

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received **OCT 4 1983**

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Hamilton Mill Village Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Boston Neck ^{and} Road, Martha Road, Salisbury ^{and} Avenue, Web Avenue not for publication

city, town North Kingstown NA vicinity of

state Rhode Island code 44 county Cong Distr #2--Hon. Claudine Washington code 009 Schneid

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple (see list on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission)

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. North Kingstown Town Hall

street & number 80 Boston Neck Road

city, town North Kingstown state Rhode Island

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Historical Preservation Report W-NK-1, North Kingstown has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date November, 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

city, town Providence state Rhode Island 02903

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located on the southern bank of Bissell Cove, where the small Annaquatucket River empties into the Narragansett Bay south of the village of Wickford, the Hamilton Mill Village Historic District is an extremely picturesque, well-preserved rural mill complex. Although milling activities are known to have taken place at this site as early as the 1680s, no structures remain from the years preceeding the advent of textile manufacturing in the early nineteenth century. The district includes two large mill structures, an intact water-power system which remained in active use through World War II, a cluster of almost two dozen nineteenth-century mill houses, both company sponsored and privately built, a mill owner's house, and a village store. Except for a number of unsympathetic remodellings and the covering over of a number of houses with artificial siding, there have been few modern intrusions into the district. In fact, with the exception of the village social hall and several mill outbuildings, which have been torn down, the village as it developed by the early years of the twentieth century remains basically intact.

The district is visually dominated by a long, clapboarded mill building set on the western bank of Bissell Cove at the end of a long mill trench, or headrace, which originates at Annaquatucket Pond to the west. This mill structure consists of two sections: a long, low monitor roof wing to the south, the earliest section of which was built in 1838; and a taller wing added on the north in 1866, which supports a unique double clerestory monitor roof and large stair tower. Immediately in front of the oldest section of the mill stands a small, Italianate structure which housed the mill office. One-story wings in front of the building, set mostly below grade, originally housed the water turbine and steam engines which together supplied power to the machinery in the complex. In front of this wooden structure, facing the entrance drive and power trench, is an expansive, two-story brick weave shed which was built to house the growing narrow web manufacturing operation here in the 1880s. A number of small outbuildings which once stood behind the wood mill by the cove have been lost. These included an attached lapper house, a cotton house, a waste and storehouse, a smithy, and a hose house. A coal shed which formerly stood just north of the mill also no longer survives.

The fifty-foot-wide power trench in front of the mill extends approximately eight hundred feet from the man-made earthen dam, adjacent to Boston Neck Road to the east, and built to form Annaquatucket Pond. A portion of this early dam, with wooden gates used to control the flow into the trench, is still visible next to the mill's entrance drive. Also visible here is a simply detailed sign post with a pineapple finial designed for the Hamilton Web Company in the 1920s by Rhode Island architect Norman Isham. The entrance drive follows the earthworks built to form the south side of the trench. At the eastern terminus of the trench, just in front of the wooden mill structure, is another set of wooden gates which controlled the flow into the turbine. To the north of this trench, beyond a densely wooded area, the natural course of the Annaquatucket River forms the northern

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) mill community
Specific dates	1686, 1838, 1850, 1866, 1883, 1898 Builder/Architect			

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hamilton Mill Village Historic District is significant as a visually cohesive mill community typical of the small, self-sufficient textile manufacturing settlements which developed at sources of water power throughout rural Rhode Island in the early nineteenth century. It remains today almost wholly intact, with few significant alterations or disruptive mid-twentieth-century intrusions to alter its original plan, or to detract from the simple vernacular character of its buildings. The village retains an architecturally distinguished, timber-framed, clapboard mill which was built in a handsome vernacular style over several stages of construction from 1838 to 1866. The dramatic, double clerestory monitor roof of its large 1866 addition is the only such roof form known in Rhode Island, and is significant for both its visual effect as well as for its creative structural engineering. The architectural character of this mill is enhanced by its picturesque setting on the banks of Bissell Cove.

With documentary evidence recording a mill here as early as 1686, the district is probably one of the earliest industrial sites in southern Rhode Island. One of the earliest and most successful cotton webbing manufacturers in the state was established here by 1866 and later incorporated as the Hamilton Web Company. It was in this mill that Charles Sisson received his training before leaving in 1883 to found the Hope Webbing Company in Pawtucket, a mill which grew to become one of the largest narrow fabric manufacturers in the nation.

Industrial activity is recorded here, where the Annaquatucket River empties into Bissell Cove of Narragansett Bay, by 1686 when Richard Wharton of Boston purchased 27 acres of land on the north side of the stream "for a mill or mills" from Richard Smith, the first European settler in the area. Wharton was attracted to this spot because of the combination of water power and convenient transportation by sea which the site afforded, and the gristmill he established here was one of the first in southern Rhode Island.

In 1711, this land and fourteen adjoining acres on the south side of the river were acquired by Joseph Smith, who subsequently sold the property on the south side of the river, "with mills and all the privileges of building the dam" to Samuel Slocum. Slocum in turn sold the property in 1729 to Thomas and Samuel Hazard who operated a wheat mill, fulling mill, and carding mill, here as well as a successful shipping and trading business.

(See Continuation Sheet #13)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet #16)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 30 acres

Quadrangle name Wickford, RI

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	9	2	9	6	9	5	0	4	6	0	2	4	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

1	9	2	9	6	7	6	0	4	6	0	2	0	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

1	9	2	9	6	3	0	0	4	6	0	2	1	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

1	9	2	9	6	4	2	0	4	6	0	2	6	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet #17)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Clifford M. Renshaw, A.I.A.

organization date

street & number 25 Main Street telephone 401-294-6538

city or town Wickford state Rhode Island 02852

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Frank R. Williams* date 30 Sept 83

title date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 11/3/83

for *Alvora Byers*
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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Historic American Engineering Record
1978 (Federal)
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

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boundary of the district.

To the south of the mill buildings is a cluster of single-, double- and multi-family wood-framed houses, many built by the mill company and almost all dating from the last half of the nineteenth century. Local histories record that by 1849 the settlement here (then known as "Bissell Mills Estate") consisted of four dwelling houses in addition to the "cotton manufactory" on 22 acres of land. As the mill expanded, new houses were built throughout the nineteenth century. However, a lack of construction records and contradictory evidence found in period maps makes a precise dating of these residential structures impossible.

The earliest house still standing in the district is almost certainly the one at 18-20 Web Avenue, a one-block long street running south from the mill. This house, which may have been built as a two-family dwelling, retains its Greek Revival entrance, twelve-over-twelve double-hung windows with projecting, pegged frames which suggest plank wall construction, and a long, shed roof dormer, a feature derived from mill construction of the period. The other houses along the street are modest, nearly identical, mill-sponsored one- and two-family residences which were built somewhat later.

Just south of the mill is Martha Road, a short street which runs east from Web, bordering Bissell Cove. Originally a row of at least three large, two-story structures, built either as generous two-family houses or else as multi-family tenements, stood on the south side of this street. At least one of these structures has been destroyed, another is in an advanced state of deterioration, and a third has been altered beyond recognition of its original character.

Web Avenue terminates at Salisbury Avenue which runs east-west and links the village to Boston Neck Road. The north side of this street, to the east of Web Avenue, is lined with five once identical, two-family mill houses similar to those on Web Avenue. On the corner of Web is the largest residential structure in the village, a two-story wood-framed tenement, probably built to house four families.

Although similar to these company-built houses in scale, the houses on the south side of Salisbury are all single-family structures, built in a variety of simple styles in the late nineteenth century. Apparently these were all privately built and owned, although their residents almost certainly were employed by the mill.

On the north side of Salisbury to the west of Web are several houses which appear to date from the mid-nineteenth century even though they do

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not appear on maps of the district as late as 1895. At least one of these structures is reported to have been moved to the site from nearby Annaquatucket, a nineteenth-century mill hamlet at the head of Annaquatucket Pond, also owned by the Hamilton Web Company, which ceased operations before World War I. It is possible that these houses were moved into Hamilton around the turn of the century.

Fronting Boston Neck Road at the corner of Salisbury is a large, two-and-one-half-story commercial structure with a bracketed cornice which housed the general store and, after 1877, served as the village post office. A store at this location is recorded as early as 1850, when the mill property was purchased by Syria H. Vaughn. In that year Vaughn built a store, and, on the adjacent lot, a social hall which provided a place for community gatherings, social events, and religious services. Known as Annaquatucket Hall, this social center was torn down in 1977.

North of the store, facing Boston Neck Road on a deeply shaded lawn south of the main entrance to the mill is a one-and-one-half-story house of a simple Italianate style which was Syria Vaughn's own residence and quite possibly one of the several dwellings known to have been built by him after purchasing the mill in 1850. Behind these structures on Boston Neck Road is the right-of-way of the old Sea View trolley line which operated between East Greenwich and Narragansett Pier from 1898 until 1921. Only the modern power lines which follow the original right-of-way stand today as visible evidence of this abandoned transportation line.

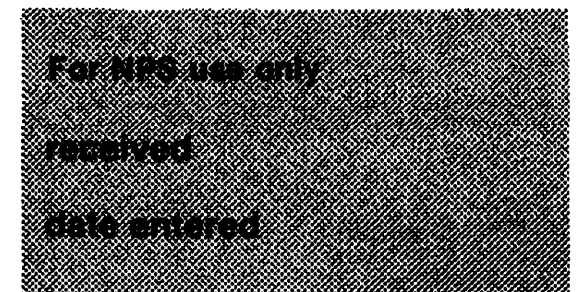
INVENTORY

Contributing structures include those buildings erected from the early nineteenth century through the early twentieth century when the textile mill in Hamilton dominated the community which was virtually self-sufficient because of its physical isolation from surrounding communities. These include structures built and originally owned by the mill company, including a group of workers houses, referred to as "Mill Houses," as well as a row of houses on Salisbury Avenue which were privately built. Virtually all of the contributing buildings are of simple, vernacular styles. Although a number have been remodelled and/or covered over with inappropriate siding, they have been considered contributing to the historical fabric of the district if their basic form remains intact. Those structures which have been built in recent years as the village has been assimilated into the surrounding suburban development of North Kingstown and which have no historical tie to the textile mill community have been considered non-contributing.

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CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

BOSTON NECK ROAD

800 Syria H. Vaughn House (c. 1850): This one-and-one-half-story, gable-roof house, set back from Boston Neck Road on a broad, shaded lawn, was the home of Syria H. Vaughn, founder of the Hamilton Company which purchased the mill here in 1850. It is possible that he had this house built for himself at that time. The five-bay-wide structure is embellished with decorative, sawn vergeboards and delicately detailed porch posts and brackets. Three small, round-headed windows, tucked under the eaves of the roof above the central entrance, provide light to the upper floor of the house. The somewhat larger size of this house and its "carpenter-built" architectural decoration are all that distinguish it from similar houses in the village built for the mill workers.

820 Store and Post Office (c. 1870, rear portion 1850?): A large, two-and-one-half-story, wood-shingle structure with a cross-gable roof supported on heavy, sawn brackets. Originally, the store front facing Boston Neck Road was set behind the front plane of the building in a deep, covered porch which was served by full-width steps. However, this store front has been removed and the porch has been enclosed with a new, vertically boarded front that disrupts the otherwise well-preserved character of this building.

It has been reported that this structure dates from 1877 when Sweet and Owen operated a general store here. However, a store to serve the mill community was first built at this location by Syria Vaughn in 1850. It is possible that the small, gable-roofed structure attached to the rear of this store may be part of the earlier structure.

MARTHA ROAD

13 Mill House (late 19th century): A four-bay wide, one-and-one-half-story, gable-roofed, clapboarded house with a wide, simply detailed front porch. This single-family house sits on a foundation of large granite blocks, directly across the street from the wooden mill.

31A Mill House or Tenement (late 19th century): A large, gable-roofed structure built into the hill rising above Bissell Cove, three

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Martha Road (cont.)

stories in height facing the road and two stories in the rear. Built as either a large two-family house or as a tenement, the structure has been extensively remodelled with new, inappropriate windows and doors and covered over with siding.

- 31B Mill House or Tenement (late 19th century): A large, two-and-one-half-story gable-roofed structure which may have been identical to No. 31A when first built. Although this clapboarded structure retains its original clapboard siding and simple window and door casings, much of its original detail is in a very deteriorated condition.

SALISBURY AVENUE

- 48-50 Mill House (late 19th/early 20th century): A tall, well-maintained, gable-roofed two-family house, larger in scale than the other earlier mill houses in the village with a wide shed dormer projecting from its gable roof, which is set parallel to the street, this house is virtually two full floors in height.
- 51 House (early 20th century): A two-story, five-bay-wide, hipped-roofed house with a wide, open front porch with simple turned posts. Set back from the road behind large shade trees, this house retains much of its original character, although it has been covered over with asbestos siding.
- 58 Mill House (mid-19th century?): Set with its gable roof and rear ell parallel with the street, the entrance to this one-and-one-half-story clapboard and wood-shingle house is placed on its three-bay-wide gable end. Stylistically this house appears to date from the middle of the 19th century, although no structures are recorded on this site as late as 1895. It is possible the house was moved to this site.
- 59 House (late 19th century): A simply detailed, one-and-one-half-story, five-bay-wide gable-roofed house with a small entrance porch and shed-roofed dormer above. The sides of this house are covered with asbestos siding, and the front has been sided with wood shingles.
- 64 Mill House (mid-19th century): A one-and-one-half-story, gable-roofed house, now covered over with artificial siding. The

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Salisbury Avenue (cont.)

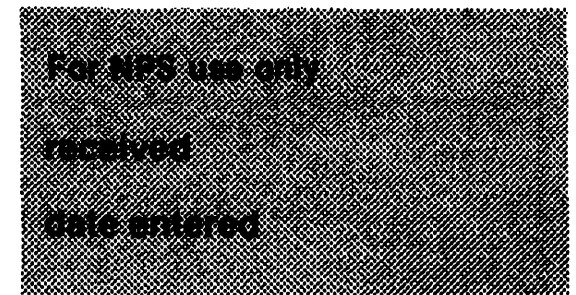
present owner, who has lived in this house since birth, claims that the structure was moved from the nearby Annaquatucket Mill settlement which was owned by the Hamilton Web Company in 1880 until it ceased operations before World War I.

- 90 Mill Tenement (late 19th century): This large two-story, gable-roofed structure apparently was built as a four-family tenement. It is well preserved and retains its clapboard siding, simple trim detail, six-over-six windows, and four-panel entrance doors. Like the adjacent two-family mill houses, the facade is composed of two, four-bay wide halves.
- 93 House (late 19th century): A five-bay-wide, one-and-one-half-story single-family house with its gable roof flanking the street. The house has been covered with artificial siding, and its wide front porch has been enclosed.
- 100-102 Mill House (late 19th century): This one-and-one-half-story, two-family house with its gable roof flanking the street is a well-preserved example of the most common type of mill-sponsored housing found in Hamilton. Rectangular in plan, the building is composed to two, four-bay wide units, each with a small brick interior chimney. This structure retains its original six-over-six double-hung windows and simple entrance with narrow transoms above panelled doors. A simple molding at the head of the window and door frames provides almost the only embellishment to the exterior. At the center of the street facade, a small, shed-roof dormer with a pair of windows provides light and ventilation to the middle of the attic floor.
- 101 House (late 19th century): A one-and-one-half-story, single-family house with a gable roof flanking the street and an ell extending to the west side. An overhanging roof on both the front and back of the ell originally covered open porches, although the floors of these have been removed. The central entrance of the five-bay wide facade is emphasized with a simple projecting flat cap supported on brackets.
- 110-112 Mill House (late 19th century): A two-family mill house, identical to No. 100-102 Salisbury, which also retains most of its original architectural character.

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Salisbury Avenue (cont.)

- 117 House (late 19th century): A tall, one-and-one-half-story, five-bay-wide house with two-over-two double-hung sash windows and a central entrance. A pair of brick chimneys project from the gable roof which is set parallel to the street.
- 120-122 Mill House (late 19th century): Originally identical to the two-family house at 100-102 Salisbury Avenue, this house has been seriously altered in recent years with the installation of new windows and doors inappropriate to the architectural character of the original house.
- 128-130 Mill House (late 19th century): A two-family house originally identical to the house at 100-102 Salisbury Avenue. This building has been remodelled with new windows, doors and wood shingle siding, such that some of its original character has been lost.
- 138-140 Mill House (late 19th century): Once identical to the house at 100-102 Salisbury, this house has received alterations including the replacement of the original entrance doors and the installation of asphalt siding. Except for the remodelled dormer, the house still retains the basic character of the original structure.
- 139 House (late 19th century): A one-and-one-half-story structure, now covered with artificial siding, with its gable end facing the street. An open front porch retains its turned posts and simple sawn brackets.

WEB AVENUE

- 10-12 Mill House (late 19th century): A two-family house, once similar to 100-102 Salisbury Avenue, which has been covered with artificial siding.
- 13 Mill House (late 19th century): A one-and-one-half-story house with its gable roof flanking the street. This five-bay-wide, single-family structure is similar in appearance to the typical two-family house in the village. Instead of a shed dormer, however, a pair of windows are tucked below the eaves of the roof above the central entrance. The house has been covered with artificial siding.
- 18-20 Mill House (c. 1840): This very well-maintained, one-and-one-half-story gabled-roofed, clapboard house was probably among the first

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Web Avenue (cont.)

mill houses built in Hamilton and is certainly the oldest one still standing. The house, which appears to be of plank wall construction, has retained twelve-over-twelve and eight-over-twelve windows with pegged frames and Greek Revival period entrance with sidelights. A long, continuous shed-roof dormer along the south side of the house is a characteristic feature of early-19th-century mill buildings.

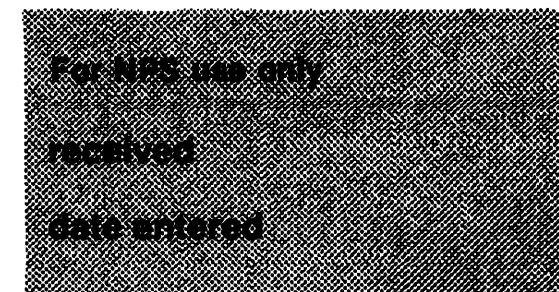
- 19 Mill House (late 19th century): A one-and-one-half-story, gable-roofed, two-family house, similar to 100-102 Salisbury Avenue. This house retains most of its original detail.
- 26 Mill House (late 19th century): A one-and-one-half-story, single-family, clapboard house with its gable end facing the street. The house retains its six-over-six windows. A shed-roof dormer on the south side appears to have been altered.
- 40 Hamilton Mill Complex; A. Main Mill Building (1838; 1866): The long, clapboarded mill building picturesquely sited on the banks of Bissell Cove at the end of the water trench leading from Annaquatucket Pond is the earliest remaining structure in the Hamilton Mill complex. The building consists of two distinct wings which were constructed in at least four phases of construction.

The lower wing to the south is the earliest portion of the building. One-and-one-half-stories tall on its western facade, the structure is covered with a clerestory monitor roof with a row of windows to light the attic level. As the land falls away toward the cove on the east side, the structure becomes two and one-half stories tall with its field stone foundation fully exposed. Most of the windows in this section retain their original twelve-over-twelve and six-over-six, double-hung sash, and smaller six-over-six and eight-over-twelve clerestory windows, although some modern windows have been installed on the east side. The southern end of the structure retains an unusual, early twenty-four-over-twenty-four light window on both the main floor and attic levels, and several projecting "dormer" windows at grade level which open in the basement. The six northern most bays of this structure were built first and almost certainly comprised the 30' x 46' mill built and leased to Slocum and Gardiner for the production of cotton textiles in 1838. The remaining ten bays of this wing were built in a very similar style in two subsequent

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Web Avenue (cont.)

phases of construction. A two-story, square stair tower dating from before 1876 is attached to the western front of this wing. Its low, hipped roof with overhanging eaves is supported on flat brackets, but its original open cupola, which served as a belfry, is now missing.

The complex is visually dominated by the much taller, sixteen-bay long northern wing which was probably added in 1866. This wing supports a unique double clerestory monitor roof, the only one of its kind known to exist in Rhode Island, with the pitched roof rising in steps, broken by two continuous bands of eight-over-eight double-hung sash windows lighting two attic levels. The regularly spaced windows on the floors below are mostly twelve-over-twelve, with the exception of the east side of the ground level where triple-hung, twelve-light sashes open into the extra high interior spaces on this level. A four-story stair tower, similar in detail but larger than the tower on the earlier section, is attached to the east facade of this wing. At the north end of the building, a remarkable fire escape ladder, fabricated from a single split log, rises almost five full stories from grade to the peak of the roof.

On the interior, the heavy timber framing of both sections of the building remain exposed, although alterations have been made throughout the structure. The older section to the south is three structural bays deep, with the corners of its wooden beams and square posts finished with a simple chamfer. Floors throughout are wood plank, and ceilings are unfinished. Above a wainscot of horizontal boards, the exterior walls were originally finished with plaster applied directly to the sheathing between the timber posts and studs which were left exposed. Much of the original interior finish has been removed or covered over with fiberboard and other materials because of its deteriorated condition. After the larger wing was added to the north, this portion of the mill was used for carding on the basement level, spinning on the first floor, and warping and twisting in the attic.

Although larger in floor area and taller in ceiling height, the interior of the north wing is quite similar to the earlier section in construction and finish. At the lower of the two attic levels, heavy timber rafters rise from the exterior walls below

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Web Avenue (cont.)

to support the clerestory wall of the floor above, a design which allows both attic floors to be free of interior columns. Before the nearby brick weave shed was built in the 1880s, the tall first floor and the second floor here housed the weaving machinery of the mill. The third floor was used for spooling and dressing, and the fourth floor was used for spooling and packing.

Just to the north of the stair tower, set mostly below grade, is a one-story brick structure with a flat roof. This wing was once larger and served as a dye house, but it was remodelled and reduced in size to house later steam boilers. A metal stack replaces an earlier brick chimney.

B. Mill Office (c. 1870): Set immediately in front of the older section of the mill building, adjacent to its stair tower, the mill office is a small, one-story, rectangular clapboard structure. Its shallow pitched gable roof with overhanging eaves is supported on brackets similar in detail to the stair towers of the mill building. The double-hung windows, both individual and pairs, and the simple entrance at the south end are capped by slightly projected lintels supported on small brackets. No original detail or finish remains on the interior of this structure. Just to the north of this building stands a very small, hipped roof wooden structure which dates from before 1876 and was built to house a water hydrant for the protection of the mill complex from fire.

C. Weave Shed (1882): Built to accommodate the expanded narrow-web-weaving operations after the Greene family took full control of the mill in 1873, the weave shed is an expansive, two-story tall, red brick structure. Of rectangular plan, the building is covered by a gable roof of extremely shallow pitch. A monitor originally extended along the ridge of the roof to provide light into the interior of the building, but this has been removed and roofed over. Projecting brick pilasters, which express the load-bearing function of the exterior walls, divide the end walls into twelve narrow bays, and the longer north and south walls into twelve wide bays. A three-story, square stair tower with a flaring mansard roof projects from the middle of the north facade, facing the entrance drive. A more modest tower projects from the middle of the opposite facade on the south.

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Web Avenue (cont.)

Eight-over-eight, segmental-headed windows set close to the ground provide light to the first level, set partially below grade, which was used for packing, shipping, and storage. Much taller, multi-light, double-hung windows with large transoms light the much taller floor above which was used for weaving. Individual segmental-headed windows are set in each bay of the end walls while large, tripartite units fill the wider bays of the north and south facades. A portion of the original brick walls at the northwest corner of the structure was rebuilt in wood and covered with clapboards following a fire which destroyed this corner of the building in the 1890s.

On the interior, the upper floor of the weave shed consists of a single, open space which once housed all of the looms of the Hamilton Web Company. The space is composed of two structural bays to either side of a much wider central bay. Heavy timber beams, and timber trusses above the central span, rest on round wood columns to support the roof.

The ground floor or basement level, which is much lower in height, is seven bays wide with heavy, square wood posts carrying the floor above. Slots in the floor allowed the webbing being woven upstairs to pass through to be collected in baskets on this level. This was found to be an efficient arrangement which made it possible to gather long, unbroken lengths of webbing. A portion of this level was used as a repair and machine shop.

D. Hose House (before 1876): A small, one-story, gable roof building set on a stone foundation fronting Martha Road. The rectangular structure is covered with wood shingles except for a small area of wood clapboards above a pair of rolling wood barn doors on the south front. Built as a hose house, the building remains in use for storage. A five-bay-long clapboard addition with a shed roof extends from the east side.

NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

SALISBURY AVENUE

- 30 House (mid-20th century): A one-story, wood-shingle, gable-roofed house with a detached garage.

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Salisbury Avenue (cont.)

- 76 House (mid-20th century): A one-story, asbestos-shingle house with a shallow-pitched, gable roof, which was built as a meeting hall for an employees' association, and later converted to a private residence.
- 79 House (mid-20th century): A recently built, one-story gable-roofed house and garage, covered with wood shingles and set back from the street. A small cottage, similar in style, is set towards the rear of the property.
- 125 House (early 20th century): A one-story, artificially-sided structure with an irregular gable roof, set on a concrete foundation. It is possible that this is an earlier structure which has been remodelled.

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The cove and the early settlement here were named after Samuel Bissell, who acquired partial interest in this property in 1737. The importance of the settlement by the turn of the eighteenth century is suggested by a 1795 map of Rhode Island which records only the village of Wickford and Bissell's Mills in the town of North Kingstown. By 1800 industry here included a corn mill, a snuff mill and an ironworks in addition to the earlier wheat and fulling mills. Also by that time, four brothers named Pierce, who had purchased an interest in the mill property, were sailing a 15-ton sloop, "The Four Brothers," from here to Newport to transport passengers and freight.

In 1838, the property was purchased by Rowland G. Hazard, owner of a prosperous textile mill in the South Kingstown village of Peace Dale. In that year Hazard built a 30' x 46' cotton mill, probably the oldest portion of the large wood frame mill we see today, which he leased to John Slocum and Ezra Gardner for the production of cotton yarn. In 1849, the 27-acre property, by then known as Bissell Mills Estate and consisting of four dwelling houses and a machine shop in addition to the cotton manufactory, was sold to the Hamilton Company, a firm owned by Syria H. Vaughn in partnership with Perez Peck, Asa Sisson and Isaac Peck.

Born in 1817, Vaughn had learned the textile business first in Newport and later in Paterson, New Jersey, a technologically advanced manufacturing center in the early nineteenth century. By 1848 Vaughn had established the Hamilton Company, named after his wife's family, to produce textiles at Potowomut Forge in the northern end of North Kingstown, but because of insufficient water power there, the firm relocated to Bissell Cove. By 1850 Vaughn and his two brothers purchased full interest in the struggling mill at Bissell Cove and in that year they expanded the operations by adding on to the mill building, purchasing new machinery, and building a store, a social hall and four new dwelling houses.

It was probably Vaughn who began to manufacture cotton webbing in Hamilton. Joseph Hall, in his Biographical History of the Manufacturers and Businessmen of Rhode Island, credits the company for being the first manufacturer of cotton webbing in the state and a pioneer industry of its kind in the United States. The company became very successful making name tapes, used particularly for pulls at the back of men's boots, and other types of tapes and bindings in wool worsted and silk, as well as cotton. By the middle of the nineteenth century, cotton mills in Rhode Island were struggling in the face of competition from much larger mills in neighboring Massachusetts which were more abundantly supplied with water power, labor, and capital, and many of the mills failed when sources of supply of raw

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cotton and the market for finished goods were disrupted during the Civil War. It was because the firm developed its own market for a specialty product that the Hamilton Company survived and even flourished during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

In 1866 half-interest in the Hamilton Company was sold to Joseph Warren Greene who wished to establish his son, James, in the textile business. Joseph Greene, himself, was the son of Captain James Greene who had been a partner in the Warwick Spinning Mill established in Centerville in 1794, a concern believed to have been the second water-powered textile mill in the state. Operating as Vaughn and Greene, the new firm immediately built a large addition to the mill, probably the large, double monitor roof wing of the clapboard mill which still stands. New machinery was purchased and several new dwelling houses were built. Vaughn sold out his interest in the company in 1873 in order to pursue other business interests, which were to include the running of a steamship line between Wickford and Newport and the establishment of Vaughn's Hall, a public entertainment hall in Wickford. From that date until the property was sold in 1951, the Greene family retained full ownership of the mill and the adjacent mill village. In 1885 the firm was incorporated as the Hamilton Web Company.

The Hamilton Web Company prospered under the control of the Greene family. About 1882 the company had erected a large brick weave shed to accommodate all of the weaving operations of the mill. At that time, the wooden mill was put to use for a variety of subsidiary functions in the production of textiles, from the cleaning, carding and dyeing of the raw cotton, to the spinning, spooling and storing of the yarn. Eventually 100 looms and other machinery, manned by about 175 operators, were in production six days a week, 11½ hours a day. By the late nineteenth century, the mill was powered by a coal-fired steam generator in addition to the early water power system which could only deliver up to 100 horsepower and was irregular due to seasonal fluctuations in the water flow. However, the water power system remained in operation as an auxiliary power system as late as World War II.

As larger mills throughout Rhode Island began to fail in the years following World War I, largely because of competition from the South and the inability of the old mills to upgrade their facilities to manufacture new synthetic fabrics, the Hamilton Web Company remained viable as a manufacturer of a specialty product. Although sold by the Greene family in 1951, and subsequently relocated to another plant in Rhode Island, the Hamilton Web Company remains in business today as a custom manufacturer of jacquard woven non-elastic tapes and webbings, still widely used for fancy trimmings and trade mark identification.

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Because of the remote location of this once rural site, the nineteenth century textile millowners here were forced to provide both housing and other amenities of village life in order to attract the labor force their operations required. Since older children as well as adult men and women worked in the mill, whole families were often hired. At Hamilton, French Canadian families were recruited to work with the local families of Yankee stock. The small village grew in a rather casual manner along the three streets just south of the mill complex as the company built houses to rent to the workers. Most of these were one- and two-family structures erected between 1858 and 1882, the year the large brick weave shed was built. By the turn of the century, twenty-five dwellings had been built, including at least one tenement.

In addition to housing, the mill provided a post office and store, and for a while operated a dairy farm which supplied the village with fresh milk. The only social institution in Hamilton was Annaquatucket Hall, a community center built by the mill company to accommodate a variety of social events. Weekly religious services were held in the hall because there were no churches in the vicinity. The village was served by a rural schoolhouse which is still standing south of Hamilton on Old Boston Neck Road.

The pattern of community life dominated by the mill lasted here as late as 1951 when all of the mill-owned property was sold. Many of the workers, some of whom were fourth-generation employees of the mill, bought the houses their families had previously rented. However, with the advent of the automobile in the early twentieth century, the village had become less isolated, and today Hamilton is becoming assimilated into the surrounding suburban development of the Town of North Kingstown. New houses and a large new school have been built along the southern border of the district, and several newer houses have been built on what had been open lots within the village.

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The boundaries of the Hamilton Mill Historic District, located entirely within Plat 45 of the Town of North Kingstown, begins at the southwest corner of lot 19, extends north along the east side of Boston Neck Road to the Annaquatucket River at the northwest corner of lot 14, then east and south following the river to the northeast corner of lot 88, then south along the east sides of lots 88 and 36, crossing Salisbury Avenue and continuing south along the east side of lot 12, turning west along the south line of that lot, continuing along the south lines of lots 40 and 9, turning northwest along the lines of lots 8, 7, and 5, turning west at Salisbury Avenue to the beginning at Boston Neck Road.

The boundaries of the Hamilton Mill Historic District have been drawn to include all of remaining elements of the textile mill village which developed here from the early-nineteenth century and remained as an isolated, almost self-sufficient community through the early twentieth century. Included are the mill complex, the dam, gates, and trench of the water power system, the mill owner's house, the village store, and housing built and formerly owned by the mill company. Also included in the district is housing on the south side of Salisbury Avenue which, although privately built, is related in date and to a more limited extent in style to the mill-sponsored housing and was almost certainly also occupied by mill workers. Excluded from the district, or considered as non-contributing elements within the district, are those houses and a school on Salisbury Avenue which were built in the middle of this century by which time the pattern of mill-dominated community life here had vanished. The undeveloped land north and west of the mill and mill trench is included because it has always been part of the mill-owned property, and today it helps provide the appropriate rural character of this district.