

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**1. Name of Property**

Historic Name: Zedler Mill Historic District
Other name/site number: Zedler Mill Complex
Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

2. Location

Street/Number: 1115 and 1170 South Laurel Avenue
City/Town: Luling State: Texas County: Caldwell and Guadalupe
Not for Publication: NA Vicinity: NA


3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

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

	State Historic Preservation Officer	11 29 23
Signature of certifying official/title		Date
Texas Historical Commission		
State Agency		

In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting or other official	Date
State or Federal Agency/Bureau or Tribal Government	

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other, explain: NA

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: District

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
9	3	buildings
0	0	sites
5	4	structures
0	0	objects
14	7	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: DOMESTIC/single dwelling, secondary structure
COMMERCE/TRADE/business
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/processing, animal facility, storage, outbuilding
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACATION/manufacturing facility, energy facility

Current Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum, auditorium, outdoor recreation
LANDSCAPE/street furniture/object

7. Description

Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne
OTHER/Factory/Mill
NO STYLE

Principal Exterior Materials: METAL/Steel
WOOD/Weatherboard, Board-and-Batten
CONCRETE
BRICK
STONE
EARTH

Narrative Description (See Pages 7-17)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criterion: A

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Industry

Period of Significance: 1888–1964

Significant Dates: 1888, 1912, 1921, 1929, 1964

Significant Person: NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: NA

Narrative Statement of Significance (Pages 18-30)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (See Pages 31-35)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

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

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (Texas Historical Commission, Austin)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other—Specify Repository: NA

Historic Resources Survey Number: NA

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10. Geographical Data

(See Page 36)

11. Form Prepared By

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Date: April 2023

Additional Documentation

Maps (See Pages 37-40)

Figures (See Pages 41-54)

Photographs (See Pages 55-78)

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time to review instructions, gather and maintain data, and complete and review the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

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Photograph Log

Name of Property: Zedler Mill

City or Vicinity: Luling

County: Caldwell and Guadalupe

State: Texas

Photographer: Amy E. Dase (except as noted)

Date(s) Photographed: August 19, 2022

Photographs reflect the current appearance of resources in the nominated district. Map 3 provides a directional guide of the views

1. Left to right, spillway (Resource 2C), dam (Resource 2A), race/superstructure (Resource 2B), retaining wall (Resource 2D), and southern portion of millhouse (Resource 1A), camera facing west.
2. Left to right, race/superstructure (Resource 2B), retaining wall (Resource 2D), millhouse (Resource 1A), smokestack (Resource 1B), and corn sheller building (Resource 3), camera facing northwest.
3. East façade of millhouse (Resource 1A) and smokestack (Resource 1B), camera facing southwest.
4. Cotton unloading shed at millhouse (Resource 1A) northeast corner, camera facing north.
5. North façades of northern (foreground) and western (background, at right) the millhouse (Resource 1A) wings, camera facing south.
6. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, Lummus Sons Company revolving double-box cotton press on circular turntable/platform, camera facing southwest.
7. South and east façades of corner sheller building (Resource 3), camera facing northwest.
8. Equipment inside corn sheller building (Resource 3), camera facing northeast.
9. Agricultural work area with, left to right, portion of noncontributing event center (Resource 12, background, at left), smokehouse (Resource 7, left foreground), noncontributing privy (Resource 15), shed (Resource 8, background, at center) corn crib (Resource 5, background, at right) with small trough (Resource 10 in front of crib), and livestock barn (Resource 6, at right), camera facing south.
10. Agricultural work area with, left to right, shed (Resource 8), noncontributing privy (Resource 15), corn crib (Resource 5) with small trough (Resource 10 in front of crib), and smokehouse (Resource 7), camera facing west.
11. North and west façades of corn crib (Resource 5), camera facing southeast.
12. Livestock barn interior (Resource 6), camera facing northeast.
13. Northwest façade of Fritz and Louise Zedler home (Resource 11A), camera facing southeast.
14. Southeast façade of Fritz and Louise Zedler home (Resource 11A) and garage (Resource 11B, at far right), camera facing northwest.

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15. Sawmill mechanical system (Resource 9A) and noncontributing sawmill shed (Resource 9B), camera facing west.
16. Landscaping and north façade of noncontributing event center (Resource 12), camera facing southwest.
17. South façade of noncontributing event center (Resource 12), camera facing northeast.
18. Southeast oblique of millhouse (Resource 1A), camera facing northwest.
19. Northeast oblique of smokestack (Resource 1B), camera facing southwest.
20. Dam (Resource 2A), camera facing southwest.
21. Race/superstructure (Resource 2B), camera facing west.
22. Spillway (Resource 2C), camera facing south.
23. Retaining wall (Resource 2D), camera facing northeast.
24. Southwest oblique of corn sheller building (Resource 3), camera facing northeast.
25. Northeast oblique of scale house/office (Resource 4), camera facing southwest.
26. Northeast oblique of corn crib (Resource 5), camera facing southwest.
27. East façade of livestock barn (Resource 6), camera facing west.
28. Southeast façade of smokehouse (Resource 7), camera facing northwest.
29. Northeast oblique of shed (Resource 8), camera facing southwest.
30. Sawmill mechanical system (Resource 9A), camera facing northeast.
31. Sawmill shed (Resource 9B), camera facing northeast.
32. East side of trough (Resource 10), camera facing southwest.
33. Southeast façade of Fritz and Louise Zedler home (Resource 11A), camera facing northwest.
34. Front façade of garage (Resource 11B), camera facing northwest.
35. Southeast oblique of event center (Resource 12), camera facing northwest.
36. East side of bridge (Resource 13), camera facing southwest.
37. East side of bridge (Resource 14), camera facing northwest.
38. Front façade of privy (Resource 15), camera facing northwest.

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39. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, Gin Stand, camera facing south. Photo by Gregory Smith.
40. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, gin stand and conveyor belt framing, camera facing southeast. Photo by Gregory Smith.
41. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, Lummus Sons Company revolving double-box cotton press on circular turntable/platform, camera facing southwest. Photo by Gregory Smith.
42. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, Lummus Sons Company revolving double-box cotton press on circular turntable/platform, camera facing east. Photo by Gregory Smith.
43. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, revolving turntable under the double-box cotton press, camera facing south. Photo by Gregory Smith.

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This project was funded through an Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund grant from the National Park Service that addresses damage inflicted by Hurricane Harvey. In January 2020, National Park Service staff concurred that this property is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.”

Description

The Zedler Mill Historic District is on the north bank of the San Marcos River adjacent to the State Highway 80 bridge over the waterway, which demarcates the City of Luling south boundary and the border between Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties.¹ The millers initially directed the river to power equipment that processed agricultural yields, notably corn and cotton; in the twentieth century, the millers sustained these processing activities, and hydropower generated at the complex eventually provided electricity to the community. Extant buildings, structures, and objects associated with these activities are 14 contributing and 7 noncontributing resources, all built between 1888 and ca. 1950. The major contributing buildings—the millhouse, livestock barn, corncrib, a single-family dwelling, processing facilities, and agricultural resources—are of wood-frame construction. Contributing structures, such as storage and energy facilities, are of concrete or brick. Nonhistoric and noncontributing to the district are the Zedler Mill Pavilion, an event center with a patio and amphitheater, plus two bridges, a smokestack, a small privy, and a sawmill mechanical system. The many small objects scattered throughout the district—mostly large fragments of metal equipment, remnant concrete foundations, interpretive signs, historical markers, and utilities—are not included in the resource count. The district retains sufficient physical and historical integrity to convey its significance.

The Zedler Mill Historic District is in Luling, Texas, approximately 1 mile south of the city center. The mill straddles the San Marcos River and is therefore within both Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties. Along the district’s south side is the San Marcos River flowing southeasterly. To the southeast is State Highway 80, its bridge over the waterway, and the Edgar B. Davis Southside Park and the Luling Municipal Golf Course. Mill Creek generally parallels South Laurel Avenue as it meanders southeasterly toward the San Marcos River. Adjacent and northwest is the Charles and Charlotte Zedler family’s second home, Rio Vista, built in 1928, and 1930s-era dwellings on the Weldon Survey. Further to the northwest and to north is Laurel Heights, a neighborhood developed in the 1950s and 1960s.

The district, on either side of South Laurel Avenue, encompasses two land parcels in Caldwell County and a sliver of the river’s south bank in adjacent Guadalupe County; the City of Luling owns the entirety of these three parcels (Maps 1 and 2). Most of the district is on the 5.568-acre Parcel 24067 between the river and South Laurel Avenue.² Approximately half of the dam (Resource 2A) and, on the south bank, the entirety of the spillway (Resource 2C) are in Guadalupe County, part of the 18.365-acre Parcel 132042.³ The Zedler house and garage (Resources 11A and 11B) are on the 1.343-acre Parcel 24604 on the north side of South Laurel Avenue.⁴ The City of Luling also owns the 2.03-acre Parcel 24066 that abuts the house/garage parcel’s southeastern edges, with surface parking for the event center in about 2010, which is excluded from the district.

The setting has changed from a working mill with a water works and a hydropower plant during its functional use to a community events center. The City of Luling acquired the portion of the district in Caldwell County in 2002 and 2003, and the portion in Guadalupe County in 2013, according to appraisal district records. In 2004, the City, National Park Service, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, and Luling Economic Development Corporation developed a master plan for the property.⁵ Some of the plan has come to fruition. The millhouse was repurposed as a museum, the Fritz and Louise

¹ Luling Economic Development Corporation, *Discover Zedler’s Mill* (Luling: Luling Economic Development Corporation, 2004). All but a small portion of the nominated property is within Caldwell County.

² Caldwell County Appraisal District, Parcel 24067 (2022).

³ Guadalupe Appraisal District, Parcel 132042 (2022).

⁴ Caldwell County Appraisal District, Parcel 24064 (2022).

⁵ Luling Economic Development Corporation, *Discover Zedler’s Mill*.

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Zedler house (Resource 11A) as a bed and breakfast, and the scale house/office (Resource 4) as an administrative office with restrooms. Construction of the event center pavilion, amphitheater, and patio (Resource 12) with open spaces landscaped for various passive and active uses took place in 2012. This effort included installation of informational and interpretive signage at opportune junctures, a safe and picturesque overlook of the river and mill, and surface parking.⁶ In 2014, the riprap along Mill Creek was replaced to repair storm-damaged materials, according to Texas Historical Commission records. These many projects saved the resources from continued decay and collapse.

The banks of the San Marcos River, a prominent focal point in the district, have undergone many improvement projects to repair erosion and flood-related destruction. Stabilization work was proposed in 2003 and 2005. In c2014 A mostly submerged sheet-pile stabilization wall was installed along the upstream face of north bank to prevent water flowing beneath the dam and undermining its foundation. This restored the historic-period bank alignment and protected its slopes from further erosion. A 3-foot-wide concrete cap and 1 to 3 feet of sheet piling are visible. The nonfunctional sluice gates and rack and pinion operators were replaced at the race bulkhead; the nonhistoric gates are below the water line during normal conditions.⁷ In about 2018, the riverbank was reclaimed and reinforced with a retaining wall to protect the property from potential flooding.⁸

Layout and Circulation Pattern Development

The historic-period development of this agricultural processing and industrial complex never strayed from its original design. The public commercial and domestic zone with the dam (Resource 2A) and race/superstructure (Resource 2B) at the river were the pivotal functional resources on the property's southern half. Water-powered equipment was situated close to this fuel source, in or near the millhouse (Resource 1A). Customers could access these resources from what would become State Highway 80 and Laurel Avenue, taking an interior driveway to first pass a domestic zone, with the no-longer-extant Charles and Charlotte Zedler home, to arrive at the scale house/office (Resource 4) and onward to the agricultural processing and industrial complex at the millhouse.

One domestic zone separated the agricultural processing and industrial complex from an agricultural work zone, where the public circulation pattern did not extend. In this more-private zone, removed from the commercial and industrial complex, are a large corn crib (Resource 5) and livestock barn (Resource 6), and a small smokehouse (Resource 7). Here, the Zedler family managed their working equines, stored feed for them and other livestock, and preserved food. The other domestic zone, the Fritz and Louise Zedler home, on the other side of Laurel Avenue, was distinctively separated from the agricultural processing and industrial complex, giving the family's older generation considerable privacy.

Relationships of Buildings to One Another

The resources have distinct interrelationships (Activity Zones map). In the public commercial and industrial zone, the scale house/office introduced customers to the agricultural processing complex with the millhouse and the dam and race/superstructure, necessary for the complex and the no-longer-extant water works to function. The corn sheller building (Resource 3) in this zone offered yet another commercial service to customers in this southern work zone. One domestic zone, the site of the burned Charles and Charlotte Zedler home, offered conspicuous visual variance from the public zone, partially obscuring the northern agricultural work zone from view. Across Laurel Avenue and perched on a hilltop, the domestic zone with the Fritz and Louise Zedler home is notably separated from but has views of the agricultural processing and industrial complex. Resources in the northern agricultural zone, especially those dedicated to livestock,

⁶ Luling Economic Development Corporation, *Discover Zedler's Mill*.

⁷ Amy E. Dase, Section 106 Coordination with the Texas Historical Commission: Zedler Mill Dam and Race Rehabilitation, 2013, Prewitt and Associates, Inc., Austin; Freese and Nichols, "Construction Plans for Zedler Mill Dam Rehabilitation, Issued for 60 Percent Review" (Austin: Freese and Nichols, March 2013).

⁸ Brian King, December 14, 2018.

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were mutually supportive of upkeeping the draft animals critical to agricultural processing and industrial complex and to the family farm.

Range and Distribution of Construction Dates

The extant resources in the Zedler Mill Historic District were erected between 1884 and about 1950 during several building campaigns. Four resources date to the earliest period of construction, 1884 to ca. 1900: the patriarchal home (Resource 11A), a portion of the millhouse (Resource 1A), and the scale house/office (Resource 4). The latter two buildings evolved during subsequent developmental phases to accommodate commercial and industrial expansion on the property. During the developmental phase between 1912 and 1921, the most important components of the property were built, the dam and race/superstructure (Resources 2A and 2B), and spillway (Resource 2C), plus a smokestack (Resource 1B) and a shed (Resource 8).

The biggest twentieth-century construction burst took place between 1921 and 1929. During this period, the Zedlers added breadth to their operation with a corn sheller building (Resource 3), corn crib (Resource 5), livestock barn (Resource 6), smokehouse (Resource 7), and smaller-scale resources like concrete troughs (Resource 10), mostly north of the Charles and Charlotte Zedler family house site. Domestic resources included two one-story wood-frame sheds, no longer extant, and a ca. 1925 two-vehicle wood-frame garage (Resource 11B). After 1929, limited development occurred on the property. The millhouse underwent some additions between 1929 and 1935. A retaining wall (Resource 2D) to support the bank was added in about 1938, and the race/superstructure (Resource 2B) underwent an update in about 1950.

Property Types and Forms

Buildings, structures, and objects in the district can be dissected into four property types. The buildings are mostly rectangular, except for the millhouse, which is irregularly shaped, as are most structures.

Agricultural Resources

- Processing
 - Millhouse/smokestack (Resources 1A and 1B)
 - Corn sheller building (Resource 3)
 - Smokehouse (Resource 7)
- Animal Facility
 - Livestock barn Resource 6)
- Storage
 - Corn crib (Resource 5)
 - Trough (Resource 10)

Commercial Resources

- Scale house/office (Resource 4)

Industrial Resources

- Energy facility
 - Dam/race/spillway/retaining wall (Resources 2A–2D)
- Manufacturing facility
 - Sawmill mechanical system (Resource 9A)

Domestic Resources

- Single-family dwelling (Resource 11A)
- Garage (Resource 11B)
- Shed (Resource 8)

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Portions of the property have been assessed for potential archeological sites. The archeological study determined that modern construction activities, including the addition of top fill, likely extends from the top of the alluvial terrace to South Laurel Avenue.⁹ The Texas Historical Commission concurred with the recommendations in the study that no prehistoric archeological sites or artifacts have been previously identified in the area along the San Marcos River.¹⁰ However, determining the presence or lack of historic-era archeological materials dating to the historic district's period of significance may be a future area of study.

Common Construction Materials

As buildings at the Zedler Mill evolved, so did common construction materials. Most of the earliest-built resources have pier-and-beam foundations, are of wood-frame construction, and are clad in board and batten. Later improvements have contemporaneously modern materials, like concrete foundations or piers and standing-seam or corrugated-metal cladding. For example, the millhouse (Resource 1A) has at least four types of foundations that reflect its construction evolution: historic-period pier-and-beam, brick, concrete, and post-historic-period concrete foundations; an adjacent stone foundation was associated with the Luling Water Works Company building. It has bois d'arc wood framing and roof trusses, much of which was milled on site.¹¹ The oldest part of the millhouse is sheathed in board-and-batten cladding; newer portions are clad in corrugated metal, as are the building's various roofs configurations. The associated smokestack is of brick construction. Brick also supports some of the corn sheller building.

Other buildings typically have earth, brick, or concrete bases and/or floors, are of pier-and-beam construction, and have board-and-batten or corrugated-metal exterior cladding and corrugated-metal roof cladding. Those that differ are the scale house/office (Resource 4), with weatherboard cladding, and the garage (Resource 11B), with drop siding.

The Zedler house (Resource 11A) has a pier-and-beam foundation that decorative wood lattice, brick piers, and portions of concrete slab hide. Exterior beveled weatherboard, drop siding, and decorative fish-scale shingles clad the building, and it has a standing-seam metal roof. Decorative wood details include turned spindle-work balustrades at porches, balconies, and the roofwalk, and in gable-end detailing. The yardscape has a brick retaining wall and staircase.

Structures on the property are concrete and/or brick. The dam (Resource 2A) and spillway (Resource 2C) are made of concrete with metal reinforcements. The race (Resource 2B) and retaining wall (Resource 2D) are made of concrete and brick. One trough is concrete (Resource 10).

Integrity of the District

As a collection, the Zedler Mill Historic District retains physical and historical integrity, despite changes the property has experienced. Floods have damaged the property several times causing bank erosion and threatening the stability of the site, and a fire destroyed a dwelling. The Luling Water Works Company building, and a water tower are no longer extant, and the Charles and Charlotte Zedler family home constructed between 1902 and 1907 burned in 1980. The most obvious intrusion is the Zedler Event Center, a large building with an outdoor patio, gazebo, and, built onto a slope, an amphitheater (Resource 12). The main building is in the approximate location of the former Charles Zedler family home. From almost every perspective, the event center is shielded from view when visitors arrive; from the millhouse, a young motte of oak trees partially shield views of the building. The design employs natural-looking materials like rustic-painted wood and native stone seating that blends well with overhanging trees and open lawn. New resources, smaller in scale and impact, are the vehicular and pedestrian bridges, of which only the guard rails and road decks are readily apparent; an open-air shed that protects the sawmill mechanical system, moved to this location recently; and a one-seater privy. Some

⁹ J. Michael Quigg and Terri Myers, *San Marcos Riverbank and Zedler's Mill Stabilization, Caldwell County, Texas: An Archeological and Historical Assessment, Technical Report 34062* (Austin: TRC Environmental Corporation, 2005), 22.

¹⁰ Quigg and Myers, iii.

¹¹ Luling Economic Development Corporation, *Discover Zedler's Mill*.

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nonhistoric intrusions are minor in scale and proportion, like directional and educational signage, light fixtures, and other amenities for visitors. At the river's edge are nonhistoric concrete walkways with plain metal guardrails.

The district's contributing resources convey salient aspects of integrity for properties listed under Criterion A—location, setting, feeling, and association. All the resources are in their original locations. From most vantage points, most of the resources are fully protected from viewsheds to and from the nonhistoric event center, retaining integrity of setting. The district's integrity of feeling is replete with natural components—river, creek, mature trees, and topography—and manmade elements that correspond with commercial and industrial enterprises. The scale of and interrelationships among the buildings, structures, and objects imply a historic-period time and place. The archival records—land grant, deed, ad valorem tax, manuscript decennial population and agricultural census records, newspapers, maps, and photographs—provide substantial documentation for the resources and their associative qualities.

The district's contributing resources retain substantial integrity of design, materials, workmanship, because of local efforts to preserve the property. Many of the resources had been in derelict condition for several years. Most of the resources have had some, much, or all exterior wall and roof cladding replaced in kind with nonhistoric wood or corrugated metal. The millhouse has nonhistoric alterations to accommodate visitors, like the covered walkway to, and viewing platform above, the race; the corn sheller building has a nonhistoric projecting front ell. The Zedler house and garage have historic-period alterations and additions with some replaced windows and a notable exterior staircase on the north façade.

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Inventory of Resources

Resource	Name	Status	Built	Type
1A	Millhouse	Contributing	1888, 1912–1921, 1921–1929, 1929–1935	Building
1B	Smokestack	Noncontributing	1912–1921	Structure
2A	Dam	Contributing	1914	Structure
2B	Race/superstructure	Contributing	1914, ca. 1950	Structure
2C	Spillway	Contributing	ca. 1920	Structure
2D	Retaining wall	Contributing	ca. 1938	Structure
3	Corn sheller building	Contributing	1921–1929	Building
4	Scale house/office	Contributing	ca. 1889, 1912–1921, 1921–1929	Building
5	Corn crib	Contributing	1921–1929	Building
6	Livestock barn	Contributing	1921–1929	Building
7	Smokehouse	Contributing	1921–1929	Building
8	Shed	Contributing	1912–1921	Building
9A	Sawmill mechanical system (relocated from original site)	Noncontributing	ca. 1900	Structure
9B	Sawmill shed	Noncontributing	2015	Building
10	Trough	Contributing	1925	Structure
11A	House	Contributing	ca. 1884, 1900	Building
11B	Garage	Contributing	ca. 1925	Building
12	Event center	Noncontributing	2009	Building
13	Bridge	Noncontributing	ca. 2010	Structure
14	Bridge	Noncontributing	ca. 2010	Structure
15	Privy	Noncontributing	ca. 2013	Building

Architectural Styles and Physical Descriptions

The Zedler Mill buildings exhibit limited architectural styles. The most elaborate of these is the Zedler house, a good example of Queen Anne design with both full- and partial-width asymmetrical porches, textured shingle-cladding, and stylized wood ornamentation. The scale house/office is a modest version of the style. The millhouse is typical of a factory/mill with various additions built to accommodate changing activities. Otherwise, the buildings and structures are utilitarian with no apparent stylistic influences.

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Contributing Resources



Millhouse (Resource 1A; Photograph 18)

The millhouse's irregular shape indicates its many phases of construction, which began in 1888. By 1902, the millhouse was a two-story, five-room building. By 1907, the building included a corn mill and electricity. By 1921, more powerful steam engines had been installed and additions included a second story above the cotton press room, and grain and flour warehouses. By 1929, a shop and larger engine room had been built. By 1935, the building had more additions, including a water closet and a threshing machine room.

Portions of the buildings that are below grade house equipment for the grist and feed mills, and a brick and concrete substructure supports the cotton baler. Foundations are pier-and-beam, brick, and historic-period and modern concrete. Exterior cladding is board and batten or corrugated metal. The several roof configurations—hipped, gable, and shed—of varying pitches are all clad in corrugated metal. Three large metal-clad vents pierce the northern roof, which protects the interior cotton baler. The building has several loading platforms. Its fenestration varies with construction phase and includes 4/4, 6/6, double-hung wood windows, 6-pane fixed windows, and single, double, and loft wood doors. The interior has myriad equipment, artifacts, photographs, and ephemera on display. The several pieces of large equipment that remain in situ present excellent teaching tools that depict the various processes carried out in the building. According to Texas Historical Commission records, the roof and exterior siding were replaced in about 2010. Near the building's southwest corner, was the site of the Luling Water Works Company building, which has not been extant since at least 1955. The Texas Historical Commission determined the water works site not eligible for the National Register. In about 1917, the site area was improved with a concrete catwalk and a stone wall with metal railing that allows visitors views of and access to the race/superstructure, according to the Texas Historical Commission.



Dam (Resource 2A; Photograph 20)

The 1914 concrete dam structure spans the San Marcos River. The main dam face has five concrete buttresses. Two full-height buttresses are on the southern end, and one is on the northern end.



Race/Superstructure (Resource 2B; Photograph 21)

Together, the northern end of the dam and a brick chute to its north form the ca. 1938 brick-lined mill race structure that once had a water wheel. The ca. 1950 concrete superstructure has steel cross members. The corrugated metal-clad viewing platform atop the superstructure is nonhistoric.

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Spillway (Resource 2C; Photograph 22)

The ca. 1920 concrete spillway structure on the southern side of the dam helps control overflow water.



Retaining wall (Resource 2D; Photograph 23)

The ca. 1938 S-curve, brick-lined, concrete retaining wall structure relieves water pressure to protect the embankment.



Corn Sheller Building (Resource 3; Photograph 24)

This building, known as an automotive garage at some points, was built into a hill between 1912 and 1921. The brick lower level has a metal roof and is connected to the upper-level wood-frame, metal-clad building that has both gable and shed roofs.



Scale House/Office (Resource 4; Photograph 25)

The ca. 1889 one-story, wood-frame building was expanded between 1912 and 1921. The front (east) portion of the building has a side-gable roof with wide closed eaves. Four chamfered posts support the integral porch, which leads to a single door. Ornamental vertical wood siding, in a sawtooth pattern, decorates the porch. The west portion of the building has an addition with public restrooms. Windows are 4/4 double-hung with plain shutters.



Corn Crib (Resource 5; Photograph 26)

Likely built during the 1912 to 1921 development phase, this two-and-one-half-story, wood-frame, standing-seam and corrugated-metal clad building has both gable and shed roofs. A full-width shed roof with exposed trusses and beams protects the front façade. Under this roof, stone steps lead to each of three equidistant single doors to provide access to the interior concrete floor. Shed-roof vents along three façades offer ventilation.

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Livestock Barn (Resource 6; Photograph 27)

Built during the 1912 to 1921 development phase, this two-story, wood-frame and board-and-batten-clad building has a corrugated-metal clad gable roof that protects equine stalls with concrete floors and wood feed bins. A cantilevered section of the building, also with concrete flooring protected feed and animals. In about 2010, the exterior siding replaced in kind, according to Texas Historical Commission records.



Smokehouse (Resource 7; Photograph 28)

Built during the 1912 to 1921 development phase, this two-story, wood-frame and board-and-batten-clad building has a corrugated-metal clad gable roof. A cantilevered section of the building protected food preservation activities.



Shed (Resource 8; Photograph 29)

Built during the 1912 to 1921 development phase, this one-story wood-frame shed and sometime-caretaker cottage has a front-gable roof and a projecting front-gable porch. The exterior walls and roof are clad in corrugated metal. The building has 4/4 double-hung wood windows on the side façades and a single nonhistoric front door.



Trough (Resource 10; Photograph 32)

The rectangular trough of poured-in-place concrete with metal reinforcements was made on May 26, 1925. Remnant pipe denotes water inflow and outflow locations.



House (Resource 11A; Photograph 33)

Because the Zedler house evolved with the family, it has several components from different construction periods that include the ca. 1884 earliest-built northern portion, the 1900 main Queen Anne southern block, and several chunky additions to the eastern façade. The building's robust character-defining Queen Anne features are its complex roof forms, asymmetrical plan and fenestration patterns, wraparound porch, plethora of wood textures (fish-scale and shake shingles, horizontal and patterned vertical siding, and turned-post balustrades), widow's walk, and gable end decoration, and the cutaway balcony. In about 2010, the metal roof was installed and exterior siding, fascia board, underpinning, porch rail, and other wood details were replaced in-kind, according to Texas Historical Commission records.

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Garage (Resource 11B; Photograph 34)

The ca. 1925 one-story, two-vehicle garage is on a concrete base. Of wood-frame construction, it has exterior drop siding and a standing-seam metal roof. A shed-roof addition to the original side-gable roof extended the building southeasterly; the southeasterly and northwesterly facing portions of the roof have exposed rafter tails. The addition has two double wood doors. The northwesterly and southwesterly façades each have a fixed 4-pane window. The southwesterly façade has a single wood door that leads to wood steps and a raised walkway to the house.

Noncontributing Resources



Smokestack (Resource 1B; Photograph 19)

The original date of the brick smokestack structure is unknown, but it had been moved to this approximate location between 1912 and 1921. It eventually collapsed and was rebuilt in about 2011, according to Texas Historical Commission records.



Sawmill Mechanical System (Resource 9A; Photograph 30)

This ca. 1900 sawmill mechanical system was moved from its location at the Zedler gin in east Luling. The Medart Company of St. Louis made the continuous drive with a weighted idler carriage. A Woodward governor controlled the turbines with a cable drive. The original object had two drives, one for a gin and one for a sawmill. Recently moved to the property, the object represents an important functional component of the Zedler family's complex in east Luling, and was not historically associated with this property along the San Marcos River.



Sawmill Shed (Resource 9B; Photograph 31)

The ca. 2015 one-story open shed with an earth floor protects the sawmill mechanical system. The wood-frame building has a gable roof clad in corrugated metal.



Event Center (Resource 12; Photograph 35)

Built in 2009, the event center is a large building with an outdoor patio, gazebo, and amphitheater.

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Bridge (Resource 13; Photograph 36)

The ca. 2010 concrete vehicular bridge has a gravel roadbed and wood guard rails.



Bridge (Resource 14; Photograph 37)

The ca. 2010 wood pedestrian bridge has wood deck and guardrails. At each end is a stylized metal arch and two brick piers with lanterns.



Privy (Resource 15; Photograph 38)

The ca. 2013 one-story, wood-frame privy has a concrete foundation. Clad in board-and-batten wood siding, it has a corrugated metal-clad shed roof with minimal eaves. The single door has a carved crescent moon-shaped opening at eye level. This building replaced an earlier-built privy in this approximate location.

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Statement of Significance

The Zedler Mill Historic District, in Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas, is significant for its associations with local commercial and industrial development. The Zedler Mill served an area of approximately 280 square miles that surrounded Luling. The mill was the longest-lasting facility of its type in this vicinity. It remains the most intact example of a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century industrial complex in Luling. The district retains a high concentration of agricultural processing resources and hydro-powered infrastructure that originated along the San Marcos River to utilize power from the river flow to operate a mill and other agricultural processing services, and to provide water and electric power during the period of significance, 1888 to 1964. This period begins with the construction date of the oldest extant resource and extends to the end of the property's functional lifespan. The district is nominated under Criterion A at the local level in the area of Commerce as a fundamental commercial enterprise that processed cotton and grains, notably corn. The Zedler family improved the complex for commercially processing agricultural products. The district is also significant in the area of Industry as an essential industrial facility that provided water and electricity to the community after the operators introduced changing technologies to the complex that supported municipal utilities. The property evolved to accommodate distinct types of agricultural processing equipment and to incorporate industrial components concurrent with local population growth and trends in agriculture. Because the district contains a high proportion of contributing resources and has limited infill construction and sensitive alterations to historic-period resources, it retains sufficient physical and historical integrity to convey its significance.

Development in Luling, Texas, 1874–1884

Development of this area of Caldwell County was sparse until 1874. The region was a portion of the traditional Tonkawa, Karankawa, and Comanche groups' territories, who hunted and gathered throughout the Guadalupe River basin. As hunter-gatherers, these tribes were nomadic and traveled seasonally with portable shelters through the larger area that included parts of Gonzales County and the Gulf Coast.¹² The earliest Euro-American settlement in the vicinity of present-day Luling, Texas, was along Plum Creek, 3 miles to the west, beginning in about 1840. Plum Creek incorporated in 1848, and remained a small enclave of settlers. The trajectory of development in the region changed drastically in 1874 when the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad was completed.¹³ The majority owner of the railroad, Thomas W. Peirce,¹⁴ had chosen an uninhabited terminus, since clear land allowed him to divide and sell lots to settlers the railroad attracted.¹⁵ This terminus railroad was within the cattle procurement area of the Chisholm Trail, an established livestock trade route between southeast Texas and Kansas.¹⁶ In 1874, the same year the track was completed, a post office named Luling was constructed near the terminus, incorporating the Caldwell County town. A definitive origin of the name Luling remains unknown.¹⁷

The first local agricultural processing operation, constructed in 1874, was a grist and sawmill along the San Marcos River south of downtown Luling.¹⁸ This location took advantage of the river as a power source. The three founders, brothers John Merriwether and James Merriwether, and Leonidas Hardeman, built the mill in response to a need for cornmeal and grain grist as a food source for both incoming settlers and traveling cattle drivers and their thousands of cattle passing near on the Chisholm Trail. The men constructed a stone dam to direct water to power the mill. Constant flooding proved the

¹² Carol A. Lipscomb and Tim Seiter, "Karankawa Indians," in *Handbook of Texas Online* (Texas State Historical Association, 2020); Vivian Elizabeth Smyrl, "Caldwell County," in *Handbook of Texas Online* (Texas State Historical Association, 2020).

¹³ Vivian Elizabeth Smyrl, "Luling, Texas," in *Handbook of Texas Online* (Texas State Historical Association, 1995).

¹⁴ This surname appears as Pierce in some records.

¹⁵ Werner, "Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway."

¹⁶ Donald E. Worcester, "Chisholm Trail," in *Handbook of Texas Online* (Texas State Historical Association, 2020).

¹⁷ Smyrl, "Luling, Texas."

¹⁸ Caldwell County Historical Commission, "Texas State Historical Markers Located in Caldwell County," in *Caldwell County Historical Commission* (2022).

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dam needed regular replacement and maintenance. Within a year they added a cotton gin to the operation. In the early 1880s, the Merriwethers paid taxes on the property, assessed as 4 acres out of the Morris Survey valued at \$3,000.¹⁹ The Merriwethers and Hardeman had successfully anticipated a period of increased demand for cotton and understood the importance of this location along a major railroad and within a region with ideal growing conditions.²⁰

In only 10 years' time, with the railroad as its spine, Luling boasted a population of 2,000, and was a regional trade center by 1884, of which the mill was a constant component.²¹ Other commercial enterprises similarly took advantage of the city's appeal, like the Luling Manufacturing Company Oil Mill, also with a cotton gin, and the McGaffey, Allen, and Company Lumber Yard.²² Companies in Luling were producing cotton oil, meal, and cake, and regularly transporting these items, plus pecans and cattle via the railroad.²³ The mill was a gathering place for farmers and merchants conducting business with the Merriwethers and Hardeman.²⁴ There, they could share updates on local news, weather, crops, livestock, and current events. In 1881, dry goods merchant and grocer J. K. Walker purchased half of the Merriwethers/Hardeman mill. A year later, Walker sold his shares to Orchard and Company, which subsequently bought the remaining shares. Walker owned Orchard and Company with engineer and railroad man Robert H. Innes, drayman John Orchard, and miller Frederick²⁵ "Fritz" Zedler.²⁶

Zedler was born in Germany in 1840 and came to Texas with his parents and six siblings in 1852 under the mistaken surname of Settler.²⁷ They settled in DeWitt County, southeast of Caldwell County, where the family was one of the earliest inhabitants of the German enclave of Yorktown, and owned a productive farm.²⁸ As a young man, Zedler held varied occupations as farm laborer, mail carrier, cattle driver, and freight line operator.²⁹ At the age of 22, he enlisted in the Confederate States Army as a bugler. His final military rank was as a principal musician.³⁰ Zedler was released from the army on leave, and he married Louisa Fechner shortly after. The couple initially moved to Mexico, and returned to DeWitt County by 1870 where he was a miller and wheel right working alongside several other men of "Prussian"

¹⁹ Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, Ad Valorem Tax Rolls (Manuscript), 1881, Texas County Tax Rolls, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Family Search.

²⁰ James Hulse, "Using Your 'Head'" (The Historical Marker Database, 2022); "Why Here? Why Now?" (The Historical Marker Database, 2022).

²¹ Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, "Luling, Texas," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities* (Jackson, MS: Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, 2022); Luling Chamber of Commerce, "The History of Luling: A Brief Overview" (2022); Worcester, "Chisholm Trail."

²² Sanborn Map Company, "Luling, Caldwell County, Texas" (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1885).

²³ *Galveston Daily News*, "Texas News Items: Caldwell," May 8, 1883, 3; Smyrl, "Luling, Texas."

²⁴ James Hulse, "The Lifeblood of Luling" (The Historical Marker Database, 2022).

²⁵ This given name has various spellings.

²⁶ Maria Watson Pfeiffer, "Zedler's Mill, Luling, Caldwell County, Texas" (San Antonio: self-published, November 2006), 1; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Inhabitants, Precinct 28, District 6, Caldwell County, Population Schedule, 1880 (Manuscript), 1880, Family Search.

²⁷ Caldwell County Historical Commission, "Historical Markers in Caldwell County"; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Inhabitants, DeWitt County, Population Schedule, 1860 (Manuscript), Family Search; Paul Zedler, "The Zedler Family," in *Historical Caldwell County: Where Roots Intertwine*, ed. Mark Withers Trail Drive Museum (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, for the Genealogical and Historical Society of Caldwell County, 1984), 209.

²⁸ Anonymous, "The Zedler Family" (n.p.: On file at the Zedler Mill Event Center, Luling, n.d.), 1; *Cuero Record*, "Fritz Zedler Dies in Luling Thursday," September 21, 1932; Frances Hartmann, "Yorktown, Texas," in *Handbook of Texas Online* (Texas State Historical Association, 2019); U.S. Department of the Interior, Inhabitants, DeWitt County, Population Schedule, 1860 (Manuscript).

²⁹ Anonymous, "The Zedler Family," 1–4.

³⁰ Civil War Sailors and Soldiers System, "Frederick C. Zedler," in *United States Civil War Soldiers Index, 1861–1865* (National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), Family Search.

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descent.³¹ By 1879, the Zedlers had moved to Gonzales County where he owned a grist mill and cotton gin.³² He was an experienced business owner and miller by the time the Zedler family moved to Luling in 1884.³³

Development of Zedler Mill, 1884–1888

In 1884, the men of Orchard and Company founded the Luling Water Power Company at the mill site the Merriwethers and Hardeman had formerly owned.³⁴ The company began mill operations at the site to provide Luling residents with water and power derived from the flow of the San Marcos River.³⁵ Within one year of the purchase, a wood dam, a penstock to pressurize water for pumping, and hydraulic Leffel turbines replaced the stone dam. The replacement dam was 60 feet long and comprised of two stacked crib structures built upon sandstone and secured by a bracing pile of gravel and stone. The height of the dam increased the head—the distance water has to fall—to 16 feet, the tallest on the San Marcos River. This gave their dam the most power potential of any on the river and increased its capacity to a total of 150 horsepower between the two turbines. This replacement dam was also less likely to fail during flooding events than the original stone mill.³⁶

Of the four men, Zedler appears to have been very enterprising. At the mill in 1887, he registered a car coupling patent by which train cars could be conveniently coupled without entering them.³⁷ Shortly after, when railroad agents offered to purchase the patent, he declined, citing a lack of control as his reason.³⁸ In 1888, four years after the Luling Water Power Company purchased the mill, Zedler bought all shares of the company from his partners and began sole operation of Zedler Mill, with his eldest son Bertold³⁹ as business partner.⁴⁰ Around the time of this transaction, a second railroad operating north to south, perpendicular to the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio line, was under construction in Luling. This new San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad would connect to the nearby towns of Lockhart, the Caldwell County seat, and Shiner, strengthening Luling's position as a regional trade center.⁴¹

The Zedlers were positioned for success when tragedy struck. In 1888, Zedler owned 4 acres out of the Morris Survey, where the mill was situated, valued at \$6,000, the equivalent of almost \$190,000 in 2022. Between father and son Bertold, the Zedlers had 2 animal-drawn vehicles, 4 horses or mules, 8 cattle, 12 hogs, and \$20 in miscellaneous property.⁴² An unfortunately timed fire followed Zedler's 1888 purchase of the property. A fire that October⁴³ destroyed the three-and-a-

³¹ Anonymous, "The Zedler Family," 5; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Inhabitants, Precinct 3, DeWitt County, Population Schedule, 1870 (Manuscript), Family Search.

³² *Galveston Daily News*, "State News Items: Gonzales," October 7, 1879, 4; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Inhabitants, Precinct 71, Gonzales County, Population Schedule, 1880 (Manuscript), Family Search.

³³ Caldwell County Historical Commission, "Historical Markers in Caldwell County."

³⁴ Caldwell County Historical Commission, "Historical Markers in Caldwell County"; James Hulse, "Responding to a Looming Need" (The Historical Marker Database, 2022).

³⁵ Hulse, "Responding to a Looming Need."

³⁶ Hulse, "The Lifeblood of Luling"; "From Spin to Gin" (The Historical Marker Database, 2022); Thomas U. Taylor, "The Water Powers of Texas," in *Water-Supply and Irrigation Paper No. 105, Series N, Water Power*, 7 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Geological Survey, 1904), 40.

³⁷ Friedrich Zedler, Car Coupling, Patent No. 359,047, filed March 1887.

³⁸ Anonymous, "The Zedler Family," 8.

³⁹ This given name appears as Berdoff in some records.

⁴⁰ Caldwell County Historical Commission, "Historical Markers in Caldwell County"; Zedler, 209.

⁴¹ Smyrl, "Luling, Texas."

⁴² Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1888.

⁴³ All sources but one reference the 1888 fire. In a December 1, 1889, article however, the *Galveston Daily News*, reported that "The rebuilding of the Zedler mill, recently burned, is being rapidly pushed. It will soon be ready for business," indicating the fire may have occurred in 1889.

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half-story gin building.⁴⁴ In spite of the loss, Zedler rebuilt the mill at the same site. Sons Bertold, Herman,⁴⁵ and Charles Sr. readied the site by clearing debris before construction launched. During this period, Zedler left Luling briefly in search of replacement gin equipment.⁴⁶

Rebuilding and Sustained Operations, 1888–1921

With the assistance of community donations, the Zedlers quickly rebuilt the millhouse (Resource 1A) within seven weeks, and reopened in December 1888.⁴⁷ Farmers stored their harvests in Luling to await the mill's reopening, instead of taking it elsewhere for processing.⁴⁸ The replacement millhouse was on 4 acres Zedler owned that were valued at \$4,000.⁴⁹

Cotton was the local cash-crop of choice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1889, the year following reconstruction of the millhouse, Luling exported more than 10,000 bales of processed cotton.⁵⁰ In 1850, Texas was the ninth highest producer of cotton bales in the United States. By 1890, it had rocketed to the highest position with 9,934,525 acres of cotton in cultivation, the most of any state.⁵¹ Between 1889 and 1890, all states producing more than 100,000 bales of cotton per year saw an increase, but none so much as Texas, which boasted a 30.7 percent increase.⁵² Caldwell County, with ideal cotton growing conditions, had 12 percent (approximately 36,403 acres) in cotton. Another 20,404 acres (approximately 6.7 percent) were in corn. In comparison, only five acres were reported in wheat.⁵³

Shortly after the Zedlers rebuilt the millhouse, the penstock on the San Marcos River broke. Although reconstruction could occur right away, the effort would further the family's debts. To earn income, Zedler left Luling once more to manage an established cotton gin in Cuero, where he resided until 1895. In his absence, sons, Bertold, Herman, and Charles Sr. fixed the broken penstock and operated the Zedler Mill.⁵⁴

Once the penstock was rebuilt, the mill funneled water to Luling via water mains.⁵⁵ Previously, the Luling Manufacturing Company Oil Mill had relied on a well, water tanks, and hydraulic hoses and pumps to operate the facility.⁵⁶ By 1891, the Zedler Mill provided "city water" to the oil mill via a network of underground pipes, ranging from 2 to 8 inches in diameter. The Luling Oil Mill and Cotton Gin, previously the Luling Manufacturing Company Oil Mill, abandoned their well, opting instead for steam power the Zedler Mill generated.⁵⁷

Zedler sons Herman and Charles Sr. became partners in the family business in the early 1890s, around when son Bertold left Luling to manage his own cotton gin and grist mill along the San Marcos River at Ottine, to the southeast, in Gonzales County. As operations continued at the Zedler Mill, cotton staged for processing was always in the gin yard. Demand for

⁴⁴ Anonymous, "The Zedler Family," 8; Anonymous, *Meriwether and Hardeman Mill*, n.d., Texas Historical Commission, Austin; Zedler, 209.

⁴⁵ This given name appears as Harman in some records.

⁴⁶ Anonymous, "The Zedler Family," 8; Zedler, 209.

⁴⁷ Federal Emergency Management Agency, December 14, 2016), 4; Hulse, "Why Here? Why Now?"; Latoya N. Leger, "Section 106 Consultation, PA-06-TX-4245-PW-00251(0)" (Austin, Texas).

⁴⁸ Anonymous, "The Zedler Family," 8; Zedler, 209.

⁴⁹ Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1890.

⁵⁰ *Galveston Daily News*, "The State Press," December 1, 1889, 6.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture*, The United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), 43, 46.

⁵² U.S. Department of the Interior, *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture*, 43.

⁵³ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture*, 385.

⁵⁴ Anonymous, "The Zedler Family," 8–9.

⁵⁵ Zedler, 209.

⁵⁶ Sanborn Map Company (1885).

⁵⁷ Sanborn Map Company (1891).

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their ginning services was high, as the surrounding farms were particularly productive.⁵⁸ The cotton gin processed 30 to 40 bales per day, and the water works pumped one million gallons to Luling each day.⁵⁹ By 1891, the four acres had increased in value to \$6,000.⁶⁰ The Zedlers continued to increase their wealth and by 1893, the family had acquired an additional 3 acres, in the patriarch's name, and the property valued swelled to \$8,000.⁶¹ In 1894, the Zedler sons successfully provided hydropower to Luling.

In Cuero, in consecutive years, Zedler received two more patents for his inventions. The first, an apparatus for the treatment of cotton he published alone in 1894.⁶² The second, a cotton elevator and distributor, was published in collaboration with a P. L. Ward, a farmer in Clinton, DeWitt County, in 1895.⁶³ Zedler maintained professional and personal connections with DeWitt and Gonzales Counties for the rest of his life.

In October 1896, with Zedler back in Luling, the family expanded the business with a new steam-powered gin in eastern Luling.⁶⁴ By this time, the other cotton gin in town at the Luling Oil Mill had ceased operation.⁶⁵ As the new facility neared completion in March 1897 a newspaper report proclaimed, "Luling is watching with much interest as it knows the mill will bring thousands to the little city that has heretofore sought other markets."⁶⁶ The new facility, conveniently along the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad, was dedicated to cotton ginning and baling. The Zedlers continued to gin cotton and mill corn out of the two-story gin house without electricity, despite the fact that the dam provided power to Luling.⁶⁷ With the operation doing well patriarch Fritz and wife Louise Zedler designed a house positioned on a mild rise north of the millhouse and on the north side of Laurel Street, completed in 1900 (Resource 11A).⁶⁸

Cotton continued to be the most important crop in Texas and in Luling, and Zedler's milling experience benefitted other cotton ventures in the town. At the turn of the twentieth century, land cultivated in corn was decreasing. Between 1890 and 1900 corn went from 79 percent of all cereals farmed in Texas to 72.4 percent of cereals.⁶⁹ In Caldwell County, land cultivated in corn increased slightly from 20,404 acres to 33,220 acres, but this jump was small compared to that for cotton, which ballooned from 36,403 to 90,164 acres in the span of 10 years.⁷⁰ The Zedlers' role in Luling's commerce expanded beyond milling, power, and water. In 1901, Zedler was elected to the board of directors for another cotton oil mill in Luling.⁷¹ The Zedlers also grew row crops, likely corn and cotton, on their farmland across the San Marcos River from the mill in Guadalupe County.⁷²

The Sanborn Map Company first depicted the complex in 1902, when the Zedler Mill processed cotton and grist (Figure 1). The property featured:

⁵⁸ Zedler, 209.

⁵⁹ *Galveston Daily News*, "Highest State Courts: Synopses of Judicial Decisions Rendered," December 16, 1892, 1.

⁶⁰ Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1891, 1892.

⁶¹ Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1893.

⁶² Friedrich Zedler, Apparatus for the Treatment of Cotton, Patent No. 520,285, filed May 22 1894.

⁶³ DeWitt County Tax Collector and Assessor, Ad Valorem Tax Rolls (Manuscript), 1891; Friedrich Zedler and Perry L. Ward, Cotton Elevator and Distributor, Patent No. 539,325, filed May 14 1895.

⁶⁴ *Shiner Gazette*, "Gulf Coast News," October 21, 1896, 7.

⁶⁵ Sanborn Map Company (1896).

⁶⁶ *Houston Daily Post*, "Luling Locals: Zedler Mill is Near Completion," March 20, 1897, 2.

⁶⁷ Hulse, "Why Here? Why Now?"; Sanborn Map Company (1902).

⁶⁸ Anonymous, "The Zedler Family," 11.

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Agriculture*, Vol. VI, Part II, Crops and Irrigation, Census Reports (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 68.

⁷⁰ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Agriculture*, Vol. VI, Part II, Crops and Irrigation, 184, 434.

⁷¹ *Lockhart Daily Post*, "Luling Locals," April 16, 1901, 1.

⁷² *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, "Negro Boy Bitten by Supposed Mad Dog," August 10, 1924, 6.

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- A two-story, five-room gin house with two Murray gins;
- A cotton seed shed east of the millhouse;
- A city water works pumping station south of the millhouse at the river;
- A repair shop east of the millhouse at the river; and
- An office building with covered drive (Resource 4) north of the millhouse with a double hydrant adjacent to the south.

A covered wagon loading platform separated the cotton seed shed from the gin house. The millhouse had a hydrant and hose in the northernmost room, and a ca. 1899 F. H. Lummus Sons Company cotton press in the room to the south that produced rectangular cotton bales. The revolving double-box press was positioned on a circular turntable/platform from which lint was manually raked into the press box (Figure 2).⁷³ The central room, the gin house, was two stories in height and had two hydrants, one on each floor, and four skylights in the top story. South of the gin house was a covered drive, and the southernmost room was two stories in height and of unknown use. The millhouse had a wood-shingle roof, and the river powered the operation.⁷⁴

In the early twentieth century, the Zedler gins continued processing cotton from other precincts, but Luling was potentially losing its status as a regional cotton ginning center, with cotton gins established in nearby Shiner, Gonzales, Seguin, and Lockhart by 1900.⁷⁵ With growing competition, Luling experienced underperformance in its cotton yields. In 1903 Luling processed and shipped \$147,650 worth of cotton bales across the United States and to England, but in 1904 earned only \$114,750.⁷⁶ Cotton bale receipts in Luling were down from 8,644 in 1902 to 2,953 in 1904.⁷⁷

Between 1899 and 1904, Zedler owned 10 acres valued at \$16,000. After the apparent crash of the cotton industry, he owned 4 acres out of the Morris Survey valued at \$1,000 from 1905 to 1907. During the same period, sons Charles Sr. and Herman did not own land individually, but jointly possessed a 2-acre parcel valued at \$6,000 and a 4-acre parcel valued at \$7,000.⁷⁸ Between 1902 and 1907 (Figure 3), expansion included:

- A hydrant in the press room (the hydrant in the northernmost room had been removed);
- A corn mill in the room which was previously the southernmost room;
- An eastern wing with, west to east:
- A single-story, 180-horsepower engine room;
- Four cylindrical iron corn bins along the exterior of the northern façade of the engine room;
- A room with two horizontal steam boilers;
- A covered porch on the southern façade of the steam boiler room, just north of the repair shop; and
- An exterior iron chimney;
- A single-story room south of the corn mill room with a fire pump in the northwest corner; and
- An electric light station in the southernmost room of the millhouse.⁷⁹

The Zedler brothers upgraded and improved the property as their business prospered. In 1907, sons Herman and Charles Sr. took possession of the Luling Electric, Light, and Power Company. By this time, the operation was known as the H. and C. Zedler Cotton Gin and Grist Mill. Remembering the 1888 fire, Charles Sr. installed a fire alarm system with the

⁷³ Karen Gerhardt Britton, *Bale O' Cotton: The Mechanical Art of Cotton Ginning*, Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 73–74.

⁷⁴ Sanborn Map Company (1902).

⁷⁵ *Lockhart Daily Post*, "The Bond Issue," February 1, 1904, 1; Sanborn Map Company (1885, 1888, 1891, 1900).

⁷⁶ *Lockhart Daily Post*, "The Bond Issue," 1.

⁷⁷ *Lockhart Daily Post*, "Luling Cotton Receipts," February 2, 1904, 2.

⁷⁸ Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904.

⁷⁹ Sanborn Map Company (1902, 1907).

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control board mounted in his home, purportedly the first of its kind in the United States. He had a house constructed on the property west of the millhouse between 1902 and 1907.⁸⁰ Charles Sr. employed son Paul at the grist and cotton gins while the Zedler patriarch Fritz worked as a farmer, likely assisting at the mill from time to time.⁸¹ Even as cotton markets fluctuated, the Zedler brothers' business flourished. In 1907, Charles Sr. owned lots in Luling valued at \$400, plus manufacturing and machinery valued at \$2,150.⁸² In 1908 and 1909, brothers Charles Sr. and Herman jointly owned 6 acres with the mill valued at \$16,000, plus the company, valued at \$1,200.⁸³ In 1910, the company's valued had dropped to \$12,000, and the brothers also owned the Luling Water Works, valued at \$16,000.⁸⁴

Despite continued decreases in local corn cultivation, the Zedlers continued to operate their grist mill. By 1910, 80 to 90 percent of Caldwell County land was under cultivation.⁸⁵ Land in corn decreased to 29,071 acres. Land in cotton continued to increase and was up to 112,847 acres.⁸⁶ This trend was in line with state reports. Texas had experienced an increase in land in cotton, reporting almost 10 million acres, a jump of 42.7 percent in 10 years.⁸⁷ As Charles Sr. and Herman operated the two Zedler cotton gin properties in Luling, their 70-year-old father still worked at the family grist mill.⁸⁸

Charles Sr. and Herman invested in expansion of the operation's capabilities while they continued to provide milling services. With continued emphasis on providing hydropower to Luling, which by now relied on the mill as the town's power source, the Zedlers constructed a concrete dam (Resources 2A and 2B) in 1914 to replace the wood crib dam.⁸⁹ Construction of the concrete dam occurred shortly after Portland cement became widely used in southeastern Texas in about 1910.⁹⁰

Additions between 1912 (Figure 4) and 1921 (Figure 5) included:

- Steam and oil engines with up to 300-horsepower even when the river was flooded;
- A second story above the cotton press room of the millhouse;
- A second press at the northern end of the millhouse;
- A grain warehouse extension on the western façade of the millhouse;
- A flour warehouse appended to the western façade of the millhouse;
- A brick smokestack (Resource 1B) replaced an iron chimney on the eastern side of the millhouse;
- An extension to the Charles Sr. and Charlotte Zedler family home on the western façade;
- A shed (Resource 8) 50 feet west of the Charles Sr. and Charlotte Zedler family home;
- An automotive shop addition on the western façade of the office building; and
- A platform on the northern end of the millhouse.⁹¹

⁸⁰ Sanborn Map Company (1902, 1907).

⁸¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Inhabitants, Precinct 2, Caldwell County, Population Schedule, 1920 (Manuscript), Family Search.

⁸² Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1907.

⁸³ Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1908, 1909.

⁸⁴ Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1910.

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, *Agriculture, Reports by States, Nebraska to Wyoming*, Vol. VII, Thirteenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 612.

⁸⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, *Agriculture, Reports by States, Nebraska to Wyoming*, Vol. VII, 681.

⁸⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, *Agriculture, Reports by States, Nebraska to Wyoming*, Vol. VII, 626.

⁸⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, 1910.

⁸⁹ Zedler, 209.

⁹⁰ Watson Pfiesser, 10.

⁹¹ Sanborn Map Company (1921); Zedler, 209.

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Through 1917, the values of the agricultural processing and water works complex held steady, but the power company's value declined to \$2,000.⁹² In 1919, both the Luling Electric, Light, and Power Company and the Luling Water Works were no longer part of the Zedlers holdings; and the value of their 6-acre property held steady at \$16,000.⁹³ This is likely a direct result of artesian wells constructed in Luling in 1919, that the Central Power and Light Company owned and operated.⁹⁴ In 1921, the 6-acre property was valued at \$18,000.⁹⁵ Between 1921 and 1929, the Luling Water Works pump house at Zedler Mill ceased operation, but the building remained intact. Shortly after, power produced at Zedler Mill, which had been provided directly to Luling, was sold to the intermediary Central Power and Light Company, which then sold the power to the community.⁹⁶

Ownership and management of Luling's water supply was typical of that across the United States, shifting from private to public ownership. Through the late nineteenth century, private companies operated the majority of water works, delivering water to local residents. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the national trend moved to public ownership of municipal water works.⁹⁷ Increased contract, sometimes litigation, and negotiation costs encouraged the water works municipalization movement between 1880 and 1930.⁹⁸ Before its closure, the Luling Water Works at the Zedler Mill was the primary source of local drinking and utility water, without them, the community's growth and development would have been stifled. In about 1919, the transition from private family to municipal ownership occurred in Luling, during the national municipalization period, when the plant could no longer sustain a water supply apace with Luling's population burst after the 1920s oil boom.⁹⁹

A Changing Economy, 1922–1964

The same year Charles Sr. took over the Zedler Mill, the discovery of oil near Luling changed the course of the local economy. In 1922,¹⁰⁰ Charles Sr. purchased all of his brother Herman's shares in the operation and became sole owner of the business.¹⁰¹ Just northwest of Luling, the new oilfield was immediately successful, producing 11,134,000 barrels in 1924.¹⁰² The population of Luling increased from 1,500 in 1925, to 6,000 in 1935, with to job opportunities related to the oil business attracting new residents.¹⁰³ By the late 1920s, pushed out by the livestock and oil industries, the cotton industry was declining locally.

The two seemingly disassociated industries—livestock and oil—were actually compatible in many ways. Livestock, particularly mules, pulled large equipment in the oil fields.¹⁰⁴ These draft animals necessitated enormous amounts of feed. Charles Sr. and sons, in response to the changing economy, once again expanded the operation with agricultural processing equipment for distinct types of feed production. The Zedlers milled feed for cattle, swine, and poultry, a corn-based mix of cereal grain. Feed was either collected by farmers at the mill or purchased from the Zedler store at their other

⁹² Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916.

⁹³ Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1919.

⁹⁴ Leger, "Section 106 Consultation, PA-06-TX-4245-PW-00251(0)," 4–5; Sanborn Map Company (1929); Watson Pfeiffer, 13.

⁹⁵ Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1921.

⁹⁶ Watson Pfeiffer, 13.

⁹⁷ Scott E. Masten, "Public Utility Ownership in Nineteenth-Century America: The "Aberrant" Case of Water," *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 27, No. 3 (October 2011): 605.

⁹⁸ Werner Troesken and Rick Geddes, "Municipalizing American Waterworks, 1897–1915," *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 19, No. 2 (October 2003): 374–75.

⁹⁹ Quigg and Myers, *San Marcos Riverbank and Zedler's Mill Stabilization*, 17.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Zedler recalls this transition occurred in 1917. However, Sanborn Map Company depictions show the transaction likely occurred after 1921, based on the name of the business shown the maps.

¹⁰¹ Hulse, "The Lifeblood of Luling"; "Capitalizing on the Need for Feed" (The Historical Marker Database, 2022).

¹⁰² Vivian Elizabeth Smyrl, "Luling Oilfield," in *Handbook of Texas Online* (Texas State Historical Association, 1995).

¹⁰³ Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, "Luling, Texas."

¹⁰⁴ Hulse, "Capitalizing on the Need for Feed."

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gin in east Luling.¹⁰⁵ Within the millhouse, the feed mill initially replaced a portion of the flour mill rooms; by 1929, the feed mill had completely replaced the flour mill.¹⁰⁶ The millhouse main floor was for mixing and bagging feeds, and storage bins and a milling separator were on the second floor.¹⁰⁷

The family operation and the associated farm across the San Marcos River in Guadalupe County employed not only three generations of Zedlers, but also workers of various ages, races, and ethnicities, all men. In 1900, the Zedlers' white, middle-aged employees may have included 32-year-old cotton ginner Albert Moore, 43-year-old mill laborer Robert Buchard, and cotton weighers 46-year-old Demott Day and 56-year-old John Orchard.¹⁰⁸ Subsequently, employees were not exclusively white and the mill's expanded capabilities necessitated additional occupations. In 1910, possible Zedler employees included Black grist mill laborers 34-year-old Dave Chambers and 38-year-old Wesley Clay; possible white employees were 34-year-old Ruby Smith and Buchard, now 52, as grist mill and cotton gin laborers.¹⁰⁹ In 1920, both Black and white employees worked as cotton gin and flour mill laborers, and some surely labored at the Zedlers' complex.¹¹⁰ In 1924, the Black Steve McKinney and his 20-year-old son lived on the Zedler farm.¹¹¹ In 1930, Charles Zedler employed Mexican-born 58-year-old farmhand Jesus Hernandez and 44-year-old farmer Pilar Santanna.¹¹² The mill had its own workers' union and was, at least for some time, the terminus of a federal postal route between Rancho in Gonzales County, and Luling.¹¹³ With employees residing in the vicinity, the mill complex was known as "a little community near Luling."¹¹⁴

Between 1921 and 1929 (Figure 6), the Zedlers expanded the operation. Additions included:

- A two-story stable (Resource 6) north of the Charles Sr. and Charlotte Zedler family home;
- A one-story smokehouse (Resource 7) north of the Charles Sr. and Charlotte Zedler family home;
- Conversion of the office and warehouse to a single warehouse room;
- Four fuel oil tanks on frame platforms to the southeast of the millhouse near the river;
- An automotive garage (Resource 3) east of the millhouse with attached hydrant;
- A single-story square outbuilding to the west of the millhouse;
- Expansion of the Charles Sr. and Charlotte Zedler family home on the northern and western façades;
- Expansion of the mill house's southern façade for a shop room and a larger engine room;
- Removal of the 8-inch water pipe between the pump house and Luling;
- Installation of two pipelines leading to fire hydrants; and
- Removal of the platform at the northern end of the millhouse.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁵ James Hulse, "Mixing to Match" (The Historical Marker Database, 2022); Sanborn Map Company (1921).

¹⁰⁶ Hulse, "Mixing to Match"; Sanborn Map Company (1929).

¹⁰⁷ Hulse, "Mixing to Match."

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Inhabitants, Precinct 2, Caldwell County, Population Schedule, 1900 (Manuscript), Family Search .

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Inhabitants, Precinct 2, Caldwell County, Population Schedule, 1910 (Manuscript), Family Search

¹¹⁰ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Inhabitants, Precinct 2, Caldwell County, Population Schedule, 1920 (Manuscript), Family Search.

¹¹¹ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, "Negro Boy Bitten by Supposed Mad Dog," 6; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Inhabitants, Precinct 2, Caldwell County, Population Schedule, 1930 (Manuscript), Family Search.

¹¹² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Inhabitants, Precinct 2, Caldwell County, Population Schedule, 1930 (Manuscript), Family Search.

¹¹³ *Galveston Daily News*, "Postal Matters," July 31, 1886, 1; *San Antonio Daily Express*, "Unions Will Meet," June 4, 1907, 7.

¹¹⁴ *Cuero Record*, "Fritz Zedler Dies in Luling Thursday," 7.

¹¹⁵ Sanborn Map Company, "Luling" (1921, 1929).

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Charles Sr. enacted operational and organizational changes at the complex in response to the changing economy of Luling and the region. Expansion of processing capabilities occurred partially in response to the faltering regional cotton crops that drought and pests had damaged.¹¹⁶ He brought sons Charles Jr. and Paul on as partners in the family business in 1930.¹¹⁷ Charles Sr. continued to expand feed processing operations as late as 1931.¹¹⁸ The family patriarch, Fritz Zedler, died in 1932.¹¹⁹ Until at least 1935, his property was typically valued at \$16,000.¹²⁰ He continued to expand the complex, but these improvements did little to raise the property's value.

Between 1929 and 1935 (Figure 7), the millhouse was expanded to include:

- A covered area north of the west wing;
- The addition of a room on the southern façade of the west wing;
- A water closet at the southeastern corner of the millhouse; and
- A threshing machine room, for removing grain seeds from stalks and husks, on the northeastern corner of the east wing.

The economic benefit of local oil fields to Luling wavered before World War II. Oil-related industries moved southeast to Corpus Christi, leaving Luling without a major employer. Around this time several railroads, including the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad, discontinued routes through Luling, stripping its status as a railroad crossroads.¹²¹ Luling issued a bond for improvements to the Zedler pump house and power plant in 1938. The bond may have funded construction of the late 1940s retaining wall on the east side of the San Marcos River at the Zedler Mill dam (Resource 2D).¹²²

From the early 1940s through World War II, Luling's population was in slow decline, but the economy remained steady with more than 150 businesses operating during this period.¹²³ The Zedler Mill no longer operated as the water works for Luling, but the family retained the contract to provide power to the city until about 1943 when the Lower Colorado River Authority became the local supplier.¹²⁴ Between 1951 and 1953, Paul Zedler, one of Charles and Charlotte Zedler's sons, became sole owner of the complex.¹²⁵ The population of Luling decreased through the 1950s and local farmers diversified their crops, many growing truck crops like watermelons and tomatoes.¹²⁶ Gradually, various operations ceased until the mill closed in 1964 (Figure 8).¹²⁷

Zedler Mill, 1964–2022

After the operation closed, few changes occurred at the property until 2007. Charles Sr. had been suffering from cardiovascular disease for approximately four years, which coincided with the 1964 closure.¹²⁸ He died in 1967 of heart failure. Son Paul owned the property until 1972 when he sold it to the Westbrook family who hosted events at the

¹¹⁶ Watson Pfieffer, 12.

¹¹⁷ Watson Pfieffer, 13; Zedler, 209.

¹¹⁸ Quigg and Myers, 16.

¹¹⁹ Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, "Frederick Zedler," in *Texas Death Index, 1903–2000* (Austin: State Registrar Office, September 15, 1932), Ancestry.

¹²⁰ Caldwell County Tax Collector and Assessor, 1922, 1925, 1930, 1935.

¹²¹ Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, "Luling"; Smyrl, "Luling."

¹²² Watson Pfieffer, 13.

¹²³ Smyrl, "Luling, Texas."

¹²⁴ Watson Pfieffer, 13.

¹²⁵ Watson Pfieffer, 13; Zedler, 209.

¹²⁶ Smyrl, "Luling, Texas."

¹²⁷ Caldwell County Historical Commission, "Markers in Caldwell County"; Watson Pfieffer, 13.

¹²⁸ Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, "Charles Zedler," in *Texas Deaths, 1890–1976* (Austin: State Registrar Office, March 17, 1967), File No. 14398, Ancestry.

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complex.¹²⁹ In 1980, the Charles Sr. and Charlotte Zedler family home burned and was not rebuilt.¹³⁰ The approximately 9.26-acre property was sold to the City of Luling in 2002 for development as a park, and in 2007 the City received a grant to restore and adaptively reuse the site as a location for historical interpretation and events.¹³¹ Between 2007 and 2012, many resources were restored, and new ones were constructed.¹³² In 2013, when the City began considering bank stabilization, an overall plan view (Figure 9) of the property and a plan and profile drawing (Figure 10) of the dam were developed.¹³³ Most recently, in about 2018, the bank of the San Marcos River has been reclaimed and reinforced with a retaining wall to protect the property from potential flooding.¹³⁴ Undated floor plans for the Fritz and Louise Zedler house and the millhouse were also developed (Figures 11–13).

Criterion A

The Zedler Mill Historic District is significant under Criterion A at the local level for its association with commercial and industrial development in Luling. The district is a concentration of agricultural processing resources and hydro-powered infrastructure that originated along the San Marcos River to utilize energy from the river flow to fuel a mill, other agricultural processing services, and electric power during the period of significance, 1888 to 1964, which applies to both areas of significance. This period begins with the construction date of the oldest extant resource and extends to the end of the property's functional lifespan.

Area of Significance: Commerce

The Zedler Mill Historic District is significant in the area of Commerce as a fundamental commercial enterprise that processed agricultural yields like corn, grains, and cotton harvested in the area surrounding Luling. The Zedlers, important intermediaries between farmers and the open market, were responsible for the processing, selling, and organizing transport of yields. The Zedler Mill was a commercial hub that served approximately 280 square miles surrounding Luling. The location of the mill had easy road access to an important connector highway, was adjacent to the San Marcos River, and worked in tandem with a second Zedler gin location on the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad. These three modes of transportation of goods to and from Luling were unique among similar mill facilities in nearby Gonzales, Lockhart, Sequin, and Shiner during the period of significance. Yields processed at the Zedler Mill, particularly cotton bales, were sold locally, nationally, and internationally, having been shipped as far away as England.

Because the Zedler family was responsive to changing economic conditions that affected their commercial enterprises, the mill flourished. Over time, the family improved the complex for commercially processing agricultural yields. The property evolved to accommodate more types of agricultural processing equipment concurrent with local economic change and population growth. The Zedlers' adaptability made their mill the longest-operating facility of its type in and around Luling during the period of significance. Despite damages from the many weather episodes it has endured, the Zedler Mill Historic District is the most intact example of a commercial and industrial complex from this period in Luling.

Area of Significance: Industry

The Zedler Mill Historic District is significant in the area of Industry as an essential industrial facility that delivered both water and electricity to the community. Daily, the Zedler Mill pumped 1 million gallons of freshwater from the San Marcos River throughout Luling. Once electrical production mechanisms were installed, the Zedler Mill supplied

¹²⁹ Watson Pfeiffer, 13.

¹³⁰ Watson Pfeiffer, 10.

¹³¹ Leger, "Section 106 Consultation, PA-06-TX-4245-PW-00251(0)," 4.

¹³² Google Earth Pro, Caldwell County, Texas (Aerial Image) (2008); Caldwell County, Texas (Aerial Image) (2011).

¹³³ Freese and Nichols.

¹³⁴ King.

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electricity to other industrial facilities in Luling. Later, the operators introduced changing technologies to the complex that supported a municipal utility. This innovation is representative of industrial development that occurred to support concurrent local population growth.

The Zedler Mill specialized in processing raw materials into intermediate goods, such as baled cotton, and finished products, like feed grains. The mill was an important industrial processing service for farmers' agricultural yields in and around Luling. The mill's equipment and processing techniques regulated pre-market product quality. With the equipment, the Zedlers were able to sustain their family-owned mill business when, increasingly, similar facilities were tending toward larger metropolitan areas with built-in transportation nodes. Equipment used in the milling processes during the period of significance remains, both in situ and staged, strengthening the historic district's integrity of materials, association, and feeling. These mechanical systems have the potential to educate visitors through interpretation.

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Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

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Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Geographical Data

Acreage of Property

8.6 acres

Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

	Latitude	Longitude
1	29.668602°	-97.650875°
2	29.668575°	-97.650677°
3	29.668386°	-97.650461°
4	29.667928°	-97.650505°
5	29.666626°	-97.650485°
6	29.666335°	-97.650798°
7	29.666098°	-97.651331°
8	29.666343°	-97.651825°
9	29.666678°	-97.652131°
10	29.667734°	-97.652389°
11	29.668060°	-97.652181°

Verbal Boundary Description

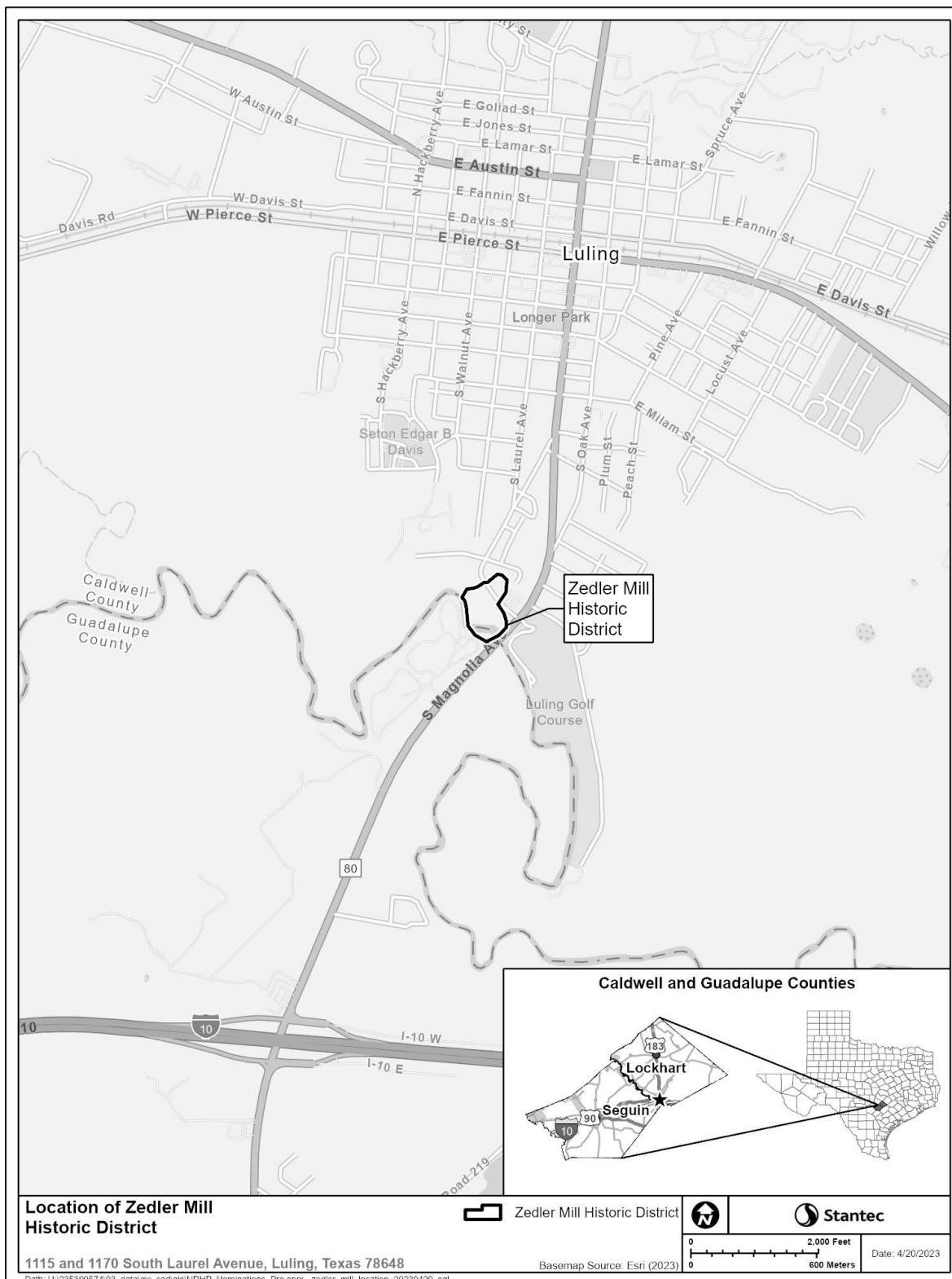
The district, on either side of South Laurel Avenue, encompasses two land parcels in Caldwell County and a sliver of the river's south bank in adjacent Guadalupe County totaling 8.6 acres (Maps 1 and 2). The City of Luling owns the entirety of these three parcels. Most of the district is on the 5.568-acre Parcel 24067 between the river and South Laurel Avenue. Approximately half of the dam and, on the south bank, the entirety of the spillway are in Guadalupe County, part of the 18.365-acre Parcel 132042. The Zedler house and garage are on the 1.343-acre Parcel 24604 on the north side of South Laurel Avenue. The City of Luling also owns the 2.03-acre Parcel 24066 that abuts the house/garage parcel's southeastern edges, with surface parking for the event center in about 2010, which is excluded from the district.

Boundary Justification

The 8.6-acre Zedler Mill Historic District boundary includes a cohesive and intact collection of 15 contributing resources that depict a family-run agricultural processing complex and hydroelectric source during the period of significance. The district includes the core resources that supported the property's commercial and industrial functions, and the patriarchal family home. Within the boundary are buildings, structures, and objects that correlate with the evolution of the property's use from 1888 to about 1964. The few modern intrusions are nonhistoric and noncontributing: the Zedler Mill Pavilion, an event center with a patio and amphitheater, two bridges, and a small privy. From almost every viewshed, the event center has a low-slung profile that landscaping screens. The many objects scattered throughout the district—large fragments of metal equipment, remnant concrete foundations, interpretive signs, and utilities—are visually unobtrusive. Outside the district boundary is the associated and city-owned parking lot, excluded because it has neither a contributing resource nor a landscape that evokes the historic-period setting. The 1928 Charles and Charlotte Zedler family home, to the north, is also excluded from the district; although associated with the district through kinship, it is privately owned and outside the scope of effort for this nomination.

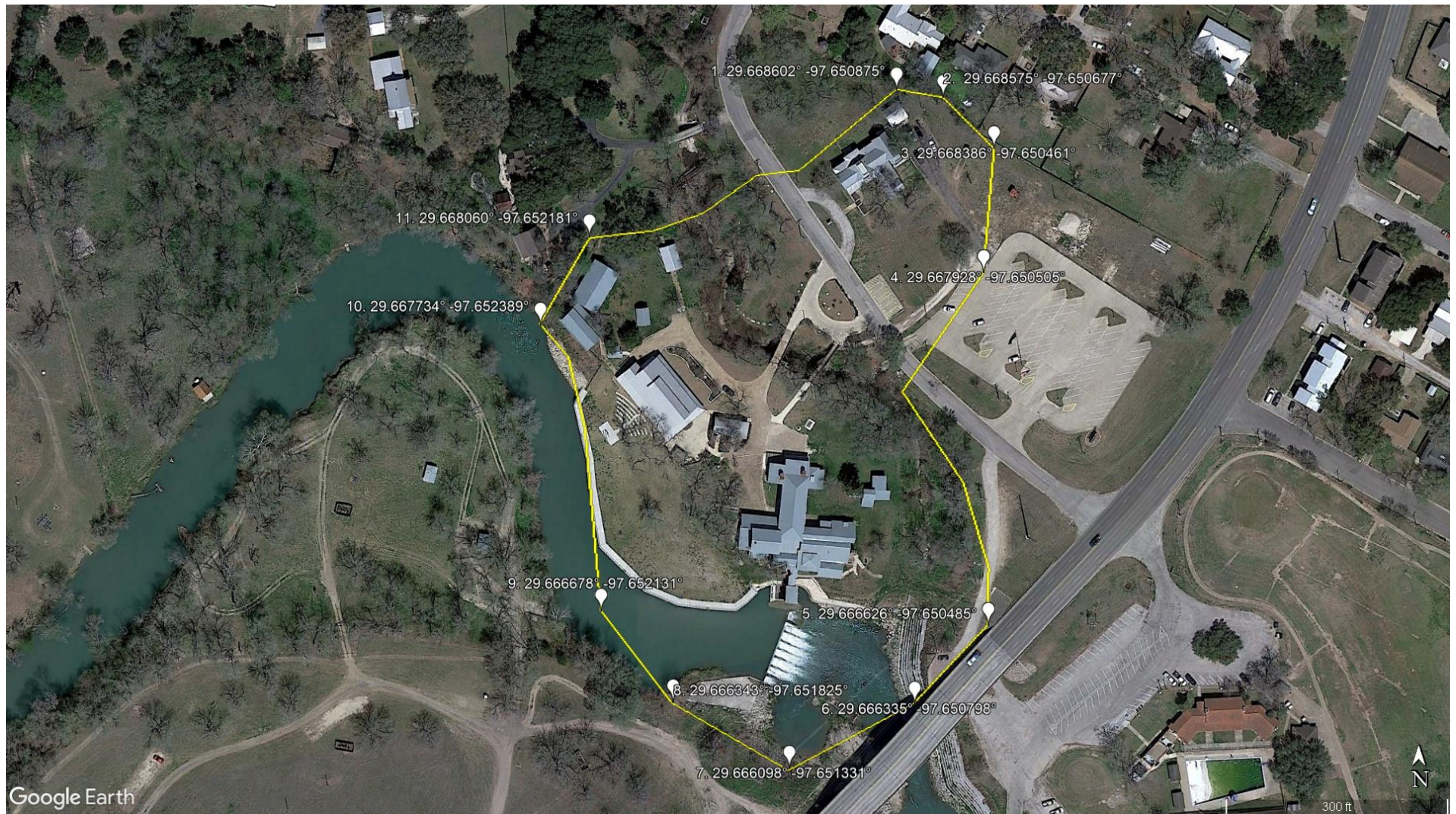
Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Location of Zedler Mill Historic District



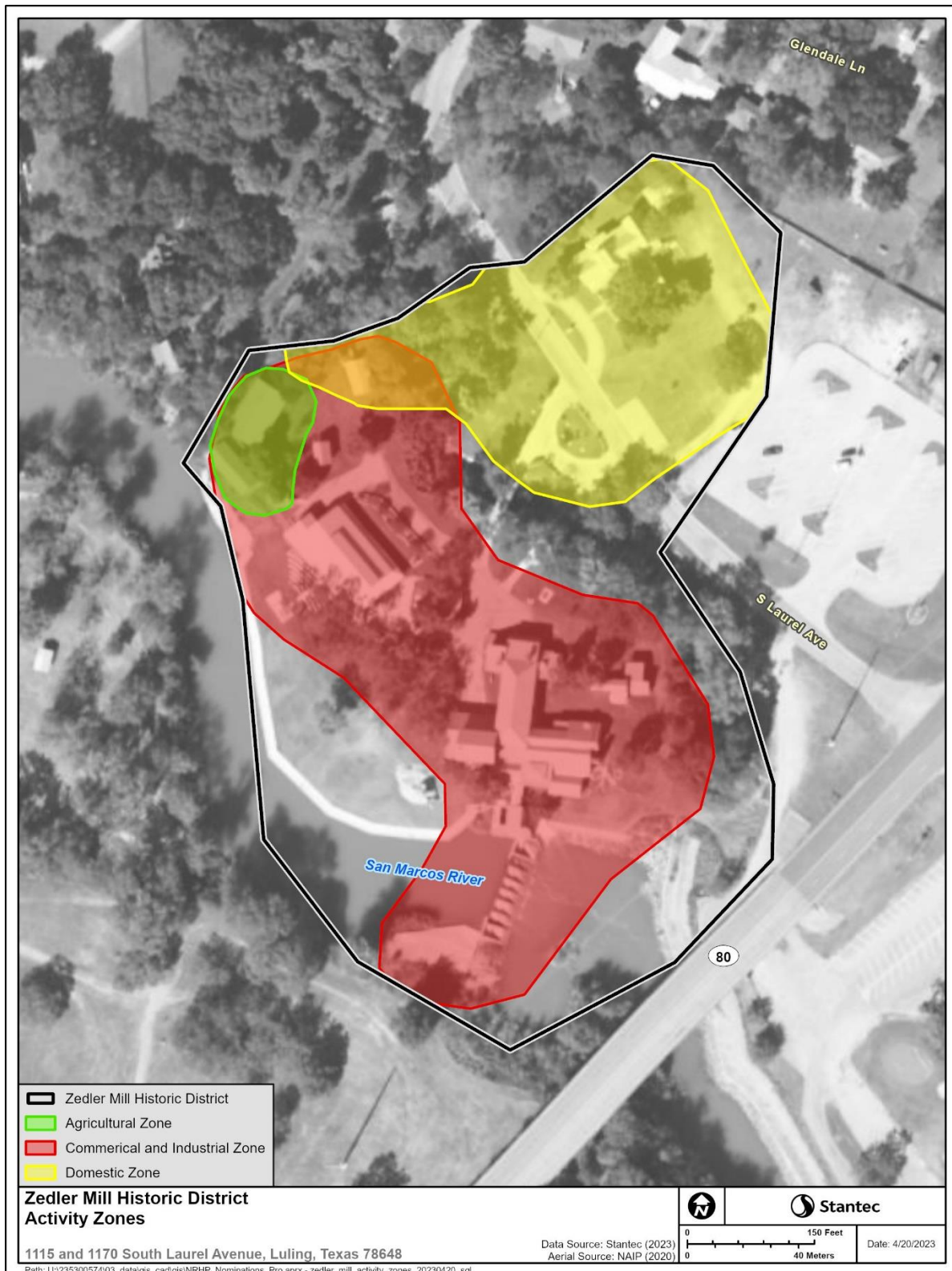
Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Boundary Map



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Activity Zones



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Directional Photograph Locations

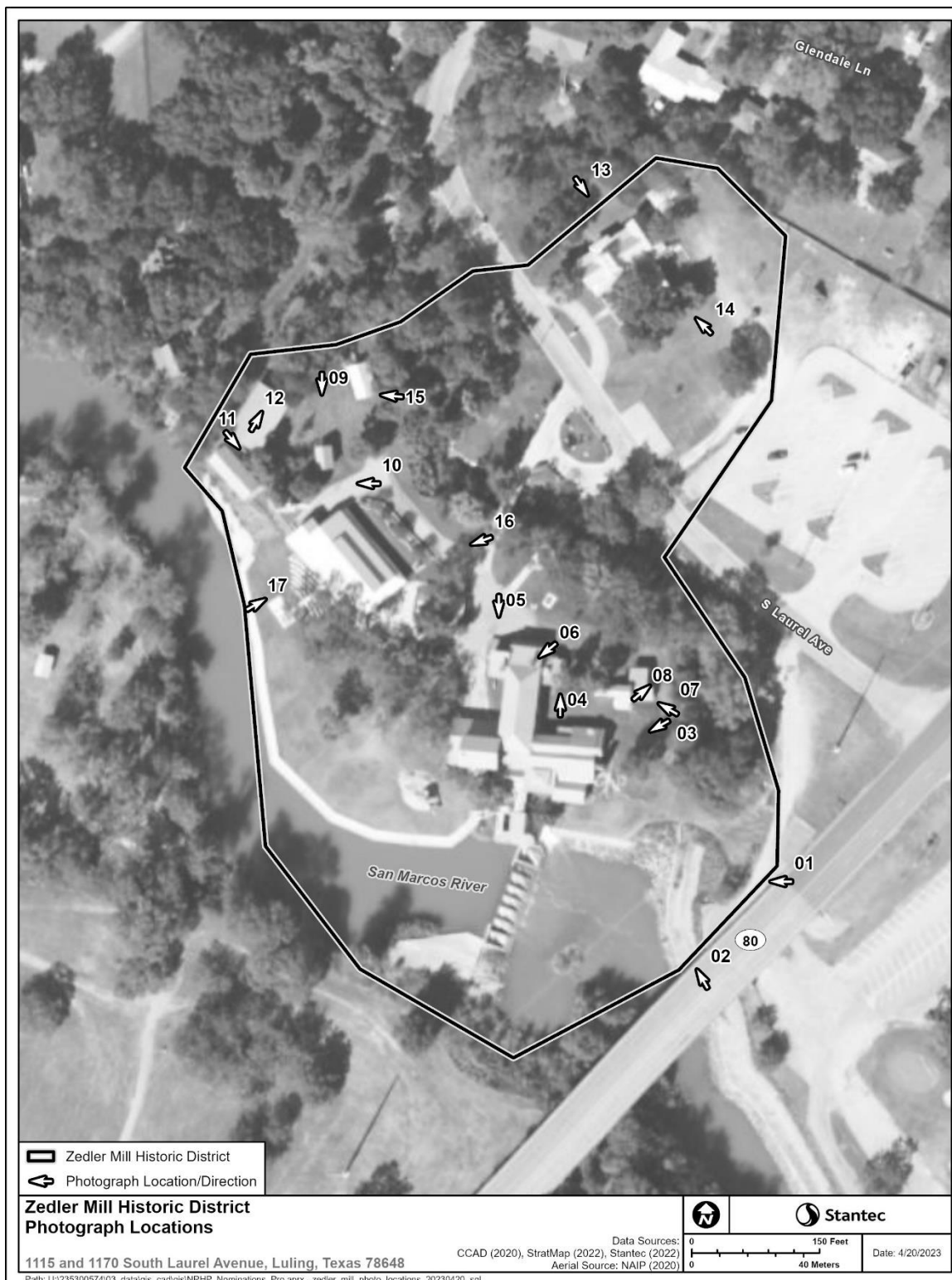
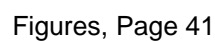
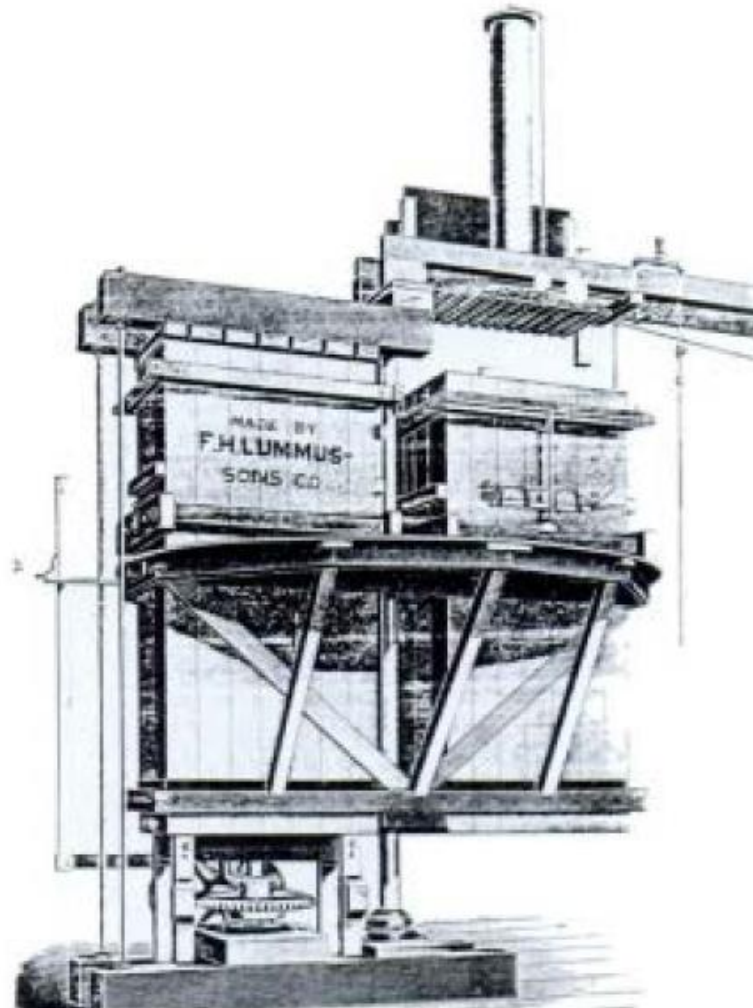


Figure 1. Sanborn Map Company depiction in January 1902.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Figure 2. A model of the Zedler Mill revolving double-box press from *Bale O' Cotton* by Diane Britton.



Revolving double box press, 24" x 54" x 10'; 5" diameter screw; steam tramper; box was made of seasoned white oak and straight-grain yellow pine. From F. H. Lummus Sons Co. Catalogue, 1899; courtesy Lummus Industries, Inc.

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Figure 3. Sanborn Map Company depiction in October 1907.

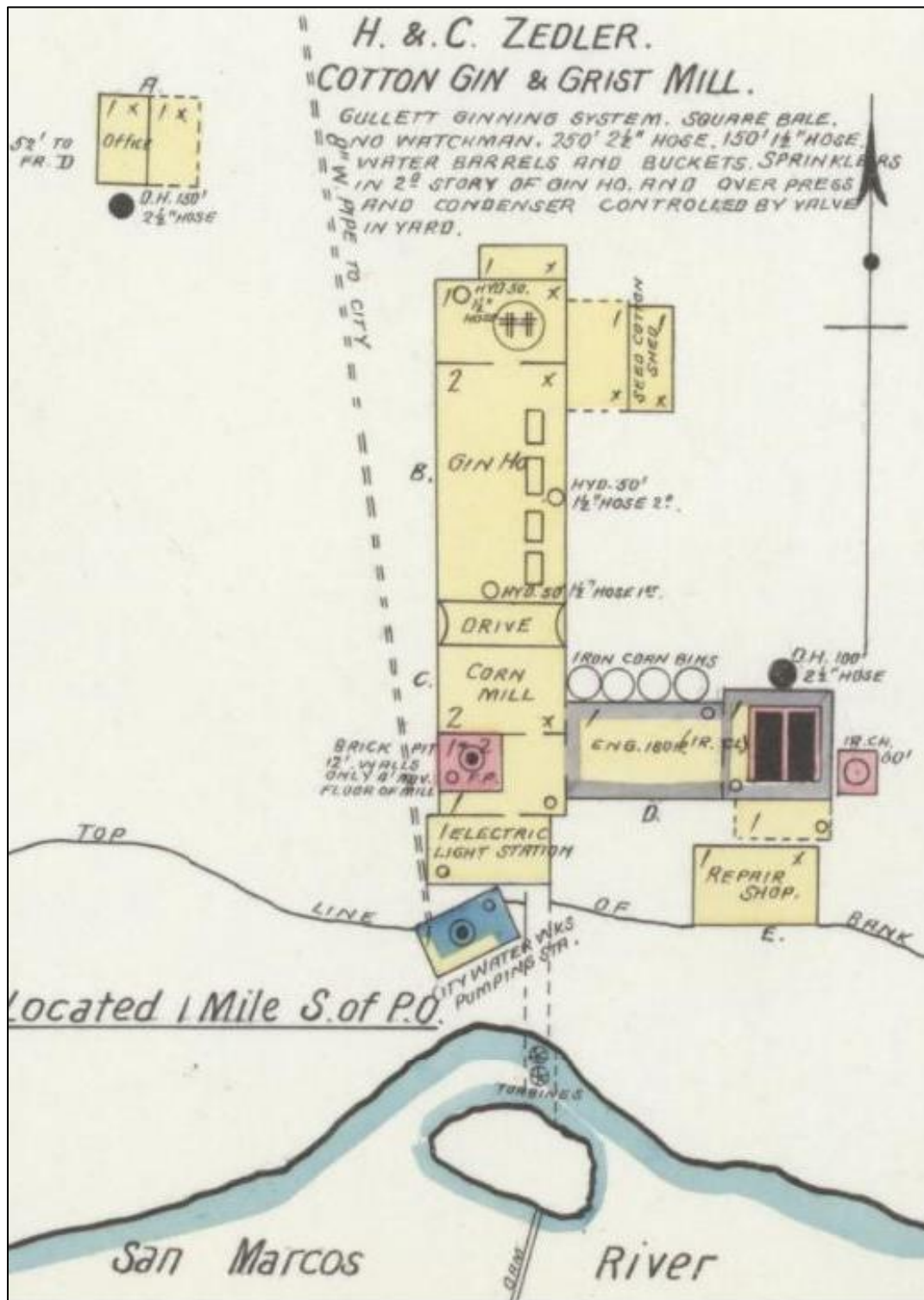


Figure 4. Sanborn Map Company depiction in May 1912.

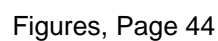
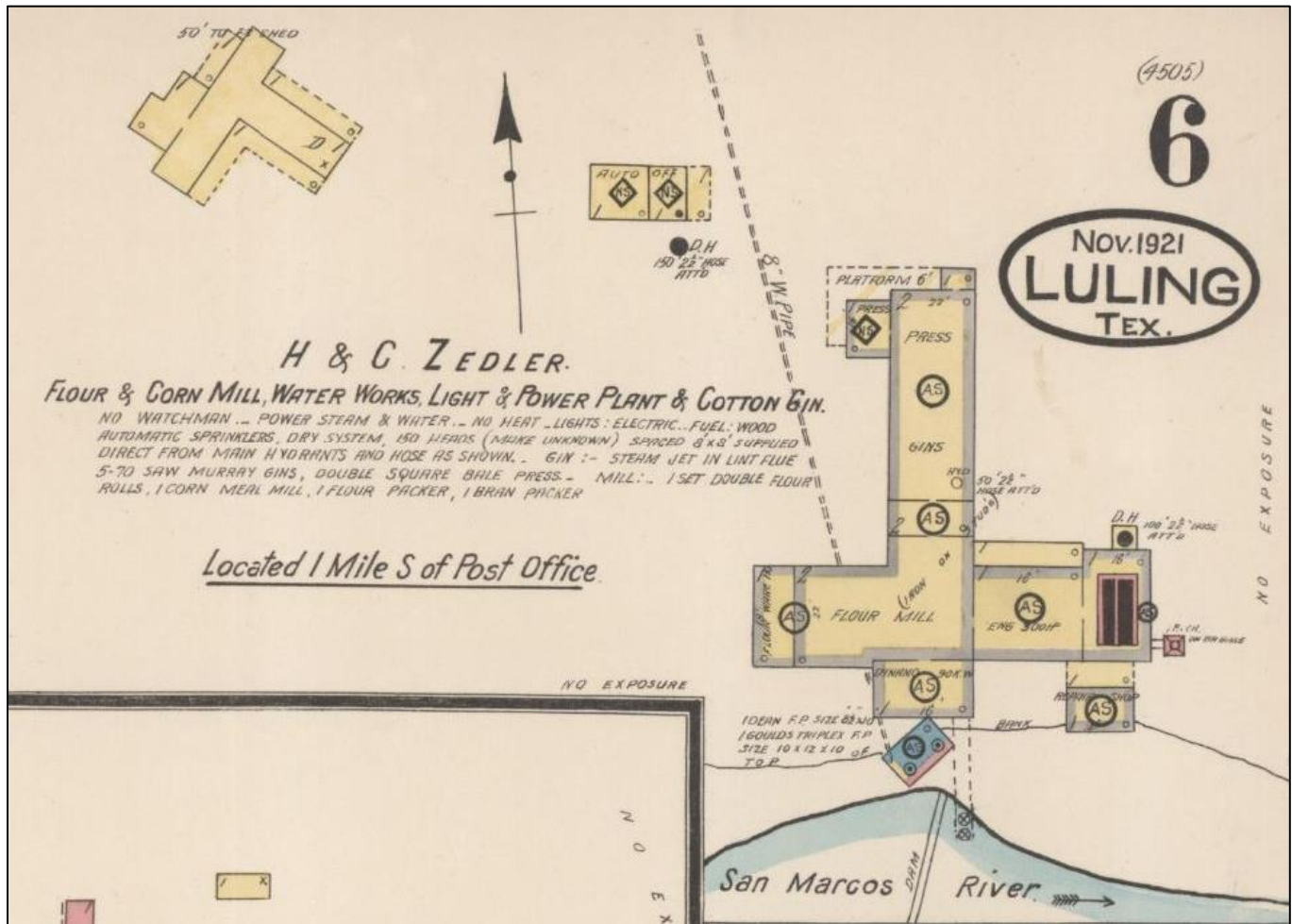
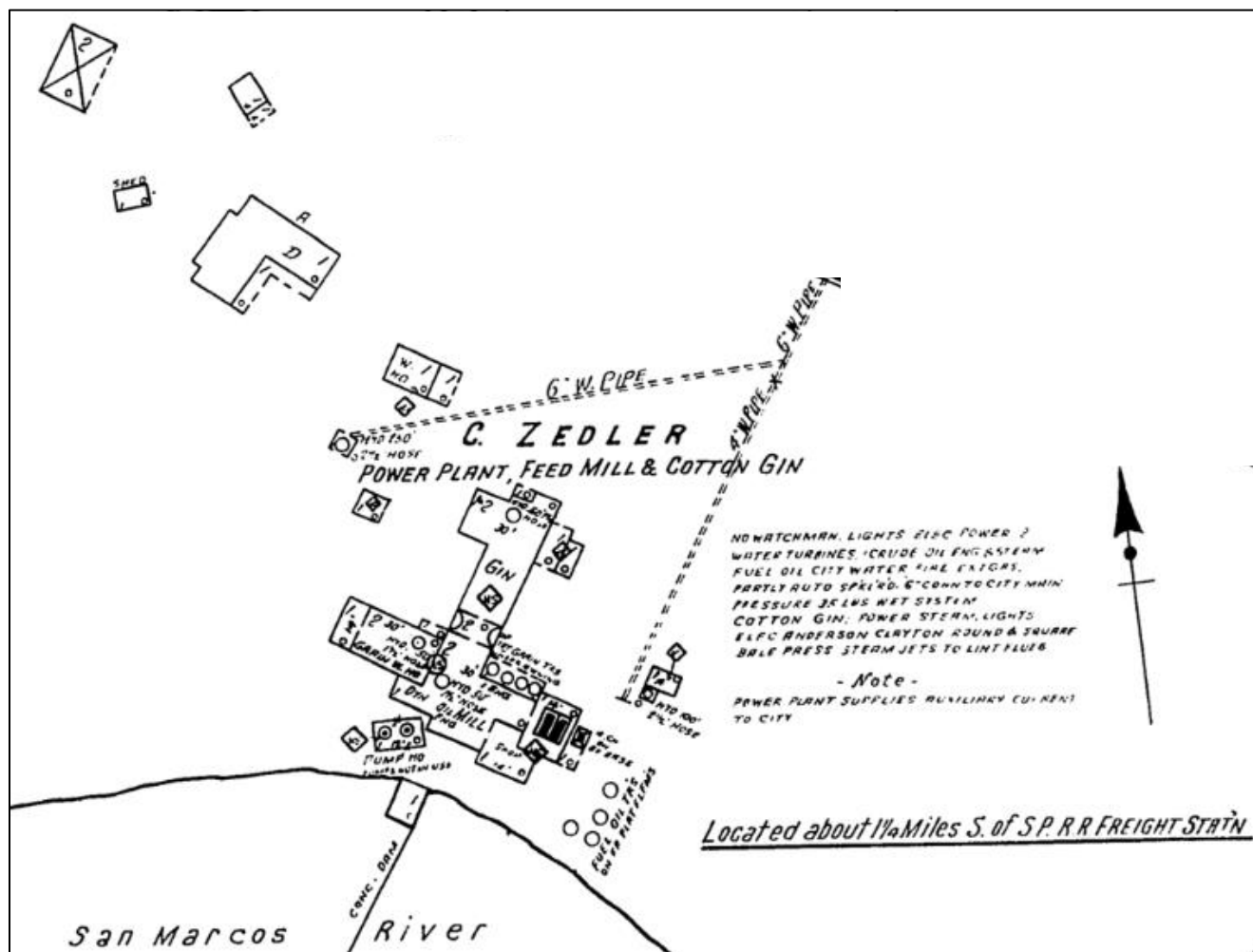


Figure 5. Sanborn Map Company depiction in November 1921.



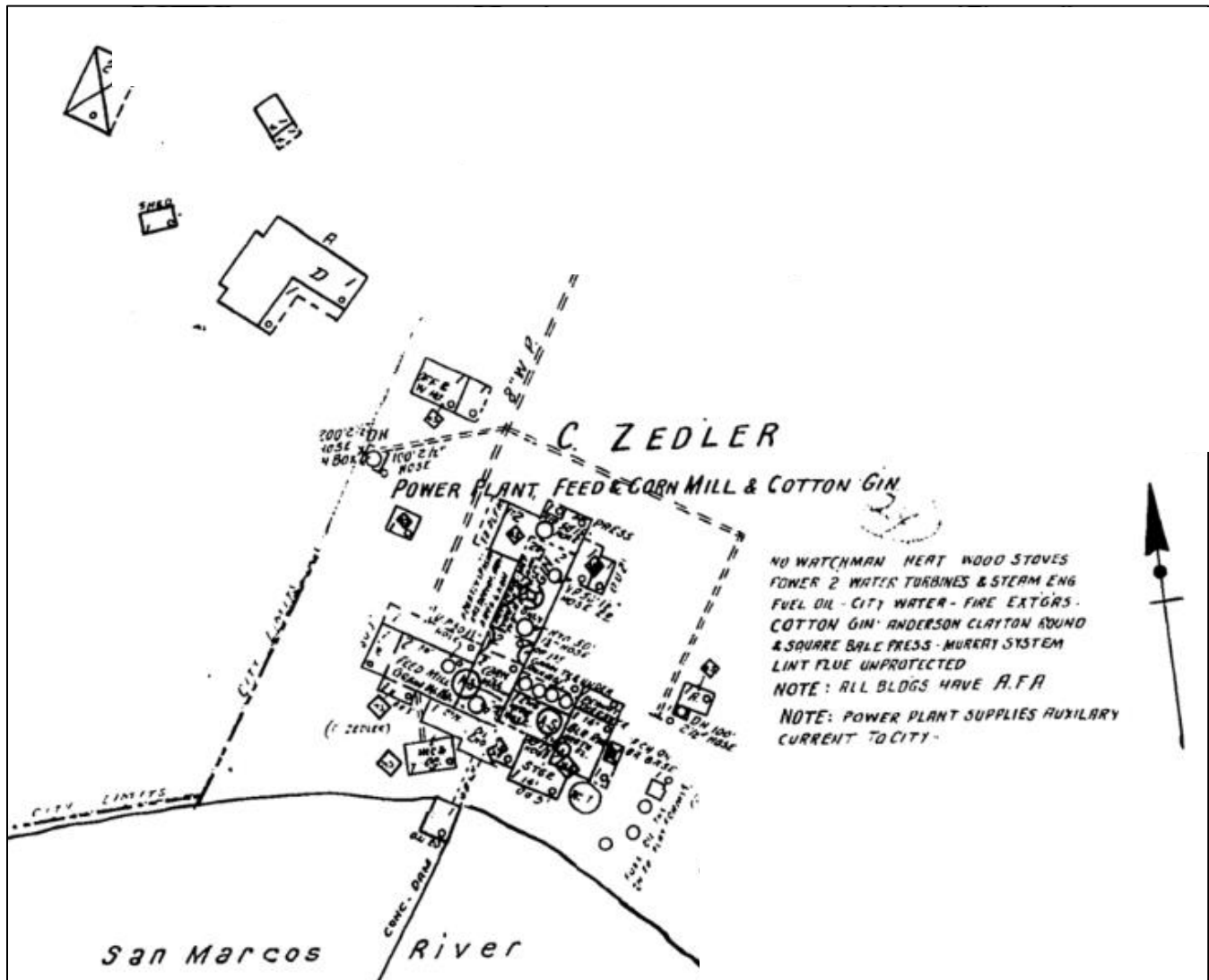
Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Figure 6. Sanborn Map Company depiction in April 1929.



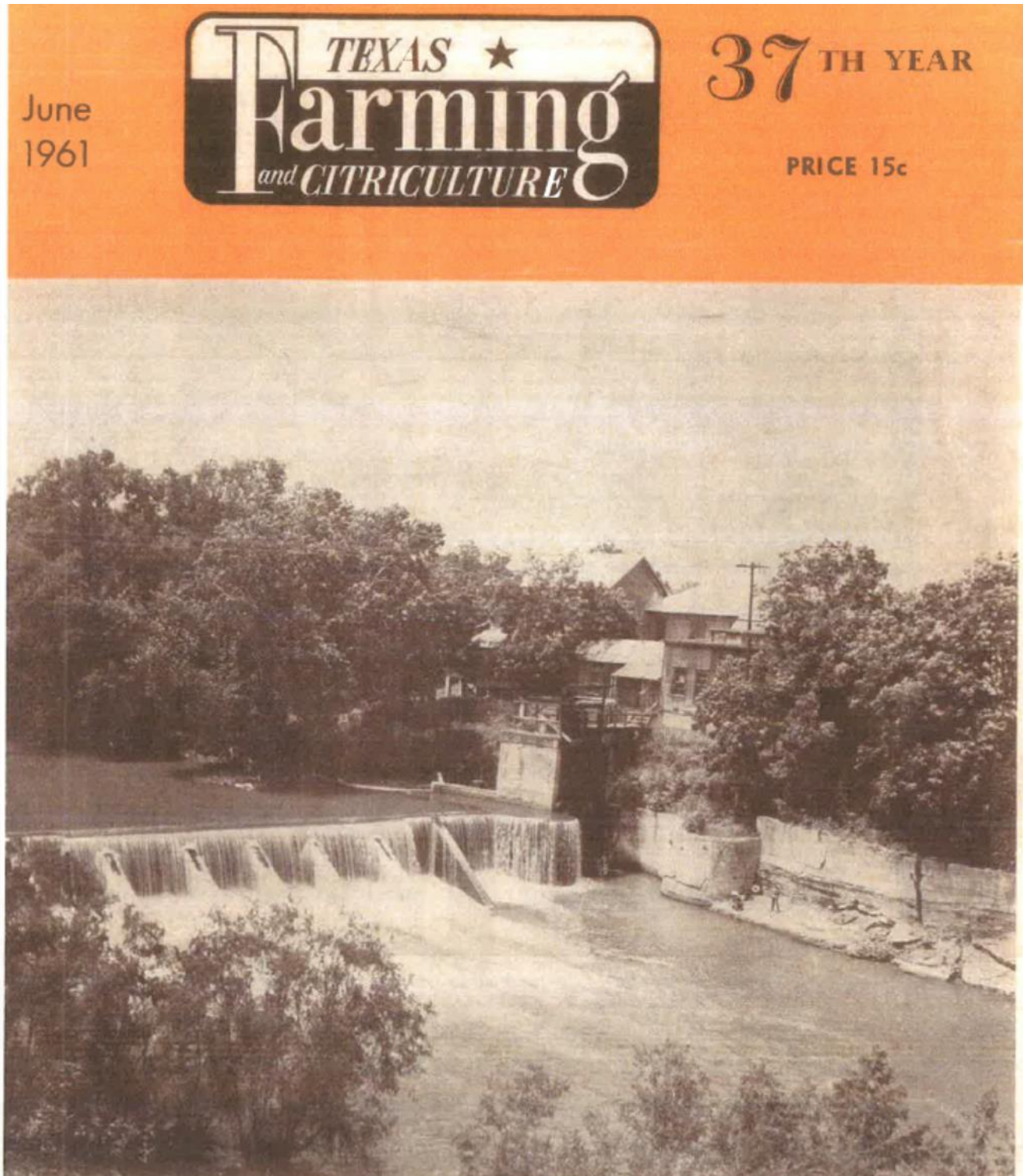
Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Figure 7. Sanborn Map Company depiction in November 1935.



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Figure 8. Zedler Mill, depicted on the cover of *Texas Farming and Citriculture*, June 1961, three years before its closure.



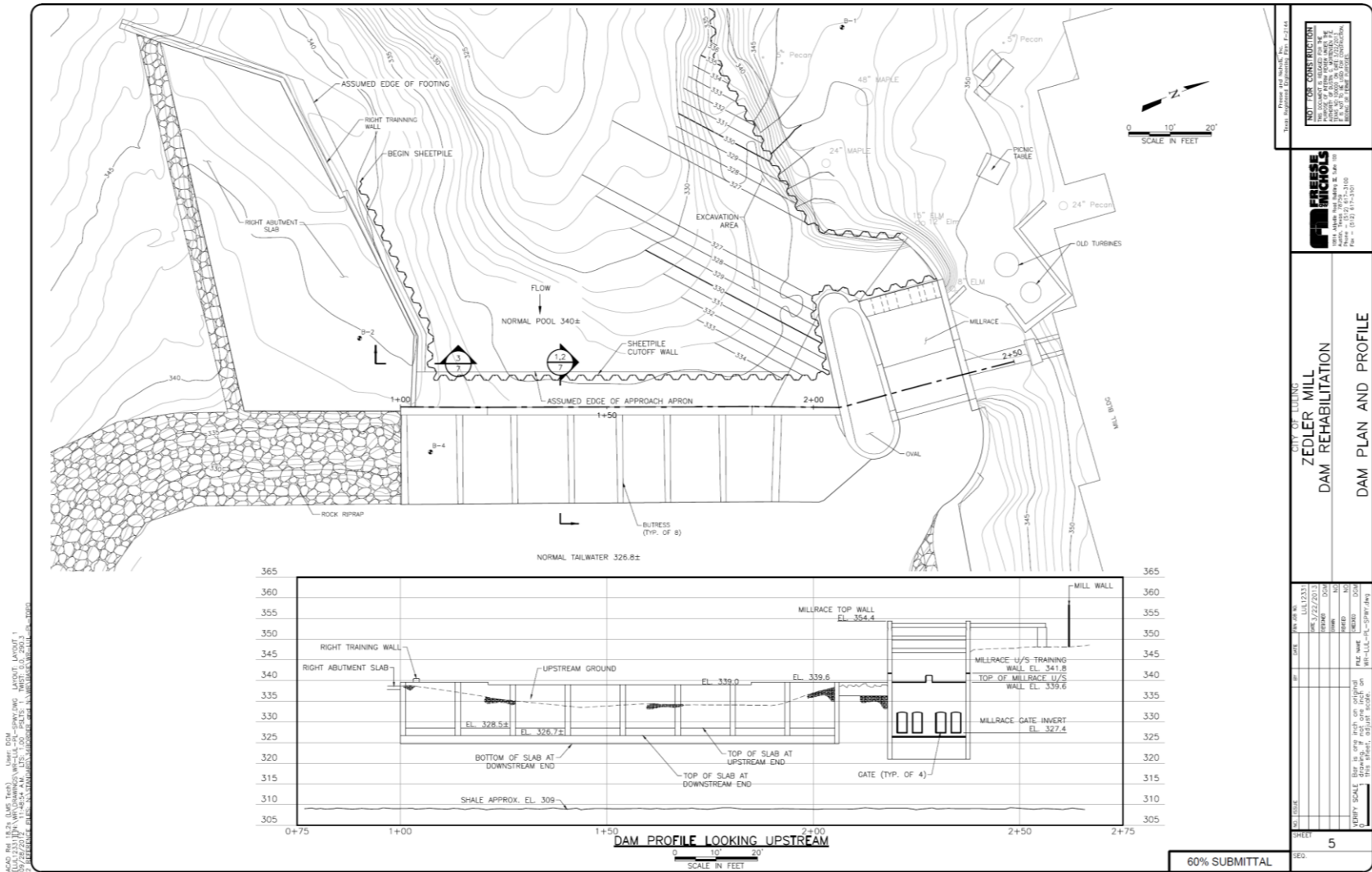
Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Figure 9. Zedler Mill overall plan view by Freese and Nichols, 2013.



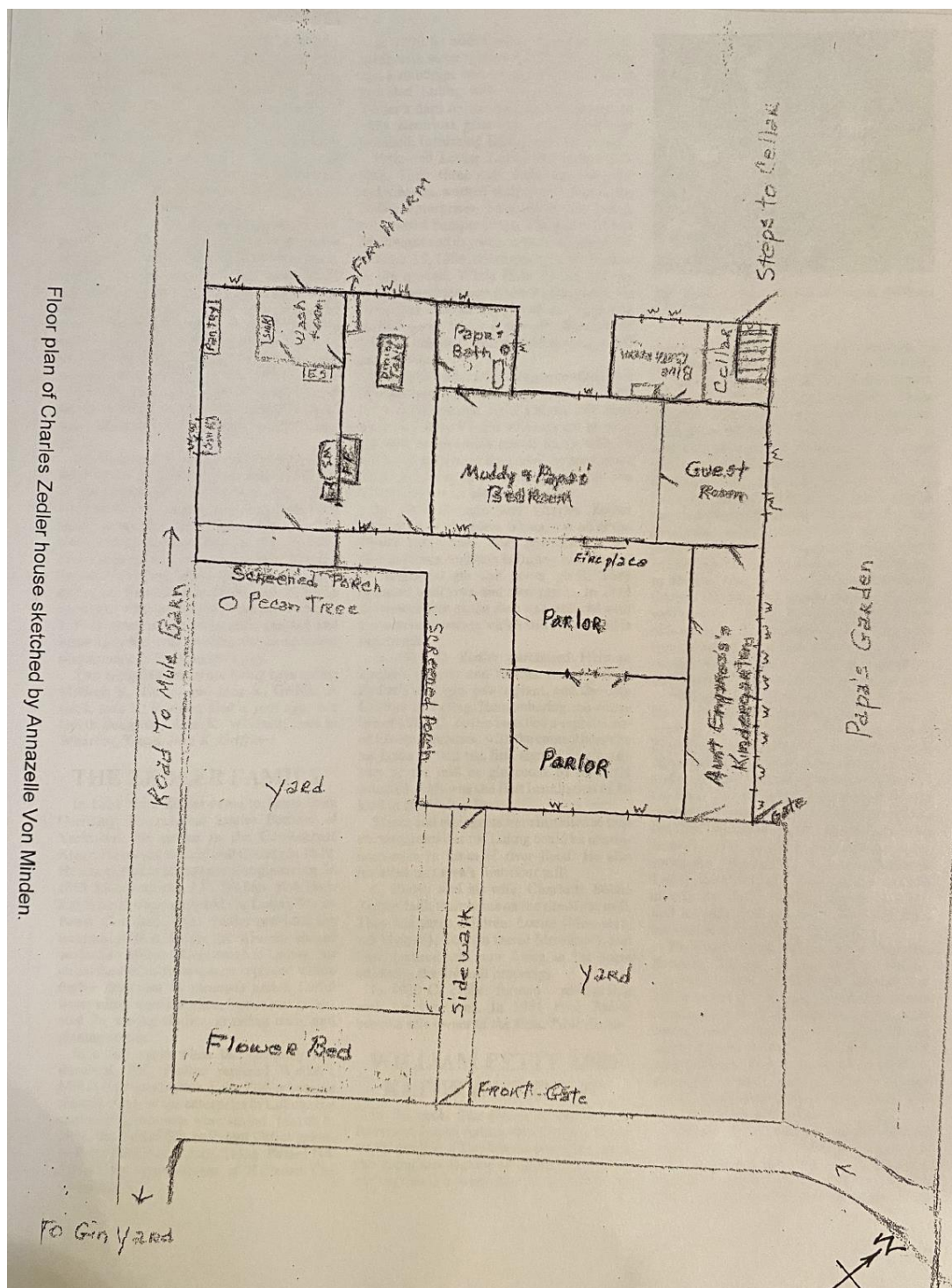
Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Figure 10. Zedler Mill dam plan and profile by Freese and Nichols, 2013



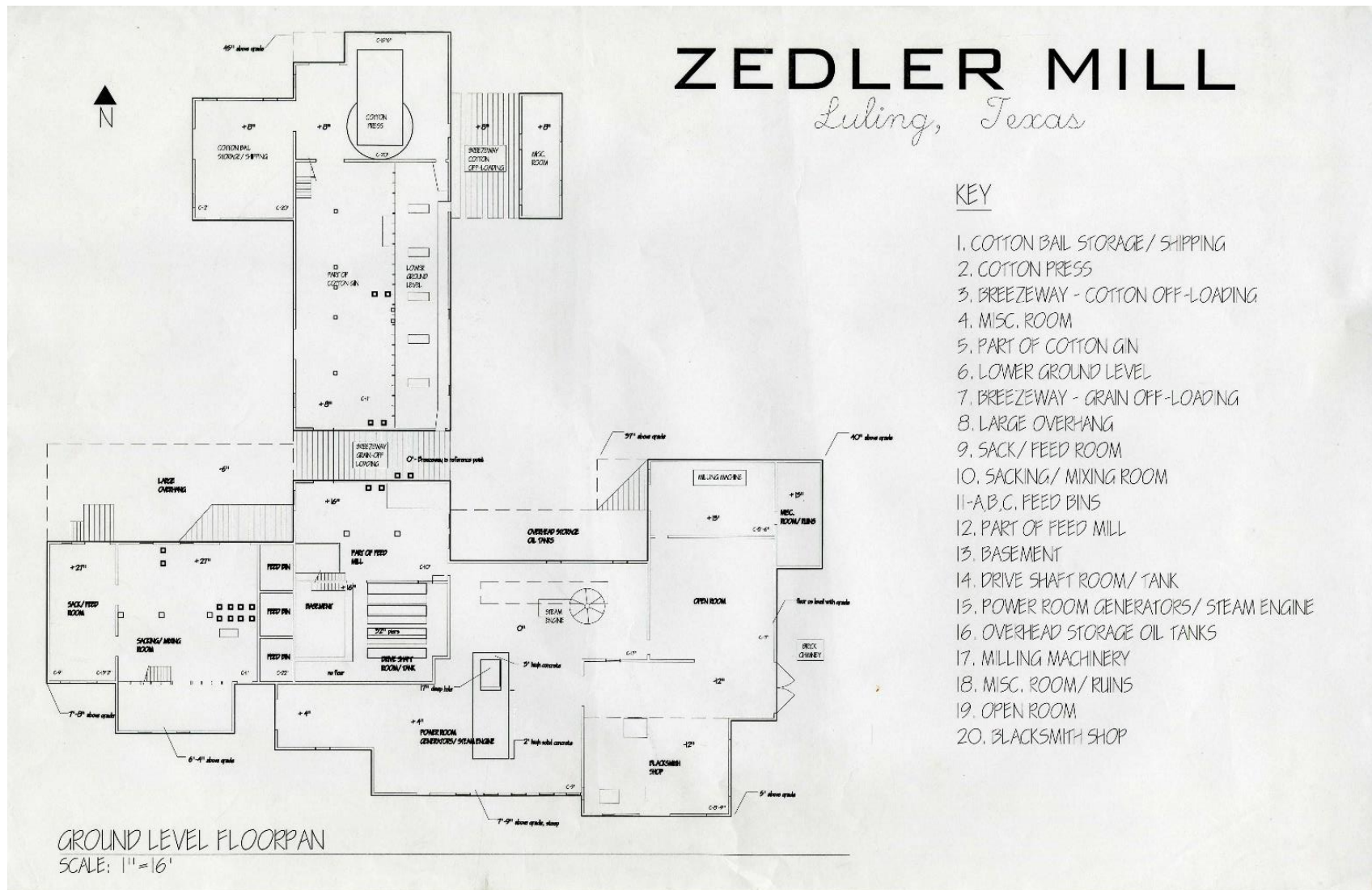
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Figure 11. Undated floor plan for the Fritz and Louise Zedler home (Resource 11A) by Annazelle Von Minden.



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Figure 12. Undated anonymous first floor plan of the millhouse (Resources 1A and 1B).



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Figure 13. Undated anonymous second floor plan of the millhouse (Resource 1A).

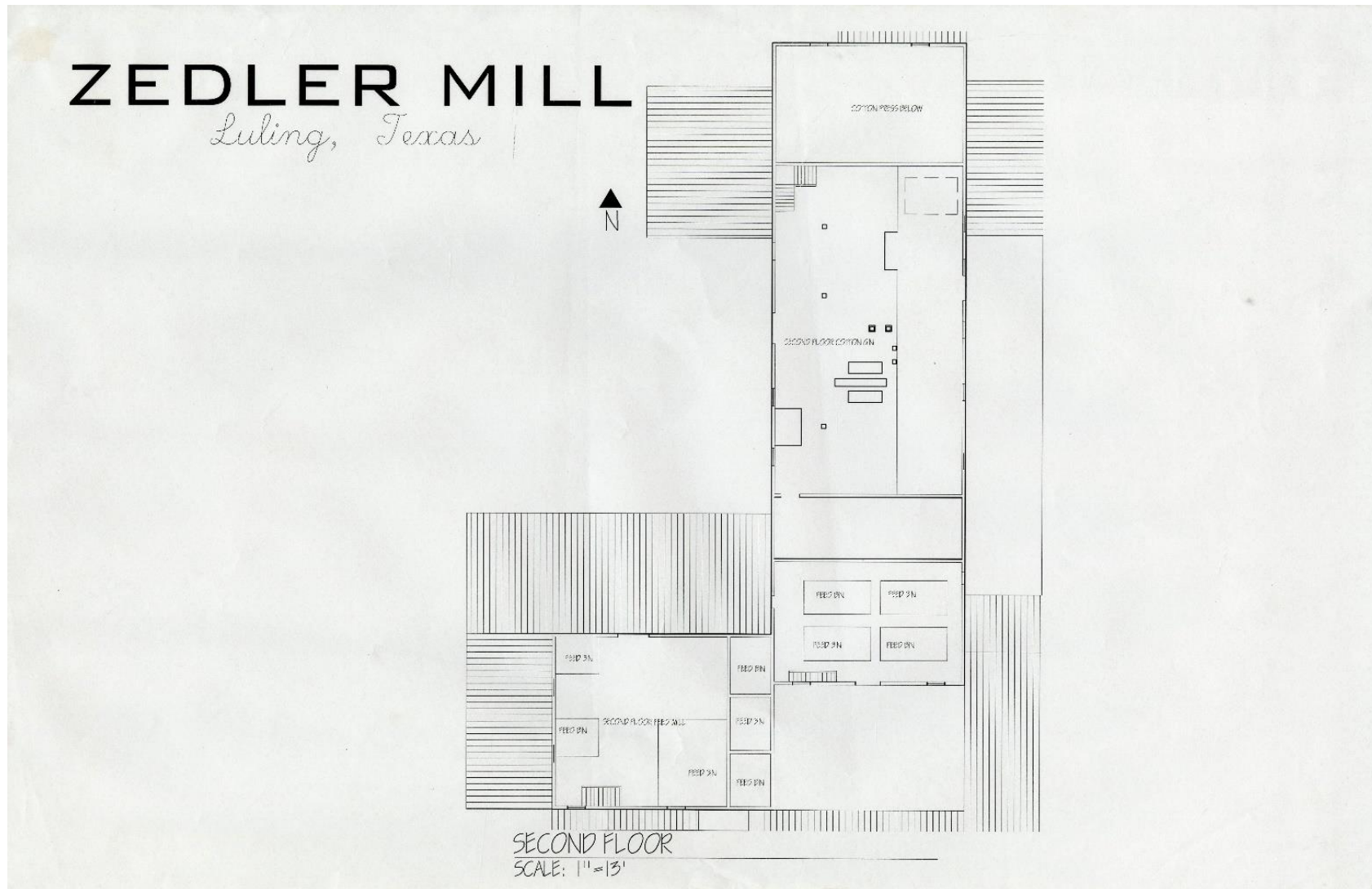
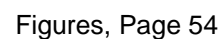


Diagram (on an educational panel outside of the millhouse) illustrating the cotton processing system used in the mill.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Current Photographs (August 19, 2022)

Photo 1. Left to right, spillway (Resource 2C), dam (Resource 2A), race/superstructure (Resource 2B), retaining wall (Resource 2D), and southern portion of millhouse (Resource 1A), camera facing west.



Photo 2. Left to right, race/superstructure (Resource 2B), retaining wall (Resource 2D), millhouse (Resource 1A), smokestack (Resource 1B), and corn sheller building (Resource 3), camera facing northwest.



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Photo 3. East façade of millhouse (Resource 1A) and smokestack (Resource 1B), camera facing southwest.



Photo 4. Cotton unloading shed at millhouse (Resource 1A) northeast corner, camera facing north.

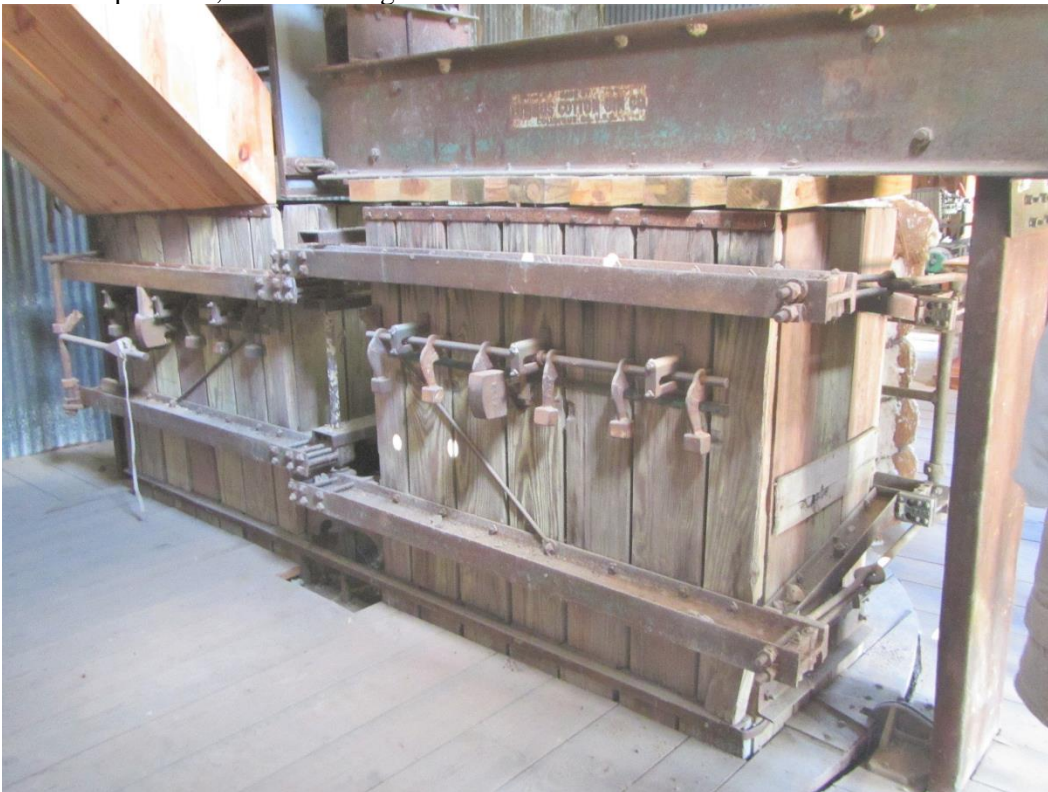


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Photo 5. North façades of northern (foreground) and western (background, at right) the millhouse (Resource 1A) wings, camera facing south.



Photo 6. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, Lummus Sons Company revolving double-box cotton press on circular turntable/platform, camera facing southwest.



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Photo 7. South and east façades of corner sheller building (Resource 3), camera facing northwest.



Photo 8. Equipment inside corn sheller building (Resource 3), camera facing northeast.



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Photo 9. Agricultural work area with, left to right, portion of noncontributing event center (Resource 12, background, at left), smokehouse (Resource 7, left foreground), noncontributing privy (Resource 15), shed (Resource 8, background, at center) corn crib (Resource 5, background, at right) with small trough (Resource 10 in front of crib), and livestock barn (Resource 6, at right), camera facing south.



Photo 10. Agricultural work area with, left to right, shed (Resource 8), noncontributing privy (Resource 15), corn crib (Resource 5) with small trough (Resource 10 in front of crib), and smokehouse (Resource 7), camera facing west.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Photo 11. North and west façades of corn crib (Resource 5), camera facing southeast.



Photo 12. Livestock barn interior (Resource 6), camera facing northeast.



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Photo 13. Northwest façade of Fritz and Louise Zedler home (Resource 11A), camera facing southeast.



Photo 14. Southeast façade of Fritz and Louise Zedler home (Resource 11A) and garage (Resource 11B, at far right), camera facing northwest.



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Photo 15. Sawmill mechanical system (Resource 9A) and noncontributing sawmill shed (Resource 9B), camera facing west.



Photo 16. Landscaping and north façade of noncontributing event center (Resource 12), camera facing southwest.



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Photo 17. South façade of noncontributing event center (Resource 12), camera facing northeast.



Photo 18. Southeast oblique of millhouse (Resource 1A), camera facing northwest.



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Photo 19. Northeast oblique of smokestack (Resource 1B), camera facing southwest.



Photo 20. Dam (Resource 2A), camera facing southwest.



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Photo 21. Race/superstructure (Resource 2B), camera facing west.



Photo 22. Spillway (Resource 2C), camera facing south.



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Photo 23. Retaining wall (Resource 2D), camera facing northeast.



Photo 24. Southwest oblique of corn sheller building (Resource 3), camera facing northeast.



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Photo 25. Northeast oblique of scale house/office (Resource 4), camera facing southwest.



Photo 26. Northeast oblique of corn crib (Resource 5), camera facing southwest.



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Photo 27. East façade of livestock barn (Resource 6), camera facing west.



Photo 28. Southeast façade of smokehouse (Resource 7), camera facing northwest.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Photo 29. Northeast oblique of shed (Resource 8), camera facing southwest.



Photo 30. Sawmill mechanical system (Resource 9A), camera facing northeast.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Photo 31. Sawmill shed (Resource 9B), camera facing northeast.



Photo 32. East side of trough (Resource 10), camera facing southwest.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Photo 33. Southeast façade of Fritz and Louise Zedler home (Resource 11A), camera facing northwest.



Photo 34. Front façade of garage (Resource 11B), camera facing northwest.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Photo 35. Southeast oblique of event center (Resource 12), camera facing northwest.



Photo 36. East side of bridge (Resource 13), camera facing southwest.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Photo 37. East side of bridge (Resource 14), camera facing northwest.



Photo 38. Front façade of privy (Resource 15), camera facing northwest.



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Interior Photos by Gregory Smith (August 19, 2022)

Photo 39. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, Gin Stand, camera facing south



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Photo 40. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, gin stand and conveyor belt framing, camera facing southeast.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Photo 41. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, Lummus Sons Company revolving double-box cotton press on circular turntable/platform, camera facing southwest.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Photo 42. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, Lummus Sons Company revolving double-box cotton press on circular turntable/platform, camera facing east.



Zedler Mill Historic District, Luling, Caldwell and Guadalupe Counties, Texas

Photo 43. Millhouse (Resource 1A) interior, revolving turntable under the double-box cotton press, camera facing south.



- end -