

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

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

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

For HCRS use only

received APR 28 1982
date entered JUN 1 1982

1. Name

historic Knowlton Hat Factory

and/or common Kartiganer Hat Factory

2. Location

street & number 134 Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Upton

N/A vicinity of

congressional district 3d

state Massachusetts

code 025

county Worcester

code 027

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
☐ district	☒ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture	☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial	☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational	☒ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment	☐ religious
☐ object	N/A in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government	☐ scientific
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial	☐ transportation
		☐ no	☐ military	☒ other: community center

4. Owner of Property

name Milhaus Associates

street & number 23 Central Avenue

city, town Lynn

N/A vicinity of

state Mass.

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number 2 Main Street Courthouse

city, town Worcester

state Mass.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Inventory of Historic Assets
title of the Commonwealth, #9

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1981

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston

state Mass.

7. Description

Knowlton Hat Factory, 134 Main Street, Upton

Condition		Check one	Check one	
☒ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☒ unaltered	☒ original site	
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ altered	☐ moved	date N/A
☐ fair	☐ unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Knowlton Hat Factory is located on Main Street in the village of West Upton, bounded on the east by Hartford Avenue and on the west by Centennial Court and Farm Street. The property occupies 5.21 acres of land, sloping nearly 30 feet from street grade at Main Street down to the southern edge of the site. Surrounding this prominent complex is a neighborhood of small-scale residential structures associated with the manufactory.

The factory complex today contains six major structures. All of the buildings are brick, ranging from one to six stories in height. (The number of stories is given as the maximum number visible on any one side, usually that number seen on the south (rear) elevation.) In its present state, the Knowlton Hat Factory is the product of two major periods of construction: the 1872 Main Street sections (Buildings A, B, and C) and the 1908 rear additions (Buildings D, E, and the Upton Community Center). At least seven other major structures existed on the site between 1840 and 1925 but have since been demolished. Brief descriptions of the extant structures follow.

Building B (1872), which lies parallel to Main Street without setback, is 4 stories high and 3 bays by 11 bays large. Its paired rectangular windows have granite sills and lintels; those on the facade are framed by 2 story segmental blind arches which approach pilaster construction. Pairs of sawn wooden brackets support the slate-tiled mansard story. An interesting design feature of this building is its Queen Anne-style dormers, whose segmental arch windows are recessed within gabled and bracketed frames. An incised scroll design decorates the dormers' pediments.

Building A (1872) is 3 stories high and 4 bays by 13 bays large, placed perpendicular to and behind Building B. Its segmental arch windows have granite sills and gauged brick lintels; a bracketed cornice tops the walls. Above are a slate-tiled mansard roof and dormer windows with flat cornice molding. Placed behind Building B, the two structures have recently been connected by a glass-enclosed walkway.

The main section of Building C (1872) is a large 5-story structure placed perpendicular to Main Street, on which it fronts. The top story of the building is treated as a mansard roof and is covered with slate tiles. Further articulating the box are segmental arch windows with gauged brick lintels and granite sills, a cornice formed by a brick corbel table and dentil course, and a tower on both the north and west sides. The 4-story tower on the north facade connects Buildings B and C and contains the principal entrance, which is marked by a Queen Anne-style hood and segmental arch doorway. Attached to the northwest corner of the main block is a small 2-story office; its 3-sided facade has a flat roof and detailing similar to the main block.

Building E (1908), continuous with Building C, is 5 stories high plus a basement. The block has a flat, cornice-less roof, and its segmental arch windows have granite sills and gauged brick lintels. A sixth floor was destroyed by the 1938 hurricane and was never replaced.

Building D (1908) lies perpendicular to Building E, to which it is attached by a narrow tower. The six story block (3 bays by 10 bays) culminates in a corbelled cornice and flat roof. Segmental arch windows with granite sills and gauged brick lintels are separated by wide piers.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

The Upton Community Center (1908) is a small square structure of one story, resting on a fieldstone foundation. Under its flat roof are tall, segmental arch windows with granite sills and gauged brick lintels. Although the building has lost its cornice, it remains a contributing structure on the site.

The Knowlton Hat Factory is presently under renovation for use as rental housing units. Alterations made for this purpose have included replacement of original sash (much of which had seriously deteriorated), insertion of a new doorway on the facade of Building B, the addition of a glass-enclosed walkway between Buildings A and B, and cleaning of the exterior brickwork.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1872, 1908 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Knowlton Hat Factory is significant for its associations with the growth of local manufacturing, for its association with a prominent manufacturer and developer, and as an example of industrial architecture from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The complex possesses integrity of location, design, setting, and materials, meeting criteria A,B, and C of the National Register.

William Knowlton, a Boston native (1809-1886), entered the hat-making business in 1835. His initial operation was established in the Fay building in Upton Center. At that time, local women braided straw in their homes and brought the braids to the Fay building, where the hats were completed.

Around 1838-39, Knowlton relocated to West Upton, built a home, and purchased land for a new factory building. The first structure to be used for making hats here was erected in 1840 and later turned into a dormitory for the workers; this structure is no longer standing. Machinery was introduced into the manufacturing process in 1850, boosting production significantly. Peak production occurred from the 1870s through the 1890s. By the late 19th century, a New City office was opened, managed by Knowlton's son, Edwin. By 1925, Knowlton's industry was valued at \$610,000, and by the mid-20th century the Knowlton Hat Factory was the largest manufacturer of straw hats in the world. During the factory's hey day, as many as two shipments per day were sent out.

For decades the Knowlton Hat Factory was the major employer in West Upton and surrounding communities. At the factory's peak, it employed approximately 800 people and brought in female operatives from as far away as Maine and Nova Scotia.

The catalytic effect on the local economy is evident in a number of ancillary businesses. For example, a manufactory of hat boxes opened in Upton and a railroad was constructed through the town specifically to service the hat-making industry. In the 1890s, hat-making spread to the nearby towns of Westborough and Framingham.

William Knowlton is also remembered for his considerable contributions to the physical development of the community. Knowlton erected housing for his operatives, a school, store, church and hotel. A fire department was built near the complex, and in 1888 Knowlton installed a water supply system and built a gas plant to provide electricity. An early experiment was the cattle farm Knowlton established next to the factory circa 1847.

In 1925, the Knowlton Hat Factory passed out of the family in a sale to the Merrimack Hat Company, who later sold to Charles Kartiganer. Hats were last produced here in 1972 by Lish Brothers Industries, who closed the shop.

The Knowlton Hat Factory is a prominent landmark in the village of West Upton, located directly on Main Street at a bend in the road. Despite its industrial function, the complex is humanized by its small scale, asymmetrical plan, and elaborate ornamentation.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 5.21

Quadrangle name Milford, Ma.

Quadrangle scale 1:25000

UMT References

A	1 9	2 8 3 1 6 0	4 6 7 1 8 0 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 9	2 8 3 2 8 0	4 6 7 1 6 5 0
E			
G			

B	1 9	2 8 3 3 0 0	4 6 7 1 7 0 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	1 9	2 8 3 2 8 0	4 6 7 1 7 0 0
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached sketch map.

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

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Wendy Frontiero, Preservation Planner with Jeffrey Lechter, Design Alliance

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission

date March 1, 1981

street & number 294 Washington Street

telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston

state Mass.

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Robert L. Wesbrook

title Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission

date 4/21/82

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 6/1/82

for *Delores Byers*
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet

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Page 2

These features -- unusual for the building type -- enhance the factory's visual and cultural connections with the surrounding area. The current adaptive re-use of the property promises to maintain and strengthen the Knowlton Hat Factory's historical importance to the community.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation sheet

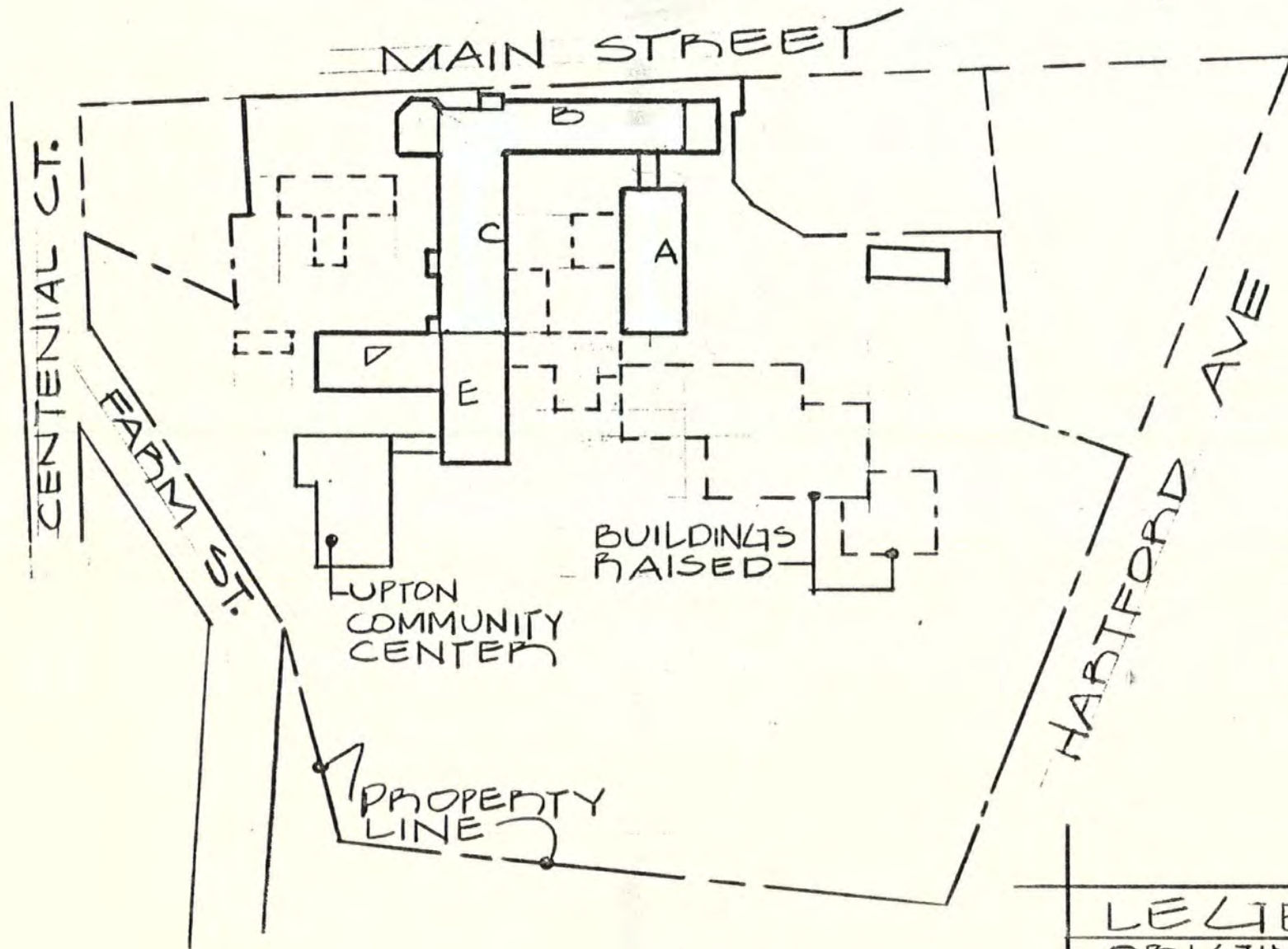
Item number 9

Page 1

Bibliography To Accompany Statement of Significance

Millhaus at Upton
West Upton, Mass.

1. "Upton, MA. 1735 - 1935", The Charlescraft Press, 1935, Velorous Taft, Arba Thayer Wood, Reverend George S. Ball, William Knowlton: This book was sponsored by descendants of four friends of the Town's second century.
2. "Making the Headlines", Merrimac Hat Corporation, Amesbury, MA, 1944.
3. "History of Worcester County, MA"; Volume II, J. W. Lewis & Company, Philadelphia, PA, 1889; compiled under the supervision of Hamilton Hurd.
4. "The Industrial Development of Upton"; Address delivered by Major George W. Knowlton, Jr., July 4, 1935.
5. "Straw Hats", taken from a newspaper clipping 1899, author unknown.
6. Conversations with Nancy Beatty, President, Upton Historical Society, Box 89, West Upton, MA 01587, September 3, 1981 and March 9, 1982.
7. Conversations with Otis Inman, Upton resident and Upton Historical Society member on March 9 and 26, 1982. (529-6292).



SOURCE:
1908 photographs provided by
Upton Historical Society

DESIGN ALLIANCE/ARCHITECTS,
83 Newbury Street, Boston MA

SCALE : 1" = 100'



LEGEND

ORIGINAL 1872
BUILDINGS A, B & C

ADDITION 1908
BUILDINGS D & E

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

EVALUATION / RETURN SHEET

Property: Knowlton Hat Factory
State, County: MA, Worcester
Federal Agency: _____

Working No. 4/28/82-1275

Fed. Reg. Date: FEB 1 1983

Date Due: 5/27/82 - 6-72-82

Action: ☒ ACCEPT 6/1/82

Entered in the ☐ RETURN _____

National Register ☐ REJECT _____

photos ☒

maps ☒

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

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

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____

Reviewer _____

Discipline _____

Date _____

☐ see continuation sheet

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

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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

8. Significance

Period _____ Area of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UNIT References

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272-35

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



1
UPTON, MASS.
Knowlton Hat Factory

Building B: East and North Elevations
Photo by Stephen Sherman, 1981
Negative filed with Stephen Sherman Studio
26 Otis Street, Cambridge MA 02141
Photo 1 of 3

MANUFACTURED BY THE EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY

PHOTO © COPYRIGHT STEPHEN J. SHERMAN
C1981

STEPHEN J. SHERMAN STUDIO
26 OTIS ST. 2ND FLOOR
CAMBRIDGE, MASS. 02141



2.
UPTON, MASS.
Knowlton Hat Factory

Buildings B and C, West and North Elevations
Photo by Stephen Sherman, 1981
Negative filed with Stephen Sherman Studio,
26 Otis Street, Cambridge MA 02141

Photo 2 of 3

PHOTO: © COPYRIGHT STEPHEN J. SHERMAN
CIRCUIT & SWANSON & SHERMAN STUDIO
260 HUNTING 2ND FLOOR
CAMBRIDGE, MASS 02141



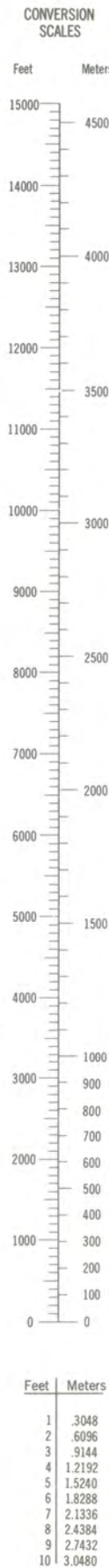
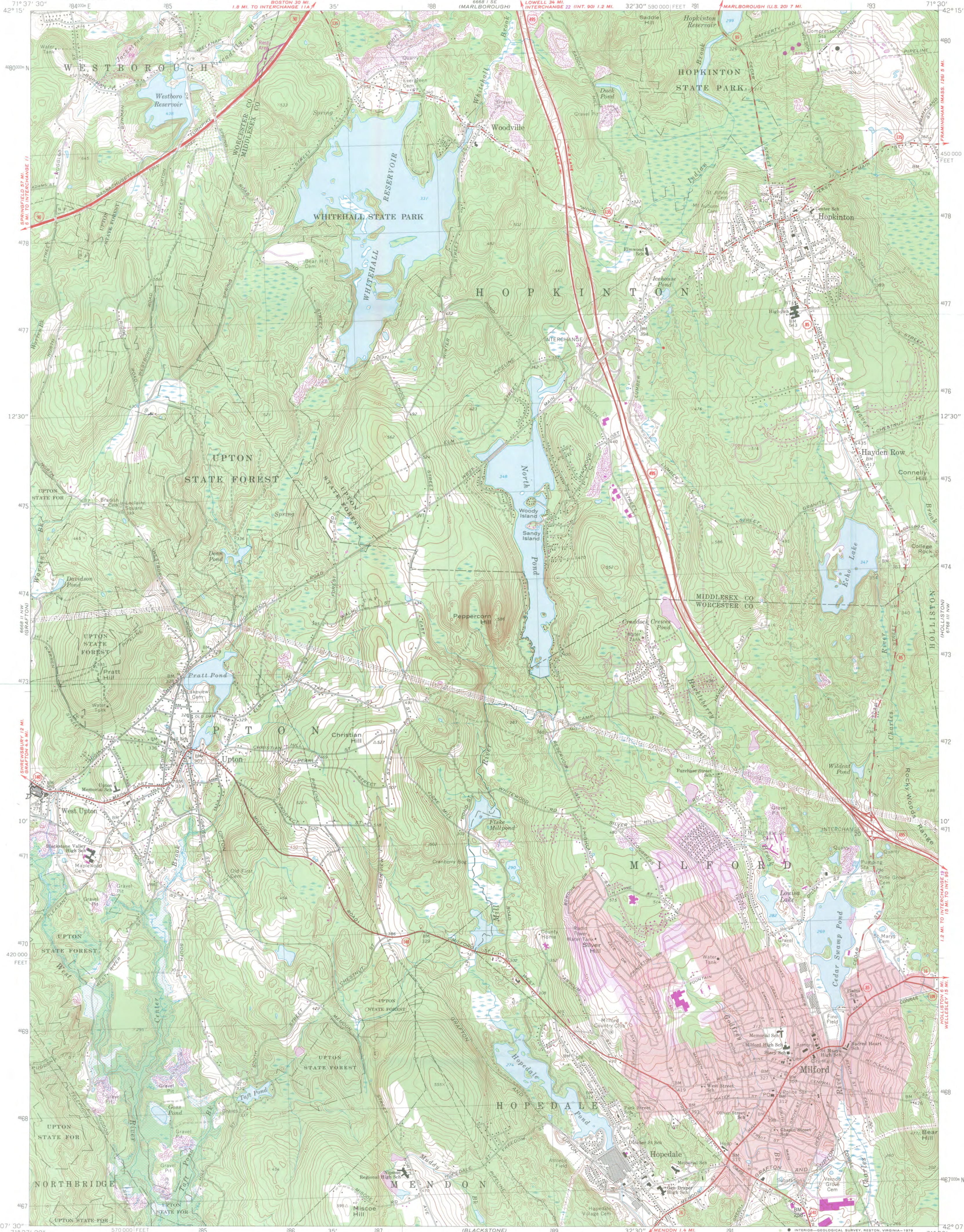
3

UPTON, MASS.
Knowlton Hat Factory

L to R: Upton Community Center, Buildings D, E,
B, and A; South Elevations
Photo by Stephen Sherman, 1981
Negative filed with Stephen Sherman Studio,
26 Otis Street, Cambridge MA 02141

Photo 3 of 3

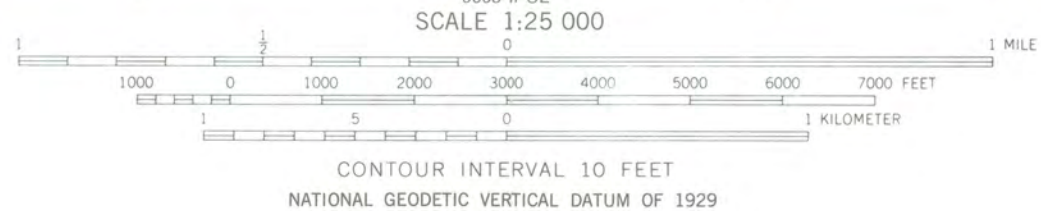
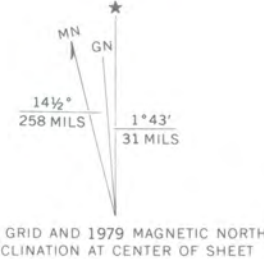
PHOTO © COPYRIGHT STEPHEN J. SHERMAN
STEPHEN J. SHERMAN STUDIO
26 OTIS STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MASS. 02141



Knowlton Hat Factory
Upton
Worcester County, MA

UTM Reference:
A) 19/283160/4671800
B) 19/283300/4671700
C) 19/283280/4671650
D) 19/283170/4671700

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1942-1943. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1967. Field checked 1968
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Area covered by dashed light-blue pattern is subject to
controlled inundation by West Hill Dam
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, all weather, hard surface	Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface	Unimproved road, fair or dry weather

Interstate Route
State Route

MILFORD, MASS.
N4207.5 - W7130/7.5
1968
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6668 II NE-SERIES V814

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

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with State of
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1977 and other
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Secretary of State

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

MICHAEL JOSEPH CONNOLLY
Secretary of State

April 22, 1982

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



Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

Boston - Adams Nervine Asylum (state)
Boyalston - Keyes - Dakin House (local)
Grafton - Willard House and Clock Museum (state)
Hatfield - The Old Mill Site Historical District (local)
Holden - Rogers House (local)
Needham - Tolman - Gay House (local)
Newton - Slade - Hovey House (local) owner objects
Sturbridge - Oliver Wight House (state)
Upton - Knowlton Hat Factory (local)
Weston - Isaac Hobbs House (local)

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

Sincerely,

Candace Jenkins

Candace Jenkins
Registration Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

CJ/anf