

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received JUN 5 1985
date entered JUL 19 1985

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Item number

7

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NAME: Shady Lea Historic District (North Kingstown MRA)
LOCATION: Shady Lea Road and Tower Hill Road off RI 138
OWNERS: Multiple; see list on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
CONDITION: Good; Altered; Original Site (except a corn crib at 1340 Tower Hill Road, moved, 1970s, within district)

DESCRIPTION:

The Shady Lea Historic District is a small, linear, nineteenth-century milling hamlet set on the Pettaquamscutt River. A long, narrow district, Shady Lea's form is created by the Pettaquamscutt River, a relatively small stream which flows south through southern North Kingstown; at the north end of the district is the mill owner's house; at the southern end is Shady Lea Pond, created by draining the Pettasquamscutt. The district's buildings are located along the north-south axis created by Shady Lea Pond; at the north boundary is Tower Hill Road (a much-widened stretch of the old Post Road).

The west edge of the district is marked by the Shady Lea mill pond probably created in the 1820s. At the southern end of Shady Lea Pond is the Shady Lea Mill, a rambling, L-shaped, factory complex of wood, stone, and brick, mostly two stories high, with two stair towers, two engine buildings, and several outbuildings, all from the nineteenth century. The mill is now used for staple manufacture. A cluster of nineteenth-century double mill cottages is set east of the mill; several others are set along Shady Lea Road. Several modern houses at the northern end of Shady Lea Road (33, 39, and 47) have been built in the district.

Set at the north end of Shady Lea is the Rodman House, a large mansard-roofed structure. North of the Rodman House (on Tower Hill Road) is a large Rodman-built horse barn.

INVENTORY OF CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES:

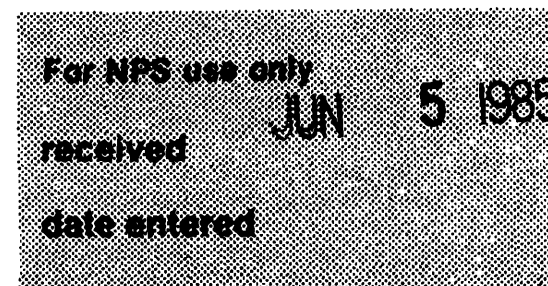
Contributing structures are defined as those dating from the period of Shady Lea's significance as a small rural nineteenth-century mill village. All buildings are of frame construction unless otherwise indicated.

SHADY LEA ROAD

- 20 Charles Rodman House (mid-1860s): A 2½-story mansion with a mansard-roof, brackets under the eaves, first-floor bay window and veranda. Granite gateposts, picket fence, and fine trees maintain the Victorian setting. The house was apparently built by Charles

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SHADY LEA ROAD (cont)

Rodman; Robert Rodman lived here before moving to Lafayette village.

63-69 Mill Tenement House (mid-19th century): 2½-story, flank gable, centered-double-entry-plan, multifamily dwelling with projecting bracketed door hoods, built to house workers at the Shady Lea mills.

111 Mill Cottage (mid-19th-century): This is a 2-story flank gable, 5-bay residence, with a 1-story porch with square posts and small addition across its street facade. Small square windows, tucked under the eaves. A 1-story ell is attached to the rear.

150 Mill Cottage (mid- to late 19th century): A 1½-story, 5-bay, flank-gable shingled house with dormers; its door is set at the center of the facade.

162 Mill Cottage (mid- to late 19th-century): A small, 1½-story, 3-bay, flank-gable house with center door; the fenestration has been altered somewhat and vinyl siding applied.

Shady Lea Mill (before 1832 and throughout the 19th century) A rambling, L-shaped, factory complex of wood, stone, and brick, mostly two stories high, with two stair towers, two engine buildings, and several outbuildings, all from the 19th century. The earliest part of the mill (remains of a stone-and-wood building with some Federal 12-over-12 windows) was probably built by Esbon Sanford during the first third of the 19th century. It is now hidden within the mid-19th-century eastern end, with only a few Federal-style 6-over-6 windows showing to the right of the stair tower. Several brick extensions to the west and south date from a series of building campaigns of the second half of the century. Most of the sturdily crafted frame outbuildings were in place by 1883. These include the office, set to the west of the mill; stock houses, to the south, carpentry shop to the southwest; wheel turbine house attached to the southern end of the mill; and, across the Pettaquamscutt River, the smithy. Together, they form an unusually well-preserved mill complex.

203 Mill House (mid-19th century): A 2½-story, flank-gable, brick house, its flat front facade directly opposite the road from the mill; its narrow door is set in the center of the facade. A 2-story ell has been added to the rear.

233 Double Mill House (mid-19th century): A simple 1½-story, 8-bay, shingled house, with a flanking gable roof. Flat boards mark the corners and frame the two doors with transoms.

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SHADY LEA ROAD (cont)

- 234-236 Double Mill House (mid-19th century): Same as 233, except that it retains its original clapboard siding and has an ell to the northwest.

TOWER HILL ROAD

- 1340 Potpourri Potters, Former Rodman/Shady Lea Mill Barn (late 19th-century): A modern pottery now occupies this handsome large barn, with clapboard wall cover, attached silo, jerkinhead gable roof, and cupola, probably built for the Rodman milling operations at Shady Lea. A corncrib (moved, 1977, from a nearby location on the farm) is set near the road; its wall cover and roof form repeat those of the larger barn. A small, shingled, gable-roofed shed is also set nearby.
- 1376 House (mid-19th century): A particularly fine 5-bay, 1½-story, Greek Revival house, with a handsome pilaster-and-architrave door-frame, panelled pilasters, large 2-over-2 window and a bracketed veranda on a rear ell.
- 1410 House (ca. 1865): A 1½-story, cross-gable house, with projecting front porch with turned posts and delicate brackets, first floor bay, trefoil bargeboards, and 2-over-2 sash.

NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

SHADY LEA ROAD

- 33 House (ca. 1955): A simple 1-story, flank-gable shingled house.
- 39 House (ca. 1955): A simple gable-roofed, 1-story house.
- 47 House (ca. 1955): A simple gable-roofed, 1-story house.

PERIOD: 1800-1899

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Industry

SPECIFIC DATES: Various (see inventory entries)

BUILDER: Various, unknown

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Shady Lea Historic District is significant for its ability to document a relatively well-preserved, nineteenth-century rural milling village, and for its association with the Rodman family's textile firm. Throughout the nineteenth century small textile mills were constructed

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on the waterways of North Kingstown and generated about themselves small villages to house mill workers; in North Kingstown few villages grew to substantial size and most remained small industrial outposts set in a rural landscape; Shady Lea is representative of this development pattern. The Rodman family was instrumental in the development of three of the town's villages: Shady Lea, Silver Spring (north of Shady Lea), and Lafayette (already entered on the National Register). Operating in the southern Rhode Island tradition of small, highly paternalistic textile firms, the Rodmans produced cottons and woolens from the 1840s through the 1940s. At Lafayette, the Rodmans created a fully-realized company town with mills, houses, and attendant institutions, managed on a daily basis by resident owners. The Shady Lea Mill mills supplemented production at Lafayette throughout the last half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.

Manufacture of jeans at Shady Lea on the Pettaquamscutt River was begun by Captain Esbon Sanford, Jr., who sold the operation in 1832 when he moved to Annaquatucket. For several decades, different owners manufactured a variety of cotton and wool textiles: flannels, linsey woolseys, and cassimeres. Under Walter B. Chapin, builder of a mill in Wickford, Shady Lea made blankets for the Union Army during the Civil War. Robert Rodman purchased Shady Lea in 1870 for the manufacture of warps used in jeans. He expanded the factory to the west and it remained in his empire until the Rodman family disbanded their holdings in 1952.

Of special significance at Shady Lea is the mill itself, little changed since the early twentieth century and still used for manufacturing. Especially noteworthy is the collection of small mill outbuildings (office, carpenter shop, stock houses, and the like) which are among the most fragile and least likely to survive of industrial buildings; they document the multiple phases of textile production and help to tell the story of nineteenth-century manufacture in North Kingstown.

ACREAGE: c. 18 acres

QUAD NAME: Wickford, R.I.

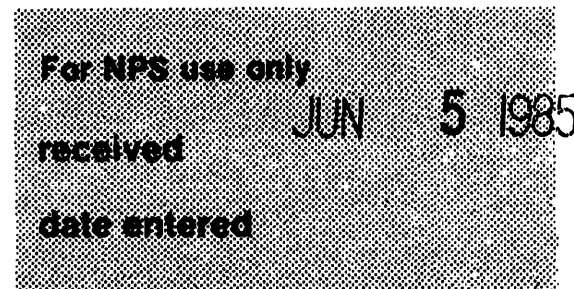
UTM:	A	19	294100	4601480	B	19	294600	4600810
	C	19	294440	4600590	D	19	293930	4601250

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The boundary of the Shady Lea Historic District is drawn to encompass those structures which historically participated in the district's significance as a rural industrial village: mill, workers' houses,

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the Rodman House and barn. A small wooded area located between Shady Lea Road and the Pettaquamscutt River and east of the Shady Lea Pond is included; this land has historically been associated with the mill ownership and its inclusion documents the historic environmental setting of the district. Shady Lea Pond, created to power the mill, is also included.

All numbers refer to plots/lots: The boundary begins at the northwest corner of 7/18, proceeds south to the southeast corner of 7/18, southwest along the southeast lines of 7/18, across the Shady Lea Road, 7/19, and 7/11, northwest along the southwest line of 7/11 to the west side of Shady Lea Pond and the west side of the Pettaquamscutt River to Tower Hill Road; then north along the east side of Tower Hill Road to the northwest corner of 7/23; then southwest, southeast, and southwest again along the east lines of 7/23, 7/13, and 7/9; crossing Shady Lea Road to the northeast line of 7/3; then following the west side of Shady Lea Road to a point opposite the northwest corner of 7/14, crossing Shady Lea Road and proceeding east, south, and west around 7/14 and 7/15, back to the east side of Shady Lea Road, proceeding south along the east side of the road to a point opposite the northwestern corner of 7/8, then northeast to the point of beginning.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

Photo numbers 20-25