

PROPERTY REPORT

Property ID: -932617725

Property Name: Miesch Silk Co. Totowa Avenue Works

Ownership: Private

Address: 468-480 Totowa AVE

Apartment #:

ZIP: 07522

PROPERTY LOCATION(S):

County:	Municipality:	Local Place Name:	USGS Quad:	Block:	Lot:
PASSAIC	Paterson	Paterson		801	9

Property Photo:



Old HSI Number: PAS1608-418

NRIS Number:

HABS/HAER Number:

Description:

The Miesch Silk Co. Totowa Avenue Works is an industrial complex situated on 2 acres containing 3 primary structures dating to the first quarter of the 20th century plus infill. The primary building is a 4-story, L-shaped brick mill that spans 200 feet along Totowa Avenue. Behind this mill is 1-story, brick silk staging/boiler house and a 1-story, brick cloth cutting building. Over time, various auxiliary 20th-century structures have linked these three buildings. Of note is a cylindrical brick smokestack located between the mill and the boiler house.

Setting:

The Miesch Silk Co. Totowa Avenue Works fronts Totowa Avenue and is bounded by Kearney Street to the east and Jasper Street to the west. The lot to its rear (south) is being developed for town homes and divides the mill lot from the Passaic River. The setting is a mixed-use urban neighborhood, with the majority of lots north of Totowa Avenue occupied by 20th-century residences. The neighboring lots to the immediate east and west are industrial. The industrial lot opposite Jasper Street was initially developed ca. 1900 by the Mapele Silk Manufacturing Co., but was eventually absorbed into the Miesch Silk Co. Works. Because this lot was not originally developed under Miesch, it has been excluded from this survey. Two lots west of the mill site is a public school. The Passaic River and Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park are located less than 0.25 miles southwest of the mill site. Across the River to the southwest is the Great Falls/S.U.M. Historic District.

Survey Name: Intensive-Level Survey of Paterson Industrial Mills

Property ID:

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Principal Investigator: Patrick Harshbarger

☒ (Primary Contact)

-932617725

Organization: Hunter Research, Inc.

Registration
and Status
Dates:

National Historic Landmark?: ☐

National Register:

New Jersey Register:

Determination of Eligibility:

Certification of Eligibility:

SHPO Opinion:

Local Designation:

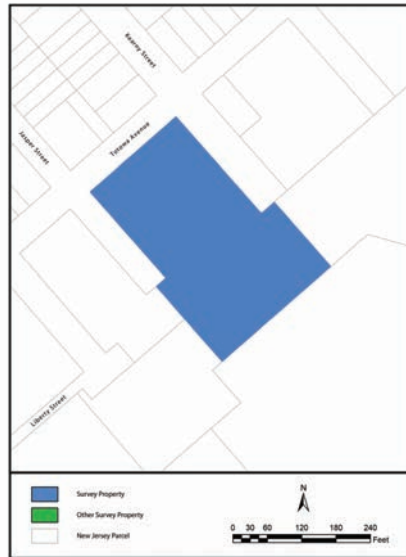
Other Designation:

Other Designation Date:

☒ Eligibility Worksheet included in present survey?

☐ Is this Property an identifiable farm or former farm?

Location Map:



Site Map:

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Author:	Title:	Year:	HPO Accession #: (if applicable)
Department of Community Development	City of Paterson Survey	1987	
Archimede, Gianfranco	Paterson Historic Mills Group Municipal Historic Site Designations Staff Opinion of Eligibility	2012	
Hyde, E B	Atlas of Passaic County, New Jersey	1877	
Robinson, E	Atlas of the City of Paterson, New Jersey	1884	
Robinson, E	Atlas of the City of Paterson and Haledon, New Jersey	1899	
Mueller, A H	Atlas of the City of Paterson, New Jersey	1915	
Sanborn Map Company	Insurance Maps of the City of Paterson, New Jersey	1931	
Sanborn Map Company	Insurance Maps of the City of Paterson, New Jersey	1915	

Additional Information:

More Research Needed? ☒ (checked=Yes)

INTENSIVE-LEVEL USE ONLY:

Survey Name: Intensive-Level Survey of Paterson Industrial Mills

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Attachments Included: 0 Building 0 Bridge
 0 Structure 0 Landscape
 0 Object 3 Industry

Historic District ? ☐

District Name: not applicable

Status:

Associated Archeological Site/Deposits? ☒

(known or potential sites. If Yes, please describe briefly)

Potential industrial archaeology (interior and courtyard)

Conversion Problem? ☐ ConversionNote: 10

Date form completed: 9/7/2012

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INDUSTRIAL BUILDING ATTACHMENT

Common Name: 468-480 Totowa Avenue

Historic Name: Miesch Silk Co. Totowa Avenue Works Mill

Present Use: Industrial, light industrial

Historic Industry: Textiles

Construction Date: 1909 **Source:** Historic Maps

**Construction
Start Date:**

**Construction
End Date:**

Building ID: 1

Style: ☐ Vernacular?

Exterior Finish Materials: Brick, Common Bond

Physical Condition: Good

Foundation Materials: Modern Concrete

Remaining Historic Fabric: Medium

Roof Finish Materials: Rolled Asphalt

Length: 200 **Stories:** 4

Structural System: Heavy Timber Frame

Width: 200 **Bays:** 26

Roof System:

Equipment/Machinery:

Transportation Links: ☐ airstrip ☐ loading dock ☐ slip
(checked if applicable) ☐ dock ☐ rail siding ☐ other

Exterior Description:

The Miesch Silk Mill is an L-shaped, 4-story, 26-bay industrial building constructed ca. 1909. It has a cross-gabled roof sheathed in rolled asphalt. Each side of the L-shaped roof has a frame, 8-ft. raised monitor roof with covered sidelights. At the roofline is a bracketed wooden cornice. Projecting brick pilasters divide each bay. The upper three levels have replacement fixed, 28-light windows; some of these window panes have been replaced with fiberglass. The first story has original wooden 12/12 windows with a pivoting upper sash. All windows are set in arched openings with arched brick lintels and stone sills. Despite some replacements, a remarkable number of original windows remain, although some have been infilled, particularly those along the elevator shaft at the northwest corner of the building. Entrances located at the northwest building corner along Totowa Avenue are recessed and have fluted wooden surrounds. A concrete foundation accommodates for the rise in grade at the western end of the building along Totowa Avenue. At the east end, where the street grade is lower, are fixed wooden windows with 12 lights.

The courtyard side of the mill maintains more original fenestration than the street side of the building; however, approximately 8 bays along the south elevation have been stuccoed. A blind brick stair tower was added to the crook of the ell sometime between 1931 and 1950. Added to the south elevation of the Kearney Street ell is a 5-story brick tower, with metal multi-pane windows only at the fifth story level. A 1-story, shed roof passage connects the rear of the Kearney Street ell to the mid-century infill buildings at the rear of the lot.

Interior Description:

The building interior was not accessible at the time of this survey, but 1915 Sanborn maps indicate that the mill contained wood posts. Blocking, finishing, & shipping was conducted at the basement level. Winding, warping, and quilling were conducted at the first story, where the offices were also located. Weaving was carried out on the 2nd through 4th floors. At the rear of the Kearney Street ell was a 100,000 gallon underground reservoir. At the northeast corner of the mill on the Kearney Street side was a dumbwaiter shaft in galvanized iron.

Alteration Dates:

Alteration(s):	Circa Date:	Date Range:	Source:
Physical alteration	1930	to	Window materials
Physical alteration	1940	to	Tower additions

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Principal Investigator: Patrick Harshbarger

☒ (Primary Contact)

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Organization: Hunter Research, Inc.

Architect/Designer:

Date form completed: 9/25/2012

Survey Name: Intensive-Level Survey of Paterson Industrial Mills

Principal Investigator: Patrick Harshbarger

Organization: Hunter Research, Inc.

☒ (Primary Contact)

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INDUSTRIAL BUILDING ATTACHMENT

Common Name: 468-480 Totowa Avenue

Historic Name: Miesch Silk Co. Boiler House

Present Use: Industrial, light industrial

Historic Industry: Textiles

Construction Date: 1909 **Source:** Historic Maps

**Construction
Start Date:**

**Construction
End Date:**

Building ID: 3-4

Style: ☐ Vernacular?

Exterior Finish Materials: Brick, Common Bond

Physical Condition: Good

Foundation Materials:

Remaining Historic Fabric: Medium

Roof Finish Materials:

Length: 80 **Stories:** 1

Structural System:

Width: 40 **Bays:** 4

Roof System:

Equipment/Machinery:

Transportation Links: ☐ airstrip ☐ loading dock ☐ slip
(checked if applicable) ☐ dock ☐ rail siding ☐ other

Exterior Description:

The Boiler House at the Miesch Silk Co. Totowa Avenue Works was constructed along with the Mill ca. 1909. It is a 1-story, 4-bay brick building with flat roof. The roof has a frame, 5 ft. raised monitor roof with sidelights. Rising from the north and south facades are stepped brick parapet walls. Projecting brick pilasters divide each bay and horizontal courses of stepped brick are at the top of each bay. The northernmost 2 bays are divided from the southern 4 bays by an interior brick wall that is stepped beyond the roofline, extending to divide the monitor roof. This is likely a reflection of the multiple uses of this building, namely silk staging in the northern section and housing of boilers in the southern section. Windows on the 4-bay north façade are wooden 12/12 with pivoting upper sashes. They are set in arched openings with arched brick lintels and stone sills. In the narrow exterior space between the Boiler House and the Mill is a cylindrical brick smokestack. The south and west elevations of the Boiler House are connected to the other ancillary buildings of the complex via mid-20th-century brick infill structures.

Interior Description:

The interior of the Boiler House was not accessible at the time of this survey. Sanborn maps dating 1915-1950, however, indicated that the building has a concrete floor.

Alteration Dates:

Alteration(s):	Circa Date:	Date Range:	Source:
Physical alteration	1960	to	Infill buildings

Architect/Designer:

Date form completed: 9/25/2012

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**Principal
Investigator:** Patrick Harshbarger

☒ (Primary Contact)

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Organization: Hunter Research, Inc.

INDUSTRIAL BUILDING ATTACHMENT

Common Name: 468-480 Totowa Avenue

Historic Name: Miesch Silk Co. Cloth Cutting Building

Present Use: Industrial, light industrial

Historic Industry: Textiles

Construction Date: 1915 **Source:** Historic Images, Historic Maps

Construction Start Date: 1909 **Construction End Date:** 1920 **Building ID:** 7

Style: ☐ Vernacular?

Exterior Finish Materials: Brick, Common Bond

Physical Condition: Good

Foundation Materials:

Remaining Historic Fabric: Medium

Roof Finish Materials: Rolled Asphalt

Length: 90 **Stories:** 1

Structural System:

Width: 70 **Bays:** 4

Roof System: Wood Trusses

Equipment/Machinery:

Transportation Links: ☐ airstrip ☐ loading dock ☐ slip
(checked if applicable) ☐ dock ☐ rail siding ☐ other

Exterior Description:

The Cloth Cutting Building at the Miesch Silk Co. Totowa Avenue Works is primarily a 1-story, 4 bay brick building with a front-gabled roof, but overtime it has grown to encompass several other buildings within the Miesch complex. The original Cloth Cutting Building, constructed ca. 1920, has a gabled roof sheathed in rolled asphalt. At the roofline is a bracketed wooden cornice. The north and south facades have brick parapet wall with stepped brick details. The south façade is blind, except for a shuttered garage bay that is not original to the building. Bays are divided by projecting brick pilasters. Windows on the west elevation are span the width of each bay and are divided into 9, multi-light parts. Eventually, the Cloth Cutting Building would expand north so that by 1950 it connected with the earlier (ca. 1909) Printing Shop. By the time this connection occurred, the printing shop, a 1-story brick building with a frame 5-ft. raised monitor roof, was repurposed as a carpentry shop. During the latter half of the 20th century, further infill expanded the Cloth Cutting Building west to connect with the ca. 1920 1-story, brick carpentry shop. Today the Cloth Cutting Shop is a conglomeration of early 20th century ancillary buildings connected by mid-to-late 20th century, 1-story infill structures.

Interior Description:

The interior of this building was not accessible at the time of this survey. Sanborn maps dating to 1950 indicate the building has a cement floor and wood trusses.

Alteration Dates:

Alteration(s):	Circa Date:	Date Range:	Source:
Physical alteration	1940	to	Building connections
Physical alteration	1960	to	Building connections

Architect/Designer:

Date form completed: 9/25/2012

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Principal Investigator: Patrick Harshbarger

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Organization: Hunter Research, Inc.

ELIGIBILITY WORKSHEET - Properties

Property ID **-932617725**

History:

While only ephemeral evidence was available under the scope of this research, the Miesch Mfg. Co. may be associated with Kaspar Miesch, a surname of likely Austrian or Bavarian origin. Miesch started ca. 1886 as a tenant in the Dale Silk Mill on Railroad Ave. Later, the incorporation of the Miesch Mfg. Co. in 1889, capitalization of shareholders from Philadelphia and elsewhere, allowed him to erect of a small, 60x200 handsome mill to "manufacture on an extensive scale all kinds of fine ribbons and silk goods that are used in the millinery trade [hats], making a specialty of manufacturing only the finest class of goods." This mill, located on Courtland Street in South Paterson was expanded prior to 1915. Around that time the John C. Welwood Corp purchased the Miesch Company and a new works was constructed on Totowa Avenue, ca. 1909. Historic records are unclear as to whether Welwood purchased the Miesch Company before or after its expansion to Totowa Avenue, but historic maps clearly label John C. Welwood as owner of the Totowa site by 1915.

The association with John C. Welwood Corp. is significant in that it represents a significant shift in the silk industry at the turn of the century to the proliferation of conglomerate businesses. These entities, like the J.C. Welwood Corp. based in New York City, had capitalist motivations of accumulating specifically smaller entities often built by nineteenth-century families or the previous generation of "trade expert" owners, so as to capture ever smaller market shares of the times due to extreme competition, technological change, and increased specialization. This and other complexities developed and contributed to the shrinking and eventual demise of the traditional silk industry in Paterson by mid century. As reported by Grace Hutchins in her book Labor and Silk (1929), a study about the Paterson Silk Strikes of 1925-26:

"The Miesch Manufacturing Company, owned by the John C. Welwood Company, has just been merged with the Buser Silk Company. The two merging concerns run eleven plants in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, and have now become a \$3,000,000 corporation, the Miesch Manufacturing Company employing 2,000 workers. The best of the looms in the Buser mill have been moved to the Miesch plant and the old looms are discarded. The company states that all workers in the Buser factory have been taken into the Miesch mill."

Advertisements for the Miesch Co. in Paterson touted association with J.C. Welwood as "sole Selling Agents" and by the mid-1920s, the Welwood Co. as "largest silk ribbon manufacturer in the world." Miesch Mfg. Co. touted its Trade Marked brand of "Olive Branch Ribbons" and mills established in Paterson, Allentown, PA, Piermont, NY, and Hallstead, PA. All were "represented" by J.C. Welwood, who may have had an ownership interest through merger, or owned Miesch outright. This is also clarified by Hutchins in Labor and Silk (1929):

"The non-union ribbon mills of the Miesch Mfg. Company are owned now by the John C. Welwood Corporation. The company has recently grown by a merger described in a later section. Its capitalization was increased from an original \$100,000 to \$1,000,000 in 1920. John C. Welwood, president of the corporation, lives on upper Fifth Avenue, overlooking Central Park. He is the largest stockholder in his company. Assets of over \$3,000,000 of the concern are in ratio of about three to one of liabilities. It claims "the largest ribbon business in the world." Broad silk mills at Hawley, Honesdale, and White Mills, Pa., also help largely in building up the profits of the John C. Welwood Corporation."

It is unknown when the Welwood Corp. and the Miesch Co. left the silk ribbon business, but records demonstrate that the Totowa Avenue works was operational under the Miesch name until the mid-1930s. It is also documented in Silk and Labor that the Miesch mill workers were involved with the Paterson Silk Strike of 1925, and the appearance of Miesch and Welwood in this book demonstrated the eventual demise of the traditional American silk industry caused by the many complexities of capitalist markets and labor conflicts.

Statement of Significance:

Operations at the Miesch Silk Co. Totowa Avenue demonstrated a counter-trend away from single-site, family-based silk weaving businesses toward conglomerate operations. This decentralization of business, along with technological advances, altered work expectations and conditions within silk mills, contributing to the strike of 1925.

Architecturally, the Miesch Silk Co. Totowa Avenue Works follows the typical linear form of turn of the century textile mills, allowing for the use of line shafts to distribute on-site generated power to mill machinery. It has excellent integrity of design and materials.

Eligibility for New Jersey and National Registers: ☒ Yes ☐ No

National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Level of Significance: ☒ Local ☐ State ☐ National

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-932617725

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Justification of Eligibility/Ineligibility:

The Miesch Silk Co. Totowa Avenue Works are recommended eligible under Criterion A for their operation as a conglomerate mill and their association with the Paterson Silk Strike of 1925. They are also recommended eligible under Criterion C as the mill embodies the distinctive characteristics of textile mill architecture with an emphasis on functionality and efficiency.

Total Number of Attachments: 3

List of Element Names: Miesch Silk Co. Totowa Avenue Works Mill
Miesch Silk Co. Boiler House
Miesch Silk Co. Cloth Cutting Building

Narrative Boundary Description:

Date Form Completed: 9/25/2012

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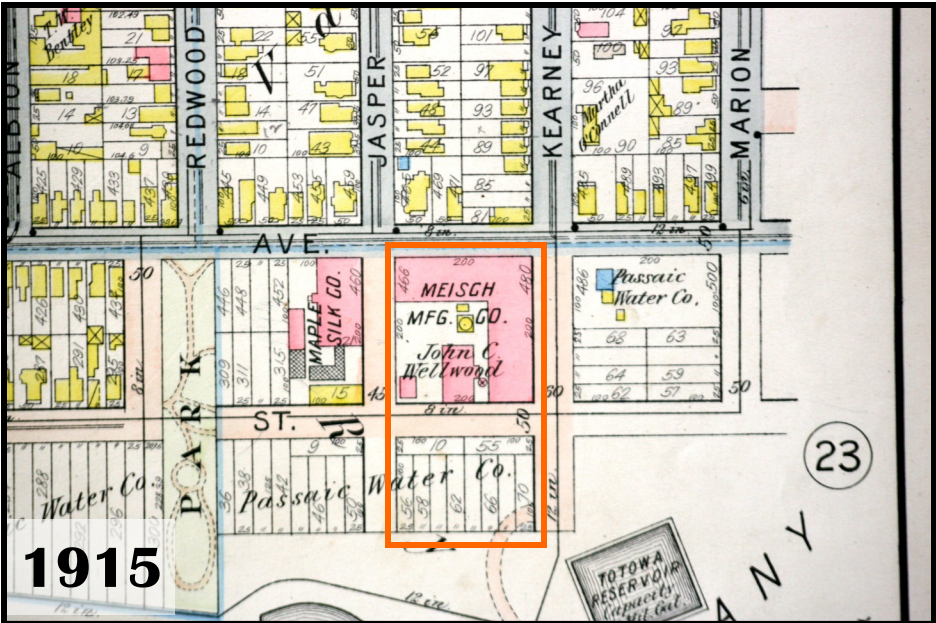
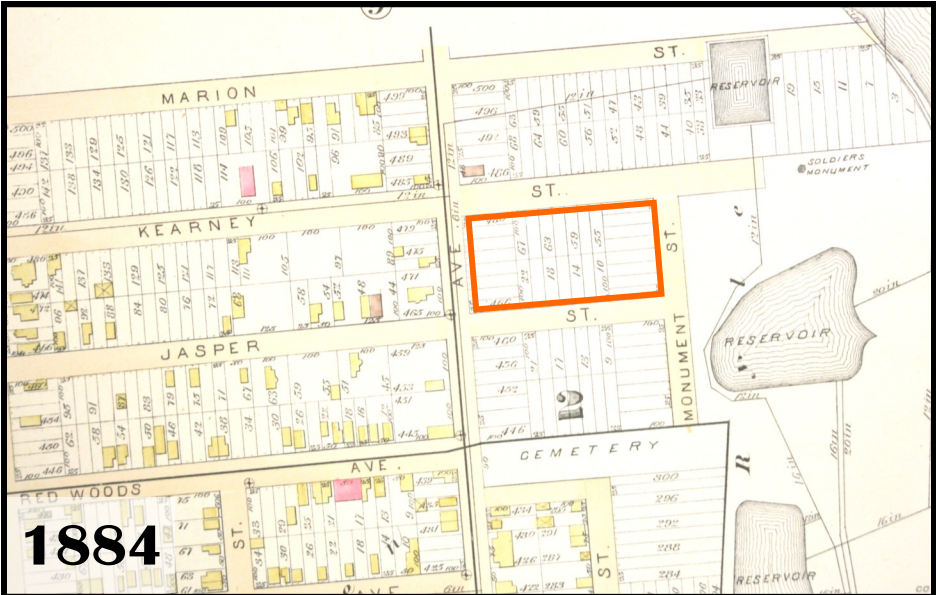
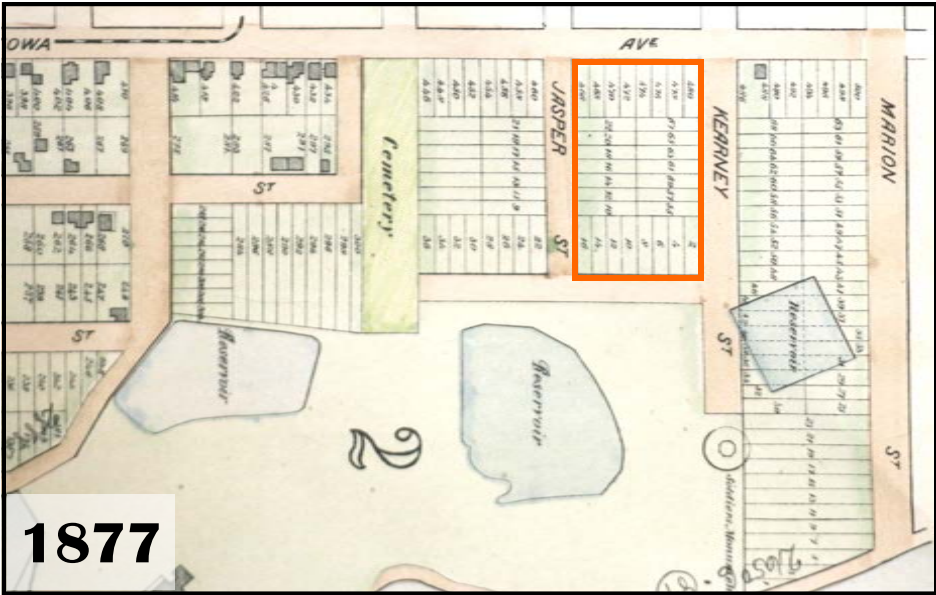
☒ (Primary Contact)

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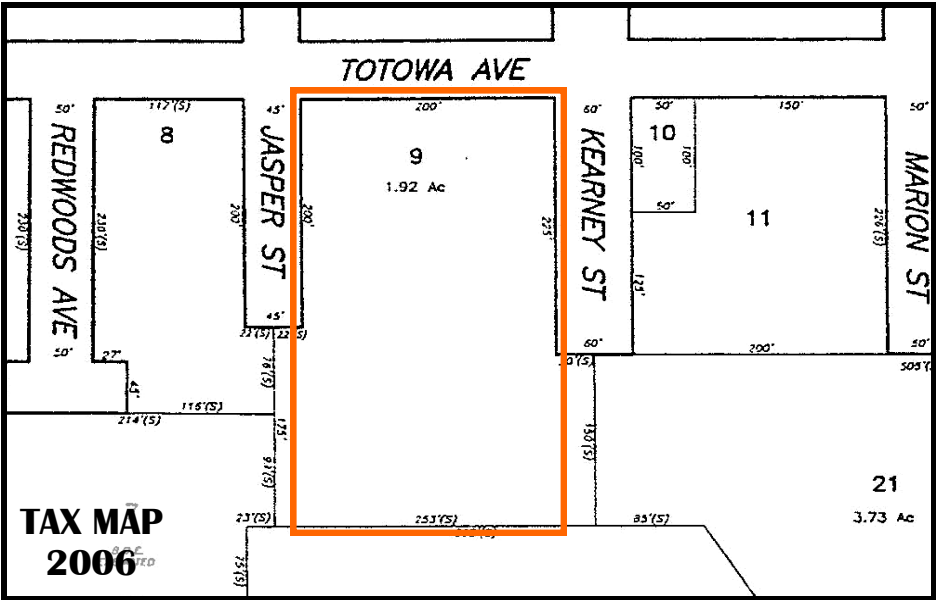
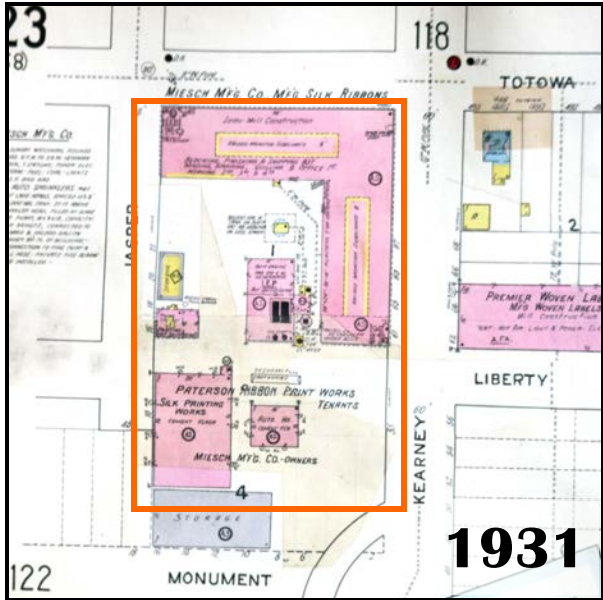
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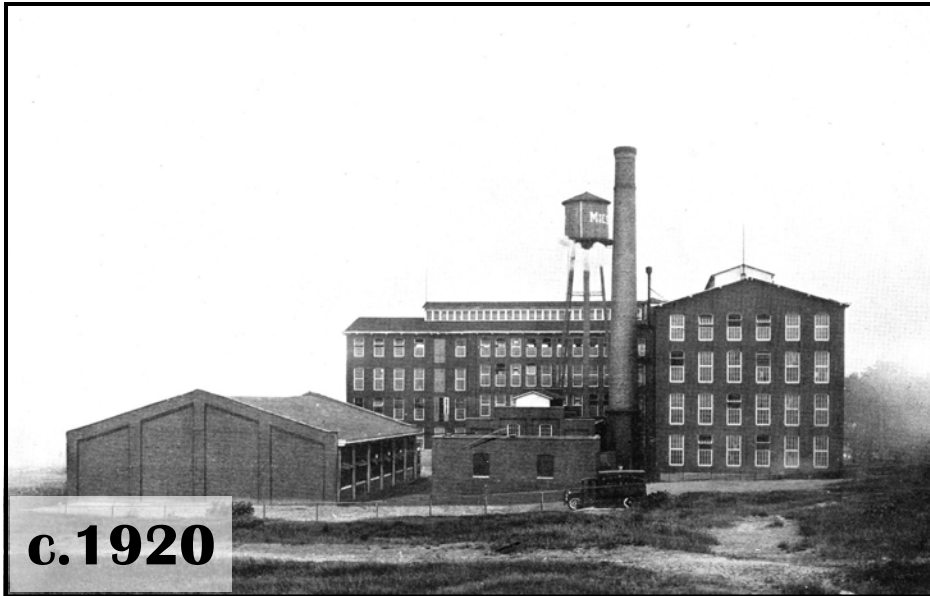
MIESCH SILK RIBBON MFG. CO. Totowa Ave.
468 Totowa Ave, Paterson, NJ B 801 L 09
Site Development Maps 1877, 1884, 1899, 1915



MIESCH SILK RIBBON MFG. CO. Totowa Ave.
468 Totowa Ave, Paterson, NJ B 801 L 09
Site Development Maps, 1931, 2006, 2010



MIESCH SILK RIBBON MFG. CO. Totowa Ave.
468 Totowa Ave, Paterson, NJ B 801 L 09
Photographs, historic / contemporary



MIESCH 1: c.1920 looking N at rear of complex. Note clerestories along ridgeline of both wings, smokestack, Boiler house at center, and silk printing shop at left.

MIESCH 2: a similar view to no. 1, looking N at rear of complex.



MIESCH 3: Silk Printing shop, oblique view looking NW showing S façade. Note intact cornice detail, and later addition of rolling door entrance and side wing infill.



MIESCH 4: Administration Building, looking W, showing E side. Note 1920s addition at rear.

MIESCH SILK RIBBON MFG. CO. Totowa Ave.
468 Totowa Ave, Paterson, NJ B 801 L 09
Photographs, historic / contemporary



MIESCH 5: oblique view looking SW from Kearny St. showing Totowa Ave. façade.



MIESCH 6: oblique view looking NW, showing Kearny St. façade.



MIESCH 7: detail view looking S, showing Totowa Ave. façade.



MIESCH 8: looking SE, showing intact Boiler House and smoke stack at center of complex.