

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Other names/site number: Farnham & Lathers Woolen Mill; A. H. Rice & Company Silk Mill

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 55 Spring Street

City or town: Pittsfield State: Massachusetts County: Berkshire

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 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 level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

<i>Brona Simon</i>	<i>January 15, 2015</i>
<hr/>	
Signature of certifying official/Title: <b>Brona Simon, SHPO</b>	Date
<hr/>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this 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:)

Patricia Andrews  
Signature of the Keeper

3/2/2015  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

*(Check as many boxes as apply.)*

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

*(Check only one box.)*

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

*(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)*

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

*(Enter categories from instructions.)*

INDUSTRY / PROCESSING / EXTRACTION: Manufacturing Facility

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

*(Enter categories from instructions.)*

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

*(Enter categories from instructions.)*

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> C. REVIVALS: Classical Revival

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> C. AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

**Materials:** *(enter categories from instructions.)*

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, stone, metal

### Narrative Description

*(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)*

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### Summary Paragraph

The A. H. Rice Silk Mill complex is a well-preserved brick industrial complex located in the Morningside neighborhood, an urban residential area in the city of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, near the center of Berkshire County in the western part of the state. The six industrial buildings are located on a flat, rectangular, three-acre city block bounded by Spring Street to the east, Willow Street to the south, Cherry Street to the west, and Burbank Street to the north. In basic form, materials, construction methods, and restrained design elements, the A. H. Rice Company complex is an example of slow-burning masonry mill construction and relates directly to other textile mills erected in Pittsfield and throughout Massachusetts during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In its current configuration, the mill complex consists of five connected masonry buildings of two or three stories and one detached wooden barn. The earliest building in the complex (Building #1) was erected in 1874, with other structures added in 1881, 1886, 1900, 1905, and 1945 (all extant), and about 1965 (no longer extant). The complex is surrounded on three sides by a working-class residential neighborhood with wood-frame one-, two-, and three-family housing erected in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The mill complex is bordered on the west by a modern elementary school and the back of the former Berkshire County House of Correction (PIT.172, built 1872). Small-scale commercial businesses and auto-related services are located along Tyler Street in the neighborhood just north of the mill complex.

The walls of each rectangular mill building are of brick masonry construction with shallow, protruding piers. The foundations are built of quarry-faced granite blocks. The longitudinal axes of the buildings are oriented north-northwest by south-southeast; however, for clarity of description, the Spring Street



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

elevation will be referred to as the east elevation and the Burbank Street elevation will be referred to as the north elevation.

The brick walls of each mill building are dominated by regularly spaced, large, multipane windows, and exhibit varying degrees of decorative brick corbelling along the cornice lines. The earliest building (Building #1) and the storage barn (Building #11) have gabled roofs. The other buildings have low-pitched, almost-flat roofs with beveled and exposed rafter tails.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick buildings have tall, double-hung windows with segmental-arched lintels and quarry-faced granite sills. The early 20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings have large, rectangular, multilight, factory-style windows with fixed lights and a hinged awning panel. All of the windows are insulated aluminum replacements (2012) that closely replicate the original configurations.

The industrial complex was vacated in 2006 and was rehabilitated for use as rental apartments in 2012.

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### Narrative Description

The A. H. Rice Company Silk Mill consists of six buildings clustered along Spring Street, on the east side of the three-acre parcel. The buildings are built close to the north, east, and south lot lines, and the entire parcel is enclosed by a low, decorative aluminum fence (2012, noncontributing, PIT.9056). The open space on the parcel is dedicated to parking, open lawn areas, and a community garden. A handful of mature trees on the property have been supplemented by landscaped berms, shrubs, and new trees planted in 2012.

The building numbers below reflect the designation of the buildings during occupancy by the A. H. Rice Company (1874-2006).

**Building #1 (PIT.167, Photos, 1-7)**, built in 1874, is a long, rectangular building located at the northeast corner of the parcel (at the corner of Spring Street and Burbank Street). It is a 2½-story, gable-roofed, red-brick building on a raised basement, with corbelled brick trim and returns. The north slope of the roof features a large, wood-framed shed dormer. All of the windows are insulated aluminum windows that were installed during the rehabilitation of the building in 2012.

The primary façade on the east gable end of Building 1 (facing east on Spring Street) retains the former main entrance located at the center of the first floor. The entrance (now serving as a private entry to a single apartment) has a projecting gabled portico supported by two Doric columns. The wood door is flanked by three-pane sidelights and engaged pilasters. The portico is flanked by double-hung (12/12) windows with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels. There are two basement-level windows with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels flanking the front door and the concrete entrance stairs. A loading entry door (now sealed) with granite sills and triple-course, arched-brick lintels at the center of the second floor, is flanked by double-hung (6/6) windows with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels. There is an offset wall vent located between the second and third floors. There is a single double-hung (6/6) window in the gable end at the attic level.

The north façade of Building 1 (facing Burbank Street) is twelve bays long. The window bays are separated by brick pilasters that run the height of the building to support a corbelled brick frieze. There are double-hung (12/12) windows, with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels, spaced at

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

regular intervals on the first and second floors. The basement level features smaller, double-hung (8/8) windows with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels. A former loading door (now fixed in place) is located at the center in the first floor. The door features six fixed-glass panes over two wood panels. The large shed dormer on the north slope of the roof has two double-hung (12/12) windows.

The west gable end of Building 1 (facing the parking area) has a corbelled-brick frieze and return. There are three small, double-hung (8/8) windows with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels on the basement level; both the first and second stories have three double-hung (6/6) windows with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels. There is a single double-hung (8/8) sash with a granite sill in the gable at the attic level.

The south façade of Building 1 is partially concealed by the 1886 addition (Building 1A). The visible portion has nine exposed window bays. There are two private apartment entry doors on the first floor, each accessed by a set of modern concrete stairs sheltered by a flat canopy roof. At the basement level, the windows consist of double-hung (8/8) sash with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels. On the first and second floors, the south elevation has double-hung (6/6) windows with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels.

On the interior, Building #1 was formerly an open factory floor on two levels with wood floors, painted brick walls, two rows of wooden support columns, and exposed ceiling beams. Stud-wall office partitions were inserted on both floors in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The space has been converted to residential apartments with new partition walls, gypsum wallboard finishes, and exposed ceiling beams.

**Building #1A (PIT.763, Photos 1-3, 6, 7, 12)**, an addition to Building 1 completed in 1886, is a two-story, rectangular, red-brick building that is joined at right angles to the south elevation of Building 1 along Spring Street, on the east side of the parcel. The five-bay building is two stories high on a raised basement and has a low-pitched roof with a shallow wood cornice supported by simple brackets. The east wall is reinforced with steel plates that indicate the locations of additional support for the first and second floors. All of the windows are insulated aluminum replacement windows installed in 2012.

The east elevation of Building 1A (facing Spring Street) has four basement-level, arched window openings with equipment vents installed as the top sash. At the first-floor level there is a former loading door (now fixed in place) near the south end, and four double-hung (6/6) windows with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels. Five double-hung (6/6) windows and a single wall vent on the second floor are aligned with the openings below.

The west elevation of Building 1A (facing the courtyard and parking lot) has five exposed window bays. The first floor has two individual private apartment entries near the north end, accessed by modern concrete stairs and sheltered by a metal canopy. There are three double-hung (6/6) windows with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels on the first floor. The five double-hung (6/6) windows with granite sills and double-course, arched-brick lintels on the second floor are aligned with the openings below.

The north and south walls of Building 1A are embedded in the adjoining walls of Building 1 (north) and Building 3 (south).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

On the interior, Building 1A was formerly an open warehouse and shipping space with wood floors, painted brick walls, and exposed ceiling beams. The space has been converted to residential apartments with new interior partitions, gypsum wallboard finishes, and exposed ceiling beams.

**Building #3 (PIT.764, Photos 1-3, 6, 8, 9, 12-14)**, erected ca. 1900, is a two-story, red-brick building that projects forward to the east lot line on Spring Street. The building has a square footprint and a low-pitched roof with a wooden cornice supported by simple brackets. The east façade of Building #3 (facing Spring Street) projects forward of the adjacent buildings (Buildings 1A & 7) and has four large window bays on each floor. The window openings feature double-course, arched-brick lintels and granite sills. Each masonry opening is fitted with a large pair of double-hung (6/6) windows.

The north and south elevations of Building 3 are joined directly to the end walls of the adjoining buildings (1A and 7), but Building 3 projects one bay forward of the adjoining walls. There are single bays with double-hung (6/6) windows on the east ends of the north and south side projections.

On the west elevation, Building 3 faces the landscaped courtyard and serves as the main entrance to the apartment complex. The west elevation has four exposed window bays on each floor before it meets the north wall of Building 7. One bay on the first floor is fitted with a double entrance door and transom under a metal entrance canopy. The remaining bays have segmental-arched brick lintels and granite sills. Each masonry opening is fitted with a pair of double-hung (6/6) windows.

On the interior, Building 3 was formerly manufacturing and warehouse space with wood floors, painted brick walls, and exposed ceiling beams. The space has been reconfigured as the main entrance to the apartment complex, and includes a fitness room on the first floor and a community meeting room on the second floor.

**Building #4 (PIT.765, Photos 3, 5, 12, 13)** was built about 1905 as a two-story, red-brick building and was subsequently expanded with a brick third story (ca. 1945). It now reads as a single three-story, red-brick structure projecting from the north and south walls of Building 7 and above the roofline of Building 7. Building 4 has a square footprint, projecting brick corner piers, a brick beltcourse between the first and second floors, and a flat roof with a shallow metal coping. The building has three window bays on each floor on the north elevation, and two window bays on each floor on the east and west projections. Each rectangular masonry opening has a simple granite sill and a header defined only by running-course brick. The masonry openings are fitted with multipane, industrial-style, fixed-light windows, each with an operable awning section at the middle. The third-floor windows do not align with the windows below.

Building 4 was formerly configured as production space with wood floors and painted brick walls. It has been reconfigured as residential apartments with new interior partitions and gypsum wallboard finishes.

**Building #7 (PIT.766, Photos 2, 3, 8-12, 14)**, built ca. 1900 and expanded ca. 1940, is the largest building in the mill complex and served as the main production facility. The two-story, red-brick, rectangular block was originally eight bays long and six bays wide, but was extended to twenty bays long about 1940. The building has a low-pitched roof and a wood cornice supported by square wooden brackets. The long walls divided by shallow brick piers were later partially blocked by construction of Building 4 on the north side (ca. 1945) and Buildings 8 and 9 on the south side (ca. 1965, demolished 2010).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

The window openings on the first and second floors of Building 7 are large rectangular openings with flat brick lintels and granite sills in the 1900 portion of the building (east end), and concrete lintels and sills in the 1940 expansion (west end). The windows are all multipane, industrial-style, fixed-light windows, each with an operable awning section at the middle. One of the first-floor window bays on the north elevation has been converted to a secondary entry to the apartment complex.

On the interior, Building 7 was formerly an open factory floor with two rows of wood support columns on each floor. The wood floors were heavily stained with machine oil, the painted brick walls had no insulation, and the ceiling beams and roof decking were exposed. Building 7 has been reconfigured as residential apartments, arrayed on both sides of a central corridor with new interior partitions, gypsum wallboard finishes, and exposed ceiling beams. A secondary staircase is located at the west end of the building.

**Building #11 (PIT.767, Photos 6, 15)**, built about 1900 and expanded ca. 1945, is a two-story, wood-frame barn located at the southeast corner of the lot near the intersection of Spring Street and Willow Street. The building has wood-clapboard siding and an asphalt-shingle roof. The windows in the north and south gable ends and on the east and west sides have been covered with painted plywood panels, except for the attic vents.

Building 11 is used only for the storage of maintenance equipment. The east elevation on Spring Street has two grade-level vehicle bays equipped with modern overhead garage doors. On the interior, it is a utilitarian building with unfinished storage space.

Several smaller buildings and structures that were formerly part of the mill complex were demolished in 2010 to facilitate rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the remaining buildings.

- Building #2 (1889 & 1900) was a brick dyehouse completely enclosed by Buildings #1, 1A, 3, 4, and 5. The courtyard and main entrance to the complex now occupy that location.
- Building #5 (1902) and Building #6 (ca. 1950) were the old and new boiler rooms, respectively—brick structures located along the north wall of Building #4. Both building sites were heavily contaminated with fuel oil and other hazardous substances. The site is now landscaped and incorporates tenant mailboxes, sidewalks, and parking.
- Buildings #8 and #9 (ca. 1965) were concrete-block factory buildings directly adjoining the south side of Building #7. The site now holds landscaped plantings, parking, and a community garden.
- Building #10 (ca. 1965) was a small, wood-frame covered, loading dock that was located at the junction of Building 8 (manufacturing) and Building 11 (storage barn). The site is now landscaped and provides direct pedestrian access from the apartment complex to Spring Street.

Two smokestacks that are visible in historic photographs were removed while the mill was still in operation. The east smokestack adjacent to Building 1A was erected in 1886, but had been removed by 1904. The west smokestack between Building 1 and Building 7 was built ca. 1900 and was removed by 1950, when the new boiler room (Building 6) was built.

The spring and stream that originally provided water for the steam boilers at the mill site were captured by underground piping early in the development of the site. No visible evidence of the water source remains.



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

The 2012 rehabilitation of the A. H. Rice Silk Mill created new parking areas on the south and northwest sides of the complex. The southwest corner of the parcel holds a community garden. The entire site is now enclosed by a modern aluminum fence (2012, noncontributing) in a simplified version of the traditional cast-iron style.

### Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are currently recorded on the A.H. Rice Silk Mill property or in the general area (within one mile), sites may be present. Most known ancient sites in the region are located along terraces of the West and East Branches of the Housatonic River and its tributaries. Environmental attributes of the mill property indicate the presence of some locational criteria (slope, soil damage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable indicators for many types of ancient soils. Urban land deposits characterize the level to moderately sloping mill property. Identification of soil types and their characteristics in this category have been obscured by urban development. The presence of urban land soils types also implies that integrity may be a problem with any ancient sites in this area. The district complex is located more than 1,000 feet from the nearest wetlands, a factor that also adversely affects the archaeological sensitivity for ancient sites at this location. Given the above information, a low potential exists for locating ancient Native American sites on the property.

A high potential exists for locating historic archaeological resources on the mill property. Most industrial buildings in the complex survive; however, some buildings that are no longer extant may survive as archaeological sites. Structural evidence may survive from a separate storage building originally located to the southwest of the main mill. Similar evidence may survive from a separate dyehouse (Building 2), demolished in 2010. Structural evidence may also survive from barns, stables, and industrial-related outbuildings employed in the manufacturing process. Occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may also survive in the area around the mill buildings still extant in the mill complex.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1874-1964  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

RICE, Arthur H. (1854-1927, mill owner)  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

BURBANK, George W. (1837-1909, developer)  
\_\_\_\_\_

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** *(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)*

The A. H. Rice Silk Mill (55 Spring Street, Pittsfield, Massachusetts) is a complex of connected masonry industrial buildings and a detached, wood-frame barn associated with the local manufacture of wool, silk, and specialty fibers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In its current configuration, the complex consists of five connected masonry buildings dating from 1874 to 1945 and one detached, wood-frame barn dating from about 1900. The buildings represent vernacular expressions of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial and industrial architectural styles, and have a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The A. H. Rice Silk Mill is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criteria A and C, with a period of significance that extends from 1874 (the date of initial industrial development) to 1964 (the objective 50-year threshold). The mill complex was rehabilitated for adaptive reuse as rental housing in 2012, using state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits.

The property meets National Register Criterion A at the local level in the area of industry for its historical association with the manufacture of silk thread, braids, and specialty materials during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The A. H. Rice Silk Mill represents an important aspect of the industrial development of Pittsfield, and is historically related to the development of the textile industry in Massachusetts and the creation of jobs and economic activity in Berkshire County.

The mill also meets National Register Criterion C at the local level in the area of architecture as a distinctive and well-preserved example of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century industrial "slow-burning" construction. The general layout and individual buildings of the mill complex represent a functional approach to industrial manufacture based on the stages of production, the size of production equipment, the availability of natural light, and the proximity of administrative and supervisory activities. The mill buildings incorporate such common features as long, narrow building footprints, slow-burning masonry construction, and large, evenly spaced windows.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** *(Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)*

The A. H. Rice Silk Mill is historically significant as an expression of the emerging textile industry in Pittsfield during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The A. H. Rice Silk Mill complex represents a specialized segment in the development of major textile manufacturing industries in western Massachusetts.

#### Historical Background

Land in the Pittsfield area was first made available for colonial settlement through a public auction in 1736. Initial settlement was slow due to geographic isolation and rugged topography, but by 1753, the land was cleared for lots and there were 200 inhabitants. In 1761, the settlement was incorporated as the town of Pittsfield.



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

Pittsfield grew after the American Revolution with agriculture, trade, and small-scale textile and paper industries serving as the primary economic engines. The Housatonic River powered iron forges in Pittsfield as well as sawmills and gristmills, dyeworks, and factories for weaving and spinning.

Pittsfield's population grew by only 269 people between 1791 and 1800. Local historian Joseph Smith in 1876 reflected on the slight increase:

It is worthy of remark that all the towns through which ran the great highways crossing Berkshire from the east to the west gained in population. But the chief agencies which advanced Pittsfield were agriculture, commerce and manufactures—not an uncommon combination, and the same which still prevails. But the order of their precedence has become reversed; it now being manufactures, commerce and agriculture.<sup>1</sup>

By 1800, the town had a population of 2,261 and served as a local trade center, with grain and livestock farms surrounding the town center and with sawmills and gristmills operating on the Housatonic River and its tributaries. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pittsfield became a thriving commercial center due to the hardwood forests on the hills and mountains surrounding the town, which led to the development of a thriving paper manufacturing industry on local waterways. The introduction of Merino sheep to New England in 1807 helped boost both agriculture and industry, and supported the development of waterpowered woolen mills throughout the region.

The connection of the Western Railroad (later the Boston & Albany Railroad) to Pittsfield in 1841 provided a link to the urban markets in Boston and New York. The railroad contributed to Pittsfield's rapid development as a center for manufacturing, trade, and tourism in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Between 1850 and 1870, Pittsfield's population increased from 5,872 to 11,112. The construction of the railroad had brought an expansion of the local paper and textile mills, as well as an influx of Irish Catholic immigrants to Pittsfield. Many of these immigrants, men and women, would form the labor pool for the A. H. Rice Silk Mill and other Berkshire County textile mills.

## CRITERION A: INDUSTRY

### Initial Development – 1874-1886

Pittsfield developer George Wesley Burbank (1837-1909) built the brick mill building (Building #1) at the corner of Spring Street and Burbank Street as a speculative venture in 1874. Burbank was born in Pittsfield in 1837, the third of ten children of Abraham and Julia Burbank. His father was a successful builder, farmer, hotelkeeper, merchant and landlord who owned several business blocks and tenements in Pittsfield.

George W. Burbank followed in his father's footsteps and was a successful Pittsfield real estate developer and civic leader. During the 1850s, Burbank had worked in both San Francisco and Michigan, but in April 1861, he mustered in with the 8<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. After the end of the Civil War, Burbank returned to Pittsfield and focused on real estate development: "besides building the lower end of Burbank Street, he has built Spring and Water Streets, and the Rice Silk Mill [the subject of this nomination], one of the finest in the city. He also erected the West Street Block, and many smaller

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Edward Adams Smith, *The History of Pittsfield (Berkshire County), Massachusetts: From the year 1800 to the year 1876* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1876).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

buildings, and nearly a quarter of a century ago he put the steeple on the Episcopal Church in Lanesborough. He has erected many buildings on Summer Street.”<sup>2</sup>

Burbank helped advance Pittsfield’s development as a regional textile manufacturing center. The invention of the steam engine stimulated the construction of several mills, and the railroad allowed the importation of raw materials (such as raw silk imported from China, Japan, and Bengal), and distribution of the finished products.

In addition, immigration to New England created an available workforce of people from traditional textile areas such as Ireland and England. While the planned industrial communities of Lawrence, Lowell, and Fall River were the initial centers of the Massachusetts textile industry, the planned towns of Holyoke and Chicopee in the Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts were not far behind. Berkshire County in far western Massachusetts made a smaller, but significant, contribution to the state’s textile output, especially in the local manufacturing centers of Adams, North Adams, Great Barrington, and Pittsfield.

Between 1874 and 1876, local developers built several steam-powered mills in Pittsfield:

In May, 1874, all the water-power of the town being occupied, and there being a strong public desire to extend manufacturing, after a series of public meetings, a company was organized, with a capital of forty-two thousand dollars, for the purpose of erecting a building with steam-power, to be leased, in such portions as might be needed, to other parties.<sup>3</sup>

During the summer of 1874, George Burbank tapped a local spring as a source of water for steampower and started construction on the new mill building on Spring Street. *The Pittsfield Sun* reported on June 17, 1874:

Mr. George Burbank, who proposes to excel his father as a builder, is about to erect on the corner of Spring and Burbank streets, a building two stories high, 100 feet by 50 on the ground, with stone basement, brick walls and slate roof, substantially built, with steam power.<sup>4</sup>

Burbank lived a block away, at the northeast corner of Burbank and North Second streets. The county jail, with its wide open space, was the only property that separated Burbank from his new mill, so Burbank could also easily monitor construction.

Shortly thereafter, in the summer and early autumn of 1874, the *Pittsfield Sun* provided several progress reports on Burbank’s building.

July 8, 1874: Geo. Burbank in digging for the foundations and cellar of his steam power mill...has discovered a spring of water of capacity enough to furnish his boilers. He has commenced receiving brick for the structure which will be immediately put up.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Biographical Review XXXI: Containing Life Sketches of Leading Citizens of Berkshire County, Mass* (Boston: Biographical Review Publishing Company), 1899.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *History of Pittsfield* (1876).

<sup>4</sup> *The Pittsfield Sun*, June 17, 1874.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, July 8, 1874

A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

August 5, 1874: The foundation of the Geo. Burbank new steam power mill is laid, and the walls have been started. It is said that it is also to be occupied for a silk factory.<sup>6</sup>

August 12, 1874: The George W. Burbank manufactory will be 100 feet long by 40 feet wide, three stories in height, with separate engine and boiler house, 22 by 40 feet. The roof will be on in a fortnight, and the whole finished by the middle of September. The engine will be of 30 horsepower.<sup>7</sup>

September 30, 1874: Geo. W. Burbank left for New York State on Monday, to secure a silk manufacturer as a tenant for his new mill.<sup>8</sup>

The building was initially known as the Burbank Manufactory Building, but Burbank's decision to build the new steampower plant was ill timed. The Panic of 1873 triggered a long period of economic depression and the Berkshire region was hit hard by a failing economy. On November 24, 1875, the *Pittsfield Sun* reported that there was a "suspension of two of the principal mills, owing to financial difficulties..."<sup>9</sup> In February 1876, the Maple Grove woolen firm in South Adams, which came to prominence during the Civil War, closed its doors. At the same time, the Berkshire Woolen Mills in Great Barrington failed "to the complete astonishment of not only the citizens of that locality but to the whole county."<sup>10</sup>

In May of 1876, the *Boston Post* reported:

The heavy failures of mill owners in Northern Berkshire is to be regretted the more since it appears from the situation as if a few months would have enabled the manufacturers to tide over the stagnation and keep themselves and their creditors whole. Perhaps they will not be serious sufferers in the end, as it is, and as the magnificent mill privileges there available will not remain long idle, the blow to general industry cannot be looked upon as very prostrating.<sup>11</sup>

According to Pittsfield historian Edward Boltwood, "the period of business distress between 1870 and 1880 was burdensome to the textile manufacturers of Berkshire, and heavy failures in this branch of industry discouraged the people in both the northern and southern sections of the county."<sup>12</sup>

Although he was the son of one of Pittsfield's business leaders, George W. Burbank was not immune to the financial difficulties plaguing the region. On March 29, 1876, the *Pittsfield Sun* reported "Another Failure":

We regret to learn the financial difficulties of Mr. George Burbank have increased to such an extent as to compel him to go into insolvency, unless some arrangement can be made with his creditors, which is improbable. Mr. Burbank has been industriously engaged in building, in the northeast part of the village, for ten years, where he erected two years ago a brick steam power building, with [sic] the prostration of business has prevented his renting... Mr. Burbank has acted

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., August 5, 1874.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., August 12, 1874

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., September 30, 1874

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., November 24, 1875

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., February 2, 1876.

<sup>11</sup> *Boston Post*, May 1876.

<sup>12</sup> Boltwood, *History of Pittsfield* (1916), p. 27.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

in the most honorable manner, not favoring any creditor, and not securing to himself even a homestead. His paper in the bank is all secured by good endorsers. His liabilities are about \$30,000. His assets consist of the steam power building and a number of houses, whose value cannot readily be computed.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the lack of a primary tenant, Burbank's new mill was not entirely vacant. Other local wool and silk factories employed many female laborers. On December 15, 1875, the *Pittsfield Sun* reported a gathering of the "silk factory girls" at a local barn "in women's rights style, but a party of 69 bachelors from town put in an appearance and a portion joined the dance."<sup>14</sup> Burbank's building also served a social purpose in the evenings. In 1877, a local group identified only as "the P.L.G.'s" held "their second social dance at Burbank's factory."<sup>15</sup> A few weeks later, another group mentioned only as "the P.C.T.'s" gave "an entertainment at Burbank's Factory."<sup>16</sup>

#### Farnham & Lathers Woolen Mill, 1877-1886

Despite the depressed economy, Burbank was eventually successful in finding a textile manufacturer to occupy the new building. In 1877, the new building became the Farnham and Lathers woolen mill. Richard Lathers, Jr. (ca. 1854-1925) was an 1876 graduate of Williams College and had formerly worked at the Pomeroy woolen mill in Pittsfield. William E. Farnham (b. 1837) came to Pittsfield as a young adult, "where he was engaged in the woolen mills for a number of years. In this work he showed himself proficient and was given one of the most responsible positions."<sup>17</sup>

Within four years of leasing the building, Farnham and Lathers purchased the property from Burbank. The October 19, 1881, edition of the *Pittsfield Sun* reported: "The Burbank Steam Power Building on Burbank Street was bought last week by Richard Lathers and W.E. Farnum [sic], for \$4,000, and it is said they may build an addition of 100 feet to it."<sup>18</sup> The woolen mill manufactured "heavy weight overcoatings."<sup>19</sup>

In 1886, Farnham and Lathers dissolved its operations, and the Spring Street mill was again vacant.

#### A. H. Rice & Company Silk Mill, 1886-2006

The local firm of A. H. Rice & Company purchased the Spring Street mill complex following the closing of Farnham & Lathers, in 1886. The company had been formed a decade earlier, when S. K. Smith, foreman of the Saunders Silk Company, purchased part of the Saunders machinery and started his own silk enterprise.

William B. Rice (1824-1917) of Lanesborough provided S. K. Smith with a loan of \$5,000 to assist with the start-up business, initially known as Smith and Rice. William Bainbridge Rice was an 1844 graduate of Williams College and was for "many years an exceptionally efficient educator, eventually an equally

<sup>13</sup> *Pittsfield Sun*, March 29, 1876.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, December 15, 1875.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, January 31, 1877.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, February 14, 1877.

<sup>17</sup> "William Eugene Farnham Gone," *The Enterprise* (Blair, Nebraska), June 25, 1925.

<sup>18</sup> *The Pittsfield Sun*, October 19, 1881.

<sup>19</sup> Boltwood, *History of Pittsfield* (1916), p. 27.



A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

successful manufacturer ... one of the most honored of the citizens of Pittsfield."<sup>20</sup> He was born January 12, 1824, the son of Royal Rice (a farmer and shoemaker) and Sarah (Heminway) Rice. William Bainbridge Rice had begun his career as a schoolteacher in the nearby town of Peru (Berkshire County), and became the principal of Norfolk Academy in Norfolk, Connecticut (just south of Berkshire County). Rice moved to Pittsfield in 1858 and "entered into the steam, water and gas pipe business"<sup>21</sup>

In 1876, William Bainbridge Rice was the chairman of the Pittsfield school committee and functioned as the superintendent of schools for many years. Rice was described as "an old-line Whig, and since its formation a staunch Republican ... [he was a] life-long member of the Congregational church and served for many years as one of the board of deacons of the South church, Pittsfield."<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the loan to Smith, William B. Rice placed his twenty-two year old son, Arthur Hitchcock Rice (1854-1927), in the new business to protect his investment and "therein to learn the business."<sup>23</sup> A Pittsfield native, young Arthur Rice was a recent (1876) graduate of Williams College.

The new firm of Smith & Rice was responsible for "the manufacture of silk thread in a small shop on the corner of Robbins Avenue and Linden Street,"<sup>24</sup> where between thirty and fifty people were employed.<sup>25</sup> By 1884, Smith & Rice had dissolved its operations, and A. H. Rice & Company became the sole successor to the firm, with capital of \$14,000 and bills payable of \$32,000.<sup>26</sup>

A. H. Rice & Company first began operation at the Smith & Rice mill on Linden Street in 1884. The company produced silk sewing thread and braid used in binding men's suits. Arthur Rice, in recalling the first year of the A. H. Rice & Company, wrote:

Naturally, we were very anxious about the results of the first season's business after dissolution, as our future depended on it. At the end of six months we took our first inventory, and after making some necessary reductions in valuations we found that we had broken even. I think I was more gratified by this result than I have been by any inventory since, though we have at times made as high as 30% on our capital. It meant that we could get along for at least another season.<sup>27</sup>

Silk braid, then of rare manufacture in the United States, was a new and profitable product added to the company's early output. A line of mohair braids for women's coats and suits was introduced in the early 1880s.<sup>28</sup>

The new company employed "many operatives, being one of the significant business successes of Pittsfield distributing a large product through offices in New York, Chicago, and St. Louis."<sup>29</sup> With a need for overall expansion, the company looked to relocate from its small Linden Street location.

<sup>20</sup> Rollin Hillyer Cooke, *Genealogical and Personal Memoirs of Berkshire County, Massachusetts* (Pittsfield, MA: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 163-167.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Boltwood, *History of Pittsfield Massachusetts* (1916), p. 249.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p 249; and "Same Family has operated Local Plant for 60 Years," undated newspaper clipping.

<sup>26</sup> ELC Industries, "History," ELC Industries Homepage. Last Date Modified: 2012. Date Accessed: August 24, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), December 12, 1978.

<sup>29</sup> Cooke, *Genealogical and Personal Memoirs* (1906), pp. 163-167.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

In 1886, A. H. Rice & Co. purchased Burbank's brick mill complex on Spring Street from Farnham & Lathers for \$3,800.<sup>30</sup> The company erected a new two-story brick addition (Building 1A) perpendicular to the main building (Building 1) shortly after their purchase of the mill.

When A. H. Rice & Company purchased the Spring Street mill complex in 1886, the surrounding residential neighborhood was still being developed. In the 1870s, George W. Burbank had begun to lay out new residential streets in the northeast section of Pittsfield and to construct workers' housing in the area. The owners of the Rice Silk Mill followed that lead and continued to invest in the community.

In 1889, A. H. Rice & Company "...sold 13 of their 41 building lots in the section of town near the Silk Mill and will only sell half a dozen more at the present price. Ten houses are going up in the vicinity, 4 of them on the Rice lots."<sup>31</sup>

George Burbank had constructed two residences just northwest of the mill at 140 and 146 Burbank Street in 1876. The two houses most likely provided employee housing or additional rental income. They were part of the Silk Mill complex until at least 1956, but were demolished by the A. H. Rice Company to allow for the expansion of mill facilities and to improve shipping and delivery access to the site.

Between 1889 and 1893, there was a separate storage building located to the southwest of the main mill. During this time, there was also a separate dyehouse (Building 2, demolished 2010). Between 1889 and 1895, the basement of the main building was used for storage. The mill used steam power, fueled by coal, for heat and to power the machines. The building had kerosene lighting and Grinnell automated sprinklers. A man slept in the building as a night watchman, and the attic was vacant. The first floor was for throwing (silk preparation), and the second floor was used for finishing.<sup>32</sup>

In the 1890s, A. H. Rice & Company "was busily raising the quality and quantity of their output of braid."<sup>33</sup> The company had purchased the mohair braid plant of the Barnes Manufacturing Company of Paterson, NJ, in 1893, and installed the equipment of this plant in Pittsfield in 1894. The complicated machinery had been made in Germany and required specially trained operatives."<sup>34</sup> There was a separate building for mohair by 1895. By 1896, the company employed 250 people year-round and produced silk thread, fancy silk braids, and mohair braids.

In the census tract surrounding the silk mill (Ward 2, District 67), the 1900 Federal census recorded only 41 employees of the silk mill—ten men and 31 women, ranging in age from fourteen to 46. The jobs reflect the complicated series of steps in preparing, weaving, and finishing silk fibers: raw silk winder,

<sup>30</sup> Daniels, Tammy, "Pittsfield Silk Mill Begins Residential Renovation," Pittsfield.Com website. Last Date Modified: October 28, 2011. Date Accessed: August 24, 2012. ELC Industries, "History," ELC Industries Homepage. Last Date Modified: 2012. Date Accessed: August 24, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> *Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), October 3, 1889. Most of the houses erected in the Spring Street neighborhood were two-story, wood-frame, multifamily homes erected on small lots and ornamented with modest Queen Anne/Victorian details. Many of the houses are still extant in the neighborhood, but have been substantially altered with synthetic siding, vinyl replacement windows, and pressure-treated decks. The current National Register nomination focuses on the manufacturing complex, and does not include any of the houses in the adjacent neighborhood.

<sup>32</sup> Sanborn Insurance Maps: 1889, 1895.

<sup>33</sup> Boltwood, *History of Pittsfield Massachusetts* (1916), p. 27.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

raw silk doubler, soft silk reeler, silk dyer, silk spinner, silk warp winder, silk spooler, silk weaver, silk braider, braid picker, braid boxer, and foreman.

Most of the employees identified in 1900 (85%) were born in Massachusetts or other northeastern states. Only six of the identified employees were foreign born (a married couple from Germany, one person from France, one from England, one from Ireland, and one from Canada.) The great majority of residents in the census tract were employed in other industries (cotton mill, wood mill, hosiery mill, shoe manufacturing) or in a variety of downtown retail and commercial establishments.

The early success of the A. H. Rice Silk Mill mirrored a nationwide trend. The silk industry had “a long established tradition in the United States as one of the earliest and most prominent industries along the East Coast.”<sup>35</sup>

The Silk Association of American noted that silk manufacturing in the United States had displayed “a marked development” since 1890:

It has taken its place as one of the leading industries of the nation and along several lines has established its independence of foreign competition. The causes for these favorable conditions were manifold. Chief among them was the enterprise of the manufacturer, the perfection and reliability of his machinery, and the wise restriction of importation during the less prosperous period of the development of the industry.<sup>36</sup>

In 1902, A. H. Rice & Company hired the firm of Dodge and Devanny to build a new, one-story-high engine room (Building 5, the Old Boiler Room, demolished 2010) which was to measure 50 by 20 feet and “to be of brick and ... separated from the other structures.”<sup>37</sup> By 1905, the Pittsfield electric street railway ran along Burbank Street with a stop in the vicinity of the mill.

In 1905, the company was incorporated as the A. H. Rice Company, with W. B. Rice, president, and A. H. Rice, treasurer.<sup>38</sup> As competitors floundered or went out of business, management astutely purchased their braiding machines and specialized equipment, adding to Rice's array of unique patterns, stripers, and size options:

Changes in fashion and the decreasing use of braids for ordinary clothes caused the ruin of many competitors. The Rice Company acquired the business of some of the bankrupts and went on prospering, promoting the industrial use of braids and threads to replace the demand that had formerly come from tailors and dressmakers.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Bethlehem Silk Mill, Bethlehem, PA, National Register Nomination Form, 2004; and Boltwood, *History of Pittsfield* (1916), p. 249.

<sup>36</sup> Franklin S. Allen, *The Silk Industry of America, June 1st, 1900* (Silk Association of America, 1902), p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> *Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), May 15, 1902.

<sup>38</sup> Cooke, *Genealogical and Personal Memoirs* (1906), pp. 163-167.

<sup>39</sup> George F. Willison, *The History of Pittsfield, Massachusetts 1916-1955* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts: City of Pittsfield, 1955), 413.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

In 1908, the company was one of the first silk manufacturers to use rayon, a cellulose- or wood-based synthetic silk. Within twenty years, Rice was the first company to transition from producing silk parachute cord to producing cords made of rayon at the Pittsfield plant.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to running the mill, Arthur Rice had been active in Pittsfield business affairs as President of the Berkshire County Savings Bank and Treasurer of the Berkshire Loan & Trust Company.<sup>41</sup> When A. H. Rice died in Atlantic City in 1927, his son, William T. Rice (1891-1978), assumed control of the company.

Some of the silk mill employees have been identified in the 1910 and 1920 Federal census records. In the census tract surrounding the silk mill (Ward 2, District 69), the 1910 census included 21 employees—three men and nineteen women ranging in age from fourteen to 48. Their jobs reflected the increasing mechanization of the spinning and weaving process: “floss girl” (Mattie Kernan, age 15), silk winder, doubler, twister, spooler, and braider, with an addition of a “typewriter” (Alice Pease, age 21). All of the silk-mill employees in the surrounding census tract were born in Massachusetts or other northeastern states. The great majority of neighborhood residents were employed in the “electrical works” (later General Electric), or in downtown retail and service industries.

The 1920 census for the neighborhood (Ward 2, District 55) identified 24 employees of the silk mill—seven men and seventeen women ranging in age from fifteen to 65. All were born in Massachusetts or other northeastern states, except for a married couple from Canada and a woman from Ireland. Their jobs reflected steps in the production process—reeler, dyer, spooler, winder, braider, and lapper—with an accountant (Frank Ensign), an office clerk (Orvilla Gagne), and a foreman (Charles Bradley). The silk mill employed only a small proportion of neighborhood residents. Most of the people in the neighborhood were employed at General Electric in Pittsfield, or at the Crane Paper mills in nearby Dalton.

During the 1920s, the company experienced profound growth, with the installation of an electrical power system in 1923.<sup>42</sup> The A. H. Rice Company increased both its capacity and its market share with the purchase of machinery from two defunct braid mills in 1928: the Sutro Bros. Braid Co. of New York and New Jersey, and the Waitsfelder Braid Company of Brooklyn.

The size of the workforce at the silk mill is difficult to estimate without personnel records. The 1930 census for the neighborhood surrounding the mill (Ward 2, District 52) recorded only sixteen silk-mill employees—eight men and eight women ranging in age from thirteen to 64. Only three were foreign born (Mary Sias from France, Edward Goodrow from Scotland, and Octave Bourdeau from Canada.) Jobs remained standardized—dyer, spinner, winder, braider—but also included three inspectors (Dorothy Bradley, Anna Kelly, Mary Sias) and a labeler (Dorothy Boyer). As in previous census records, the majority of neighborhood residents were employed at the General Electric factory, while others were employed at nearby woolen and worsted mills.

<sup>40</sup> *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), December 12, 1978.

<sup>41</sup> *The South Berkshire Directory* (1925); Aldice G. Warren, *Catalogue of the Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity* (Delta Kappa Epsilon Council, 1910).

<sup>42</sup> Willison, *History of Pittsfield, Massachusetts 1916-1955* (1955), p. 413.



A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

In 1933, the company developed a "special insulation" product for Admiral Richard E. Byrd's Second Antarctica Expedition. Byrd used the special insulation on the wall of his advance meteorological base, which he operated alone for five months.<sup>43</sup>

The 1940 Federal census for the area around the silk mill (Ward 2, Tract 2-87) includes 22 silk-mill employees—eleven men and eleven women, ranging in age from seventeen to 67. Most were born in Massachusetts or other northeastern states, with one each from Italy (Madeline Columbari), France (Angeline Bradley), England (John Neyers), and Canada (Mary Roboin). As in previous years, the jobs reflected production (silk doubler, winder, dyer, spooler, braider, braid finisher) and support (packer, shipper, stock clerk, messenger). General Electric Company continued to be the leading employer in the neighborhood by a wide margin.

During World War II, the A. H. Rice Company benefitted from its government contracts. The company introduced the "handi-end" spool, which was a thread-controlling device that avoided tangles and increased productivity. With nationwide rationing of silk during the war and new advances in the production of nylon, the company was able to produce an alternative to real silk.

The company was a major part of the country's defense during the war years, producing "not only braid and thread for trimming and stitching service uniforms, but nylon cord for parachute shroud lines, silk thread for stitching powder bags and nylon thread for stitching parachute canopies, sewing combat boots, fabricating jungle hammocks and many other items."<sup>44</sup> The *Berkshire Eagle* reported on the mill's contribution to the war effort in 1941:

Because of the proportion of present and expected defense orders, and also because of the successful production of synthetics, Mr. Rice believes the mill will keep going at present full capacity and probably indefinitely. If government production does not keep the whole force busy, there will be opportunities to turn out synthetic threads and cords for general consumption, he anticipates.<sup>45</sup>

In 1948, the A. H. Rice Silk Mill was "well and favorably known... [enjoying] an enviable reputation for quality not only throughout this country but abroad."<sup>46</sup> The company produced 100-yard and 50-yard spools of silk, "made in a size and strength best to meet the general needs for women who use silk thread, and is furnished in more than 300 colors." The mill's sewing silk was "used by men's and women's tailors, manufacturers of men's and women's clothing, shoes, hats, gloves, shirts, and for almost every purpose where sewing thread of any kind is used."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> "Admiral Byrd Used Rice Material in Antarctic," undated newspaper clipping, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts; and "Work at Rice Silk Mill Not to Be Curtailed Now," *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), December 12, 1978.

<sup>44</sup> "Same Family has operated Local Plant for 60 Years," undated newspaper clipping, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts. George F. Willison, *The History of Pittsfield, Massachusetts 1916-1955* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts: City of Pittsfield 1955), p. 413.

<sup>45</sup> *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), August 2, 1941.

<sup>46</sup> "Same Family has operated Local Plant for 60 Years," undated newspaper clipping, Berkshire Athenaeum.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

The silk mill received raw silk in skeins and and processed them into silk strands:

When being prepared for use at the Pittsfield plant these [silk] skeins are soaked in water for 12 hours to soften the natural gum preparatory to winding the silk on swifts, from which it is wound again on large bobbins. These bobbins go to the doubling frames, where the number of strands necessary for the finished thread of any desired size and strength are put together, then to the spinning and twisting frames, where they are twisted firmly together, then to the water stretcher which takes out any kinks and unevenness. The silk is ready then to be degummed, dyed and spooled. Throughout all of these processes should a single strand snap, the machines will stop automatically.<sup>48</sup>

The open floors of the mill buildings were filled with braiding machines:

Braiding machines to a layman resemble for all the world a great, flat crown with the carriers set in rows around the perimeter. Carrying the bobbins upright, they might be dancers around the May pole, with the threads led up to a small metal ring suspended above the center of the flat machine top. Warp bobbins thread up from beneath the machine with the wool bobbins braiding their threads around them ... These bobbins moved on oiled tracks with lightning speed, zigzagging completely around the flat machine top.<sup>49</sup>

By 1948, the A. H. Rice Silk Mill was recognized as the premier manufacturer of silk braid:

During its 60 years of business, the company has increased its equipment until now it is recognized as making the most extensive variety of braids in the industry. These total more than 2,000 different items. They range in use from the cradle to the grave – trimming for baby bonnets to casket decorations. A sample card of a few patterns is a veritable rainbow palette. Silk, rayon, mohair, cotton, imitation leather and cellophane are in every hue, and braids of gold and silver tinsel imported from France glisten brightly.<sup>50</sup>

During America's involvement in the Korean War in the 1950s, the A. H. Rice Company employed 175 people and continued to make mohair and cotton braids for Army and Air Force uniform caps. In addition, it contributed to the manufacture of new military items, such as armored vests and deceleration chutes for jet planes.<sup>51</sup>

In the 1950s the company also began to manufacture Orlon, an acrylic yarn developed by DuPont as an alternative to rayon.<sup>52</sup> The A. H. Rice Company had already produced other synthetic silks such as nylon and rayon, but each synthetic fiber had its own limitations. Orlon was designed to withstand sunlight more effectively. Reflecting the instability of the Cold War and the potential volatility of the Korean War,

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> "Veteran Employees Credited With Aiding Plant's Success," *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), August 27, 1950.

<sup>52</sup> "Rice's Ready to Spin Orlon, Help Stabilize Employment," *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), June 30, 1950.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

the company was ready to answer the government's call "if the United States needs more parachutes and uniforms in a hurry."<sup>53</sup>

With the proliferation of private automobiles in the 1940s and 1950s, parking in the Spring Street neighborhood became an issue. In 1956, the residents of Spring Street complained to the Pittsfield City Council that the Rice Silk Mill employees were taking the street parking spots, leaving no room for the residents.<sup>54</sup> In 1959, several residents of Burbank Street also complained to the Pittsfield Police Department and wrote a letter of protest to the *Pittsfield Eagle* concerning the smoke pollution emitting from the mill.<sup>55</sup>

In 1963, the A. H. Rice Company increased its operations through the acquisition of machinery from the Trienis Knitting Company. During the "space race" of the 1960s and 1970s, NASA contracted with the A. H. Rice Company several times for space travel-related products. In fact, the company was involved in all seventeen space expeditions up to 1973. A. H. Rice & Company made braided tape that was used to lace together bundles to harness electrical cables in the Apollo missions to the moon. The company also designed and developed a knitted fabric for use as a debris net in the Apollo capsule to prevent articles discarded by the astronauts from floating into the electrical systems lining the bulkheads.<sup>56</sup> In 1973, the firm was given less than 24 hours to design and weave "a special cable of spun-glass thread coated with Teflon that was used to help salvage part of the Skylab space station when circling the earth."<sup>57</sup>

In 1969, the Rice family sold the company, which had 250 employees at the time, to Gerli & Company of New York City. Originally formed in 1883, Gerli & Company was a "national leader in the field of importing and distributing raw and spun silk," and was a longtime supplier of silk fiber to the Rice Company.<sup>58</sup> John Sullivan, owner of Gerli & Company, ran the Pittsfield operations remotely, and tried to reinvigorate the manufacturing facility. In 1985, the company actually returned to the manufacture of silk thread after years of producing synthetic fibers such as rayon, nylon, and Orlon.

In 1989, Gerli sold the 100-employee company to George L. Unhoch, owner of the New Bedford Thread Company. Established in 1953, New Bedford Thread had moved to Fairhaven, MA, in 1956. The company produced "glace finish cotton sewing thread...[and was] the largest producer of glace finish cotton sewing threads in North America, and quite possibly the largest glace finish cotton producer, under one roof, anywhere in the world."<sup>59</sup> Among its clients were Boeing Aircraft and Delta Airlines, who used Rice's nylon thread to secure aircraft carpets.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), March 21, 1956.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., June 17, 1959.

<sup>56</sup> *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), December 12, 1978.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> "Quality, American Made Products," New Bedford Thread Company. N.D. Date Accessed: September 6, 2012.

<sup>60</sup> "A. H. Rice Corporation: 120 Years Old and Still Going Strong," *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), March 29, 1998.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

At the helm of the A. H. Rice plant, George Unhoch:

initiated a robust period of modernization ... He turned the dye house into a state-of-the-art operation, able to produce the quality and consistency required for the uniform trade. The plant was managed primarily by on-site management – growth and quality control were employee driven, and the braid and thread product lines steadily grew.<sup>61</sup>

In 2001, the company manufactured “specialty textile trims for uniforms such as police, fire, band, pilots, flight attendants, etc. [as well as] synthetic sewing products for commercial aircraft, parachutes, garments, bookbinding, saddles...”<sup>62</sup> The A. H. Rice Company also supplied gold braid to trim the uniforms of White House guards.

The A. H. Rice Company moved its operations to Rock Hill, SC, in 2005, and the Pittsfield mill closed permanently in 2006 after “the cost of heating the plant had become too high.”<sup>63</sup> By the time of the closure, there were only 50 employees at the Pittsfield plant.

The Eisman-Ludmar Company, a uniform accessories manufacturer in New York, acquired the braid division and the A. H. Rice name and reorganized the business as ELC Industries LLC. The company is still producing specialty braids at the South Carolina plant, using some of the vintage machines that were formerly installed in Pittsfield by the A. H. Rice Company.

All machinery was removed from the manufacturing complex in Pittsfield and the buildings were shuttered after local production ceased in 2006. An initial proposal to convert the vacant mill complex to housing failed. The complex was purchased by a new developer in 2010, and was completely rehabilitated for rental housing. The 45 apartment units at the former A. H. Rice Silk Mill, completed with the assistance of state and federal tax incentives, opened for occupancy in September 2012.

<sup>61</sup> ELC Industries, “History,” ELC Industries Homepage. Last Date Modified: 2012. Date Accessed: August 24, 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Stevens Alumni Association, “The Stevens Indicator,” Stevens Institute of Technology, No. 1, 2001.

<sup>63</sup> “Pittsfield Silk Thread Plant, here since 1878, Employs 50,” *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), August 24, 2005.



A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

### CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURE

The A. H. Rice Company factory complex was erected in several different stages, representing the sustained and successful growth of the company. The brick mill (Building 1) was initially built in 1874 as a speculative venture by local developer George W. Burbank. Additions to the industrial complex were added in 1886 (Building 1A), 1893, 1900, 1905, 1945, 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1994 (not all extant).<sup>64</sup>

The A. H. Rice mill complex reflects typical New England mill construction of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A 1925 edition of the periodical *Architectural Design* detailed "the standardization of mill construction," such as "a range of detailed design treatments ... including the use of brick construction with segmented and rowlock brick arches, and wood windows..."<sup>65</sup> A 1973 book, *Early American Mills*, described mill construction:

England established a basic architectural vocabulary for the early textile mill, where silk-throwing mills and the principles of their design are carried over to the cotton industry. Functional requirements produced the basic form, unchanged in its essentials throughout eighteenth and nineteenth century mill building: a rectangular edifice, somewhat long and narrow in its proportions, with several stories, many windows, and an unbroken, uncomplicated interior space. Such proportions were adapted to the arrangement of machines and to the vertical transmission of power.<sup>66</sup>

The A. H. Rice Mill is also a good example of the type of fire-resistant construction that was commonly used in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Developed by New England Mutual Insurance and the Factory Insurance Association, the fire-resistant slow-burn specifications included "watertight floors, segregation of spaces through inserting massive brick firewalls, and use of heavy 'over engineered' timbers for construction that would support their weight for some time in a major fire."<sup>67</sup>

A 1903 construction manual outlined the details:

In order to obviate many of these difficulties [of standard construction], slow-burning construction was introduced ... the fundamental principle of this form of construction lies in the omission or alteration of every detail of balloon or braced frame construction which would tend to make combustion rapid or easy. The individual members, such as beams, columns, etc., are so proportioned that they retain strength enough to do the work required of them even after one-third of their bulk has been charred or burned. Instead of a large number of small pieces, as in balloon and braced frame construction, there is a small number of very large pieces in the slow-burning construction ... The ultimate objects of this form of construction may be summed up as follows: To make a building strong enough to stand any ordinary stress, even after its timbers are partly burned; to make the floor so tight and strong that when a fire starts in one story, the water poured in to quench it will not run through and ruin goods on the floor below; to avoid any corners,

<sup>64</sup> ELC Industries, "History," ELC Industries Homepage. Last Date Modified: 2012. Date Accessed: August 24, 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Hulbert, *The Petaluma Silk Mill, Historic Structures Report* (Oakland, CA: Preservation Architecture, 2009).

<sup>66</sup> Martha and Murray Zimiles, *Early American Mills* (Bramhill House, 1973), 111-112. Mark Hulbert, *The Petaluma Silk Mill, Historic Structures Report* (Oakland, CA: Preservation Architecture, 2009).

<sup>67</sup> Revolution Mills Studios, "History," Revolution Mills Studios. Last Date Modified: 2007. Date Accessed: September 7, 2012. (Courtesy of Preservation Greensboro Incorporated & Benjamin Briggs, Executive Director.)

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

pockets, or flues where fire could get started without being immediately discovered; and, above all, to provide a building where every part is easily accessible and the fire can be attacked and extinguished at close quarters without flooding the entire structure.<sup>68</sup>

In its current configuration, the A. H. Rice Silk Mill consists of six buildings erected between 1874 and 1945.

**Building #1 (PIT.167, Photos 1-7)**, built in 1874, is a long rectangular building located at the northeast corner of the parcel (at the corner of Spring Street and Burbank Street). It is a 2½-story, gable-roofed, red-brick building on a raised basement that originally served as the main production facility and office for the mill.

**Building #1A (PIT.763, Photos 1-3, 6, 7, 12)**, an addition built in 1886, is a two-story rectangular, red-brick building that is joined at right angles to the south elevation of Building 1 along Spring Street. The two-story, five-bay building on a raised basement has a low-pitched, almost-flat roof. It originally served as shipping and warehouse space for the A. H. Rice Company.

**Building #3 (PIT.764, Photos 1-3, 6, 8, 9, 12-14)**, erected ca. 1900, is a two-story, red-brick building that projects forward to the east lot line on Spring Street. The building is attached to the south end of Building 1A and has a square footprint and a low-pitched, almost-flat roof. It formerly provided shipping and warehouse space for the complex.

**Building #4 (PIT. 765, Photos 3, 5, 12, 13)** was built about 1905 as a two-story, red-brick building, and was subsequently expanded with a brick third story (ca. 1945). It now reads as a single three-story, red-brick structure projecting from the north and south walls of Building 7 and above the roofline of Building 7. Building 4 has a square footprint, projecting brick corner piers, a brick beltcourse between the first and second floors, and a flat roof with a shallow metal coping. The building formerly served as production and office space for the complex.

**Building #7 (PIT.766, Photos 2, 3, 8-12, 14)**, built ca. 1900 and expanded ca. 1940, is the largest building in the mill complex and served as the main production facility. The two-story, red-brick rectangular block was originally eight bays long and six bays wide. It was extended to twenty bays long about 1940. Building #7 served as the main manufacturing floor until the mill closed in 2006.

**Building #11 (PIT.767, Photos 6, 15)**, built about 1900 and expanded ca. 1945, is a two-story, wood-frame barn located at the southeast corner of the lot near the intersection of Spring Street and Willow Street. It replaced an earlier barn that stood farther north at the same corner. The current building has wood-clapboard siding and an asphalt-shingle roof, and has always been used for maintenance and storage.

<sup>68</sup> *International Library of Technology: A Series of Textbooks for Persons Engaged in the Engineering Professions and Trades, Volume 30* (International Textbook Company, 1903).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

Several smaller buildings that were formerly part of the mill complex were demolished in 2010 to facilitate rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the remaining buildings.

- Building #2 was a brick dyehouse, originally constructed about 1889 and expanded around 1900. The dyehouse had no exposed elevations and was completely enclosed by Buildings #1, 1A, 3, 4, and 5. The courtyard and main entrance to the complex now occupy that location.
- Building #5 (1902) and Building #6 (ca. 1950) were the old and new boiler rooms—brick structures located along the north wall of Building #4. Both building sites were heavily contaminated with fuel oil and other hazardous substances. The site is now landscaped and incorporates tenant mailboxes, sidewalks, and parking.
- Buildings #8 and #9 (ca. 1965-1975) were concrete-block factory buildings directly adjoining the south side of Building #7. The site now holds landscaped plantings, parking, and a community garden.
- Building #10 (ca. 1965) was a small, wood-frame, covered loading dock that was located at the junction of Building #8 (manufacturing) and Building #11 (storage barn). The site is now landscaped and provides direct pedestrian access to Spring Street.

Historical images of the mill also show the east smokestack adjacent to Building 1A that was erected in 1886, but had been removed by 1904 (Fig. J & K). A west smokestack between Building 1 and Building 7 was built ca. 1900 and was removed by 1950, when the new boiler room (Building 6) was built (Fig. K & L). Smaller buildings and modern additions that blocked or constrained existing buildings were demolished in 2010 as part of the rehabilitation project.

All of the buildings in the A. H. Rice Silk Mill complex retain the original exterior walls, floor plates, and roof structures. There have been relatively few changes to the buildings over the years. The recent (2012) rehabilitation included the insertion of new entries, the replacement of wood and steel factory windows with contemporary aluminum units, and reconfiguration of the interior for contemporary living units. The rehabilitation complies with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (36 CFR Part 67).

The Silk Mill complex has been substantially rehabilitated for adaptive reuse as rental housing; however, these alterations have had minimal impact on the characteristics that make the A. H. Rice Silk Mill significant as an historic industrial complex. The setting of the mill largely retains its historic character as well. The building and site preserve the spatial arrangements integral to the mill's functioning as a major industrial installation for its period in western Massachusetts.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

**Archaeological Significance**

Historic archaeological resources described above have the potential to contribute important information on the overall development of the silk industry in Massachusetts, and the manufacture of silk threads, braid, and other specialty materials during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Additional historical research, combined with archaeological survey and testing of the areas around the storehouse and dyehouse, may contribute evidence of the role these structures played in the manufacturing process. Physical examples of the threads, braids, and other specialty materials produced at the A. H. Rice Silk Mill may be present. These examples may include experimental examples of threads and braids that were later produced at this or other factories, or were never produced at all.

Additional historic research, combined with archaeological survey and testing at the sites of the storehouse and dyehouse, may produce archaeological evidence that the A. H. Rice Silk Mill contributes a distinctive and well-preserved example of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>- century industrial “slow burning” construction. Archaeological testing of industrial trash areas may recover examples of production equipment used in the manufacturing process. The stages of production and the size of production equipment are two factors used to represent a functional approach to industrial manufacture used at the A. H. Rice Silk Mill.



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### **Bibliography** (*Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.*)

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A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

*Pittsfield, Mass.* [birdseye view]. South Schodack, NY: A.M. Van de Carr, 1899.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS): HPCA # 24,713**

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** PIT.167, 763-767, 9056

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property:** 3.0 acres

*Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates*

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)*

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.456538 | Longitude: -73.242510 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Or**

**UTM References**

*Datum (indicated on USGS map):*

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 18 | Easting: 644508 | Northing: 4701963 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

**Verbal Boundary Description** (*Describe the boundaries of the property.*)

The boundaries of the nomination are shown as a heavy penciled line on the accompanying tax assessment map of the City of Pittsfield, identified as Parcel # I100013101 and enclosing a full city block of 3.005 acres. Starting at the southwest corner of Burbank Street and Spring Street in Pittsfield, the boundary runs southwest 361.91 feet along the west side of Spring Street, northwest 370.69 feet along the north side of Willow Street, northeast 356.27 feet along the east side of Cherry Street, and southeast 370.4 feet along the south side of Burbank Street to the point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of the nomination include the land and buildings historically associated with the A. H. Rice Silk Mill, and represent the current and legal boundaries of the property. The nomination consists of a single parcel of 3.005 acres occupying a full city block, bordered by Spring Street on the east, Willow Street on the south, Cherry Street on the west, and Burbank Street on the north.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Brian Knight & Gregory Farmer, consultants, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director  
organization: Massachusetts Historical Commission  
street & number: 220 Morrissey Blvd.  
city or town: Boston state: MA zip code: 02125-3314  
e-mail: betsy.friedberg@state.ma.us  
telephone: 617-727-8470  
date: January 2015

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

**A.H. Rice Silk Mill  
Pittsfield (Berkshire County), Massachusetts  
Property Data Sheet**

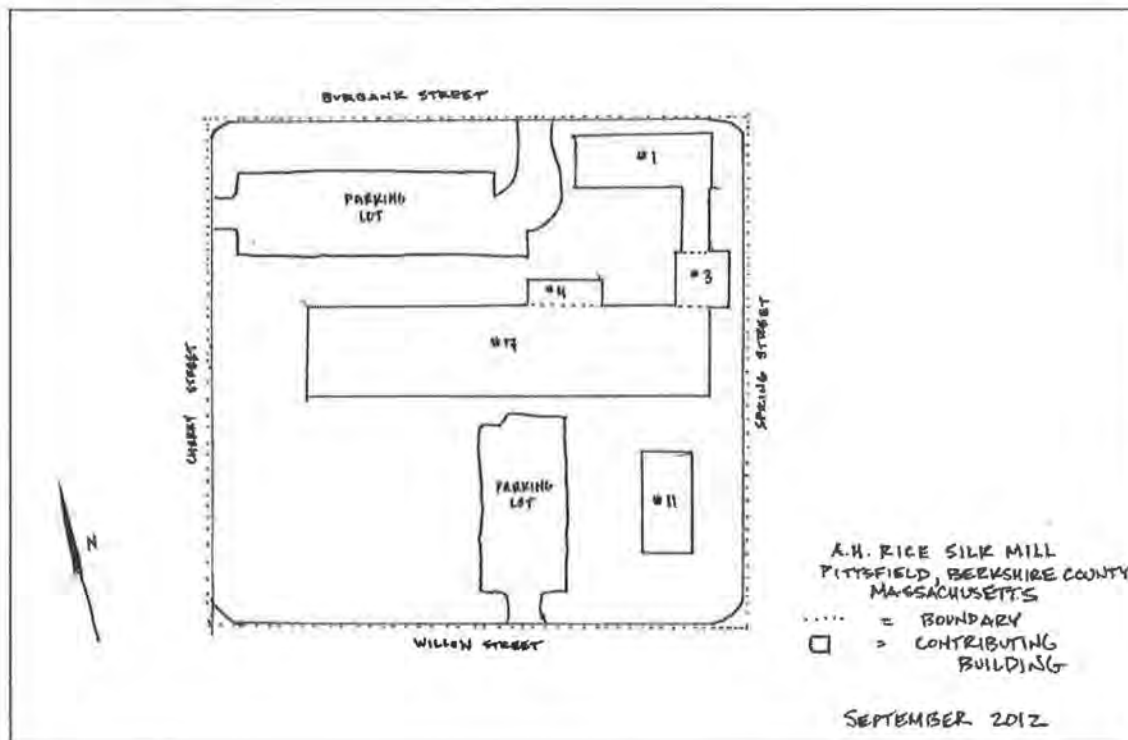
MHC #	Name	Date	Photos	Type	Status (C/NC)
PIT.167	Building #1	1874	Photos 1-7	B	C
PIT.763	Building #1A	1886	Photos 1-3, 6, 7, 12	B	C
PIT.764	Building #3	ca. 1900	Photos 1-2, 6,8,9,12-14	B	C
PIT.765	Building #4	ca. 1905	Photos 3,5,12,13	B	C
PIT.766	Building #7	ca. 1900; ca. 1940	Photos 2,3,8-12, 14	B	C
PIT.767	Building #11	ca. 1900; 1945	Photos 6, 15	B	C
PIT.9056	Aluminum fence	2012		ST	NC

Contributing Buildings: 6  
Noncontributing structures: 1

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

### Sketch Map



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

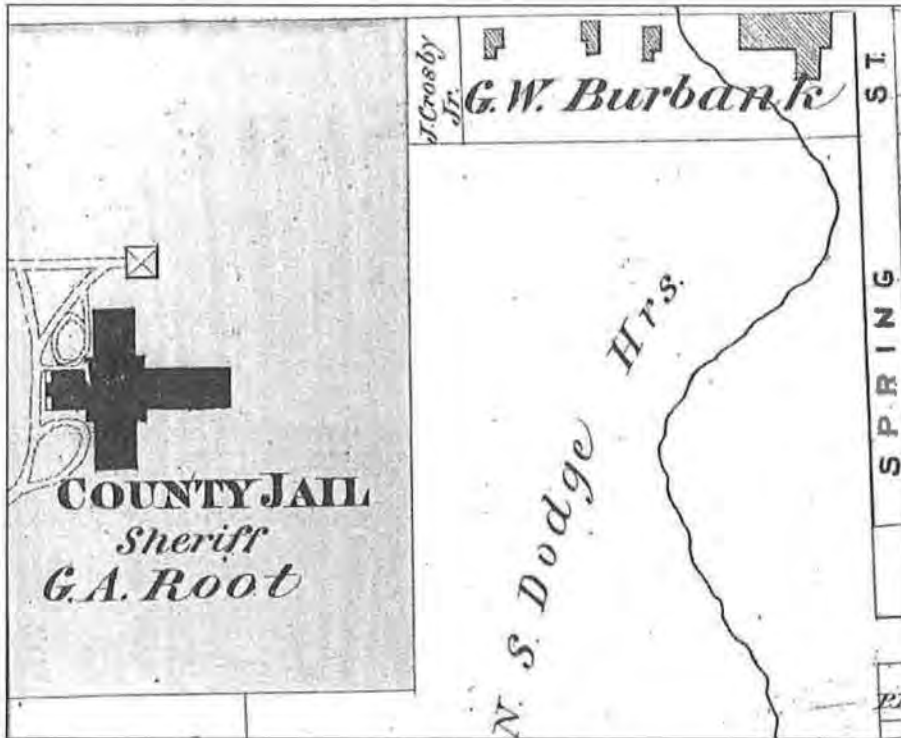


Figure A: Detail from Beers Atlas of Pittsfield (1876) showing the Burbank mill and the water source

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

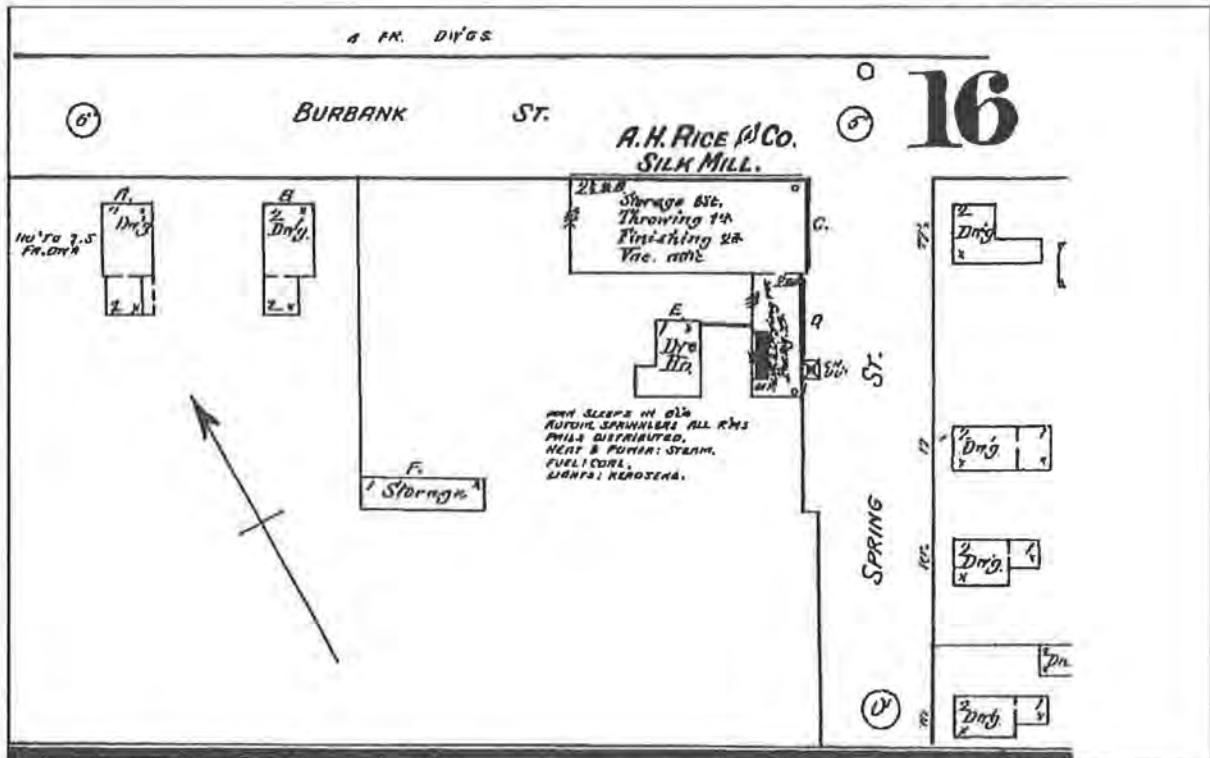


Figure B: Detail from Plate 16 of the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield (1889)



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Figure C: Detail from the 1893 Atlas of Pittsfield showing the Rice Silk Mill

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

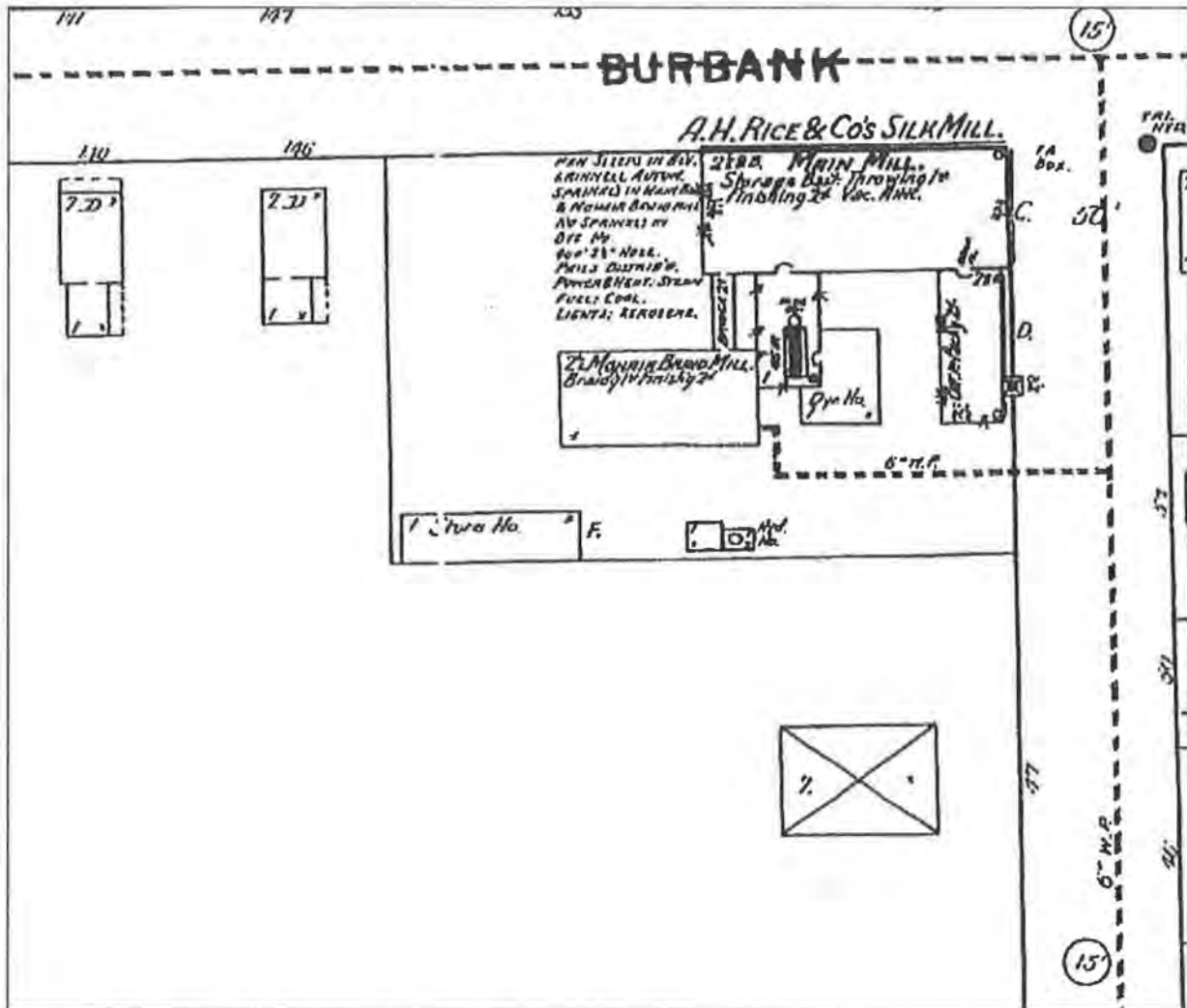


Figure D: Detail from the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield (1895)

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

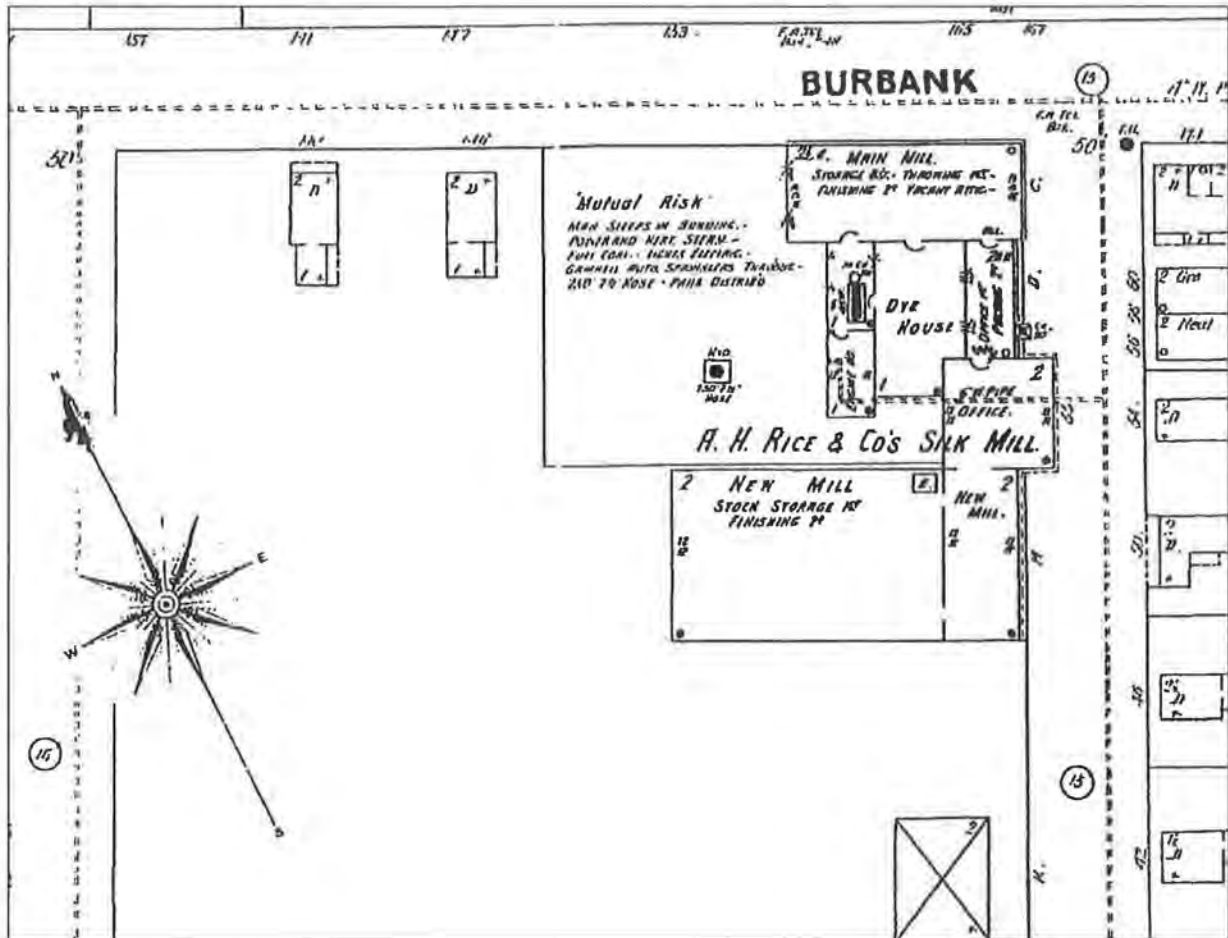


Figure E: Detail from the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield (1900)

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

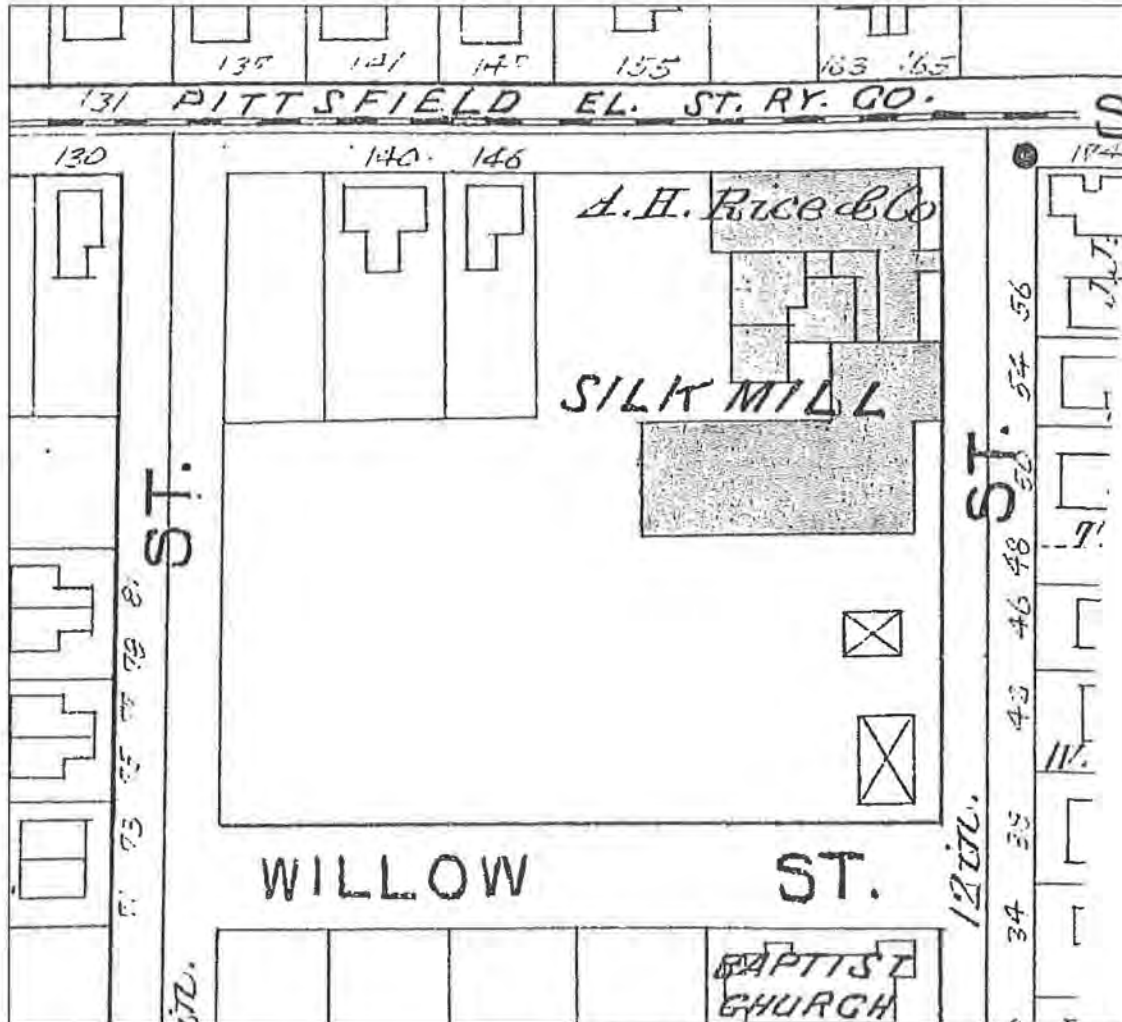


Figure F: Detail from the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield (1904)

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

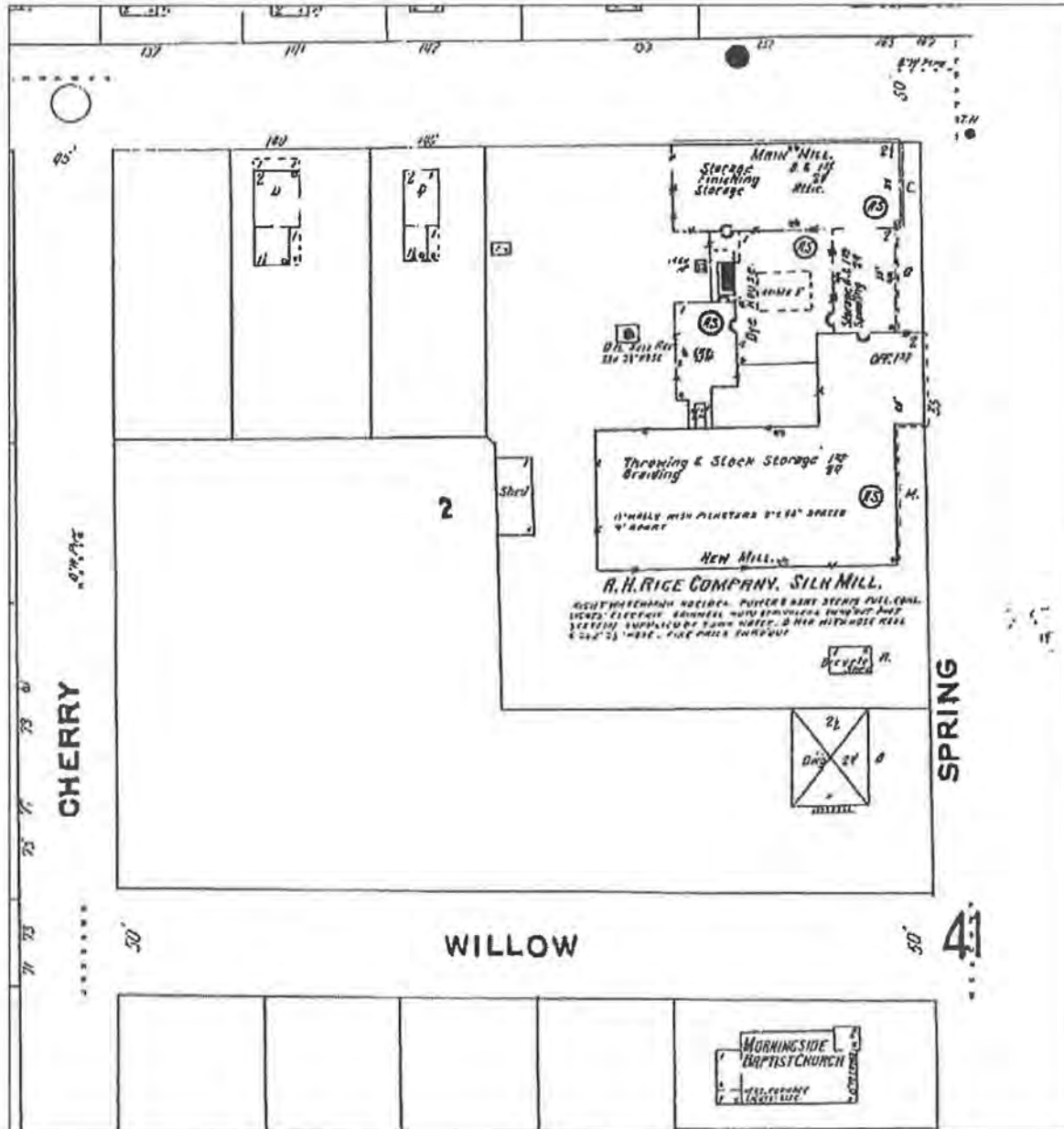


Figure G: Detail from the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield (1905)



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

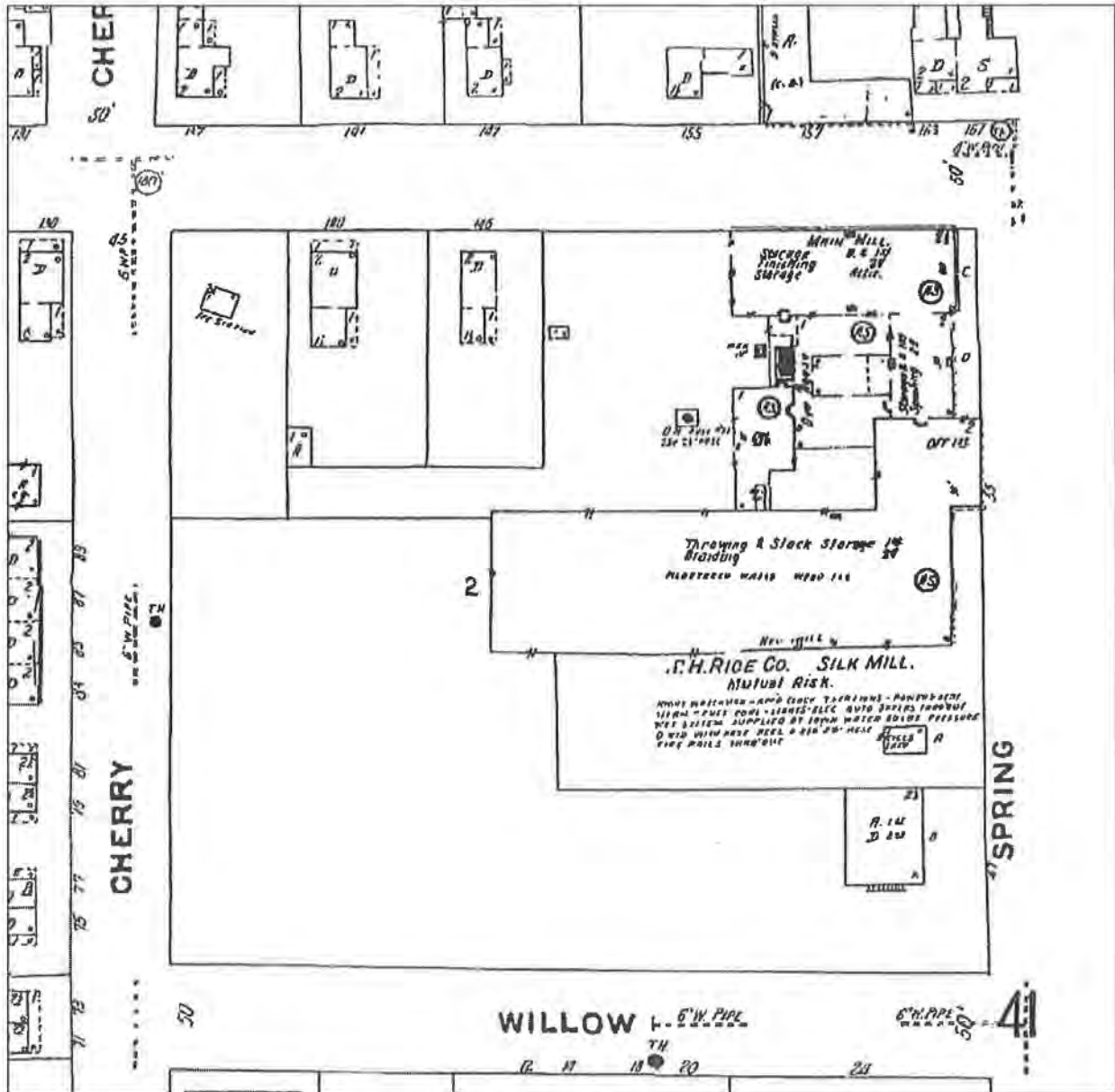


Figure II: Detail from the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield (1905-1941)

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

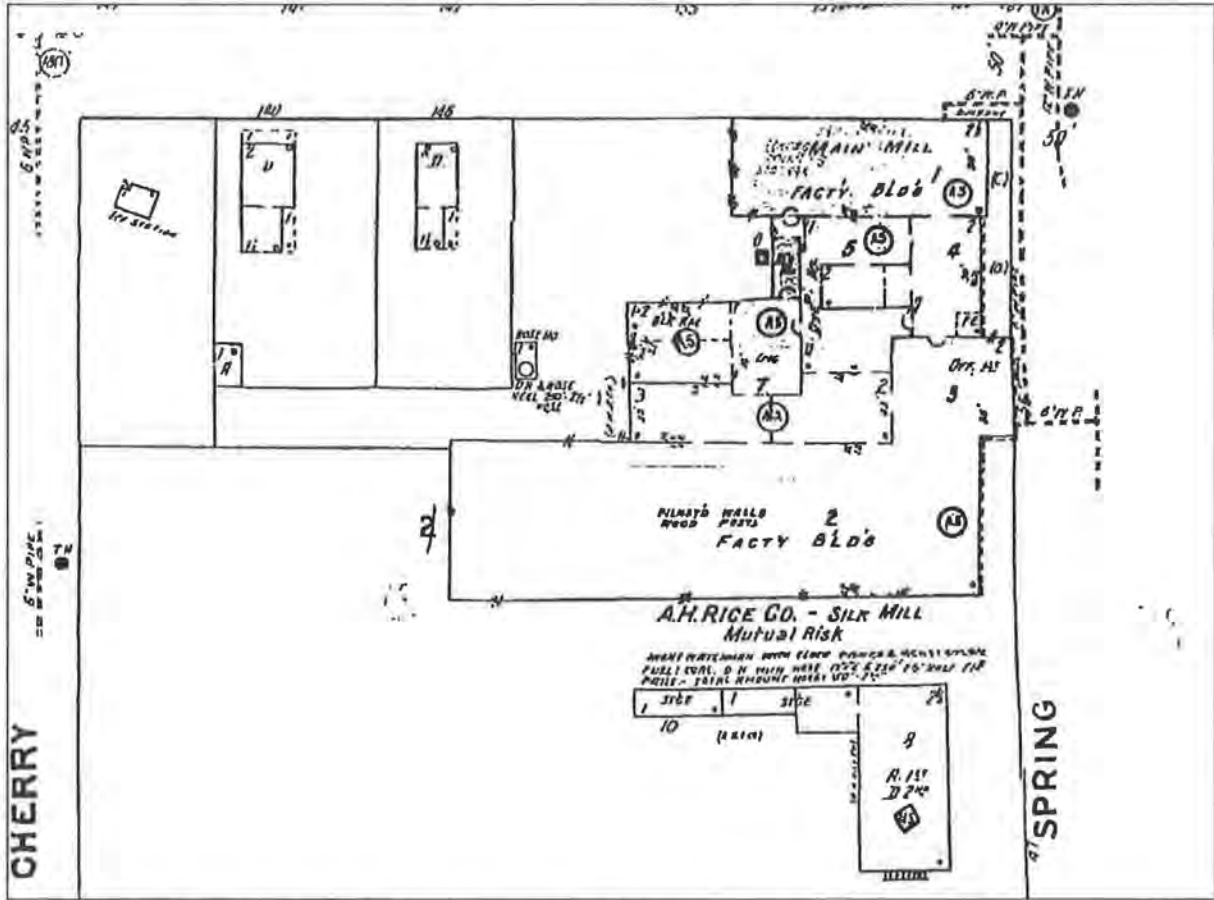


Figure I: Detail from the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield (1905-1950)

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



**Figure J: Historic view of the Farnham & Lathrop Mill (ca. 1886) showing the current Building #1, looking southwest.**

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

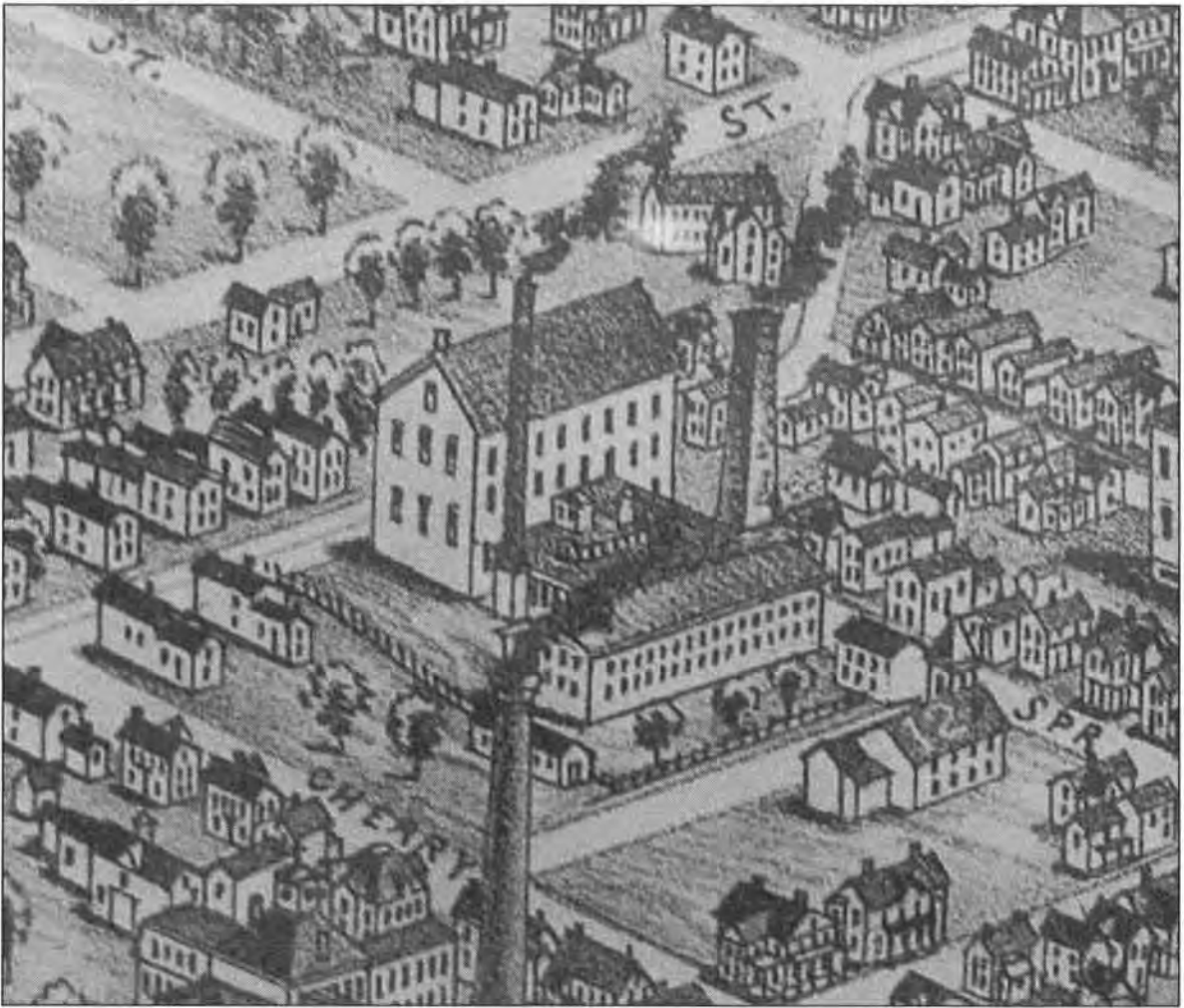


Figure K: Detail from the 1899 birds-eye view of Pittsfield showing the A. H. Rice Company mill complex, looking northeast.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Figure L: Historic view of the A. H. Rice Silk Mill (1912) showing Buildings 7, 3, and 1, looking northwest.

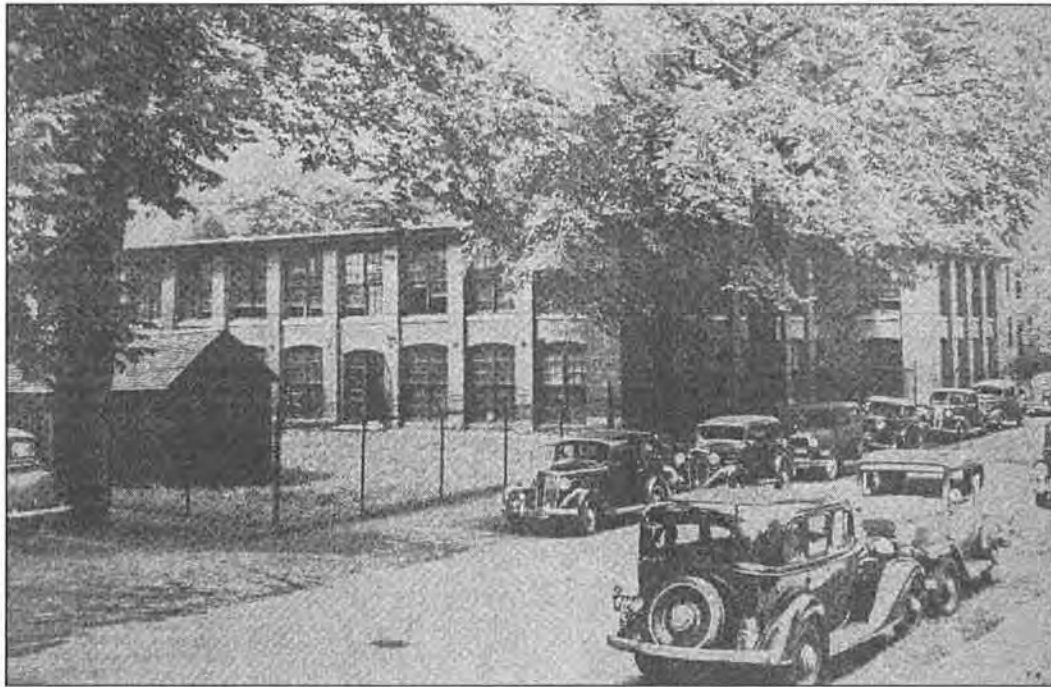


Figure M: Historic view of the A. H. Rice Silk Mill (1940) showing Buildings 7 and 3, looking northwest



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

### Photographs

*Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.*

### Photo Log

Name of Property: A. H. RICE SILK MILL .

City or Vicinity: 55 Spring St., Pittsfield

County: Berkshire

State: Massachusetts

Photographer: Gregory Farmer

Date Photographed: September 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

### PHOTOGRAPH CAPTIONS

Photo 1 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east and north elevations of Buildings 3, 1A, and 1 (camera facing southwest).

Photo 2 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east and south elevations of Buildings 7, 3, 1A, and 1 (camera facing northwest).

Photo 3 of 20: Exterior view of the rear of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the west and south elevations of Buildings 1, 1A, 3, 4 & 7 (camera facing northeast).

Photo 4 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east and north elevations of Building 1 (camera facing southwest).

Photo 5 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the north and west elevations of Building 1 and a portion of Building 4 (camera facing southeast).

Photo 6 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the north and east elevations of Building 11 (barn), 3, 1A & 1 (camera facing southwest).

Photo 7 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east elevations of Buildings 1A & 1 (camera facing northwest).

Photo 8 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east and north elevations of Buildings 3 & 7 (camera facing southwest).

Photo 9 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the south and east elevations of Buildings 7 & 3 (camera facing northwest).

Photo 10 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the south and east elevations of Building 7 (camera facing northwest).

Photo 11 of 20: Exterior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the west and south elevations of Building 7 (camera facing northeast).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA

County and State

Photo 12 of 20: Exterior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing north and west elevations of Buildings 1A, 3, 4 (three-story) and 7 (camera facing southeast).

Photo 13 of 20: Exterior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing north and west elevations of Buildings 3 & 4 (camera facing southeast).

Photo 14 of 20: Courtyard entrance to the Silk Mill Apartments showing the west and north elevations of Buildings 3 & 7 (camera facing southeast).

Photo 15 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east and north elevations of Building 11 (camera facing southwest).

Photo 16 of 20: Interior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the first-floor lobby.

Photo 17 of 20: Interior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the second-floor lobby.

Photo 18 of 20: Interior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the community room.

Photo 19 of 20: Interior of the Silk Mill Apartments, Apt. 206.

Photo 20 of 20: Interior of the Silk Mill Apartments, Apt. 110.

### **Historic Images**

Figure A: detail from 1876 Beers Atlas of Pittsfield, showing Burbank mill and water source.

Figure B: detail from Plate 16 of 1889 Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield.

Figure C: detail from 1893 Atlas of Pittsfield showing Rice Silk Mill.

Figure D: detail from 1895 Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield.

Figure E: detail from the 1900 Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield.

Figure F: detail from the 1904 Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield.

Figure G: detail from the 1905 Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield.

Figure H: detail from the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield (1905-1941).

Figure I: detail from the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Pittsfield (1905-1950).

Figure J: historic view of Farnham & Lathrop Mill (ca. 1886), showing current Building #1.

Figure K: detail from 1899 birds-eye view of Pittsfield, showing A. H. Rice mill complex.

Figure L: historic view of A. H. Rice Silk Mill (1912), showing Buildings 7, 3, and 1.

Figure M: historic view of A. H. Rice Silk Mill (1940), showing Buildings 7 and 3.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Photo 1 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east and north elevations of Buildings 3, 1A, and 1 (camera facing southwest).



Photo 2 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east and south elevations of Buildings 7, 3, 1A, and 1 (camera facing northwest).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Photo 3 of 20: Exterior view of the rear of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the west and south elevations of Buildings 1, 1A, 3, 4 & 7 (camera facing northeast).



Photo 4 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east and north elevations of Building 1 (camera facing southwest).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Photo 5 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the north and west elevations of Building 1 and a portion of Building 4 (camera facing southeast).



Photo 6 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the north and east elevations of Building 11 (barn), 3, 1A & 1 (camera facing southwest).



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Photo 7 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east elevations of Buildings 1A & 1 (camera facing northwest).



Photo 8 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east and north elevations of Buildings 3 & 7 (camera facing southwest).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Photo 9 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the south and east elevations of Buildings 7 & 3 (camera facing northwest).



Photo 10 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the south and east elevations of Building 7 (camera facing northwest).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Photo 11 of 20: Exterior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the west and south elevations of Building 7 (camera facing northeast).



Photo 12 of 20: Exterior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing north and west elevations of Buildings 1A, 3, 4 (three-story) and 7 (camera facing southeast).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Photo 13 of 20: Exterior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing north and west elevations of Buildings 3 & 4 (camera facing southeast).



Photo 14 of 20: Courtyard entrance to the Silk Mill Apartments showing the west and north elevations of Buildings 3 & 7 (camera facing southeast).

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Photo 15 of 20: Exterior view of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the east and north elevations of Building 11 (camera facing southwest).



Photo 16 of 20: Interior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the first-floor lobby.



A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Photo 17 of 20: Interior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the second-floor lobby.

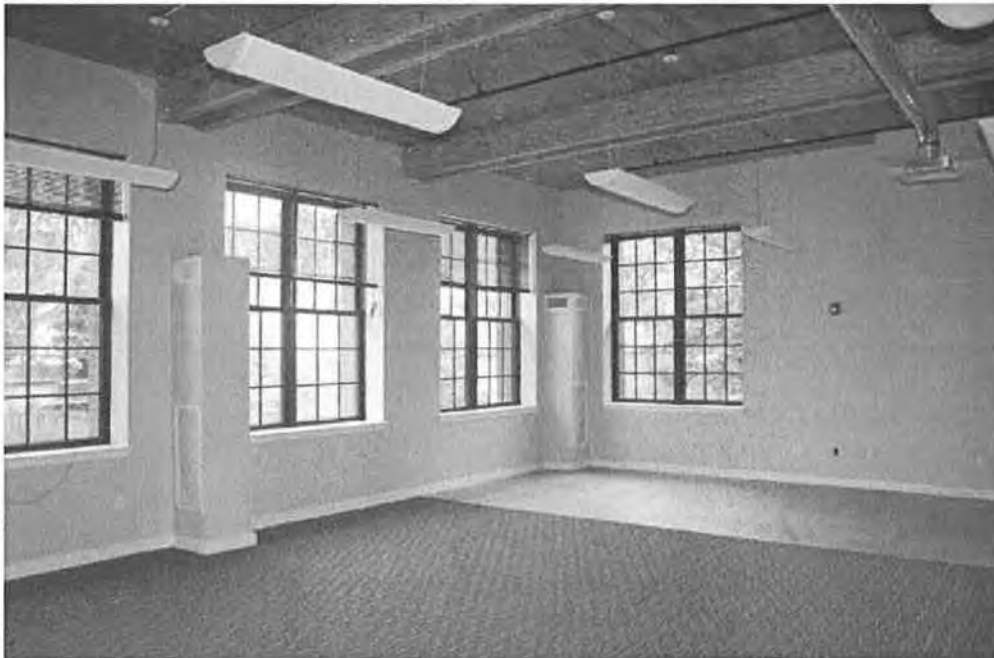


Photo 18 of 20: Interior of the Silk Mill Apartments showing the community room.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State



Photo 19 of 20: Interior of the Silk Mill Apartments, Apt. 206.



Photo 20 of 20: Interior of the Silk Mill Apartments, Apt. 110.

A. H. RICE SILK MILL  
Name of Property

BERKSHIRE, MA  
County and State

**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 for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing 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, DC.

# Rice Silk Mill Complex

Pittsfield, MA

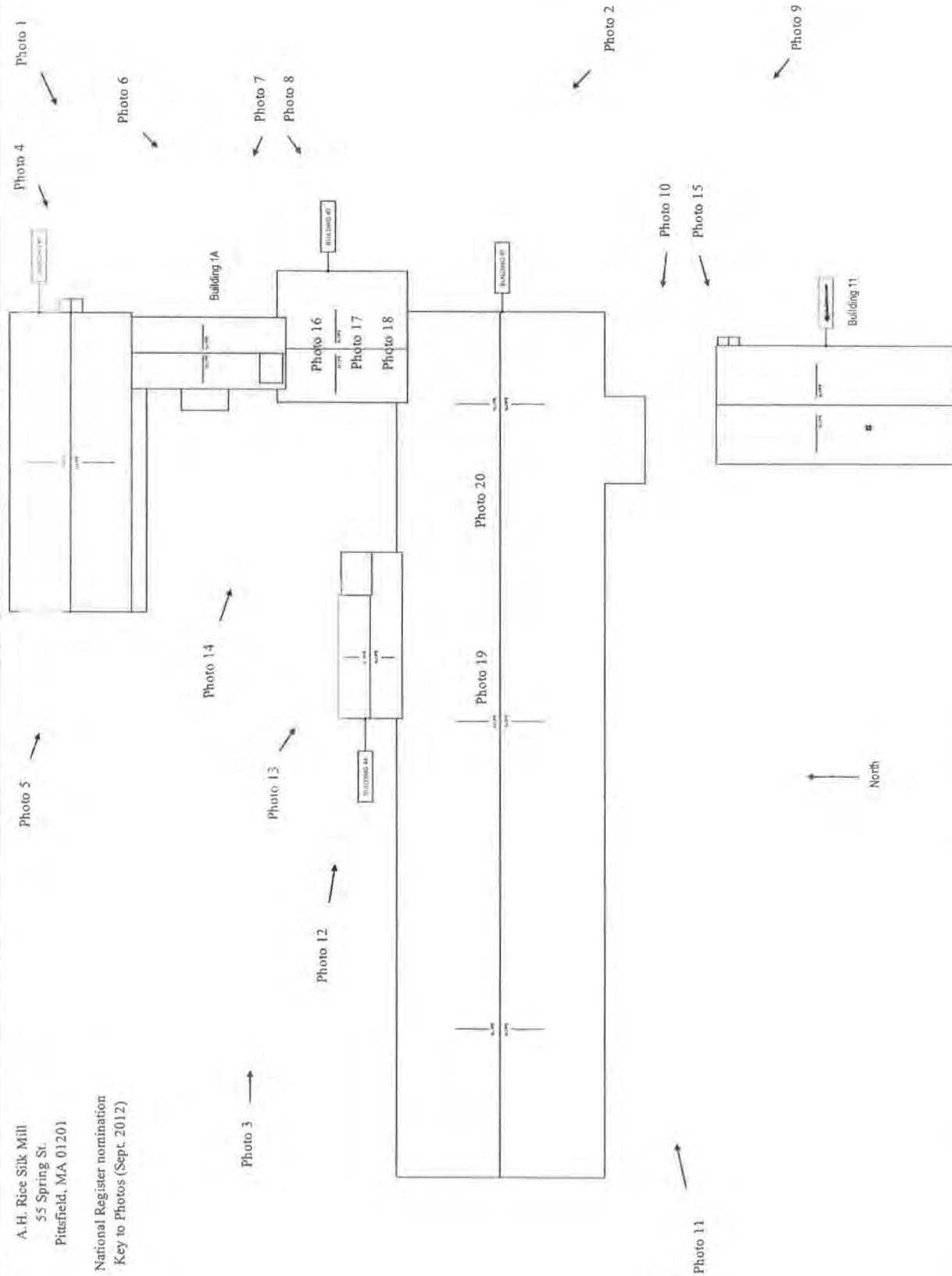
## PROPOSED ROOF PLAN

tat | the architectural team

DATE: 2/10/2009

DEVELOPER: Rees-Larkin Development

ARCHITECT: The Architectural Team, Inc.



A. H. Rice Silk Mill  
55 Spring St.  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

National Register nomination  
Key to Photos (Sept. 2012)

55 Spring St., Pittsfield, MA



Property Information  
 Property ID 1100013101  
 Location 55 SPRING ST  
 Owner PITTSFIELD SILK LLC



MAP FOR REFERENCE ONLY  
 NOT A LEGAL DOCUMENT

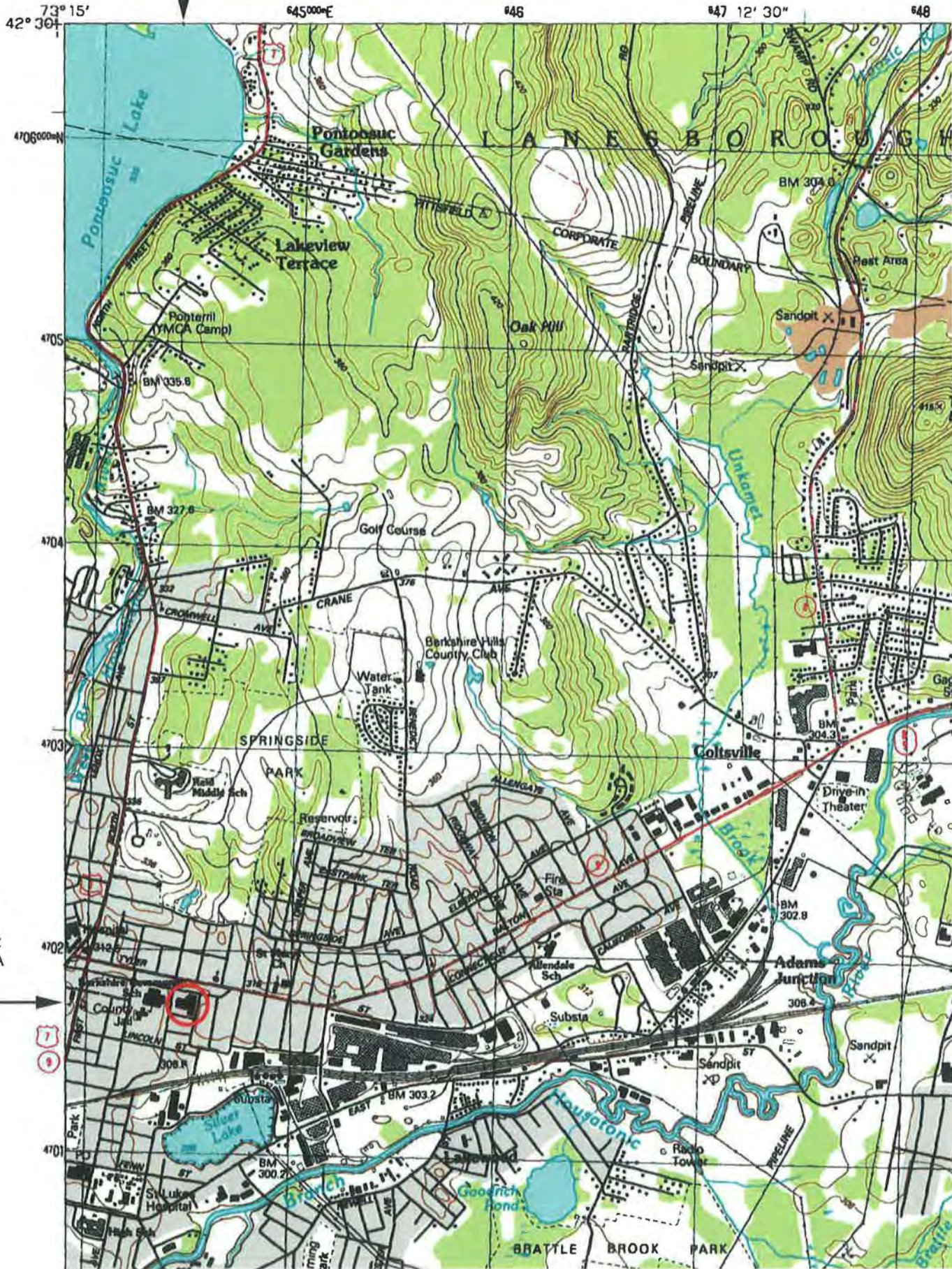
The City of Pittsfield makes no claims, no representations, and no warranties, expressed or implied, concerning the validity (expressed or implied), the reliability, or the accuracy of the GIS data and GIS data products furnished by the City, including the implied validity of any uses of such data. The use of this data, in any such manner, shall not supercede any federal, state or local laws or regulations.





A.H. Rice Silk Mill, 55 Spring St., Pittsfield, MA

PITTSFIELD EAST, MASSACHUSETTS



A.H. Rice  
Silk Mill  
55 Spring St  
Pittsfield, MA





SPRING

13N A 50













SPRING ST









SPRING ST

ELECTRICAL SERVICE  
SAFE  
3101

















Pittsfield School  
Food Service

























EXIT





EXIT















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Rice, A.H., Silk Mill

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Berkshire

DATE RECEIVED: 1/16/15      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/06/15  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/23/15      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/03/15  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000047

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: Y PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    3/2/2015 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept AIC

REVIEWER Patrick Andrews

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 3/2/2015

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.





**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

January 15, 2015

Mr. J. Paul Loether  
Deputy Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmarks Programs  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street, NW 8<sup>th</sup> floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

A.H. Rice Silk Mill, 55 Spring Street, Pittsfield (Berkshire) MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg  
National Register Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Jon Rudzinski, BHSI  
Will Garrison, Pittsfield Historical Commission  
Gregory Farmer, Agricola, Inc., consultant  
Mayor Dan Bianchi, City of Pittsfield  
Douglas Clark, Sheila Irvin, Community Development Board