

OMB NO. 1024-0018
EXP. 10/31/84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

For NPS use only

received MAR 2 1983

date entered

1. Name

historic Paul Whitin Manufacturing Company Housing District

and/or common Rockdale Common Housing District (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 4-20 McBride, 46-58 Plantation, ^{and} 37-42 Taft sts. N/A not for publication

city, town Rockdale North bridge N/A vicinity of congressional district

state Massachusetts code 025 county Worcester code 027

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☒ district	☐ public	☐ occupied	☐ agriculture
☐ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☒ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☒ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military

4. Owner of Property

name Rockdale Common Associates

street & number 73 Tremont Street

city, town Boston N/A vicinity of state MA 02108

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Worcester County Registry of Deeds

street & number 2 Main Street

city, town Worcester state MA 02108

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of the Historic Assets of the Commonwealth has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date August, 1982 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston state MA

7. Description

Rockdale Common Housing District, Northbridge

Condition

☐ excellent

☐ good

☒ fair

☐ deteriorated

☐ ruins

☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered

☐ altered

Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved

date

N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Rockdale Common Housing District is comprised of six adjacent wood-frame tenements built as company housing for the Paul Whittin Manufacturing Company between 1880 and 1917. It is a 1-acre site in a residential area of Rockdale. The buildings face onto three different streets but back up to each other, forming a U-shape with a central open yard towards which the rear elevations all face. The district is a visually cohesive grouping, with the four triple-decker structures creating the dominant mass and scale which distinguish the district from other tenement areas of the village.

The Rockdale Common Housing District is located at the eastern edge of the original company-built mill town, reflecting its history as the last spurt of expansion by the mill and thus being on the outer edge of the original village. The topography rises gradually from the level area along the Blackstone River where the mill is situated to the higher, level area of Plantation and McBride Streets. This change in topography creates a sense of separation from the mill much greater than the actual distance would ordinarily convey. To the west of the district along Church and Taft Streets is an area of turn-of-the-century tenements, mostly small, two-story, two-and four-tenement structures. To the east along Plantation Street is an area of small, newer houses built in recent years and unrelated to the village's historic development. Just beyond the district to the south is a public park and open ball fields which were built by the mill early in the 20th century for the recreational use of its employees. With the exception of the newer homes east of Plantation Street which are set back, landscaped heavily and generally unobtrusive, the district's setting remains virtually the same as it has since the buildings were constructed.

The district's physical character is distinct from the other smaller tenements in the size and scale of the four 1917 structures which are each three stories in height and in the large grassy yards which surround each structure, both originally and presently creating a sense of spaciousness uncharacteristic of the other closely-spaced tenement rows in the rest of the village.

The district illustrates tenement design in Rockdale during the period from 1880 to 1917, the period of its greatest significance. Each of the buildings contributes to the historic character of the district, and there are no extraneous structures. The buildings vary in architectural styles from the Italianate to the Colonial Revival, reflecting improved building techniques during the period they were built as well as changing stylistic trends and a need to provide housing quickly and economically. All of the buildings are of similar scale, being 2½ to 3 stories, and all are wood-frame construction and faced with clapboards. Their simplified detailing and crisp linear designs also serve to unify the district.

All of the buildings have deteriorated in condition in recent years, although changes to both exterior and interior features have been minimal. They are currently being renovated as low-income family and elderly housing

(Continued)

8. Significance Rockdale Common Housing District, Northbridge

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☒ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400–1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500–1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600–1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☒ 1800–1899	☐ commerce	☒ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900–	☐ communications	☒ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1800-1917 **Builder/Architect** Paul Whitin Manufacturing Co.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Rockdale Common Housing District possesses integrity of location, design, setting materials, workmanship, association and feeling. As company-built housing, it reflects the last and most prosperous phase of development of the village and of the Paul Whitin Manufacturing Company, the textile mill around which the entire village depended for its economic well-being. It is of architectural interest and significance as an example of the transition which occurred in tenement design between the late 19th and early 20th centuries and as the largest and most visually cohesive grouping of triple-decker tenements in the village. Its architectural merit is determined by the attention to quality details, combined with building techniques which could meet time and cost parameters of the mill. The district has been evaluated within the context of other company tenements within the village of Rockdale and is also the only known cluster of three-story tenements within the town of Northbridge. Thus the district meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places.

The village of Rockdale was established in 1814 by Sylvanus Holbrook of Uxbridge who first built a small wooden textile mill for the manufacture of satinet near the site of the present mill. It was known as Holbrook's Upper Village to distinguish it from Holbrook's Lower Village (now Riverdale). Holbrook's textile company, the Northbridge Cloth Manufacturing Company, expanded gradually over the next 38 years, beginning with his 1823 introduction of power looms for making broadcloths. In 1831 Holbrook built a new mill north of his original woolen mill to produce standard grade cotton sheetings. After a fire in 1840 destroyed the original mill, only cotton goods were produced at Rockdale. A subsequent series of fires between 1846 and 1852 destroyed the mill and nearly the whole village, ending Holbrook's hopes for establishing his textile center at the site.

In 1856, Holbrook's land and the accompanying water rights were purchased by the firm of P. Whitin & Sons from the neighboring village of Whitinsville (NR eligible). This marked the beginning of the Whitin family's role in Rockdale and the formation of the mill village as it stands today. A new three-story granite mill, 166' long and 66' wide, was erected in 1857 on the edge of the Blackstone river. A second mill was added c.1860 as the textile industry prospered under the direction of Col. Paul Whitin's widow and four sons. The family had already established themselves in the textile and textile machinery industries in Whitinsville by the time of the 1856 purchase, which also included Holbrook's Riverdale mill. With the 1856 acquisition, the Whitins owned every mill property of any consequence in the Northbridge area and were one of the leading mill families in the entire Blackstone Valley.

In 1864 the company was dissolved and its holdings divided among Colonel Whitin's four sons. Paul Whitin Jr. the oldest son, received the textile

(Continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Aldrich, Spaulding R., Town of Northbridge Bicentennial Commemorative Journal, 1972.
Bachelor, Charles O., Northbridge Historical Notes, Whitinsville Social Library, 1875.

(continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 1.03 acres

Quadrangle name Grafton, MA

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UMT References

A

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

B

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

C

1	9
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2	8	1	3	0	0
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4	6	6	9	8	3	0
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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The district's legal boundary description is "the Land with all improvements thereon in the Village of Rockdale, Town of Northbridge, Worcester County, Massachusetts, being shown as Lots 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 on a (continued)

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

state MA code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Candace Jenkins, Registration Director by Margo Webber, consultant

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date December, 1982

street & number 294 Washington Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state MA 02108

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 Patricia L. Weseloh 2/24/83

title State Historic Preservation Officer date

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 3/31/83

[Signature]
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Rockdale Common Housing

Continuation sheet District, Rockdale, Mass. Item number 7

Page 1

7. Description

in accordance with federal historic preservation standards. The exteriors will retain their original appearance, including new wood windows and balustrades which conform to the original design of these features. The interiors will retain their original floor plans, natural wood trim and hallway wainscot.

The earliest structure in the district is 46-50 Plantation Street (#1), a fine example of vernacular Italianate tenement housing in Rockdale. Nearly unaltered from its original appearance, the 2½ story building has a U-shape plan, comprised of the 6x2-bay rectangular front and two 2-story ells extending to the rear. From the configuration of the continuous granite foundation, these ells appear to be original. The six-bay facade has two-story open porches across the entire elevation and a pair of doors in the two center bays. The porches are supported by unadorned rectangular posts. The original square-posted balustrades have been covered by plywood but will be restored to the original design. Other stylistic detailing includes adornment of the clapboard surfaces by plain cornerboards and flat wooden frames at all window openings. The gabled ends are supported by pairs of large Italianate brackets which are unusually decorative in comparison to most of the village's housing stock from this period. Originally a two-unit dwelling, this building exemplifies this building type as a most popular style and design for worker housing in the late 19th century.

The six-family tenement at 37-42 Taft Street (#6) is a good example of an early 20th century rowhouse tenement. Its design is modelled after typical mid-late 19th century rowhouses of Greek Revival and Italianate design, but here adapted to the Colonial Revival style becoming popular at this time. It is 2½ stories and was built as a larger and more substantial-looking block than most of the other rowhouses on Taft Street which are 2- and 4-unit structures. The Taft Street facade is 18 bays long, consisting of 6 3-bay, 2½-story units. The entrances are grouped in pairs and originally had small wooden hoods. (These were probably similar in design to the wooden hoods on several nearby structures.) The design features 6-over-6 wood sash and two large shingled dormers in each plane of the ridge roof, each with two 3-over-6 windows. The original clapboards were later sheathed in unsympathetic asphalt shingles which have recently been removed in order to restore the original clapboard appearance.

The district's four triple-decker tenements on Plantation and McBride Streets (#2, 3, 4, 5) form the only large grouping of this tenement type in the village. The exteriors are identical while 56-58 Plantation Street (#2) contains 12 small tenements and the McBride Street blocks each have 6 larger units. Each building is a three-story Colonial Revival structure, seven bays wide and eight bays deep, faced in clapboards and raised up on a two-foot rough-cut granite foundation. The large center entrance bay is flanked by three-sided end bays. Large wooden porches between the end bays extend the building's full height and are supported by two-story rectangular posts

(Continued)

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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Rockdale Common Housing

Continuation sheet District, Rockdale, Mass. Item number 7,8

Page 2

7. Description

with molded rims and columns with similar rims at the top. The original square-post balustrades have been sheathed in plywood which will be removed during the rehabilitation. The facade has plain cornerboards and wood frames with molded lintels at all door and window openings. Original two-over-two wooden sash remains at all windows. At the rear of each side elevation is a one-bay wing which extends to the side. The rear elevation of each tenement consists of a central enclosed stair faced in wide tongue and groove horizontal boarding and set away from the building by an open corridor. It is flanked by corner porches at all three stories.

There are no known archeological resources within the district. The district achieved significance during a period (1880-1917) when written documentation of tenement life in New England was quite thorough. Furthermore, the high density of families required good health and sanitary conditions which would not have included the old 18th century custom of trash heaps in rear yards. It is highly unlikely that archeological investigation would yield any significant information.

8. Significance

mills at Rockdale and Riverdale. In 1870, the Rockdale mill became the Paul Whitin Manufacturing Company, a partnership of Paul Whitin Jr. and his son Charles E. Whitin, both of whom continued to reside in Whitinsville. The mill was continuously upgraded and expanded, including new dams and reservoirs which were built by Paul Whitin Jr.'s younger brother James Fletcher Whitin. Before the building of the Ram's Head Reservoir at the head of the Blackstone River, the mills had to close during the summer months for lack of power. The company experimented with the latest textile machinery being produced by the Whitin Machine Works in Whitinsville which was now headed by Paul Whitin Jr.'s brother John. Most of the innovative textile equipment received its trial runs at Rockdale before going on the market.

Paul Whitin Jr. died in 1884 and his son Charles survived him by only a few years. The company was passed to Charles' son Henry Thomas Whitin who at age 21 was already superintendent of the Rockdale mill. Harry T., as he was known, served as president during the 1890's to late 1920's, an era which included the company's most expansive period of 1900-1918 and the most substantial development of the community. Under Harry T. Whitin, the #3, 4 and 5 mills were built. The bulk of the village's housing stock was built during these years, primarily to accommodate the influx of French-Canadian immigrants who were being brought to Rockdale to work in the mill.

In the mill's early years the majority of immigrant labor in the area was Irish. Then came the Poles, who lived mostly on Railroad and Sutton Streets. In the 1880's the first group of French-Canadians arrived, establishing a

(Continued)

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received	
date entered	

Continuation sheet Rockdale Common Housing
District, Rockdale, Mass Item number 8

Page 3

8. Significance

trend which would continue until 1917.

Maintaining an adequate supply of labor was the company's most difficult task during this period. A company agent travelled to the villages near Montreal to hire French-Canadian workers who were anxious for stability and economic prosperity which the mill promised.

A paternalistic attitude by the Whitin family was established in Rockdale, much as it had been at the earlier Whitinsville village. In order to attract labor to the remote rural village and once there to encourage them to stay, the mill owners provided inexpensive tenements for their workers. The majority of tenements were for families, and jobs were provided for men, women and children. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement which continued into the 1930's: good housing at affordable prices for the employee and a stable work force for the mill owner. In the interest of its employees and the village as a whole, the Whitins also financed town services such as schools and a fire station and supported the building of St. Peter's Church, the French-Catholic church which was completed in 1904. Rockdale was never intended to be run as a "company town," however. The Whitin family's financial support of public facilities was to improve the general welfare of the community and not for its own financial gain. Harry T. Whitin was particularly supportive of the local baseball team which played at the company-built town ballfield on Church Street and competed against mill teams from throughout the Blackstone Valley.

During the early 20th century, the Paul Whitin Manufacturing Company continued its role as a leader in the cotton textile industry. It remained a fine goods mill, producing fine combed cotton and jacquards in contrast to the lower grade carded cottons of the Merrimack Valley mills. A recession in the industry affected the mill as early as 1927, nearly halting production of cotton goods. The 1930's were a period of experimentation with new filament fabrics such as rayons and taffeta. The mill was a forerunner in this new field and one of only two mills in the country developing spun acetates, blends of wool with synthetic fabrics.

A labor strike in 1934-35 followed in line with strikes throughout the New England textile industry for higher wages. It was a long strike, ardently supported by the labor unions. The strike was eventually settled on company terms, without allowing the unions to enter. At this time the mill began to sell much of its residential property, including the buildings on McBride, Plantation and Taft Streets. Tenements were auctioned off, with preference given to current residents and mortgages provided by the mill. With transportation so much improved, it was no longer necessary for the mill to provide housing in order to attract good labor.

World War II marked a transition to manufacture of war goods. From 300 to 400 different fabrics were made for the U.S. Government, including a

(Continued)

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Rockdale Common Housing

Continuation sheet District, Rockdale, Mass Item number 8

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received
date entered

Page 4

8. Significance

rayon/wool blend to replace the formerly all wool uniforms of the American Red Cross and a new patented rayon cloth for disposable parachutes. During the Korean War, a specialty item was a silk powder bag cloth impervious to moisture. The mill ceased operation in 1954 when the company was bought out by a larger textile firm. The competition from larger mills and southern mills where labor costs were substantially lower made it difficult for the medium-size specialty firm to prosper.

The Rockdale Common Housing District is significant as the best example of a grouping of company-built tenements dating from the mill's last and most successful period of growth between 1900 and 1917. It has remained in continuous use as low-income housing since it was built and represents all of the major building types associated with Rockdale's tenements: the rowhouse, 2-unit tenement, 6- and 12-unit triple-deckers. The development of these various tenement forms reflects the company's increasing needs for labor during this period and demonstrates the important role company housing played in the continued prosperity of Rockdale's textile industry well into the 20th century.

Architecturally, the district contains the largest and most distinctive tenement structures within the three-block residential area east of the mill that was developed as company tenements. It is also the best example in the village of a clustering of large-scale tenements from this period. The imposing mass, visual continuity and generous siting created by the four triple-decker structures emphasize a concern for community planning on the part of their builders. The quality design of the buildings combined stylistic trends of the day with concerns for practicality in construction and durability. Although the buildings are not associated with a particular architect or builder, they represent fine craftsmanship and vernacular design by local carpenters. Many of these craftsmen were probably newly-arrived French-Canadians whom the mill needed as much to build and maintain the village as to work in the mill.

The district is distinct from other tenement areas of the village in the size and scale of its buildings, and in their arrangement around a central large open yard. As an example of the transition from late 19th to early 20th century tenement design it is also notable. Other earlier tenement development in Rockdale tended to be a row of nearly identical 2-unit tenements along a single street, set close together in linear fashion. This occurred first on Railroad Street, later on Providence Street across from the mill and still later on Church Street. In each case the buildings are of simple vernacular design, and some retain their integrity while others have been unsympathetically upgraded. The village's other triple-decker tenements are scattered among earlier, smaller structures, particularly along the east end of Providence Street. They are set amidst commercial and residential blocks, and likewise, many have been altered from their original appearance.

(Continued)

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Rockdale Common Housing

Continuation sheet District, Rockdale, Mass item number 8

Page 5

8. Significance

All six buildings have remained under a single owner since acquired from the mill in 1935. They were recently sold again for renovation as low-income family housing, a continuation of their original use. The buildings are unoccupied and construction is in progress. The owner intends to apply for historic preservation tax incentives and has received approval at the state level for his proposed work. The exteriors will be restored to their original appearance and the continuity of the district further enhanced visually by the upgrading of the buildings.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Rockdale Common Housing
Continuation sheet District, Rockdale, Mass. Item number 9,10

Page 6

9. Major Bibliographical References

Navin, Thomas, Whitin Machine Works Since 1831, Harvard University, Graduate School of Business Administration, 1950.
Maps and Atlases, 1857, 1870, 1893, Whitinsville Social Library.
Personal Interviews with Harry T. Whitin III, Rye, New York and Paul Whitin V, Kennebunkport, Maine.

10. Verbal Boundary Description

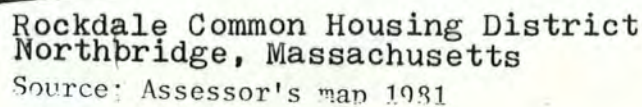
plan entitled 'Plan in Subdivision of a Portion of the Dwellings & Land of the Paul Whitin Manufacturing Co. at Rockdale in Northbridge, Mass.' dated November 30, 1935, prepared by William I. Thompson, C.E., and recorded with Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 89, Plan 2."

The district encompasses six adjacent structures, examples of late 19th and early 20th century tenement design in Rockdale which demonstrate the design transition which occurred during this period due to the ever-increasing need for more labor and more housing stock during the village's peak era of prosperity. It is visually cohesive and there are no visual intrusions. Its surroundings include mid-20th century single-family homes across Plantation Street to the east, typical late 19th and early 20th century 2- and 4-unit rowhouses along Cross and Taft Streets to the south and west, and a mixture of large and small tenements across McBride Street to the north. The district is distinct from its surroundings in terms of the size and larger scale of its major structures and in their siting away from the street on larger lots than most of the village's other tenements.

Rockdale Common Housing
District, Rockdale, Mass.

DISTRICT DATA SHEET

<u>Map #</u>	<u>Historic Name</u>	<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Style</u>
1	Paul Whitin Manufac- turing Company tenement	46-50 Plantation Street	c.1880	Italianate
2	Paul Whitin Manufac- turing Company tenement	56-58 Plantation Street	1917	Colonial Revival
3	Paul Whitin Manufac- turing Company tenement	4-6 McBride Street	1917	Colonial Revival
4	Paul Whitin Manufac- turing Company tenement	12-14 McBride Street	1917	Colonial Revival
5	Paul Whitin Manufac- turing Company tenement	18-20 McBride Street	1917	Colonial Revival
6	Paul Whitin Manufac- turing Company tenement	37-42 Taft Street	c.1912	Colonial Revival



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Rockdale Common Housing District
Worcester County
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. MAR 2 1983
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-7-84
Date Due: 3/31/83 4/16/83
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 3/31/83
Entered in the ☐ RETURN
National Registry ☐ REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

- ☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments: _____

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: ☐ technical corrections cited below
☐ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☐ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ altered	☐ moved date _____
☐ fair	☐ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- _____ summary paragraph
- _____ completeness
- _____ clarity
- _____ applicable criteria
- _____ justification of areas checked
- _____ relating significance to the resource
- _____ context
- _____ relationship of integrity to significance
- _____ justification of exception
- _____ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Average of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

USIT References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____ date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Rockdale Common Housing District

Village of Rockdale

Northbridge, MA

Photo by Margo Webber, July, 1982

Neg. at E. Denis Walsh & Assoc.,

73 Tremont St., Boston, MA 02108

Photo 1 of 5

View looking sw at facades of Mc-

Bride and Plantation Street three--
decker tenements.



Rockdale Common Housing District
Village of Rockdale
Northbridge, MA
Photo by John Bowman, July, 1982
Neg. at E. Denis Walsh & Assoc.
73 Tremont St., Boston, MA 02108
Photo 2 of 5
Facades of Buildings 3,4,5 along
south side of McBride Street, look-
ing southwesterly.



Rockdale Common Housing District
Village of Rockdale

Northbridge, MA

Photo by John Bowman, July, 1982

Neg. at E. Denis Walsh & Assoc.

73 Tremont St., Boston, MA 02108

Photo 3 of 5

Building 1, looking sw towards fa-
cade and north elevation from
Plantation Street.



Rockdale Common Housing District
Village of Rockdale
Northbridge, MA

Photo by Margo Webber, July, 1982
Neg. at E. Denis Walsh & Assoc.

73 Tremont St., Boston, MA 02108
Photo 4 of 5

Facade of Building 6 on Taft Street
from se.



Rockdale Common Housing District

Village of Rockdale

Northbridge, MA

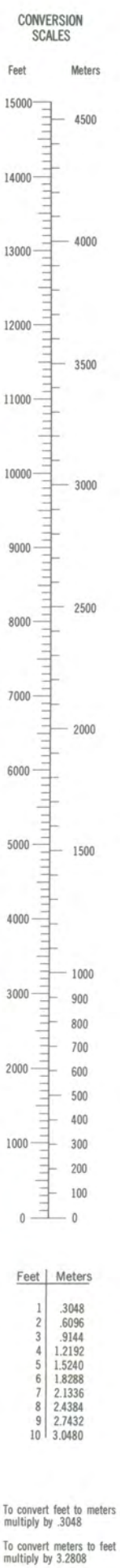
Photo by Margo Webber, July, 1982

Neg. at E. Denis Walsh & Assoc.

73 Tremont St., Boston, MA 02108

Photo 5 of 5

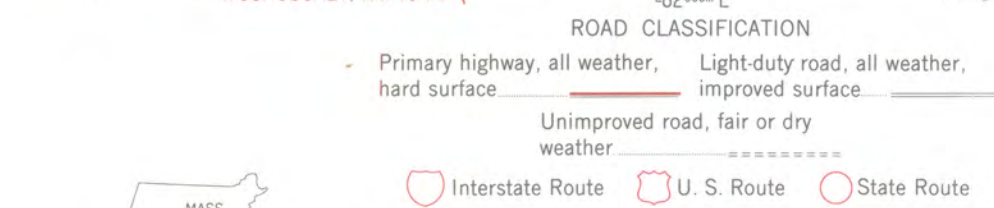
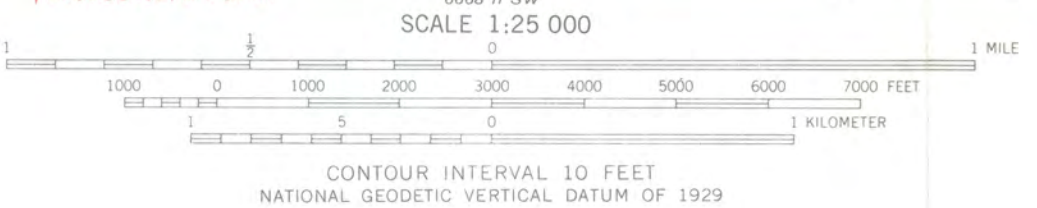
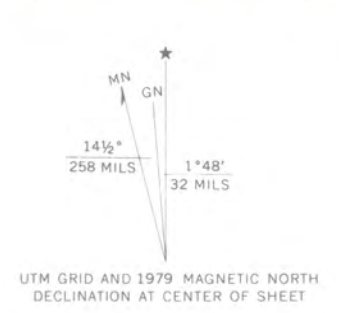
View looking ne across open yard at
center of district from south cor-
ner of Building 6.



ROCKDALE COMMON HOUSING DISTRICT
4 - 20 McBride, 46 - 58 Plantation,
37 - 42 Taft
Rockdale, Massachusetts

UIM references:
A - 19/281230/4669930
B - 19/281320/4669920
C - 19/281300/4669830

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1942-1943. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1967. Field checked 1969
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
Area covered by dashed light-blue pattern is subject to
controlled inundation by West Hill Dam
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979

GRAFTON, MASS.
N4207.5—W7137.5/7.5
1969
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6668 II NW—SERIES V814

E. DENIS WALSH 73 TREMONT STREET • BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS 02108 (617) 742-0516

RECEIVED

AUG - 1 1982

MASS. HIST. COMM.

August 4, 1982

Candy Jenkins
Massachusetts Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Dear Ms. Jenkins:

I have enclosed the inventory sheets, prepared by Margo Webber, for the properties in Northbridge about which we spoke some weeks ago.

We have recently purchased these six buildings, and are in the process of renovating them as subsidized family housing financed by the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency. The buildings have been neglected, but not detrimentally altered over the years. In fact, it is the history of 'benign neglect' which opens the possibility of architectural restoration.

Let me add a word to Margo's synopsis of architectural and historical significance. Visually the impact, when restored, of these six buildings clustered together will be much greater than that of six separate restorations scattered across town. The diversity of building types within the cluster creates a historical microcosm of family mill housing in an environment which we, as owners of nearly the entire block, can control.

Rockdale was one of the earliest mill sites in the Blackstone Valley. Blackstone Valley mills were developed under the "Rhode Island System", which employed the labor of families, as opposed to single women.

Candy Jenkins August 4, 1982
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Page 2.

The family tenements built by the mill company were therefore one of the most significant characteristics of the rural "Rhode Island System" of mill development which dominated the Blackstone Valley.

My final point is this. The economics of government subsidized housing development allows us to build housing, but does not allow us to restore, with historical integrity, these six buildings. The proposed historic designation will generate funds through the tax credit to cover the cost of the exterior restoration techniques required by your office. In this case, a historic designation won't just add to the register, it will produce a restored property.

Your careful consideration of our proposal would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Bowman". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John C. Bowman

JCB:mf
/Enclosures.



Northbridge Historical Commission

MEMORIAL HALL

WHITINSVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 01588

November 8, 1982

RECEIVED

Candice Jenkins
Massachusetts Historical Commission
Washington Street
Boston, MA

MAC 11-10-82

Dear Candice:

The Northbridge Historical Commission has been made aware that E. Dennis Walsh Associates are restoring the apartment houses abutting Plantation and McBride Streets in the Rockdale section of Northbridge.

They have notified us that they have completed a historical-architectural survey of these buildings and have applied for National Register status on the Rockdale Common Project.

These buildings reflect a segmented but important part in the overall historical and architectural scheme in the village of Rockdale. The Northbridge Historical Commission plans to complete a survey of the entire village sometime in the near future.

The E. Dennis Walsh Associates have done an outstanding job on this one segment and we therefore concur with their nomination for National Register status.

Sincerely,

Kenneth M. Warchol

Kenneth M. Warchol
Chairman, N.H.C.

cc: J. Alfred Benoit, Chairman of Selectmen
Representative Jack Driscoll
E. Dennis Walsh Associates

E. DENIS WALSH 73 TREMONT STREET • BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS 02108 (617) 742-0516

January 3, 1983

Valerie Talmage
Mass. Historic Commission
264 Washington Street
Boston Ma. 02108

Dear Valerie:

Your letter of December 27th invited comments on the proposed listing of the Rockdale Common District on the National Register of Historic Places.

I understand the historical significance of the property is well documented in the submissions to your Commission. I will only add a word then about the particular significance of your nomination decision on February 9th.

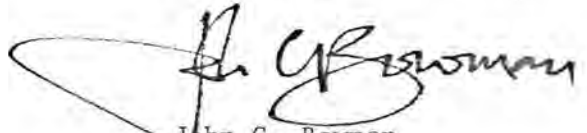
I have recently purchased six vacant buildings in the proposed District and am in the process of renovating them as subsidised family housing. The economics of government subsidised housing development allows me to build housing, but will not allow me to restore, with historical integrity, these six buildings.

However, the proposed historic designation will generate funds through the tax credit to cover the cost of the exterior restoration techniques required by your office.

My point is that in this particular case, your historic designation on February 9th won't just add to the National Register, it will produce a restored property.

I would appreciate your consideration of this aspect of the nomination.

Sincerely,


John C. Bowman

JCB;jmb



TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

WHITINSVILLE, MASS. 01588

(617) 234-2095

January 6, 1983

Ms. Valerie Talmadge
Ma. Historical Commission
284 Washington Street
Boston, Ma. 02108

Dear Ms. Talmadge:

I write to you in support of Rockdale Common Associates' application to have their properties, 6 buildings located one adjacent to the other, on Plantation Street, McBride Street, and Taft Street in the village of Rockdale, Northbridge, Ma., placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Being an amateur local historian of some note (braggadocio of course) it is my judgement this application is more than worthy of consideration, it is worthy of placement on the Register.

The application is superb. Ms. Margo E. Webber, who prepared the document, is to be complimented on her thorough approach and historical accuracy, most particularly in those areas where she has contributed written, and verified, documentation which adds to the general body of information available to those who wish to study the historical evolution of this community. One cannot separate this growth of the Town and the growth of the industrial base, over a period of approximately 150 years (1810-1960) anymore than can the Whitin "Family" be separated from these factors.

We, of this community, think of Northbridge as the birthplace of the industrial revolution in Massachusetts, possibly properly so as we are located only 8 miles from Sam Slater's mill in Slatersville, R.I. The community prospered, or not, according to the economic well being of the Whitin Family and their various textile enterprises. The benevolent paternalism practised by the Family, in good and bad times, is a far cry from the monstrous sweatshops of other New England textile centers, as the Whitins were of our community and trained in their own shops thereby becoming imbued with a sense of community pride most textile magnates of that era lacked.

I wholeheartedly endorse this application and urge you and the Commission to act favorably on this attempt to preserve, and upgrade, the unique vestiges of what was.

Very truly yours,

Spaulding R. Aldrich
Administrative Assistant

JOSEPH D. EARLY
DISTRICT OFFICE

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2349 FAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
TELEPHONE: (202) 225-6101

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

DISTRICT OFFICE:
ROOM 203
34 MICHIGAN STREET
WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS 01895-2457
TELEPHONE: (617) 752-6718

COMMITTEE:
APPROPRIATIONS

January 28, 1983

Valerie Talmage
Massachusetts Historical Commission
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Secretary of State
294 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Dear Ms. Talmage:

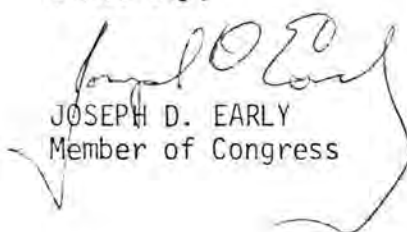
It has come to my attention recently that the Rockdale Common District in the Town of Northbridge, Massachusetts, has filed the necessary forms to be considered by the State Review Board for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. I understand that at the Board's meeting on February 9, 1983, the submissions of the Rockdale Common District will be reviewed and a decision regarding the proposed nomination will be rendered at that time.

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of my keen interest in the matter before the Board on February 9. For many months, I have followed closely the progress being made in the renovation and restoration of the six woodframe buildings which comprise the Rockdale Common District. It is my understanding that the historical significance of the property in question is well documented in the submissions which will be reviewed by the State Review Board.

Although the housing development in Rockdale Common is proceeding according to schedule, the developers inform me that available funding will not allow them to restore, with full historical integrity, the six structures. However, the proposed historic designation would generate funds through the tax credit to cover the cost of the exterior restoration of the buildings. Thus, a historic designation will both add a significant historic district to the National Register and will yield a restored property, as well.

As the Representative of the Town of Northbridge in the Congress, and as an involved party in supporting the development of housing in Rockdale which preserves the historic character of this neighborhood, I endorse the application for nomination of the Rockdale Common District enthusiastically. I am hopeful that the State Review Board will act favorably in nominating this district for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. With gratitude for your consideration in this matter, and with warm good wishes, I am,

Sincerely,


JOSEPH D. EARLY
Member of Congress

JDE:1b



**MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Secretary of State**

294 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts
02108
617-727-8470

MICHAEL JOSEPH CONNOLLY
Secretary of State

February 24, 1983

Ms. Carol Shull, Chief
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

Boston - Harvard Avenue Fire Station (Local)
Dedham - Ames School (Local)
Needham - Amos Fuller House (Local)
Newbury - Hale-Boynton House (Local)
✓ Northbridge - Rockdale Common Housing District (Local)
Springfield - Upper Worthington Historic District (Local)
Winchester - Town Hall (Local)

All have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment. Comments received to date are attached to the nomination forms.

Sincerely,

Candace Jenkins

Candace Jenkins
Registration Director

CJ/lk

RECEIVED

FEB 28 1983