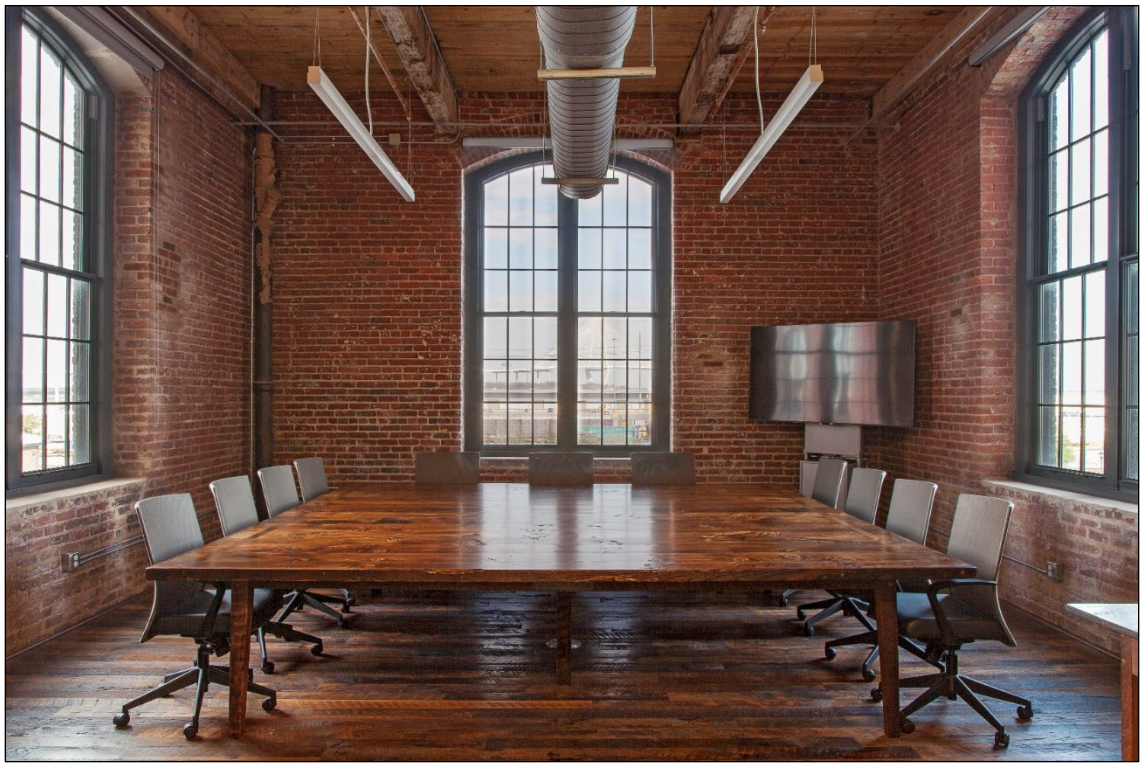

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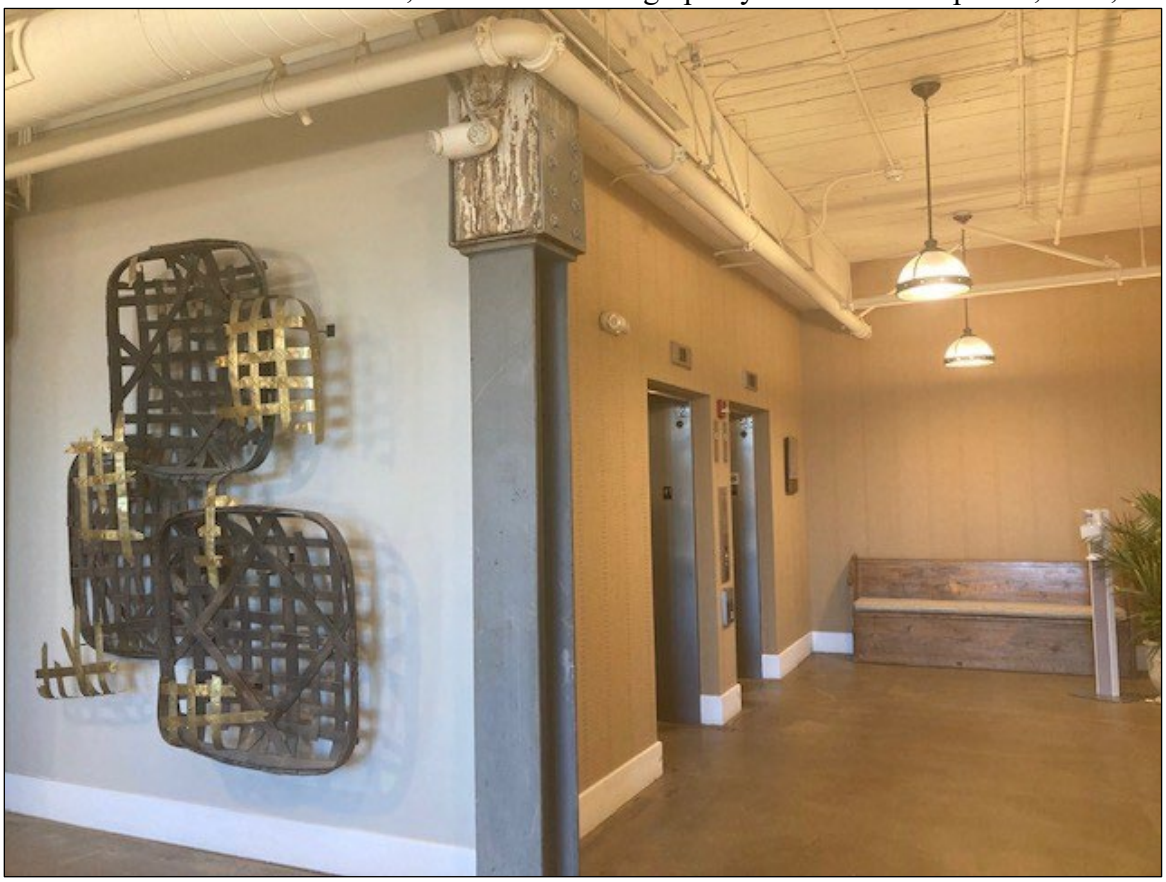

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