

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

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

received **DEC 19 1988**

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Valley Queen Mill

and/or common Original Bradford Soap Works

**2. Location**

street & number 200 Providence Street

N.A. not for publication

city, town West Warwick

N.A. vicinity of

congressional district #2  
Hon. Claudine Schneider

state Rhode Island

code 44

county Kent

code 003

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<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 type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input 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. <input type="checkbox"/> 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 Original Bradford Soap Works, Inc.

street & number 200 Providence Street

city, town West Warwick

N.A. vicinity of

state Rhode Island

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. West Warwick Town Hall

street & number 1170 Main Street

city, town West Warwick

state Rhode Island

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Historic American Engineering Record has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Department of the Interior

city, town Washington

state D.C.

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

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

The Valley Queen Mill is a long, primarily five-story, L-shaped stone structure with an almost flat gable roof. It is located on a steep, narrow site between the South Branch of the Pawtuxet River and Providence Street in the River Point section of West Warwick. The long west front of the mill, which is perpendicular to the river and the road, is dominated by a very tall stone stair tower with a steep, hipped roof. From the south end of this main block, a long ell extends east along Providence Street, and rambling one-story additions extend to the rear of the main structure. A small, free-standing stone office sits in front of the mill on the steep bank at the street's edge. Although the earliest portion of the mill was built in 1834-1835 by the Greene Manufacturing Company for the manufacture of cotton textiles, the structure was extensively altered and enlarged to its approximate present form in 1888-1889 by B.B. and R. Knight, Inc., manufacturers of the famous "Fruit of the Loom" brand of cotton fabrics.

The early mill, which was constructed of locally quarried granite ashlar by Providence masons Stephen Norton and Thomas Peck, is incorporated in the western end of the much larger structure seen today. An early insurance map of the Factory Mutual Insurance Company records that by the 1850s the structure was 22 bays long and three full stories tall with a continuous clerestory monitor in its shingle roof providing light to a fourth attic level, although it may have been smaller when first built. The regularly spaced, rectangular, double-hung sash windows were glazed with 7" x 9" lights of glass, probably in a sixteen-over-sixteen configuration.

The 120-foot long headrace, which remains in place and in good condition, originally delivered water from above the dam, also constructed in 1834, to a water wheel, 20' long and 4'-4" diameter, which was located beneath the west end of the building. A one-story stone addition, extending west from the main structure to the river's edge, may have been used for some processing operations. There was probably a stair tower on the mill's western front, at the location of the tower we see today, but its height and exact appearance are not known. The "New Privilege 1834 Building Accounts" of the Greene Manufacturing Company, a manuscript which records details of the construction of the original building, indicates that the structure had a belfry. Another one-story addition extended from the east side to the rear, and a small boiler house was attached to the south end.

After purchasing the mill from the Greene Manufacturing Company, the B.B. and R. Knight firm altered and enlarged the early structure in 1888-1889. The work was directed by D.M. Thompson, a mill engineer who directed extensive remodellings at other Knight-owned properties, including the Natick Mill in 1882 and the Royal Mill just up the Pawtuxet River in 1890.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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Large additions were made to both ends of the early mill, and the main block was raised to a full five-story height and covered with an almost flat gable roof with overhanging eaves. Apparently, the original window openings were retained, and their size and spacing were matched in the new construction, although the windows themselves were replaced with nine-over-nine light sash. The uncoursed pattern of the original granite ashlar was matched in the new work, and the new stone was quarried from a ledge owned by the company on the opposite side of the river, quite possibly the same ledge used for the construction of the original building making it difficult, if not impossible, to discern the new work from the old.

The earlier one-story addition at the river's edge on the north end of the mill was extended to the new five-story height of the main structure. A large stone arched opening at the base of this addition allowed the head-race to pass underneath to a new one-story wheel house which was constructed on the east side. Two earlier window openings, now filled with stone, are visible at the lowest level of the west face of this wing and are among few discernable clues to the previous appearance of the mill. The new wheel house was built to accommodate a number of water-powered turbines; however, this wing has since been severely damaged by fire and no historic machinery survives.

Additions made to the south end of the main structure were more extensive. The main block was extended nine bays in length, and although the roof line of this addition was continuous, it is only four stories in height because of the rise in grade of the site. Where the new wing adjoined the earlier structure, a two-story tall tunnel was provided to allow a new railroad siding to pass through the building. The siding ran from the Pawtuxet Valley Railroad on the east, continued west along the mill property, and crossed Providence Street in order to serve the nearby Royal Mill, also owned by the Knights. A primarily three-story, flat-roofed stone ell was built perpendicular to the main block at this end near the street, thus forming an L-shaped structure.

On the west front, at what was apparently the middle of the earlier mill facade, an imposing stair tower was built, probably incorporating an earlier tower at its base. Simple rectangular openings provide pairs of wood panel and glass doors on the front of the tower at each floor and pairs of double-hung windows on the sides. The tower extends well beyond a stone belt course at the roof level of the main block, and tall, rectangular louvers open into what was probably once a belfry. It is capped with a steep, slate hipped roof set on an elaborate, bracketed wood cornice. The short ridge of the roof is finished with copper cresting and is embellished with an ornate finial, as is the triangular dormer on the front of this tower roof.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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A long, cast-iron pedestrian bridge extends south from the front of the tower at the third-floor level to the nearby mill office. This bridge was in place by the turn of this century, and it may have been installed during the 1889 remodelling in order to facilitate communications between the mill and the office.

On the east side of the main block, a full-height, square tower housing toilet facilities and a freight elevator was added opposite the main stair tower. Between this tower and the wheel house to the west, a rambling one-story stone wing was built to house the mill's engines, pumps, and boiler. A stucco-finished, concrete boiler room at the end of this wing may have been a later addition, although it was in place by 1922. Two stories tall, but containing a single space within, this early concrete structure is treated with multilight, double-hung sash windows with transom sashes above, and its flat roof is trimmed with a corbelled brick cornice. An earlier brick chimney stack has been removed and replaced with a metal flue.

In recent years a number of primarily one-story concrete block additions have been built along the rear of the main structure, and a 10,000 square feet, two-story block addition has been built on the east end of the south ell. A large, freestanding metal warehouse structure has been constructed at the eastern edge of the site beyond the railroad trestle which has bisected the property since the Providence, Hartford, and Fishkill Railroad was put through in 1852. Because of the configuration of the main mill building and its steep hillside site, these newer structures and additions are not visible either from Providence Street or from the principal front of the mill to the west.

During occupancy of the B.B. and R. Knight Company, the mill accommodated almost all of the operations in the production of cotton fabrics. In the main block, weaving operations were housed on the lower two levels, carding on the third floor, and spinning on the two upper floors. The wing to the south was used for a variety of functions, accommodating carding and weaving on its upper levels and a machine and carpentry shop on its lowest level. The rear of this wing housed the pickers and lappers, and at the southeast corner a dust flue gathered the dust from all floors and collected it in a dust chamber at ground level. Floor space throughout the plant was left open to facilitate the transfer of the power to all of the mill machinery by leather belts and metal shafts.

Today the interior of the Valley Queen Mill, which is used for the manufacturing and packaging of soap, retains much of its earlier character. Heavy wood beams span the width of the main structure, supported throughout

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

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most of the building by a single row of interior columns. These exposed beams and the wood plank flooring they support form the ceiling of each floor; the exterior stone walls are finished with plaster on the interior. Much of the original wood plank flooring throughout the mill has been covered over with later wood flooring or concrete topping. Although interior spaces remain open in many areas of the mill, partitions have been installed to separate the various manufacturing operations, and on the second and third floors of the main block, huge metal soap kettles have been installed. In the south wing, a small cafeteria and research lab have been installed in previous manufacturing spaces.

Set on the steep bank in front of the mill close to the street is a small, flat-roofed, stone structure which serves as the mill office. Because of the change in grade, this office is one story tall on the street side and almost three stories tall on the north. Rectangular in plan, with large six-over-six windows, the office is built from the same granite ashlar as the mill. Its flat roof extends well beyond the faces of the walls, supported by a tall, wood cornice with a double row of dentils and pairs of brackets. Small windows are set into this cornice to light the attic level. The construction date of this office is not clear. Early maps show a structure at this location as early as 1855, but the Italianate details on both the exterior and interior suggest that it might be of a later date. It is possible that, like the mill itself, this office may be an earlier structure which was subsequently remodelled. A small one-story, flat-roofed addition, faced with stucco-finished panels and sympathetic in appearance to the earlier structure, has been added between the office and the mill to the east above an earlier open terrace.

Although the street front entrance to the office has been moved to the new addition, the original office retains its late nineteenth-century character. The principal floor on the upper level consists of a small front office, originally the entry hall or reception room, an enclosed stair at the middle of the structure, and a larger, rectangular office at the rear. All of these spaces retain a broad, molded chair rail with a vertically boarded wainscot below. Similar moldings trim the windows and doors, and the windows are further embellished with pairs of rosette blocks at the base of their casings. A fireplace in the main office appears to be a later addition.

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1834-35, 1888-89 **Builder/Architect** Stephen Norton and Thomas Peck, Masons (1834-35); D.M. Thompson (1888-89)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The earliest section of the Valley Queen Mill, dating from 1834-35, originally housed the operations of the Greene Manufacturing Company, one of the most successful cotton textile firms in Rhode Island in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1885, the mill was acquired by the firm of B.B. and R. Knight, Inc., and remodelled under the direction of the mill engineer, D.M. Thompson, into the larger structure we see today. With its "Fruit of the Loom" trademark, the Knight concern became the first textile manufacturer in the world to paste a printed label on every bolt of fabric it produced. Largely because of this inventive advertising technique, the firm prospered, and the Valley Queen Mill became part of one of the largest cotton textile conglomerates in the world. With its imposing tower built in a High Victorian style and dominating an expansive mill complex of a more conservative style, the Valley Queen Mill is a well preserved example of an extensive nineteenth-century textile mill.

The Greene Manufacturing Company, which built the earliest portion of the Valley Queen Mill in 1834-35, was established in 1812 by Drs. Stephen Harris and Sylvester Knight, with backing from Captain James Greene, Resolved Slack, and Resolved Waterman. In that year the newly formed company bought 40 acres of land and half a house on the north side of the South Branch of the Pawtuxet River from Elisha Warner and built a two-story, 65-foot long wood mill for manufacturing cotton yarn. This early mill stood adjacent to the falls just up river from the Valley Queen Mill site. It was moved in 1890 and remodelled into tenements.

Harris, the driving force behind the young company, was a physician and had started his medical practice in Johnston in 1808. The following year he married Eliza Greene, daughter of Captain Greene who was a partner in the Warwick Spinning Company in Centerville, a textile mill organized in 1794. Harris relocated to Centerville with his wife and established a medical practice there with Dr. Knight.

Aware of the potential of the young textile industry, the two doctors organized the Greene Manufacturing Company, undoubtedly drawing on the expertise and financial resources of Captain Greene. Harris abandoned his medical practice in order to concentrate on this manufacturing enterprise, and in 1817 he bought out his partners. The business prospered for over sixty years under Harris' management, and subsequently under the management of his sons, Cyrus and Stephen. By 1820 the firm had installed eighteen power looms, thus becoming one of the first mills in the state to utilize

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Basham, Susan M. Rhode Island Historical Society. "The Greene Manufacturing Company." 1973.

(See Continuation Sheet #8)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 3.4 acres

Quadrangle name Crompton, RI

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

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

B 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

C 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

D 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

E 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

F 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

G 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

H 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Plat 26, lot 13, Town of West Warwick, Rhode Island. The nominated property contains the entire Valley Queen Mill, its mill office, and waterworks.

### 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 Clifford M. Renshaw, AIA, Consultant

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 14 November 1983

street & number 25 Main Street telephone 401-294-6538

city or town Wickford state Rhode Island

## 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 *Richard Williamson*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 8 Dec 83

### For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date 1/19/84

*J. Delores Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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water power for the weaving of textiles, and by 1832 it had become one of the seven largest cotton mills in Rhode Island with 3600 spindles in operation.

In 1834 construction began on a new dam and stone mill at a newly acquired mill privilege just down river from the wood mill. It was this mill which was later altered by B.B. and R. Knight, Inc., into the Valley Queen Mill seen today. Details of the construction of this early stone structure are recorded in the "New Privilege 1834 Building Accounts" manuscript which survives at the Rhode Island Historical Society. In 1844 a second stone mill was erected just north of the early wood mill. This second stone structure was also greatly enlarged by the Knight concern and renamed as the "Royal Mill" in 1890.

The primary product of the Greene Manufacturing Company during this period was "Kentucky jeans," a durable twilled cotton fabric sold as Negro cloth. Negro cloth, a Rhode Island specialty, was manufactured for slave owners in the south who used it for the plain, durable clothing they supplied to their slaves. In addition to providing a strong market, this product allowed Rhode Island manufacturers to trade with the plantation owners directly for raw cotton without the need to exchange cash. Throughout this period currency was in short supply, and the shortage often limited trade.

Following the Civil War and the demise of slavery, the market for Negro cloth collapsed. These fabrics accounted for over 70% of Rhode Island's total textile production in 1850, but they dropped to below 15% by 1870 and disappeared entirely during the following decade. The Greene Company suffered financial losses following the Civil War, quite possibly due to this disruption of their regular trade and their inability to find a new market or to accommodate necessary changes in production. In 1885, upon default on a bank loan, the mill property was put up for auction and purchased by the textile firm of B.B. and R. Knight, Inc.

By 1885 B.B. and R. Knight was well on its way to becoming one of the largest textile manufacturing conglomerates in the world, achieving fame with its "Fruit of the Loom" trademark. The business was established in 1851 when Benjamin Brayton Knight joined his brother, Robert, in the ownership of the mill at Arnold's Bridge, in Warwick, Rhode Island, which they renamed Pontiac. Robert began mill work at the age of eight at the Cranston Print Works where his father was employed as a farm hand. After his early years of mill work, a year and one-half of schooling, and a brief career as a teacher, Robert Knight took a lease on a mill owned by John Clark at Arnold's Bridge when Clark was elected as a U.S. Senator in 1846. By 1850

(See Continuation Sheet #5)



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he and a partner had purchased the mill, and in 1851, with his brother, Benjamin, who had recently sold out his interest in a grocery business in Providence, the Knights took over full ownership. Under the name of B.B. and R. Knight, Inc., the brothers' empire grew rapidly during the following decades. Robert ran the manufacturing operations, and Benjamin was responsible for the business administration.

The Knights acquired mills throughout Rhode Island and southern Massachusetts where they manufactured cotton fabrics, specializing in cotton muslin. In 1877 the firm became the first textile manufacturer to paste a printed label on a bolt of cotton. The Knights had noted the success one of their dealers had achieved in selling bolts of muslin by attaching to them a hand-painted label with an illustration of a Swaar apple. Since it was impractical to hand paint a label for every bolt of muslin the firm sold, a printed label was developed. Soon labels were developed illustrating different fruit for each type of fabric the firm produced, and together the fabrics became known as the "Fruit of the Loom." In addition to being significant as an effective advertising technique, the "Fruit of the Loom" trademark and printed guarantee which came with it set a nationwide standard of consistent quality for the fabrics the firm produced.

By the turn of the century, the firm owned 15 mill villages and 21 cotton mills. It operated over 500,000 spindles and 11,000 looms, and it employed 7,000 operatives housed in over 1,700 tenements managed by the company. At the peak of its production, the company manufactured 17,000 miles of cotton fabric each year, and after the death of his brother in 1898, Robert Knight became the largest individual cotton manufacturer in the world; his company was among the world's largest.

It was the policy of the Knights to buy and extensively renovate existing mills rather than to establish new ones. Soon after purchasing the property of the Greene Manufacturing Company, the Knights engaged D.M. Thompson, a mill engineer, to direct an extensive enlargement of the early stone mill at the lower falls. Thompson followed the masonry construction and straightforward style of the earlier mill in his additions, but he embellished the enlarged structure with an imposing stair tower of a High Victorian style. Legend records that Thompson looked at the rebuilt mill from the road and commented to Robert Knight that it looked like a "queen on her throne," and Knight announced that it would be called the "Valley Queen." Upon completion, the mill produced cotton yarn and cambric fabric on 400 looms and over 15,000 spindles. Today the Valley Queen is one of the best preserved of the mills enlarged by the Knights, and with its imposing stair tower, it is perhaps the only remaining example of Thompson's

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mill construction. Although the additions made under Thompson's direction to the Royal Mill just up river were even more extensive, and its two stair towers taller and more flamboyant in style, a devastating fire damaged much of this complex and destroyed both towers in 1919.

In 1922, the Knight family sold the fourteen mills and the bleachery it still owned for \$18 million to a group of investors headed by Frederick Ruprecht. The family had just financed the extensive rebuilding of the Royal Mill following the fire there, and they were aware of the modernization required in many other plants. Two months after this new company, known as B.B. and R. Knight, Inc., of Massachusetts, purchased the mills, the textile market collapsed. The firm announced an immediate wage reduction of 22½% which set off one of the longest and most violent labor strikes in Rhode Island history. On January 24, 1922, the workers at the Valley Queen Mill walked out, following the lead of their neighboring workers at the Royal Mill, and soon the entire Pawtuxet River Valley was shut down in a strike that lasted 34 weeks.

The company was unable to meet the workers' wage demands and still earn a profit because their market prices were continually undercut by manufacturers from the south. Without labor unions, mills in the south could operate for longer hours at a lower pay rate and therefore could charge less for their finished products. In 1925 an involuntary petition for bankruptcy was filed against B.B. and R. Knight when the company could not meet its financial obligations. The bankrupt company was reorganized, and over the next ten years all of its property was liquidated.

In 1931 the Valley Queen Mill was purchased from the Knight organization by Original Bradford Soap Works, Inc. Original Bradford had been established in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1876 by C.B. Murgatroydt, who emigrated from Bradford, England, to make soap for the National Providence Worsted Mills. Soap was an important product required by the textile industry. Harsh soaps were needed to wash and scour raw materials, and finer soaps were used in the finishing of the woven fabrics. In 1896 Murgatroydt's son-in-law, George L. Rogers, became a partner in the growing concern, and in 1908 the firm was incorporated.

Original Bradford bought out the Standard Soap Company of Woonsocket in 1923. After a number of years of running two plants, the company purchased the Valley Queen Mill in order to consolidate all of its manufacturing operations in a single facility. It is significant that as the textile industry throughout New England collapsed, Original Bradford was successful in developing specialty products for new markets. Operating at the Valley

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Queen Mill for over fifty years, Original Bradford today produces soaps and chemicals for the textile, paper, and pharmaceutical industries, and it has become one of the largest manufacturers of fine soaps for private label marketing in this country.

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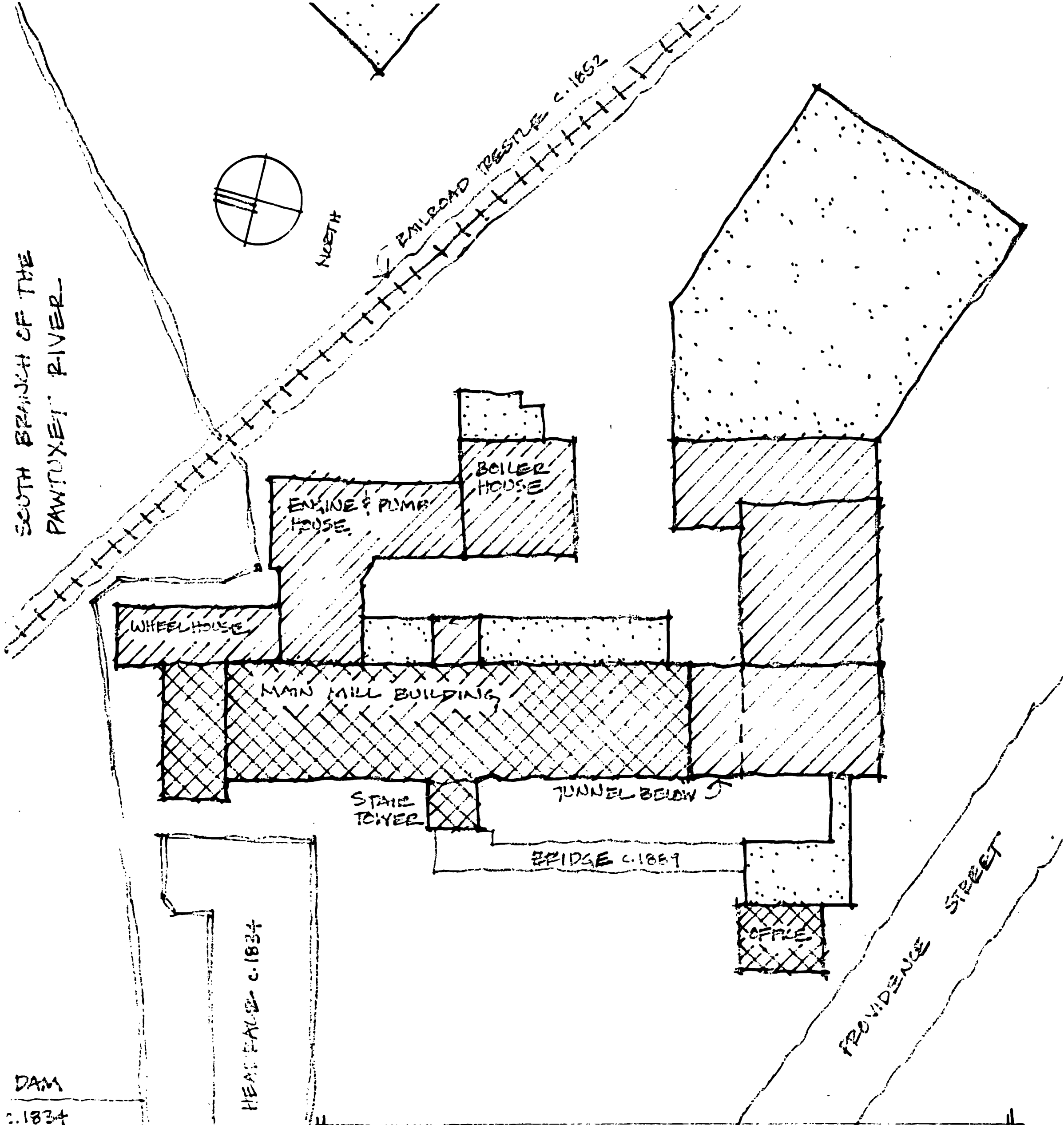
date entered

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VALLEY QUEEN MILL  
 WEST WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND

- ORIGINALLY BUILT  
 1834 - c. 1855
- 20th CENTURY
- 1888 - 89
- SCALE: 1" = 50'