DHR | Virginia Department of Historic Resources

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 298-5003

1. General Information

District name(s): Scottsville Tire Cord Plant

Main Streets and/or Routes: 800 Bird Street

City or Town: Scottsville

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Albemarle

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: ~23

Setting (choose only one of the following):
Urban _____ Suburban _____ Town __X__ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural_____

Briefly describe the district's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The Scottsville Tire Cord Plant is located just outside the historic core of the town of Scottsville, Virginia. The property is located along the banks of James River and surrounded by a large berm constructed in the 1980s as a flood protection measure. The historic entrance to the property is located along a tree-lined street adjacent to the James River that meets a parking lot added by the mid-1960s. After the construction of the earthen berm, a new road was added north of the former access. A paved road circles the primary plant building. While there is limited vegetation immediately adjacent to the plant, the property's perimeter is heavily wooded.

3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): Industrial; Moderne

If any individual properties within the district were designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here:
unknown

If any builders or developers are known, please list here: Daniels Construction Company

Date(s) of construction (can be approximate): 1944, 1957, 1958, 1964, 1966, 1974, 1980, 1990s

Are there any known threats to this district? Flood; Redevelopment

Narrative Description:

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire historic district, such as building patterns, types, features, and the general architectural quality of the proposed district. Include prominent materials and noteworthy building details within the district, as well as typical updates, additions, remodelings, or other alterations that characterize the district.

The Scottsville Tire Cord Plant, constructed in 1944, is a one-story, rectangular masonry building with a flat roof, corbelled brick cornice, and common bond brick exterior. Though primarily industrial in character, the building features elements of Moderne style architecture, which was popular during the 1930s and 1940s. The original core of the building includes a 125,500 square-foot manufacturing floor, with an office and administrative entrance on the primary, south elevation. The office is 13-bays wide with two double-door entrances and symmetrically spaced windows. A flat canopy shelters each entrance, which retain their aluminum storefront, though the glass has been boarded over. A set of concrete steps and iron railing lead to each entrance, and the east entrance also has an ADA ramp. Each door is surrounded by Moderne-influenced decorative inset brick. The windows have aluminum frames and concrete sills, and their glass has been boarded over or removed. The rest of the south façade is primarily windowless, with the exception of two casement windows near the eastern end of the building. An addition to the west end of the south façade was added between 1966 and 1974.

The north (rear) elevation has a common-bond brick exterior, punctuated by single and loading door entries that open onto a concrete loading platform that runs the length of the building and is sheltered by a flat or pent-roof canopy. The central portion of the rear elevation features two stories of wood windows, whereas the rest of the elevation relatively few window openings.

Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, several metal warehouse additions were constructed to the west elevation of the original plant. Each addition was connected via an internally connected hyphen to the main plant. Each addition has a metal gable roof and corrugated or v-crimp metal siding. A central loading door entrance is located at the front of each warehouse addition and is covered by a flat metal canopy.

The interior of the plant is primarily characterized by its large open floor plan. The office and primary entry on the south elevation is divided into smaller offices that feature a mixture of wood paneling, tile wainscotting, and plaster walls, dropped ACT ceilings and VAT floor covering. The main plant has large open floors with exposed ceiling structure and exposed metal structural supports. The plant has a combination of hardwood flooring and unfinished concrete floors. While most of the looms have been

removed, some large machinery remains in the building, as well as the historic metal catwalks that were used to supervise and oversee production. Much of the plant interior is currently used for storage and obscures some features of the interior. Additional photos will be taken and a photo key provided upon removal of the materials and prior to the preparation of a National Register nomination. The warehouse additions have exposed structure on the interior and lack traditional finishes.

The Scottsville Tire Cord Plant includes approximately 14 resources, including the Main Plant building. The resources range in construction date from 1944, with the original plant construction, to the 1990s, when modern flood control measures and updated mechanical and electrical equipment were constructed on the site. Below is a preliminary inventory of historic resources, estimated construction date based upon aerial photographs and other historic documentation, and preliminary evaluation of the contributing status of each resource:

No.	Resource Name	Estimated Construction	Contributing Status
1	Main Plant	1944, with additions in 1957, 1958, 1964, 1966, and 1974	Contributing Building
2	Power House and Smoke Stack	1944	Contributing Structure
3	Water Tower	Ca. 1946	Contributing Structure
4	Concrete Block Warehouse	1964	Contributing Building
5	Reservoir	1966	Contributing Structure
6	Wood Shed	1974	Contributing Building
7	Metal Shed	1974	Contributing Building
8	Metal Shed (2)	1974	Contributing Building
9	Metal Garage	1980	NC Building
10	Electrical Tower	1980	NC Structure
11	Mechanical Building	1980	NC Building
12	Driveway Gatehouse	1990	NC Building
13	Parking Lot Gate House	1990	NC Structure
14	Hydrant Sheds (4)	1990s	NC Structures

Discuss the district's general setting and/or streetscapes, including current property uses (and historic uses if different), such as industrial, residential, commercial, religious, etc. For rural historic districts, please include a description of land uses.

The resource is located on an industrial property surrounded by a rural landscape to the north and west, town core to the east, and the James River to the south. The resource remained an industrial property throughout the entirety of its period of significance, and is now vacant.

4. District's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the district, such as when it was established, how it developed over time, and significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.) Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

If the district is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

The Scottsville Tire Cord Plant is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Industry for its association with the production of synthetic tire cord that lined rubber tires. The plant was constructed by the United States Defense Plant Corporation in 1944 to increase the production of rubber to meet wartime needs. Following the war, the U.S. Rubber Company purchased the plant and continued operations through several mid-twentieth century corporate mergers. It is an excellent local representation of the public-private partnerships that expanded industrial capacity of the United States during World War II. At the time of its construction, the plant was considered state-of-the-art for textile production. The large, open, windowless building utilized fluorescent lighting and modern machinery to increase efficiency. As reliance on the automobile increased throughout the twentieth century, demand for rubber tires and the tire cord that strengthened them continued to increase. The Scottsville Tire Cord plant also served as a critical employer and economic driver to the rural communities that surrounded Scottsville, and at its peak, employed nearly 400 men and women. The Scottsville Tire Cord Plant has a period of significance beginning with its construction in 1944 through 1974.

Prior to the 1940s, the economy of Scottsville, Virginia, primarily relied upon the railroad, which was introduced in the late nineteenth century after the decline of the canal system. The town's location at a critical point along the James River had, prior to the Civil War, made it an important port for transporting goods through the James River Valley. The Civil War left the town desolate and its economy shaken as many commercial and industrial buildings had been destroyed. Among the industrial buildings that were destroyed at the close of the Civil War were a woolen factory, candle factory, and flour mill, as well as several warehouses. While the town had not been home to a large industrial facility in nearly 70 years, the central location among several rural counties, and ample real estate along the railroad made it a prime candidate for the U.S. Defense Plant Corporation's industrial development needs.[1]

In 1940, the Defense Plant Corporation (DPC) was established as a subsidiary of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), which had formed during the Great Depression. The RFC used public and private funds to lend to financial institutions, as well as state and local government for projects that supported economic development. The success of the RFC coupled with the development of other New Deal programs during the Great Depression marked a shift in typical wartime spending. During World War I, the U.S. government used public funds to finance construction of facilities that supported the production of military armaments, as these were seen as risky investments to private industry. The reserved risk profile of private industry remained the same during World War II—unwilling to take on the financial burden of increasing production that would not be sustained after the war. Therefore, the DPC was formed, and authorized to "subsidize construction on non-arsenal defense industries—those plants whose products were not exclusively military but whose expansion entailed a risk of capital unattractive to the private section—through a scheme by which the government built plants and leased them to

[1] National Register of Historic Places, Scottsville Historic District, Albemarle County, Virginia, National Register #76002093.

business corporations for the duration of the emergency."[2] The deals brokered between the US government and private industries were intended to ensure that wartime production needs were met, while allowing American industry to remain in private hands.[3]

In the spring of 1944, the DPC purchased approximately 66 acres near the Town of Scottsville for the construction of a tire cord plant at a cost of more than $2.2 million. The building's design and plant operations were overseen by the United States Rubber Company, which, by the 1940s, was among the countries "big four" rubber manufacturers. The plant was then leased to U.S Rubber for the remainder of the war. The cornerstone ceremony in May 1944 was well-attended and featured remarks by Virginia Governor Colgate W. Darden, H. E. Humphreys, vice-president of the U.S. Rubber Company, and O. L. Ward, the new Plant Manager, among others.[4] Governor Darden's address noted that the new plant was a "significant step toward achievement… of an economy in which agriculture will be balanced with industry." He also recognized the important contribution that the plant, Scottsville, and the surrounding areas would make toward the war effort.[5] The ceremony noted that the plant, which at its opening produced rayon tire cord, would be able to "produce enough rayon to help build 600,000 medium sized truck tires," for the war program.[6] At the height of plant operations, it was estimated that its 300 employees would be able to produce 12 million pounds of tire cord, using 25 looms, 15,000 ply twisting needles, and 11,000 twisting singles.[7]

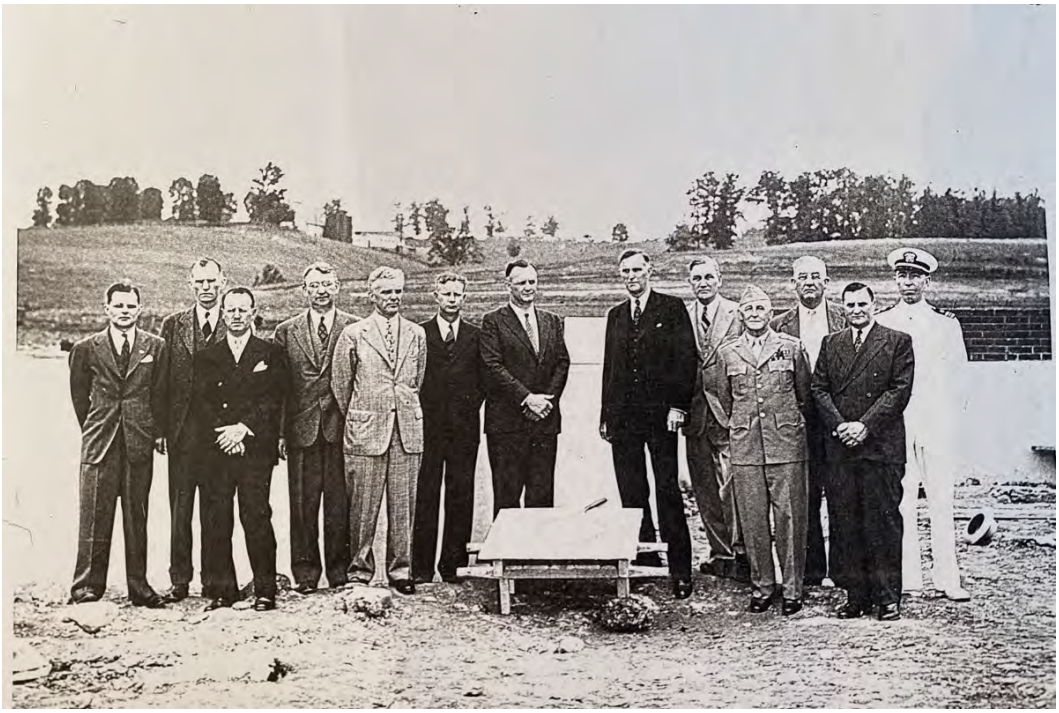

Figure 1: Cornerstone Ceremony, May 1944, Courtesy of Albemarle County Library

[2] Daniel R. Beaver, Review of "Billions for Defense: Government Financing by the Defense Plant Corporation during World War II," *The Historian*, February 1982.
[3] Gerald T. White, "Financing Industrial Expansion for War: The Origin of the Defense Plant Corporation Leases," *The Journal of Economic History*, Nov 1949.
[4] "Governor Speaks at U.S. Rubber Ceremonies," *Scottsville News*, 25 May 1944.
[5] "Scottsville Plant Hailed as Forward Step for Virginia," *Charlottesville Progress*, 25 May 1944.
[6] "Governor Speaks at U.S. Rubber Ceremonies," *Scottsville News*, 25 May 1944
[7] "Peak Tire Cord Production will be Reached in March," 29 Dec 1944; "U.S. Rubber Co. Buys Cord Plant" Charlottesville Progress, 27 Nov 1945,

Prior to US involvement in World War II, American rubber companies were already experimenting with rubber and tire production in order to meet increasing demand for automobile tires and supply chain needs. In the 1930s, U.S. Rubber Company and Goodyear worked with funders such as the DuPont family to develop a synthetic tire cord that would help overcome cotton supply shortages. In 1938, U.S. Rubber began producing rayon, "a synthetic fiber that had better wear resistance and strength than cotton cord." This allowed for tires with thinner walls, reducing the usage of rubber during the wartime shortage. Additionally, the reduction in rubber usage allowed for lighter weight tires, perfect for airplanes, and it "became a standard in military truck tires."[8]

RAYON CORD FOR TIRES — Evelyn McGuire watches rayon tire cord as it speeds through looms in the new rayon mill operated at Scottsville. The looms turn out high-strength fabric used in the manufacture of heavy-duty synthetic tires for trucks and airplanes.

Figure 2: Clipping from Times Dispatch, 15 Dec 1944, captured a Scottsville Plant employee working with the rayon looms.

At the close of World War II, the US government began this process of disposing of the plants that the US Defense Plant Corporation had funded. In November 1945, the U. S. Rubber Company, which had been operating the plant since its inception, purchase the property from the Surplus Properties Administration for $1.8 million.[9] The purchase was one that U. S. Rubber had hoped to make even prior to the completion of its construction.

The tire industry, including U.S. Rubber Company, underwent a number of large corporate mergers and reorganizations in the mid-to-late twentieth century. In 1961, U.S. Rubber Company began operating as Uniroyal, and later merged with Goodrich and Michelin, before selling to Hyusong. Under Uniroyal, the plant was enlarged several times. By 1968, the plant had 390 employees and produced 28 million pounds of tire cord annually. During the 1960s and 1970s, the tire cord materials changed from rayon to nylon,

[8] Quentin R. Skrabec, Jr., *Rubber: An American Industrial History*, 193-194.

[9] "U.S. Rubber Co. Buys Cord Plant" Charlottesville Progress, 27 Nov 1945

and to a triple ply fabric that included a weaved combination of nylon, rayon, and fiberglass.[10] During the 1960s and 1970s, the plant also developed amenities around the facility that served the community's recreational pursuits, including tennis courts, fishing ponds, and a four-hole golf course.[11] While Scottsville Tire Cord Plant's production supplied materials specific to the company's tire products, Uniroyal was responsible for producing rubber for home décor and building materials, agricultural products and tools, sports equipment, and clothing.[12]

Figure 3: U.S. Rubber Company employees playing croquet on the lawn in front of the Scottsville Plant in 1949. Courtesy of Scottsville Museum.

Like the rest of the Town of Scottsville, the tire cord plant was impacted by devastating floods in the 1960s and 1970s, including those caused by Hurricanes Agnes and Camille. In the 1980s, the plant implemented several flood protection measures including the construction of an earthen berm and several pump stations. This resulted in the reorientation of the primary access point which had historically been along the southern, tree-lined road now leading to a large parking lot. The flood protection measures allowed the plant to remain in operation with limited impact to the historic plant building. The Scottsville Tire Cord Plant remained in operation until 2009 when Hyusong finally closed its doors. It has remained vacant since, as the town and development professionals worked to determine the best path for its future use.

[10] *Scottsville of the James*; Oral history interview with Barbara Wilkinson, former employee, by author.
[11] *Stories from Scottsville*
[12] George R. Vila, *The Story of Uniroyal: 75 Years of Progress*, The Newcomen Society in North America: New York, 1968.

5. Property Ownership (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: __X___ Public\Local _____ Public\State _____ Public\Federal _____

6. Applicant/Sponsor (Individual and/or organization sponsoring preparation of the PIF, with contact information. For more than one sponsor, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: _Matt Lawless, Town Administrator_____
organization: _Town of Scottsville_____
street & number: _401 Valley Street_____
city or town: _Scottsville_____ state: _VA_____ zip code: _24590_____
e-mail: _ mlawless@scottsville.org_____ telephone: _ 434-286-9267_____

Applicant's Signature: _____
Date: _____

• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •

In the event of organization sponsorship, you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: _____
Daytime Telephone: _____

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than applicant/sponsor listed above)

name/title: _Kayla Halberg, Preservation Project Manager_____
organization: _Commonwealth Preservation Group_____
street & number: _536 W 35th Street_____
city or town: _Norfolk_____ state: __VA_____ zip code: _23508_____
e-mail: _admin@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com telephone: _757-923-1900____
Date: _1/25/2023_____

7. Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager.

name/title: _Matt Lawless, Town Administrator_____
organization: _Town of Scottsville_____
street & number: _401 Valley Street_____
city or town: _Scottsville_____ state: _VA_____ zip code: _24590_____
e-mail: _ mlawless@scottsville.org_____ telephone: _ 434-286-9267_____

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Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources

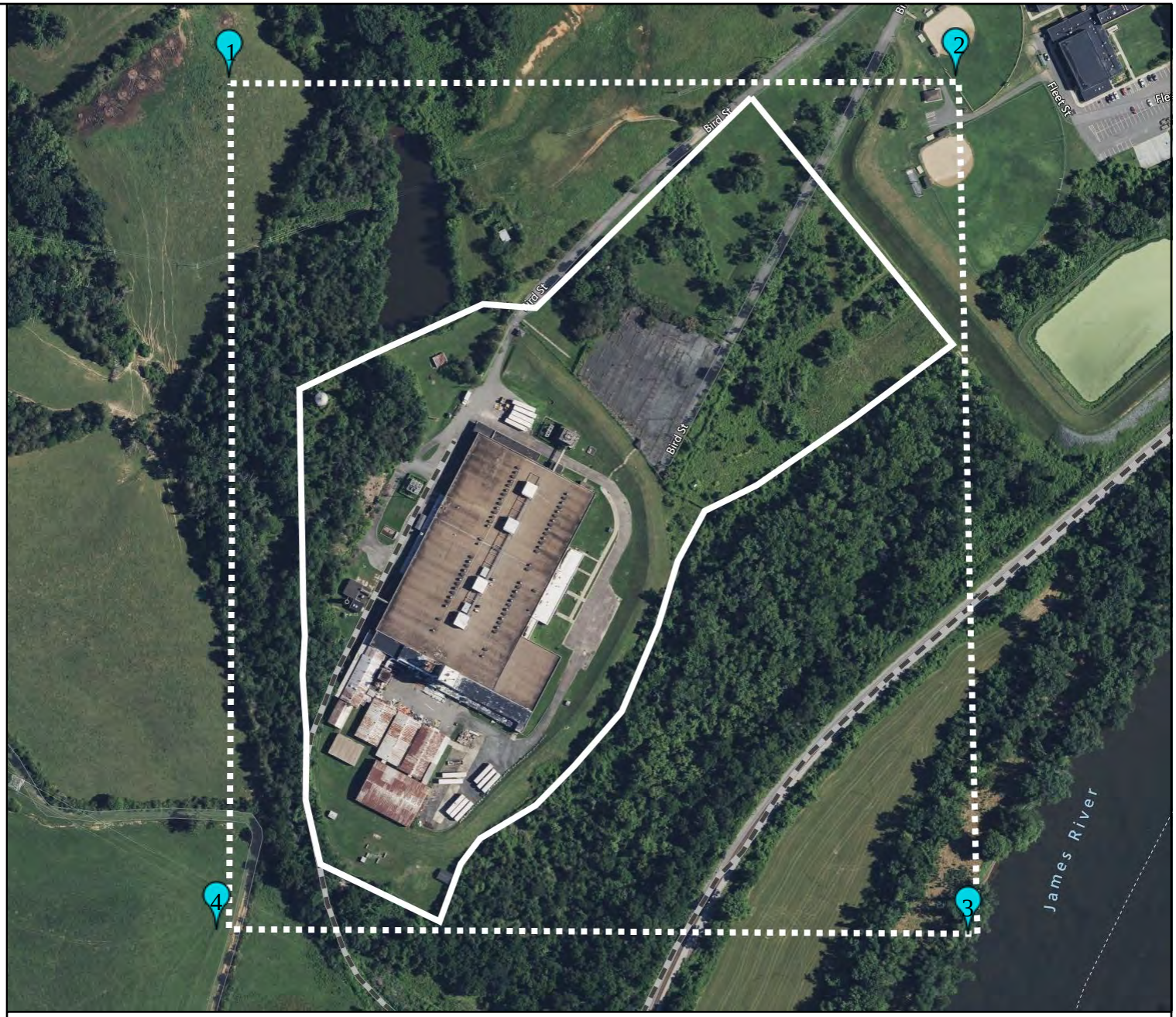
V-CRIS

Virginia Cultural Resource Information System

Legend

Scottsville Tire Cord Plant
800 Bird Street
Scottsville, Albemarle Co, VA

Location Points:
1. Lat: 37.79748; Lon: -78.50344
2. Lat: 37.79749; Lon: -78.49841
3. Lat: 37.79280; Lon: -78.49832
4. Lat: 37.79282; Lon: -78.50353



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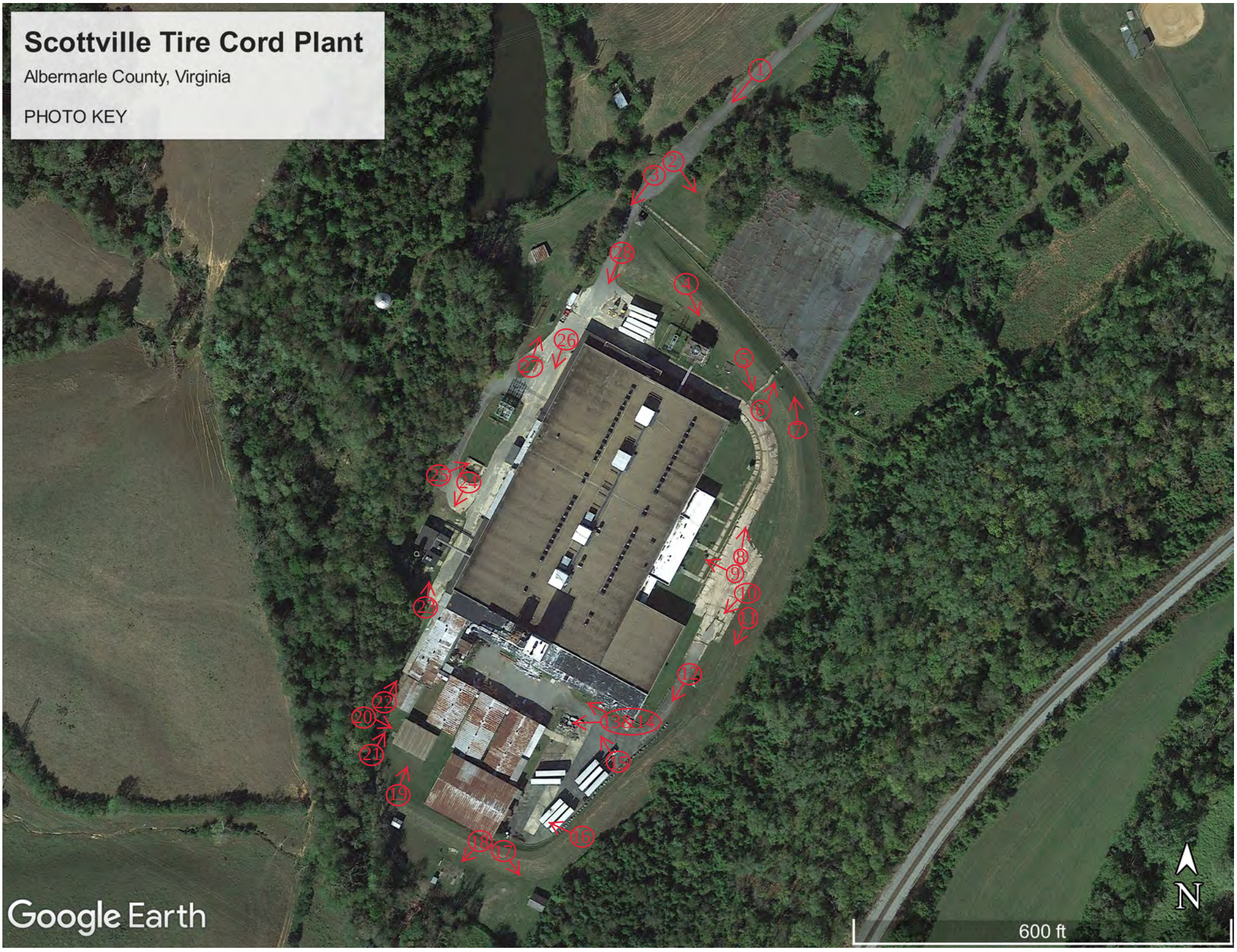
Title: Scottsville Tire Cord Plant (298-5003) PIF Location Map

Date: 1/25/2023

DISCLAIMER:Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions.The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

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


Scottville Tire Cord Plant
Albermarle County, Virginia
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Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources

V-CRIS

Virginia Cultural Resource Information System

Legend

Scottsville Tire Cord Plant
800 Bird Street
Scottsville, Albermarle Co., VA

PIF Sketch Map Key

1: ca. 1944 Main Plant with additions in 1957, 1958, 1964, 1966, 1974
2: ca. 1944 Power House and Smoke Shack
3: ca. 1946 Water Tower
4: ca. 1964 Concrete Block Warehouse
5: ca. 1966 Reservoir
6: ca. 1974 Wood Shed
7: ca. 1974 Metal Shed
8: ca. 1974 Metal Shed
9: ca. 1980 Metal Garage (NC)
10: ca. 1980 Electrical Tower (NC)
11: ca. 1980 Mechanical Building (NC)
12: ca. 1990 Driveway Gatehouse (NC)
13: ca. 1990 Parking Lot Gate House (NC)
14: ca. 1990's Hydrant Sheds, Scattered on site (NC)

Title: Scottsville Tire Cord Plant (298-5003) : Sketch Map **Date: 1/25/2023**


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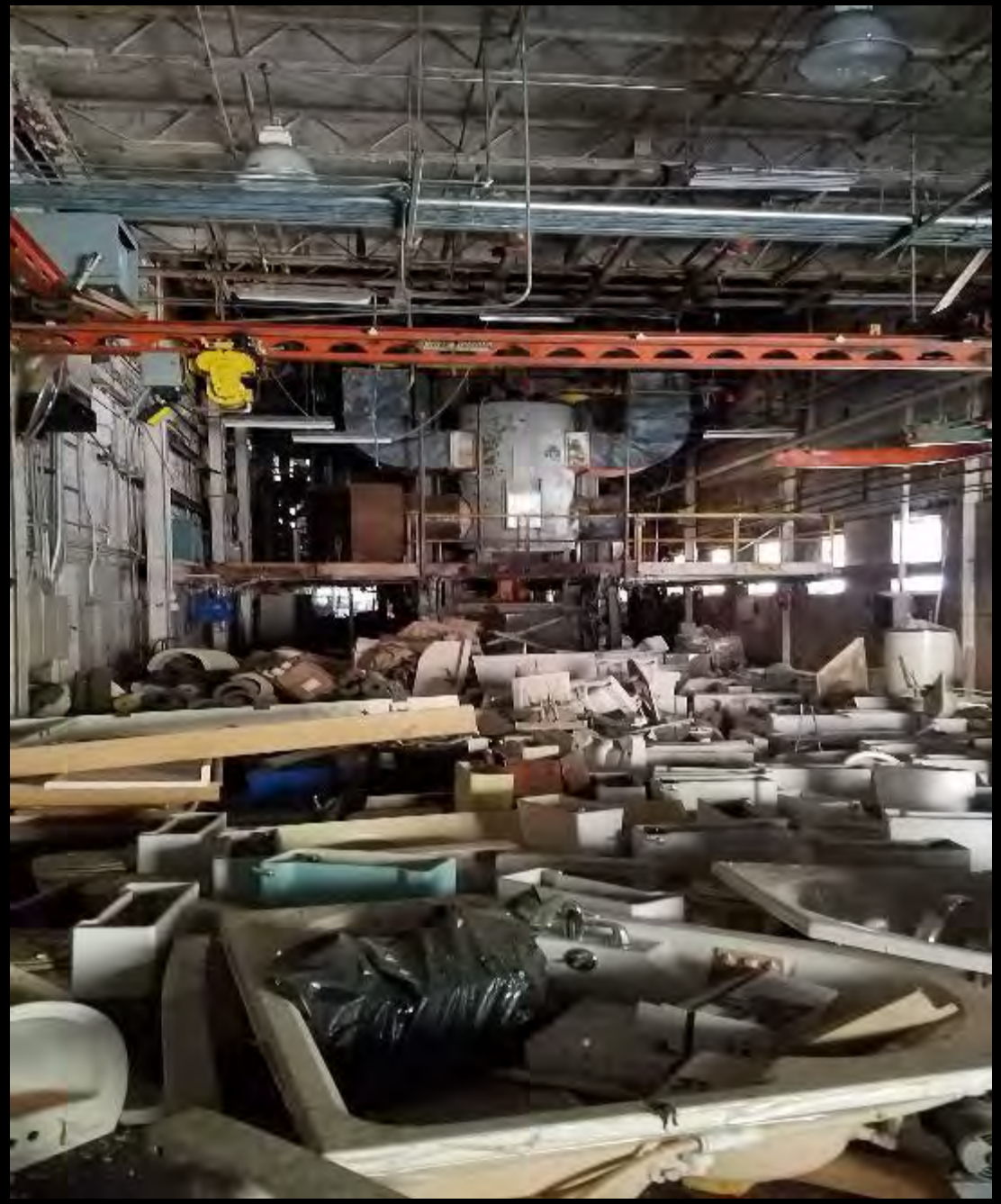


NO SMOKING