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MAR 27 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Woonsocket Rubber Company Mill  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 60-82 South Main Street n/a not for publication  
city, town Woonsocket n/a vicinity  
state Rhode Island code R.I. county Providence code 007 zip code 02895

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

Frederick C. Williams 22 March 1989  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Alan Byers Entered in the National Register 5/1/89  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility  
COMMERCE/TRADE/business  
VACANT/NOT IN USE

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE  
walls STONE  
BRICK  
roof ASPHALT  
other cast iron/granite/concrete trim

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**Summary**

The Woonsocket Rubber Company Mill, 60-82 South Main Street, Woonsocket, Rhode Island is a well-preserved industrial complex. It was constructed primarily between 1865 and 1875, with an earlier portion dating from 1857 and secondary additions dating from the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The complex consists of three primary buildings oriented north/south: the westernmost and oldest, L-plan, 3-story stone mill with brick additions, and two later 3- and 4-story brick mills with brick and frame additions. It is one of the many mills constructed during the nineteenth century along the Blackstone River in the emerging Woonsocket Falls central business district. While loss of nearby mills to the west and north in the twentieth century has altered the overall historic density of the surrounding area and some changes have been made to buildings at the Woonsocket Rubber Company Mill, the complex itself is largely intact, as is its setting abutting the river and its relationship with adjacent industrial structures to the northeast and east. The three principle buildings are architecturally and historically significant, although certain modern additions do not contribute to the importance of the overall property.

**Site**

The Woonsocket Rubber Company Mill complex is situated on two lots and an access street created by textile entrepreneur Edward Harris in 1845 following his purchase of the area known as the Island from the estate of James Arnold. Located just below Woonsocket Falls at a curve in the Blackstone River, the Island was artificially created by mill tailraces on the west and northeast. It was bounded by the river to the south and remained connected to the mainland in its north central section. Little development occurred on the Island prior to Harris' ownership. Following subdivision, in addition to the Woonsocket Rubber Company's construction, a 3-story rubblestone blacksmith

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and carriage shop, still standing, was constructed on the lot to the east, and other industrial structures stood along the north side of Island Place. A row of 2-, 3-, and 4-family tenements built by Harris to house workers at his textile mills lined the south side of Island Place.

The complex stretches from the south side of South Main Street and Island Place at Market Square, southerly to the Blackstone River. To the west, a parking lot and filled area for the Thundermist Hydropower Plant is the site of a tailrace leading from the George C. Ballou mill which stood at Market Square. The hydropower plant occupies another Ballou mill site. The mills at Market Square were demolished in the mid-twentieth century and a municipal parking lot created over the remains of the buildings and their water power system.

#### Development Overview

The earliest extant structure of the Woonsocket Rubber Company Mill complex is one of three sections creating the 3-story, L-plan rubblestone, building on lot 142. It was constructed between 1856 and 1864 (most likely in 1857) by Alfred C. Sheldon as a steam-powered sash manufacturing shop after his earlier building has been destroyed by fire (Cumberland Bk 23:213-15, Bk 25:24-25). Sheldon leased land from Edward Harris for his business. In 1864, the newly formed Woonsocket Rubber Company leased Sheldon's building and several months later acquired the lot 142 property, as well as the adjoining property to the east, present-day lot 387 (Cumberland Bk 26:441, Bk 28:626). The eastern lot had previously been occupied by the Bailey Washing and Wringing Machine Company, which relocated to the former Whipple and William Metcalf Machine Shop property on Social Street. Two stone additions were made to the Sheldon Sash shop by the Woonsocket Rubber Company soon after it acquired the property; the L-plan building configuration appears on the H.F. Keith map of Woonsocket, 1869.

The Woonsocket Rubber Company was initially formed to manufacture rubber rolls for the Bailey Washing and Wringing Machine Company, but quickly included boots, shoes, clothing and other rubber items in its production capabilities. Rubber manufacturing required steam powered machinery, heat and water

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for processing, but was not a water-powered industry. As the company grew, its plant expanded to the east with several brick additions to the main stone building. By 1875, several smaller brick and frame buildings stood on present-day lot 387, and the 4-story, brick, rear portion of the complex standing there today was under construction. The Rubber Company continued improvements to the property, erecting the central, 3-story, brick mill by about 1880. Possibly as early as 1872, and again in 1922, filling associated with municipal widening of South Main Street resulted in raising the ground elevation in front of the stone mill and along its eastern slope a total of approximately four feet.

By the late 1870s, demand for Woonsocket Rubber Company products, along with improvements in manufacturing technology, had exceeded the capacity of the South Main Street plant. In 1882, the company's rubber boot production was relocated to a new facility in Millville, Massachusetts. Seven years later, the Woonsocket Rubber Company built a large, brick Italianate style plant on Fairmount Street in Woonsocket.

The South Main Street mill was occupied for a short period at the turn of the twentieth century by the Model Dye and Printing Company and subsequently was acquired by the Falls Yarn Mills, Inc., who continued operations here until the late twentieth century. The eastern half of the complex, now under new ownership, has been stabilized and renovated for use as light industrial, retail, and office space. The older, western section of the complex is vacant and is for sale.

### Inventory

The following description of the Woonsocket Rubber Company complex structures is keyed to the accompanying map. Numbers are assigned for ease of identification only, and the two halves of the complex on separate lots are described separately.

#### Lot 142 (west)

The single building on lot 142 consists of an interconnected group of stone, brick and frame structures standing 1-to 3-stories tall and constructed primarily from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The main and earliest part is an L-

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plan, 3-story, low-pitch-gable-roof, partially-stuccoed, rubblestone structure built in three distinct sections between 1857 and 1869.

The exact sequence of construction of the stone building is not entirely clear. The construction materials and technology in all sections are basically similar. Variations may have resulted from intended function or level of construction skill as much as from construction sequence. All three roofs are sheathed in roll roofing, the introduction of which is the mid-nineteenth century made such low-pitch roofs possible. Both gable slope and end wall rafters project on the exterior. Early photographs show two square glazed cupolas on the main building roof. Although they were removed in the 1920s, the scars are visible on the interior of the building. At-grade floors are poured concrete throughout the building.

In so far as could be determined, no evidence remains of the original steam power plant nor any rubber manufacturing machinery. Evidence of early electrical belt-driven textile machinery does appear in cutouts and engine mount scars on the replaced floor/ceiling. A few small pieces of textile machinery and several piles of wood spools also exist.

1. North Section (1857/69). The front (north), 10-bay-by-5-bay section of the stone building, abutting the south side of South Main Street, differs from the two rear sections in the use of wood window and door lintels and irregular gray, shale-like corner quoins. The symmetrical, 5-bay facade (north) retains original 12/12 double-hung window sash on the second (originally third) floor; three of the first (originally second) floor windows are infilled and the easternmost window was converted to a door in the early twentieth century. The original first floor windows, visible in the interior are now buried. A c. 1870 photograph indicates the lowest floor was never fully exposed along South Main Street. These windows most likely faced a light well. The wide central entrance is higher than it was originally and also dates from the early twentieth century when South Main Street was raised. Probably at the same time, the lower third of the central second-story freight opening was filled in, creating a 2/2 window. The wood hoist beam is original.

On the west elevation, abutting the now-filled Ballou mill tailrace, all windows are filled with concrete block. The

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southernmost bay contains filled door openings on each floor which led to wood-frame exterior stairs, now removed. The northernmost four bays contain a single, 3-story opening with splayed masonry end walls which appears to be original. It is filled in on the first floor below grade by concrete block added when the tailrace was filled (c. 1960), and on the upper two floors by wood framing sheathed in matchboard and brick-pressed sheet metal. Its function is unknown. Sloping wood beams in the north wall interior masonry indicate it may have been used with a ramp system to move large machinery in and out. There is no physical or historical evidence that a building addition to the Woonsocket Rubber Company mill ever stood over the Ballou tailrace, although a building attached to the braid mill on the west was located here in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The east elevation first floor exterior is obscured by brick additions. The upper two floors retain original 12/12 double-hung sash windows.

2. South Section (1857/69). The rear (south) 9-bay-by-5-bay section of the stone building rises from a drylaid fieldstone foundation, with an exposed height of five to six feet at the south west corner along the Ballou tailrace and at the south end along the Blackstone River. The masonry building wall is tied together at this corner by regular granite block quoins. All windows on the west, south, and east elevations have granite lintels and wood sills, and are blocked. The only physical evidence observed of the water system is a bricked-in rectangular area, approximately 2x3' in size with spanning masonry blocks, located at the top of the foundation on the south side. It may have been a discharge outlet to the river. A wide flat-head door opening located at the south end of the visible 5-bay section of the east elevation appears to be a later addition or modification.

## Junction and Common Features of Sections 1 and 2

Sections 1 and 2 are joined at their south and north ends, respectively, along flush exterior walls. An interior first floor wall also existed at the juncture originally. Some evidence of quoining, partially obscured by stucco, is visible on the west elevation, although the orientation of a pre-existing corner is unclear. Further evidence of joinery appears at the roof

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junction, where the south Section 2 roof height is approximately 8-12 inches higher than, and overlaps the roof of Section 1 to the north. The juncture of the original floors is also offset by several inches. These two wood floors were removed in the early twentieth century and replaced with a single, steel-supported floor. Joist ends in the masonry walls provide a physical record of the original floor location.

3. Southeast Ell (1857/69). Sharing its west wall with the southern end of the east wall of Section 2, this 5-bay squarish ell possesses features similar to Section 2, but is also unique among the three sections. While of similar total height, this ell section differs in floor height arrangement, reflected in taller-than-typical first floor and smaller-than-typical third floor windows. Its masonry is more similar to Section 2 than 1, with granite block quoins and granite lintels. Windows exist only on the north and south elevations; with exception of the 4-light third-story glazing, they are filled in with concrete block. A wide arched entrance, probably added or modified in the late nineteenth century, is located on the north elevation. Two smaller doors at either end of the east wall have been filled in. Orientation of the roof ridge parallel (north/south) to the roof of the main mass of Sections 1 and 2 rather than perpendicular suggests an earlier construction date for Section 3. On the other hand, its function as a boiler house, with free standing exterior chimney immediately to the east, may explain the increased first floor height and lack of east wall windows. In addition, the absence of windows in the common interior wall between Sections 3 and 2 suggests this was never an exterior wall. The interior floors of the ell and all machinery were removed in the 1950's to accommodate large vats in the space, and the interior walls were sheathed in particle board.

4. Mixture Room (1864/69) and Office (1864/69; c. 1930). Set at an angle along South Main Street abutting the northeast corner of the main mill, this small, 2-story addition sits on a fieldstone and brick first floor where mixing of compounds occurred. The lower half of the two 2/2 double hung sash windows on the east elevation have been partially obscured by fill. The frame second-story office appears in a c. 1870 photograph as a flank-gable, clapboard structure with multilight (probably 6/6) double-hung sash windows with flat Greek Revival lintels and flanked by shutters, two on the north and one on the east elevations. The ground elevation is also clearly about four feet lower than at



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present. Under Falls Yarn Mill ownership in the early twentieth century, the north gable flank was raised and a one-bay-deep brick extension added along South Main Street. From a concrete foundation, it rises to a straight facade parapet inset with a concrete panel outlined in raised brick. Simple brick bands outline the door and the window openings of the asymmetrical 3-bay facade and east elevation. The original window in the frame section was replaced with the same 8/1 sash in broad openings used in the new addition. Physical evidence of the original roof line is found in the framing which remains above the interior ceiling and is visible in the east elevation clapboards. On the interior of the office structure, moisture infiltration has caused sagging and warping of the floors.

5 and 6. Cutting Room (1864/69; c. 1900). Located directly behind (south of) the mixing room/office, the 1-story, brick, flat-roof cutting room was constructed in two episodes. The earliest, 4-bay-long, northern section has 12/12 double-hung sash windows with granite lintels and a timber-spanned door opening, now glazed. Fill obscures the lower half of these openings. The southern section, connecting the northern section and the 3-story brick wing, is also brick, set on a concrete foundation. Windows are 6/6 double-hung sash with plain openings and cast iron sills, set close to the ground. The exact date of this section is unclear, although it appears to date from the early twentieth century and stylistically predates the front office extension. The roof cornice line on both sections appears to have been originally located just above the windows and later raised approximately four feet, possibly in the 1920s.

7. Fireroom and Varnishing Wing (1864/69; late nineteenth century). Now a 3-story, low-pitch gable, brick wing, this addition appears in a c. 1870 photograph as two stories with a flat roof, three large roof vents, and at least one chimney. The first floor housed three heaters for stabilizing the rubber products through the vulcanization process; the second floor served as a varnishing room. The third-floor was most likely added by the Woonsocket Rubber Company sometime between 1875 and about 1890. As it stands today, the wing is six bays long on the south elevation with regular fenestration comprised of 2/2 (first floor) and 16/16 (second and third floors) windows with straight granite lintels and wood sills (first and second floors) and cast iron lintels (third floor). On the north elevation, the remnants of two straight brick chimney stacks



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appear as pilasters with segmental arched window openings in the intervening panels on the second and third stories. The second-story windows are bricked in, a rectangular picture window has been inserted at the center of the third story, and the remaining two sash are now 12/12 and 1/1 in configuration. The 3-bay east elevation has both granite linteled and segmental arched windows, as well as freight door openings on the upper two floors. The interior timber framing has chamfered beams.

8. Shed (mid-20th century). A small steel and concrete block open shed is located at the southeast corner of the main stone building and the 3-story brick addition.

Elements no longer standing.

Four structures built in this portion of the complex are no longer standing. Three were located adjacent to the east wall of the rear stone ell, and one was attached to the 3-story brick addition. All were removed in the mid-twentieth century.

9. Chimney (1864/69). The square brick chimney rose 130 feet from a ten-foot-square granite base. The base remains.

10. Varnishing Shed (1864/69). The shadow of the 1-story, brick varnishing storage shed which stood south of the chimney is visible in the stone ell wall.

11. Shed (c. 1900). In the early twentieth century, a 1-story wood frame shed enclosed both the chimney and varnishing shed. No traces of this structure remain.

12. Passageway (late 19th century). This was a wood-frame, second-story, enclosed connector to the brick mill to the east.

Lot 387 (east)

In the early years of the Woonsocket Rubber Company ownership, construction was concentrated at the stone mill, and land to the east was occupied by several frame storage and production buildings, as well as a small brick office building on South Main Street. By 1875, however, permanent masonry construction was underway, and the two 3- and 4-story brick mills replacing the earlier buildings were completed by the early 1880s.

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13. Shoe Manufacturing, Packing, and Storage Building (c. 1875). A 4-story, 19-by-5-bay, flat-roof building on a fieldstone foundation, this is the easternmost structure of the complex. Window openings on the east, west, and south elevations are segmentally arched with cast iron sills. The original sash has been replaced with new, smaller sash with snap-in muntin grids. On the 5-bay north elevation, the twelve windows flanking the central bay may have been enlarged and rebuilt with straight concrete lintels and sills and are infilled with glass block (c. 1950). The second and third story freight doors retain original segmental openings and granite sills; the first floor door has been altered and a concrete loading dock added. An important feature of the east elevation are two sets of segmental arched door openings leading to 3-story, decorative fire escapes.

14. Elevator/Stairtower (c. 1875). The main stairtower, situated near the center of the west elevation, is a simple, 5-story, flat-roof, brick structure with segmental openings and ornamented with a granite stringcourse between the fourth and fifth stories. The original bellcast mansard roof was badly damaged in the 1938 hurricane and removed.

15. South Addition (early 20th century). The south elevation is partially obscured by a 4-story, brick-and-frame addition on a concrete foundation. Sheathed in false-brick asphalt siding and lit with 1/1 replacement sash in original window openings, this extension continues along the south side of the building and connects with a large frame addition on the west elevation.

Beginning at approximately the mid-point of the west elevation and proceeding south are a number of additions erected by the Falls Yarn Mills company between c. 1900 and 1950.

16 and 17. Boiler Room and Chimney (c. 1875/1900). Possibly an original element of the Woonsocket Rubber Company construction, the 2-story, brick boiler room and its round, yellow tile chimney are encompassed within a large, 2-story frame addition (see #21 below). Modifications to the Boiler room in 1916 were designed by Woonsocket architect, Walter F. Fontaine.

18. Elevated Passageway (c. 1900). This 2-bay wide, wood-frame structure connects the second and third stories of the two

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adjacent brick mills. It is sheathed in vinyl clapboard siding, and original window sash has been replaced with 1/1 sash.

19. Loading Dock and Stairtower (c. 1950). Located below the elevated passageway, the concrete dock extends between the two brick mills; the concrete block stairtower rises from the dock to the passageway.

20. Shed (early 20th century). This small, 1-story storage structure, sheathed in vinyl siding, fills in the north corner of the main building and its original, brick stairtower. It was constructed by the Falls Yarn Company.

21. Stores House, Dye House, and Drug Room (early 20th century). This 2-story, flat-roof, wood-frame extension, built on a concrete slab foundation, is sheathed in vinyl siding and has replacement 1/1 window sash (1987). It encompasses a 4-story, frame stairtower, abutting the original brick tower, and surrounds the boiler room and chimney. The small section south of the boiler room served as a drug room, and the remainder as a dye house and storage facility. The westernmost portion of this extension was recently removed to provide space for parking.

22. Mill (c. 1880; c. 1900). This 3- and 4-story, flat- and low-pitch gable roof, brick mill was originally constructed by the Woonsocket Rubber Company as a 2-story building. It was enlarged by a third story and to the west and north by the Falls Yarn company before 1911. The 3-story, gabled, 14-by-6-bay section has segmental arched windows with cast iron sills, iron shutter hangers, and new 1/1 double-hung-sash with snap-in muntin grids. Several original wood paneled doors in arched openings also remain.

23. West Extension (1880/1911). Extending along the west and south elevations is an elongated and truncated triangular-shaped, 3-story, 14-by-2-bay brick addition, repeating the fenestration pattern of the original building, but with concrete window sills. The northernmost section of the addition is a 4-story, polygonal bay forming a recessed corner between the original building and its west and north additions. On the interior, the original west exterior wall was removed, creating single expanses in the main mill work spaces.

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24. North Extension (c. 1900). Originally constructed by the Woonsocket Rubber Company as a 2-story, gable-roof building with a standing seam metal roof and Italianate entry portico, this section was remodeled by the office and main entrance for the complex under Falls Yarn Mills, Inc. ownership. This 4-story, 5-by-2- and 4-bay, flat-roof, hard-fired-brick addition has segmental arched windows with concrete sills and retains most of its original 6/6 sash. Its prominent Colonial Revival entrance surround, set at the east end of the 5-bay facade and reached by granite steps, incorporates a segmental modillion pediment, fluted pilasters, paneled recess, and leaded transom. The interior stairhall on the first and second floor retains original finishes including matchboard paneling, doors, tile floor, and pressed-tin ceilings. The main mill spaces remain open with exposed timber framing.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

INDUSTRY

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

Banigan, Joseph

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1857-1938

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Cultural Affiliation

N/A

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State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

**Summary**

The Woonsocket Rubber Company Mill complex is a largely intact mid- to late nineteenth-century rubber manufacturing site comprised of austere and handsome, stone and brick mills. It reflects the evolution of industrial construction technology and the rapid growth of the rubber industry in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Of the mills remaining in the industrial City of Woonsocket, the Woonsocket Rubber Company buildings are among the best preserved, and they are of special interest because they document the diversity of the city's industry beyond the dominant textile industry. The complex derives further significance from its association with Joseph Banigan, a major figure in the rubber footwear industry in Rhode Island who went on to become the first president of the U. S. Rubber Company. Secondary significance of the complex derives from its ownership and occupation by two textile firms in the twentieth century.

**The Rubber Industry**

Commercial rubber manufacture in the United States was initiated in 1832 with the founding of the Roxbury India Rubber Company, Roxbury, Massachusetts. The sensitivity of rubber to temperature extremes hampered early production until Nathaniel Hayward and Charles Goodyear developed, respectively, the applications of sulfur (1836) and heat (1839) which allowed for stabilization through the vulcanization. As a result, factories producing rubber boots, shoes, and rubberized fabrics began to appear all over New England at the middle of the nineteenth century.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property c. 3/4 acres

UTM References

A 

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

B 

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Zone      Easting                      Northing

C 

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Zone      Easting                      Northing

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Woonsocket Rubber Company Mill nomination boundary conforms to the boundaries of City of Woonsocket Plat 14-H, Lots 142 and 387, bounded roughly by Lot 21 (west), South Main Street (north), Island Place, and Lot 371 (east), and the Blackstone River (south).

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries selected encompass the lots established in 1845 and historically associated with the mill property under Woonsocket Rubber Company ownership.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Virginia A. Fitch, Senior Architectural Historian

organization The Public Archeology Laborabory, Inc. date December 1988

street & number 387 Lonsdale Avenue telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Pawtucket state Rhode Island zip code 02860



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The early evolution of the rubber industry in New England is incompletely documented and understood. In Rhode Island, contrasted with the dominating forces of the textile, machine tool, and jewelry industries, the rubber manufacturing presence was small but insignificant.

Four major nineteenth-century rubber manufacturing firms are known to have existed in the state: the Woonsocket Rubber Company (1864); the National Rubber Company, Bristol (1860s); the Davol Rubber Company, Providence (1874, listed in the National Register); and the Joseph Banigan Rubber Company, Providence (1896). Davol, the smallest, employed 275 workers in 1891 producing rubber goods for the drug, dental and stationary trades. The other three companies manufactured similar products: rubber footwear and rubberized fabrics.

Of Rhode Island's four rubber companies, the Woonsocket Rubber Company was one of the first, and the only one forced to expand away from its original site. This resulted in lower visibility than the later and larger plants, but has preserved the scale of 1860s and 1870s mills at the South Main Street Complex.

The Woonsocket Rubber Company was formed in 1864 and incorporated in 1867 by Simeon S. Cook, Lyman A. Cook, and Joseph Banigan. The Cook brothers were important local industrial entrepreneurs and were involved in the Woonsocket Machine & Press Company (1825), Bailey Washing and Wringing Machine Company (1865), and the Woonsocket Furnace Company. Joseph Banigan, born in 1839 in Ireland, came to Woonsocket from the Goodyear India Rubber Bottle Stopper Company, Boston.

By 1869, the plant on South Main Street employed 150 people and used 250,000 pounds of rubber and 500,000 yards of cloth per year producing boots, shoes, and rubberized fabrics. Expansions at the facility and increased demand for rubber products required construction of new plants at Millville, Massachusetts (1882; demolished) and at the Alice Mill, 85-87 Fairmount Street, Woonsocket (1889). By 1882, 800 hands were employed.

Boots were the primary goods manufactured at the two new mills; a subsidiary of the Woonsocket Rubber Company, the Marvel Rubber Company also produced rubber shoes at South Main Street. Through Joseph Banigan, the Woonsocket Rubber Company was also

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connected to several support industries, including the Glenark Knitting Company, Woonsocket, which produced cotton linings for the Woonsocket plants, and the Leicester Felting Company, Millville, which produced felt liners for boots. With the construction of the two new plants at Millville and Woonsocket, the company left its old factory on South Main Street in 1910. One contemporary historian claimed that the Alice Mill on Fairmount Street was the largest rubber footwear producing plant in the world.

Both the South Main Street and Alice Mills employed numerous Irish and Swedish immigrants, contributing to the ethnic diversity which characterized Woonsocket during this period. The company's General Regulations required punctuality and neatness, attentive workmanship, and proper observance of the Sabbath, reflecting a common patriarchal concern for employees' comportment both inside and outside the workplace.

Under the leadership of Joseph Banigan (the Cooks had dissolved their interests in the company by 1882), the Woonsocket Rubber Company thrived into the early part of the twentieth century. In the 1890s, it participated in the consolidation of rubber industries under the U. S. Rubber Company; Banigan was its first president, from 1893-96. A self-made millionaire, Bannigan was said to have been the largest individual importer of Brazilian rubber in the United States. In 1896 he formed an additional rubber shoe manufacturing concern, the Joseph Banigan Rubber Company, in Providence. Banigan's business interests were diverse and geographically widespread; he was a president of the American Wringer Company; of the American Hand Sewed Shoe Company, Toledo, Ohio; of the Providence Evening Telegram Company; of the Howard Sterling Company; and a director of numerous companies, including: the National Cash Register Company, Ohio; the Glenark Knitting Company; the Industrial Trust Company; and the Providence Board of Trade. Banigan moved from Woonsocket to Providence in the 1870s, where he made several contributions to the residential and commercial architecture of the city: the Alice Building, 236 Westminster Street (1898); the Banigan (now AMICA) Building, 10 Weybosset Street (1896)-- both listed in the National Register as part of the Downtown Providence Historic District; and two houses, one of which, constructed in 1875 and moved in the early 1890s, still stands at 9 Orchard Avenue. He is also notable for his philanthropic activities, particularly to Roman Catholic charities, including

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the Home for the Aged Poor, Pawtucket; St. Maria Home for Working Girls; St. Vincent de Paul Infant Asylum; St. Xavier's Convent; and St. Joseph's Hospital, all in Providence. In addition, he endowed a chair in political economy at the Catholic University, Washington, D.C.

### Falls Yarn Mills, Inc. Model Dyeing & Printing

The Woonsocket Rubber Company's association with the South Main Street property ended in the second decade of the twentieth century. In 1910, the rubblestone mill and west half of the property was sold to Hope Realty Company; and in 1914, the brick mills and east half of the complex was sold to the Falls Yarn Mill, Inc. Because both halves of the complex shared a single chimney, deeds provided for continued use by the owners of the eastern buildings. This era of the property's history is a period of secondary significance. Nevertheless, the twentieth-century occupations represent the continuum of textile production in Woonsocket, despite the overall weakening of the industry in the northeast, and reflect the impact of the tremendous influx of mill owners and workers of European origin to the city during this period.

The Falls Yarn Mills, Inc., was founded in 1900 by a group which included Joseph Cavedon, an Italian immigrant, and Theophile Guerin, a Belgian immigrant whose father, Joseph Guerin had worked at Woonsocket Rubber. The Guerin family was an early and distinguished force in the local textile industry in the early twentieth century; other ventures included the Guerin Spinning Company (1895), American Paper Tube, manufacturers of paper bobbins (1898), Montrose Worsted Company (1902), and the Alsace Worsted Mill (1904). Unlike many Franco-Belgian families who sent representatives to Woonsocket to run their mill enterprises, the Guerin family settled here. Theophile Guerin may have provided temporary financial support to get the business started, for he soon transferred his holdings to Joseph Cavedon. The Falls Yarn Mill, Inc., remained in the Cavedon family until it closed in 1984; throughout its history, the company's officers were almost exclusively family members.

The Falls Yarn company manufactured specialty and fine merino yarns, such as lambswool and cashmere for markets in the

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northeast and midwest. It initially leased the former steam-powered American Worsted Company Braid Mill on the abutting property to the west, adjacent to Woonsocket Falls. In 1914, the Cavedons purchased City Lot 387, the eastern, brick half of the Woonsocket Rubber company complex, from Woonsocket Rubber. For over three-quarters of a century, this site was the company's home. Modification of the buildings occurred to enhance production, a new chimney was erected, and an up-to-date new entrance was installed on the enlarged street front building. In 1957, the western half of the complex, the rubblestone mill on Lot 142, was acquired from the Model Dyeing & Printing Company. With the exception of the rear ell used for mixing wools, this building functioned primarily as storage space under Falls Yarn ownership.

The second floor of the rubblestone mill was used for a time as a hall for the Eureka Lodge No. 28 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. The Model Dyeing & Printing Company, one of the numerous French-owned companies in Woonsocket, was, however, the principle owner from 1916 to the 1950s. In 1920, the officers were Raphael P. Daignault, president; Alfred Daignault, treasurer; William H. Generoux, Secretary. The company remained in existence until the 1950s when the property was sold to Falls Yarn Mill, Inc.

#### Architectural Significance

The Woonsocket Rubber Company complex buildings are architecturally significant as utilitarian structures deriving interest from the simplicity of their vernacular design and reflecting the early origins of a new industry. The buildings are reasonably well-preserved and interesting expressions of mid-nineteenth-century masonry wall and timber framing techniques, here designed for an industry other than textile production. The oldest, L-plan stone section has antecedents in nearby early nineteenth-century textile mills such as the Ballou-Lippitt-Harris mill of 1836 and portions of the Woonsocket Company/Bernon Mill of 1835 (both listed in the National Register). Among its contemporary mid-nineteenth-century, low-pitch-gable, fieldstone counterparts is the 3-story carriage and blacksmith shop, Island Machine, sited immediately east of Woonsocket Rubber Company complex and a portion of the former George C. Ballou mills, later incorporated into the Glenark

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Knitting Company plant on East Street.

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**HISTORIC MAPS**

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| 1845 | Plat 1, Page 13, Cumberland. Surveyed by Rufus Arnold for Edward Harris, March 17, 1845. |
| 1855 | Map of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Henry F. Walling.                                       |
| 1862 | Map of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Henry F. Walling.                                       |



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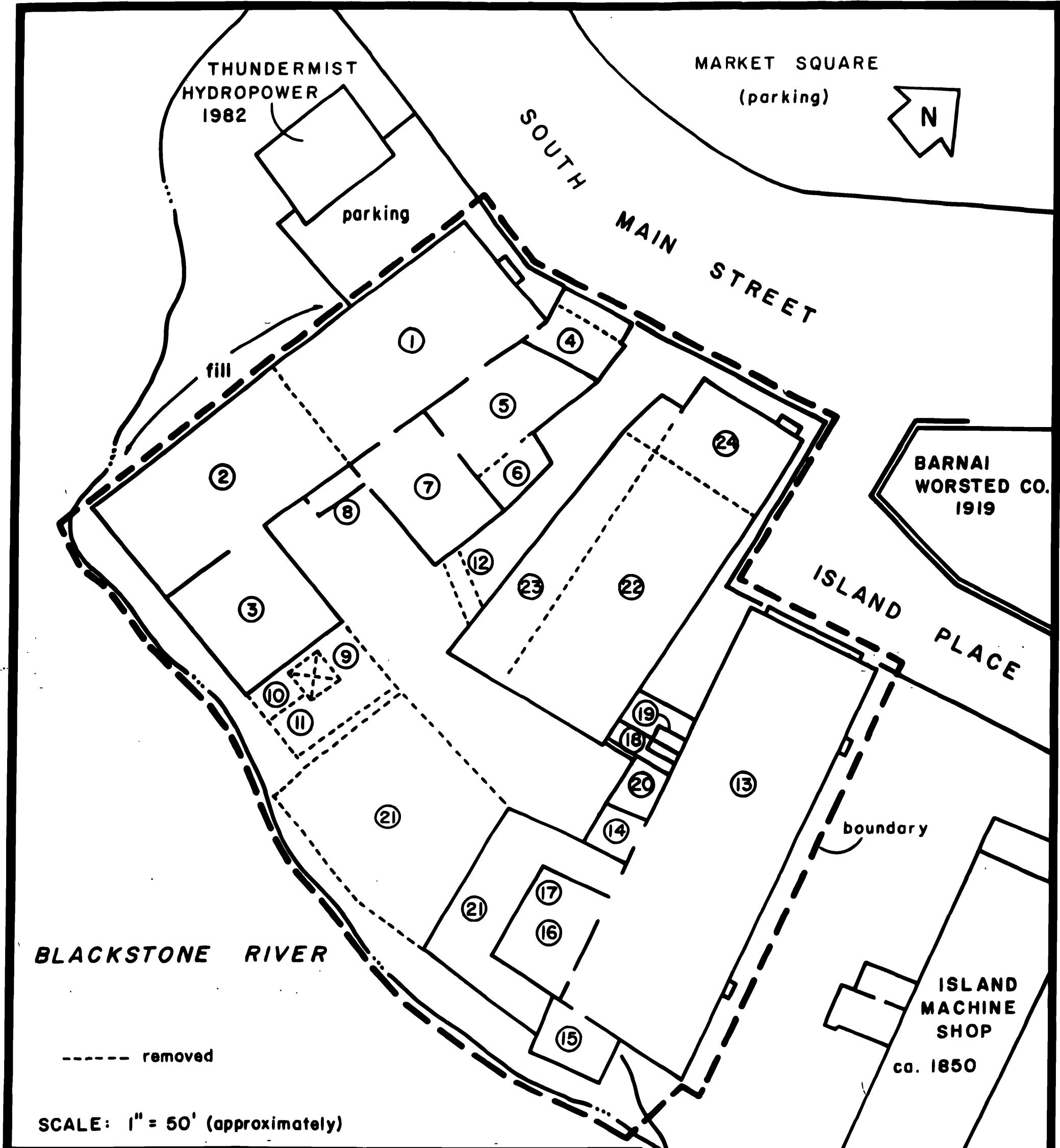
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Historic Maps (continued)

1869	Map of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, H.F. Keith.
1870	Atlas of the State of Rhode Island, D.G. Beers & Co., Philadelphia.
1872	Plan of the Relay and Widening of a portion of South Main Street, Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Woonsocket City Records.
1875	Insurance Maps of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Sanborn Map Co., New York.
1911/ 1922	Insurance Maps of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Sanborn Map Co., New York.
1955	Insurance Maps of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Sanborn Map Co., New York.

OTHER

Rhode Island Historical Society Graphics Collections  
Woonsocket City Directories  
Woonsocket City Archives (land evidence and tax records)  
Woonsocket Historical Society Collections (including a c. 1870 photograph)  
Cavedon Family Records



BLACKSTONE RIVER

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SCALE: 1" = 50' (approximately)

**WOONSOCKET RUBBER COMPANY COMPLEX**  
**1988**  
**NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION MAP**  
**SOUTH MAIN STREET**  
**WOONSOCKET (PROVIDENCE COUNTY), RHODE ISLAND**

Source: Sanborn Map Co.  
 1955