Historical Context and Physical Reconnaissance of the Pillsbury Mill Site in Springfield, Illinois

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Under the terms of the February 11, 2025 contract with Moving Pillsbury Forward, this FICAS report provides an historical context for the Springfield facility, which includes a brief background of the Pillsbury Company, its role in the Springfield industrial economy, its transition and closure 1991-2001, and a chronology of facility development at the plant. The report also includes a generalized summary of the extant buildings on the property, information about their function as derived from extant oral and written sources, and also notes regarding the current integrity of extant factory systems.

Also included in this study is a general description of historical artifacts and paper documents found at the site, as well as transcripts of three principal oral history interviews conducted with former employees. The report is intended to accompany the exhaustive photographic documentation of the architecture and facilities at the site, as recorded by Ben Halpern and submitted under separate cover.

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Acknowledgments

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The authors also wish to thank the numerous former employees of the Pillsbury Mill that visited the site during our study, providing critical insights into the workings of the plant and its history.

Valary Carraro (FICAS) served as field assistant and copy editor for this report.

All historical images courtesy of Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library, unless noted.
All contemporary site photographs courtesy of Robert Mazrim unless noted.
Abbreviations used in citations: ISR = Illinois State Register (newspaper), SJR State Journal Register (newspaper).

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Section 1

Pillsbury Mills and Its Role in the History of Springfield

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For over seven decades, the Pillsbury Flour Mill played a pivotal role in the economic and social development of Springfield, Illinois. Established in 1930, the plant quickly grew to become one of the city's leading employers, reaching its peak workforce during the 1950s. Despite its success, the mill experienced a gradual decline due to increased competition, evolving technologies, and changing market conditions—culminating in its closure in 2001. Beyond its economic contributions, the mill was deeply integrated into the civic life of Springfield. Employees organized and participated in various charitable activities, sporting events, and community initiatives, often through a company-sponsored recreation committee.

The Pillsbury Company was established in 1869 by Charles A. Pillsbury, who acquired a one-third interest in a Minneapolis flour mill. During the 1870s, the company expanded rapidly through the purchase of additional mills and soon reached a production capacity of 3,000 barrels of flour per day. Pillsbury distinguished its product with the label *Pillsbury's Best*, a name that came to symbolize quality in the flour market. In 1881, the company built the Pillsbury A Mill, which became the largest flour mill in the world at the time. A major innovation was the implementation of the roller milling system, which replaced traditional grindstones and significantly increased flour yield from wheat kernels.

In 1889, the company sold three mills and an elevator operation to a newly formed enterprise backed by English investors—Pillsbury-Washburn Flour Mills. Although the company reached new production milestones in the 1890s, poor harvests and unfavorable economic conditions led to financial instability. By 1909, the firm entered receivership, and its mills were leased to a newly incorporated entity known as the Pillsbury Flour Mills Company.

Early Milling in Springfield

Springfield's milling history predated Pillsbury's arrival and played a key role in the city's economic foundation. Early mills, powered initially by animals, gave way to water powered and then steam-powered operations during the mid nineteenth century. The city's milling industry reached its peak in the 1870s and early 1880s, with five flour mills in operation. The largest, the Elevator Milling Company, opened in 1880 and could produce 300 barrels of flour per day. It featured a storage elevator with a capacity of 125,000 bushels of grain and advanced milling equipment for its time.

However, by the late 19th century, the local flour milling industry began to decline. Increasing competition from larger out-of-state producers, especially those in Minneapolis, undercut local brands. By 1886, only two mills remained operational in Springfield. In a symbolic act of resistance, the Illinois Millers' Association met in Springfield in 1894 to encourage consumers to support locally milled flour in the face of "powerful spring wheat milling combinations" forming in the northwestern states (ISR 4-21-1894).

The Elevator Milling Company shifted to corn milling in 1900 due to repeated wheat crop failures. While corn products such as hominy and grits became mainstays, the overall decline of flour milling continued. A devastating fire in 1927 destroyed the Elevator Milling Company's facilities and marked the end of an era in local milling.

In 1929, the Springfield Chamber of Commerce successfully attracted Pillsbury to the city by promoting its ideal location, strong labor force, and excellent rail connections. The announcement of the construction of a new plant by the Pillsbury company was regarded as a revival of the flour milling industry in Springfield. Ironically that same company, by producing a superior, cheaper flour, had contributed to the demise of the earlier, local flouring industry in Springfield.

Pillsbury selected a site on the northeast side of Springfield, adjacent to the Chicago and Illinois Midland Railroad yard. This location offered strategic logistical advantages: direct access to major rail lines, proximity to wheat-producing regions, and the added benefit of mineral rights to the property—thus ensuring the land could not be undermined by mining activity.

The site itself had a layered history. Originally undeveloped, it served as a racetrack during the 19th century, hosting the Great National Horse Show and Equestrian Fair in 1865. Known as Osborn's Driving Park in the late 1860s, the area remained semi-rural until purchased in 1895 by the Chicago, Peoria and St. Louis Railroad, which constructed a roundhouse and shops. The Chicago and Illinois Midland acquired the Chicago, Peoria and St. Louis Railroad in 1926.

By the late 1920s, residential development had expanded to surround the industrial corridor. Subdivisions like Tracy's Melrose Addition and others built by the Wanless family established neighborhoods to the north and east of the railyard.

At the time of Pillsbury's arrival, Springfield was a mid-sized industrial hub with a population of approximately 71,800. The city offered a capable workforce and a diverse local economy. Coal mining, active since 1867, still employed nearly 5,000 men in fifteen mines. Over 1,000 retail stores employed 4,000 full-time workers, generating $45 million annually. Major construction projects were underway, including a new administration building for Springfield Junior College, the Central Illinois Power Service Building downtown, and municipal efforts to develop a new lake for a public water supply.

Springfield's industrial identity was reinforced by a variety of manufacturers producing watches, tractors, electrical meters, automobile parts, shoes, pumps, and lawnmowers. Two significant industrial milestones occurred around the same time as Pillsbury's arrival. The Hamilton Watch Company acquired the Illinois Watch Company, and Allis-Chalmers established its presence in the city by purchasing the Monarch Tractor Company. Allis-Chalmers became a dominant employer, alongside Pillsbury, in Springfield's mid-century economy.

The 1930s – Growth, Unionization, and Community Engagement

The Pillsbury plant in Springfield officially began flour production on February 17, 1930. Within seven months, its daily milling capacity doubled to 4,000 barrels, marking the beginning of a decade of significant expansion. As the plant expanded, so too did its workforce and community presence. A bowling league was established in December 1930, with teams named after Pillsbury products such as Sno Sheen, Whole Wheat, Pancake, and Farina. Additional recreational activities—including softball and basketball teams—soon followed, reflecting Pillsbury's broader emphasis on employee morale and workplace culture.

Following the repeal of Prohibition, a local establishment—The Mill Tavern—opened in 1933 just south of the plant. Operated by the Cohen brothers beginning in 1934, the tavern was later renamed The Mill Restaurant and gained a reputation for quality food and live entertainment before it was destroyed by fire in 1972 (Mann 1996:99).

By 1936, the Springfield plant employed approximately 325 individuals across milling and administrative departments. Its product line included Pillsbury's Best Flour, Sno Sheen Cake Flour, wheat cereal, Farina, and bran. To meet growing demand, a major facility expansion was undertaken in 1937 with the construction of the C-Mill. This addition made the Springfield location the fifth-largest flour producer in the United States and the largest in Illinois (ISR 11-2-1937).

Unionization efforts gained momentum in the late 1930s. On June 1, 1937, Pillsbury recognized the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in all plants where a majority of employees had unionized. Shortly thereafter, AFL organizer Lumbert Betson arrived in Springfield to assist with organizing efforts, leading to the formation of Feed and Flour Mill Workers Local No. 21101.

One of the decade's most memorable initiatives was the company's "silver dollar payroll" experiment. For three weeks in April 1939, Pillsbury paid its employees entirely in silver dollars in an effort to stimulate local economic activity. On the first payday, $20,000 in silver dollars was delivered to the plant under police escort.

Pillsbury female employee exhibit their silver dollar payroll. Two plain clothes Springfield detectives, Mester (right) and Cantrall (left) keep guard with their Tommy guns. (Photo courtesy of the Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library)

The 1940s – War Effort, Postwar Transition, and Corporate Expansion

The 1940s represented a pivotal era for Pillsbury Mills in Springfield, characterized by wartime mobilization, and then by the postwar evolution of the company and its labor practices. During World War II, the plant operated at full capacity and aligned its production efforts with national needs. Pillsbury's primary contribution was nutritional: the company began producing enriched white flour fortified with B vitamins and iron in accordance with the National Research Council's recommendations (ISR 4-12-1942).

In recognition of its efficiency and wartime service, the Springfield plant received the Army-Navy "E" Award for excellence in production in 1942. Employees participated in war bond drives, a ride-sharing program, and Red Cross blood drives. A union-sponsored dance was introduced in 1942 to

support a local sick fund. Union records note that 206 employees enlisted in the military during the war, six of whom died in service (ISR 9-3-1944).

In 1944, the company changed its name to Pillsbury Mills. President Philip Pillsbury visited the Springfield plant later that year to award "years of service" pins. Pillsbury was instrumental in designing the company's growth in postwar consumer product development. The plant produced one of the company's first new products: a pie crust mix.

After the war, the Truman administration ordered a temporary halt on the production of certain flour types to support international famine relief, prompting a two-day protest by workers. A national railroad strike and wheat shortages also temporarily reduced operations. Pillsbury restructured its business into four operating divisions by 1947 and later specialized into categories such as grocery products and grain merchandising (Powell 1985:147).

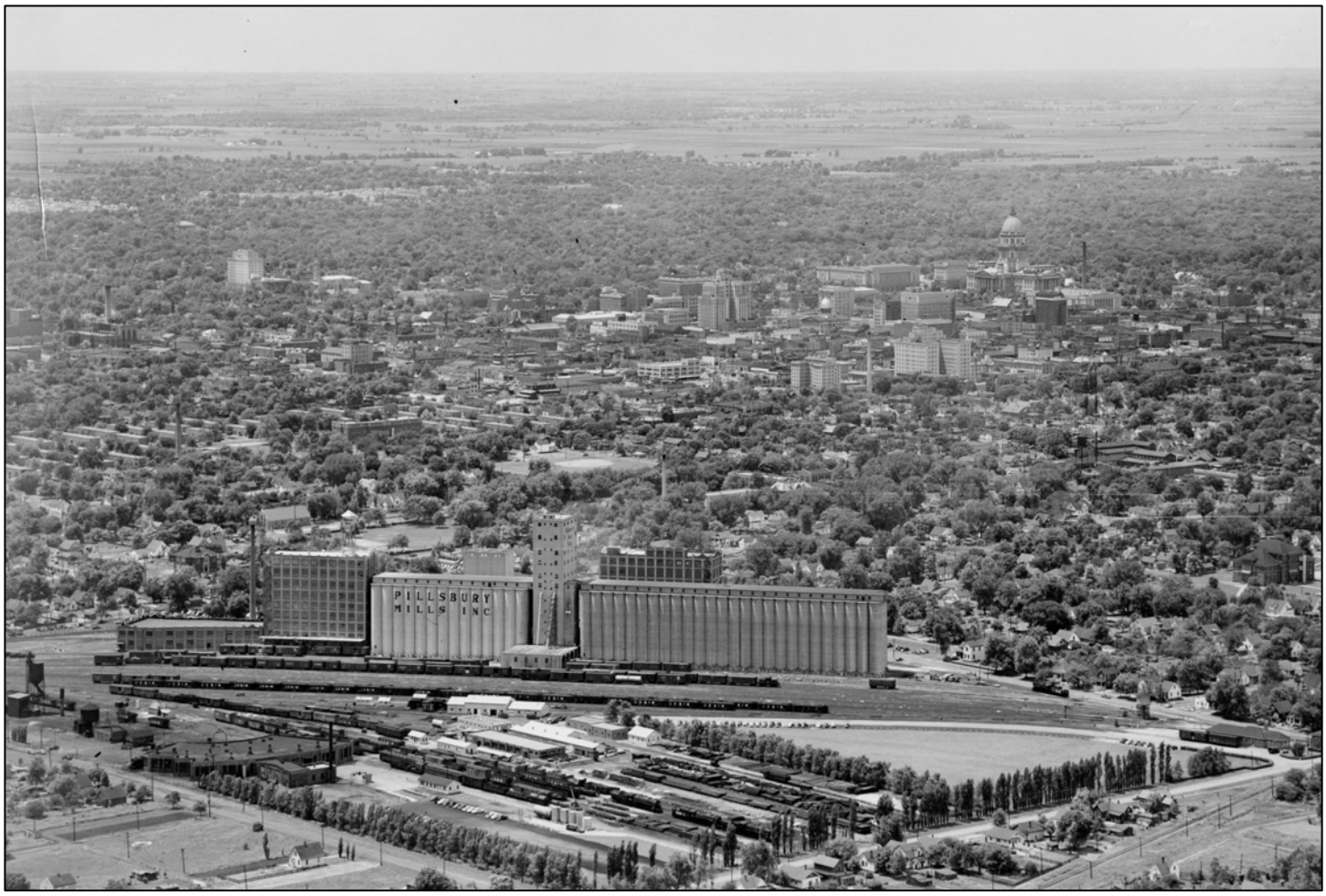
Labor negotiations intensified in 1946 with demands for wage increases, resulting in a twelve-day strike that secured an 8.5-cent raise. This was one of the first known strikes at the Springfield plant. Stalled negotiations between management and labor eventually lead to potential or actual strikes. The local union bargained for wages but relied on the American Federation of Gran Processors AFL to secure national agreements that covered all flour mill workers. These national agreements included issues such as pension and retirement programs, improved sick leave and arbitration clauses (ISJ 2-2-1948). Community involvement continued through union donations and events such as a noteworthy charitable donation fund to help completion of a home for a permanently disabled veteran. The fifty-dollar donation from union members paid for the plastering of the walls for the house of Richard Icenhower (ISJ 1-23-1947).

Instruction in safety was a customary practice at the plant. The entire workforce received an award in recognition of outstanding safety efforts in 1949. However, accidents in the plant did occur. The earliest record of a serious injury at the plant dates to July 1930, and involved an employee losing a hand while oiling machinery (ISR 2-19-1930). Lacerations to hands and arms were the most common form of injury. Newspaper articles in the 1940s noted accidents involving injury to limbs caught in belts, machines, boxcars, and elevators. Burns from dry ice and propane tanks were also reported. While accidents resulting in death were not common, two deaths are known to have occurred during the 1940s. The first death occurred when an employee died from a heart attack while at work. The second death occurred when Delmar W. Corra was crushed to death when a heavy steel cable winding on a drum trapped is body on the device

In 1949, the plant became the site of the country's first dedicated premix production facility. That same year, Pillsbury launched the Pillsbury Bake-Off, which became a defining aspect of its consumer branding.

The 1950s – Peak Production, Consumer Expansion, and Labor Disputes

The 1950s marked a high point for Pillsbury Mills in Springfield, both in terms of employment and production. The postwar boom, coupled with strategic acquisitions, positioned the company as a major player in the national food industry. The Springfield plant, along with Allis-Chalmers and Sangamo Electric, stood among the city's top manufacturing employers, collectively shaping Springfield's industrial identity during this prosperous decade.



1950s aerial view of the Pillsbury Mills plant, facing southwest.
(Photo courtesy of the Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library)

Pillsbury began the 1950s with an aggressive strategy of expansion through acquisition. In 1951, the company purchased Ballard and Ballard Company of Louisville, Kentucky—the largest flour producer in the southern U.S.—gaining access to a new regional market. The following year, Pillsbury acquired Duff Baking Mix Division of American Home Products Corporation, adding a major player in the consumer baking mix market to its portfolio. This purchase halted plans the company was making for the possible construction of a new plant at Springfield or Buffalo, New York (Powell 1985: 153).

Despite ranking last among major food companies in earnings in 1952, Pillsbury's leadership pursued consumer food innovation aggressively. By the mid-1950s, it had risen to lead the market in frozen dough products and dominated sales of pie crust, cake, and hot roll mixes. Its flagship product, Pillsbury's Best Flour, remained a household staple. In 1958, the company formally dropped "Mills" from its name, rebranding as The Pillsbury Company to reflect its broadened scope.

Union activity intensified. A strike in 1950 won workers a 7.5-cent hourly wage increase. A 1952 contract brought a 10-cent raise and enhanced vacation benefits. Disputes in 1953 and 1957 over job reclassification and workload consolidation caused work stoppages. A 33-day strike in 1959 ended with workers accepting a company proposal after two rejections.

Another rail strike in 1951 resulted in the plant closing down because of limited supplies of material. Almost all of the employees were laid off work while a few made needed repairs to the mill (ISJ 2-4-1951). The plant was able to resume normal operations five days later.

A fire in the grain drying building of the mills on December 27, 1951 caused extensive damage to machinery in the building. The cause of the fire was undetermined, but one potential source was a spark from a drying fan. The cost of repairing or replacing damaged equipment was estimated to be approximately $100,000. (ISR 12-28-1951).

By 1955, the plant employed 1,500 workers and produced 52 distinct products across 543,000 square feet. It could grind 1.65 million pounds of flour per day and package 50,000 baking mix units per hour. Pillsbury had been experimenting with a new turbo grinding and turbo separation process at the Springfield plant in 1953, and announced to the public the development of turbo milling in 1957 (Powell 1985: 167). The new method was described as a "revolutionary flouring technique which makes possible the production of entirely new types of flour" (ISR 4-30-1957). A one-million-dollar expansion was initiated in 1958 to enlarge the plant's turbo milling operation. The facility was ready for operation in January 1960.

The 1960s – Diversification, Modernization, and Workforce Reduction

The 1960s marked a continued period of corporate expansion for Pillsbury, both domestically and abroad. The company acquired several new businesses, extended its product lines, and expanded into international markets. At the Springfield plant, significant investments were made in new machinery and infrastructure. However, this growth was paired with the first indications of long-term contraction, including job reductions and the closure of one of the plant's milling units (C-Mill).

In 1960, Pillsbury acquired Tidy House Products and Gibbs Goodies, and expanded into food production abroad. In Springfield, Pillsbury invested $1.5 million in facility upgrades and new packaging technologies. Despite these improvements, employment declined from 1,500 in the 1950s to 800 by 1963. A 1966 report ranked Pillsbury as the area's third-largest manufacturing employer (Kain 1966:12).

Labor relations remained stable. A two-week strike in 1961 preceded a wage increase; subsequent contracts in 1963 and 1964 were settled without major conflict. In 1964, the C-Mill unit was closed, resulting in job losses. City officials viewed this loss as manageable within the growing local economy. Growth in non-manufacturing jobs allowed city leaders to be optimistic (ISJ 3-31-1964).

Significant changes in the flouring industry benefited the company's flour milling division including the Springfield plant. The first was a reduction in the number of the nation's flour mills. The second was a stabilization of the per capita flour consumption in the country (Powell 1985: 189). Encouraged by these developments, Pillsbury moved forward with the modernization of its mills. In 1966 a major plant upgrade was announced for the Springfield plant. The plant was considered the company's largest and most diversified operation (ISR 3-9-1966). Among the products that Pillsbury acquired with the purchase of the Ballard and Ballard Company in 1951 was a refrigerated biscuit dough. Related products, including buttermilk biscuits and cinnamon rolls, were soon introduced. The market for the refrigerated fresh dough market expanded in the 1960s. As a result, Poppin Fresh®, or the Pillsbury Dough Boy, was introduced in 1965. This advertising move was intended to unite all the

refrigerated dough products under one symbol (Powell 1985: 180). An image of the Pillsbury Doughboy was found on a control panel in the former Springfield plant in 2023. Former employees suggested that an employee working at the plant may have sketched the original image. However, this seems unlikely as the Doughboy was created to represent the company's refrigerated dough products, which were not produced at the Springfield plant. In 1967, Pillsbury acquired the Burger King franchise, adding a new restaurant division to its increasingly diversified portfolio. The restaurant chain consisted of 275 stores in about 28 states as far west as Colorado (Powell 1985: 183).

By the late 1960s, rising operational costs prompted management to assess the Springfield plant's future viability. The goal for the 1970s was to regain competitiveness through cost control and new product lines.

The 1970s – Rising Costs, Decline, and Industrial Challenges

The 1970s were a turning point for the Pillsbury plant in Springfield. While the company continued to diversify its portfolio nationally and internationally, the local facility faced mounting financial pressures. Rising operational costs, mechanical obsolescence, and changes in market demand placed increasing strain on the workforce and infrastructure. Although modernization efforts and collaborative labor-management initiatives sought to revitalize the plant, these efforts only delayed an eventual decline.

Pillsbury and the local union implemented cost-saving measures including a supplemental retirement program introduced in 1972. That year, Pillsbury remained the third largest manufacturing employer in Springfield with 760 workers. Allis Chalmers continued as the top employer with 3,200 and Sangamo Electric, second, with 2,150 (Industrial Development Council 1972:3). Both Allis-Chalmers and Sangamo Electric underwent major changes during the next three years. Allis-Chalmers and Fiat S.P.A. of Italy formed a construction machinery partnership called Fiat-Allis in 1973. Sangamo Electric was sold to the Schlumberger Electric Company in 1975. Two years later Schlumberger announced it was considering closing the plant and removing operations to other plants. Management asked production workers to reduce their pay by more than $2 per hour. Efforts to keep the plant in Springfield failed. The Springfield plant closed, and production was moved to Georgia and Florida.

Despite remaining the city's third-largest manufacturing employer, the plant began extending shutdowns, and possible layoffs were announced in 1975 (SJR 1-19-1975).

A string of equipment-related fires and explosions troubled the plant throughout the decade. A 1971 dust explosion, fires in the bakery and grain buildings, and a fatal warehouse accident underscored persistent safety risks. A product recall in 1971 due to ground glass in Farina highlighted quality control challenges.

Nationally, Pillsbury rebranded as a food product-centered company and acquired Steak and Ale and Totino's Frozen Pizza. Still, local management grew increasingly pessimistic. By 1978, plant employment had fallen to 435, and Springfield's aging infrastructure and high labor costs made it vulnerable in a competitive marketplace. Plant manager Carl Tully held a meeting with employees to discuss the current business environment. Tully painted a somewhat gloomy outlook for the future of the plant. He told employees that lower production of wheat was having a strong effect on the milling department at the plant. He felt the plant was losing ground in the competitive business world due to rising transportation and labor costs along with the cost of wheat (SJR 9-8-1978).

The 1980s – Retrenchment, Union Concessions, and Corporate Takeover

The 1980s still began with some promise for the Pillsbury plant in Springfield. Product demand remained steady, investment in capital improvements was ongoing, and employment levels were stable. However, optimism faded as Pillsbury's corporate priorities shifted, economic pressures mounted, and the plant's long-term viability came under scrutiny.

After years of investment, including $2 million in 1982 upgrades, a 1984 feasibility study revealed that Springfield's labor and production costs far exceeded those of newer facilities. The local union responded with concessions, including job eliminations, to avoid closure. Pillsbury pledged to keep the plant open.

In a comparable situation, Fiat-Allis had been forced to lay off many of its workers in the late 1970s and early 1980s because of a slump in demand for construction equipment and competition. Their Springfield plant was closed in 1985, leaving Pillsbury as the dominant employer in Springfield manufacturing.

During the next two years, the company spent $4 million for improved packaging equipment. Plant employees were retrained for new jobs and to work with new equipment. A new three-year contract with the union was approved in 1986. Among the terms was the union accepting a wage freeze during the first year of the contract. For its part, Pillsbury committed to building a warehouse distribution facility at the plant. By the summer of 1986, 407 hourly and salaried employees worked at the plant (SJR 7-16-1986). A newspaper editorial lauded the union for agreeing to the new contract. It noted that many of the union employees were within 10 years of retirement and were "willing to accept the logic that keeping their present paycheck was preferable to having none at all." (SJR 7-20-1986).

By the beginning of 1987, the company announced that it was conducting another study to analyze efficiency at the plant. Rumors circulated that the company was planning to reduce employment at the plant by shutting down one production line (SJR 1-29-1987).

In the meantime, a fire broke out on the sixth floor of the bulk plant on March 2, 1987. An electrical panel apparently shorted out and started a fire that spread through four floors and caused extensive damage. 32 firefighters spend two hours extinguishing the fire (SJR 3-3-1987).

During the 1980s, two more deaths occurred at the plant. A contractor was crushed to death when an elevator he was unloading was accidentally activated. Finally, an employee working on a ground level warehouse was crushed by falling products stacked on pallets. The rumors of a production line shutdown proved to be true. Eleven workers were laid off with the shutdown. An additional 30 jobs were being considered for elimination as well (SJR 4-1-1987).

A year later, the company announced a major product realignment for the Springfield plant. All production of bulk Bakery Mix would be moved to a plant in Martel, Ohio. Shift production of (small-package) food product items would return to the Springfield plant. Plant manager Michael Broll noted the plant's familiarity with this type of work would be helpful "with our particular expertise in this plant, we are able to be more competitive handling the food service products than managing the bakery mix." (SJR 5-6-1988).

A 1988 annual report noted the company was the nation's fourth largest flour miller, with eight mills and a daily capacity of 120,000 hundred weights. Pillsbury merged its grain merchandising, special commodities, flour milling and bakery products into a single, client-driven business in 1988 (Pillsbury 1988:8).

In October 1988, Grand Metropolitan PLC (Grand Met), a British liquor and restaurant conglomerate, initiated a hostile $5.2 takeover offer for the Pillsbury Company. Pillsbury rejected Grand Met's offer of $60 per share and urged shareholders not to sell their stock. As a first step in the challenging the takeover, Pillsbury filed a series of lawsuits in 13 states. Over the following two months both sides acted. Pillsbury had several defense strategies available. One was a "poison pill" provision in its bylaws, allowing the company to issue and sell additional shares at a discounted price to existing shareholders. This maneuver would make the acquisition more expensive for Grand Met. Another strategy involved spinning off Pillsbury's Burger King subsidiary into an independent company, with Pillsbury shareholders receiving one share in the new company for every share they owned. The combined value of the two stocks was expected to exceed Grand Met's $60-per-share offer. Grand Met countered these moves with lawsuits of its own and was forced to extend its tender offer deadline several times. Despite this, nearly 90 percent of Pillsbury's stock was eventually tendered to Grand Met. Facing mounting pressure from shareholders - especially after Gran Met raised its offer first to $63 and then to $66 per share – Pillsbury accepted the offer in December 1988. The final deal, valued at $5.7 million, marked the end of the fight. At the time, the Springfield plant employed 350 people and remained a key local employer.

The 1990s – Disinvestment, Plant Sale, and Closure

The 1990s marked the concluding chapter for the Pillsbury facility in Springfield. Following the 1988 acquisition by Grand Metropolitan, Pillsbury underwent a sweeping corporate restructuring. Older and less efficient plants, including Springfield's, were increasingly marginalized. The decade was characterized by sharp workforce reductions, the loss of key product lines, and the eventual sale of the Springfield plant to Cargill, Incorporated (Minnetonka, Minnesota).

In 1990, the grocery product line was moved to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and food service production shifted to Martel, Ohio. In 1991, Pillsbury sold the remaining mill and elevator operations to Cargill, which retained only a fraction of the workforce. Cargill was founded in 1865 as a single grain warehouse in Iowa. The company expanded with purchases of elevator properties across Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and the Dakotas. An eastward expansion began in the 1920s with elevators leased in New York and Canada. After World War II, Cargill diversified by entering the animal feed, seed and soybean processing industries. The company actually had a brief presence in the city prior to the 1991 purchase. In 1943 Cargill acquired the Illinois Soy Products plant in Springfield. Illinois Soy Products had the capacity to process one million bushels of soybeans a year into meal. Cargill operated the plant until it was sold in 1951.

At the Pillsbury plant, layoffs immediately followed the 1991 purchase, and by midyear, only 40 former Pillsbury employees had transitioned to Cargill. The city negotiated utility incentives to retain operations, and Cargill made modest investments in infrastructure. The plant operated quietly under Cargill and a flour mill only until its final closure in 2001, thus ending 71 years of milling in Springfield.

Summary

From the moment production began in 1930, Pillsbury became one of Springfield's largest employers, offering good jobs and sponsoring civic events and social activities. This pattern continued throughout the plant's existence. Over the decades, however, the plant experienced many of the successes and challenges to any business, reacting to factors such as management decisions, labor issues, wartime demands, modernization, fires, and, finally, obsolescence. The first thirty years can be considered a period of growth and expansion, with the plant reaching peak capacity in both production and employment during the 1950s. The next forty years were marked by a gradual decline, despite several efforts to reverse the trend.

In the 1920s, the Pillsbury Company began expanding geographically beyond its Minneapolis base, establishing milling locations in Kansas, Oklahoma, and New York. At that time, the company remained primarily a flour miller. Springfield became the fourth site selected for expansion in 1929. The Springfield plant quickly found success, becoming a prominent facility in the company's holdings and producing at least six distinct products. Recognizing the plant's potential, Pillsbury added another mill—the C-Mill - in 1937. During World War II, the plant demonstrated its value by supporting the war effort through flour production and other services. After the war, Pillsbury shifted its focus toward becoming a grocery products company, with the Springfield plant playing a key role in this transition. In 1949, a new Bakery Premix plant was constructed at a cost of one million dollars.

The Springfield plant reached its height during the 1950s, when it employed approximately 1,500 workers. Despite strong union efforts, company reinvestment, and local support, Pillsbury's operations in Springfield slowly diminished. Over the next thirty years, significant investments in the plant were paired with long-term contraction and job reductions. By 1990, with the loss of the Grocery product line and food service production, the plant had reverted to its original function: flour milling. The sale to Cargill in 1991 briefly sustained this final operation, but in 2001, the doors closed for good.

Pillsbury Mills in Springfield lasted only three generations. Now, as the physical plant faces demolition, the legacy of Pillsbury endures—not only in the city's economic history but also in the lives of the employees and their families, who benefited from the health care and educational opportunities provided by the company. As people gather to share their memories, the old factory transitions from a ruin to an enduring part of Springfield's history.

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Section 2

A Chronology of the Development, Expansion, and Decline of the Pillsbury Facilities at the Springfield Plant

Robert Mazrim

On April 28, 1929, the headline of the Illinois State Register (Springfield) read "Pillsbury to Locate Big Mill Here." Construction would begin immediately, and the plant was scheduled to be completed (impressively) before the end of the year. The initial capacity of the grains silos was to be one million bushels. The initial production estimate was 3000 barrels of flour per day. The estimated cost of construction and outfitting the mill was 1.5 million dollars.

Springfield's Home-Owned Newspaper

ILLINOIS STATE REGISTER

FIRST NEWSPAPER IN THE CAPITAL CITY

Two Press Wires

VOL. 94—NO. 118 SPRINGFIELD SUNDAY APRIL 28 1929 FIVE PARTS

PILLSBURY TO LOCATE BIG MILL HERE

HOOVER WINS VICTORY AS BUCK PASSED TO SENATORS

President Fishes for Few Hours

Flight Fails

Nicholas Senn High Wins State Band Contest With Urbana High School Next

MERCANTILE BOOZE CASE ORDERED TO GRAND JURY

Granted Decree

ELEVATOR OF MILLION BU. CAPACITY TO BE ERECTED

ONE SLAIN IN RENEWAL OF "POLITY BATTLES"

FISHWICK ASKS HOOVER TO AID COAL CONSERVATION

BUSINESS HEAD FOR SCHOOLS ECONOMY PLAN

DEBENTURE PLAN TO BE DEFEATED.

AUTO DEALER

The site of the new mill was announced in early May, at 15th and Phillips (ISR May 8 1929). The ground would be staked off on the morning of May 8th, and construction would begin immediately. The general contractors for the project were the Jones Hettelsater Construction Company (of Kansas City) and Schuck and Son, a Springfield lumber and building materials company. The latter provided sand, gravel, cement, and other materials. They advertised that the job required approximately 30,000 barrels of cement and 50,000 tons of sand and gravel (ISR 5-4-1930). Only "key men" from the company's Minneapolis headquarters were being brought to Springfield. The rest of the labor force was to be trained from the local population. The company also promised to employ locals for construction as well.

Groundbreaking at the mill site, looking northeast. May 1929.

An artist's rendering of the plant published on May 8th included the A-B Mill, the south bank of silos, the Head House, the Grocery Building, the Boiler Room, and a two-story warehouse ("Warehouse #1).

Million Dollar Mill For City—

ARTIST'S DRAWING OF MILLION DOLLAR PILLSBURY MILL FOR THIS CITY—The above picture shows the new mill to be erected in Springfield by the Pillsbury Milling company at a cost of one million dollars. The huge structure will be built at Fifteenth street and Phillips avenue, and the actual work of excavation will be commenced today. The Jones Hettelsater Construction company of Kansas City, Mo., has the contract for the plant. The plant will be constructed of reinforced concrete.

1929 artist's rendering of the Pillsbury Mill at Springfield.

Initial phase of construction of the Head House (views from the southwest and north).
The standing water probably fills the future basement of the Grocery Building.

The Head House, which was at the time was referred to as a 15-story concrete "pit house", was the first building to be completed, followed closely behind by 42 concrete grain silos (on the south of the Head House). The Head House is 210' high, the silos themselves 100' high. After the grain storage

facilities were nearly completed, work shifted to a three-shift, 24-hour construction project (ISR 5-3-1930). The entire facility was built in such a way to allow for additions that did not disrupt production.

Head House completed, silos under construction (view to north).

By October of 1929 there were 56 circular concrete silos standing, each with a capacity of 18,000 bushels of grain. A two-story warehouse building was one of the few that was made partially of timber framing. This was to guard against moisture (common in concrete structures), thus protecting the product that was stored within. A 180' tall concrete smokestack associated with the Boiler Room had also recently been completed. Grain began to be unloaded into the silos by October 25th of 1929.

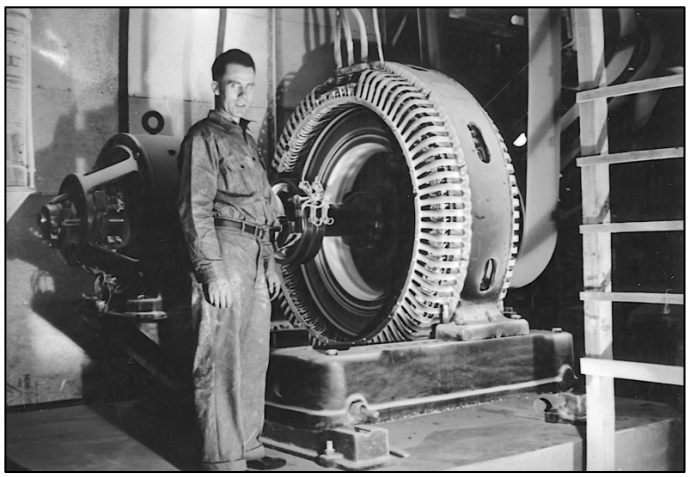
Special bricks were made for the plant. The Pillsbury Company apparently brought bricks from a Minneapolis plant and asked local brickmaker Poston if they could be duplicated. "After a series of experiments, the company found it could duplicate the dark red face brick samples submitted by the Pillsbury officials. The face brick was burned at the Poston Springfield Brick Company, especially for Pillsbury, following the color scheme and texture of other Pillsbury buildings" (ISR 5-3-1930).

The plant was scheduled to formally open on February 1st, 1930 (ISR 1-8-1930), but that was delayed until May 3rd (ISR 5-3-1930). When the plant initially opened, only half of the A-B Mill machinery had been installed. However, plans were already underway to build the C-Mill (which happened in 1937). The second half of the A-B Mill machinery was installed by September 4th, 1930 (ISR 9-4-1930)

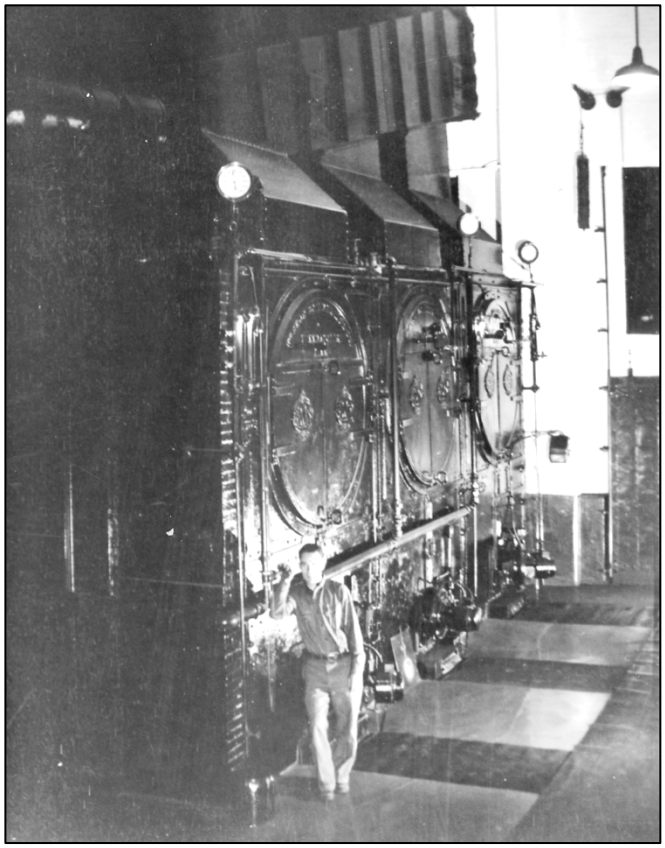
A summary of the Pillsbury plant was published in the Illinois State Journal on November 8th of 1931 – a year into its production. It cited a daily capacity of 3700 barrels of flour and 266,000 pounds of packaged goods. It was reported that the plant was designed for approximately 300 employees, 30 of which were office workers.

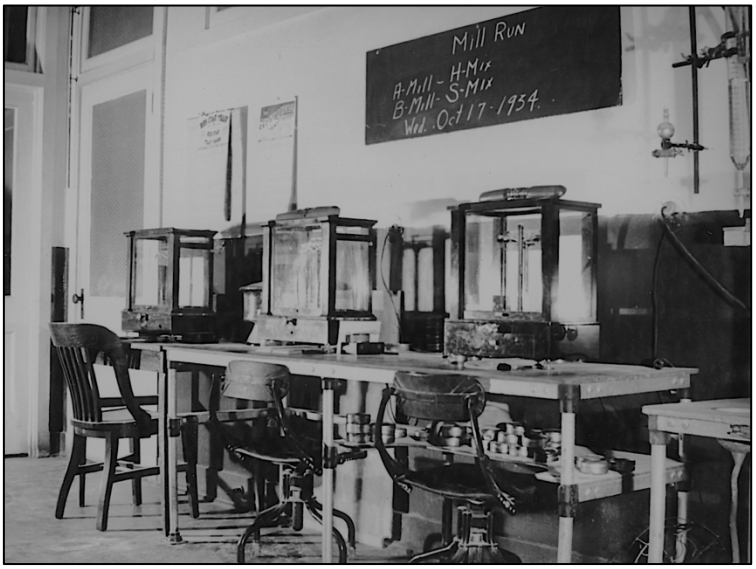
"The plant is fed by eight spur tracks from the main line of the Chicago and Illinois Midland Railroad which runs through some of the most productive wheat, corn and oats counties in the state. On the north and also to the southeast. A chemical laboratory equipped with special apparatus including electric ovens and accurate testing devices of various sorts is an integral part of the plant. Samples of grain, flour and cereals daily are run through tests that have become standard through a long period of successful use."
(ISR 9-4-1930)

1930 view (from the northwest) of nearly-completed first phase of mill.



Motor used to drive mill stands (left) and bakers in the test kitchen (right), circa 1930s.





Above: Boiler room
Upper Right: Laboratory (in Grocery Building?)
Lower Right: Office (in Grocery Building)
Bottom: Packaging flour.
All circa mid-1930s.

Construction of the new C-Mill was underway by May of 1937. The warehouse against the south side of the A-B Mill (known today as Warehouse #1) may have been built as part of the same project. The local newspaper reported a cost of the project at one million dollars (ISR 5-3-1937). Production at C-Mill was scheduled to begin in November.

1937 aerial view from the west of the Pillsbury Mill, with nearly-completed C-Mill and new silos on left.

Circa 1940 aerial view of completed mill complex.

Another lengthy article in the Illinois State Journal on April 13th, 1939 provided details into the workings at the mill:

> *"Production of flour is only a part of the duties the Springfield mill handles in the vast Pillsbury system. The Springfield plant produces all packaged goods sold by the firm over the entire country, with the exception of the states along the Pacific coast. There are eight brands of this packaged good, and the efficiency, size and speed of the plant is best known by listing the amount of each that can be turned out by the package plant simultaneously. In an hour, the package plant can roll off 6600 20-ounce packages of Pillsbury's pancake flour, 1503 half pound packages of the same flour, 3000 packages of Pillsbury's buckwheat pancake flour, 1680 packages of Pillsbury's wheat bran, 900 packages of Pillsbury's cornmeal, the same number of Farina packages, 1600 sacks of Harvest Time pancake flour and 5000 pounds of donut flour."*

These packaged goods were still flours, but they were specialty flours. They were designed for pancakes and donuts, as well as general use. The factory had apparently yet to venture into the realm of pre-mixed, ready-to-bake processed foods. These were first manufactured in the Grocery Building, probably during the 1940s.

Packaging pancake flour in the Grocery Building, circa 1945.

The Springfield factory proudly proclaimed that all packaged goods produced there were handled in such a manner that they were never touched by human hands throughout the process, and that all cereal foods were sterilized to ensure purity and guard against infestation.

"Every hour, a sample of the flour stream is taken and the flour is baked in a kitchen that amounts to a laboratory to afford a practical test. Chemical analysis is going on all of the time. A dingus that looks like a switchboard makes it possible to plug into any bin in the elevator and immediately tell the temperature of the grain in that bin."

"The wheat before it is stored in the bin has been tested by federal inspectors, and a sample of every car of grain is sent to the laboratory for test before being assigned to a bin."

"The grain is purchased directly in car load lots from the farm elevators in this section, which I think means region. After the cars of wheat are tested, the grain is lifted in cups to a continuous conveyor belt thousands of feet long, and it is in this manner taken to the bin to which that car load of wheat has been assigned for milling. The wheat is removed from the bottom of the bins and transported by a similar system to the mills. All wheat is washed, cleaned and tempered before milling. After grinding, the flour is weighed in on an automatic weighing machine, which is tested hourly and sacked."

"The huge warehouse with space for scores of cars of flour forms a large part of the mammoth building. It allows the mill to run at capacity with the flour being stored until sale, and allows sale of flour from the warehouse even faster than it can be produced."
(ISR 4-13-1939)

A considerable expansion of the Pillsbury factory at Springfield, and also an expansion of their product line, occurred in 1949 with the construction of the "Bakery Mix" building and the associated offices, laboratories, and test kitchen there. During the 1950s, this facility (as well as poorly documented updates to the Grocery Building) pioneered the production of processed food mixes for consumer and commercial use. For a time, it appears the Springfield plant was a key component of the company's pursuits in this field. The Bakery Mix Tower was focused primarily on various premixes for products (such as doughnuts, biscuits, rolls, and pancakes) used at a commercial or institutional scale in restaurants, hotels, bakeries, or other large facilities. Production of household consumer mixes remained in the Grocery Mix Building.

The Illinois State Journal Register announced the opening of the new one-million-dollar Bakery Mix plant, on July 20th, 1949. The plant produced 22 types or kinds of prepared mixes. The new building was described as a "push button bakery mix plant."

"Prepared mixes of relatively recent development, designed for use by bakers, restaurants, hotels, institutions, and resorts, are here to stay. When ingredients were hard to get and help was scarce during the war, prepared mixes came into their own. The opinion of some that they would be of temporary nature has proved wrong with the opening of Pillsbury Mill's new plant here, which will handle prepared mixes solely. Reasons for the fact that mixes will remain are easily explained. They offer better inventory control, ease of handling, save time and money, simplify cost control, and result in more uniform quality of the final product."

Circa 1955 view of expanded plant, with Bakery Mix, Administration, and north warehouse in foreground.

"Of the 22 mixes, 16 lend themselves readily to restaurant making, a specialty of serving quality foods. There are two yeast raised mixes, four cake mixes, waffle, egg griddle, pancake, biscuit bran, muffin, corn muffin, pie crust, and gingerbread mixes."

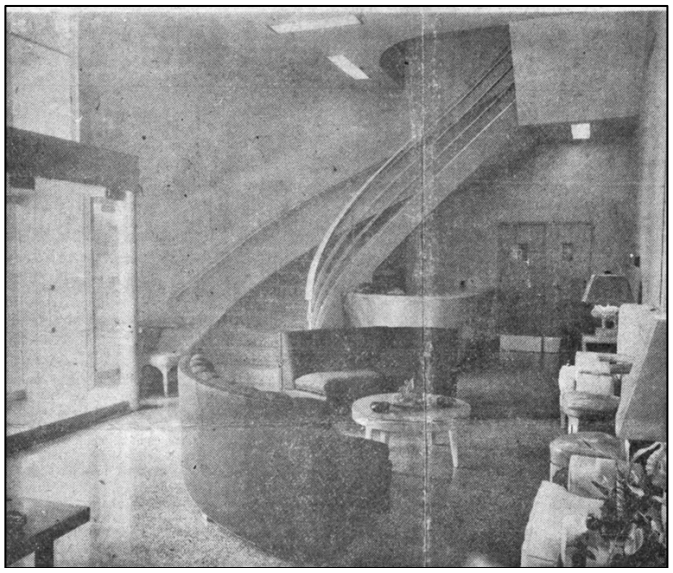
"Time and money saving features of prepared mixes appear equally obvious, but consider a specific case in preparing sweet dough. By the older method, a baker had to go through twelve time-consuming operations. He had to gather his materials, weigh his sugar, weigh his salt, weigh shortening, weigh powdered milk, weigh eggs, weigh flour, measure flavor, add yeast, add ingredients to water, mix, and at last roll the dough onto the bench. The only ingredients that have to be assembled by the newest premix are the mix, yeast, and water. The baker simply has to weigh the mix, add yeast to water, add the ingredients, and put it in the mixer. The dough is ready. Six steps can be eliminated."

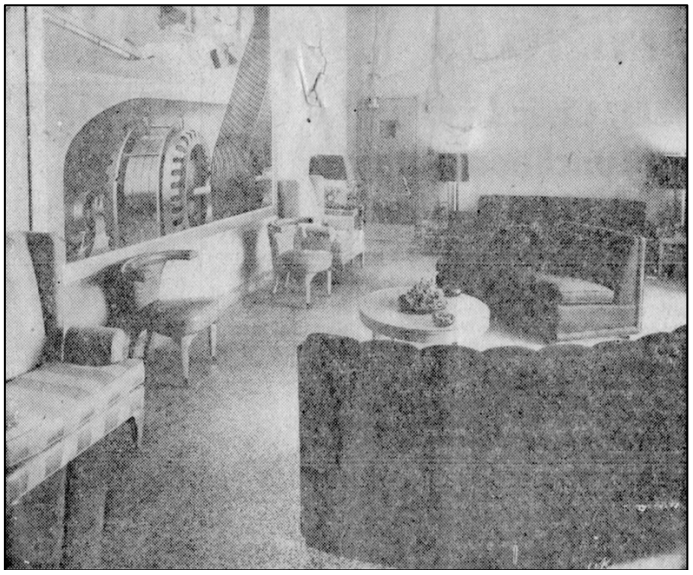
"Behind premix production are the laboratories. Before the ingredients are used in a mix, samples of the raw material are checked in a chemical laboratory. They must measure up to specifications if not, they are not used. A formulation laboratory develops and controls all formula used in Pillsbury premixes. This involves determining all the ingredients used in the formula and the proportions in which they are used. It is necessary for this laboratory to work closely with production department in regard to the best methods of incorporating ingredients."

"It is often wise to use special production procedures to obtain specific baking characteristics. The control laboratory checks all batches made by the production department. The laboratory's functions are to determine whether the batches are up to standard and ready for shipment. The laboratory makes

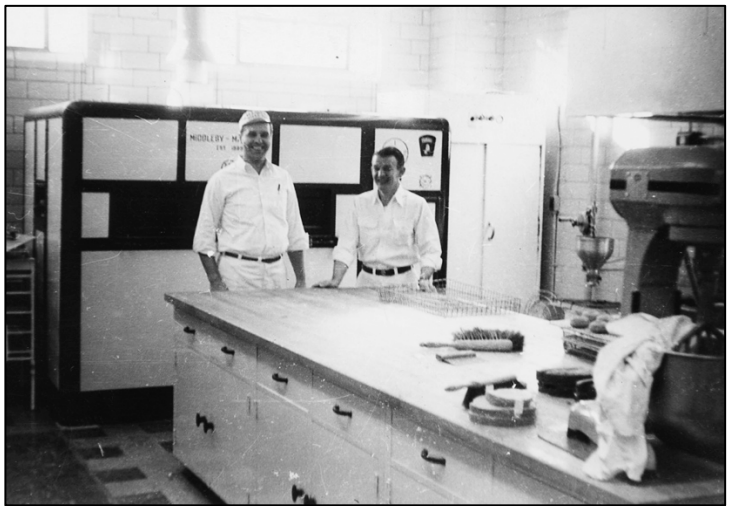
baking tests for all batches. Baked samples are then scored for volume, crust, color, symmetry, grain crumb colorization and other values."

"Pillsbury plant offices are air conditioned despite the fact that temperatures in the premix plant itself range upward from 80 degrees and in some portions become extremely warm because of the requirements of the materials used. Such is not the case in the plant office, part of which is shown here. In air-conditioned comfort, workers complete their daily office tasks in these modern surroundings."





Lobby of 1949 Administration / Bakery Mix Building. Note bottom portion of large painting by Minneapolis artist Gustave Wilhelm Krollman of "milling and allied industries…taken from Pillsbury activities". A portion of that painting is also visible in photo below.




New test kitchen in Administration and Bakery Mix Building. Circa early 1950s.

The 25th anniversary in 1955 of the Springfield plant probably represented the peak of the factory's production and employment. Some statistics published in the Illinois state register on June 26th of 1955 included:

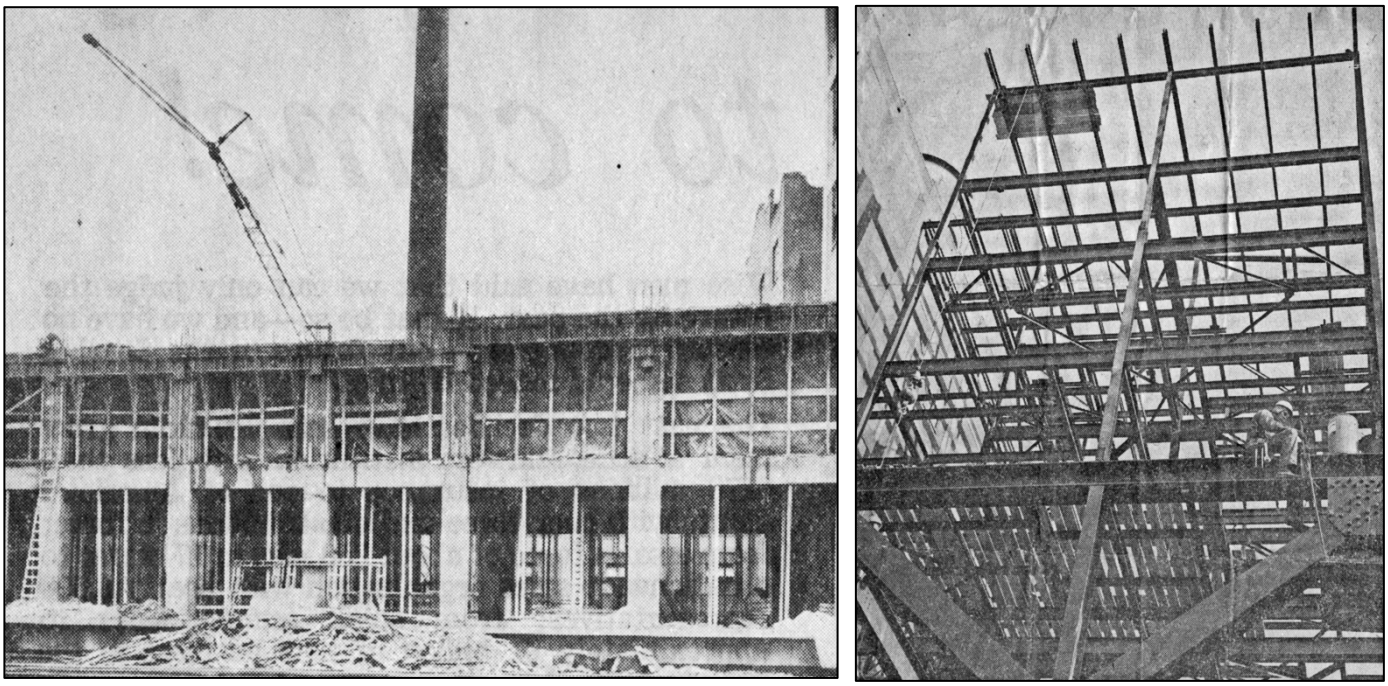
- 1500 employees of the Springfield plant.
- Annual payroll = $6 million.
- Daily capacity of flour = 16,500 cwt, or 1,650,000 pounds.
- Packages of flour = 1,300,000.
- Number of products = 52.
- Plant area = 543,000 sq ft.
- Grain storage capacity = 3,550,000 bushels.
- Annual incoming and outgoing rail shipments = 50,000.

In April of 1957, Pillsbury announced to the Springfield media its involvement with the "revolutionary flouring milling technique which makes possible the production of entirely new types of flours" (ISR 4-30-57). This form of "turbo" milling had only recently been developed and involved rotors that moved at high speeds, creating intense shear and impact forces that break down the grain or flour. The high speeds broke the wheat down more quickly than traditional methods. Construction of what is known as the "Turbo Building" (on the south end of the A-B Mill) began in 1958 or 1959 and was completed in 1960 (ISR 10-7-1958, 1-10-1960).

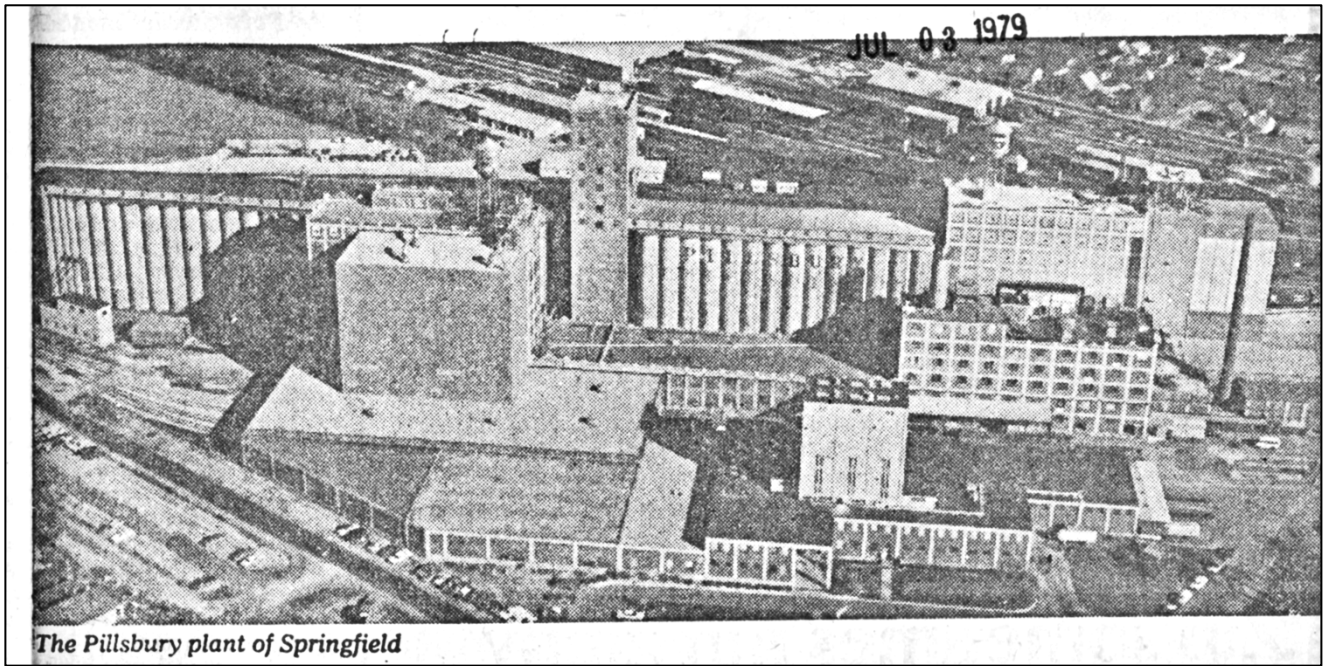
Another major modernization program was announced for the Springfield plant in March of 1966 (ISR 3-9-1966). This involved the construction of a nine-story structure against the west side of the C-Mill, eventually known by several names – "Pre-Mix", "Pre-Blend", the "Dryer", or the "8180 Building". The structure was to be "clad in aluminum skin which will house part of the new equipment required for the current modernization program." The Franklin-Cress Construction Company was the general contractor for project.

Few other references to this building have been found, but from former employees we have learned that its principal purpose was to employ high velocity heat to convert cake mix "slurry" (made

in the Grocery Building) into a dry powder mix. Its massive dryers also created powdered artificial sweeteners and "Funny Face" drink mix. The Dryer Building was controlled from the 3rd floor of the largely abandoned C-Mill, and packaging of the product was conducted on the 1st and 2nd floors.



Construction views of Turbo Building 1960 (left) and Dryer Building (right).



1979 aerial view of Pillsbury plant, showing Turbo addition (upper right) and Dryer Building (middle left).

On the 40th anniversary of the Springfield plant (in 1969), the local newspaper summarized the factory and its products:

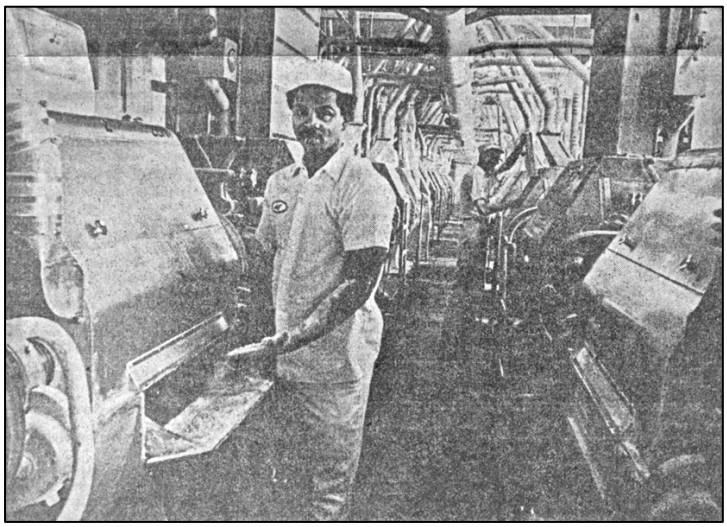
> *"40 years ago, Pillsbury was called Pillsbury Flour Mills Company. Today, the new name, the Pillsbury Company, is in line with company expansion beyond traditional grain-based products. Food items such as space food sticks, gorilla milk, instant breakfast, liquid sweetener, sprinkle sweet granular sweetener, and funny face drink mixes are a few examples of the new look at Pillsbury. Over 200 different products are manufactured at the Springfield plant.*
>
> *"Turbo milling represents the first major breakthrough in flour milling technology in 100 years. The plant also includes a five-story specialty mix building and a pre-mix plant for preparing batter used in batter cakes."*
>
> *"A bakery mix plant, which manufactures mixes for hotels, restaurants, institutions, and food manufacturers. A vast warehouse housing complex plus a highly skilled plant management staff, complete with its own planned computer."*
> (ISR 4-6-1969)

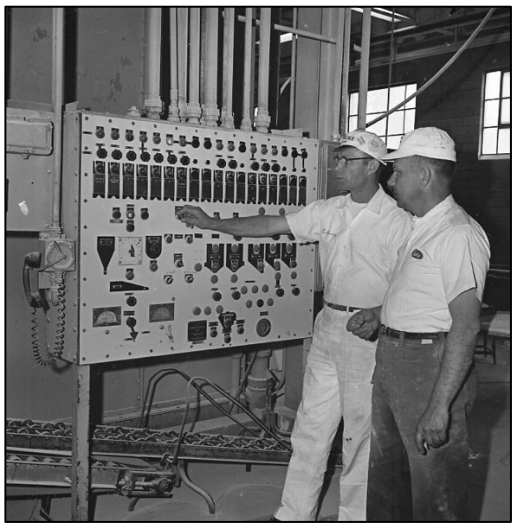
Ten years later, the newspaper provided more description of the milling process:

> *"Ever wonder how those little grains of wheat are turned into flour? It's a continuous system of grinding, separating, regrinding, and re separating. At Pillsbury mill in Springfield, they start with a lot of kernels of wheat and end up with many varieties of flour, bran, germ, and feed. Basically, a kernel of wheat is made up of three parts, the endosperm, or flour, surrounded by a shell or the bran portion, and at one end, the high protein, oily part, called the germ"*
>
> *"The milling process is to separate the parts cleanly and economically. The wheat kernel must be cleaned, softened or tempered, cracked open or ground, and then the particles must be separated. The first step in the milling process is to clean the wheat and separate out the dirt, sticks, stones, chaff, etcetera. Wheat is then tempered with water so that the shell is softened, and may be easily cracked. Then the wheat is ground. Streams of wheat are conveyed into roll stands where the kernels fall between two revolving steel rolls. This breaks up the kernels and particles, and the particles drop into sifters.*
>
> *"The sifters have several successive screens of increasing fineness, so the particles are separated according to size. Then the streams of various sizes run through purifiers, where air currents separate the bran and lighter impurities. These steps of grinding, sifting, and purifying are all repeated over and over until all parts of the wheat kernel are separated. These products are*

then conveyed into bulk bins and then packed into small bags, 100-pound sacks, or into bulk rail cars or trucks. Flour is also sent to the bakery and grocery departments."

"*The entire bakery operation is run by computer* [built at a cost of $150,000 in 1973]. *Human contact is restricted to the buttons on the computer. The exact amounts of flour, sugar, hot shortening, salt, milk and egg, soda and leavening are programmed in the computer for each product on each of three systems. One, the computer can handle a new batch of ingredients every four minutes. The grocery department cake mixes are only semi-automatic. Small ingredients are measured manually. 'We can do 278 totally different products through this computer without ever touching the product.'"*
(SJR 7-1-1979)





A "bolter" (who operates the mill stands), and staff in at a panel in the Bakery Mix Building.

Staff at a packaging machine (left), and employee posing next to various Pillsbury products made at the plant.

A unique document was found in the Sangamon County Assessor's records. It is associated with depreciation of property at Pillsbury, submitted to Sangamon County in 1980 and citing 1979 evaluations. It documents the company arguments for obsolescence of various parts of the plant, for obvious tax benefits. The reality of that obsolescence is difficult to assess.

A "Depreciation Explanation" summarized the company's view on six principal facilities:

> ***A-B Mill****: Age and condition indicate a higher depreciation factor. The design and layout of the building does not represent modern technology. As long as go as 1960 the assessor allowed 30% physical and 25% functional obsolescence.*
>
> ***C-Mill****: In 1964 use of this building was discontinued and the milling machinery removed. Today the first and second floors are used for a packaging line. We are presently using 44,200 ft.² of the total 114,000 (39%).*
>
> ***Grain Storage****: This elevator is used for grain storage. It's operation is different than the normal elevator. The buildings are old and deteriorating. They would not be replaced in kind.*
>
> ***Grocery Mix Plant****: Another 50-year-old building in a deteriorated condition. It would not be replaced as such. In 1960 the assessor recognized 30% physical and 22% functional obsolescence.*
>
> ***Bakery Mix Plant****: Economic obsolescence is present here. This has become a one shift operation. Movement of this operation to Martel, Ohio to be combined with another one shift plant is being considered.*
>
> ***Pre-Blend Building****: One half of this building is being used once a month for a one product operation otherwise the building is idle.*

Clearly, the Pillsbury Company was arguing that their 50-year-old plant was becoming technologically out of date and was deteriorating. The reference to the 1st and 2nd floors of C-Mill as used for a packaging line probably refers to the mixes or sweeteners produced in the Dryer Building. The obsolescence claim for the 31-year old Bakery Mix plant is surprising. Here, the company had reduced production to a one-shift operation and was already hinting to County officials of their plans to move a portion of the facility out of state. The apparent disuse of the Dryer Building, which was less than 15 years old, seems even more surprising. The building would have still been in good condition, and thus either the company was exaggerating it's falling utility, or significant changes in the production of these forms of processed foods had occurred only recently. By 1980, apparently the nine-story structure was used only once a month.

Again from the Assessor's records, in 1979 the most valuable facilities on the property were the two sets of grain silos. The original, built in 1930, was valued at approximately one million dollars (fair cash value), and the second set (four years younger), nearly 1.5 million. The company argued a physical depreciation of 40% and a functional depreciation of 30% for these fixtures. Thus, the result was an adjusted fair cash value of approximately one million dollars for both sets of silos, as well as the head house and the truck dump. The appraised value of the suite of grain storage facilities had been cut by

more than half from the previous year. The values of the four remaining principal facilities was as follows:

Pre-Blend Building, $793,000.
Bakery Mix and Office, $768,000.
Grocery Mix Building, $734,000.
A-B Mill, $584,000.

Using 1979 cash values, the Pre-Blend Building, (i.e. 8180 or Dryer), was the second most valuable facility on the property, with a Quadron cash value at roughly $800,000. The Illinois Manual of Appraisal valued it twice as much - at 1.6 million. However, even at the lesser 1979 fair cash value of roughly $800,000, the Pre-Blend was still the second most valuable facility at the factory, followed closely by the Bakery Mix Building (and administration complex), and then the Grocery Mix Building. All of these buildings were associated with processed food production, as opposed to flour milling. Meanwhile, the original A-B Mill itself was only valued at $584,000.

Oddly enough, the Pre-Blend Building (which was only 14 years old and carrying a 1979 Quadron value of $793,000 and an Illinois Appraisal Manual value at 1.6 million), was argued a 22% physical depreciation and an impressive 75% functional depreciation. What occurred over that 13-year period in the dry mix and artificial sweetener technology is unclear. However, if there were indeed necessary technological upgrades that were not present at this facility, they resulted in the lowering of the adjusted fair cash to $312,000, from a book value the previous year of nearly $800,000 and projected a value of 1.6 million. The 14-year-old, steel and aluminum, nine-story building was valued at just $60,000 more than the 50-year-old concrete Grocery Building.

Internally, the news wasn't all bad. A memo written in 1982 (found in the Sangamon Valley Collection) by the Springfield Plant Manager, outlined a drop in ingredient costs used in Grocery production (Coyle 1982). Apparently due to modifications in equipment or processes, the cost of "M34T flour", cocoa, shortening, and sugar used in that department fell from $752,478 in fiscal year 1981-1982 had fallen to $469,988. The author of the memo noted "If these favorable ingredient costs continue, Grocery should make lots of money this year".

Four years later after the depreciation declarations (and two years after the memo above), the Pillsbury Company was publicly announcing its concerns over the obsolescence of the Springfield facility. A newspaper headline in October of 1984 announced "Pillsbury Trying to Trim Costs" (SJR 10-17-1984). The opening paragraph read "Poppin Fresh, Pillsbury's chubby little product symbol since 1966, has been changing his diet lately, and that may have a long-term effect on the company's Springfield plant and its 465 employees."

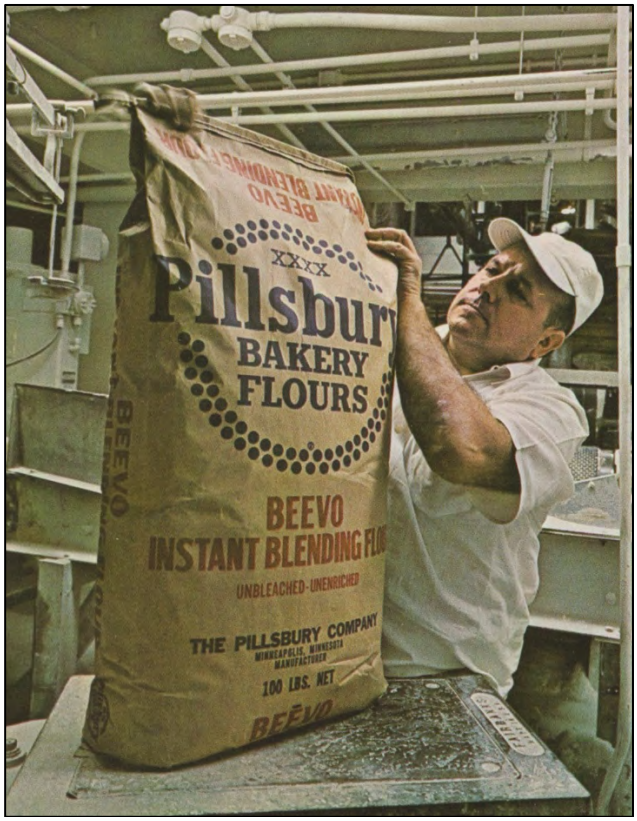
The obsolescence cited in this article, however was affiliated with changes in the company's goals as much as the state of the physical facilities and equipment in Springfield. Firstly, the company was at odds with the local union. The article reported that if the two sides couldn't reach an agreement over proposed concessions in such areas as wages and benefits, the company planned to begin phasing out the Bakery Mix division, which employed 54 people. The local plant manager suggested that if that were to occur, the Grocery division and even the milling and warehouse operations would be threatened as well.

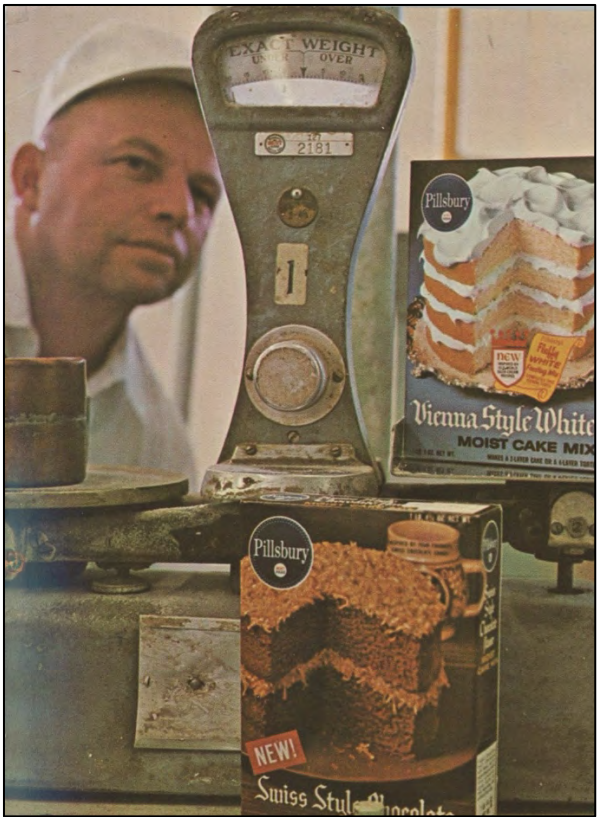
> *"Pillsbury, a diversified food company known as a tough competitor, has been concentrating its investment in recent years in its restaurants, frozen and refrigerated foods, rather than milling and dry products. These areas, according to analysts, are where growth potential exists and the firm's expenditures have paid off in sales and earnings."*

Pillsbury was still reported as a healthy company. Its sales in 1984 reached $4.2 billion. At that time, consumer sales represented 43% of their income, restaurants 42%, and agricultural products 15%. Pillsbury claimed that the Springfield plant was a "high-cost operation", with competitors having lower overhead.

> *"The Springfield plant itself, although it saw many additions in its early years and improvements and remodeling in recent years, is still more than 50 years old. By comparison, the Pillsbury Bakery plant in Martell, Ohio, a competitor of the Springfield Bakery, was built in the late 1960s."*

> *"The bakery mix division produces industrial and institutional mixes, such as pancake mix for international House of Pancakes and mixes for hotel and motel chains. The grocery goods division makes dry mixes the consumer buys at the store, such as cake, bread and donuts."*





Promotional photos taken at the Springfield plant, circa 1970.

On March 3rd of 1987, the State Journal Register reported that at 10:30 a.m. the previous day, an electrical fire caused extensive damage in the turbo mill. Fire broke out on the 6th floor of the Turbo Building. The Battalion Chief said the entire electrical vault area was in flames. "When he arrived, the heat was so intense there was oil coming out of the conduit lines and dripping down to the floors below. The fire spread from the vault, which carries the heaviest electrical load, to five junction boxes, from which numerous lines run from the 6th to the 9th floor of the building." Plant officials could not estimate the cost of damage except that it would be "extreme". That year, 410 people were working at the factory.

On February 5th, 1989, the State Journal Register announced that the Springfield plant had been acquired as part of a hostile takeover of the Pillsbury Company by Grand Metropolitan PLC. At the time, the Springfield plant employed 300 hourly and 80 salaried workers. Grand Metropolitan paid 5.7 billion dollars for corporate Pillsbury, its facilities, and its brands.

The Springfield plant manager reported that for the last 15 years, the Springfield plant was the only wholesale bakery mix source for Pillsbury in the country, and Springfield remained the sole source of Hungry Jack pancake flour, Pillsbury Plus cake mixes, and farina cereal. "Huge quantities of eggs, cocoa, and other ingredients are processed. More than 180,000 pounds of sugar, for instance, is consumed in three eight-hour shifts. And of significance to Springfield, Pillsbury was the largest remaining facility that could be classified as a manufacturer."

View of the mill complex from the southwest, with staff entrance and Grocery Building in foreground.

The effect of the takeover was announced on January 19th, 1990 with a headline in the State Journal Register that read: "Pillsbury Employees are Stunned." The article announced that 200 Pillsbury employees would lose their jobs when the Springfield plant's grocery product line was moved to Murfreesboro, Tennessee. During the Grand Metropolitan takeover, "grocery product lines from Springfield Farina cereal, along with brownie cake, pancake, cornbread, and hot roll mixes will be

relocated to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, just south of Nashville. The same plant will assume production of dry grocery products from Terre Haute, Indiana as well." The Murfreesboro plant had been built ten years earlier but was partially idle, and Pillsbury planned to install the latest processing equipment there.

On June 2nd, 1990 the State Journal Register reported that another segment of the local operation in Springfield was being moved. This time it was the "food service mix operations" that were relocated to Martell, Ohio. This referred to the institutional mixes made in the Bakery Mix plant. At that time, the plant was employing 287 hourly and 70 salaried workers. "Phasing out food service and grocery will leave the plant with fewer than 100 workers, even if flour milling continues" (State Journal Register 1-19-1990). Ultimately, the total employee count was fewer than 50.

On March 31, 1991 the State Journal Register reported that the Cargill Corporation of Minneapolis was awaiting approval from the Federal Trade Commission for its purchase of Pillsbury plants in Springfield and three other cities. The company planned to keep the Springfield plant open as a flour mill only. This marked the closure of the Grocery, C-Mill, Pre-Mix / Dryer, and Bakery Mix buildings.

On August 1st, 1991 the State Journal Register reported (on page eight in a small headline) "End Finally Comes for Pillsbury":

> *"An era in Springfield's industrial history ended Wednesday, when Pillsbury ended a 62-year presence in the city. Sort of. Most of the Pillsbury's 345 workers left the plant before Wednesday through earlier layoffs, retirement, or to begin new jobs. About 50 former Pillsbury employees, 41 hourly and nine or ten support personnel, will report to a new employer, Minneapolis based grain Miller Cargill."*
>
> *"Today the plant is one of four Pillsbury flour mills acquired by Cargill. In an agreement that was made final in June, Cargill leased the plant back to Pillsbury until August to allow Pillsbury to finish transferring equipment and operations to Tennessee by October."*

Shortly after Cargill assumed control, the new Springfield plant manager reported that the Corporation did not realize how inefficient the plant was until it took control in August (just two months earlier). "Prior to that, we were sort of outside the window looking in the store. The problem was a lot more serious than it looked like." (SJR 10-24-91). The Cargill operation in Springfield was producing 50 and 100-pound bags of flour, as well as providing bulk flour for rail and truck transport.

In 1996, the Cargill Corporation conducted a survey of asbestos within the plant. The hazards of the carcinogenic substance were now well known, and as over half of the plant had fallen into disuse and was probably in disrepair, the liability of asbestos was a considerable one. Documents from this survey estimate remediation costs for each building. As most of the A-B Mill was not included, it seems likely that the corporation was, at the time, focusing principally on vacant facilities. The findings consisted mostly of pipe insulation. Unspecified "fittings" (5000-8000 of them) were also not included in survey. The upper floors of the C-Mill were surprisingly free of asbestos, suggesting previous removal – probably after the 1964 shuttering of those floors. That removal may have occurred as part of the

industrial salvage of the milling equipment. Former Pillsbury employees also spoke of being assigned to uncertified asbestos removal themselves, “after their shifts”.

Boiler House = 470 linear/square feet	= $9,000
Mill / Bulk Plant (pipe shop and basement only) = 910 linear/square feet	= $11,200
Main Office & Bakery Mix = 8523 linear/square feet	= $117,750
Grocery= 10,440 linear/square feet	= $163,000
C-Mill = 3925 linear/square feet	= $78,500
8180/Dryer = 5730 linear/square feet	= $113,450
Other warehouses & smaller buildings	= $189,860
	SUBTOTAL = $682,760
	Estimated cost of “fittings” = between $250,000 and $400,000
	TOTAL ESTIMATE $932,760 - $1,082,760

Thus, the cost to the Cargill Corporation for the responsible clean-up of their vacant facilities at the Springfield factory in 1996 would have been approximately one million dollars. Less than ten years later (in 2017), the cost to the EPA for the remediation of most of the asbestos on the site was $3,250,000.

Ten years after Cargill acquired the Springfield plant as a flour milling facility, it announced it would close the mill (SJR 4-25-2001). A month later, on May 31st, 2001, the mill was shut down and the remaining employees dismissed. No plans for a buyer had been made, nor was the facility mothballed or secured in any significant manner. Ultimately, the factory complex sat shuttered until 2008.

Former employee Ross Kelly (who had worked in maintenance beginning in 1981) was retained by Cargill as sole watchman and maintenance manager for the factory complex immediately after the plant was closed. He served in that position until 2008. During his tenure, Ross superintended the removal of various equipment sold by Cargill to other companies, or moved to other facilities. The first trespassers on the property were encountered in the summer of 2001, and vandalism and metals looting soon became a frequent nuisance to the watchman (Kelly 2024). Grass and weed trees were appearing on the property by the fall. The high voltage three-phase power service to the facility remained on.

In 2001, when the plant was closed, the property was valued by the Sangamon County Assessor at 4.8 million dollars. It was assessed at 4.9 million the following year, and then fell back slightly to 4.7 million in 2003. In 2004 it raised again to 4.8 million, and then in 2005 its appraised value fell to $999,999. It remained at one million dollars through 2007.

Cargill apparently assembled a bid package for demolition of the plant in 2004 (Ross 2024). After receiving the bids, the corporation instructed Ross to “find a buyer” for the property, plant, and its contents. Ross recalls that the facility was offered to the City of Springfield at no cost. The city declined. Notably, the year following the demolition estimates, the appraised value of the site suddenly fell 80% - from 4.8 million to one million dollars.

Brokered in part by Ross, the 18-acre, 775,000 square foot former Pillsbury Mill complex was finally sold in 2008 to a local metal salvage business (Ley Metals) for $257,000. Members of the family-owned business had previous ties to the Pillsbury factory. The property had been assessed at $4.8 million dollars three years earlier, but was assessed the year of its sale at only $175,854 – a 90% drop in three years. City and County government encouraged and facilitated the sale of the site, in the hopes that local, privately-owned metals salvors would ultimately demolish some or all of the decayed and contaminated structures at no cost to the public.

Ley Metals immediately recovered and sold eight-year-old wheat from three of the silos. That company then contracted for small asbestos surveys in various parts of the plant, and remediated asbestos in small electrical areas that housed high-value metals. Various forms of salvage were conducted at the plant until 2013, when it was sold contract-for-deed to the National Salvage Company of Indiana. Less than a year later, Nation Salvage sold the property to Springfield-area P-Mills LLC, also for contract-for-deed. Those sale amounts are unknown. Between 2008 and 2014, neighbors reported salvage work at the site "day and night".

Very limited asbestos remediation was conducted for P-Mills LLC in 2014, and metals salvage continued. Asbestos-contaminated debris began accumulating on the site, and illegal removal of asbestos pipe wrap was occurring in several buildings. In October of 2014, P-Mills LLC demolished (or "kneeled") the nine-story Premix/Dryer Building by cutting its steel supports. The 5730 linear/square feet of asbestos reported to Cargill in 1996 had not been remediated, and the entire area and surrounding neighborhood was exposed to or contaminated by asbestos debris and airborne fibers.

> *"'It looked like something was on fire,' Ridgeway recalls. Brian Dearco was repairing his roof a couple of blocks away from Ridgeway's home, directly across the street from the mill. 'As soon as the building came down, millions of mosquitoes and gnats came out,' Dearco says. 'I broke out in a rash. My wife did, too. … You could smell it in the air after that building came down. It smelled like gas, so the fire department came.' "*
> (Illinois Times 1-18-2018)

The remains of the Premix/Dryer Building and its machinery were sold for scrap to the Indiana salvage company. Unusable material and asbestos debris lay in the former shadow of the building. Salvage work continued at the site through the summer of 2015. In August, however, the Illinois EPA was alerted by an employee of P-Mills LLC to the illegal handling and disposal of asbestos as part of these salvage activities. Inspections found the site highly contaminated with loose or untouched asbestos and debris. In September of 2015, the Illinois EPA and the State Attorney General's Office secured a court injunction for any further work at the site (EPA Case #2015-CH-308 Site # 1671205043 2015-2016). In March of 2016, the Illinois EPA referred the Pillsbury Site to the Federal EPA for assessment and possible removal action. In April of 2017, an owner of P-Mills LLC pled guilty to failure to adequately remove and dispose of asbestos material, and to violations of the Clean Air Act.

After funding was procured, clean-up efforts at the factory complex by the EPA began in the spring of 2017, and were completed in November. Nearly 2,200 tons of contaminated debris, 1,160 cubic yards of contaminated pipe wrap and boiler insulation, nine 275-gallon totes of waste/fuel oil, three 55-gallon gallon drums of waste anti-freeze, 3,700 fluorescent light bulbs, and 12 pounds of mercury were removed and shipped off-site.

2015 EPA inspection, showing illegally handled asbestos on site.

Following the departure of the EPA, illegal, small-scale salvage activities were again conducted day and night at the plant, now by trespassing individuals in search of copper. Vandalism, theft, and disintegration of the property continued for another five years. A methamphetamine laboratory was rumored to have been in operation somewhere on site in 2020. In March of 2022, aided by city and country offices, the not-for-profit *Moving Pillsbury Forward* acquired the site for one dollar and began raising funds and applying for grants. Between 2022 and 2024, MPF cleared, secured, and removed debris at the site in preparation for its final demolition. The first building to be demolished was the two-story Warehouse #1, in January of 2023. Historical surveys for this report began in April of 2023. Demolition contracts from the remaining structures were signed in March of 2025.

2022 views of the abandoned site (photos: Chris Richmond).

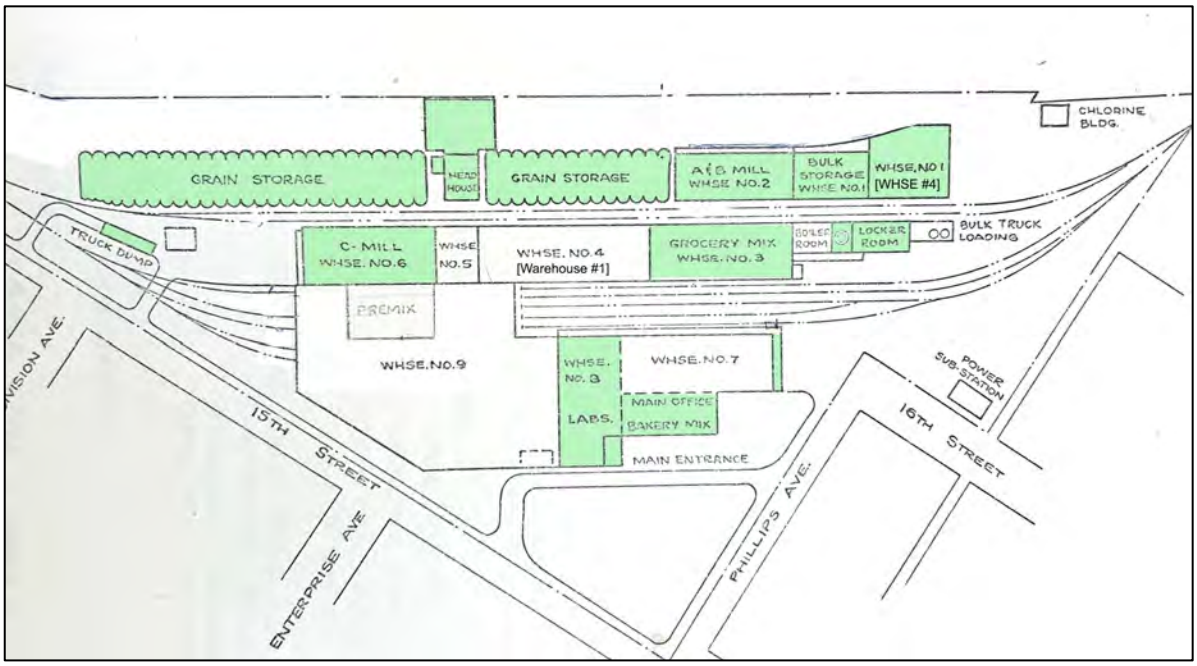
Section 3

Basic Reconnaissance of the Pillsbury Mill Site

Main Structures and Notes on Integrity of Various Factory Systems.

Robert Mazrim

The following descriptions focus on the nine principal structures still extant on the Pillsbury site as of 2023. The emphasis is on A) a basic understanding of the function of each of the facilities and B) the potential historical integrity of the buildings, and perhaps more importantly, the machinery and equipment associated with the flour milling and other food processing that occurred here between 1930 and 2001. These buildings comprise a total of accessible 47 floors and approximately 500,000 square feet of floor space.



Above: View of site from the southwest, 2023.
Below: Plan map of site ca. 1981. Structures in green extant as of April 2023.

A-B Mill

The A-B Mill was constructed 1929-30. It is of reinforced poured concrete, brick infill, and wooden flooring on floors 4-9. The building measures 55′ x 165′. It has nine floors and a working basement. A main stairway, a freight elevator, and two "manlifts" served this building. The latter consisted of two adjacent circular openings through which a massive belt continually rotated slowly. The belt was fitted with foot and hand holds, and passengers could quickly "jump" onto to the moving belt to ride upward or downward though the factory without waiting for the freight elevator or using stairs. Manlifts were decommissioned at the plant during the 1980s or 1990s, presumably due to OSHA concerns. None are left intact, and most of the openings that facilitated the lifts have been sealed or converted into small lift elevators.

East and west sides of the A-B Mill.
The west side connects to the Grocery Building via three catwalks over a former rail track.

The mill building is in poor condition. Exterior walls have been breached in numerous places by large salvors' openings, and the wooden flooring on floors 4-9 are in various states of water-based decay. This structure has also been heavily mined by copper thieves. An original water tower remains intact on the roof.

Water tower atop A-B Mill.

Damage to the A-B Mill from large-scale metals salvage.

The A-B Mill is perhaps the most historic element of the factory complex, and certainly the center of the industrial production there. It was here that wheat was cleaned, ground into flour, mixed, and processed. The mill ran continuously from 1930 until 2001. It briefly had a sister facility known as C-Mill, which operated between 1937 and 1964. A-B Mill was essentially "The Mill", and the heartbeat of the Springfield facility. It was also the oldest and longest running component of the factory, along with the associated Head House and grain silos.

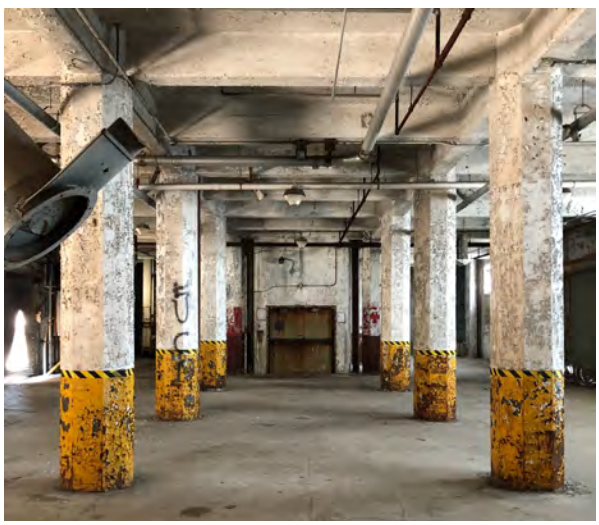
Even though there has been considerable industrial salvage in this facility (and much structural degradation from those efforts) the equipment in this building - some of which is nearly a century old - is still reasonably intact. For that reason, survey of this facility was the most intensive. Fire exit maps (probably dating the 1990s) that depicted the machinery and fixtures on each floor (see Section 4) greatly aided this analysis, as did on-site interviews with several former employees including August Billeck, Dave Kelly, and Bob Howard.

Basement

This floor served as the principal maintenance and craft support center for the entire plant. Most important to that support was the Millwrights' Shop, which provided a number of repair, maintenance, and fabrication services. Also present on this floor was a welding shop, painting shop, metal fabrication, two offices, and the work stations of the millwrights themselves. Access to the outlets of the grain silos (to the north) and the basement of the Grocery Mix building (via a passage under the railroad separating the buildings) could also be gained from this floor.

Integrity of fixtures in the basement of A-B Mill is moderate to low. The most impressive in-situ features are the work stations of the millwrights, consisting of circa 1930s work benches and cabinetry. Also, a large ca. 1930s metal lathe remains in place. A very large free-standing vice, and the only in-situ bag sewing machine were also documented on this floor. Such objects are poignant reminders of older technologies, but they do not hold historical value in and of themselves.

A tunnel connects the basement of the A-B Mill to the basement of the Grocery Mix Building. It is generally flooded with 12"-24" of water.



Millwrights' benches in basement of A-B Mill, and ground floor of mill.

First Floor

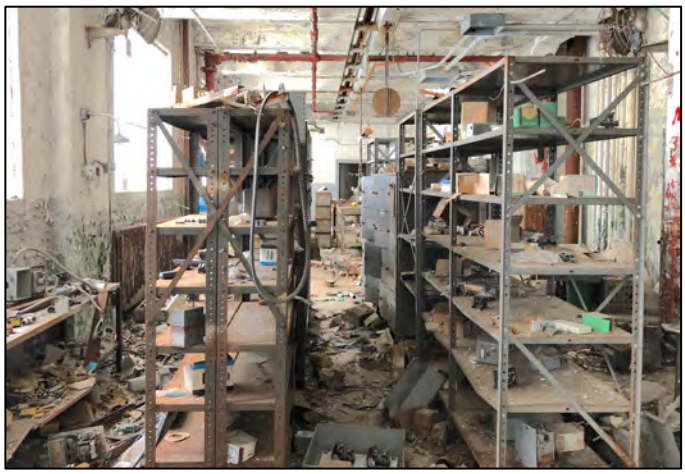
The ground floor was used, in part, for packaging flour manufactured on the floors above. A fire exit map that probably dates to the 1990s suggests much of the floor was used for storage at that time, and was also the location of a pallet loader. The floor is now entirely empty, having been salvaged, cleared, and then used for a number of activities by Ley Metals between 2008 and 2014. No evidence of milling / production / packaging fixtures remains. The empty space now highlights the massive cast concrete columns that support the floors above.

On the extreme north end of the first floor are encased bucket elevators, which carried raw wheat from the smutter's silos (directly to the north) up to the smutter's portions of the upper floors (always on the extreme north), where the wheat was cleaned and prepared prior to milling.

Second Floor

The second floor of the A-B Mill housed a number of support services during the entire life of the factory. By the 1990s, it was also used for storing unused equipment and a few isolated machinery units. A large portion of this floor was occupied by the Electricians' Shop and offices. Unused electrical supplies were still in place in 2023. A large number of heavily damaged blueprints (consisting principally of wiring schematics) were found in an office in this section, which had been closed since 1991. The documents were heavily contaminated by insecticide. A second, larger office in this section also contained a number of documents – consisting primarily of trade catalogs.

The remainder of the second floor of the A-B Mill was almost entirely emptied by the companies and professional salvors. On the south, passing through the second floor of the Turbo Building, this floor connects to the second floor of a mid-1930s two-story warehouse, built of a combination of poured concrete, brick infill, timber framing, and a wooden upper floor. This warehouse stored Grocery Mix ingredients by the 1980s. This space was significantly damaged by arson in 2018. It is empty.

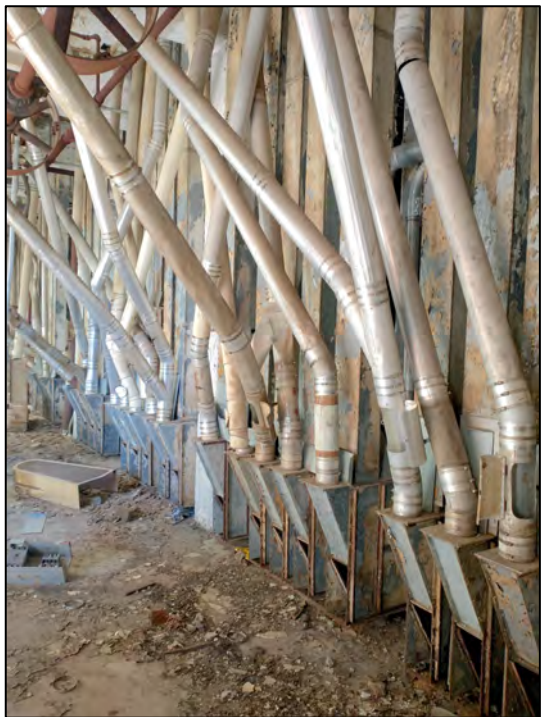


Parts storage area in second floor Electricians' Shop.

A catwalk on the northwestern corner of the second floor connects to the Grocery Mix Building to the west. It is passable. A second catwalk on the southwestern corner was built to accommodate fork lifts. It is unpassable.

Third Floor

This floor housed the large motors that powered the milling machines on the floor above, via the huge driveshaft and belt assemblies that transferred the power from the motors to roller stands. The 200 horsepower motors remain, as do the driveshafts and some of the very large drive belts. The third floor is also the base of the seven-story-tall bucket conveyors, which carried processed wheat and flour upward on its vertically serpentine journey from north to south across the mill. These conveyor belts were maintained and repaired via hatches in the bases of the elevators on this floor. Against the north wall of the third floor is a horizontal "wet wheat mixer", used in the smutter's process.



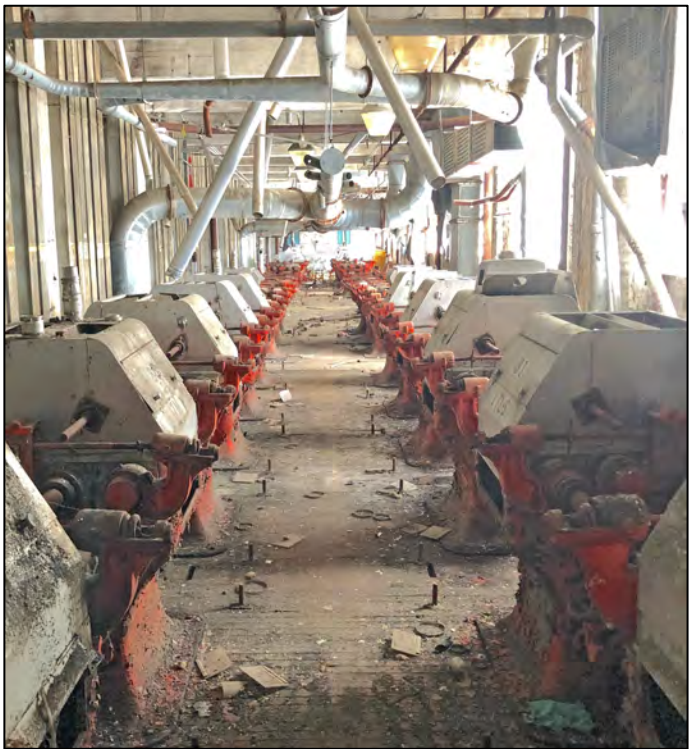
Third floor. Driveshafts and belt wheels that powered mill stands on 4th floor, and bases of rectangular product elevators, connected to down-flowing "spouts".

Spliced elevator belt, with product cups (left). Smutter's wet wheat mixer (right).

Fourth Floor

The fourth floor housed the milling machines, or “roll stands”, that ground the wheat into successively smaller fragments (“first break”, second break”, etc.). The roll stands at Pillsbury appear to be originals from the 1930s. They represent the core of the 70-year milling process at the factory.

All of the roll stands on the west side of the floor have been salvaged for scrap. They were pushed with a forklift through a large hole broken out of the west brick wall of the building. Most of the roll stands on the east side are partially or near intact. The middle section of the floor was in the process of being salvaged, however, and bucket elevators have been cut away in order to haul the machines across the floor.



Fourth floor mill stands or “bolt stands”.
On right, two large rollers and a grain separator inside the stands.

At the extreme south end of the floor are the partially dismantled remains of two “bran mills”, which are larger than the standard roll stands. A catwalk on the northwestern corner of the fourth floor connects to the Grocery Mix Building to the west. It is passable.

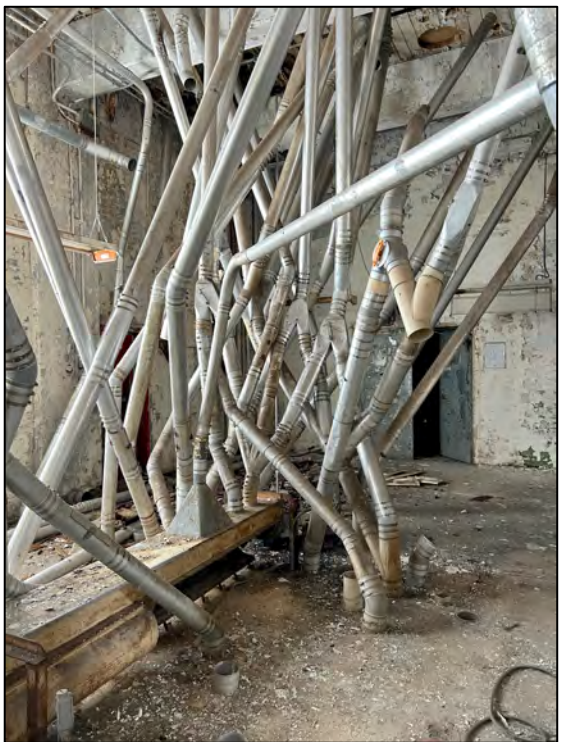
Fifth Floor

This floor housed a variety of devices, including more roll stands, “chlorine mixers”, and suction equipment. Some of the roll stands, perhaps two of the of devices that introduced chlorine into the product stream, and some of the suction equipment remain partially intact. There are a number of aluminum pipes or “spouts” (that carried product downward through the factory) and bucket elevator chutes that occupy the center of the floor. The latter remain intact through each successive floor, until they terminate on the 9th floor.

Sixth Floor

According to the fire map, this floor was occupied by purifiers, wheat feeders, and suction-related fans and enclosures. Having passed through sifters on 8th floor, flour was sent through “purifiers” that separated fine particles from coarser ones and removed impurities such as bran, dust, and other foreign materials. These were floor-standing devices, and all appear to have been removed. The span of the east floor now consists only of spouts, where a row of purifiers is located on the fire map. A large enclosed blower (marked “fan” on the fire map) is still in place.

In the middle of the floor is a line of hopper-like devices than flange outward at the top, connecting to large wheat/flour bins on the floor above. These are also intact. They are marked on the fire map as “wheat feeders”. Wheat feeders are generally used to achieve the correct blend of wheat to maintain the highest quality flour. They may also have been known as “ingredient feeders”, where “ingredients were added and blown through the system” (Billeck 2023). On the west side, the north end of the floor is entirely empty. The middle section contains an enclosed device (“good suction”) that is still intact and connected to large ductwork. No other machinery is present.



Spouts and wheat feeders on the 6th floor. (Photo on right: Ben Halpern).

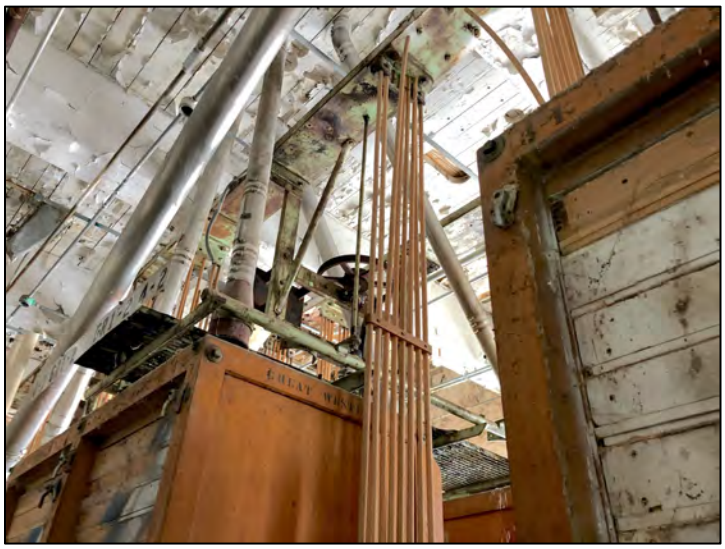
Seventh Floor

According to the fire map, on this floor was a variety of equipment, including purifiers, dust collectors, and sifters. In the center of the floor are large floor-to-ceiling bins (marked as "bins" on the fire map) that are connected to the hoppers or wheat feeders on the floor below. These bins are intact, but, like the 6th floor, much of the 7th floor appears to have been salvaged while the machinery was still serviceable. A dense stand of spouts (marked as "flow pipes") remains on the east, as do a couple of wooden sifter boxes in the southeast corner. The west side of the floor is nearly empty of machinery, and was probably salvaged while still serviceable (and while the freight elevator was still powered).

Eighth Floor

Here, wheat began its journey through the mill from the "smutters' tanks" on the extreme north side of the building. The bulk of the 8th floor housed the large wooden sifters, which were suspended from the ceiling. The sifters were made by the Great Western Manufacturing Company of Leavenworth, Kansas. During the milling process, these vibrated and passed product in various stages of milling through a number of internal screens and meshes. Most of the shaker boxes are still intact on the east and west sides of the floor. If it weren't for surrounding floor damage and debris, these would appear impressive and well-preserved.

In the center of the floor are large, steel, vertical tanks marked on the fire map as "bins" (like on the floor below). These are evidently a continuation the bins on the 7th floor. All are in place, as are the bucket conveyors. From the 8th floor is a short catwalk that connects to the long "gallery" above the wheat silos, which also provides access to the Head House.



Eighth floor wooden sifters, suspended from the ceiling. Note drawer-like screens, and diagonal reference lines painted by staff to replace screens in proper position. (Photo on left: Chris Richmond)

Ninth Floor

On the 9th floor are the tops of the bins that pass through the 8th and 7th floors, as well as the drives on the tops of the bucket conveyors that powered the belts that fed product upward through building. Most of the east and west sides of the floor seems to have been devoted to suction-related equipment, at least some of which is still intact. On the fire map, one large rectangle (identical to others that are marked "suction") is inexplicably labeled "garlic butter". Much of the suction-related equipment is at least partially intact, as are the bucket conveyors and bins.

South Warehouse Extension

A two-story warehouse addition to A-B Mill was made in 1937. It was of concrete, timber frame, and brick construction, the former intended to reduce moisture problems inherent with concreate construction. The northern half of this warehouse (known as "Warehouse #4" before ca. 1965, and Warehouse #1 by 1981), was replaced by the construction of the Turbo Building in 1960. A portion of the original timber-framed warehouse remains on the extreme south of the complex, and was used as a loading dock. The second floor of this warehouse was heavily damaged by arson in 2018. Both floors are empty.

Head House and Silos

The Head House and the south bank of grain silos were constructed 1929-30, and were the first structures to be completed. A second back of silos was added on the north side of the Head House ca. 1935. Each bank contains four rows of silos. The result was a total of 160 circular silos (measuring 16 feet in diameter and 100 feet tall), as well as storage spaces in between these silos, which allowed for a combined capacity of 3.5 million bushels of wheat.

All of these facilities are constructed of reinforced cast concrete. The Head House was fitted with a passenger elevator and a manlift (from the 10th floor gallery to the top five floors), as well a narrow stairway from the ground level. The structure is intact and well-preserved. The Head House and silos were coated in a layer of silver asbestos paint (to retard moisture) sometime in the mid 20th century.

Grain silos and Head House, view from the northeast.
(Photo: Ben Halpern)

Grain silos and Head House, view from the west. Demolished remains of Warehouse #1 in foreground.

The 15-story Head House pulled grain from railroad car unloading bays on the east side of the building and a "truck dump" on the west side, and distributed it to various holding and drying facilities. Below the silos are two offices, located near the rail loading bays, from which the distribution of grain to particular silos was overseen. A large schematic of each of the silos is still extant on the walls.

Unloading of grain shipped by rail occurred on east side of the headhouse (left).
On right, basement office with schematic of grain silos.

At the top of the Head House, the 15th floor is largely open except for motors that powered the mechanicals below. On the 14th floor are the tops of four "weighing tanks", which measured grain as it entered the system. Large hydraulic shakers for those tanks are still in place on this floor. The 13th floor encloses the weighing tanks, and is also the location of a centrally located "scale house" room, from where the flow of grain was controlled.

Distribution of grain from the weighing tanks began on the 12th floor. Grain was fed into the floor below, where a massive, still in-situ "tangle" of tubing (painted bright blue) distributed the grain into

shoots flowing downward to the 10th floor, or the level of the "gallery" that crosses over the tops of the silos themselves. The equipment on the 11th floor was modernized in the 1980s, to afford for automatic switching of grain flow. Prior to that, this was done manually. From the gallery level within the Head House, more tubes go down into the six holding bins that occupy all of the remaining windowless space in the Head House above ground level.

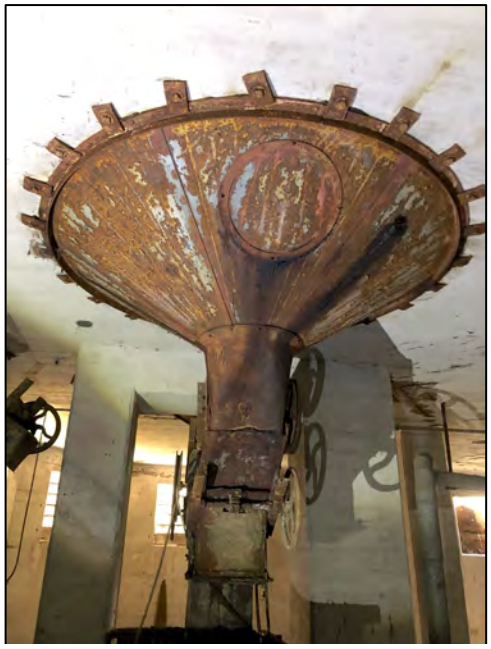
Some or all of the unprocessed wheat that passed through this system was eventually sent to the wheat dryer attached to the north wall of the Head House. That small facility, entered via a single metal ladder or a manlift and fitted with three levels of narrow steel-grate flooring, is one of the least accessible at the site, but its equipment is intact. From the dryer, the grain was sent up again, and ultimately delivered to the silos via conveyors and the "trippers" on the 10th floor gallery. Most of these systems and equipment are still in place.

1. Passenger elevator in upper floors of Head House.
2. Eleventh floor distribution tubing, circa 1980s.
3. "Tripper" (circa 1930s) on gallery level.
4. Interior of grain dryer (looking downward) on north side of the Head House.

(Photos 2-4: Chris Richmond)

A long, narrow building passes across the tops of the silo banks on both sides of the Head House. It was known by staff as the "gallery". Here, a series of four conveyor belts and devices known as "trippers" filled various silos with grain sent from the Head House. Three of the four tripper devices were modernized late in the history of the plant, and were sold as industrial salvage by Cargill. However, one tripper and associated conveyor, probably dating to the 1930s, remains intact and in-situ above the northern bank of silos.

A three-story deep "pit" beneath the Head House, used during the loading process, is now completely filled with water. In the basement of the silos themselves are two sets of parallel conveyors. Raw wheat was dispensed through funnel shaped openings in the base of each silo and onto the conveyors below. These conveyors are still in place. As wheat was required from the mill, it was then conveyed into one of the four smutters silos at the extreme south end of the silo complex. At this point, the wheat began the smutting process, where it was cleaned and prepared for milling. The bases of the four smutters silos are different in design than the remaining silos, accessible by metal ladders and catwalks. All of the machinery seems intact. From the smutter's silos, the wheat entered a series of upward bucket elevators located on the north side of the A-B Mill, where it was carried to the top of the mill to be washed and cleaned through another series of downward and upward processes.



Silo basement. Outlet at the base of one silo, and conveyor for wheat from two rows of silos.
(Photo left: Chris Richmond)

Together, the Head House and grain silos represent an impressive, well-preserved, and unusually large example of cast concrete grain storage architecture that became so important to the Midwestern economy during the early-mid 20th century. They are structurally sound, and are perhaps the most iconic element of the Pillsbury site in Springfield.

Turbo / Bulk Storage Building

The Turbo Building was constructed ca. 1958-1960 as an addition to the south side of the AB-Mill. It is of reinforced concrete with a partial brick facing. An area where brick facing was not applied to cast concrete walls enclosed the most potentially explosive part of this facility, which was the bulk

flour storage. Bricks, in this context, were seen as potential projectiles in the event of a flour dust explosion. The building measures 55′ x 105′. It is nine stories tall with a working basement. Access to the floors in the Turbo Mill was generally gained from the south side of the A-B Mill, although small stairways and a manlift connect certain floors within the Turbo and Bulk Storage areas. The structure is generally in stable condition, except for a peeling 8-story tall brick face on east side of the building.

The Turbo / Bulk Storage Building, on the south end of the A-B Mill.

The A-B Mill flour production was supplemented in 1960 by this large addition on its south end, which provided for a "turbo milling" process, as well as the bulk storage of finished flour. Turbo milling involves a spinning rotor that moves at high speeds, forcing the material through a stator (a stationary fixture with small openings). This creates intense shear and impact forces that break down the grain or flour. The high rotational speeds can achieve fine particle sizes more quickly compared to other milling methods.

This more recent building was not surveyed as thoroughly as A-B Mill for this study, but it is clear that most of the essential machinery for turbo milling (except for motors and power supplies) remain in-situ. A lack of paper documentation of this section hampers our understanding of the activity that occurred here, and most of what we know about the process and storage has been gleaned from fire maps and employee interviews. That information is fragmentary.

The "turbo" portion of the mill, which consisted of the high velocity movement of flour products through multiple floors of the facility, is found on the northern portion of this addition. The large, multi-story bulk flour storage bins are still in place on the south. Between the third and fourth floor is the "stream tenders" area, where various flours were diverted from one product stream to another. The stream tender's office includes a large control console with elaborate readouts in multicolored lights and polychrome flow pictographs. On the floors above are the massive blowers and ducts associated with the cyclonic turbo-milling system, as well as multi-story flour storage tanks. Most of this equipment seems to be largely intact, except for motors and other electrical components removed or mined by salvors. The basement of this building seems to have served as additional workspace for the millwrights, and for storage. It is debris strewn and contains racks of large iron and aluminum bar and rod stock.




Photos 1-3: Equipment affiliated with the turbo milling process. Photo 4: Bulk storage containers. Below, stream tender's area and control panel.


A two-story warehouse addition to A-B Mill (made in 1937) was halved by the construction of the Turbo building. A portion of the timber-framed building remains on the extreme south of the complex, and was used as a loading dock. The second floor of this warehouse was heavily damaged by arson in 2018. Both floors are empty. This warehouse was known as Warehouse #4 before ca. 1965 and Warehouse #1 by 1981.

Grocery Mix

The Grocery Mix Building was constructed in 1930, originally as a four-story structure. A fifth story was added in the mid-1930s, and eventually a number of rooftop facilities were also added. It had a functioning basement, as a well as a smaller sub-basement in which high voltage electrical equipment was located. It measures 80' x 200'. It is of reinforced cast concrete with brick infill and is of very similar appearance to the A-B Mill. The windows on the west wall of the building were sealed with brick sometime after ca. 1980. It is the only substantial building on the campus that is entirely of concrete construction – no wooden flooring is present. Two main stairways, a manlift, and a freight elevator serviced the building.

Exterior view of the Grocery Mix Building, from the southwest.

The grocery building represents another one of the key structures in the original 1930 construction. The role of this building changed over time as the company expanded not only it's factory campus, but it's product line as well. For most of the plant's history, employees entered grocery on its south side to report to their stations across A-B mill, Warehouse #1, C-Mill, and Grocery Mix.

Upon completion, this building was sometimes referred to as a "Storage House" in early newspaper articles and plan view documents of the plant. The four-story structure was clearly intended for more than a warehouse, however, and the reference to storage may suggest that the original bulk storage (tanks?) of the flour produced in the A-B Mill were installed here. Soon, the building was referred to as the "Cereal Plant", "Specialty" (as late as 1959), and ultimately "Grocery Mix". The latter referred to the expansion of specialty flours, and by the 1940s, pre-mixes for such goods such as pancakes and cake mixes. These were initially packed for domestic consumer sales – that is, to consumers via grocery stores. Hence the name "Grocery Mix". Later, with the construction of the

“Bakery Mix" building (in 1949), production expanded into pre-mixes for commercial or institutional kitchens.

Based on a few vintage photographs (see Section 2), it is also believed that the Grocery Building was the original site of the administrative offices (ca. 1930-48), possibly on the 4th floor. Further evidence of those offices is the presence of larger than normal restroom facilities on the southeast corner of the 4th floor. Also on this floor was a test kitchen that operated through much of the plant’s history. The kitchen is the only space finished in distinctive green and pink ceramic tile. A large, early 20th century oven is still present in this room. The 4th floor would have also provided convenient access from the offices and the kitchen to the mill itself, via a (still extant) catwalk.

There is little remaining integrity to the industrial fixtures in this building, as 90% has been removed, probably during the Cargill era when grocery mix production was halted. It is also likely that certain parts of this building were emptied or cannibalized during the later years of Pillsbury. There is little extant documentation of what occurred on each floor (except for the 5th floor, which is partially documented in a series of blueprints found on site), and most of what has been gleaned about the structure comes from former employees.

The first floor of this building was used for “processing” and packaging. It was entirely empty in 2023, and like that of the A-B Mill, now highlights the massive cast concrete columns that support the floors above. Some tanks and fixtures are present on the second and third floors, but these too are largely empty. Based on employee interviews, it appears that by the 1970s one the most important roles of the Grocery Building occurred on the upper floors (and most certainly the 5th floor), where the various mix ingredients (flour, oils, flavorings, dyes) were mixed into a slurry that was piped into the vacant C-Mill Building. From there, it was stored in large tanks and then sent upward and over into the adjacent 8180 / Dryer Building. This process served to convert wet product batters into a dry form. A small number of blueprints pertaining to the machinery on 5th floor of Grocery (as well as facilities located in small structures on the roof) were discovered as part of the document survey of this project. Grocery, then, was where those dry ingredients were stored and mixed. The lower floors of the Grocery Building were used for packaging various dry mixes.

First floor view (left), and fourth floor test kitchen (middle, right) in Grocery Mix Building.

Remnant product tanks (top, middle), and various rooftop facilities, Grocery Mix Building.

The basement of the Grocery Building housed high voltage electrical equipment, as well as a supply store, where items could be requisitioned by each department. An office containing part numbers for thousands of parts was still extant in 2023, but was heavily damaged by frequent and significant flooding of this basement, as well as vandalism. Much unused equipment and supplies was still present in banks of steel drawers and on open shelving. Large electrical equipment on the south end of the building was also partially intact in 2023, except for transformers removed by the EPA and large copper components collected by salvors. The subbasement is permanently flooded and inaccessible due to blocked entrances. The basement itself is often flooded with water ranging from 12″ to 30″ deep.

Supply store and associated office in basement of Grocery Mix Building.
(Photos: Ben Halpern)

Boiler Room

A one-story boiler room was constructed against the south wall of the Grocery Building in 1930. It measured 45′ by 55′ feet, and was of concrete and brick construction. The building was partially demolished and salvaged sometime between 2006 and 2022, but a few early-mid 20th century photos exist. The boilers were associated with a concrete chimney (180′ high) that is still extant. Along the west side of the boiler room was once a hallway connecting the Locker House (adjacent on the south) to the south entrance of the Grocery Building. It was along this hall that most employees working in the milling and grocery sections of the plant arrived and departed each day. Employees referred to this passage as the “runway” or the “raceway” (Howard 2023).

Remains of the Boiler Room.

Locker House

Connected to the south of the Boiler Room is a two-story Locker House measuring 45′ x 80′. It was constructed between 1940 and 1950 of cast concrete and brick infill, in a style similar to the adjacent mill and grocery buildings. The Locker House provided locker rooms, changing areas, showers, and restrooms for the entire staff. It was largely intact and sound in 2023.

Stone sink fixture in womens′ locker room, second floor.

Warehouse # 1

Known as Warehouse #1 prior to ca. 1965 and Warehouse #4 by 1981, a two-story warehouse intended to store packed products prior to transport was built against the north wall of the Grocery Building in 1930. It was of cast concrete, brick infill, and timber frame construction. It measured 80′ by 240′. It was lengthened to connect to the C-Mill in 1937. The brick infill utilized two different types of bricks – one standard and one white. The wood framing (consisting of massive yellow pine beams), wooden flooring (on the second floor), and perhaps an unusual type of brick used in part of the building (chalky white and having the appearance of fire brick), was intended to reduce moisture in the warehouse environment. Cast concrete structures are more prone to condensation and moisture during temperature changes. The second floor of this structure included as a full-service cafeteria until circa 1970. On the west of the second floor was a catwalk connecting to the second floor of the Bakery / Administration Building. This warehouse was demolished and salvaged in 2023 by Moving Pillsbury Forward.

Aerial view (from the north) of Warehouse #1 in late 2022. Roof removed prior to 2015.
(Photo: Chris Richmond)

C- Mill & Dryer Building

The C-Mill was constructed in 1937. It is of reinforced cast concrete with brick infill. It has wooden flooring between the 4th and 9th floors. It measures 80′ x 180′. The structure is nearly identical in construction and appearance to the A-B Mill. Two main stairways, a freight elevator, and two manlifts served this building. The windows on the west wall were sealed in brick as part of the construction of the 8180 / Dryer addition in 1966.

C-Mill added a third flour milling line to the plant early in the history of the factory. This mill was operated for only 27 years, and was decommissioned in 1964. The early closure of the third milling line, its complete interior dismantling after 1964, and lack of paper documentation makes C-Mill the least functionally intact, large-scale building on the property – and also one of the most poorly understood. However, it is reasonable to assume that it was essentially a reflection of the A or B (east and west) sides of the A-B Mill during its brief operation.

View of C-Mill from the southwest, and of the now-demolished Dryer Building as it was in 2014.
(Photo on right courtesy of Sangamon Valley Collection)

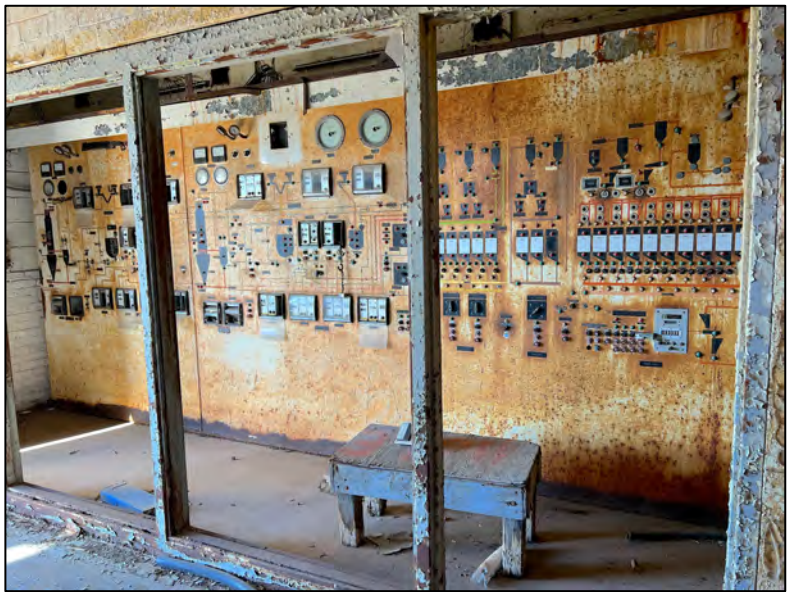
The upper floors were largely emptied of their milling equipment by Pillsbury during the 1960s and 1970s. On the 8th and 7th floors, in the northeast corner of the building, are large two-story bins that terminate into a series of hoppers on the 6th floor. These are nearly identical to those on the 6th through 8th floors of the A-B Mill.

On the 4th floor is some remnant milling machinery along the western side of an otherwise vacant (and rotted out) floor. A small room in the southwest corner of this floor was used for storage during the milling era of the C-Mill, and reflects the remains of pre-1964 storage. It contains shaker screens, sewing machines (used on flour bags), iron fittings, gears, and other unused parts. All is heavily rusted or decomposed.

Remnant pre-1964 milling machinery (wheat feeders) in C-Mill.

The 3rd floor is also largely vacant, except for an area on the western side of the floor that served as a control center for the adjacent 8180/Dryer Building after 1966. An impressive series of electrical readouts and control panels are painted or printed in elaborate pictographs which, along with colored lights, depict the stream of product through the dryer process that occurred in the adjacent building. During the mid-1960s, this control area would have been a technological marvel, and is still in excellent condition as a technological artifact of its time.

Pre-1964 parts room in C-Mill.



Circa 1966 control panel for the adjacent Dryer Building. (Photo: Chris Richmond)

The 1st and 2nd floors were retrofitted for product handling of mixes and artificial sweeteners made in the Dryer Building. In the northwest corner of the 1st floor was an enclosed area containing machinery dedicated to the production of Kentucky Fried Chicken biscuit mix (Billeck 2023). A large fumigation room was also on this floor (on the north end).

After 1991, what was left in C-Mill was salvaged and emptied by Cargill, and then by salvors and copper thieves. The basement of the C-Mill has been heavily salvaged and is debris strewn. Few in-situ fixtures remain in the basement, and no fire maps offer a better understanding of how this area functioned before 1964. At least a portion of the basement (in the southwest) contained several 2000lb compressors that were associated with the pressurized dryer in the adjacent Dryer Building, but that equipment was removed prior to 2022.

A "second life" for the C-Mill structure came during the mid-1960s, with the construction of the 8180 / Dryer Building against the west wall of C-Mill. This nine-story building, measuring 70' x135', was constructed almost entirely of steel and aluminum. It was clad in windowless aluminum and was surrounded by a one-story warehouse. The structure was illegally "kneeled" (demolished) by salvors in the fall of 2014, prior to asbestos abatement. Nothing remains of this facility, and few images of the structure were found during this study.

The Dryer Building served to convert ready-mixes that were created as wet a slurry in the upper floors of the Grocery Mix Building. This material was piped to the C-Mill (over Warehouse #1), where it then passed into the Dryer Building where high temperature apparatus transformed that mix into a dry powder that could be packaged for the home consumer. During the 1960s - 1980s, the Dryer also manufactured artificial sweeteners and "Funny Face" powdered drink mix, representing new processed food products for the Springfield plant. No documentation of the equipment in this structure has been located.

Several multi-story tanks that temporarily held the slurry mix were located behind a brick partition on the south end of the C-Mill building. These may also have originally been used for bulk storage of flour made in C-Mill between 1937-64. The upper floors of the Dryer Building held two massive, high pressure, high temperature drier tanks. The lower two floors were open and connected to a large warehouse that surrounding the building. On the north were loading docks.

Bakery Mix and Administration

The Bakery Mix Building is a broad two-story structure with an additional six-story tower. The current two-story, L- shaped base measures 181' x 221' and the tower 40' x 65'. Originally, a much larger one-story product warehouse wing (added ca. 1950) extended to the north. The latter, known as "Warehouse #9 was used for storage of both finished product and ingredients used in the Bakery Building. Demolished before 2017, only the west wall of that wing remains today. The building is of glazed brick, concrete, and steel construction, with a formal modernist/international style public entrance fronting west. The lobby is finished with a terrazzo tiled floor, an impressive curved staircase, and exhibits remnants of stainless steel and acrylic fixtures.

Possibly removed in 1991 was a 10' by 23' painting on canvas, mounted on the lobby wall facing the entrance. The work of Minneapolis artist Gustave Wilhelm Krollman (1888-1962), the painting consisted of "a mural showing milling and allied industries…taken from Pillsbury activities" (ISJ 7-20-1949). Only a small portion of the image was inadvertently photographed in the 1960s, as part as an executive meeting in the lobby, and in a newspaper advertisement for the furnishers of the lobby (see Section 2). The whereabouts of the painting is unknown.


The Bakery Tower and surrounding administration and warehouse buildings (view from west and south east).

The administrative parts of the building were serviced by the grand staircase and a staff stairway. The Bakery Mix Tower was fitted with a stairway, freight elevator, and a manlift. The structure of the building is sound, except for heavy damage to the second story roof, which has caused severe water damage. The interior plaster surfaces and partition walls on the 2nd floor are in very poor condition.

Lobby and main public staircase to administrative offices.

The most significant expansion of the Springfield plant occurred in 1949, with the construction of the Bakery Mix Building and the associated offices, laboratories, and test kitchen there. The Bakery Mix Tower focused on the production of premixes (for products such as doughnuts, biscuits, rolls, and pancakes) used at an institutional scale in restaurants, hotels, bakeries, or other large kitchens. Household consumer mixes continued to be made in the Grocery Mix Building.

The 1st floor of Bakery ("Warehouses #7 & #8" by 1981) was used for the packaging and storage of both raw ingredients and finished product. The equipment on this floor has been removed. A partial basement on the south wing of the building (Warehouse #7) still contains a series of large holding bins and augers.

The 2nd floor was the administrative center of the plant after 1949. It contained offices, a test kitchen, a full chemical testing laboratory, a wood-lined refrigerated room, a nurse's station, locker rooms, and a corner executive office. Much of this was left vacant after 1991, with only a portion of the office spaces used during the Cargill era. The remains of the offices are in very poor condition, due to water damage and vandalism. Few fixtures and only minimal furnishings remained in 2023.

Laboratory and test kitchen on 2nd floor of Bakery Building.

Large early-to mid-century enameled bake ovens still remain on the 2nd floor (in the test kitchen), along with a number of early hardwood counters and cabinetry used in the kitchen. The adjacent laboratory contains random pieces of testing equipment, a chemical hood, and the terminus of an elaborate pneumatic system that sent samples of product from across the plant to this room for regular analysis.

In-situ bake ovens in the test kitchen.

Decommissioned in 1991, the 3rd through 8th floors (of the Bakery Tower) were not fitted with fire maps that have allowed for a detailed understanding of the processes on each floor (like that of the A-B Mill). Further, most employees interviewed in 2023 and 2024 knew little of the workings here, as they were stationed at the A-B Mill or in the Grocery Building. There is evidence of industrial salvage of equipment on the 3rd floor, which also housed a ca. 1980s computer control center. The gutted remains of vintage computer banks were still present in 2023. On the 4th floor are a series of stainless-steel mixing vats and augers, and it was on this floor that four unusual, house-made flavoring tanks were harvested as artifacts in 2023. The 5th floor is largely empty except for a large array of horizontal augers on the ceiling. Most of the floor-standing equipment on this level appears to have been salvaged industrially.

Flavoring tanks on 4th floor of Bakery Tower.

The 6th through 8th floors of the Bakery Tower are constructed with steel grate flooring. A series of large vertical tubes and tanks occupies the 6th floor. The dense array of these components seems intact. On the 7th floor are larger tanks (for flour?) on an elevated platform, as well as a series of floor hatches (leading to the tubes and tanks on the 6th floor) where various ingredients such as food colorings and other dry additives were apparently added by hand. The 8th floor is a complex mass of auger and shaft systems that also appear to be largely intact.

Product augers on the 5th floor (above), ingredient shoots (7th floor), and view of 8th floor (right).

Section 4

Historical Artifact Collection and Documentation

Robert Mazrim

Between the spring of 2023 through the fall of 2024, Mazrim and MPF staff conducted a survey of the entire complex looking for portable objects of potential historical significance. Some items were also collected by MPF staff prior to April of 2023.

It was soon learned that the Pillsbury plant has been heavily scavenged not only by two privately-held salvage companies, but by trespassers and the Cargill and Pillsbury companies themselves. The latter sold off equipment during periods of contraction in the business, and also established giveaway programs to employees as the facility was contracting and closing. The result was a surprising paucity of what might be considered "historical artifacts."

Mazrim identified seven basic categories of potentially significant objects still extant in the factory complex. As practical, many of these were harvested and stored and displayed in what was called a "curation facility" in an abandoned but secured loading dock. Unfortunately, many objects from several categories were either displayed or stored in the March 2024 Adams Street "Pillsburied" exhibit, which was destroyed by fire in June of 2024. Some of those materials were actually salvaged from the ruins of the building, however.

Category 1: Iconic Items

These are objects emblematic of the processes, production or history of the mill. Not including large, floor mounted equipment, extant items in this category were surprisingly few. The paucity of such items probably reflects their collection by former employees, professional salvors, and casual thieves.

Category 2: Personal / Modified Items

These are small items associated with the daily activities of the workers employed at the plant. Of specific interest were those items that had been modified, rigged or personalized by those employees. This included safety helmets, modified tools, signage, or protective gear. Such items simply represent the minutia and character of daily life at the plant. Few items from this category, however, were found in the plant.

Category 3: Handmade Items

Category 3 consists of handmade items very probably produced on site in the millwright shop in the basement of the A-B Mill. These were often fashioned from stainless steel or aluminum and were made for an eclectic and wide variety of tasks and functions, ranging from specialized hand grain scoops, laboratory drying racks, and paper towel dispensers to large, rocket-shaped tanks designed to contain artificial flavorings.

Category 4: Staff Graffiti

A non-portable artifact class, employee-drawn pictures and text were discovered in several places across the facility. Usually executed in pencil, and many clearly pre-dating ca. 1960, these were photographed when discovered. Of note was a series of drawings and phrases made during World War II, found on two concrete columns in the basement of C-Mill.

Category 5: Fire Exit Map Floor Plans

Hand-drawn and framed fire exit maps (probably dating the 1990s) were found mounted on the walls near exits in the A-B Mill and the Turbo Buildings. These depicted (along with locations of fire extinguishers and fire exit routes) the machinery and fixtures on each floor, and were quite valuable in the interpretation of the use of the floors in both of these buildings, as well as the basic function of extant and non-extant machines and fixtures.

Category 6: Control Panel Readouts

Also of potential significance was a large number of readout panels to electrical control and switching devices. These consist of large steel boxes (sometimes measuring as large as 4 by 5 feet) that contained controllers for various types of machinery in the plant. The doors of these boxes not only contain indicator lights and switches, but specialized labeling and even pictographic representations of subsets of the manufacturing process. Each was unique to a specific function within the plant, and was probably designed for this plant in particular.

Evidence of site-specific design was found along with the discovery of a control panel that featured the "bicep doughboy." Following its discovery, MPF personnel contacted Automation Displays Incorporated (that manufactured that particular panel), out of interest in the origin of the doughboy graphic. It was learned that all records concerning the designs of that panel, including hand-drawn and inked designs, were still extant. The designs were subsequently obtained by MPF.

This subset of potentially significant objects represents an aesthetically compelling and now largely outdated reflection of the industrial technologies that were present at Pillsbury. However, it was soon learned that the recovery of such panel doors was extremely difficult, requiring grinders, sawzalls and such like in environments that were not only without power but were difficult to access and sometimes dangerous. A select few were collected.

Category 7: Documents

The sixth category consists of extant paperwork that might be of significance to future scholars. Huge amounts of papers, blueprints, manuals, trade catalogs, etc. were still present in the factory, but most had suffered substantial damage from weathering or contamination.

Ultimately, approximately one dozen large plastic totes of paperwork were collected from the various buildings. These were first examined and sorted on site. From these samples, only a very small percentage of documents were found to be of potentially significant interest for interpreting the history of the plant, its architecture, or activities within. These include blueprints, plan drawings, schematics, and correspondence. The most significant of these will be curated by the Sangamon Valley Collection at the Lincoln Public Library.

Category 1: Iconic Items

Time card clock (basement of Head House), hand cart, bag sewing machines (in situ on left, Millwrights' Shop).

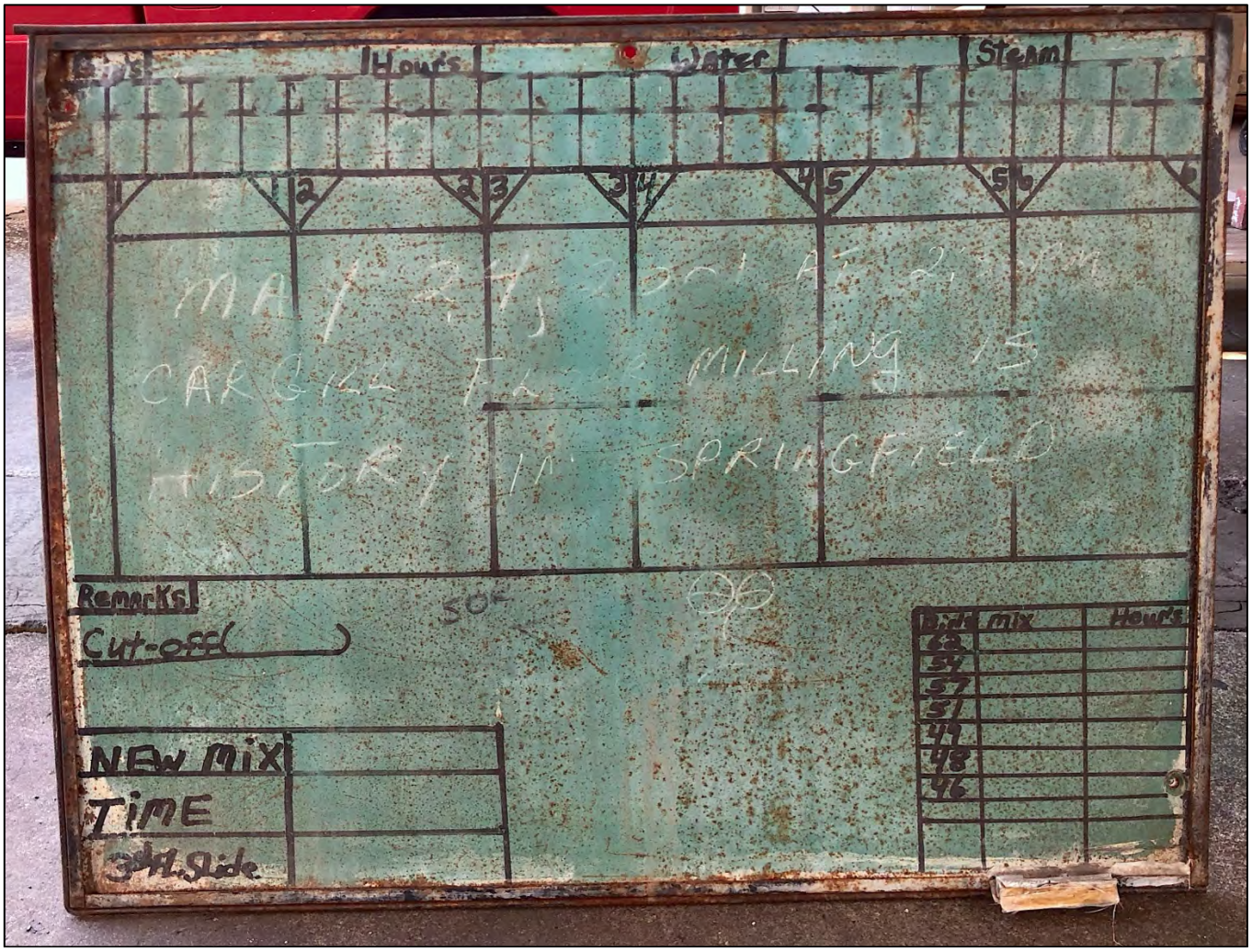
Category 1: Iconic Items

In-situ emergency stretcher box (C-Mill), Wheeldex (parts department office, Grocery Mix Building) safety sticker featuring “slipping doughboy”, and food safety sign with post-abandonment graffiti.

Category 2: Personal / Modified Items

Safety helmet decorated by wearer. Modified rubber hammer (used to knock clumping flour from spouts), repaired safety boots (locker room).

Category 2: Personal / Modified Items



Smutters' Chalkboard (A-B Mill, 8th Floor), used to track grain movements in the silos. Marked in chalk, presumably by the Smutter, on last day of production: *"May 24, 2001, at 2:30 PM Cargill Flour Milling is History in Springfield"* (with frowning face.

Category 3: Handmade Items

Handmade specialty scoops.

Handmade card box and handled can/pail.

Category 3: Handmade Items

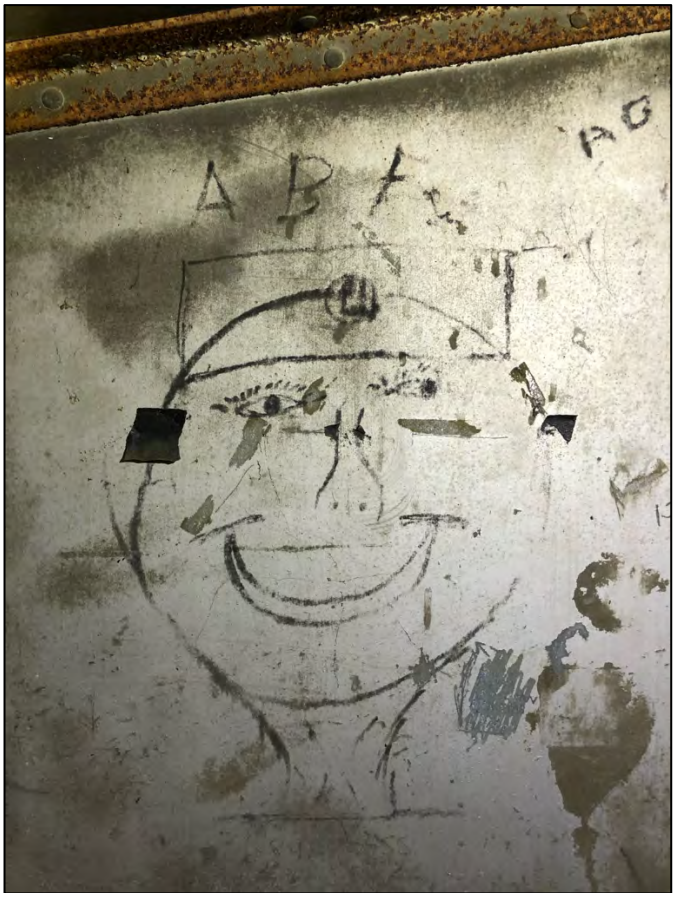
Handmade paper towel dispenser and pneumatic tube rack (laboratory).

Handmade rolling flour bin and flavoring tanks (Bakery Tower).

Category 4: Staff Graffiti

War-era staff graffiti in basement of C-Mill.

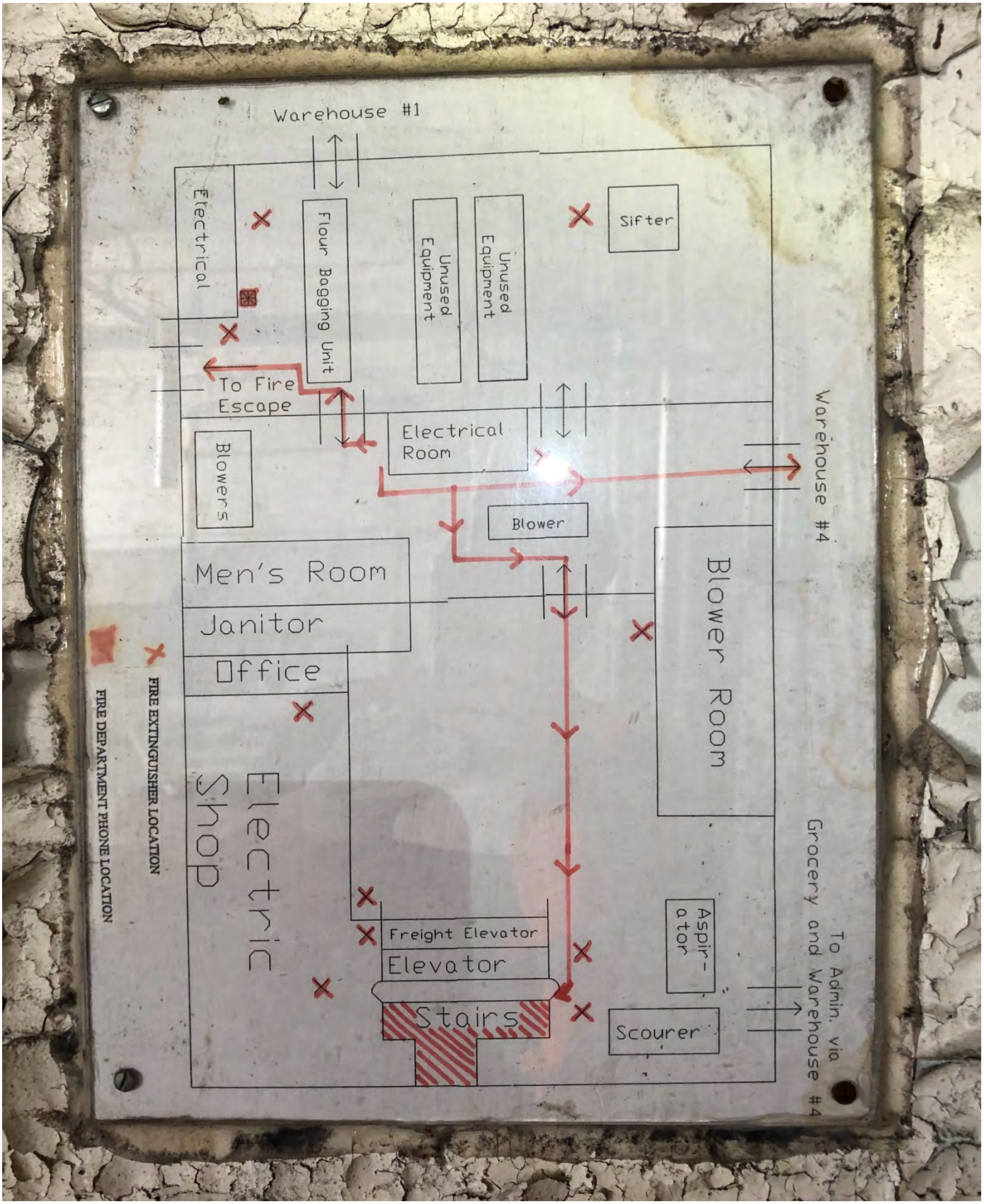
Category 4: Staff Graffiti



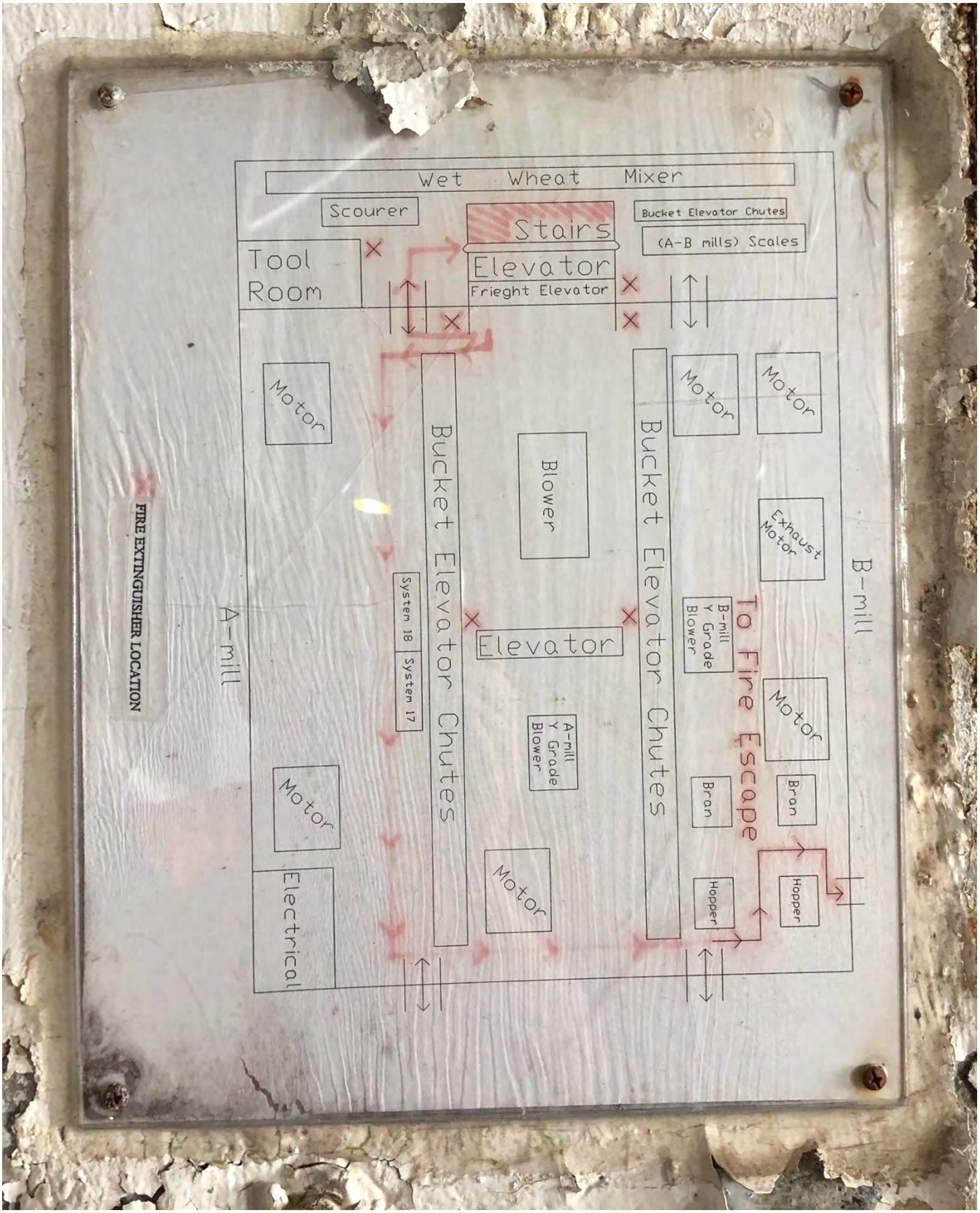
Category 5: Fire Exit Map Floor Plans (A-B Mill)

A-B Mill Basement

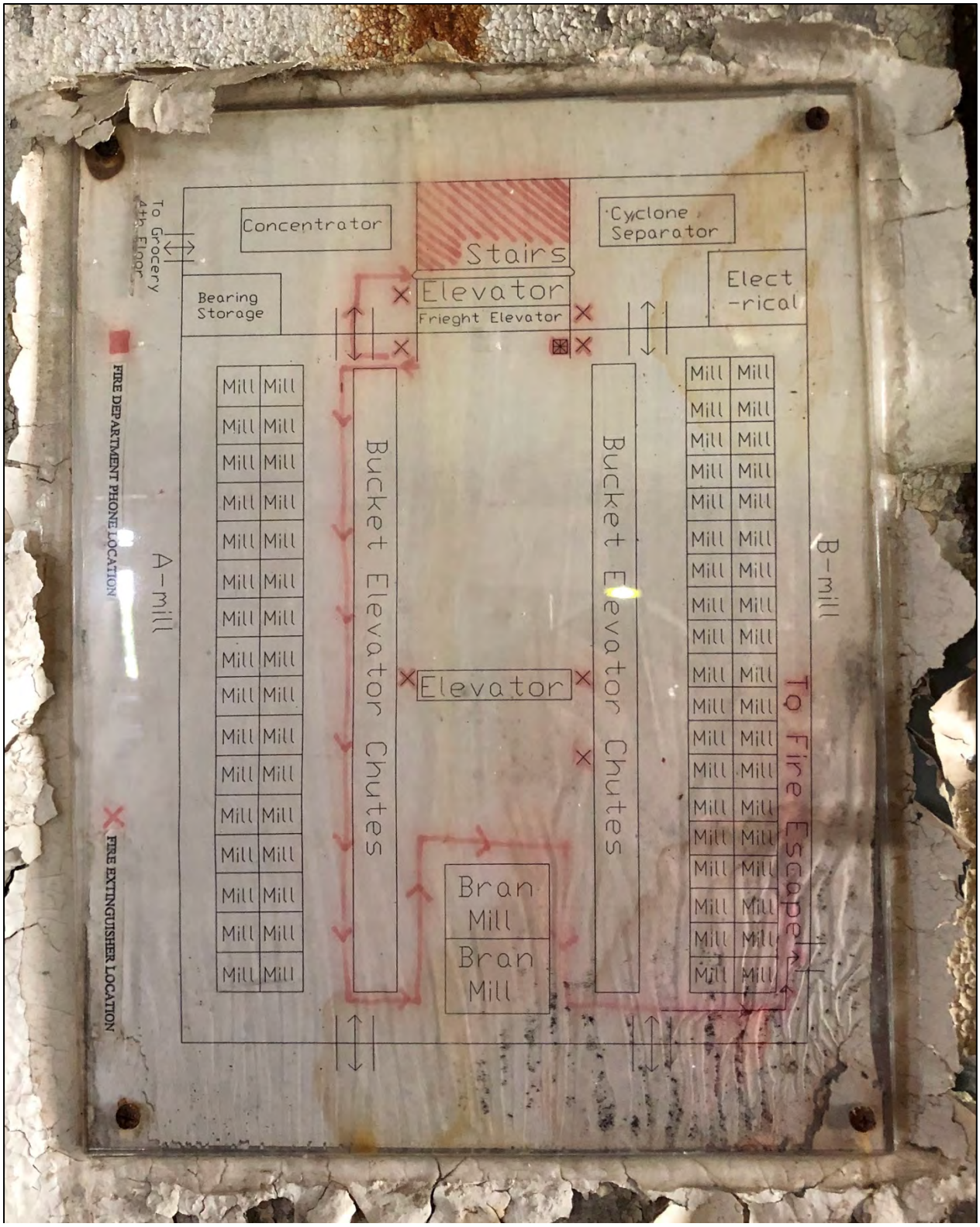
A-B Mill First Floor



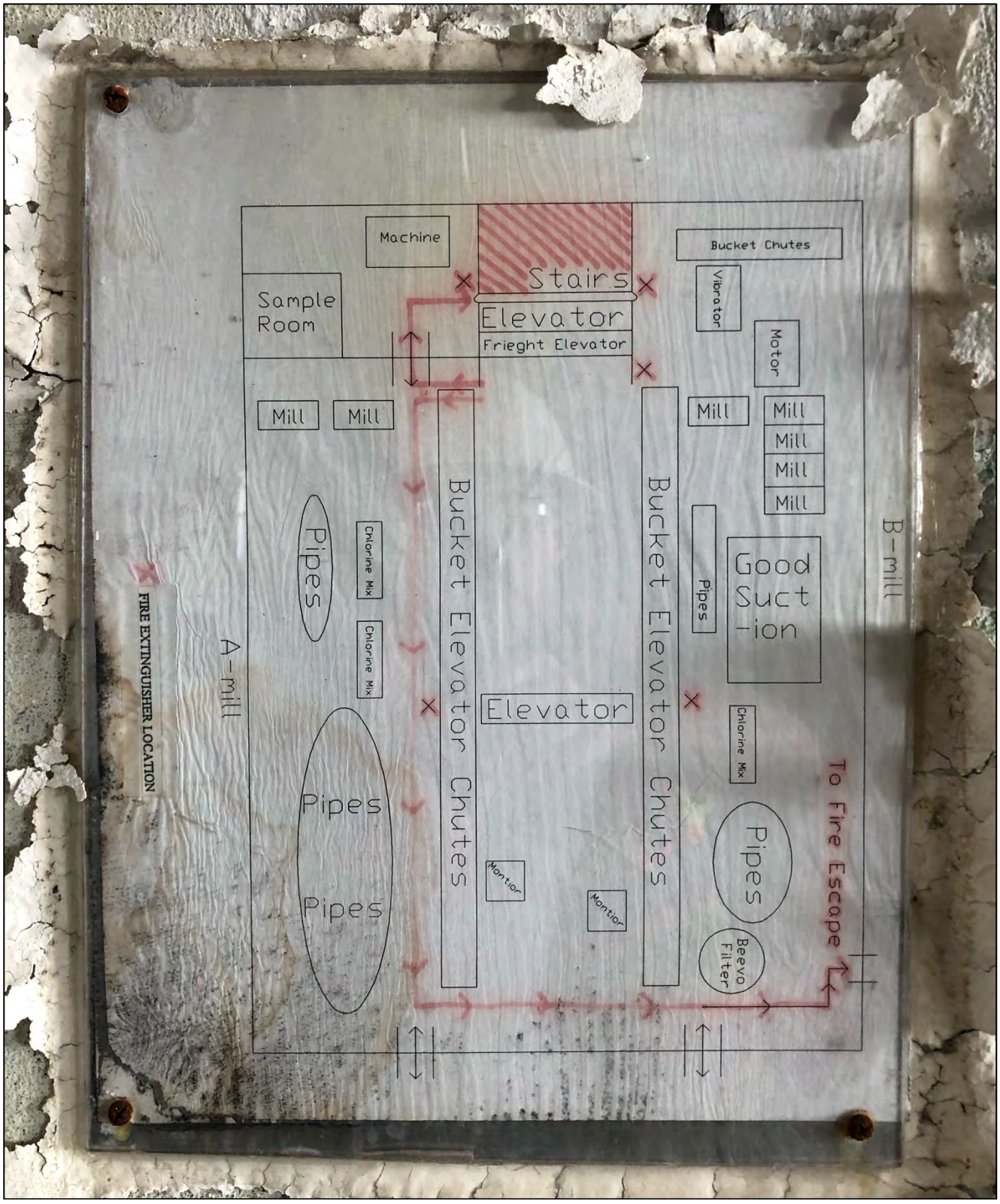
A-B Mill Second Floor



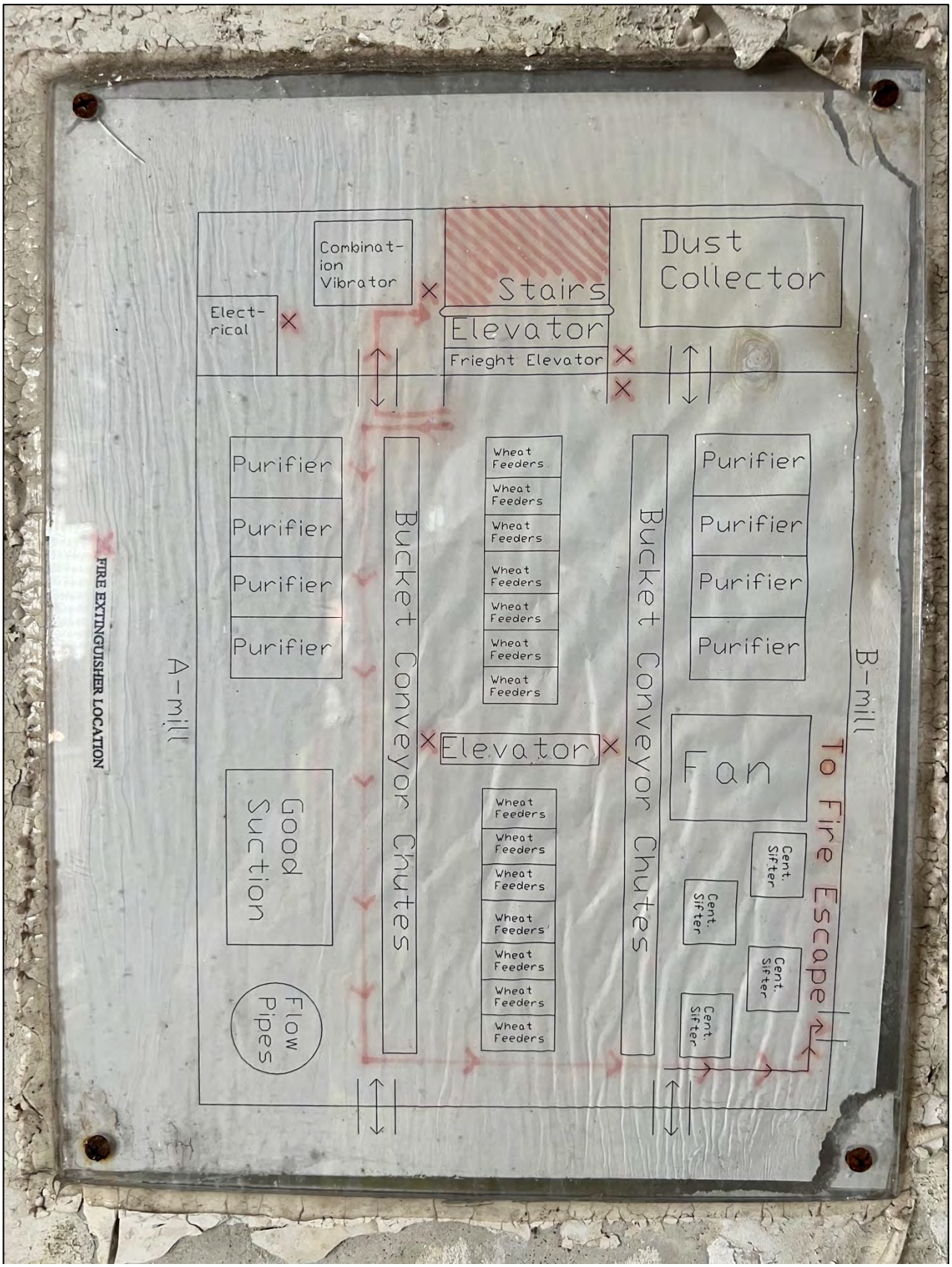
A-B Mill Third Floor



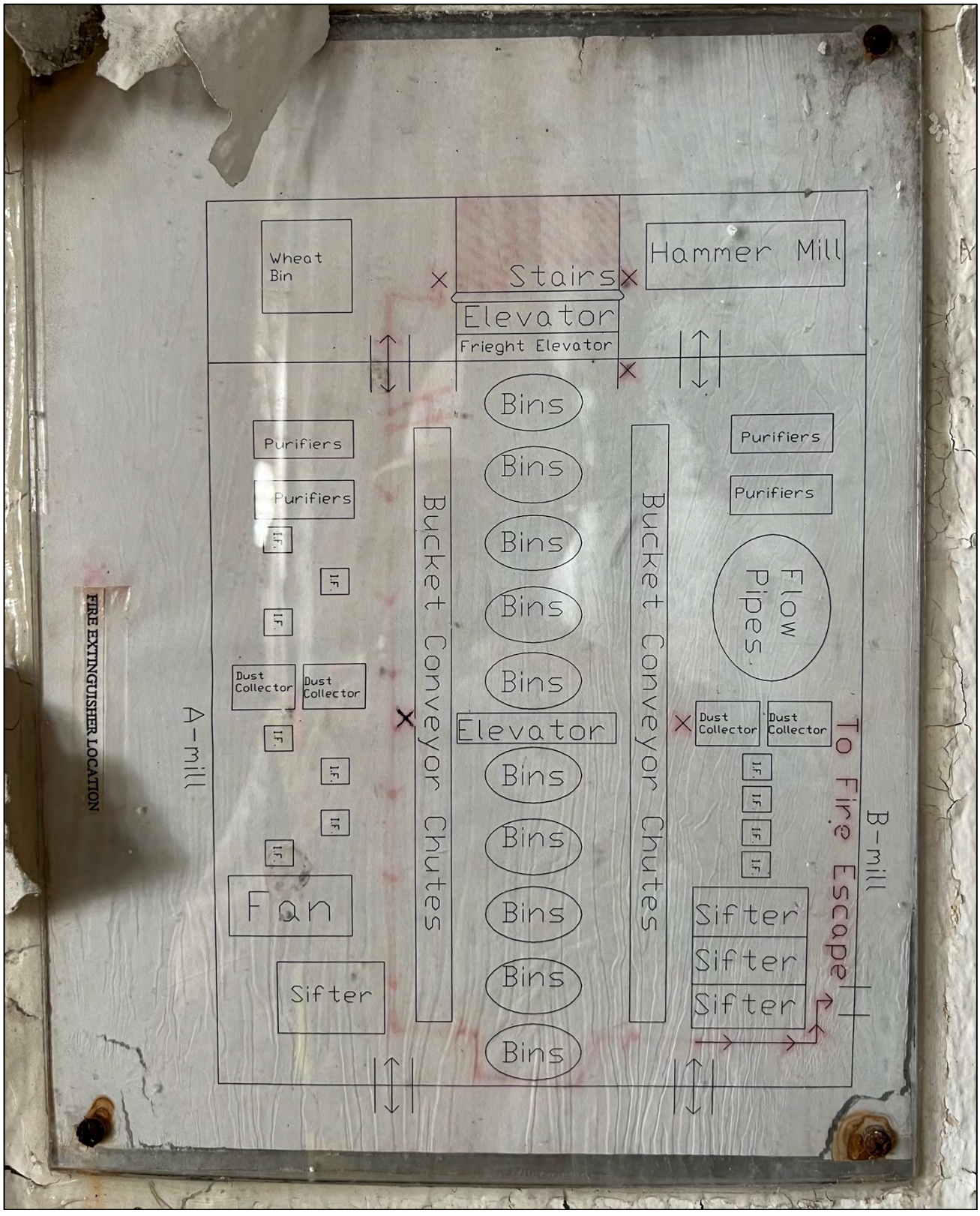
A-B Mill Fourth Floor



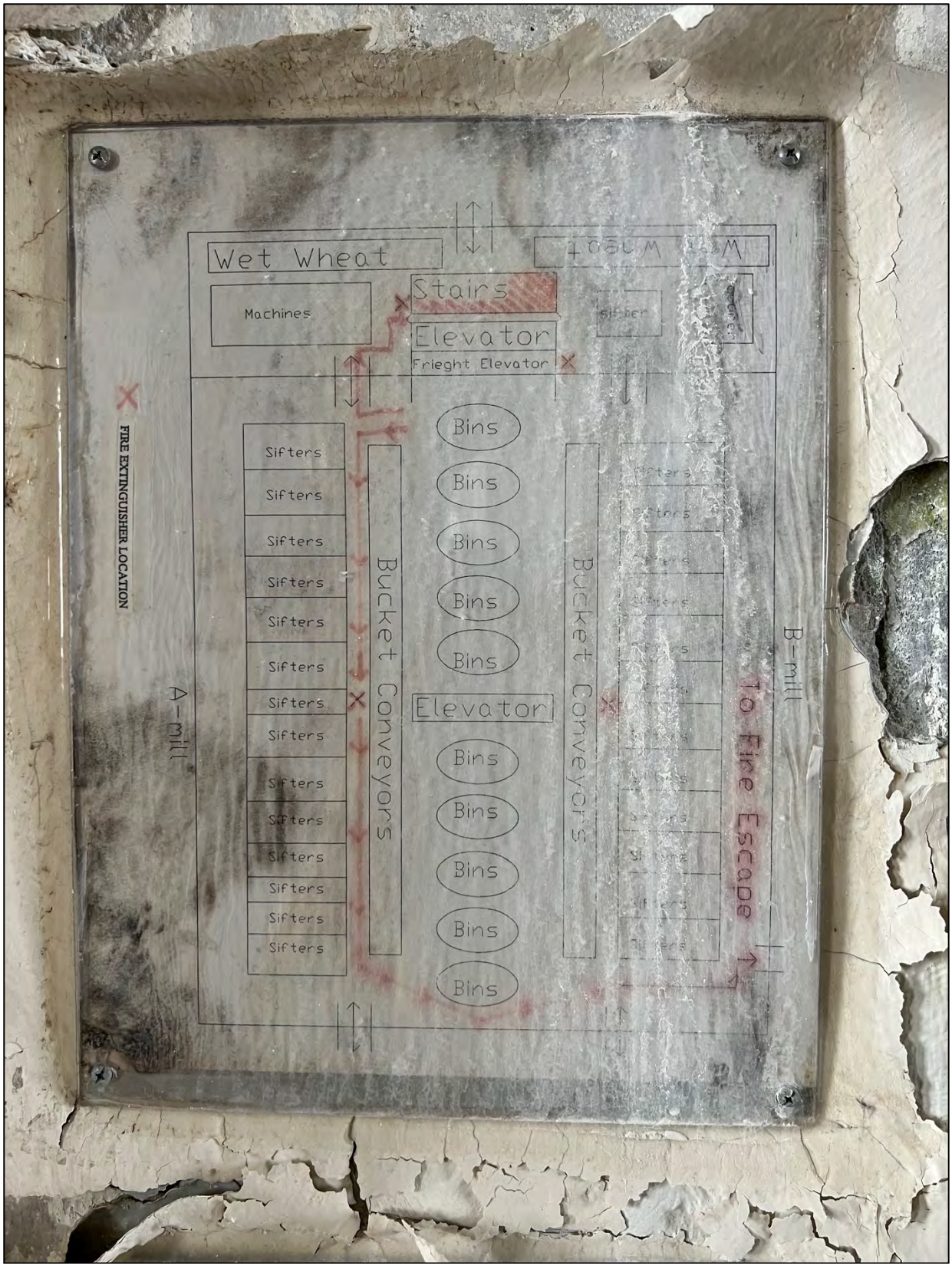
A-B Mill Fifth Floor



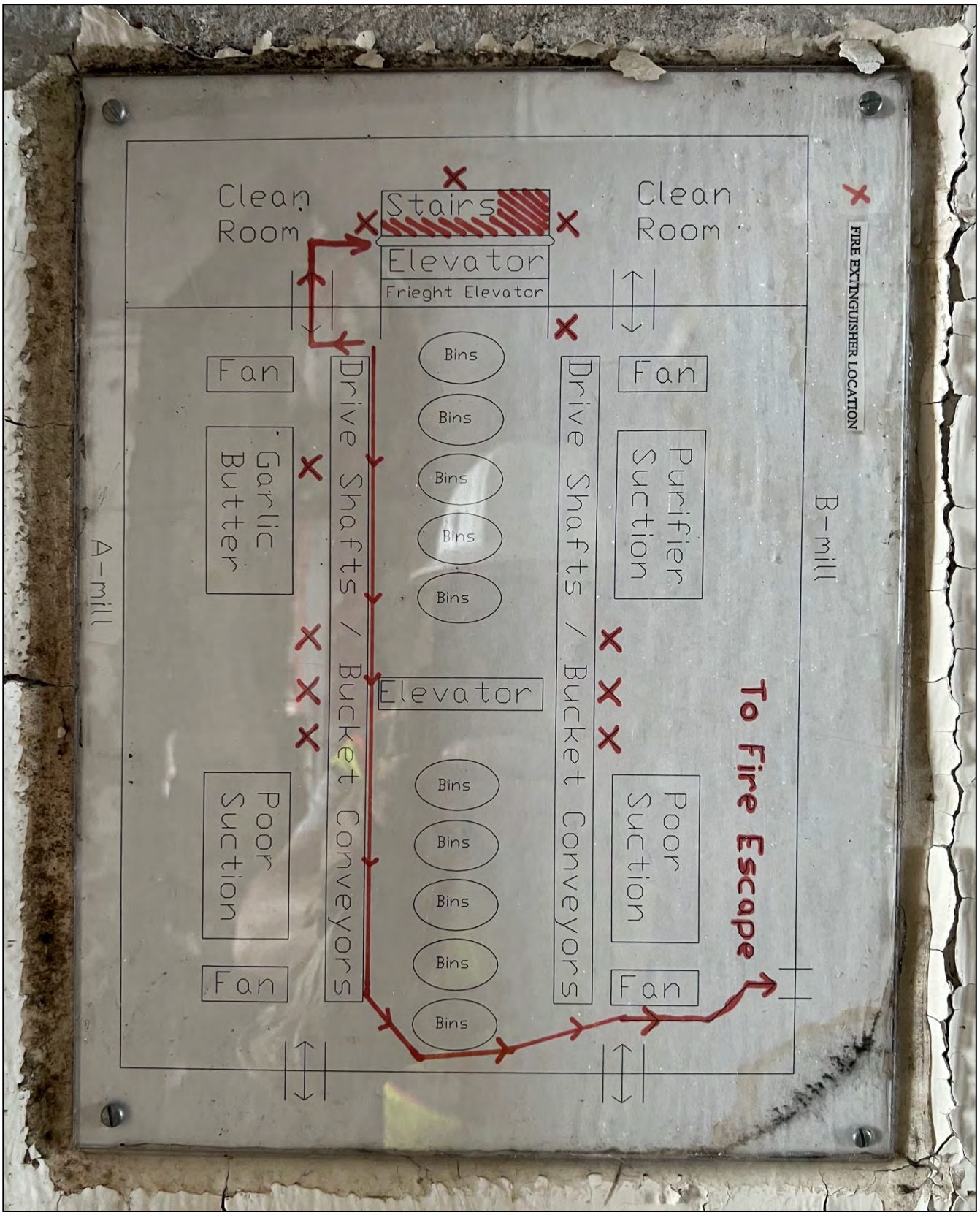
A-B Mill Sixth Floor



A-B Mill Seventh Floor

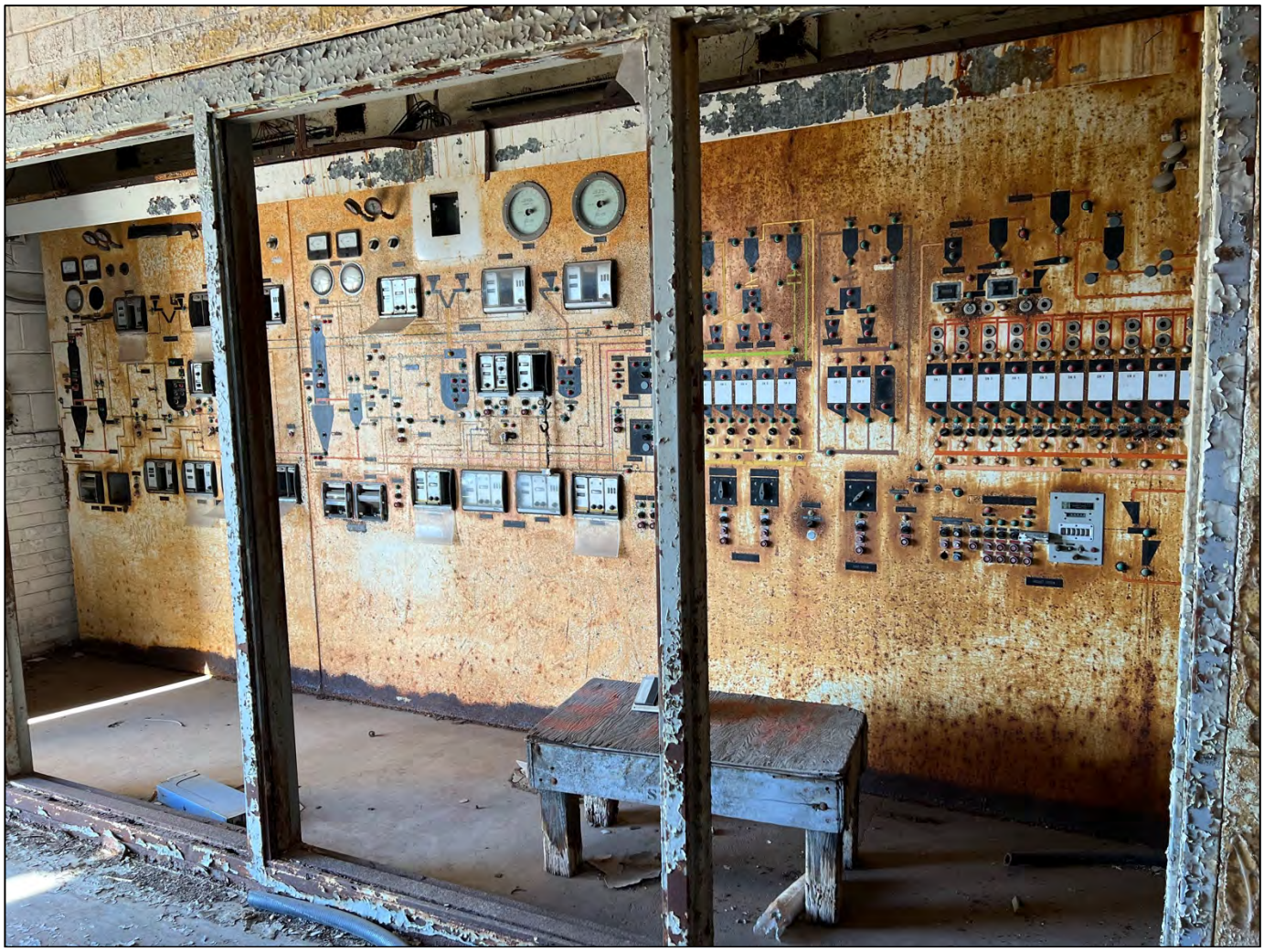


A-B Mill Eighth Floor



A-B Mill Nineth Floor

Category 6: Control Panel Readouts

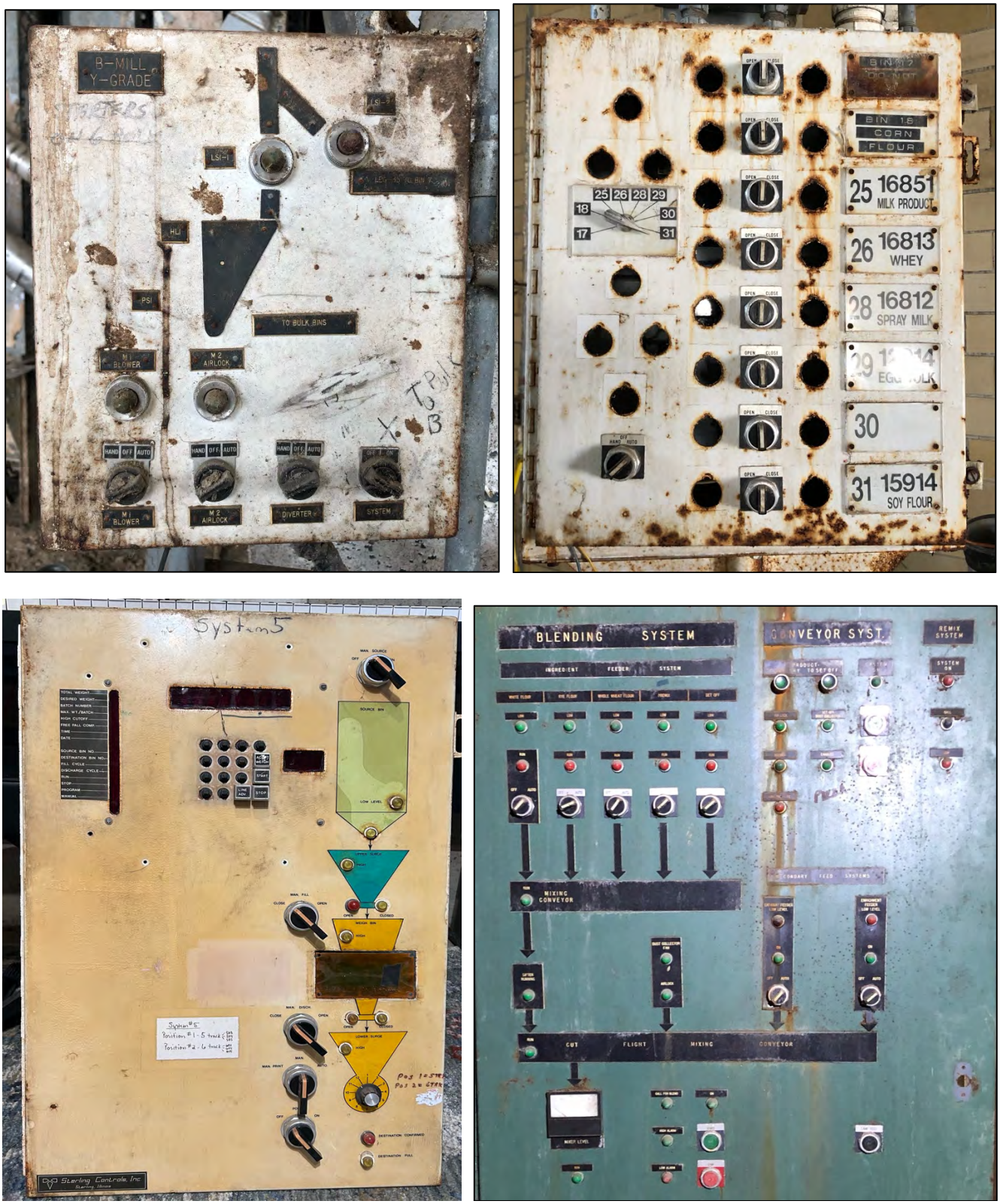


Control panels for Dryer Building (located on 3rd floor of C-Mill)

Category 6: Control Panel Readouts

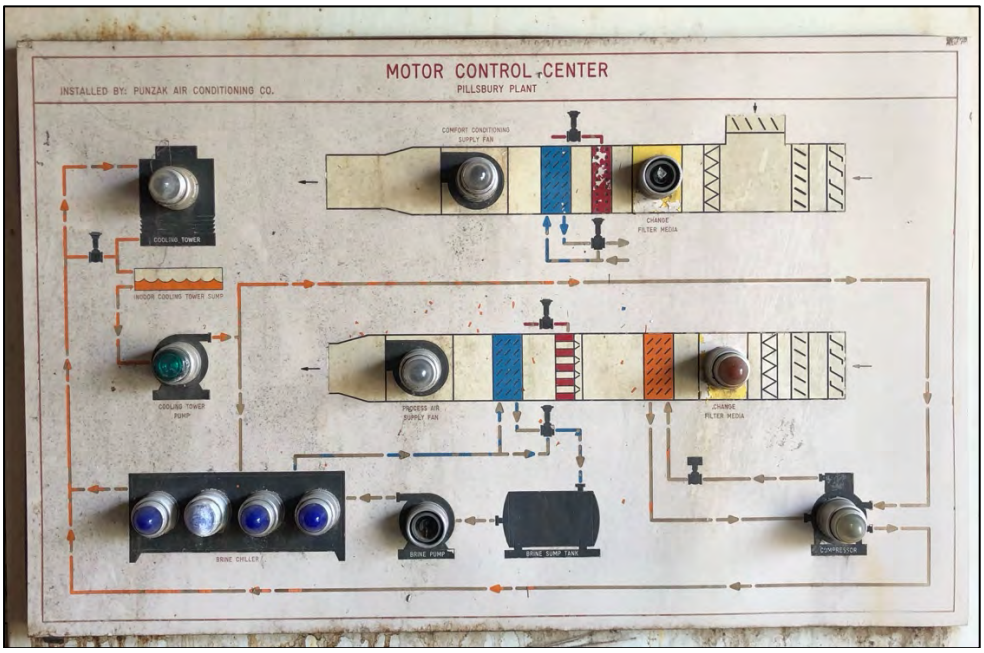
Readout panels in Stream Tender's office (Turbo Building).

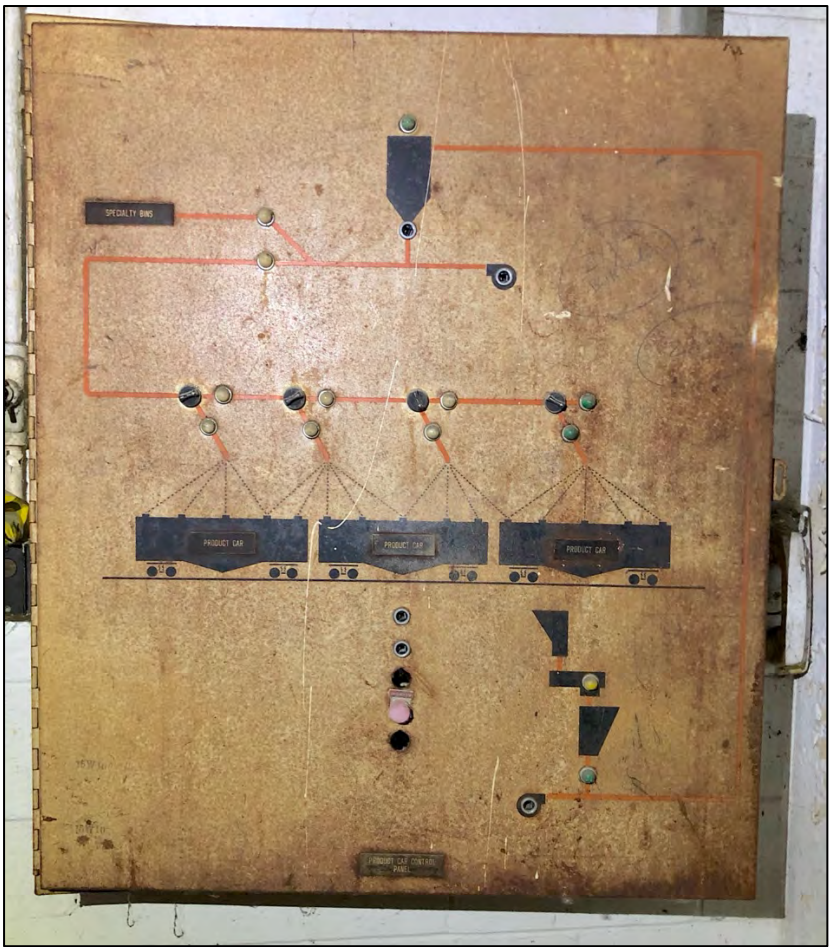
Category 6: Control Panel Readouts



Various small control panels.

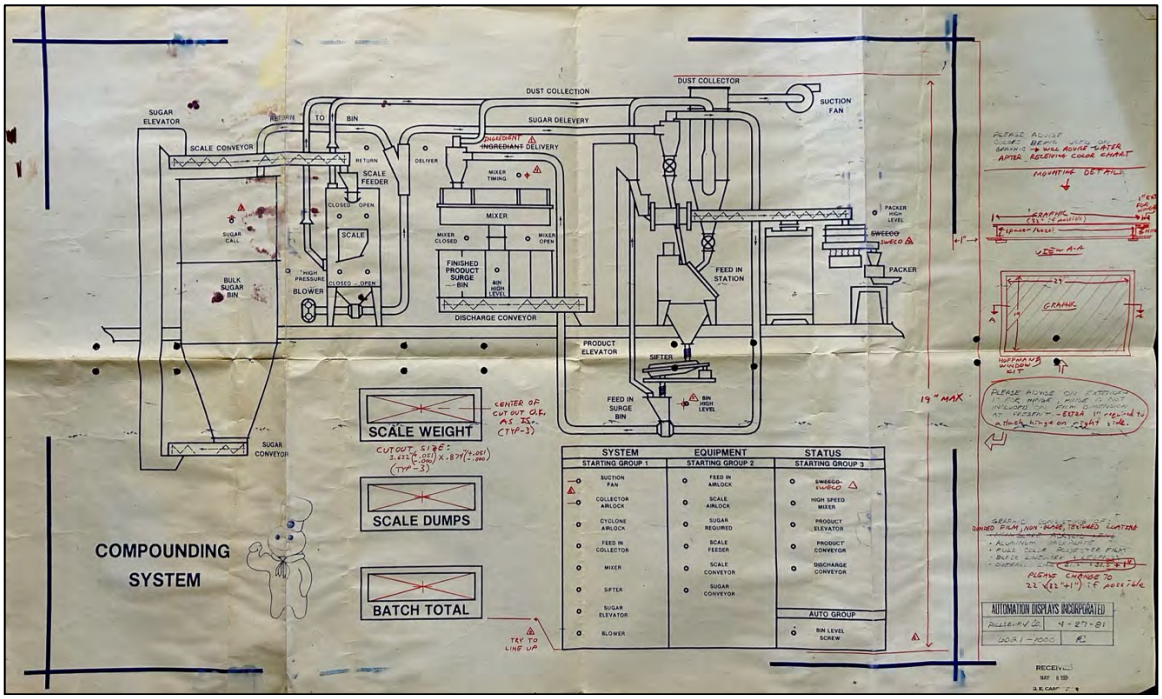
Category 6: Control Panel Readouts





Small control panels (note train car pictographs on right).

Category 6: Control Panel Readouts



The “Bicep doughboy” control panel, found on the ground floor of the Bakery Building, with source graphic and production drawing from Automation Displays Incorporated.

Category 7: Paper Documentation

Large Format Blueprints, Schematics, and Plans

1959: Property Plat

- Scale plan view of the layout of the structures at the plant. The unfinished Turbo and Bulk Storage building are depicted, and the Grocery Building is labelled as "Specialty Plant".

1961: Property Plat

- Nearly identical to 1959 Plat.

1978: Machinery Plan – Grocery Building

- Plan drawings of machinery on ground floor of Grocery building, north end.

1980: Bulk Sugar Modifications

- Plan view of machinery on 5th floor of Grocery Building and installations on rooftop.

1980: Bulk Sugar Modifications

- Elevation drawings of machinery on 5th floor of Grocery Building and installations on rooftop. Probably associated with pre-production of materials piped to Dryer Building.
  Elevation drawings are rare in extant document collections.

1983: Flow diagram Grocery Building 5th Floor

- Depicts automation-related machinery on 5th floor of grocery and rooftop. Probably associated with pre-production of materials piped to Dryer Building.

1984: "Flow Filling Systems"

- Elevation drawings of machinery associated with upper floors of Grocery Building.

1985: "Grocery Building _____ [illegible]"

- Plan view of floor drains and equipment locations on 5th floor of Grocery Building.

1981: Production Drawings for "Bicep Doughboy" control panel

- Obtained from the manufacturer's archives. Panel found on ground floor of Bakery Building.

1989: Asbestos Survey

- The most complete and significant set of extant paper records recovered from the site consist of a multi-page roll of large-scale blueprint plan views of the facility associated with an asbestos surveys conducted for the Pilsbury Company, and dated January of 1989. The survey includes plan view drawings of each of floor of each significant structure in the complex. Given its purpose – to record the presence and character of asbestos pipe wrap and insulation, most of what is depicted on these floor plans consists of lines of piping, boilers, and other fixtures that were insulated with asbestos. References to milling machinery, other fixtures, or general function of each floor is rare. However, these documents represent the most detailed and accurate plan view drawings of the buildings at the Pillsbury site.

Category 7: Paper Documentation

Miscellaneous Records

- Lighting contract for Turbo Milling and Bulk Storage addition. 1960. No drawings. Outlines basic terms.
- Elevation drawing of Grain dryer November 1970
- Drawings of floor grating in Bakery Tower. Original plans, with 1985 alterations.
- Bulk Storage basement motor control center diagrams. August 1961 (shortly after completion).
- "Man-Lift" safety rules. Posted somewhere in plant.
- Correspondence associated with production of "Bicep Doughboy" control panel.

Section 5

Oral Histories from Selected Former Employees of the Pillsbury Mill at Springfield

Interviews conducted, transcribed, and edited by Robert Mazrim

A number of former employees of the Pillsbury Mill visited the site between 2023 and 2025. Casual interviews and oral histories were conducted or recorded by Mazrim and Chris Richmond during this period. Selected here are three edited transcriptions of what have proved to be some of the more valuable conversations that were recorded. The transcriptions (made by the AI program "Alice AI") were lightly edited for errors, content, and clarity.

August Billeck: Worked at Pillsbury/Cargill from 1981 to 2001. He was a Bolter (Miller) in the A-B Mill, and also worked the Head House. He ran the last grind of wheat in May of 2001. Recorded 7/25/2023 and 8/1/2023.

Dave Kelley: Worked at Pillsbury from 1970 to 1991. His father also worked at Pillsbury. Kelly was a Millwright for many years of employment. Recorded 8/8/2023.

Bob Howard: Worked in the Grocery Building 1985-91 and served as Union President in 1991 when Cargill took over. Recorded 8/17/23.

Auggie Billeck at his former desk, and at the control panels (in A-B mill) used to shut down the mill in 2001.

August (“Auggie:) Billeck

Speaker A: August Billeck
They, for some reason, put me in the grain elevator.

Speaker B: Robert Mazrim
So you've been working in the mill for ten years and they just moved you.

Speaker A
They moved me to the elevator. When Cargill took over, they put me in the grain elevator.

Speaker B
And they gave you a pay cut.

Speaker A
And they give me a pay cut and put me in a job I didn't know nothing about.

Speaker B
So, do you recognize these things? [gesturing to segments of the elevator cups displayed in the exhibit].

Speaker A
I've replaced a million of them. You know, they eventually break if they get a big load on them. They, like, if something backs up and it backs up into these elevators. That's what these are called, elevators. The pulley up on the top just burns it and burned the thing through, and it would finally break and you would hear the whole thing fall down. So you had to go down on the third floor and take off the panel there, and you had to pull that big belt, that elevator out of the pulley thing there.

Speaker B
No kidding?. I thought you meant you just replaced those cups.

Speaker A
I've done that, too. But, yeah, we replaced the whole…. or we put the same belt back in and would you say, patch it, you know, clinch them together and use the same one over again. But if it was so burnt up, then they would. There was a department that made the whole strap itself with all the cups on it.

Speaker B
Oh, they did that here?

Speaker A
Yeah, they did it here. And they would make them here. They would have rolls and rolls of this, of the material, and then they drill. Well, they came with the holes already in them, I believe. Yeah, because you could see a couple of them. Anyway, you put the cups on and, you know, the things here. And then you had to do that, and it took a long time because those were really long. They went from the third floor to the 9th floor, so they pretty long.

Speaker B
You probably had something to do with one of those [gesturing to the timeclock on display].

Speaker A
Oh, my God. I punched in and out of that clock a million times.

Speaker A
[Looking a roll stand cart from A-B Mill]. Oh, I worked many of these. These are what you use to move your roll stands. On the fourth floor were the rolls, and that's where the wheat went into and ground up the wheat. Well, those. You moved them. The rolls, they were called rolls inside of the thing while they would be put on the floor. And if they had to be replaced. Well, you would take this and put it right over that roll and pull that back, and then you can move it.

Speaker B
They're really heavy.

Speaker A
Oh, my God. You ain't no way a person could lift them, you know, himself. So that's what that was for, to move roll stands. The rolls that go into the roll stands, that's what they use to move the rolls.

Speaker B
So you call them roll stands? That's what's grinding the flour?

Speaker A
Yes, the rolls. On the fourth floor. Oh, it's probably a 20 minutes process. From the time it's wheat to the time it's flour, you know, about 20 minutes. It goes through a series of sifters and grinders. Now, these grinders, that's where these rolls are, that these moved. Every so often, the roll stand had to be worked and they would replace them with sharper ones, you know, because they dull after a while. And they. Underneath the stock, you would grab the stock and you could see it's flat and come out. In other words, that told you that the roll was dull. So we needed to replace that roll. So they would work it. On days that the mill was down, we would work the roll stand. And they used block and tackle to take the roll out of the stand. And then they would move it down and then set it on the floor. And then they would put that on it, back it up and you can move it over. And they would get a new roll stand by the same thing. They would go to a new one, hook into that, put it back to the roll stand. So that's what that was used for.

Speaker B
Well, the stands are marked, aren’t they? First break, second break?

Speaker A
First break, second break, third break. And that means just that. When the wheat first hit the roll stand, that's first break. And it would go through a series of things, and then it would go to the second break, which would grind it up again. And same thing. It would go up through a series of sifters and purifiers and all this stuff. And then third break, fourth break. Now it goes from the head end of the roll floor to the tail end of the roll floor. Wheat germ stuff that they got. They made from the wheat. Wheat germ is very good stuff.

Speaker B
So, this stuff is going up and down constantly? It looks like they're sending it up, sending it down, sending it up. Is that how it works?

Speaker A
Yes, exactly. It goes up through, like I said, first break. And it'll go up through the thing, and it'll come back to the roll floor through the second break. Once wheat first hits the rolls down on the fourth floor, when the wheat first hit it, it would go through the first brake roll stands. That's what the rolls are in. A roll stand, it's called. Okay, so it first hit in there, and it would go through the first break, and there would be nothing on the tail end yet because all the wheat stuff is down on the first break. But it would go through the mill, down to the roll, the roll floor on the fourth floor. And then it would go through the second brake. And it would go through the second brake sifter.

Speaker B
So does it have to go way high up in the mill again?

Speaker A
It's got to go up to the 9th floor. It goes to the 9th floor, and then the 8th floor is the sifter floor.

Speaker B
That's where the big boxes are.

Speaker A
Big boxes. Those are sifters. So, the wheat would go through those sifters, and the stock would go out of the sifter boxes underneath. Underneath those sifters. And then it would go down to the roll floor again through the second break and go through the roll stand there of the second break, and it would go down through the third break, and then the same thing down to the fourth break all the way to the end.

Speaker A
And if something gets backed up and it backs up into that elevator head, that's what, there's so much weight on those belts because it won't move. And the bearing or whatever you call it up there burns that belt. Well, that. And then it would break. It would break. And then you would hear that. So, shit, I just broke a belt. So then an elevator. So we'd say, which one? Elevator 32. So you'd go down to the third floor to elevator 32, take the things apart there, and then you would pull that big thing all the way out. And remember it was like 100 some feet, it had to be, because it would go from the third floor to the 9th floor and back down. So, yeah, those things were very heavy.

Speaker B
Long, and so then the product would come down again just through all those tubes. Right. Just gravity. Right?

Speaker A
Yes. So when you pull out now, of course, you're making a huge mess that you got to clean up later, picking up flour or whatever was in that particular strap. So when you're pulling it out, you're making a heck of a mess. Now, depending on what it was, you may have to take the feed off of the mill to, you know, stop the wheat from hitting the roll stands, because the more you're pulling, the bigger mess you're making. So you say, well, it's time to shut the feed off, because obviously, if it keeps running and that elevator is not working, all that stock is going through there, nowhere to go, makes a big mess. So take the feed off the A-mill.

Speaker B
So what do you do? You get on one of those phones that's all over the place and holler at somebody to shut it down.

Speaker A
They had a horn system and. Which was a phone thing. Everybody, like, I had three short. That was me. I was the bolter in the mill, which a bolter is the one that puts the ingredients on the flour. Once it's all flour and stuff, I had the job of binning it into different bins, the flour bins that were 72 foot deep. The flour went up, and that's where it was pulled and sent to grocery mix, where they made cake mix.

Speaker B
So where are the large bins in the mill? Where were they located?

Speaker A
Well, it's what they call the bulk plant. I don't know if you know where the bulk plant.

Speaker B
No, I haven't heard that. I know that there's A and B mill. And then there's Turbo.

Speaker A
Yeah, I ran the turbo, too. The A mill, the B mill, the Turbo. And where the turbo was, that's the bulk plant. So up on the 9th floor of the bulk plant is the top of the flour bins and they're 72 foot deep. And we had a tape up there that we, you know, put the tape down in that hole to see how many feet we have.

Speaker B
Is this what you are talking about [gesturing to roll of measuring tape on display].

Speaker A
Yes, exactly. Oh, my God. Yeah, I'm like a kid in the candy store. …. We let that fly down in the holes on top of the bins and say we stopped here, say, okay, we got 4ft in that bin is all we got. So the bin is full. So they had a hose system, rubber hoses that would go into pipes that sent the flour to the different bins. So if that bin was full, you take that hose and put it on a different bin that had maybe the same flour. See, all the flours have different names. Gl 43, bleach and rinse [?], you know, and for like Kentucky Fried Chicken, flour, stuff like that, they all had different names, numbers and stuff. So. Oh, we got some more of that down in bin 47. So I would hook that hose up to bin 47 and then would go to bin 47 and do this and say, okay, it's got 60 foot in it, so it's way damn near empty because the bins are 72 foot deep.

This is in the bulk plant, the flour bins. This is the final product. The 9th floor of the bulk plant is where the flour bins are.

Say I'm making flour and I'm putting it in bin 27 and I'd go up to the bin. They also had automatic sensors, when they were full, they would automatically switch to the other hose. There was two hose system. You were going in one hose, and if that filled up, they had a micro sensor, or whatever you call it inside there, that if it hits that, it will automatically switch it to the other hose. So if you're making one certain flour, you're going to switch it to the other bin. So you got to make sure that that other bin is hooked to the same kind of flour that you're making. In other words, if you've got this one blend of flour

and it fills up and switches to the other bin, and that other bin has a different kind of flour. You're putting one kind of flower on top of another.

Well, then will it reject it. What they do is they'll pull the flour from the bottom of the bin and until it gets so far, like, say you had 50ft in it, once you got that much out of it, then they would shut it off, knowing that that's where the new mix has started going. In that bin.

Speaker B
Where did they put what they were emptying out?

Speaker A
The book[?] tender would put it into another bin of the same product.

Speaker B
And so you said these black phones that are all over the place…. [gesturing to black handset]

Speaker A
Everybody up there, each position. Well, they had a different name of what they were called. I was a bolter, and we had a bolter helper, a grinder, a smutter. And then the boss was the head miller. But we all had different beeps. You know that. I was three short.

Speaker B
What's the process? You pick it up or you just hit a button. What do you do?

Speaker A
Where these were, there was a button, and you would go beep, beep, beep. And then I would beep back just a one short beep, in other words. Okay, I'm on the line. Hello? Hey, what's going on? Yeah. Okay, we'll take care of that. A smutter was one long and one short. Grinders, you know, Bolter helper was four shorts. I was three shorts. Everybody had a different. So when you wanted to call the smutter, you would call one long and one short, and he would beep. Hey, so whatever you had to do. Yeah, that's what those were for.

Speaker B
I noticed there is a lot of homemade metalwork around here.

Speaker A
Yes, they did. They did those in the shop. In the maintenance shop downstairs, that's the basement, they had a welder. You know, that actually was his job.

Speaker B
Looks like they made just about everything.

Speaker A
Yeah, they kind of made things as… See what we need. We need this thing. And the welders would say, well, I could probably make one of those. And that's the kind of stuff they come up with.

Speaker B
I see.

Speaker A
But in the maintenance shop, they had their own welders. You know, people that welded in the maintenance shop, everybody had different jobs. You know, so, like, if somebody in the mill would call down at the maintenance shop, hey, we got this switch. It's not working right or something. They would send somebody up to look at the switch to see what was wrong with it or whatever. But if it was something with one of those buckets or something, like that. They would have get a different guy, you know, a different position that knew what suction system, I guess. I don't know how you call it, but these tubes. [sees pneumatic tube containers on display]

Oh, my God! In the sample room where I worked up on the fifth floor of the mill, we got samples. I would get samples of the flour.

Speaker B
And the little things [gesturing to tubes] those are for flour samples?

Speaker A
Exactly. I would get samples out of the flour that we're making at that particular time. Then we would put this up into here. And it went all the way over to the lab.

Speaker B
Over here? (Gesturing to Bakery second floor lab)

Speaker A
Yeah, over to the lab and the flour lab. And they would take. It landed over there, and then they would open that up. And the samples that we sent them, they would check for protein, moisture, _____ number, which was a malt that was put on. Some flours took malt flour, some did not. It just depend on what the…. This looks like it would be from the grocery….

Their cakes and brownies and all that stuff that they would test. Every so many cases. Every so many boxes of cake mix or whatever that you make, you have to get a sample off the line, send it up to the lab. And they would bake that cake, to make sure it rises right. And then they would wrap them. And then each night there was a certain group could come and pick up those, all those cakes and brownies and breads, like the grocery department, the bakery department, the mill. “Hey, it's our night”, you know? So we would go over there and pick up. And you would take home to mom or your wife.

Speaker A
You know what? These are sewing machines. They're sewing machines. They had burlap bags. Big burlap bags of flour. I did that too, for a while. They would get these contracts to send this flour overseas, and they would use these big burlap bags. Well, they have this machine. You put the burlap bag on this thing, puts it up, and it fills full flour, and then it comes down to a conveyor belt, and it goes to a guy that's on these machines, and he'll take the two ends, you know, put it like just like a woman on a sewing machine would take it to make sure it goes right through the thing and will step on a thing. And then it had a thing that cut the string at the end of it, and then it would go down, and those things would go down a chute to a palletizer downstairs, and it loaded up. They shipped it overseas.

Speaker B
Where was this done? Where were they doing this stitching up?

Speaker A
On the second floor of the bulk plant. That's where they loaded.

Speaker B
What was the difference after Pillsbury left and Cargill got here? Things changed a lot, right?

Speaker A
Well, they had their way of doing things. Pillsbury had their way of doing stuff. Cargill had their way. So they would send us these notices that we no longer do this. We do this. Okay. So we don't do that no more.

Speaker B
Did they shut down a lot of the old production here when Cargill got here?

Speaker A
Yes, because Cargill wanted to get out of certain businesses. They said, no, we don't want to deal with that. Maybe bakery mix. We're not going to deal with that kind of stuff. So they closed bakery mix down, and so the people that got stuff from bakery mix had to go somewhere else because we shut ours down. But I never worked anywhere else other than overtime in the grocery. You know, I dropped pouches into the boxes. The fudge pouches that go into cake mixes.

You know, those fucking things went so fast, you know, I was practically throwing them, trying to [get them into the boxes]. And if they weren't a certain weight, they would automatically get kicked off the line, you know? It just seemed like every time I got on there, they sped it up! I don't know why. I'm dropping them pouches in there, and next thing I know, I'm practically throwing them, saying, “I hope it goes in the hole.” My goodness. But, yeah, I did that for a while.

Speaker B
So I want to ask you something else about those. When you sent one of those little [pneumatic] tubes over to QA.

Speaker A
Oh, my God, that was cool.

Speaker B
So did they come back to you with, did they tell you, would they tell you to do something?

Speaker A
We would send them samples in those tubes and then they would write it down on a piece of paper. The results of the test that you sent for, they'll send you that back on paper. And then they had a chart there in the sample room, which was on the fifth floor of the mill.

Speaker B
Okay.

Speaker A
The sample room is where those tubes stopped and that's where I would pick them out of there and would get the paper and to look at: “Oh, my God, that enrichment's too high!”. So I would have to go up to the 6th floor where the ingredient feeders are, and maybe turn that enrichment feeder down a little bit because my spec was too high.

Speaker B
You used one of those little jars, right?

Speaker A
Yes.

Speaker B
And you filled it up with flour and you stuck it in one of those tubes and it went up. And then you had to wait there. Right, until they had something to tell you.?

Speaker A
Yes. Either they would call you, we had a telephone in the sample room. They may call you and say, hey, you need to turn that down. Got too much. So I would go up there and adjust the ingredient feeder and then wait a few more minutes and then get another sample, send it up and then say, okay, that's better.

Speaker B
How often did you have to do this?

Speaker A
Well, it depends on when you sent the sample. Every time you went from one flour to another, you had to send over a sample of that flour and they would check the protein, the moisture, the enrichment, the malt, the different ingredients that you put on it to make sure there's enough or not too much, you know, so. And then you acted accordingly. When you got the results back, they usually put it in red pen. If something was way too high or something. Oh, my enrichment's too high. So I'd go up to the 6th floor, to the enrichment feeder, turn it down a little bit, wait a. Wait a few minutes, get another sample. They'd say, okay, that one was okay, so you're all right there.

Speaker B
Did you shut it off then while you were doing this?

Speaker A
No, it just. It just kept running. And if it was in a bin that had high enrichment, they would blend it. When they loaded a truck or whatever, they would blend it with another bin of the same flour. So if you had a high enrichment or something, if you blended the two together, that would be in spec. Yeah. It would drop it down so that it met spec.

Speaker B
So you had to know enough to address the issue. It’s not as if they'd say, “there's something wrong”, and somebody else handled the problem. You had to go up and make an adjustment yourself.

Speaker A
Yes. And I that was a job that I had to do too, was fill the feeders up. Enrichment, you know, every so often, every 2 hours, you had to weigh them up. It was a scale. And you see how much enrichment you used in the last 2 hours. Okay, so that's how. That's another way they could tell, you know, if you say, “oh, my God, I used six pounds in that 2 hours,!” you know, so you say, “I gotta turn that down. That's too much”. Because like I said, every so often, you would have to send a sample. So you actually had to be a seed analyst, also. A seed analyst. Well, a flour analyst, whatever you want to call it. Yeah. You had to know what you was doing.

Speaker B
How did you learn this? How did they train you?

Speaker A
Oh, my God. They had, well, of course, a qualified guy, you know, you would follow everywhere he went. “What we're doing here is we're making sure that this ingredient feeder. See that, this ingredient feeder”, you know, he would show you, and he would show you how to weigh it up and how to fill up the feeder. He would teach you up on the 9th floor, the hose system that I told you about earlier. You've got system 18, system 19. They each had two hoses. That was flour off the A mill, flour off the B mill.

So you could say, “okay, on the A mill, I'm making p 41 super bleach and richest.” That's what Kentucky fried chicken used. Okay? So, on the B mill, I was probably making gl 43 bleach and Ritz, which was their cake mix flour. Okay, so each system had two hoses. So there was an A hose and a B hose on system 18, and an A hose and a B hose on system 19. A flour that came off the A mill, flour that came off the B mill, and the flour all went out to the bulk plant. And then that's, again, that's when we had to size those bins where we was putting the flour. We had to size those bins up so we knew how much we was putting in there, and we knew how much time we had. Because on an empty, going into an empty bin, you had like 4 hours before that bin was full.

Say you're making a certain flour, and you're on a 24 hours run, which means you'll be running the same flower for 24 hours. So you just had to keep bending the same flour. You know that once you start it into a bin, you've got 4 hours, and then it'll switch itself. The micro system will switch it automatically into the other hose. I also mixed the wheat. They had this kind of wheat and this kind of wheat. So they would blend it for a certain customer. This kind of wheat and that kind of wheat. So I would open one bin, and it would run out onto that conveyor. And then say I'd go to another bin that had a different kind of wheat. And then I would open up that a little bit, depending, because they would tell me 50%, 40%. So I knew how far to open that….

Speaker B
And this is down in the basement, down at the very bottom.

Speaker A
At the bottom of those silos.

Speaker B
So, so you're walking along down there...

Speaker A
I was walking along, and I would open up the ones that…. The guy downstairs, a boss of the elevator, I guess you could say, he would give me this slip of paper saying, 50% out of bin, whatever bin it was. So I would go to that bin and open it up 50%. And then I would go to another bin, and he'd say, maybe 30%. And I would open that bin up just a little bit. And then another bin might be 20%. Well, that was what they called a blend. So we would open those three bins up, and they all went to the same conveyor. And then they went down and up, up the head house with the thing in the middle. And then it would go down into one of the, what do you call it? The bins in the head house. And then he would later. We would later pull those open and send that flour [wheat] over to the mill. And then they would clean it.

First of all, it first goes to the smutter. That's what they were called. The smutter would wash that. Basically, it went through a series of machines, and it cleaned them up, cleaned the wheat. So the wheat was all cleaned before it hit the fourth floor, the grinding floor. So that wheat was all washed. Pardon me, it washed, and then it got sent to the mill. And then that's when started the first break, second break, third break.

Speaker B
How many guys were actually running the elevator?.

Speaker A
The whole elevator? Four people in the whole crew.

That was in Cargill days. That was the only time I worked in an elevator. So there would be a guy out at the truck dump, like I said, if I wasn't unloading rail cars and if it was in season of the wheat rush. I mean, that parking lot there on 15th street was loaded, all three of blocks or whatever, just lined up with semi trucks. And I took this big, long probe up on top of the truck, stuck it into that load. The trucks that were all lined up, I would have bags that I carried to each truck, and I would climb up with a bag and a big, long probe and stick it into their load and turn it. And then I'd pick up that probe and dump it into that bag. And then right down on the next corner is a wheat testing station on 15th and Reservoir. The building still there. It's still a gold building, but somebody lives here. Anyway, I would take the samples. Either you could walk down there, or I took my vehicle because I didn't want to be walking that many trips. But you take it down there to that station and wait for around 20 minutes or whatever until they ran that. Ran the test for protein, moisture, bran bugs. If it's got any bugs in it, we won't take the load. Then you have to go tell the driver, sorry.

Speaker B
Foreign materials, things like that.

Speaker A
Yeah. So, mouse turds. Mouse pellets. They call off the sample. “You're rejecting me because I have one mouse pellet?” You had one mouse pellet in a little bag, little sample of that. So we figured there's got to be a whole lot more of them in that load. So we rejected their load. And you know what they did a lot of times, they would just go back, get back in line again. They'd have to sit there, wait a long time, but I'd reprobe them again. And if they happen to pass, well, they pass, you know? Well, that sample didn't have pellets in it.

Speaker B
So how did they shut the plant down? They stopped taking grain, and they just ran it all through?

Speaker A
They ran it all. Everything. That wheat that they were going to grind, they ran through. And the smutter. Who cleans the wheat when it first come in. He'd say, okay, we just got the last of the wheat. So it would go down to the fourth floor, the grinding floor, and then once the bin that he was sending the flour or the wheat to, as soon as that bin emptied out, well, then there was no more wheat going to the roll stands. First break, second break. So you had to throw out the roll, which meant you put a opening in it, you pulled this valve, and to where the rolls weren't grinding against each other, you pulled it. You opened up the roll stand, is what it was called. So you go down to each one of the roll stands, which, God, there was very many of them, and throw them all out. Throw them all out and let that process go through. And then once there's no more stock going to any of those roll stands, well, then you can shut all the roll stands down because they're all empty. So you could shut them all down and add a big controller thing there in the, in the mill on the fourth floor, on the roll stand floor, there was a big machine there that had all the different valves where you would push that, and then all those roll stands would stop. And then after a while, all the elevators with the buckets on them, those would all stop, you know, but once they're all emptied out. So that's what we did. We just went through the process and as things emptied out, we shut them down.

Speaker B
So what was it like on that last day?

Speaker A
I was also the union vice president at the time, and it, of course, nobody wanted to lose their job. You know, I even got interviewed by Channel 20 and stuff, and that pretty much asked me that same question. What was it like on that last day? And said, well, it was kind of depressing, you know, nobody was out to sabotage anything. You know, pissed off. F this. I'm going to choke this up. I'm going to choke that up. No, nobody did that. We got everything run through and everything. We shut it all down and said, well, there it goes for the last time, and you push that button. And that's what I got to do. I pushed that button for the last time, and those machines stopped running. And, boy, does it get quiet in that mill when nothing's running, but when everything's running. I wore earmuffs and stuff because, oh, my God. In fact, I have some hearing loss. I wear hearing aids. I don't have men today, but I have hearing. I lost some hearing.

Dave Kelly

Speaker A: Dave Kelly
My dad worked here. He got hired in 1949. He's one of the younger guys and he didn't. He went to days about the same time I did because he stayed. They had the group full, you know, a few guys got hired but basically till 1950. I mean there are some spots in here, but nothing like from the 70s. When I first started, I'm pretty sure there was like over 700 guys in the union. And when we left it was 350. And they were producing more with the 350 because of automation and them old mill rights.

I just can't imagine, you know, before they had the tools that they have now. Like if they were going to put an anchor in the floor or ceiling. When you hit it with a hammer and you turn it. You know that star thing. Well, see they had a thing called Phillips gun when I first went down there. But then they got healed a gun shooting one handed stuff, you know, so they didn't have to replace all.

Speaker B: Robert Mazrim
When you were working, . we're talking 70s or so, there'd be 16 millwrights?

Speaker A
No, this would be after. Because I didn't go down to the shop until about 1980. 81.

Speaker B
Okay. So by the 80s there are 16 millwrights and four….

Speaker A
Four, four or five sheet metal guys.
And I don't know, you'd have to talk to electricians….

Speaker B
Right, but that's up on the second floor, right?.

Speaker A
Yeah, they're kind of working out of….

Speaker B
And so you said the sheet metal guys just did day shift. But the millwrights are here all the time?

Speaker A
No, millwrights all days except for. I don't know what year they did it. They used to always have a 311[?] mill. But then they put on a 311 and a midnight. Just one guy. I filled in for one one week. I had to fill in for a vacation on mill….You got the whole goddamn plant. It was a nightmare for me.

Speaker B
So, as a millwrights, - those big old rollers in the roller stands on the fourth floor. If those things go out of alignment or there's something wrong with them. Did you guys deal with those?

Speaker A
Oh yeah. The regular mill department. They could change your role. See, when I first went down the shop there was a gang of what they call Babbitt [?] Barons. They're big giant things. And then they poured. And they used to do that before my time. They had them down in the millwright shop. There's a little room. And they poured. They had molds that they poured it. It was just. Almost looked like lead to me. I don't know if that's what it was. Well, they had to have oilers on every shift. Well, when I went down the shop, they were changing all that over to roller bearings. So it was our job. Put them new roller bearings. And if a bearing went bad or something went wrong with the line shaft, that'd be millwright.

Speaker B
Right.

Speaker A
In fact, I got in on this job up there. You've seen them 200 horse motors?.

Speaker B
Those on the third floor that are running the fourth floor?

Speaker A
Running the line shaft.

Speaker B
Right

Speaker A
Well, one of the motors burned up. We had to take that down. Weighed 8,000 pounds and had a gang of us millwrights. And we had to chain oyster drill all the way through the floor and put metal iron pieces out. And then walk that with chain hoist and then down. Yeah. Now that kind of stuff's millwright.

Speaker B
[gesturing to exhibit] It looks like a lot of this stuff is shop made to me.

Speaker A
Yeah, that's. That's something that they made here.

Speaker B
Okay.

Speaker A
And all they like these benches and stuff.

Speaker B
Would that be down in the millwright shop that they're going to make that?

Speaker A
Oh, yeah, yeah.

Speaker B
So how did it work? Somebody said, you know, just say, hey, “make us a half a dozen benches”.

Speaker A
Well, one time I had to make. I was just an apprentice then they needed a bunch of shelves built for the C mill basement to get everything up off the floor. Some state outfit told me, hey, you gotta have everything up off the floor. You can't have nothing on there. So me and another guy.

I don't know how many of them we fabricated. They were two by two tubing. And then we made the frame. And then the sheet metal guy cut out the actual shelves and he put them in. But that was all done in the Shop.

And if you go down the shop, you know how you go into it and straight ahead.
That was the welding shop there. Very big round things.

Speaker B
Yes. Yeah, the rounded tables.

Speaker A
Ton of welding in there.

Speaker B
All right. And then we were just down there yesterday and we went all the way to the south underneath the bulk plant or the turbo. There was still all kinds of big stuff on the shelves down there. Is that where you kept the stock?

Speaker A
There was all kinds of… They had any kind of angle iron, flat steel that you could. And all kinds of equipment that you could shear stuff off, bend it, roll it.

Speaker B
I mean, it must have been a miracle of a shop.

Speaker A
Oh, I could build well, and they didn't frown on you. Halfway through my 10 years as a millwright, we got all new bosses. And they were younger guys. They didn't frown at all as long as you wasn't building a car in there. But they let you build. In fact, I built stuff for bosses one time.

Speaker B
Take home stuff, you mean?

Speaker A
Yeah, I was working on something outside on the north end. My boss said “here” He had a little picture or something, draw it up. And he said, hey, can you make this? Yeah. Okay. So I made that. And after I put it together, I thought, what the heck? I said, hey, what's this for? And he said, that's a mechanism to crank his boat out of the water.

And they had a boiler room guy. And he was on all three shifts. I say, can you make something like that? You know, come back, have me a nice stainless steel roll. And then when I was down the shop, I made all kinds of stuff for guys.

Speaker B
Did anybody just do crazy things. Just to make something funny?

Speaker A
Well one guy. I didn't make one of these, but somebody come up with some kind of idea. And the next thing you know, they were mass producing them. Some kind of nut cracker thing they made to crack nuts, you know, really.

Speaker B
When you first got here, was the shop still pretty old timey? Was there a lot of stuff that had been sitting here since the 30s?

Speaker A
Well, that old lathe is probably still there. They updated. They, you know, they had new lathe on there. Had a milling machine, all kinds of grinders and a drill press that was out of this world down there. And all kinds of shears that you could….

Speaker A
I mean, I got some bad things. I got asbestos in there. I got other health issues, but they found that. But so far it hasn't. The way I understand that stuff can stay dormant and never cause you a problem. But it is there. They've seen it. But outside of that, I wish I could have retired from here. I really do.

Speaker B
How did you get into the asbestos? Were you having to cut into it?

Speaker A
Well, everybody to a certain extent got exposed to it. You probably see like in Bakery Mix, all the pipes and stuff.

Speaker B
Yeah, exactly. Everything was wrapped.

Speaker A
All that had wrapped. They blow it down constantly. So you get a little tear in that. And we didn't know what really.

See, like in grocery department, there's full of machines in there. And usually sometimes for months on end. Every, like Saturday, they made the day shift come in, blow down from the ceiling down. Afternoon guys would come in, clean the machines. They midnight guys to sweep the floor and clean all that up.

Speaker B
So when you say they blow down, you mean they're cleaning them? What's that phrase means?

Speaker A
Well, there is dust and everything, you know. Now Bakery Mix. When I first started, that's where I spent my first year. It was water wash every. Every week at the end.

Speaker B
Well, that was safer, actually.

Speaker A
Yeah. But then they got the [water] treatment plant to fine Pillsbury, because it sends too much solid. So they put that thing. It's gone. There's a big tank out there. And the top was open. And then they had to pump every…. All the sewer went to there.

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Speaker A: Robert Mazrim
So, walking down for the first time, going into the millwright shop now, what's that like?

Speaker B: **Dave Kelly**
Well, it brought back good memories. You know, I can remember all kinds of things that went on down there. You know, we joked around and a lot of times it wasn't like work. You had to do some hard work. I mean.

I got up on top the wheat bins. There's two big old flat belts, you know, to move the product. One of them had to be replaced. Well, there's a roll. In fact, they didn't have a cotton pickin fork truck that could pick up that roll, you know, not heavy duty. So we had to get it up on that floor. It has a little elevator, but it was too little.

So if you notice, there's I beam that sticks out on the end [of the Head House]. So I had to put a pulley in there, called a company with a real long cable. Pulled that cable up by hand, fed it up through that guy and then he hoisted up there. And then we pulled on that chain hoist, to bring it in the building.

Speaker A
That must have been something to see.

Speaker B
Yeah. I wish I'd had the wife film that one. But you at that time, that was one of this kind of stuff we took for granted. That was always going to be here, you know, But yeah, it didn't work out that way.

And then at one point, they, like. What did they do? They changed the system around. Someone was telling me that that big stack wasn't running anymore. So they changed the boilers out and they weren't running that stack. They put new boilers in. In fact, when they put the new boilers in, I wasn't in the shop then, but right after that I got in the shop. And I actually built catwalk all around the ceiling, up the top. I built a lot of catwalk.

Speaker A
So up in Bakery Tower. There's all kinds of that stuff up there. What about that building?

Speaker B
Yeah. Now, I only worked a little bit over there. There's a basement. Of course, it's underwater there now. Part of the floor was cracking. We actually put some more support in there. Welded that in underneath. You know, that part of the plant, they didn't have it, like way back there in C mill. And in part of A and B mill, they didn't have fork trucks when this place was built. So the concrete [at Bakery] couldn't handle that kind of stuff.

Speaker A
So it was starting to show wear.

Speaker B
Back there in C- mill. There was a couple palletizers. And I don't know if you've seen the kind of lifts they ended up with. They had two forks. They were this wide. And they went to a point and then they had a thing. They could reach out and grab the cardboard and pull it up and that kind of stuff.

Well, them things are massive and they're heavy. Fork drivers kept letting them fall right on the concrete here. So that was cracking. So there's a spot. If you go down the basement. We actually made it thicker right where that was at. Right outside that door that where the propane and where they fill the tanks.

That little sidewalk out there. I poured that. Me and another guy. Yeah, yeah. And there's a place to mix the mixers down there.

Speaker A
Just about anything is millwright work then?

Speaker B
Yeah. You never got bored. Something different all the time. You might remodel a couple offices. In fact, there's some of my handiwork up there in the office. They moved the scheduler. Used to be in a little room right over there. But they moved him up. Well, there's two of them moved him up there in the main office.

Well, I had to put in a window and a sliding door and then have a countertop that you could do your business and that there stuff.

Speaker A
What I've read in the records is that most of C Mill was shut down in the mid-60s.

Speaker B
Yeah. My dad thought he was going to lose his job. I was just a kid. And then he thought he was going to lose his job because he was working back in C-mill at the time. Because it was to produce more than A and B together.

Speaker A
So, did it have the same kind of a milling equipment that A-B Mill has?

Speaker B
I mean it has the rollers and the sifters all that once had all that. So then they took all that out. It is empty.

Speaker A
All the floors are rotted out.

Speaker B
Well, see, they used part of the C-mill as part of the Premix plant. And I worked back there for a few years too. Storage and stuff. They put that Sprinkle Sweet in these… They were cardboard totes. They were four foot square totes full of Sprinkle Sweet. And so one of them floors, I can't remember which one was just full of them, you know, product.

Speaker A
On the third floor of C Mill there is the biggest electrical panel that's in the entire place. It's a whole wall.

Speaker B
It was a big old thing with all kinds of buttons. That's the brains of the Premix plant that they tore down already.

Speaker A
That's the brains of the big metal plant that the nine-story edition?

Speaker B
Two dryers were in there. Oh yeah.

Speaker A
They called it the dryer building, didn't they?

Speaker B
It's been called Premix plant. And I don't know where they came with 8180. See, at one time that was used for all… Any of the Pillsbury plants that made cake mix that was part of the ingredients. So that had top priority. But I got in on the tail end.

I don't know what year I went back there but. There's two dryers and they could premix all the time before they changed the formula of the cake mix. And they did away with that, and Sprinkle sweet, they'd run like once a week. One week out of the month.

Speaker A
What years are we talking about now?

Speaker B
Well, I went down the shop around 1980. So we would be talking 1975 to around 1980.
In fact, just about the only thing they added to when I was there was from this part of the building over to the grocery, [was a new] a warehouse. And the plant manager promised us. He said, he told us, because we give up some money to get that. And he said this is going to create a few jobs. And he said Pillsbury is going to have a long term commitment. He said 10 years they're talking. But it was out of his hands because that Grand Met. They took over.

Speaker A
Did you feel it when they took over?

Speaker B
Well, they kind of…. They didn't do nothing, but they didn't know what they had. Pillsbury was huge. They owned Jolly Green Giant at the time, Burger King. I mean it went on. So they left us alone for a year. We thought it was going to be all right.

And then one day, I'll never forget, I was patching. There's brick walls down in the C-Mill basement and I patched and tuckpointed and like down there. And they shut down everything. And we went up to the cafeteria, which is gone, and they called us in. They said we're going to phase you guys out in 18 months. And at that time they said they were going to keep 41 jobs.

But I wasn't in the top 41. But then guys were starting to quit and find other stuff. So then they offered me a job, Pillsbury. But I was gonna have to go back to nights - the new guy again, you know.

Speaker A
So what year is this?

Speaker B
Would be about 1990.

Speaker A
Just before they sold the Cargill.

Speaker B
Well, yeah, yeah, right before. Because it was still going to be Pillsbury. Well then other guys quit. Well, I moved up and I was going to end up in the elevator department. Which one summer I unloaded wheat cars and stuff. And that's strictly days. So I thought, well, I'm staying.

Well then, Cargill came in and they said they would honor the union and they would keep the 41 jobs here. But they didn't want to go by seniority. And that's where I got… not hostile… feelings. But the International did us wrong. They should come in and said, hey, you're gonna honor the union. You're gonna honor the oldest 41 guys. Or take these jobs and shove them up your ass. That's what they should have did, but they didn't. So then they picked and chose. Well, I had an interview for them. So everybody, most guys did, I did well, they offered me a job that made no sense at all.

They offered me a job in the milling department. And I told the guy, I said, I've worked on things here, but I have no idea, you know, [it's not] something I knew how to do. And they said, well, they feel confident you could pick it up. Well, my dad, he was a grinder at C-mill.

Well, this job they offered me, it used to be one of those line of progression. You had to be qualified on all the individual jobs to get that job because it's not something you're going to pick up in a week or so, you know. So anyway, I played a game because you had to give up your severance pay if you took a job with them.

So anyway, there was a special union meeting I was supposed to start the next day for 3 to 11 [shift]. They were going to start training me. And so I kept asking our union president, hey, how long can I play

around acting like I'm going to take this job and quit and still get my severance pay? “As long as you don't clock in for them”.

So that night, some of these guys that they picked just got hired because so many guys were bailing out. They were filling in. Well, one question I had was what about the retirement? Are they gonna keep the Pillsbury retirement or am I starting over vacations, all that?

They couldn't answer a thing. So anyway, some of them younger guys, I thought, I don't, I didn't know what I was going to do until that meeting. But I knew what I was doing now. I'm walking. And I did.

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Speaker B: Robert Mazrim
Well, when did things start to change here? I mean, when did you feel a difference here? When could you tell something was going to change?

Speaker A: **Dave Kelly**
No, I didn't feel nothing until they told us that they were going to shut down in 18 months.

See, I think they made a deal. We heard they really didn't. Well, when Cargill bought it, they really didn't want this plant. I think they made a deal. Just my own idea. See, Murfreesboro, they did that. Here, you push a button, they can send flour to any one of these departments.

Well, down there they don't make no flour. So everything had to be hauled in. And before, prior to the move down there, we might get. They might bring in one, two, three trucks a week, bulk trucks of flour after that.

I think what the deal was, that was part of the agreement, they would supply flour for 10 years if they bought this plant because, well, with all the asbestos and stuff, you know. And if you're not going to operate the whole plant, you know.

See, my boss that I was working for is a millwright at the end. He actually went down to Murfreesboro before they ever said that. And he said they Pillsbury, before they got bought out, they were planning on shutting that down.

It was the newest plant, no fork truck drivers. The palletizer operator could push a button and put it away. He said it was there was a refrigerator plant. My boss explained to me. So we didn't worry about that, you know, them. But then when the British outfit bought us, they put everything on hold, see, they had to see exactly what they had bought.
Well, they kept that. They expanded that area, and some of the guys went down there.

Speaker B
So that's when Murfreesboro kind of took off?

Speaker A
Oh, they took off.

Speaker B
Was this place was basically just a flour mill for Tennessee?

Speaker A
Yeah, for a while. It's all coincidental. We didn't have no bulk business, Hardly at all. And then it skyrocketed, and they got rid of packaged stuff here. They didn't do that here. Cargill didn't do that.

Speaker B
Let’s talk about C-mill now. C-mill looked a lot like A-B Mill at one time?

Speaker A
Right. With all those chutes, it looked identical, but they gutted all that. In fact, one time as a millwright, there was one sifter up there still left. I took it out. They were junking it.

Speaker B
So part of your job was to take stuff apart.

Speaker A
Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Like palletizers and stuff. They updated. They got a new one that was coming in. Well, the old one. Me and another guy cut the old one all up, hauled it out, and they brought the new one in. And they were in the process of taking guys that knew palletizers came out of St. Louis area. And they actually take, like, three guys at a time. And go down there and spend, like, three or four days at the factory Learning how to troubleshoot them, which was a good idea.

Speaker B
They weren't laying people off in the 80s, no?

Speaker A
In fact, some of the younger guys, they'd give guys my age group said, oh, yeah, now we're gonna hear these horror stories about being laid off. Well, my first, I didn't start working year round till it was probably at least seven years. It would boom up until the holidays, and then after the first of year, you'd be laid off.
In fact, one year I was laid off for about six months.

Speaker B
But what were you. What was your job then?

Speaker A
Well, see, I was… part of the time was in Grocery. And see, we always called that God's country because it was a nicer place to work, you know, so all the old guys were there. So if you didn't have no seniority, man, you'd have first to go.

Speaker B
So Grocery was a better job?

Speaker A
Oh, better environment. In fact, after I left there and went down the shop, they air conditioned that place. Not for the people. It made the systems all run better.

Speaker B
Because that would be the opposite over at AB. You wouldn't want that. You couldn't air condition.

Speaker A
You can't even open the window. I was brand new my first year. I was over there sweeping one day and oh man, it's. It's hot, you know, summertime. So they had like, almost looked like a basement window you get to crank up. I had my head in there. Boss tapped me on the shoulder, the boss over there, and he said, hey, you can't. Can't do that. He said, if you get overheated or something, walk out on the fire escape and make sure you close the door. Because see, that condensation mess everything up.

Speaker B
But Grocery was a different situation.

Speaker A
Oh yeah, but see, that premix plant was part of grocery. Even though it's a block apart now back there on the eighth floor. Well, it's gone now, but the eighth floor, that's the top of the dryer that's where the burners were. You talk about hot. We had change. There was like nozzles, real high air pressure.

The compressors in the [C-mill] basement, it was back then, 2,000lbs of air pressure. Then the slurry, it was pumped up from the third floor up there. Went around a big ring and goes through these little nozzles. I mean, and then it would change. That almost looked like a syrup type of texture in the powder.

But it real hot. You go up there and have to work. Me and two other guys were up there one day. We were in Hell. Two of us was in our 20s. And I said, man, is it hot. Wonder how hot it is. We was trying to guess. So the next day I brought a thermometer with 130 degrees.

You walk out in the rest of the plant, it was 90. I was watching that. And you get goosebumps.

Speaker B
And what's in this slurry?

Speaker A
Well, that was part of the premix. I don't know. Was all….

Speaker B
So it's the ingredients. It's part of the ingredients, but it becomes liquefied. And then they have to dry it out again.

Speaker A
Yeah, they make a powder of it. And then there's bins back there. They were the old wheat bins, but then they converted to wheat bins for C-mill. When it was back there, they converted it over. That's where they stored the premix. And every once in a while, if the guy in that big room you're talking

about, if he wasn't paying attention to what he was doing and they get too wet, that would set up in there.

So then you go up on 8th floor, there's like a manhole cover thing. You take off and you start. You could see it might be right there plugged or it might be down. And they had like a couple of flights of auger and conduit and an inch drive drill. Two of you get on it and drill. And then when you get down the bottom, take the drill off a new section on there and get up on the ladder and keep doing that. Then when you got a hole all the way through, if it didn't fall, they put you in a Bozeman chair and down in there you went with a shovel.

Speaker B
So there was a chute that went through the whole building.

Speaker A
Them bins reach from the eighth floor down to the ceiling on three.

Speaker B
So you had to clean out all this mix?

Speaker A
Yeah. One of them plugged up. I've been in there a few times. I don't know if I'd do that now, but…

Speaker B
What was it like?

Speaker A
Well, there wasn't…It wasn't very big. I mean. Yeah, you just rode that chair. Your partner would crank you down there…

Speaker B
So you're going into a tank full of cake mix?

Speaker A
Well, through that premix stuff, and you just poke it down that hole. That'd go to hog feed.

Speaker B
What did it smell like?

Speaker A
Oh, it didn't smell bad or nothing.

Speaker A
If you worked over in the grocery department, on the fourth floor was their lab. And every 200 cases on whatever you're running, you had to send a couple boxes, and they'd bake it and everything. So you go in there, and then you could eat all that stuff. So you had trouble keeping weight off back then.

Speaker B
That's still up there. That's the room with all the ceramic tile.

Speaker A
Yeah. Yeah. I took Chris up there. He didn't know what that was until I actually told him that was.

And then they have the chute deal where up on five was where all the mixers was at. Fifth floor grocery. Then you'd get a sample called a salt test, and put that in there.
And then it'd go down to the lab there. And they could test it somehow to know that the bulk of your stuff, like the main ingredients is sugar and flour. And they could tell by that little sample. So they'd send it back. Okay to continue. Or you had to doctor a batch or something, which never turned out good.

Speaker A: Kelly
[Discussing a repair request for a test oven]
No, she said it's like a pizza oven, you know they put stuff in there, it keeps rotating and she said it won't turn. Oh okay. So I pulled this guard off there's chain and two sprockets and wore out. I pulled them off, went down the storeroom, put two new ones on. She thought I was could walk on water.

She tried to give me. They was deep frying donuts. Now they didn't have no icing or nothing on it but they, they had donuts looked like glazed donuts. And then a couple bags of sugar granulated and powdered you could throw them in there and shake them up. And biscuits, they had that and add butter if you wanted.

She's trying to feed me all that cuz she thought I did something great which was nothing. She. Little did she know man. I didn't know nothing about no oven.

In the Grocery lab. It might be at least three women all three shifts, you know.

[Changing subject] Well then they put a palletizer in and they reduced six jobs to one guy to operate the palletizer and one driver.

Speaker B: Mazrim
When was that happening?

Speaker A
Well that happened right after I started in the early 70s in that because I wondered well I was only 18 years old, I didn't know and I thought well how can that machine know to turn that bag a certain way now? Well that machine can do anything, you know.

Speaker B
Pancake mix was a big deal here, right?

Speaker A
Yeah, that was on the second floor. There was two pancake lines, one kind of in the middle and one on the end. And that dude, they called it never stop. Because most things that like cake mix, they go through a scale. And you know, it was a slower deal, even though you could make 200 cases an hour, you know, if everything ran good.

But that pancake thing, they called it never stop because the flow, if the line shut down for any reason, this thing just diverted it and go right back through the system. You adjust the weight by increasing or decreasing the flow. And I'm telling you, there's three guys to operate that one guy on the head and there these, it was unformed boxes, you know, be like that and that thing's going like that.

I mean you set one of the things up that much, they'd go, you put another one up. The middle guy, he's looking for bad flaps, anything that's sticking out that good. And they, he'd throw them out and chute went down to the first corner to the cut up room. Then it recycled the and the guy putting a case in cases.

The machine did that and he put the cardboard cases in. And it could make, if it run good, it can make 10,000 a shift.

And that's happened on the second floor.
Second floor. But all that's gone. Yeah, yeah, there's a couple of the bins in the north end is still here. But everything else is gone.

Speaker B
Cargill would have taken all that out, wouldn't it? It wouldn't have done any of that.

Speaker A
No. So it, I don't know how they. What I heard one day Cargill left that Lay guy and his brother worked here. Gary Lay worked here. Anyway, he took out all the electric, all the easy stuff, but then you got nothing. That stuff, you can't. That makes no sense. Of course, that's the easy stuff.

Speaker A
Yeah, they had that on the second floor. There's two pancake lines. The Farina line, that was like a baby's dry cereal deal. And then there's. I think it was line 20. I should remember that because I ran that for quite a bit. They, they. Well before I started, they made stuff like Kool Aid down there.
But yeah, Funny Face is what it's called the only reason I remember that my dad would bring, you know, if they didn't have the right amount of accuracy it took. So you brought that home. But then they changed it. When I ran it down, there was a cupcake line, one machine operator and they had about.

I think it was four or five women dropping different things in there. Because you had to put the little extra bags in the boxes and all that.

Speaker B
Was there anything else that was non-bakery that was produced here like this?

Speaker A
The Kool Aid - Funny face.

Speaker B
Yeah.

Speaker A
Well, just the Sprinkle Sweet that was produced here.

Speaker B
Okay, Right.

Speaker A
Yeah.

Speaker B
And sprinkle sweet was in the 8180 building. Right?

Speaker A
That's the part that's gone.

Speaker A
But even that, even that stuff up there, that Cyclone. Yes. That's actually part of the Premix plant. That's part of their system.

Speaker B
I see.

Speaker B
So they put in that big panel on third floor to run that new building?

Speaker A
Yep. That was so important to the whole Pillsbury organization up there on eight that they tore down. There was a generator there that was diesel. They could power that. And it had big old motors and I mean there's quite a system there.

Speaker B
So that was one of the busier places in the plant.

Speaker A
Well, I first, but only three guys. Can you imagine that? The guy for that whole plant. Yep. The operator. He sat in that room there with the big panels. With the big panels.

They called it number one man and number two. I was the number two there. The only difference between one and two was number two guy wasn't qualified to relieve the operator for his breaks.

Speaker B
So you didn't have to run that big panel.

Speaker A
No, I didn't have to. But my golfing buddy, he was an operator and well, he was qualified on all three things.

Speaker B
The three of you are running a….

Speaker A
Nine story building, see. And in the basement there's this big old compressors. Was in the basement. That's one thing they wouldn't let us weld on. They had to get a regular certified guy because of that air pressure. I didn't like to be around them. 2,000 pounds of air pressure and everything is welded.

And then that stainless steel where they pumped the slurry is probably about like that. It was all stainless steel. And it went from the third floor up to eight and up on eight it made a big circle. And then it went to them individual with nozzles and that thing is flared up every place there was a joint inch bolts held that together.

And the flange was about an inch thick. Yeah, it forced a little scary stuff. Yeah. And they had porthole. It was a good job back there. Every hour you'd go up, up there, get a sample online.

There's a sample you get, send it to the lab. Then you'd walk the dryer down, the lights on. You could look in there and you could see it look like it's snowing, you know. And the ductworks, they're down on five. You go to the straight circle down to five and then funnel down to a thing about that big around.

And you had to water wash that all the time. If it gets specky, they shut it down and you water wash. But they had ductworks. They had like these cyclones that because it sucked at product, it could go clear up to the top. And then you have to see if that was getting plugged up.

You'd open that door. That's the only time they let you take your hat off, you know, because you better have a hold of your flashlight because it was pulling that, you know. Yeah, it was. Had a lot of fun working, working back there. But yeah, three guys. There wasn't too much more than.

Speaker B
So, you know, but Premix and Grocery are pretty much the same place, aren't they?

Speaker A
The same department?

Speaker B
Right.

Speaker A
And then in between there is warehouse. And then on the second floor was our…. The big break room, the lunchroom.

Speaker B
Were there a lot of lines connecting product between grocery and premix?.

Speaker A
There's all kinds of pipes in. In fact, the. When they shut, shut the Premix plant down, they left some of them bins part. There'd be some left in the bottom. They wanted to clean that out so no bugs and stuff would nest in there. So me and my golfing buddy, that's before we was in the shop.

We worked a Saturday back there. We were supposed to drop all that, run it on the floor and shovel it up for hog feed. Well, my buddy was operator. He said we don't have to do that. He said. He said I can

route that stuff and go down to the second floor. We can put that in big sprinkle sweet totes. No shoveling. Hey, man, that sounds good to me. So he turns the thing on everything. We got that. Piece of cake. We're done. We walked to our side because that's who took. We had no boss back there for that. Walked over here, get our time card sign and everything. And he said, hey, you guys want to work overtime?

Heck no, we're tired. Said, what on. He said, well, we're getting specky mix in the flower bin. No, we're not staying. So Monday comes. I was running a machine that day, and boss came up to me and said, hey, did you touch anything back there? I said, no, I didn't touch nothing, you know.
And he's. He said, well, what about Steve? And I said, well, he's an operator. Well, it was posted disconnect the line that shipped that. See, that premix could go right to a bin on fifth floor grocery. Well, when he turned the system on, see, that was supposed to be disconnected, but it wasn't. And it sent that nasty stuff. So all that stuff had to be packed out.
My buddy still teases me about it. He says, you tried to blow the whistle on me. I said, well, I didn't. Had to go to the hog feed.
But no one went after your head.

Speaker A
[Discussing reaching into moving machinery in Grocery]
Well, anyway, every once in a while somebody would do that. Lose the little plastic thing down in there. So, you know. I would never do that. But every once in while somebody would do that and they'd go down there and even though nine chances out of ten the sifter would get rid of that, but they go down there and tell [the supervisor].

And the supervisor would never say, "hey, you're gonna get two weeks off without pay." If you did something like that, even though it was wrong, they wanted you to tell the truth. Then you pack all that off and to hog feed it went.

One night I was blending on Midnights come in, the line was down. Paul said, hey, you guys gotta pack out. And usually when you gotta pack out its bad. Bad. Paul said, what's going on?. Well, this older guy. There was an area that was kind of clogged up and he stuck his hand in there. Well, this thing turned. Cut his finger off. The finger was in the [mix]. So they told me and the blender and the machine operator on that line to back out. Now, they said "you don't have to look for it, but if you see John's finger, get it". But we never did see it.

Speaker B
And what line was this?

Speaker A
I don't remember what line. For some reason I want to say it's line seven.

Speaker B
But I mean, what were they making?

Speaker A
Some kind of cake? I don't remember the cake, but it was.

I know whose finger it was. Old Big John Ruder. He's dead now. He ended up down the millwright shop. I spent a lot of time training with him. Yeah. And then he'd take that. I don't remember which finger it was, but he'd get you grab you by the head and then give you this.

Speaker A
And it looked like that finger. That kind of stuff.

Speaker B
Never a dull moment.

Speaker A
Oh, no, no, no.

Bob Howard

Speaker A: Bob Howard
[Referring to hallway leading into south entrance of Grocery]
So that led, that led from the first floor, the warehouse, to the break room. It was just lined on both sides with people 45 to 60 years old. And they're looking at me and I'll never forget that as long as I live. And a lot of them said, “what are we gonna do? I can't start a new career.”

I can't, you know, I'm gonna retire from here. And it was the saddest thing I've ever seen in my life. And at the time, I still had hope that me and my team could save it, that we could, you know, hey, what do we gotta do? I remember going to the CEO that day and he told me that day, there's nothing you can do. That's a done deal. It's being sold to Grand Metropolitan.

Speaker B: Robert Mazrim
So actually the word got out around 7 o'clock in the morning? Right after you left your shift.

Speaker A
Yeah, some people saw it on the news. Some people got home and my wife would tell them, they're closing the plan. They didn't even know yet. That's how I found out about it.

Speaker B
And you called that the Runway, that was the hallway, the Runway?

Speaker A
Marv Schneider, that guy was talking about earlier, he always called it the Raceway. Raceway, Runway. That was the hangout, man. That's where when you got here in the morning. And I used to get here just like I did today. I get here about a half hour early, go in there, talk to guys, talk to the guy ahead of me that had my job on the shift before me, see how everything was running, have coffee, all the stories and the BS going on.
This place was, I mean, it had, I always said, a cast of a thousand. They had these stories and all the old time stories, you know, back long before us, and just unique personalities. It was crazy.

Speaker B
And so that's kind of the main entrance to the plant? If you're working, you're going past that break room, and then you just go into grocery?

Speaker A
Yeah.
I was telling Chris the break room was right in there. Yeah, right. The break room basically consists of tables and some vending machines with a big chimney in the middle of it. And you walked around to get to the vending machines, I think.

Speaker B
And so that's the way you're going to come to work? If you're working in the mill or if you're working over….

Speaker A
No matter where you worked in this plant, you came through those doors. Sure did. Now, each individual time, my time clock was on, I believe, second floor grocery. As soon as I walked in, it was right there on the wall. The time clock. These guys might have had a time clock over here that you got to and clocked in.

But that's where everything started. Because we'd all go to our locker rooms. And you switched into uniforms. Everybody here wore a uniform. You didn't work in your clothes. And those were all provided by Pillsbury.

Speaker B
The Millers wore white and everybody else wore blue. Is that how it went?

Speaker A
Yep. Correct.

Speaker B
Was there much…. If you're working in grocery, did you hang with the Millers much? Did you know much about them or what they were doing?

Speaker A
Oh, yeah. Yeah. We all mixed down that Runway, down the break room. My job, I could be anywhere. What is this? How many acres?

Speaker B
17.

Speaker A
17. I could be anywhere on this. 17 acres. On my job, I was a bulk material supplier, and then I was a material handler, so. Bulk material supplier. I unloaded all the railroad cars, the flour, the sugar, all of that. As the material handler, I supplied materials to all the running lines

And the fifth floor of grocery was the blending floor. That's where they actually mixed in giant blenders as big as this room. They mixed the cake mix and the brownies. So I'd take them up, all their materials.

Speaker B
What do you mean, take them up? I mean, there's stuff up on the roof. There's little buildings up on the roof.

Speaker A
Take them up. There's a sugar tower, either with a hand truck from the bottom floor, which was the warehouse. Yeah. These guys would bring me. I would call them and tell them what I needed based on that night, what we're going to run. They would have it waiting down there. I would take it up either with a hand truck or sometimes, believe it or not, the old elevator. I could get a forklift on it. Not with any material, but just the forklift, and take it up to another floor if I needed it. Most of it was hand trucks, electric hand trucks.

Speaker B
So I'm just surprised. Like when you're in the mill, all of the product is on conveyors or going down chutes, but not in Grocery. Then if they needed everything, it was by hand?

Speaker A
I took everything up that elevator, every, every bag of material, everything. And then I would bring all the junk down, all the pallets when they were done, the cardboard, the plastic wrap, we had these giant cardboard totes a little wider than this and about twice as thick and about this high. And we put everything in those totes on a pallet.

I would bring it down and then they would put it in a compactor that sit right over here the end of the night. But no, every piece of material. Now, your bulk, your sugar and flour did get piped in, right? The sugar tower was on the roof, right? The flour got piped up, went through a sifter called Great Western Sifter up on the top floor, and then it got piped into….

Speaker B
Oh, you had a sifter on grocery then too? Not just up in AB, but there were sifters up there too?

Speaker A
Yeah. And that's the best story in the world…

Speaker B
What's that?

Speaker A
And I thought of it as soon as I pulled in. There was this guy. He was a unit manager. His name was Henry Piper, here in Springfield. I seen an article on him quite a few years ago.
Henry Piper. But the story is on him and he wouldn't like it. We were unloading a bulk truck of yellow flour, I think, right out here (on west side of Grocery). Our tubes didn't match up. Well, they preached and preached to us, you know, sanitary, sanitary, you know, make sure everything's clean, make sure everything's….

Well. The tubes didn't match up, so their tube was bigger around than our tube, but we didn't have an adapter to make it work. Henry tells me, he says, just take our tube and stick it inside theirs. Now you're talking about suction from that roof like you've never seen in your life. And Henry, I'm arguing with him, great guy.

But I said, Henry, man, that's going to be an open suction. Anything could go in there. And as I'm telling you this, he has me turn it on. As I'm telling this, he turns around. Our gloves, with the big cuffs. Well it took it right off his hand. He turned his back pocket out. He turns around. He always was moving 100 mile an hour. He turns around and I said. I said, “henry, that thing just took your gloves in there.” And he goes, “no, no, no.” He argued with me. He said, I didn't have gloves.

So we go up. There was a big opening there. We're standing up on this opening. We're watching this thing. Because I said, one of us has to be here. Henry, I'm telling you. And he's still arguing with me that he didn't just get his gloves sucked up there.

All of a sudden, a pigeon flies down and goes, peck, peck, right in the tube. I mean, two peck and into the tube! Now, Henry. Now I got Henry's attention. Shut it down! Shut it down! We go up to the Great Western sifter, and it's this giant thing. And it's got layer after layer of different mesh screens to sift this stuff. So nothing gets in there. Got these big wing nuts on these large bolts.

So I undo those. We start taking them off one at a time. First thing was the cuffs off these gloves. Second level was like the wings off pigeon. We got down to where part of his glove and, like, the beak and the feet of the. Of the pigeon were actually in there. So now. Now we gotta pack that entire batch out. Everything, the whole bin. Yeah. Gotta come out, right? I could tell you stories like that on those guys forever.

Because they, God love them, they were about production. They had a job to do one night. So when I had a sugar car, and I always did that at night with the railroad, we called it the switch. We'd set it up, they'd bring in the car that I wanted. First thing I had to do was open the hatch, take a sample for the lab.

Everything here was air tubes. I put it in a tube, and it would go all the way over. I'm thinking the lab was over here somewhere.

So it would go to the lab. I opened this hatch, and I'm not kidding you, on top of this sugar, you could not put another honeybee. They were just…. You could not put another one honeybee in there. That's how packed it was. Just full. Wow.

And what was this guy's name? This guy was a dandy. He was a unit manager. I cannot think of his name right now. So I go into the office. The office for them was second floor grocery for all of our unit managers. And I go in there and I say, hey, we got a problem.

I said, that car, we have to reject that car. It's full of honeybees. And it was one of those nights we didn't have any other cars and they needed the sugar. And you know how that is. If we'd had plenty, they would have rejected the car like that. So first thing he tells me to do, he said, I want you to open every hatch on that car. He said, those bees will leave. I said, you know what that'd be like? That would be like a bunch of teenagers at a party with free pizza and free beer. Do you think they're gonna leave just cause you open all the doors? And he didn't like the analogy.

Then he starts telling me, he started telling me on his calculator a certain percentage.
They're allowed a certain percentage of [foreign] things like that. Which is true. It is true. Of things you wouldn't even want to hear. And then I did a terrible thing. I put one of the bees… I put one of the bees in the sample.

Speaker B
I was hoping you were going to say that.

Speaker A
But it was bad because when it got to the lab and I could see this lady, plain as day, long black hair, wonderful lady, she's the one that opened it. And I think she might have been allergic to bees. It didn't sting her, but it scared the daylights out of her. But I was trying to just prove a point. You can't put this in people's food product, man. You can't do it. I mean.

Speaker A
Another guy. They called him Animal. Animal. There was a railroad car out there full of either sugar or flour that again, needed move. And they bet him he couldn't push that car. And they say, I didn't see it, that he did it physically [by hand]. I used to do them. There was a tool, right? That I put on the rail.

And that's how I moved the cars to get him where I wanted. Right. They say he grabbed that, a hold of that and pushed it. Those guys got it. Got it rolling. Well, you had to get it rolling. Yeah, that's what he said. Well, Ray White. Ray's a character.

Another guy, Carol, is the guy that was president of the union, but before. The guy that I was with before we kind of took over. Really good resource. Lou Morlock from Virden. The last time I talked to Lou was at a job fair when I was representing the college and he was representing.

Speaker A: Mazrim
So did you even know it was raining? I mean, you're inside all the time.

Speaker B: Howard
I always said sometimes in that plant, the world could come to an end and we wouldn't know it. That's what I hated about a factory.

This job was like a stepping stone. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I went to Millikan first two years of college, right out of high school.
Decided to get married, quit college, went to work for a little factory in Taylorville. How I got here, I was working at the factory in Taylorville. I was mowing about 30 yards and working for my dad's Clark station in Taylorville. I'm mowing a lady's yard in Taylorville. Mowed it every week. She would always have a glass of iced tea. Sitting on the table at the end. Giving me my $20. Sitting there having a glass of iced tea. And I said, man, I said, man, I'm killing myself. And I said, I seen a neighbor's paycheck last week. This neighbor had got on here at Pillsbury. She was so proud of her paycheck. Now, this was 1981.

She had made a thousand dollars in 1981. That was a lot of money, 1981, because the overtime. Two week. One week. One week, yeah, that'd be a lot of money. A thousand bucks. I think it was one. It may have been two, but I think it was one. It was a lot of money to me. And I'm telling this lady, I said, I would kill to make that kind of money. She said, you'd like to work at Pillsbury? I said, oh, man, I'd love to work someplace like that. Now, that's all she said to me. Finished my tea, take my truck, mowers home, shower, go back to my other job.

I got off at 11 o'clock. When I got home that night, there was a note on my kitchen table. My wife said, you're to be at job service tomorrow. 1:00, interview with Pillsbury. And I'm like, she's already asleep. I'm not gonna wake her up. And I'm like, how's this possible? Next morning I show up there. I walk up and this lady, which I mentioned, Bendina Henrietta. We called her Benny. She was the head of our HR. She comes walking up to Me. And she says, she whispers in my ear. She said, Bob Howard? I said, yeah. She goes, I'm Bendina Andretta. And she said, that lady Cynthia Flanders that you take such good care of in Taylorville. That's my aunt. Give your notice because you start in two weeks. True story.

And the wild part, when I tell them, I still get cold chills when I tell the story. If I hadn't have come here, it wouldn't have closed. I wouldn't have went back to college and finished my degree. And I would not be sitting here. I've been retired for three years. None of that would have happened. I wouldn't have got on to college. I mean, I don't know what would have happened, but that would not have happened. Would have never met Carol. With me sitting here with you guys, It's just weird how it all. It just. It just kept choosing me.

Speaker A
I think that's one of the things that, as we talk to more and more folks who worked here, is the sentiment that Pillsbury was a special place in this town. It was thousands of people, many families. I mean, it was like a game changer for them.

Speaker B
It was huge for many people. And not only that, we dealt with a place called Black's Hardware. Remember Blacks? Is it still going? So Pillsbury did a ton of business with them. They would deliver stuff to us. And think of all the lumber companies and all the trucking companies. I mean, that meant a lot.

My dad told me this one time, he said, 'look at that parking lot'. You can tell the money that people make at that place by looking at the vehicles sitting there. That car lot [Pillsbury] was full of nothing but new vehicles.

And some of these guys, it was like keeping up with the Joneses. If one of them in the warehouse got a new truck, next thing you know, four or five of them got a new truck. But it was because of the money. And the money was for that period was unbelievable.

Speaker A
Okay, so you get in here. You're in your mid-20s, 25 years old. What's the place like the first day you walk in?

Speaker B
Monstrous. I think there's no way I'm gonna learn it. I mean, I come from a small town. I had 25 in my graduating class. And I'm thinking, I'm never gonna learn this. Even the job itself. The guy's talking 100 mile an hour about this job, you know, and what all I got to do, and I'm there No way.

Like most things, within six months, like I said, I could be anywhere on this with my job and knew every inch of it. It was like old hat. Within six months. But the first day, I was scared to death. I'm not gonna lie to you. It was very overwhelming.

Speaker A
A lot of guys talk about the noise and the dust, the noise.

Speaker B
You know, if you were smart, you wore the hearing protection. I never was without my headgear. We didn't have the fancy little stuff today. We had the big…. They were brown. I still got a pair of them at home. They were again, in the bottom of grocery, down in the basement. A guy named Vic Fuctnetti was the guy that worked there.

We called him Scratch. Why? I don't know. That was the supply room, and everything was given out there. The noise didn't bother me. But the dust, you can't even fathom in a million years what the dust was like. We would do a blowdown every week. And I mean literally blow over there. Wouldn't be bad over here, but over there, we would blow down everything.

These long nozzles, you couldn't see your hand in front of you. And we had on, like, the paper masks. They weren't even close to what would keep anything out. And then everything would filter down to the floor. You let it set for about an hour and then sweep everything and air everything up. We do that every week for sanitation because of bugs and different stuff. But it was. It was ungodly.

Speaker A
Anybody within your group that suffered from any side effects from the dust?

Speaker B
I didn't. But me and another guy, same guy, me and this guy. They were always getting…. If our work was slow in grocery, they would get us because we were young, we were hustlers. They got us back in the back near, I think it was called 8180 and C Mill. C-mill, was where we were actually at. And this is a terrible story. We were tearing the asbestos insulation off of pipes with our bare hands. And we didn't… We'd never even heard of asbestos. Didn't even have a clue. And not to mention that. But these blow downs, I'm telling you, we were blowing that stuff everywhere.

So at the end, one thing me and the president investigated. We brought a lawyer in just to see for the future. If people did come down with an overwhelming amount [of illness], could anything be done to help them? I don't think that ever went anywhere. But we did. We did pursue. We brought in a lawyer and talked to him, but I don't think it went anywhere.

Speaker A
So if you're tearing up asbestos, that would have been still just mid-80s then, right?

Speaker B
That was 81. I'm sorry, 85. 85, yeah, 85. And I'd never heard of it.

Speaker A
Was it disintegrating and you rewrap it?

Speaker B
It was when we were doing the painting and we didn't even rewrap it. We just scraped and anything that was loose and then we would spray paint over. Spray painter. Yeah. But him and I, to this day, he's still alive too. We're both in decent shape for our age. I mean, I can hike 8 miles and don't even wind. And so I don't think I have anything like that.

Speaker A
So the pipe. The pipe wrap was falling apart? It wasn't….

Speaker B
It was just deteriorating. And we were painting. We were painting. So we would scrape any loose debris and paint.

But the dust. You can't even fathom the mill. Same way when the mill would have a choke up or like a belt would break. Right. And I don't know how much the mill's left if you can access it and see what I'm talking about. But they had the most beautiful floors I've ever seen in my life.
They were like gymnasium floors. The wooden little strips that's still up there. They're beautiful.

Speaker A
Not anymore.

Speaker B
It was ungodly. I'm talking polished, really. But when a choke up would happen or a belt would break, this floor would fill with flour over your head.

Speaker A
I've heard that.

Speaker B
And they would call us for overtime and we'd go over, you know, after our shift, and you would literally scoop your way from one end of that floor to the other. Because there were chutes on the floor built in to do this. Okay. And we would scoop them in these chutes from one end of that floor to the other. It'd be over your head.

Speaker A
So it's like digging out of a snowstorm.

Speaker B
It was only, only the worst dust in the world.
Like, just think of me taking literally on the hottest day you could imagine, because no matter what the temp was outside, it was like 110, 120 in the mill. I mean, it was ungodly. Those guys, we'd come over to grocery and freeze because they were used to that heat. So think of you wringing wet with sweat, and I take a bag of flour and dump it on you. That's what it was like. Hands sticking together, same way in the back. I don't know if anybody's talking about Sprinkle Sweet….

Speaker A
Yeah.

Speaker B
It was a huge, huge tower [inside 8180/dryer building]. And it was the neatest process. It would spray in as a liquid, and then the heat would dry it instantly. And it looked like smoke falling. And it was sweet. And sweetener, when I would work back there, I mean, you couldn't even hardly imagine sweetener because you're…. You're sweating, you're hot, and you'd just be covered from head to toe.

Speaker A
Was that in. In the 8180 building?

Speaker B
That was in 8180.

Speaker A
Okay.

Speaker B
Another guy, definitely. He's a colorful character, if he's still alive. Doug Butler and Doug's dad worked here, but Doug worked back there. And I'm talking. He was a character. He was famous because they used big, high pressure hoses, water hoses, when they had to clean everything.
He was famous for soaking a boss. And some new bosses would warn him, you better not do that to me. But he would find a way. So it looked like an accident. And he would soak them.

But the sweetener…It would look like snow falling as it heated up and fell to the bottom. But think about sweetener. Years later, we find out sweetener is one of the worst things I could have been breathing.

I also, when I was unloading a sugar car, especially winter, so when the sugar was put in, it was hot, and then in cold weather, it would get as hard as concrete, and it wouldn't come down the hopper to my machine. I hooked on the bottom to blow it up to the top of Grocery. Well, first we would put a vibrator on the side, and we would hit it with sledgehammers. But sometimes I had to go inside that sugar car with a kind of like a flat spade thing you'd use for a roofing job. And just try to chop that sugar up to get it to go through that auger down at the bottom. And I mean, I'd be in there with a mask and goggles and sugar. Same way. Just coated me.

_____

Speaker A: Howard
Like running 8180, the actual sweetener part only ran like once or twice a year.

Speaker B: Mazrim
Oh, really?

Speaker A
Yeah. To my recollection they would have an order to fill. Yeah. Because these, these two guys, Elmer Moss, who's long dead, good story on him. But Elmer Moss and Doug Butler were the main two guys. They would leave their grocery machine operator jobs and go back there for a certain period of time and run the batch and then it was done.

Speaker B
So it wasn't continuous?

Speaker A
Not to my recollection.

Speaker B
Okay. You were talking about Funfetti cake…

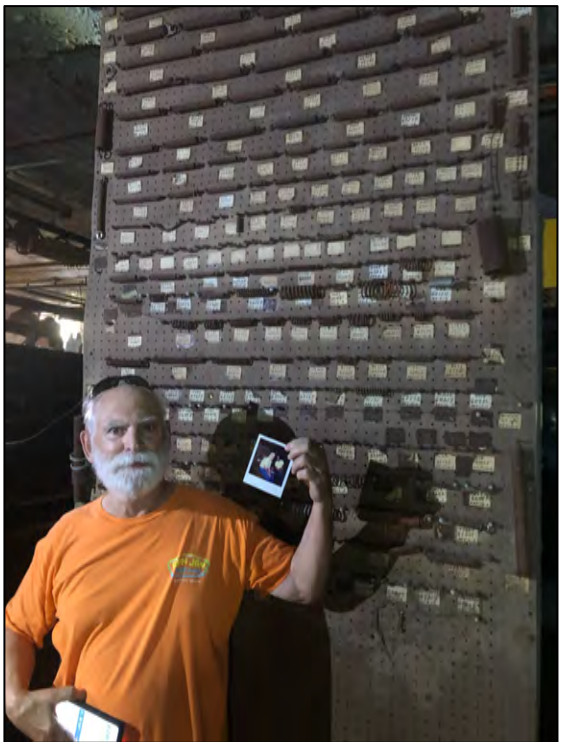
Speaker A
It's a basic cake mix, but it's got a little pouch of sprinkles that we had to add. So one of the jobs, you sit there and you have these two bins beside you. Each side you're sitting on a stool. Conveyor's coming

by, there's a person opposite you and you're literally doing this for eight hours, putting a pouch in every box that comes by.

Speaker B
Putting a pouch of Funfetti….

Speaker A
Funfetti. You're putting the sprinkles, little pouch in the box. But you talk about a boring job. Come home, your little boy says, what'd you do at work today? I put Funfetti pouches in cake boxes for eight hours, son.

Was it what I wanted to do? No. But it paid okay.



Former employee Vic Fugnitti (interview not transcribed), in the basement of the Grocery Building, 2023 and 1985.