

**United States Department of the Interior**

National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**

**DRAFT**

**Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

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**1. Name of Property**

historic name Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company

other names/site number Huck Finn Warehouse

name of related multiple property list N/A

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**2. Location**

street & 19 Erie Boulevard

city or Albany

state New York

code NY

county Albany

code 001

zip code 12207

<input type="checkbox"/>	not for
<input type="checkbox"/>	vicinity

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**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  X  nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  X  meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide       X  local

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
 Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
 County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing		Noncontributing		
1	0			buildings
0	0			sites
0	0			structures
0	0			objects
1	0			<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

N/A

0

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: concrete

walls: brick

roof: synthetic

other: steel

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## Narrative Description

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(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### Summary Paragraph and Narrative Description

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

The former Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Co. building, historically referred to as “A.P.W.,” is located at 19 Erie Boulevard, a north-south artery in the North Albany industrial sector of Albany, Albany County, in eastern New York State. Built as a paper mill for the manufacture of toilet paper and paper towels, the heart of the complex was constructed in stages between 1918 and 1922. These, plus a fifth section added between 1922 and 1936, and minor in-fill spaces, are internally interconnected and present as one, largely single-story, 222,120-square-foot massive brick masonry edifice covering nearly ten acres. The building is situated between Erie Boulevard at its west and Interstate 787 to the east, which separates the site from the Hudson River, its original eastern boundary. The building is among a group of late nineteenth and early twentieth century factories generally sited along Broadway and on the surrounding streets that have survived in what is informally called the “Warehouse District” in Albany.

The current occupant, Huck Finn, a popular retail outlet selling furniture and housewares, was established in the A.P.W. buildings in 1985. To the south of A.P.W. are non-historic concrete block and sheet metal buildings that house a large plumbing supplier. Bordering the subject property to the north is a relocated amusement park, moved by Huck Finn from its original location several miles away in 2015. At its original site, the park was an intact example of an Allen Herschell Kiddieland, an early 1950s amusement park type. Unfortunately, although the move saved the park from demolition, its integrity of location, siting, and plan were lost. The park features rides from the 1950s to 1971, most built by the Allan Herschell Company, once a premiere builder of such parks.

## **EXTERIOR:**

### **SOUTH ELEVATION**

This southernmost elevation is the side wall of the first section of the building constructed in 1918. Resting on a concrete foundation, the painted brick masonry is laid up in running bond. The twelve bays are demarcated by pilasters. Window openings are recessed by virtue of a slight reveal; further, recesses are marked at the top by brick corbeling, which also occurs just below the roofline. Here, there is a metal drip edge. All openings are blocked by white metal panels. Looking east, the first three bays show original sized openings. Thereafter, metal panels cover the smaller single and double openings that alternate between bays. While these openings were bricked-in to accommodate these windows, the original openings are recessed and therefore remain visible. The twelfth and final bay holds a single metal door accessed by a metal stair.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

## **FACADE (West Elevation)**

The facade may be divided to reflect the A.P.W. building campaign: the two identical southernmost mills (Section 1 and 2) built ca. 1918 and 1919; looking north, a central infill portion, built in part to accommodate giant paper rolls in 1936 (Infill); the third ca. 1918-1919 building that was a vast machine room where paper was actually made (Section 4); and, finally, the northernmost section (Section 5), which first appears on drawings in 1936. A metal overhang from at least the 1930s as shown in vintage photographs stretches nearly the full length of the building, as does a concrete dock. Note: Section 3, one of the four original 1918 sections, is not visible.

### **Section 1 and 2**

The progression of construction, from the oldest to newest sections, is discernible from south to north. Beginning south, sections 1 and 2 were constructed within a year of each other. They were built identically, each occupying a 120-foot by 300-foot footprint, a configuration that remains. It should be noted that the parapets of both buildings give the appearance of second stories. The buildings, however, are single-story, with upper windows overlooking the vast interior space. Their similar construction also is evident by twin flat parapets that step upward between bays two and five of the six-bay facades of each building, looking south. A central alley that once separated the sections was covered at an unknown date and is occupied by a white-painted wood overhead door. Looking south, section 2's six-bay fenestration is as follows: an overhead wood door occupies bay one; lower pairs of original multi-pane steel windows occupy bays two and three. In the parapet of bay three, the opening has been altered to accommodate a pair of single, multi-pane windows, while the bay four parapet contains an original steel window. Here, a two-story shed sections was constructed, at least by the 1930s. Bay five contains original lower and upper steel windows, while bay six contains an expansive pair of original multi-pane steel windows in original openings. All windows have been painted white. Continuing south to section 1, bays one, two, and three contain original steel multi-pane windows, albeit of different sizes. Double-leaf wood entry doors occupy bay four. Lastly, an appendage identified as an office on a 1922 Sanborn fire insurance map is situated in front of the last two bays, five and six.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

## **Central In-Fill**

This four-bay section was constructed ca. 1936 for storage of paper rolls prior to being cut and sized for a finished product. The construction was seamless, with original multi-pane steel windows occupying the lower bay one and all upper bays. Wood overhead doors are located in bays two and four, which flank the contemporary storefront in bay three. All windows have been painted white.

## **Section 4**

This five-bay edifice is one of the original ca. 1918-1919 sections and seamlessly continues the characteristics of the rest of the facade. Bay one holds an expansive, original multi-pane steel window, painted white. A recent glass-and-metal storefront door occupies lower bay two, while an original multi-pane steel window occupies the upper bay. Bays three to five have been updated to include recent glass-and-metal windows with dividing grids. These flank bay four, the main entrance, occupied by contemporary glass-and-metal doors, installed within in-fill corrugated metal panels.

## **Section 5**

This nine-bay, two-story addition was built between 1922 and 1936, the span of time between the 1922 Sanborn, when the section did not appear, and 1936, when the section is depicted on blueprints dating to that year. Lower bays three and six hold wood overhead doors; original steel multi-pane windows are located in first-story bays four and five and seven and eight. Bay nine holds a first-story single steel window and a single door, likely created from the original window opening. The north wall has two window openings covered by white-painted corrugated metal. All windows are painted white.

## **NORTH ELEVATION**

The ca. 1936 addition contains original steel windows at both stories, all bays, with the exception of the single door and foreshortened steel window located at the first story of the eleventh, final bay at the northwest corner. The bays are divided by pilasters on the otherwise unadorned elevation.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

## **EAST ELEVATION**

The elevation is composed of the fronts of four sections, from north to south: the ca. 1936 northernmost section, section 5; section 4, the machine room of the original four-building site; the rear of an undated storage building; and section 3, also an original section, abutting the 1918 and 1919 twin mills.

Section 5, the north building, is composed of eleven bays. Pairs of original steel multi-pane windows exist in the first-floor, bay one; then, in bay two, there exists a small multi-pane window, a blind bay three, and, in bay four, a single door sheltered by a shed roof. Bays six through nine hold wood overhead doors. Bays ten and eleven are without features. At the second story, six bays are partially obscured by the corrugated metal shed roof of the metal corrugated dock and shed built at the northeast corner ca. 1936. All second-story openings appear to hold pairs of original steel windows, painted white. Section 4, the ca. 1919 machine room, and adjacent in-fill are almost fully obscured by billboards. Section 4 holds a wood overhead door protected by a metal shed roof. Lastly, section 3, abutting the rear walls of section 1 and 2, is made up of thirteen bays, seven of them blank (one, four, seven through nine, eleven and twelve). Bays two and three hold double wood barn doors; bays six and nine hold wood overhead doors.

## **INTERIOR**

While the square footage and some minor characteristics differ, the essential structure and finishes of the four original buildings share a common denominator. Each rests on a reinforced concrete foundation and has a poured concrete floor. The structure in sections 1-4 is a combination of steel warren trusses supporting heavy timber wood beams and wide-plank roof decking. Architect George F. Hardy specifically called out the metal trusses in combination with the wood structure as fireproof. This system differed from the so-called mill construction of the era, in which architects and owners believed that slow-burning heavy timbers imparted the best fire protection. Hardy's expansive structural system is expressed in the open volumes, ranging from 19 feet to 32 feet high, that extend, north to south, in front of sections 1 to 4, which now house furniture and carpet showrooms. The sections originally held multiple tons of equipment to reduce wood to pulp, further worked in "beater rooms" and formed into a continuous paper web and dried in machine rooms. These uses are noted on a 1922 Sanborn fire insurance map, the earliest that shows these four original sections.



Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

## **Sections 1 and 2:**

The metal trusses in section 1 and section 2 run north to south, while the heavy timber beams are oriented east to west. The structure is painted white. Separating the sections is a gabled passage where there was once an alley. Each building has a monitor, but windows are missing, and the openings boarded. Running east to west, they terminate at lofts with metal-and-wood structure and wood strip floors. The 1922 Sanborn map indicates that the alley was covered with wide plank roof decking by that time. Here, the formerly exterior window openings of section 2 have been filled with concrete block, painted white. Original south windows are intact behind wood framing. A slim reveal denotes the original openings. The south exterior of section 1 and section 2 were built identically, with the exception of a small machine shop joining section 2 and 3.

## **Section 3**

Once the pulp mill, section 3 is currently used for storage, with boxed merchandise stacked on two-level metal shelving. Unlike sections 1 and 2, the structure here is unpainted, with the wood planking of the roof deck finished or aged to a dark brown. Formerly window openings at the rear have been filled with brick and painted white. A lofty appendage is built of terra-cotta block, but its historic use is unknown. Section 3 has a partial second story, which has a wood strip floor, deviating from the concrete floors of the rest of the complex.

## **Infill**

In 1936, A.P.W. built a warehouse to store “jumbo” rolls of paper, that is, paper that would eventually be cut and finished into toilet tissue or paper towels. Here, the structure changes dramatically from the original sections. The span of the section is supported by metal columns and I-beams, which in turn support open web steel joists, which act like trusses to carry load. Behind this section is an addition, constructed in what was an open courtyard. It dates to a span of time between 1935 and 1951, when it first appears on available Sanborn maps. The essential structure is steel, which supports narrowly spaced, wood cross-braced ceiling joists.

## **Section 4**

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

The northernmost original building today serves as the west main entrance. The entrance and front showrooms maintain the 30-foot-high ceiling of the metal and wood structure. Thereafter, a recent mezzanine with a wide-plank wood floor is accessed by an L-shaped concrete and metal stair. The mezzanine ultimately connects to the northernmost building. Long and relatively narrow, this section originally housed the paper-making operations. The section's structure matches the original section 1, 2, and 3.

## **Section 5**

Section 5 is a square two-story construct built sometime between 1922 and 1936, when it appears on blueprints illustrating other improvements to the complex. The plan describes the section as housing main offices and storage for finished products. Unlike the earlier sections, the first floor has a metal and concrete structure, with round, unadorned metal columns supporting concrete ceilings. The second floor is a largely metal structure with a wide-plank ceiling. Floors are poured concrete.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

**COMMERCE**

**ARCHITECTURE**

**Period of Significance**

**1918-1952**

**Significant Dates**

**1918-1922**

**ca. 1936**

**1922-1936**

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**N/A**

**Cultural Affiliation**

**N/A**

**Architect/Builder**

**Hardy, George F.**

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

### **Period of Significance (justification)**

The Period of Significance begins with the initial construction of the first stage of the mill complex in 1918 and extends to the end of ownership by nationally known businessman and economic theorist Roger Babson, who sold A.P.W. in 1952.

### **Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

### **Statement of Significance**

The Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Co. is significant under Criterion A in the area of industry as one of the largest global producers of paper products for the home, specifically toilet paper and paper towels, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a transitional example of industrial architecture that combines load bearing walls with a steel skeleton structure and large, steel, multi-pane windows. This mix of characteristics show the evolution from brick masonry and heavy timber typical of mill construction to early twentieth century building practices that expanded factory volumes and introduced well-lighted and cleaner expanded space.

Described at its early twentieth century zenith as the largest maker of toilet paper and paper towels in the world, Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Co. (A.P.W.) was founded in 1877 by Seth Wheeler, credited as the inventor of rolled toilet tissue, a product that remains essentially unchanged since his first patent in 1871. At first located in a series of small undistinguished buildings in the industrial section of North Albany, New York, and then in a sprawling main plant in 1916, A.P.W. in 1918 undertook another massive building campaign, constructing four mill sections in under four years at the current location. By that time, the Erie Canal had largely been abandoned, as had the Lumber District, a considerable source of trade for almost a century. Government and business leaders at this time were anxious to see the moribund Lumber District become a hub for new industry and warehousing. The A.P.W. factory stands as a testament to that transition. The A.P.W. plant is built on top of slips once used to transfer lumber from the Erie Canal, to dozens of vast lumberyards fronting the Hudson River. A.P.W. relied on the D&H Railroad at its western front, as well as the Hudson River at its

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

rear, east, elevation to transport raw material and finished paper products. While owned by the Wheeler family, A.P.W flourished, with branches in major U.S. cities, as well as in London and Paris. The company held a pulp mill and forests in Nova Scotia and a plant in England. A.P.W. imported raw materials and exported its paper products on an international scale. Newspapers were fond of superlatives to describe the plant's enormous output, claiming in 1925 that the mill produced 30,000 miles of paper towels and toilet paper in a day, enough to wind around the world one and one-third times. Employment peaked at about 1,000 workers in the late 1920s. There was a smooth transition when the Wheeler family relinquished control in 1930 to Roger W. Babson, the famous, colorful economic theorist, entrepreneur, and college founder, under whose leadership A.P.W remained a stable, self-sufficient enterprise, importing its own Canadian pulp via the new Port of Albany, in a dredged Hudson River, allowing cargo freight to its facility. A.P.W. excelled at using this formula until the mid-1950s. The plant was designed by George F. Hardy, an internationally known architect who specialized in paper mill design. Hardy designed mills across the United States, in Canada and in Mexico. The 1918 construction came somewhat early in Hardy's career and represents an evolution in his work. His career began in 1888 in the office of renowned paper mill architects D.H. and A.B. Tower. Hardy worked on surviving Tower factories that display the key characteristics of mill construction, brick buildings with heavy timber framing intended to resist fire. But the 1918 A.P.W. brick masonry mill complex is a hybrid, with massive steel trusses and columns carrying much of the load but combined with wide planking and heavy timbers above them that were still seen as fire resistant. Its numerous and expansive steel windows reflect the influence of daylight factories popularized in the early twentieth century by famed industrial architect Albert Kahn. Hardy's work thereafter represented a variation on this theme, with some buildings exhibiting the workaday characteristics of the A.P.W. mill, while others had more precise geometric lines and Art Deco flourishes, including a soaring, extant tower in Quebec. Following a succession of disruptive quick sales, the A.P.W. mill closed in 1964 and was subsequently used first for storage, then as a retail furniture outlet. These uses left the A.P.W. plant largely unaltered one on a number of period industrial buildings in Albany's warehouse district. The period of significance begins with its construction in 1918 and extends to 1952, before unstable ownership forced the mill to close in 1964.

### **Developmental History/Additional Context**

The city of Albany is located on the western shore of the Hudson River, about 153 miles north of New York City and 10 miles south of the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk rivers. Chartered in 1686 as a fur-trading

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

port, Albany is one of America's oldest cities. Albany became the state capital in 1797. The Erie Canal, completed in 1825, solidified Albany's position as the transportation and commercial hub of upstate New York and made New York City the premier port of the eastern seaboard. The canal opened the trans-Appalachian United States to settlement and exploitation, and Albany's population grew by leaps and bounds in the first half of the nineteenth century. As the twentieth century opened, Albany continued to remain a major United States city, although its relative size diminished as cities in the Mid-West and West grew in size and importance. Its industries continued to provide employment for its growing population, which peaked at 135,000 people in 1950.<sup>1</sup>

In the nineteenth century, Albany produced architectural ironwork, heating and cooking stoves, iron fences, railroad car wheels, farm equipment, pianos, paper, fabrics, fire bricks, chemicals, and beer. But none reached the order of magnitude of the Albany Lumber District, whose history is deeply connected to that of Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Co. The A.P.W. mill is built on slips that led from the Erie Canal, and its construction displaced two of the last lumberyards in the district.<sup>2</sup>

With ancestral roots in the arrival of seventeenth-century millwrights, the Lumber District flourished after the 1825 opening of the Erie Canal, consisting, by 1865, of almost 4,000 sawmills spread over 100 acres in what was described in contemporary accounts as the largest lumber district by value in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Just as A.P.W. did, the district benefited from its location on the Hudson River shoreline: lumber was transferred from the canal to the mill and to the Albany Basin, the harbor with a slip directly to the Hudson River. Albany developed a specialty, practiced by a "corps of experts" who inspected white pine in particular for defects, thus ensuring a superior product, particularly in foreign markets.<sup>4</sup> Media in 1899 still published glowing reports of the lumber trade, even as newspapers acknowledged that trade began to decline, pushing the Lumber District down the ranks of the nation's largest lumber districts, behind Chicago and then Buffalo.<sup>5</sup> Two ironies spelled the end of the district: large lumber dealers began foregoing Albany's rigorous quality control by buying lumber directly from distant mills and improved transportation via canal and railroad made available lumber from virgin forests in the Midwest, making Albany's supply "superfluous."

<sup>1</sup> Michael Lopez, American Meter Company National Register of Historic Places Draft Registration Form, New York State Historic Preservation Office, 2015, 9.

<sup>2</sup> "To Begin Work on First of New Buildings," *Times-Union*, 23 March 1918.

<sup>3</sup> "Experts Predict Deep Hudson Will Regain As Lumber Mart for Albany," *Knickerbocker Press*, 19 September 1915.

<sup>4</sup> "Lumber Boom at Hand for Capital District if the Hudson is Deepened," *Knickerbocker Press*, 10 September 1916.

<sup>5</sup> "The Summer Season Will Be One of Activity," *Times-Union*, 10 June 1899.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

The decline was fairly rapid and disastrous for a district that operated almost like a municipality, populated by generations of workers. Dealers hoped for a proposed 27-foot-deep channel dug from the city of Hudson to Albany in order to transfer lumber on to large schooners and barges, but the project would not be completed until 1930. The *Knickerbocker Press* in 1915 described an abandoned and unrecognizable wasteland where children used the slips as swimming holes; in 1923, the newspaper described the Lumber District as “merely a relic of its former self.”<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the media, business, and government leaders pivoted to turn the abandonment to advantage by heavily promoting North Albany as a growing and bustling industrial hub. In an article titled “Industry Hums in North Albany,” the *Knickerbocker Press* in 1918 listed the \$500,000 A.P.W. mill chief among companies breaking ground for factories in order to fill lucrative government contracts.<sup>7</sup> While the A.P.W. site was being graded and artesian wells dug, the Van Rensselaer Land Company was clearing land and creating manufacturing sites in the district’s northern fringe. A shipyard was being assembled within the old lumber district. The article listed a Who’s Who of prominent Albany industries planning expansions, including George H. Thacher and Company, which made railroad car wheels, stove manufacturer Rathbone, Sard & Co., and tool manufacturer Simmons Machine.

Two years later, the *Argus* published a similarly optimistic article, detailing the “astonishing progress” documented in the Chamber of Commerce’s survey of North Albany. The Chamber of Commerce was credited with spearheading the construction of Broadway, the main artery parallel to the Erie Canal, with the prediction that the road would help populate and redevelop North Albany. The area was already a transportation nexus, interconnected by the Hudson River, the D&H and New York Central railroads and a new Barge Canal terminal. The newspaper reported the expansion of existing manufacturers, including International Harvester, American Gas Meter Company, and Consolidated Heating Car Companies, all with prominent factories along Broadway, as well as the arrival of three new distributors and service stations for Pierce Arrow cars, White Trucks and Republic Trucks. It is within this context that A.P.W. built its first two mills in the former Lumber District.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “All Roads Lead to Albany,” *Knickerbocker Press*, 28 July 1923.

<sup>7</sup> “Industry Hums in North Albany,” *Knickerbocker Press*, 23 March 1918.

<sup>8</sup> “Survey Shows Industrial Growth in North End,” *Argus*, 24 October 1920.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

### **Seth Wheeler, Inventor and A.P.W. Founder**

Wheeler's father, Alonzo, a native of Albany, was described as an inventor, having perfected a tool to mortise a square hole, ultimately building a mortising machine to produce them. He partnered with one brother to build wagons, then another brother to operate a sash, door, and blind factory in Chatham, south of Albany, where Seth Wheeler was born on May 18, 1838. Alonzo Wheeler in 1849 founded Wheeler, Melick & Company in Albany to manufacture agricultural implements; Seth Wheeler, a mechanical engineer, succeeded his father at the firm until 1872, when he began to pursue his paper inventions.<sup>9</sup>

Wheeler in 1871 patented his machine for creating rolled and perforated "wrapping paper" – toilet paper -- which until that time came packaged in flat sheets.<sup>10</sup> (The word "wrapping" was a holdover description from when the company made wrapping paper for multiple users; by 1871 it had become synonymous with "toilet paper.") Wheeler in his July 25, 1871 patent stated that the practice of cutting, counting, folding, then tying together wrapping sheets was inaccurate and inefficient, with labor and packing costs passed along to the consumer. He enumerated the advantages to his invention this way:

My invention is made for the purpose of avoiding and removing all the aforesaid difficulties or disadvantages and consists in a roll of wrapping paper with perforations on the line of the division between one sheet and the next, so as to be easily torn apart, such roll of wrapping-paper forming a new article of manufacture.

The roll, he stated, eliminated damage during delivery and the labor of hand-counting, folding, bundling, and tying packages. Consumers in turn got cheaper, easier to use paper.

Wheeler in 1874 formed the Rolled Wrapping Paper Company, a failed attempt to produce his invention, before starting the Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company in 1877. A.P.W. Wheeler filed nearly 100 patents in his lifetime, many of them related to developing improvements to toilet paper. In 1884, he patented the toilet

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<sup>9</sup> Cuyler Reynolds, *Hudson-Mohawk Genealogical and Family Memoirs*. New York, NY, Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1911.

<sup>10</sup> Albany Institute of History and Art posting, <https://www.albanyinstitute.org/perforated-toilet-paper.html>



Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

paper dispenser, its essential function little changed over time. He developed a machine to emboss ornament on the paper, then the ornamented paper itself. One invention consisted of an elongated tube to hold three rolls at once.

Apparently, the new invention was a difficult sell, according to the December 1944 company newsletter. “The general public now regards toilet tissue and paper towels as daily necessities but this was not true when Mr. Wheeler first introduced roll tissue ... So A.P.W. became one of the first large scale advertisers in America and the first to advertise toilet tissue.” The company suggested that the “W” in the A.P.W. name also stood for “welfare,” since disposable toilet tissue and paper towels promoted public sanitation. It also pointed out that modern plumbing and the flush toilet would not be of any use without the invention of disposable toilet paper.<sup>11</sup>

Wheeler ultimately enjoyed significant success, certainly by the time the 1918 mill complex was constructed. In 1916, the company constructed a brick masonry plant at 971 Broadway, where pulp and paper in its rawest form were converted into the finished tissue. (While extant, the building has been heavily altered by being encased in recent stucco and glass curtain walls). Wheeler may possibly have stepped away from a leadership role since his son, William A. Wheeler, announced the 1918 plant construction.<sup>12</sup> In 1922, A.P.W. advertised itself as the world’s largest toilet paper mill, capable in one day of converting 100,000 pounds of raw paper into paper towels and toilet paper.

At his death in 1925, Wheeler was acknowledged for building an industry that “equals if not surpasses any company in the United States doing a similar business.” Wheeler also was widely known as a banking pioneer by virtue of his eleven-year tenure as president of Albany County Savings Bank.<sup>13</sup> Wheeler was a member of the higher echelon of Albany society. His sons, Seth Wheeler Jr. and William A. Wheeler, remained deeply involved in the company.

## **1918 Mill Construction**

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<sup>11</sup> “Seventy Years of Papermaking,” *Run ‘o the Mill* APW newsletter, Vol.1, Number 3, December 1944.

<sup>12</sup> “To Begin Work on First of New Buildings,” *Times-Union*, 23 March 1918).

<sup>13</sup> “Seth Wheeler, Albany Banker, Inventor, Dies,” *Knickerbocker Press* 23, March 1925.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

The Wheeler family's decision to build the mill complex resulted from a confluence of factors. By World War I, A.P.W. began having difficulty procuring good quality raw paper to convert into tissue at its North Albany converting plant. Its own mills solved that strain. Despite having a factory in Plattsburgh, N.Y., the company had difficulty keeping up production. And A.P.W. needed to rush production to fill a \$2 million government contract.<sup>14</sup>

A.P.W. strategically chose ten acres of land to be supported by the transportation nexus of the D&H Railroad, which would front the plant to the west, and the Hudson River, adjacent to the rear east docks, where goods would be received from a railroad spur partially encircling the property. The Erie Canal, running parallel to the D&H Railroad, was in its waning days and, in fact, slips once stemming from it were buried and the mill built over several of them. An underground stream daily provided millions of gallons of the clean water on which papermaking is so dependent. The increasingly abandoned Lumber District, property which stretched north, from Bridge Street, and government land, to the south, where it abutted the Riverside Power Station of the Municipal Gas Co.<sup>15</sup> The project displaced the L.H. Elmendorf sawmill, but two others, L. Thompson and Frederick Cleveland yards, were allowed to remain for one year.<sup>16</sup>

While the complex ultimately totaled four sections built in quick succession, contemporary news accounts confirm that the first 120-foot by 300-foot mill of brick, concrete, and steel was built at the southernmost end of the property. Under the supervision of former deputy state engineer and company engineer Herschel Roberts, a corps of workers staked the property and broke ground to excavate the basements in March 1918.<sup>17</sup> Based on the 1922 Sanborn fire insurance map, the four-sections complex – the two paper mills, pulp mill, and machine room -- was completed between 1918 and 1922, from the beginning date cited in numerous newspaper accounts to the date all four sections appeared on the 1922 Sanborn fire insurance map.

Architect George F. Hardy vividly described the future mill, christened Liberty Mill, in an August 23, 1918 letter to the owners:

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<sup>14</sup> "APW Plant Makes 30,000 Miles of Paper Daily," *Knickerbocker Press*, 11 July 1925.

<sup>15</sup> "APW Plant Makes 30,000 Miles of Paper Daily."

<sup>16</sup> "To Begin Work on First of New Buildings," *Times-Union*, 23 March 1918.

<sup>17</sup> "To Begin Work on First of New Buildings," *Times-Union*, 23 March 1918.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

Your new “Liberty Mill” for manufacturing tissue paper we expect to be the last word in this branch of the paper industry. The building ... is very strongly built of fireproof materials up to the roof, which is the so-called slow burning construction of plank on steel trusses.

Hardy stressed the healthy and safe environment he strove to create:

The large windows, glass partitions and white paint on all inside surfaces make every part of the mill so light and clean that it will be a second ‘Spotless Town.’ The lavatories, shower baths and individual lockers will make the workers very comfortable.<sup>18</sup>

Hardy’s attention to worker conditions reflects a movement in factory design that sought “to transform notoriously dark and gloomy workplaces to sunny, bright well-ventilated and well-heated rooms,” according to one 1918 essay that reasoned that humane conditions both resulted in better productivity and an overall enhanced quality of life. The most famous of these practitioners was Albert Kahn, who at the beginning of the twentieth century designed reinforced concrete “daylight” factories for the Packard and Ford car companies.<sup>19</sup>

While Hardy consigned reinforced concrete to foundations and favored brick masonry throughout his career, he captured the spirit of the daylight factory with expansive multi-pane windows at the Liberty Mill. Much as Kahn’s use of concrete eliminated hazardous, oily wood floors from car assembly lines, Hardy focused on nearly eliminating overhead belt-driven equipment.

As to ‘Safety First,’ which, we believe, is to be one of your main considerations in the operation of this mill, it is hard to conceive an arrangement of paper making machinery which can more easily be made safe for the operators. This is due to the entire absence of elevators and dark places, and to the almost entire absence of shafting, belts, gears, etc. which are usually found in paper mills. To summarize: Your mill has been designed not merely to make paper well and economical, but to be a safe, light, clean and wholesome place for your employees.

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<sup>18</sup> “New APW Paper Mill: George F. Hardy Gives Description of its Equipment,” *Argus*, 20 September 1918.

<sup>19</sup> W.R. Briggs, “Modern American Factories,” in *Architecture: The Professional Architectural Monthly* (September 1918), vol. XXXVIII, no. 3.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

The account took for granted that readers were fairly acquainted with paper manufacturing, a reasonable conclusion due to the strong industrial character of Albany and the surrounding region. Therefore, the newspaper described the new equipment in great detail. Six state-of-the-art “beaters” broke down pulp into a slurry early in the process. Four 86-inch cylinder machines, driving conveyor belts, made by the prominent Sandy Hill and Brass Works in Hudson Falls, NY, produced 1,000 feet of paper per minute, an astounding output when compared to speeds reported in trade journals of the time. Another top-of-the-line, expensive machine, the Downingtown Winder, was installed to dry the paper. The first mill was completed in December 1918, with one newspaper calling it “a new record for speed” in paper mill construction. A.P.W. completed a north, adjacent twin mill, as well as a pulp mill, in 1919.<sup>20</sup> A fourth section, the machine room, was built between then and 1922, when it appears for the first time on a Sanborn fire insurance map. In 1934, A.P.W. sold its converting plant on Broadway and moved all operations to the newer plant.

## **Architect George F. Hardy**

### **Biographical/Career Overview**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, New York City architect and engineer George Fiske Hardy (1865-1947) was one of the most sought-after experts in the design of pulp and paper mills in both the United States and Canada. Born in Poquonock, Connecticut, on February 12, 1865, he was educated at Dartmouth College and graduated with a degree in engineering in 1888. He gained valuable experience with D.H. & A.B. Tower & Co. of Holyoke, Mass.<sup>21</sup> Brothers David Horatio Tower (1832-1907) and Ashley Bemis Tower (1847-1901) were internationally known architects, civil and mechanical engineers who designed hundreds of mills in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Germany, Brazil, the United Kingdom, India, China, Japan, and Australia. Dissolved in 1892 upon David Tower’s retirement, the firm was described by one contemporary account as “the largest firm of paper mill architects in the country at that time, holding more than 8,000 plans for sites, mills, machinery and waterpower improvements.” The Tower brothers used their multi-disciplinary approach to thoroughly study sites, in particular to harness waterpower, propelling them to the top of this architectural niche.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> “APW Plant Makes 30,000 Miles of Paper Daily,” *Knickerbocker Press* 11 July 1925.

<sup>21</sup> Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada 1800-1950 posting, <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/2025>

<sup>22</sup> Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia posting, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D.\\_H.\\_%26\\_A.\\_B.\\_Tower](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D._H._%26_A._B._Tower)

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

Hardy in 1888 joined D.H. & A.B Tower & Co. as an engineer; once David Tower retired, Hardy became junior partner at the newly named A.B. Tower & Co. from 1893 to 1896. The partnership was short-lived. Hardy left in 1896 to take on his first independent commission, the design of the Hudson River Pulp & Paper Co. in Corinth, Saratoga County, NY (Demolished 2012), followed by a newsprint mill designed for the Laurentide Paper Co. in Grand Mere, Quebec. International Paper bought the Corinth mill, and Hardy became the company's first chief engineer, in charge of seventeen mills. In 1901, Hardy again struck out on his own, buying out Ashley Tower's assets after Tower's sudden death and founding George F. Hardy & Son in New York City. By the time he received the A.P.W. commission, Hardy was so well established that he was described in a 1908 Congressional hearing as "the famous paper and mill architect of the East."<sup>23</sup>

In his years at D.H. & A.B. Tower & Co., Hardy likely helped design two Massachusetts mills that differ markedly from his design of the A.P.W. mill. The Norman Paper Company Mill, built in 1892 in Holyoke, and the Montague Paper Company Mill, built in 1896 in Turners Falls, share the chief characteristics of so-called "mill construction," made up of load-bearing brick masonry walls and heavy timber framing intended to be slow-burning and thus fire resistant. The mills present as monumental brick masonry blocks, with ample fenestration and, in the case of Norman, a central crenellated tower, all traits that also served to convey an air of authority and force, given their importance to their communities. And Hardy's own design of his first commission, the Hudson River Pulp & Paper Co. in Corinth, reflects this same approach to industrial architecture of the time. Photographs of the earliest portions of that mill, taken before its 2012 demolition, show a simple brick construct, with corbelling at the roofline and arched windows that lightly reference Romanesque Revival ornamentation popular in mill design of the era. It typifies mill construction of the period.

Hardy's early mills shared this plainspoken design, including the 1911 Thames River Specialties Company paper mill in Montville, Connecticut (partially extant); the 1920 Castanea Paper Company mill in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, which, like the Albany mill, had stepped brick parapets (demolished); and the 1922 A.W. Jack asbestos board plant in Lockport (extant).

The A.P.W. mill also is of straightforward design, but for this building Hardy did not rely on heavy timber framing as a sole means to fire resistance. Instead, the building relied on a heavy steel truss structure, supporting heavy wood beams and wide-plank ceilings, which Hardy believed constituted "slow-burning"

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<sup>23</sup> Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia posting, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D. H. %26 A. B. Tower](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D._H._%26_A._B._Tower)

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

construction. The A.P.W. complex was built during the bridge between the Late Victorian and Modern eras of construction. As Hardy himself stated, “Your new “Liberty Mill’ for manufacturing tissue paper we expect to be the last word in this branch of the paper industry. The building ... is very strongly built of fireproof materials up to the roof, which is the so-called slow burning construction of plank on steel trusses.<sup>24</sup> As previously mentioned, his use of multi-pane steel “daylight” windows demonstrates his appreciation for modern construction innovations and the value he and architects of the era placed on the importance of worker health and safety.

In the 1930s Hardy gravitated toward designing kraft paper (for bags and wrappings) and boxboard mills, particularly in the South.<sup>25</sup> These later buildings were apparently daylight factories and possessed sleeker features than his earlier works. His 1927 design of the Quebec Anglo-Canadian Pulp and Paper Mills building (extant), includes a prominent tower that is frequently cited as a good example of the Art Deco style in Canada. The mill is arguably the best example of a Hardy design that exhibits a clearly demonstrated architectural style. He applied the same design sense to the 1937 Container Corporation of America mill in Fernandina, Florida (demolished), and the 1938 Southland Mill in Lufkin, Texas (extant). Hardy’s Southland Mill was credited with the first manufacture of newsprint from southern pine, thought to contain too much pitch. By this time, Hardy had achieved elder statesman status in the industry. He was named in *Who’s Who* in 1931 and received an honorary degree from Cooper Union in 1939.<sup>26</sup> Upon his death, at age 82, on October 2, 1947, Hardy left \$3.9 million to his two sons.<sup>27</sup> He was designing the Macon Kraft Company, Macon, Georgia, just before he died.<sup>28</sup>

### **A.P.W. 1930-1952 The Babson Era**

Roger W. Babson (1875-1967) was born into a family whose roots reached back ten generations in Gloucester, Massachusetts, a lineage that included farmers, merchants, midwives, preachers, and sailors. The son of dry goods merchant Nathaniel Babson, Roger Babson enrolled at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology but felt the curriculum was predictable and left out exploration of promising advances in the production of cars, planes,

<sup>24</sup> “New APW Paper Mill: George F. Hardy Gives Description of its Equipment,” *Argus*, 20 September 1918.

<sup>25</sup> “G.F. Hardy, 82, Dies; Paper Mill Expert,” *New York Times*, 3 October 1947.

<sup>26</sup> “Over 100 North Shore men and Women Appear in Latest Edition of Who’s Who,” *North Shore Daily Courier*, 5 June 1931; “Long Islanders Get Cooper Union Degrees,” *Daily Register* 8 June 1939.

<sup>27</sup> “George F. Hardy Estate Valued at \$2,986,556,” *Long Island Star Journal* 29 September 1949.

<sup>28</sup> “G.F. Hardy, 82, Dies; Paper Mill Expert,” *New York Times*, 3 October 1947.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

movies, phonographs, and radio. Babson, however, became fascinated with the theories of British scientist Isaac Newton, in particular, the law of motion. The idea that every action prompts an equal and opposite reaction became the basis for Babson's own business endeavors.

After his 1898 graduation, Babson briefly and unsuccessfully worked for a Boston investment firm before striking out on his own and founding his own firm. He ultimately developed an information clearinghouse for investment and business conditions, in the process analyzing the stock markets for subscribing banks and investors. The financial services firm he and his wife, Grace McKnight, began in 1904 remains today as Babson-United, Inc.<sup>29</sup>

Pursuing his early observations about the need for practical business and management instruction, Babson founded Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, in 1919. He then founded what was originally a women's business college, Webber College, in Babson Park, Florida, which is now the co-educational Webber International University. A third college, Utopia College, closed in the early 1970s. Babson was a quirky, broad-minded optimist who invented a forerunner to the parking meter. Deeply religious, he caused tension by advocating that houses of worship, like businesses, examine their practices to deal with up and down cycles of the public's interest in religion. He vigorously studied the field of gravity for potential applications in energy production. He brought those hard-charging qualities to the acquisition of A.P.W. in 1930, when Seth Wheeler's son, William W. Wheeler, sold it and Seth Wheeler Jr. became president; the latter's tenure lasted until 1933.<sup>30</sup>

Babson was apparently acquainted with Albany, according to an *Albany Evening News*, August 28, 1930 front-page article featuring a lengthy interview with Babson shortly after he bought A.P.W. Before buying A.P.W., he explored his interest in hydroelectric power in New York State. He had served as president of the Adirondack Power and Light Corporation and was an officer of Niagara Hudson. He had lofty goals for the growth of A.P.W. Babson intended to double the mill's capacity; the company was already experiencing phenomenal growth, according to Babson, who said the company had the best business it ever had when he took over, six months before.<sup>31</sup> "Do you know that 10,000,000 people in this country use our products made right here in Albany from lumber cut by our own men and conveyed here in our own fleet of ships?" Babson asked. "People smile when they mention our products. How silly. It's really a serious business ..." he continued.

<sup>29</sup> Babson College posting, <https://centennial.babson.edu/past/roger-babson/>

<sup>30</sup> "Babson Buys Paper Co.," *New York Evening Post*, 13 May 1930.

<sup>31</sup> "Babson Sees Albany with Bright Future," *Albany Evening News*, 28 August 1930.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

The company did evolve under Babson's ownership. The company abandoned its Broadway site in 1934 and invested nearly \$500,000 creating a converting plant – to transform raw paper into finished products -- at the Erie Boulevard complex.<sup>32</sup> By then, the company had also built, in 1936, a fifth major section at its northernmost point to house the main office and dry goods storage. The expansion consolidated operations, but Babson also wanted to take advantage of the Port of Albany, which in 1926 opened to accommodate large, ocean-going freighters.<sup>33</sup> The port was considered a game changer, along with the dredging of the Hudson, making way for huge cargo ships, and A.P.W., which inaugurated ocean-going service at the port in October of 1926, was acknowledged as a key importer by hauling wood pulp from its Nova Scotia mill to the Albany plant. Just before Babson's arrival, company traffic manager Donald G. Kibbe cited a 15 percent increase in sales from the prior year. Twenty boatloads of pulp, compared to fifteen the year before, fed that increased production.<sup>34</sup> During Babson's tenure, the company developed yet another product, rolled paper towels, under its Red Cross brand.<sup>35</sup>

### **Post-Babson Ownership**

Though it is unclear if Babson's promise to double capacity of production came true, employee numbers declined from an all-time high of 1,000 workers in the late 1920s to about 300 people when, in 1950, he sold a third of his interest in the company to Isadore Baum, a New York City industrialist who owned several paper mills.<sup>36</sup>

After six years, A.P.W. under Baum's leadership merged with Chicago-based Allied Paper Corporation, which promised to double plant capacity with a conversion to manufacture newsprint.<sup>37</sup> The merger proved disastrous, with "Allied Albany" closing barely a year after the merger. The company blamed the closure on difficulties with its system for extracting water from the Hudson River for the papermaking process. More than 100 people lost their jobs, and the company posted no earnings for 1957.<sup>38</sup> Though the City of Albany offered to supply

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<sup>32</sup> "APW Will Build \$470,000 Plant in North Albany," *Knickerbocker News*, 18 October 1934.

<sup>33</sup> "Ocean Transport Service: Regular Line to Begin Operation," *Oswego Palladian* 24 September 1926.

<sup>34</sup> "Plants Being Expanded in Port Area," *Times-Union*, 3 April 1930.

<sup>35</sup> "Seventy Years of Papermaking," *Run 'o the Mill* APW newsletter, Vol.1, Number 3, December 1944.

<sup>36</sup> "NY Concern to Buy Part of APW," *Knickerbocker News*, 2 November 1939.

<sup>37</sup> "APW to Merge with Chicago Firm," *Times-Union*, 22 November 1956.

<sup>38</sup> "Allied-Albany Stock Trade to be Halted," *Times-Union*, 23 February 1958.



Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

water, the plant never re-opened under Allied. The following year, it sold the mill to Steiner Paper Mills.<sup>39</sup> Steiner provided six years of relatively stable operation for the production of commercial-grade towels and tissue for use in schools and industrial settings. Once it lost its biggest customer, A.P.W. closed on December 5, 1964.<sup>40</sup> The building was used for storage until 1985, when a retail outlet opened. It remains today.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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<sup>39</sup> "Paper Firm Will Re-Open, Perhaps in April, Hire 100," *Times-Union*, 9 March 1950.

<sup>40</sup> "Steiner Tissue Closes Factory," *Evening Recorder*, 7 December 1964.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR  
x 67 has been  
requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #  
\_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of  
repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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### Acreeage of Property 10

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	3	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	4	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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

The boundary is defined by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses the lot historically and currently associated with the nominated building.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

**11. Form Prepared By**

**Draft Form Prepared By:**

name/title Michael Lopez

organization Redburn Development Partners

date 11/13/2021

street & number 204 Lafayette Street

Telephone (518) 366-6558

city or town Schenectady

state NY

zip code 12305

e-mail

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

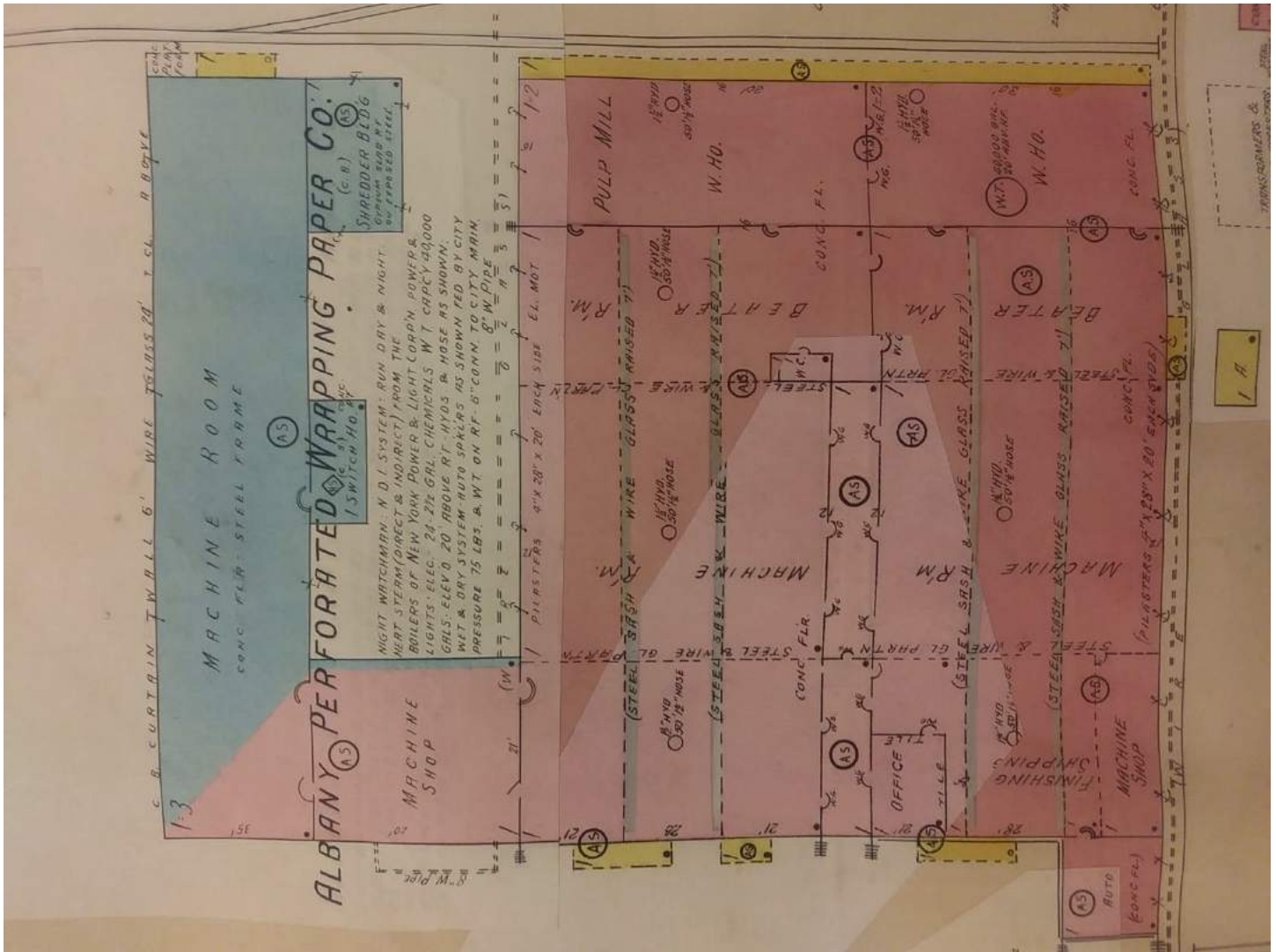
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

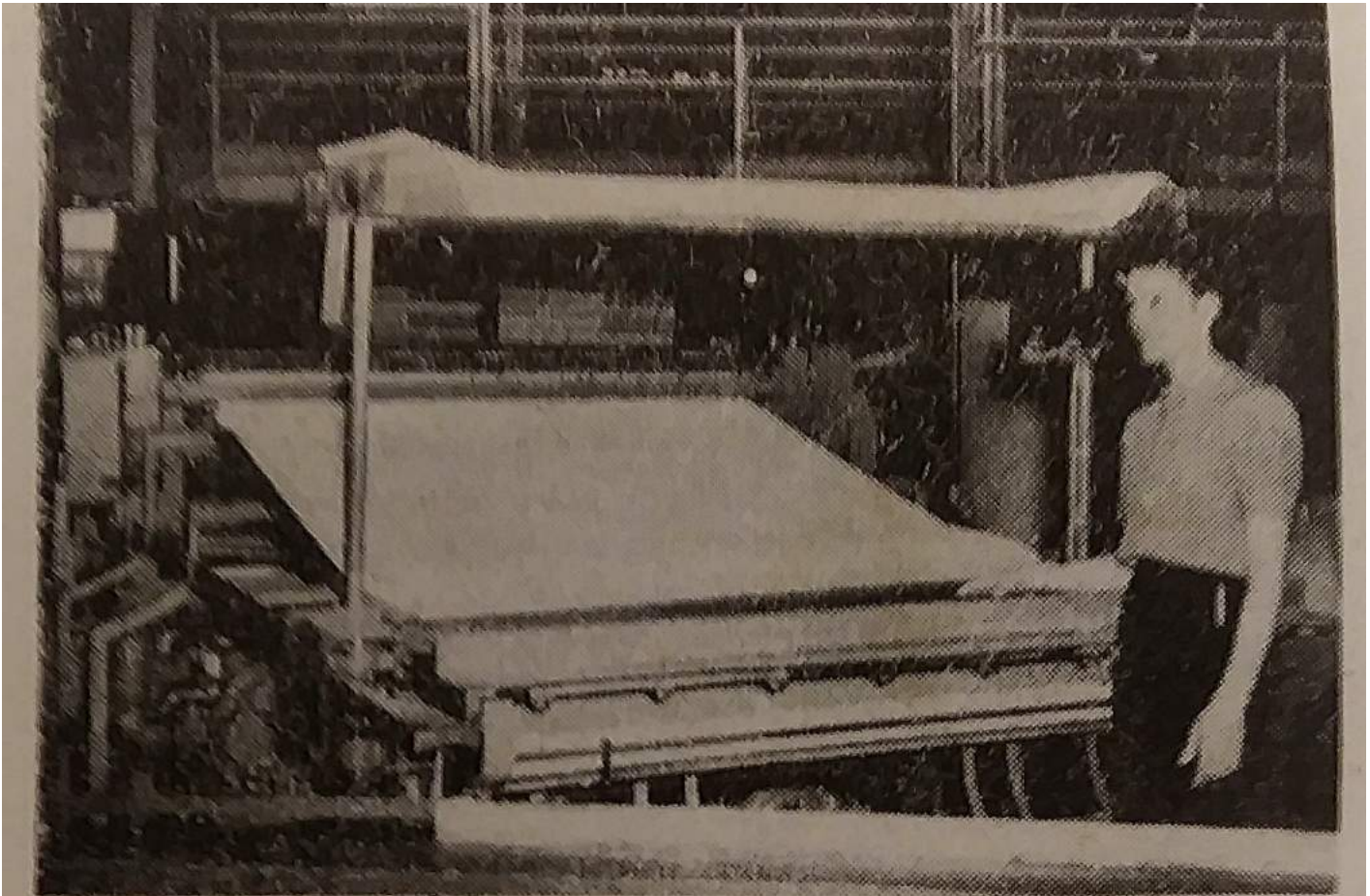


1922 Sanborn Map, Indicating 4 original mill buildings

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

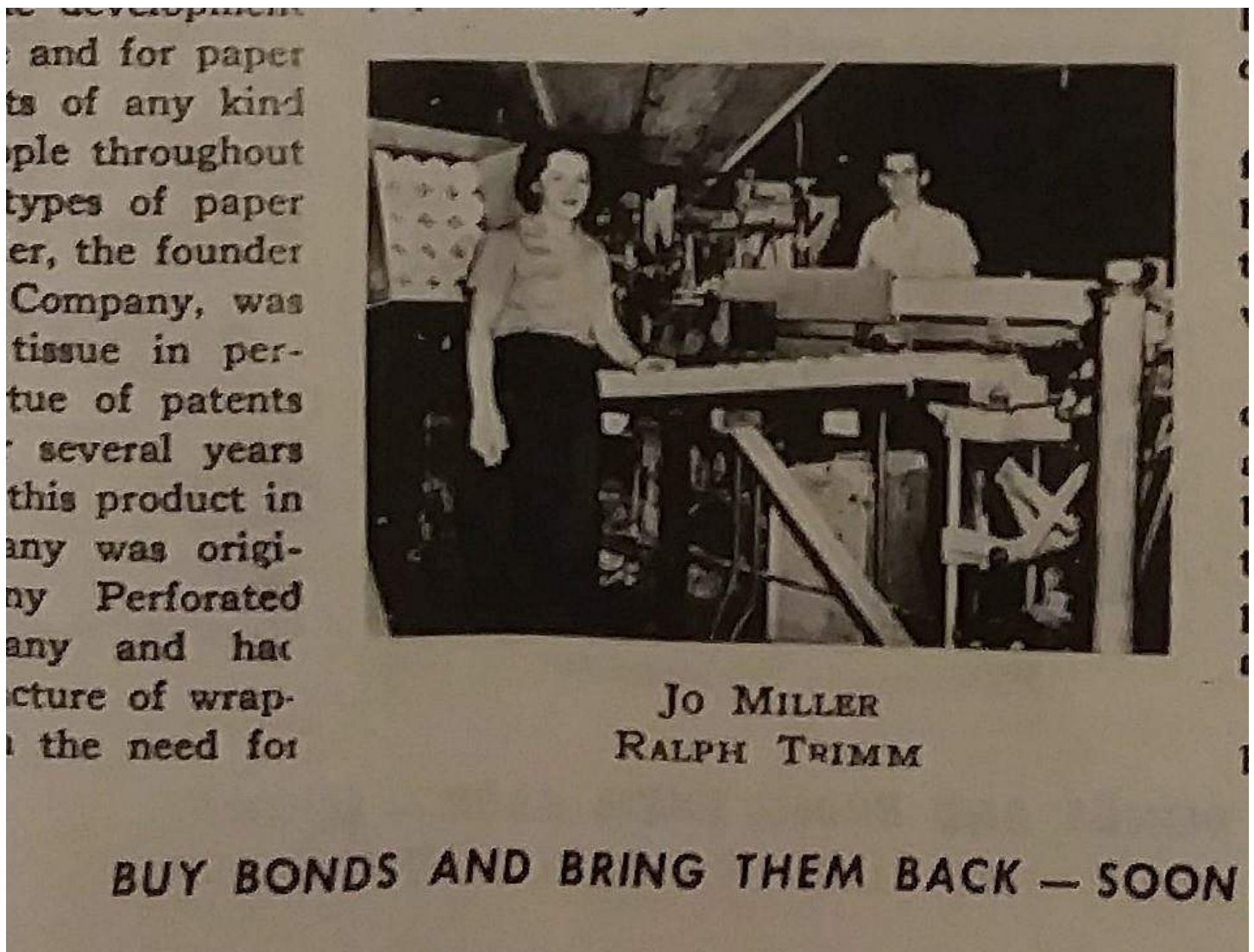


Mrs. Rose Barcomb was running the big Onliwon Towel machine when this picture was snapped. Rose's husband is overseas, and with this great machine she is doing her part as a home front soldier.

Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State



Employee Photos, Run 'o The Mill APW newsletter, December 1944.

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**Photographs:**

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Albany Perforated Wrapping Paper Company  
Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Albany Co., NY  
County and State

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: **SEE ENCLOSURES**

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

01 of **XX** –

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



