

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

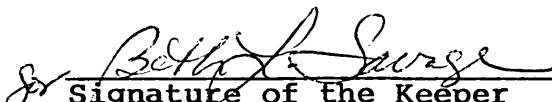
SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88002085 Date Listed: 11/14/88

Holden--Leonard Mill Complex Bennington VT  
Property Name County State

N/A  
Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
Signature of the Keeper

11-14-88  
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Counts of contributing and noncontributing resources: 28 resources in the district

- 23 C buildings
- 2 NC buildings
- 3 C structures (hydrant houses)

This information was confirmed with David Tansey, VTSHPO, by telephone.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

2085

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received SEP 30 1988  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Holden-Leonard Mill Complex

and/or common "Big Mill"

2. Location

street & number 160 Benmont Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Bennington

N/A— vicinity of

state Vermont

code 50

county Bennington

code 003

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name See continuation sheet.

street & number

city, town

vicinity of

state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Town Clerk

street & number 205 South Street

city, town Bennington

state Vermont 05201

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1974

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier

state Vermont 05602

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered

altered

**Check one**

original site

moved date \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Holden-Leonard Mill Complex stands next to the Walloomsac River in a mixed residential-commercial-industrial neighborhood of Bennington village. The mill complex consists of 28 industrial buildings, of which 26 are considered contributing to its historic character. The mostly brick, gable- and flat-roofed buildings of various dimensions and heights are generally connected to a central core dominated by the so-called "Big Mill." That four-and-one-half-story mill measures 53 feet by 227 feet; its outstanding architectural feature, a stair and bell tower centered on the east facade, rises the equivalent of seven stories culminating in an elaborate belfry. The Big Mill's distinctive corbeled eaves treatment is shared by several other nineteenth-century buildings in the complex. The buildings remain structurally sound but lack of maintenance, weathering, and vandalism have caused extensive damage, especially to the hundreds of large wood sash that constitute an important aspect of the buildings' designs; those sash are now (1988) being repaired or replaced in kind during an ongoing rehabilitation project. Overall the mill complex retains the essential integrity of its architectural character that has evolved from the original construction in 1865 through a great expansion circa 1915-25 to more recent alterations.

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

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number   4   Page   1  

---

Owners of Property:

Southern Vermont Development Corp.  
69 Merchants Row  
P. O. Box 783  
Rutland, Vermont 05701-0783

James Comi  
Vermont Bag and Film Corp.  
160 Benmont Avenue  
Bennington, Vermont 05201

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

---

Situated northwest of the center of Bennington village, the Holden-Leonard Mill Complex extends along the west side of Benmont Avenue (known historically as Mill Street) between Holden Street on the south and Leonard Street on the north. The narrow channel of the Walloomsac River curves along the west and north edges of the mill complex. The terrain in the vicinity lies relatively flat.

The mill complex comprises some twenty-eight industrial buildings of greatly varying sizes. A large majority of the buildings are linked to a central core, from which they extend outward in the manner of wings and ells. The original Big Mill (Building No. 5) stands deeply set back from, and oriented parallel to, Benmont Avenue. The second and third largest buildings, Nos. 1-2 and 27, project perpendicularly toward that street from No. 5's northeast and southeast corners respectively, forming a broad quadrangle opening onto the street. A major cross-street, County Street, intersects Benmont Avenue opposite the quadrangle; the Big Mill serves as the visual terminus of the intersecting (east-west) street.

A smaller and less publicly exposed quadrangle is formed along the south side of the mill complex. In this case, Building No. 27 serves as the central block while Buildings No. 1A-1B and 31 project from its southwest and southeast corners. The quadrangle opens onto a narrow driveway paralleling Holden Street a short distance to the south.

A veritable warren of additions and wings encrusts the rear (west) flank of the Big Mill, including Buildings No. 6, 7, 8, 9, 11-12, 13, 14, 15, 17, and 18. Constructed at various times, these buildings lack the open spatial arrangement of their counterparts on the east and south. Instead, they abut one another in a disorderly mass that completely envelops several of them.

One principal building, No. 19, stands just north of the attached group, linked only by a second-story enclosed bridge from No. 18. Two smaller buildings, No. 20 and 21, form a satellite group at the northwest corner of the mill complex. The yet smaller pump house (Building No. 10) and the three hydrant houses are scattered around the perimeter of the interconnected buildings.

Following a gravel driveway, an abandoned railroad siding enters the complex from the northeast corner of the property. The partly double-track siding passes the rear of Buildings No. 3 and 4 to

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

---

reach the shipping and receiving platforms within Building No. 9 along the west elevation of the Big Mill.

A mostly infilled tail race roughly parallels the railroad siding, leading from the former wheel house (Building No. 8) northward to the river. A subterranean iron penstock that formerly delivered water to the wheel house underlies Buildings No. 5 and 27 in its diagonal alignment from the southeast corner of the property. Another disused underground pipe connects the concrete headgate on the near (east) bank of the river with the pump house (Building No. 10). The rectangular concrete remains of a former reservoir basin appear in the open area between the southernmost buildings and Holden Street.

Within the Holden-Leonard Mill Complex, the Big Mill (No. 5) dominates the ensemble both in scale and quality of design. Its four-and-one-half-story height and 227-foot length surpass every other building, yet the architectural culmination takes the form of the great seven-story (equivalent) tower crowned by an elaborate belfry. The Big Mill shares its brick material with every other principal building, the most unifying characteristic of the mill complex. The Big Mill's segmental-arched openings with rock-faced granite sills appear on several other buildings.

The Big Mill shares two significant features, however, only with the nineteenth-century buildings in the complex that compose its original design group. The distinctive double-tiered eaves corbeling and slate-shingled gable roofs mark Buildings No. 13, 20, and 21 (along with the severely altered remnant of No. 16) as belonging to the early period (1860s-1870s) of the complex's development.

The two other design groups in the mill complex - each dominated by one of the largest buildings - overlap within the second great period of its development, circa 1915-1925. The relatively modern character of the four-story, flat-roofed, factory Building No. 27 actually represents the slightly earlier (1916-20) of these two groups. Its slender vertical piers articulate full-bay openings fitted with huge metal-framed, multi-light windows, characteristics that are repeated along the relatively uniform row of Buildings No. 11-12, 13, 14, and 15.

The more traditional appearance of the third design group belies its later period, 1920-25. Reconstructed in 1921, the two-story, monitor-roofed Building No. 1-2 with its segmental-arched

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

---

openings, wood sash, and gabled parapet illustrates the revival of nineteenth-century characteristics. The smaller Building No. 19 repeated the same idiom three years later.

The most recent building, No. 31, was added c. 1940 to the mill complex. Its one-story, flat-roofed form bears little decoration although the widely spaced piers on its public facades suggest the residual influence of a principal motif on the buildings from 1915-25.

The present physical condition of the buildings in the mill complex ranges from good to deteriorated. Most buildings appear essentially sound in structural condition if not free of specific problems. However, there also exist a few cases of advanced structural failures, such as the south wall of No. 17 and the northwest corner of No. 19, among the buildings along the west flank of the Big Mill. One of the distinctive outbuildings, Hydrant House No. 5, has been severely damaged, apparently the result of being struck by a vehicle.

The most pervasive problem of physical condition involves the large multi-light windows, both wood and metal, that contribute significantly to the architectural character of many buildings. In several cases including the Big Mill, the wood sash have generally deteriorated or been damaged beyond repair; many are now entirely missing, and the window openings have been temporarily covered. Among the early twentieth-century buildings along the west flank of the Big Mill, most of the glass in the historic metal-framed windows has been smashed.

Apart from the historical cases of overall reconstruction, e.g., Nos. 1-2 and 19, the principal buildings have generally escaped substantial alteration. A nineteenth-century building, No. 16, has suffered the most drastic alteration, having lost its gable roof and being nearly enveloped by later additions to the mill complex. The most common changes involve window and door openings that have been reworked or infilled. The monitor atop Building No. 1A-1B has been entirely sheathed (with corrugated metal) and thereby blinded; however, this alteration appears readily reversible as the original windows remain in place.

Only a minority of the buildings in the mill complex are currently being used actively, and most of those belong to the minority owner (the Vermont Bag and Film Corp.). The only industrial (manufacturing) enterprises are small-scale, involving

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 5

---

the production of specialty plastic bags and kitchen cabinets in Nos. 1A-1B and 27, respectively. The latter building also contains distribution and electrical contracting firms, and Nos. 11-14 are being used for distribution. Building No. 31 has been adapted to retail commercial use.

Prior to its present state of relative inactivity, the mill complex had already been adapted from textile or knitgoods production to a succession of light industrial activities. Accordingly, the machinery and furnishings of the buildings have been changed repeatedly during recent decades. The presently unused buildings are virtually empty of equipment.

By a transfer of ownership in 1986, the non-profit Southern Vermont Development Corp. acquired the Big Mill together with a majority of the buildings in the complex. That corporation has subsequently undertaken an extensive rehabilitation of those buildings, funded in part by a grant from the Economic Development Administration of the U. S Department of Commerce. The \$2,400,000 project entails principally repairing the buildings' envelope, meeting life-safety code requirements, replacing the electrical system, and making improvements on the surrounding grounds.

The exterior rehabilitation will cost about \$1,700,000 and treat about 120,000 square feet of building space (roughly 75 per cent of the complex). It involves three major tasks: repairing or reproducing the historic window sash; repairing or replacing in kind the slate and rolled roofing materials; and repointing or relaying where necessary the masonry walls. Owing to the great cost of restoring all of the roughly 500 full-sized wood sash, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation has approved an alternative practice for the buildings other than the Big Mill (and the south facade of Building No. 1-2 facing the main courtyard of the mill complex). This involves restoring every third or fourth window per story and covering (not infilling) with plywood the remaining openings. While the covered windows constitute an alteration of significant historic fabric, the treatment is readily reversible and makes possible the future restoration of additional windows.

The life-safety code work will include the construction of two five-story, fire-rated stair towers on the interior of the Big Mill. These will flank the existing stair tower, whose historic fabric will thereby escape alteration. A new hydraulic piston



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 6

---

elevator will be installed in the existing elevator tower to replace the present traction freight elevator.

The grounds of the mill complex will receive major improvements in landscaping and parking facilities. The front courtyard enclosed by Buildings No. 1-2, 5, and 27 will have plantings of shrubs and trees (the latter to replace the mature elm trees that formerly shaded the space) as well as a U-plan driveway leading to the front of the Big Mill. Landscaped parking areas will be constructed on the west and north sides of the complex, areas now either devoid of vegetation or overgrown with weeds and brush. Complementing the landscaped west grounds, a public walkway will extend along the bank of the Walloomsac River.

Descriptions follow of the individual buildings in the mill complex; the building numbers correspond to those used historically by the Holden-Leonard firm and on insurance diagrams, and are keyed to the accompanying sketch map.

Building No. 1-2; 1877, reconstructed 1921

The two essentially identical sections of this two-story, flat-roofed (with central monitor) building combine to form the largest floor plan (a rectangle 124 by 193 feet) in the Holden-Leonard Mill Complex. Divided only by an interior first-story brick wall, the two sections share nearly equal dimensions, No. 1 being 124 by 96 feet and No. 2 being 124 by 97 feet. The north and south elevations of the combined building are articulated uniformly by brick piers into a total of 24 bays. The similar east (Benmont Avenue) elevation of No. 1 serves as the building's main facade, being subdivided into 15 bays albeit without an entrance.

A stepped parapet with coping distinguishes the east facade; stopped against terminal piers, the parapet extends horizontally over the outer bays and then rises to a shallow peak over the central seven bays. The parapet shares the vertical plane of the piers that articulate the individual bays, the bays being recessed beneath corbeled heads. A date plaque (1921) is mounted below the corbel tables in the center bay. Like those on the north and south elevations, the window openings occupy the entire width of each recession. Three-course segmental arches relieve the openings while rock-faced granite sills provide contrast of

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 7

---

texture and color as well as horizontal delineation. The regular fenestration consists of large fifteen-over-fifteen wood sash; during the current rehabilitation, every third or fourth sash has been repaired and the others have been covered in a symmetrical pattern. Aside from the piers, the spandrels constitute the only brick surface.

The building's entrances occur on the north and south elevations. Halfway along the south elevation facing the main courtyard, a segmental-arched freight entrance retains recessed double-leaf, diagonal-boarded doors. Farther to the right, a rebuilt freight entrance with a paneled overhead door and concrete lintel displaces two original bays. The main pedestrian entrance with a replacement door and twelve-light transom occupies the first bay at the right (east) end. All of the window sash on this elevation are being repaired and left uncovered. On the north elevation, every third window is being repaired and the other openings are being covered. The eaves of the north and south elevations carry a wood cornice molding.

A broad central monitor extends nearly the entire length of the building's roof. The monitor was formerly lighted by closely spaced twelve-pane windows, there being eleven across the east and west ends and forty-four along the north and south sides. During the current rehabilitation, the historic windows on the east and west ends have been replaced with single-light windows, and the north and south sides have been entirely covered.

The appearance of the building differed radically prior to a reconstruction completed in 1921. Although its perimeter dimensions were the same, the brick building was originally only one story in height and was distinguished by a sawtooth roof with skylights mounted on the steep east slopes and corbeled eaves along the moderate west slopes. The walls were punctuated only by one segmental-headed window opening per individual segment of the roof.

Building No. 3; c. 1875

Serving to link Building No. 1-2 on the east with Building No. 4 on the south, this two-story, brick building projects two bays eastward of No. 4 and extends the full 124-foot depth of the abutting No. 1-2. Its four-bay, 48-foot north elevation reveals a shallow-pitched roof oriented perpendicular to that of No. 1-2;

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 8

---

a c. 1950, one-story, steel-framed loading shed of 20 by 30 feet projects from the north elevation.

The narrow two-bay south elevation incorporates a right-bay, segmental-arched entrance with double-leaf paneled doors (enlarged from an original single leaf) and segmental-arched window openings fitted with twelve-over-twelve sash. A corbeled cornice follows the gently sloping eaves.

The fifteen-bay west elevation has been subjected to various alterations of its first-story window and entrance openings. The lower grade exposes a high mortared rubble foundation. A one-story, 80 by 26-foot, steel-framed, plywood-sheathed, flat-roofed shed with paneled overhead doors has been constructed (c. 1955) on a raised concrete platform (and loading dock) along the west elevation, abutting also the north elevation of Building No. 4. Partly damaged by fire, this shed detracts from the historic character of the mill complex.

Building No. 4; c. 1875

Attached to the north gable elevation of the Big Mill (No. 5), this two-story brick building shares the mill's 53-foot depth but extends only 31 feet in length. Its roof repeats the orientation and shallow-pitched form of Building No. 3's roof.

The four-bay main (east) facade contains a freight entrance with double-leaf doors and massive concrete lintel and sill. The windows and cornice treatment correspond to No. 3's adjoining south elevation. Only a second-story, four-bay portion of No. 4's north elevation is exposed above the attached shed.

"Big Mill", No. 5; 1865

The massive original mill constitutes the largest building in the Holden-Leonard complex, rising four and one-half stories on a rectangular plan of 53 by 227 feet; its floor area amounts to approximately 64,000 square feet. The dominant feature of the mill (and the symbol of the entire complex), an engaged stair and bell tower of square plan, ascends the main (east) facade. A counterpart elevator tower of somewhat lower stature engages the rear (west) elevation. The towers define the center of each elevation; the building extends thirteen bays both to the right

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 9

---

(north) and the left (south) of each tower.

Standing on a mortared rubble foundation (exposed mostly along the west elevation), the load-bearing brick walls of the mill are laid up in American bond incorporating six stretcher courses followed by a course of alternating headers and stretchers. The regular fenestration occurs in the form of openings enframed by two-course segmental arches and rock-faced granite sills. The windows are fitted with twelve-over-twelve wood sash, although most have been damaged or destroyed and their openings are now covered. To preserve the historic character of the Big Mill, all of these sash are being replaced by identical new ones during the current rehabilitation of the mill complex.

A distinctive dual pattern of corbeled brickwork embellishes both the horizontal and raking eaves. The lower band comprises alternating larger and smaller pendant forms with exaggerated versions defining each corner; the upper band suggests miniature brackets that support the simple molded cornice. The expansive roof surfaces bear a somewhat mottled appearance owing to the variety of replacement slates. A row of raised skylights punctuates the roof just below the ridge.

The five-bay north and south gable elevations differ only slightly in their architectural treatment. A trio of round-headed windows marks each gable, the central window being taller than the others. The bands of corbel tables along the raking eaves are spaced closer together than those along the horizontal eaves. The south elevation carries a multi-flight iron fire escape that reaches to the gable story; a vertical iron ladder serves the same purpose on the opposite elevation.

The stair and bell tower incorporates a five-story, one by one-bay shaft of square plan surmounted by an octagonal bell chamber that culminates in a bellcast pyramidal cap. A segmental-arched entrance with double-leaf, diagonal-boarded doors marks the first story while the next three upper stories have window openings like those on the main block. An oculus with radiating muntins distinguishes each face of the fifth story. Iron star tie-rod anchors punctuate the corners of the middle stories. The eaves of the shaft repeat the corbel treatment of the main block.

Crowning the shaft, the octagonal bell chamber possesses on each face a slender round-arched, granite-silled opening now fitted with a wood louver (instead of the original glazing) below a

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 10

---

heading of simplified tracery. The bell chamber's eaves reiterate the corbel treatment of the lower eaves. The ribbed and slated cap sweeps upward to the foliated base of a missing metal weathervane. Having the form of a running stag, the weathervane was removed in 1969 and apparently taken to Massachusetts, as reported in a contemporary newspaper account, "to decorate the garden of an Exeter Corp. executive." (The Exeter Corp. owned the Ben-Mont Papers firm that occupied the Big Mill at that time.)

The bell was removed from the tower at the same time as the weathervane but was stored on the fifth floor. The brass bell was cast in 1870 by the Meneely Foundry of Troy, New York, being composed of ignot copper (77 per cent) and black tin (23 per cent). In 1987, the bell was dropped down the freight elevator shaft and sledgehammered into pieces by thieves for sale as scrap metal. The pieces have been recovered and will be welded together to recreate the bell for display in the mill.

The balancing freight elevator tower on the mill's opposite (west) elevation lacks a similar crowning chamber. Its five-story, one by one-bay shaft emulates the design - including the fifth-story oculi - of the main tower, but a slated hip roof terminates the west tower at that level.

The interior of the Big Mill retains its original arrangement. The floors are unpartitioned other than by a central rank of wood posts that extends the entire length of the building. The wood structural members have been augmented by a system of iron tie-rods. During the 1950s, the first floor was lowered by excavation to correspond to the level of the shipping and receiving facilities in the abutting Building No. 9.

**Building No. 6; c. 1875**

Entirely surrounded by the attached Buildings No. 5, 2S, 12, 13, and 7, this building consists of a two-story west section with dimensions of 18 by 54 feet and a single-story, flat-roofed east section of 16 by 48 feet. Only the two-bay second stories of the west section's north and south elevations are visible on the exterior; these share the standard window treatment of No. 5 although the openings are now covered. The slate-shingled roof possesses a steep east slope juxtaposed against a shallow west slope.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 11

---

Building No. 7; c. 1900

Another interior building almost entirely surrounded by Nos. 6, 13, 14, and 8 (a narrow gap exists along its east flank next to No. 5), this small one-story, flat-roofed building extends only 19 by 27 feet; it is not visible from the exterior.

Wheel House, No. 8; c. 1865

Yet another interior building entirely surrounded, in this case by Nos. 5, 7, 14, 15, 16, and 9, this one-story, flat-roofed building has maximum dimensions of 42 by 33 feet; the elevator tower of No. 5 protrudes into its northeast corner. This building originally contained the water wheel that powered the machinery in the Big Mill.

Building No. 9; c. 1900

Surrounded on three sides by Nos. 5, 8, 16, and 18, this one-story, shed-roofed building of 32 by 111 feet exposes only its north elevation. The east (longitudinal) half of the building consists of a shed to shelter the inactive railroad siding that serves the mill complex; a large exterior sliding door sheathed with corrugated metal closes the north end of this half. The west half shelters the concrete loading platform that has displaced a second rail siding; its brick north elevation is lighted by two segmental-arched bays of twelve-over-twelve sash.

Pump House, No. 10; c. 1900

Situated at the southwest corner of the mill complex, this detached one-story building of 12 by 36 feet consists of a brick (five-course American bond) main block and an added concrete-block south wing; both carry shallow-pitched gable roofs sheathed with asphalt paper. The one by one-bay brick block shares the segmental-arched form of openings common to the mill complex's older buildings. The north gable front has a central entrance with double-leaf, four-vertical-paneled doors. Now boarded over, the window on the west side has a six-over-six sash and dressed marble sill; the counterpart east window has been infilled with

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 12

---

brick above the marble sill. The south wing detracts from the historic character of the pump house.

A twelve-inch suction pipe leads underground from the pump house to a concrete intake structure on the near (east) bank of the Walloomsac River.

Building No. 11-12; c. 1918

Differing markedly in appearance from the earlier principal buildings of the mill complex, this flat-roofed, brick (five-course American bond) block of somewhat irregular plan shares similarity of design with the three adjoining buildings (Nos. 13-15) to the north; these four buildings compose a west facade of relatively uniform appearance but uneven profile. Building No. 4S protrudes into No. 11-12's southeast corner, abutting its one-story, flat-roofed east section invisible from the exterior. The building extends 70 feet in overall length (east-west) and from 52 to 68 feet in width.

The south half of the main block rises three stories and the north half only two; both are articulated horizontally by broad inter-story concrete beltcourses that serve also as continuous sills for most of the former window openings. On the three-story south half, brick piers provide a strong (although interrupted) vertical articulation of the individual bays. The six bays of the south elevation's third story and the corresponding bays of the north elevation's partly exposed second story are recessed slightly beneath corbeled heads.

Building No. 11-12 has been substantially altered from its original appearance. Most of its full-bay window openings and entrances have been infilled with concrete block; a metal overhead door has been installed in the west facade to become the only entrance. A third-story portion of a south-facing rear wall has collapsed either from deterioration or accidental damage.

Building No. 13; c. 1918

Only the three-bay west facade of this 25 by 70-foot, brick (five-course American bond) building is exposed; Buildings No. 6, 7, 11-12, and 14 surround the remainder of its perimeter. Unlike the similar Nos. 11-12, 14, and 15, No. 13 rises the equivalent

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 13

---

of one-and-one-half stories and carries a central longitudinal monitor atop its flat roof that nearly matches the height of its two-story neighbors.

The lower inter-story concrete beltcourse of Building No. 11-12 continues across No. 13's west facade, paralleled at the roof line by another beltcourse. Brick piers provide interrupted vertical articulation of the facade, flanking the full-bay openings fitted with metal-framed, multi-light windows with hinged panels (now partly covered and retaining little unbroken glass). A double-leaf set of wood doors has been removed from the left-bay entrance, now covered with plywood.

Building No. 14; c. 1918

Matching the perimeter dimensions of the abutting No. 13, this flat-roofed, brick building rises two stories to expose a second-story north elevation in addition to the three-bay west facade. The latter shares with its neighbors the continuous concrete beltcourse, vertical brick piers, and full-bay, metal-framed, multi-light windows with hinged panels. The main entrance in the broader central bay consists of double-leaf, six-horizontal-paneled wood doors surmounted by a twelve-light wood transom.

The north elevation corresponds to the third story of Building No. 11-12's south elevation; its four bays of slightly recessed metal-framed windows with separate concrete lintels are surmounted by corbeled heads below a low parapet with concrete coping. Toward its east end, the second story disappears behind the rising gable roof of the abutting Building No. 15.

Building No. 15; c. 1918

Although the one-story, flat-roofed west section of this building corresponds in appearance and origin to its neighbors Nos. 11-12, 13, and 14, it forms essentially a wing added to a nineteenth-century, one-and-one-half story, gable-roofed brick building. The two sections give No. 15 overall dimensions of 35-29 feet by 70 feet.

The three-bay west facade includes an overscaled central vehicle entrance whose exterior diagonal-boarded sliding door reaches upwards to the concrete beltcourse that continues from No. 14 to



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 14

---

form the eaves of this building. The flanking windows match those on the abutting block while the treatment of the west section's four-bay north elevation matches that of No. 14's second story.

The earlier east section of No. 15 carries a slate-shingled gable roof oriented parallel to that of the adjacent No. 5. Only the blank north gable wall is visible from the exterior. Buildings No. 3, 14, and 16 abut the remainder of the building, and only one original first-story wall (the east) appears to survive (now interior to No. 8); that wall displays the corbeled eaves treatment common to the mill complex's older buildings.

Building No. 16; c. 1865

This heavily altered, one-story, flat-roofed, brick building extends 40 feet by 69 feet in overall dimensions but only a three-bay portion of its west elevation remains exposed, the remainder of its perimeter being surrounded by Buildings No. 9, 15, 17, and 18. The visible portion displays segmental-arched former window openings (now infilled with concrete blocks) and corbeled eaves.

A truncated triangular section (with splash stains) of abutting Building No. 18's south elevation and a triangular section of replacement slate in the roof above indicate that No. 16 originally carried a gable roof that matched the surviving roof over the east section of No. 15. Indeed, the latter might originally have been part of No. 16, being isolated when No. 16's gable roof was dismantled.

Building No. 17; c. 1875

Attached to the south eaves elevation of Building No. 18 and the west elevation of No. 16, this structurally deteriorated, one-story, shed-roofed, brick (seven-course American bond) building extends 34 feet by 44 feet. Its three-bay west elevation carries a slightly corbeled raking eaves. The originally five-bay south elevation included a segmental-arched entrance with double-leaf doors but the central third of this wall has collapsed. The remaining segmental-arched window openings are distinguished by dressed marble sills while those on the west elevation have the rock-faced granite sills common to the mill complex's older

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 15

---

buildings. The six-over-six wood sash are either covered or largely damaged.

Above the two right (east) bays of the south elevation, the roof carries a low wood-framed, clapboarded extension whose very shallow pitch descends from the eaves of the abutting Building No. 16.

Building No. 18; c. 1865

Another original principal building of the mill complex, this two-and-one-half-story, brick block measures 43 feet by 84 feet and stands oriented with its slate-shingled gable roof perpendicular to the Big Mill. The building restates in the same materials the stylistic features of No. 5. No. 18 serves to terminate the series of attached secondary buildings that flank No. 5 on the west.

The brick bond used in No. 18 varies between six and seven stretcher courses for each course of alternating headers and stretchers. Both the horizontal and raking eaves share the corbel treatment of No. 5. Similarly, the window openings and wood sash match those of the Big Mill; the sash have been extensively damaged.

The nine-bay north eaves facade has a segmental-arched entrance with double-leaf, diagonal-boarded doors in the second bay from the right (west) end. At the center of the facade, an enclosed bridge, sheathed with corrugated metal and lighted on each side by three bays of six-pane fixed windows (now mostly covered), connects the second story with the south gable elevation of the perpendicularly oriented Building No. 19. No. 18's five-bay west gable facade lacks a first-story entrance; instead, single-leaf, vertical-boarded freight doors occupy the central bays of the second and gable stories beneath a hoist beam projecting from the gable peak. The opposite (east) gable elevation abuts Building No. 9.

Building No. 19; reconstructed 1924

Reconstructed three years after Building No. 1-2, the two-story, brick (irregular American bond) No. 19 exhibits marked similarity of design to its predecessor although only a fraction of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 16

---

latter's size. No. 19 measures 43 by 81 feet, subdivided by brick piers into five and ten bays along its north/south and east/west elevations respectively. The building stands north of No. 18, linked to the latter (and thereby to the central core of buildings) only by the second-story enclosed bridge from its south gable facade.

The north and south facades incorporate the same stylistic elements that mark No. 1-2's east facade. The recessed bays have corbeled heads below a brick parapet with concrete coping; from terminal piers, the stepped parapet extends horizontally for single bays and then ascends to a shallow peak above the three middle bays. A date plaque (1924) appears below the corbeling of the central bay. Sheltered by the bridge, a segmental-arched entrance with double-leaf, four-vertical-paneled doors occupies the central bay of the south facade.

Some of the segmental-arched window openings have rock-faced granite sills but concrete sills predominate. The twelve-over-twelve wood sash are generally in deteriorated condition. Iron star tie-rod anchors on the piers indicate inter-story reinforcement. Wood eaves embellished by cornice moldings project beyond the wall planes on the east and west elevations.

The northwest corner of the building has been demolished to a depth of one bay along each adjoining elevation, the result of being struck by a truck. The missing corner leaves the building vulnerable to further damage by weathering and vandalism.

Prior to its reconstruction in 1924, the building consisted only of a single story. The original form of its roof and other physical characteristics are not definitely known.

Building No. 20; c. 1865

Two similar one-story, gable-roofed, brick (six-course American bond) buildings stand unattached at the northwest corner of the complex. The larger No. 20 measures 39 feet by 44 feet and parallels the alignment of the adjacent Building No. 19. The building repeats the stylistic features common to the older buildings in the mill complex, notably the full array of corbel tables along both the horizontal and raking eaves and the segmental arches of the openings. The slate-shingled gable roof carries a short louvered ventilating cupola astride its ridge.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 17

---

Apart from one window in the rear (north) gable elevation, only the three-bay south gable facade is fenestrated. The central segmental-arched vehicle entrance with double-leaf, diagonal-boarded doors is flanked by window openings with rock-faced granite sills (now boarded shut).

Building No. 21; c. 1865

Essentially a smaller-scaled replica of Building No. 20, this 23 by 38-foot building differs mostly in its fenestration. The south gable facade contains two vehicle entrances with double-leaf wood doors set in rebuilt segmental-arched openings; the left entrance retains badly weathered six-horizontal-paneled doors while the extra-height right entrance now has replacement plywood doors. Both the east and west eaves elevations have two bays of present openings together with former openings that have been infilled with brick.

A deteriorated remnant of a one-story, wood-framed, flat-roofed shed links the adjacent walls of Buildings No. 20 and 21.

Building No. 27; c. 1920

Rivaling the Big Mill in size, this massive four-story, flat-roofed, brick (five-course American bond) block forms an ell from the southeast corner of No. 5. Partial projections mark both the east and west elevations, giving the building a somewhat irregular plan; the overall dimensions measure 64 by 168 feet. The single-plane north elevation incorporates a total of 21 bays, including both projections.

The building's east projection presents a four-bay east facade to Benmont Avenue, and contains stair and elevator facilities. To the left (south) of the projection, a secondary two-bay wall panel expands the building to its full width. The east pavilion exhibits slightly different design than the main body; its window openings are larger - containing 42-light metal frames with hinged panels rather than the 30-light frames elsewhere - and the individual recessed bays are not stopped at the eaves by the corbeled heads and concrete coping that mark the main body. The head of the freight elevator shaft adds a blind fifth story above the second bay from the east end of the north elevation. (During

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   7   Page  18 

---

the 1950s and 1960s, the building carried a temporary wood-framed fifth story on the south half of its roof.)

Brick piers delineate the individual bays and ascend the full height of the building, giving a dominant vertical articulation. The lighter-colored concrete sills and lintels of the openings contribute a secondary horizontal articulation. Other than the piers, the relatively narrow spandrels constitute the only brick wall surfaces.

Three entrances exist around the east front of No. 27. A pedestrian doorway occupies the right bay of the projection. A right-bay freight entrance exists on the recessed wall plane. Another freight entrance, sheltered by a wood-framed, flat-roofed loading shed, occupies the fourth bay from the east end of the north elevation (next to the freight elevator).

Some of the historic metal-framed windows have recently been replaced or covered, thereby disrupting the rhythmic pattern of the fenestration. Most of the windows on the first story of the south elevation have been covered or replaced with inappropriate modern windows in reduced openings. Three intermediate bays on the north elevation's third story have been treated similarly.

**Building No. 31; c. 1940**

The last principal block added to the complex, this building was constructed to contain the offices and laboratory, replacing the 19th-century office building at the front gate. The one-story, 33 by 84-foot, flat-roofed, brick (irregular American bond) building projects southward from the southeast corner of Building No. 27. An original blank rectangular projection on the rear (west) elevation was built to house the vault. Brick piers define the corners of the building but stop below the undecorated parapet that surmounts the public (east and south) facades.

The asymmetrical main (east) facade is subdivided into four panels by intermediate piers; the off-center entrance panel (second from the left or south) contains recessed double-leaf doors. The multiple window openings are arranged singly or in coupled groups (maximum of five), and are fitted with one-over-one wood sash.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 19

---

Building No. 1A-1B; c. 1900

Attached to the south gable elevation of the Big Mill and abutting also Buildings No. 27 and 2S, this one-story, brick (six-course American bond) building with a shallow-pitched roof extends an overall length of 146 feet by 63 feet in width; the north section (1A) accounts for 72 feet of the total length and the south section (1B) for the remaining 74 feet. South of the common wall with Building No. 27, the east elevation is punctuated by twelve bays; the main (south) facade contains an entrance among its eight bays.

The segmental-arched window openings with rock-faced granite sills reach nearly the full height of the walls, and are fitted with twelve-over-twelve wood sash (most now being covered with plywood). An off-center, segmental-arched entrance on the south facade has been altered by infilling around a replacement single-leaf door. Corbel tables support the overhanging eaves.

A high central monitor extends the entire length of the roof. Although presently concealed by exterior corrugated-metal sheathing, the monitor's original multi-light windows remain in place. A rank of circular metal ventilators stands atop the monitor's roof.

Two large cylindrical storage bins of corrugated metal have been erected next to the building's east elevation. These bins do not contribute to the historic character of the mill complex.

Boiler Plant, No. 2S; c. 1950

Defined on three sides by the originally exterior walls of Buildings No. 1A, 4S, and 6, this one-story, 32 by 32-foot building consists only of a concrete-block south facade and a shed roof that were built to complete the enclosure of the space. A large rectangular opening now exists in the south facade. The building contains the boiler room that formerly served the mill complex; one of the two oil-fired boilers remains in place. A cylindrical metal smoke pipe stands atop the roof. Non-contributing owing to age.

Building No. 4S; c. 1900

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 20

---

Another small one-story, shed-roofed building abutted on three sides (by Buildings No. 2S and 11-12), this 25 by 30-foot, brick (irregular bond) building is also exposed only on its three-bay south facade. Flanking the left entrance, its varied fenestration consists of two tiers of segmental-arched (three-course) openings with rock-faced granite sills that are fitted with small fixed-light windows.

Solvent Storage Building; c. 1950

Attached to Buildings No. 27 and 5 at the interior corner formed by their north and east facades, respectively, this one-story, 14 by 25-foot, concrete-block building carries a shed roof sheathed with standing-seam metal. An entrance marks its east elevation while three bays of two-over-two sash (now covered) light its north elevation. Non-contributing owing to age.

Hydrant House No. 1; c. 1940

Standing a short distance northeast of the solvent storage building, this eight by ten-foot, one-story, wood-framed, shed-roofed building is sheathed with brick-patterned asphalt material.

Hydrant House No. 3; c. 1900

Standing east of Building No. 1A-1B's southeast corner, this small one-story, wood-framed, matchboarded building of hexagonal plan is partly sheathed with brick-patterned asphalt material, and is capped by an asphalt-shingled pyramidal roof. "No. 3" is stenciled on the matchboard siding.

Hydrant House No. 5; c. 1900

Similar in form to the counterpart No. 3, this hydrant house retains more nearly its original appearance albeit in severely damaged condition. The building is sheathed with matched boards except for two faces that are almost entirely missing. Rising from a projecting molded cornice (also partly missing), the pyramidal roof is covered with asphalt paper but culminates in the original turned wood finial. The entire hydrant house leans

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

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number   7   Page  21 

---

markedly to the northwest, probably the result of being struck by a vehicle.



## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1865, c. 1915–25      **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Holden-Leonard Mill Complex holds primary significance for the distinctive architectural character of the so-called Big Mill, an outstanding representative of the middle nineteenth-century, multi-story, brick mill type. The central seven-story stair and bell tower flanked by broad expanses of the four-story main facade give the Big Mill a unique appearance among contemporary mill buildings in Vermont. The mill complex holds additional significance for the dominant role that it played historically in the industrial and economic development of Bennington township. At its early twentieth-century peak, the Holden-Leonard firm accounted for one-quarter of total employment in Bennington, then the leading center of the textile industry in southern Vermont. Although no longer used for textile manufacture, the Holden-Leonard Mill Complex ranks among the small number of counterparts in Vermont that survive with virtually their entire complement of functionally related buildings.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuations sheets.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 13.98

Quadrangle name Bennington, Vt.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 8	6 4 6 8 0 0	4 7 4 9 5 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	1 8	6 4 6 7 8 0	4 7 4 9 2 2 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1 8	6 4 6 5 9 0	4 7 4 9 2 3 0
---	-----	-------------	---------------

D	1 8	6 4 6 6 1 0	4 7 4 9 5 7 0
---	-----	-------------	---------------

E			
---	--	--	--

F			
---	--	--	--

G			
---	--	--	--

H			
---	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheets.

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 Hugh H. Henry

organization Historic Preservation Consultant date July, 1988

street & number Green Mountain Turnpike telephone 802-875-3379

city or town Chester state Vermont 05143

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Eric Silbert*

title Director, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation date 9/23/88

For NPS use only

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

for *Beth K. Savage* date 11-14-88  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

---

The cotton and woolen textile industry emerged in Bennington township early in the nineteenth century. Possibly the earliest cotton mill in Vermont was constructed in 1811 beside Paran Creek in North Bennington village (see the National Register nomination for the North Bennington Historic District, entered in the National Register on August 29, 1980). Other small mills followed in Bennington village and achieved modest success, their products being shipped to New York and elsewhere. Toward the middle of the century, however, rising competition from mills nearer the metropolitan centers caused a decline in local textile production.

The arrival of the railroad at North Bennington in 1852 and, via a branch line, Bennington village two years later improved the circumstances for the local industry. In 1854, the manufacture of knitgoods was initiated; that activity would expand to become Bennington's dominant industry by the end of the century. Outside businessmen brought fresh capital to Bennington and organized large-scale firms to compete in the regional market.

The ultimate in physical size of the mill buildings was achieved the following decade. In 1865, the firm of Seth B. Hunt and Philip Tillinghast constructed their "Big Mill" on an undeveloped lot along the Walloomsac River downstream of the village's other water-powered mills. The great four-and-one-half-story building with its seven-story (equivalent) bell tower cost, according to Aldrich's 1889 History of Bennington County, about \$575,000. Unfortunately for the proprietors, they chose to manufacture paisley shawls. Aldrich describes the result thus: "This undertaking would have been abundantly successful but for the fact that when this mill got in full operation the supply of this grade of ladies wear was largely in excess of demand, in fact the manufacture had already begun to decline." Seth B. Hunt acquired sole ownership of the failing firm in 1872 but died only two years later.

The first shift in output at the Big Mill followed its purchase in 1874 - for about \$100,000 - by Seleg S. and Michael Fisher of New York. Under the corporate name of Bennington Woolen Co., the Fishers converted the mill to the production of overcoatings made from wool shoddy. Clearly optimistic about their prospects, they invested some \$200,000, enlarging the mill complex and installing more machinery. In 1877, the Fishers constructed an expansive one-story brick addition, apparently the northeast ell that later was rebuilt into the present Building No. 1-2. By 1880, according to Child's Gazetteer and Business Directory, the firm

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   3  

---

had some 400 employees operating 144 looms and about 12,000 spindles to produce annually over one-half million yards of heavy overcoating.

Child notes that the mill then used both water and steam power. The former was always in limited supply from the relatively small flow and moderate gradient of the Walloomsac River past the mill site. Indeed the Fishers were forced to abandon another water-powered operation a short distance upstream, owing to its detrimental effect on the power available at the Big Mill. Steam became a virtual necessity during the annual dry periods in summer and early autumn.

The Fishers' operation of the Big Mill lasted only a few years, and the mill was then closed for a period. There followed two of the briefest ownerships in the mill complex's history. Next, R. R. Haines and Co. paid only about \$50,000 for the property, but their attempt to manufacture woollens failed within a year. In 1887, the mill was auctioned to Francis A. Fales and Benjamin Knower. Their successors, in contrast, proved the longest-lived and most successful of the enterprises that have occupied the Big Mill.

John S. Holden and George F. Leonard acquired the mill in 1889 apparently for the liquidation price of \$43,000, and started operation under the name of John S. Holden Manufacturing Co. Charles W. Leonard of Newtonville, Massachusetts joined the firm a year later, and from 1890 until 1909 the corporate name was the Holden-Leonard Co. The new firm did not accede to the contemporary dominance of Bennington's knitgoods industry, then approaching the pinnacle of its success (over half the knitting mills in Vermont were located in the township). Instead, Holden-Leonard Co. revived the manufacture of woolen textiles, and proceeded to quell any doubt about the viability of such enterprise in Bennington.

In 1891, there were about 200 persons employed at the Big Mill. Only four years later (1895), the number had increased to 300, and the company had achieved the position of being the largest industrial venture in southwestern Vermont. The mill was producing fine wool dress fabrics, cloakings, and cassimeres. In 1903, employment reached 325 and the annual production was worth \$650,000. John S. Holden died in 1907, and in 1909 the firm was incorporated as the Holden-Leonard Co., Inc. Unprecedented expansion would soon follow, made possible in part by the demand for military uniform fabric during the First World War.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

---

The most dramatic physical changes in the mill complex occurred during the period of the late 1910s and early 1920s. The 1921 edition of the Sanborn insurance map of Bennington records an advanced stage of the expansion. The second largest building (based on floor area) in the mill complex at that point had just been completed in a remarkably modern industrial style. The four-story, flat-roofed Building No. 27 projected eastward from the southeast corner of the Big Mill, rivaling the latter in its massing and presence while exhibiting a new functionality of design nearly devoid of ornament. On the opposite (north) side of the newly defined quadrangle, the west (No. 2) half of the present Building No. 1-2 had been reconstructed to the two-story height crowned by a monitor; the east (No. 1) half would lose its distinctive sawtooth roof and receive the same treatment later in 1921. Along the rear (west) flank of the Big Mill, Buildings No. 11-15 had been constructed, circa 1918, with a relatively uniform continuous west facade that anticipated No. 27 in style.

The 1921 Sanborn map provides a record of how the principal buildings of the mill complex were being used at the height of Holden-Leonard Co., Inc.'s activity. The firm was then producing dress goods and cloakings, and the extant buildings were serving the following functions:

Building No. 1 [not yet reconstructed]:

Single story - storage

Building No. 2 [reconstructed into its present form]:

First story - storage

Second story - weaving

Big Mill, No. 5:

First story - finishing

Second story - weaving

Third story - spinning

Fourth story - carding

Building No. 8:

Single story - wheel [water-powered]

Building No. 10:

Single story - pump house

Building No. 13/14:

East half - machine shop

Building No. 15:

East half - picker

Building No. 16:

Single story - dye house

Building No. 18:

Both stories - dry and stock house

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

---

- Building No. 19 [not yet reconstructed]:
  - Single story - storage
- Building No. 27:
  - First story - finishing
  - Second story - weaving
  - Third story - spinning
  - Fourth story - carding
- Building No. 1A:
  - Single story - finishing
- Building No. 1B:
  - Single story - dye house

The Sanborn map shows three lesser buildings and the free-standing brick chimney that subsequently have been removed from the mill complex. The most substantial of these stood at the front (east) gate: a one-story, 70 by 30-foot, flat-roofed symmetrical brick office whose five-bay east facade (with segmental-headed openings including a double-leaf central entrance) faced the street intersection and whose gabled parapet repeated the corbeled treatment of the Big Mill. Two smaller one-story, wood-framed buildings were sited in the rear (west) yard adjacent to Buildings No. 13-15; one served as a blacksmith shop and the other as a carpenter's shop. The tall brick chimney of square plan stood adjacent to the south elevation of Building No. 11-12.

Employment surged while the mill complex was being expanded. By 1920, some 800 persons worked there, a figure approaching the historical maximum. The Holden-Leonard Co., Inc. thus maintained its rank as the largest industrial employer in southwestern Vermont.

The physical expansion continued during the 1920s. Another reconstruction occurred in 1924 when Building No. 19 received its second story in a stylistic reiteration of the larger Building No. 1-2. A reservoir with a capacity of 1,250,000 gallons of water was constructed in the area between the southernmost buildings and Holden Street. The reservoir displaced a row of ten two-story, clapboarded, gable-roofed houses for mill workers that fronted Mill Street (now Benmont Avenue) between Building No. 27 and the intersection with Holden Street.

The national economic collapse of the 1930s nearly extinguished Bennington's textile and knitgoods industries. Several firms succumbed early in the Depression but Holden-Leonard managed to continue until late in the decade. The mill closed for nearly

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

---

two years in the early 1930s, and then operated sporadically at less than capacity until being closed again in 1938. Finally, in June, 1939, the Holden-Leonard Co., Inc. sold the entire mill complex and related employees' housing to Joseph Benn Textiles, Inc. of North Providence, Rhode Island.

The local newspaper article announcing the sale anticipated that "the wheels will soon begin to whirl." Instead, for unexplained reasons, the Benn firm proceeded almost immediately to liquidate both the machinery and buildings by a public auction held on August 22-23. The auctioneers, Samuel T. Freeman and Co. of Boston, published a catalog describing the industrial real estate (with water power), machinery, and equipment. The catalog's cover declared "The Mill Is Complete As Operated With All Preparing, Spinning, Weaving, Dyeing and Finishing Equipment - 22 Sets of Cards, 10,000 Spindles, 208 Automatic Looms." The "group of mill construction brick manufacturing buildings" then contained some 154,500 square feet of floor area.

The catalog provides a detailed roster of the machinery and equipment used in the mill, and thereby a record of the machinery (and technology) employed by the contemporary textile industry:

Some of the more important items include: 15 Sets 48"x60" Woolen Cards (Davis & Furber, Smith & Furbush); 7 sets 60"x48" Cards (Davis & Furber, James Smith); 122 Crompton & Knowles Automatic Worsted Looms, 4x1 Box, 25 Harness, 82" Reed Space; 90 Crompton & Knowles Automatic Worsted Looms, 4x1 Box, 25 Harness, 75" Reed Space - Individual Motor Drive; 50 Crompton & Knowles Woolen and Worsted Looms, 4x4 Box, 25 Harness, 75", 82", 90" and 92" Reed Space; 10 Parks & Woolson Double Shears, 66 1/2", (including Model A and Lift Saver); 4 Voelker & Gessner Steam Presses 66"; 3 Whitin Wool Ring Spinning Frames, 4" Gauge; Arlington 4 Bowl Continuous Crab; Franklin Process Raw Stock Dyeing Machines, (500 and 250 lb. Cap.); 16 Hunter Fulling Mills, (No. 10 and No. 20); Gessner & Klug Decating Machines; Davis & Furber and Gessner Single and Double Acting Nappers; James Hunter 2 Cylinder Ball Bearing Garnet Machine; Davis & Furber 240 Spindle Bobbin Winders; Gessner Vacuum Extractors; Tollhurst Extractors; Birch Scutchers; Davis & Furber Brass Plate Dressing Reels, 92"; Warp Compressors; Warp Compressor Spoolers; Gessner and Curtis & Marble Two and Four Cylinder Teasel Gigs, 80"; Marrow and other Sewing Machines; Hunter Single Apron Duplex Stock Dryer, 5 Sections, 8' Apron and Hunter Automatic Feeder with 48" Pit Feeder and set of 48" Model "D" Squeeze

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

---

Rolls; 10,000 Spindles Mule Spinning 1 7/8" and 2 1/8"; 6 and 8 String Washers; Philadelphia Hurricane, Heathcote and Kenyon Dryers; Shoddy, Burr and Mixings Pickers; Card and Napper Grinders; Steaming, Brushing, Folding, Winding, Inspecting and Measuring Machines; Belting, Shafting, Parts, Supplies, Bobbins, Shuttles, Spools, Harness, etc., etc.

The abrupt announcement of the Holden-Leonard liquidation must have been a shock to the Bennington community. Nevertheless in its August 7, 1939 headline article about the forthcoming auction, the Bennington Evening Banner tried to downplay the significance of the loss of the town's largest industry. The article stated that Bennington had been "gradually adjusting itself" to the sporadic operation and declining employment of the Big Mill during that decade. Furthermore, the article claimed (as if to prove its point) that "in better days, when the mill was running at or near capacity, many of the operatives were not permanent residents of Bennington and only temporarily contributed to the business of the town." While the economic depression certainly played a major role, the 1941 Economic Survey prepared by the Bennington Chamber of Commerce attributes the ultimate demise of the Holden-Leonard firm to another factor: "Ownership of the mill passed to heirs not familiar with or interested in manufacturing so it was sold to a knitting concern...."

Another firm took over the mill complex in 1939, and started production of knitgoods under the name of Bennington Mills. This company apparently added the last principal building to the mill complex, the new office and laboratory (No. 31) attached to Building No. 27 as a south ell; the 19th-century office at the front gate was then removed. But its employment of 150-200 was merely a shadow of the previous ranks, and the venture lasted only a decade. The closure in 1949 brought to a conclusion more than eighty years of textile manufacturing in the Big Mill. Other textile mills in Bennington and throughout Vermont suffered the same fate during the post-war period, reflecting the contemporary regional shift of that industry from New England to the Southern states.

Subsequently, the Holden-Leonard Mill Complex has been occupied by a variety of light industrial enterprises. In 1951, the mill complex was subdivided into two portions, the smaller portion comprising Buildings No. 27, 31, 1A-1B, 2S, and 4S. The larger portion, including the Big Mill, was purchased by Ben-Mont Papers, Inc., the corporate successor to a local manufacturer of



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 8

---

waxed paper established early in the present century. During the next two decades, the Ben-Mont firm used its portion of the mill complex to produce wrapping papers. That company was also involved in another shift of historic usage when the name of Mill Street was changed to Ben-Mont (commonly Benmont) Avenue.

The smaller portion of the complex has remained active with light industrial and commercial uses since 1951. The larger portion, however, has been mostly vacant since 1984 when the owner defaulted on loan obligations. A local non-profit industrial development group, the Bennington County Industrial Corp., then took over that portion of the mill complex, and was succeeded in 1986 by the regional Southern Vermont Development Corp. The latter entity has undertaken a \$2,400,000 physical rehabilitation of the larger portion of the mill complex, funded in part by a grant from the Economic Development Administration of the U. S. Department of Commerce. The purpose of the project is to create serviceable industrial space for sale as industrial condominiums.

The Holden-Leonard Mill Complex retains largely intact its design, aspect, and feeling from the 1920s period when it achieved the height of its industrial significance. Furthermore, the architectural centerpiece of the complex, the Big Mill, exhibits its original (1865) appearance altered only by roof skylights, temporarily missing window sash (being replaced in kind during the current rehabilitation), and the attachment of several more recent buildings at various positions around its perimeter. Similarly, the next most important buildings, Nos. 1-2 and 27, preserve virtually their original or historically reconstructed appearances. Together with the unaltered No. 31, the three largest buildings present to Benmont Avenue a composite public facade that evokes a strong sense of the entire chronological and stylistic spectrum of the mill complex.

The secondary buildings linked to the rear flank of the Big Mill have been subjected to more substantial alterations and have been allowed to deteriorate to a greater extent with attendant loss of some historic integrity. In the most extreme case, the removal of Building No. 16's gable roof truncated an original linkage between the Big Mill and Building No. 18. The numerous infilled windows and doorways on several of these buildings, particularly No. 11-12, detract markedly from their historic character. Given the economically marginal nature of the buildings, it appears unlikely that such elements will ever receive restoration.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   9  

---

The Holden-Leonard Mill Complex belongs among a relatively small number of multi-building industrial complexes that arose in predominantly rural Vermont during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Big Mill ranks individually as the most outstanding example in the state of its mill type; indeed, it alone possesses the elongated facade bisected by the principal tower. In most cases, such industrial complexes have been abandoned by their historical occupants, and subsequent changes of usage generally have caused substantial alterations in their historic architectural character. The Holden-Leonard Mill Complex, however, retains largely intact its historic fabric, and is now receiving an extensive rehabilitation intended to preserve the architectural quality of its buildings and to restore them to active industrial uses.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   9   Page   1  

---

Bibliography:

1. Aldrich, Lewis Cass, ed. History of Bennington County, Vt. Syracuse, N. Y.: D. Mason and Co., 1889.
2. "Auction Sale Continues at Woolen Mill." Bennington Evening Banner, August 23, 1939, 1.
3. Beers, F. W. Atlas of Bennington County, Vermont. New York, 1869.
4. Child, Hamilton. Gazetteer and Business Directory of Bennington County, Vt. for 1880-81. Syracuse, N. Y., 1880.
5. Goodkind, Milt., ed. "Bennington." Supplement to the Bennington Semi-Weekly Banner. Bennington, Vt., March, 1895.
6. Hemenway, Abby Maria, ed. Vermont Historical Gazetteer, Vol. V. Brandon, Vt.: Mrs. Carrie E. H. Page, 1891.
7. "Holden-Leonard Mill Sold to Rhode Island Textile Corporation." Bennington Evening Banner, July 6, 1939, 1.
8. Industrial Advantages of a Bennington Location, An Economic Survey. Bennington, Vt.: Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Committee, 1941. (Mimeographed.)
9. Libby, Cole G. "Bell silenced - Historic mill bell found shattered." Bennington Banner, August 31, 1987, 1.
10. Resch, Tyler. The Shires of Bennington. Bennington, Vt.: The Bennington Museum, 1975.
11. Robinson, Melvin H., ed. Bennington Souvenir. Bennington, Vt.: Directors of the Young Men's Christian Association, 1904.
12. Scribner, David. "Once-Ailing Ben-Mont Now Reports Big Upswing." Bennington Banner, May 8, 1969, 1.
13. "To Auction Off Big Mill Property." Bennington Evening Banner, August 7, 1939, 1.
14. Welter, Rush. Bennington, Vermont: An Industrial History. New York: Columbia University, School of Library Service, 1959.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   2  

---

15. Auction catalog for The Holden-Leonard Mill at Bennington, Vermont. Boston, Mass.: Samuel T. Freeman and Co., 1939.

Cartobibliography:

1. Insurance Map of Bennington, Vermont. New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1921.
2. Insurance Map of Bennington, Vermont. Pelham, N. Y.: Sanborn Map Co., 1925, revised 1964.
3. Plan in Subdivision of the Holden Leonard Property of Joseph Benn Textiles, Inc. at Bennington, Vt. [Legend missing], 1939.
4. Insurance Diagram of Sprague Electric Co., Et Al, Owner, Ben-Mont Papers, Inc., Tenant, Bennington, Vt. Hartford, Conn.: Factory Insurance Association, 1958.
5. Insurance Diagram of Bennington County Industrial Corporation, Bennington, Vermont. Boston, Mass.: Insurance Services Office, 1971.
6. Map of Property Belonging to Bennington County Industrial Corporation, Benmont Avenue Property, Bennington, Vermont. Bennington, Vt.: Office of Gerald E. Morrissey, Inc., October, 1984. Scale: 1 inch = 40 feet.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 10 Page 1

The boundary of the Holden-Leonard Mill Complex begins at Point A, located at the northeast corner of the nominated property in the west edge of the Benmont Avenue right-of-way. The boundary then extends southerly along the west edge of said right-of-way approximately 1057 feet to Point B located at its intersection with the north edge of the Holden Street right-of-way (the southeast corner of the nominated property); thence the boundary turns westerly and follows the north edge of the Holden Street right-of-way approximately 469 feet, crossing the Walloomsac River, to Point C located at the southwest corner of the nominated property; thence the boundary turns first northerly and then northwesterly and follows the west property line of the mill complex approximately 447 feet, in part along the west bank of the Walloomsac River, to Point D located at the southeast corner of property now or formerly belonging to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington; thence the the boundary turns first northerly and then northeasterly and follows the west (becoming north) property line of the mill complex approximately 1146 feet, roughly paralleling the west bank of the Walloomsac River and finally crossing the river, to Point E located on its east bank (the northernmost corner of the nominated property); thence the boundary turns southerly and follows the north property line of the mill complex approximately 75 feet to Point F located at a corner of the nominated property; thence the boundary turns easterly and follows the north property line of the mill complex approximately 152 feet to Point A, the point of beginning. The portion of the nominated property now owned by the Southern Vermont Development Corp. is described in Book O-259, Page 110 of the Bennington Land Records. The portion of the nominated property now owned by the Vermont Bag and Film Corp. (James Comi) is described in Book O-252, Page 102 of the Bennington Land Records.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property coincides with the 13.98-acre lot historically owned together with the buildings of the Holden-Leonard Mill Complex. The property adjoins Benmont Avenue (originally Mill Street) on the east and the intersecting Holden Street on the south. Mixed commercial and residential development exists along the opposite sides of both streets. The Walloomsac River forms a natural boundary along the west and much of the north edges of the mill complex; however, the property boundary extends along the opposite side of the river, presumably to secure rights for the intake and discharge of river water used historically both for power generation and industrial

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number   10   Page   2  

---

processes. Predominantly residential development occurs farther west from the river while commercial development extends to the north along the west side of Benmont Avenue.