

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

RECEIVED

MAR 7 2006

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Philmont Worsted Company Mill

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 685 Social Street  not for publication

city or town Woonsocket  vicinity

state Rhode Island code RI county Providence code 007 zip code 02895

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Frederick W. Williams 14 Dec 2005  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
  - See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
  - See continuation sheet.
- other (explain)

Edson H. Beall 4-19-06  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Philmont Worsted Company Mill  
Name of Property

Providence County, Rhode Island  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box.)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	total

**Name of related multiple property listings**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY: manufacturing facility

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation CONCRETE  
walls BRICK  
roof OTHER: tar & gravel  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**  
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**DESCRIPTION**

The Philmont Worsted Company Mill (1919) is a three-story, brick, industrial building located at the corner of Social and Elm streets in Jenckesville, a densely settled industrial and residential district north of downtown Woonsocket, Rhode Island. The mill is made up of two parts: a 60' x 200' main block, constructed in 1919 to house spinning operations, and a single-story, cement block warehouse, shipping, and receiving area built after 1955. The main block is a pier-and-spandrel, brick structure resting on a raised basement and concrete foundation. The roof is a shallow-pitched gable with a monitor and a low brick parapet at the front and rear elevations. This parapet is stepped to two heights, the raised center portion corresponding to two of five segmental window arches on the façade.

The building's fenestration is regular, except on the façade; the main mill is seven bays wide and 21 bays long. Although some segmental arch windows are found on the façade, the predominant window form is a rectangular opening with a painted concrete lintel and sill. These openings are of two types: a triple version found on the front and the first bay of the south (Elm Street) elevation, and a single version on the remaining bays of the side elevations. The triple windows are separated by wide mullions, and have decorative, angular consoles under the lintel course.

These openings present a mix of window sash; most are the result of alterations carried out during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest, original windows are wood-frame, double-hung windows appearing in several different configurations. On the northern half of the front elevation these are a mix of 8/16 and 8/12. On the southern half of the front elevation, these are wood-frame 2/1 windows grouped in threes. All third floor, front elevation windows are modern, metal replacements.

Unlike the asymmetry of the front elevation, the side elevations present a more symmetrical and consistent pattern of fenestration. Although many openings have modern replacement types or plywood fill, several paired, 6/12 original sash windows survive.

Except for some partitioned office and administrative space at the front of the building, the open interior plan is typical of slow-burning industrial buildings of the period. Floor beams and columns are steel I-section.

The design of the façade of this building is asymmetrical. The main entrance is significantly altered. The granite stairs leading to the main (right) entrance suggest a general alteration of the original entrance. A remnant of granite to the left of a more recent concrete stairway indicates an original design of two matching granite stairways flanking a central loading platform associated with the front elevator. This earlier industrial loading area was rendered unnecessary by the addition of the post-1955 shipping/receiving wing at the rear of the north

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elevation. Both of the altered entrances associated with these two stairways are of a modern, steel-frame and glass design. Fluted aluminum columns support a small porch roof over the right front entrance. This structure is of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century construction.

The loading bay addition is located at the rear of the north elevation of the main block. It is a one-story, concrete block building, roughly triangular in plan, with a flat roof. A three-bay, rectangular plan, flat-roofed addition rises to a second story at the rear of the loading bay addition. The one-story portion of the building has three loading door bays and one smaller bay raised above grade, and a pedestrian entrance accessed via stairs on its west elevation. All of these are filled with modern doors. The second-story addition has 1/1, modern windows in its three west elevation bays.

The mill is located on an irregularly-shaped, 2.5-acre lot. It is bordered on the east by the Peters River, on the south by Elm Street, on the west by Social Street, and on the north by an abutting parcel. Five-foot tall, chainlink fences encircle the property and the building is surrounded by a wide apron and parking area paved with asphalt. Temporary chainlink fencing has been erected within the parcel to limit access to the building. The parcel is accessed via a curb cut from Social Street, at the northern portion of the property.

Philmont Worsted Company Mill  
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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

**Period of Significance**

1919-1955

**Significant Dates**

1919

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

The Philmont Worsted Company Mill (1919) exemplifies in physical form some important aspects of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century history of the worsted industry in northern Rhode Island, especially the introduction of French and Belgian capital and the dominance of French-speaking management.

The Philmont Worsted Company Mill was constructed by the Guerin Company, established in 1893 by Joseph Guerin (1851-1923) and his son Theofile (1874-1961), both Belgian immigrants. The Guerins were among the earliest of a substantial number of Belgian and French investors in Woonsocket's worsted industry, drawn to the area by a French-speaking workforce, tax incentives, and the promotion of Woonsocket as an industrial location by Aram Pothier, a business and political leader and the city's chief booster.

Joseph Guerin entered the wool trade at the age of 10 in his native Belgium. By 29 he was the superintendent of a wool carding and spinning mill in Italy. He came to Woonsocket in 1891; within the year he had worked as an operative at the Woonsocket Rubber Company, as a weaver at the Perseverance Worsted Company, and as a spinner at the Saranac Worsted Mills in nearby Blackstone, Massachusetts.

In 1893, Joseph Guerin returned to Belgium and purchased second-hand machinery which he shipped to Woonsocket and set up at the Sayles and Prendergast Mill as the Guerin Spinning Company, maker of woolen and worsted yarns. Two years later in 1895, Guerin and his partners purchased an old 1828 mill on the site of the present Philmont Worsted Mill, improved it, and set it up for spinning. Power for the mill came from the Peters River, originally impounded in 1822 for industrial purposes by the Jenckes textile interests (the impoundment no longer exists).

Joseph Guerin served as general manager of the spinning company; he appointed his son as assistant manager. Theofile Guerin had preceded his father to Woonsocket in 1890. The younger Guerin had learned the worsted trade in technical school at Verviers in the woolen area of Belgium. One of Theofile's first positions in the United States was at the River Spinning Company, where he helped in setting up the mill machinery.

The Guerins' spinning operation was a success—within two years the company had built a large addition and installed a new boiler and steam engine. Over the next three decades the Guerins invested in and developed a number of new textile operations. In 1900 Theofile Guerin organized the Falls Yarn Mill for manufacture of woolen and merino yarns, and also the Montrose Mill for weaving suitings. Guerin-related interests eventually came to include the Alsace Worsted Mill (1903) and the Rosemont Dyeing Company (1905). By the time the Guerins incorporated in 1922, they operated 21,000 spindles, 112 looms, and a dyeing and finishing operation, and shipped their yarn to weaving mills across North America.

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The Philmont Worsted Company was the last of the Guerin companies; it was organized by Theofile and a number of partners in 1919. They constructed the existing brick mill on a parcel just south of the 1828 mill that they used soon after their arrival. The new mill was designed for spinning worsted and mohair yarns. The three-story mill housed 14,000 spindles staffed by 260 operatives.

Though it was the last mill operation developed by the Guerins, the Philmont was their first spinning mill organized on the "English" or "Bradford" system, using frame spinners. The Guerins had been trained in Belgium in the "French" system, using mule spinners. For this last of their mills, they selected the English system, then the universal standard in the area.

The operation of Philmont was managed by Theofile Guerin until 1923. The company carried on production until 1933, when, in the depths of the Great Depression, operations were ended. Worsted yarn production returned to the mill in 1937 and lasted until 1955 under Sydney Blumenthal and Company.

The Guerins were the first of a long line of French and Belgian investors in the woolen industries of northern Rhode Island. The Lafayette Worsted and French Worsted Companies both built substantial new mills in the 1890s, as did others, often designed by French or Belgian engineers and staffed by French or Belgian managers.

This wave of textile investors was drawn to the area by a number of economic advantages: access to the American market while avoiding the substantial protective tariffs; a hard-working, French-speaking workforce with a history—at least up to that point—of resistance to trade unions; and tax incentives for the construction of new mills.

The attractions of northern Rhode Island were promoted among European textile interests by Aram Pothier, a French-Canadian immigrant to Woonsocket who grew up in the city and became its leading citizen and its chief booster. A fluent and well educated French speaker with a lively acumen in business and finance, Pothier toured the textile regions of Verviers, Turcoing, and Roubaix, both before and after his election as mayor of Woonsocket, as commissioner to the Paris Exhibition. On these trips he convinced foreign investors to build mills in his city. As governor of Rhode Island from 1909 to 1915 and 1925 to 1928, he touted the advantages of the area as an American location for European capital and expertise, and the influx of investment to northern Rhode Island in the 1890s and 1900s was due in no small measure to his influence.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

**Books**

- Biographical History of the Manufacturers and Businessmen of Rhode Island.* Providence: J.D. Hall, 1901.
- Bonier, Marie-Louise. *Debuts de la Colonie Franco-Americain de Rhode Island.* Framingham: Lakeview Press, 1920.
- Federal Writers' Project. *Rhode Island: a Guide to the Smallest State.* Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1937.
- Fortin, Marcel, ed. *Woonsocket: A Centennial History.* Woonsocket: Woonsocket Centennial Committee, 1988. Chapter 2, Nancy Hudson, "The New Century."
- Gerstle, Gary. *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City (1914-1960).* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- History of the State of Rhode Island.* Philadelphia: Hoag and Wade, 1876.
- Mohr, Ralph S. *Rhode Island Governors for Three Hundred Years, 1638-1959.* Providence: Oxford Press, 1959.
- The Book of Rhode Island.* Providence: RI State Bureau of Information, 1930. Guerin Mills, Inc., 170.
- Thomas, Alton P. *Woonsocket: Highlights of History.* Woonsocket: Woonsocket Opera House Company, 1976.

**Articles**

- "Pioneer of Guerin Textile Firm Dead." *Providence Journal* (7 May 1923): 3.
- "Rhode Island Woolen Mills of the Present Day." *Board of Trade Journal* 23 (June 1911): 285.
- "Woolen Manufacturing in Rhode Island." *Board of Trade Journal* 23 (June 1911): 280.

**Government Publications**

- Kulik, Gary and Julia Bonham. *Rhode Island: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites.*

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Washington: Department of the Interior, 1976.

*Woonsocket, Rhode Island: Statewide Preservation Report P-W-1.*

Providence: RI Historical Preservation Commission, 1976.

**Unpublished sources**

Allaire, Edgar J. *Woonsocket: A History.*

Typescript on file, Woonsocket Public Library, Woonsocket, RI.

Tiberghien, Luc. *The French Worsted Co., Woonsocket, RI, USA: Histoire d'une entreprise textile.* 1998.

Typescript on file, Museum of Work and Culture, Woonsocket, RI.

Biographical data on Woonsocket historical figures. On file, Museum of Work and Culture, Woonsocket, RI.

**Maps and Engineering Drawings**

*Atlas of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.* D. G. Beers & Company, 1870.

Everts and Richards, Topographical Atlas Map, 1895.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1903, 1911, 1950.

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.5 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	9	2	9	2	8	2	0	4	6	5	3	7	6	0
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
4															

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Edward Connors, Principal

organization Edward Connors and Associates date August 2005

street & number PO Box 154522 telephone 401 595-0699

city or town Riverside state Rhode Island zip code 02915

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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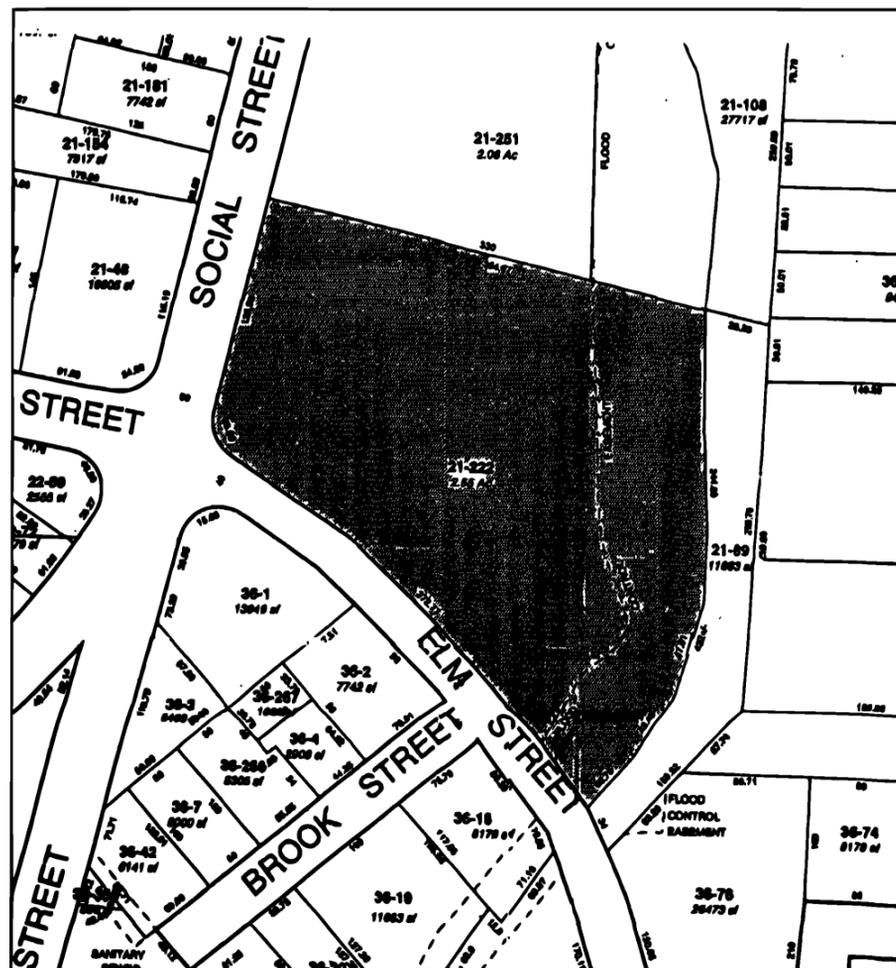
**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Boundary Description**

The boundaries of Philmont Worsted Company are contiguous with Woonsocket Tax Assessor's Plat 21, Lot 222.

**Boundary Justification**

These boundaries, comprising approximately 2.5 acres, define the land historically associated with Philmont Worsted Company and successive occupants of the building from 1919 to the present.



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Blackstone, MA Quadrangle  
Scale: 1: 24,000

