

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Crane Museum (Old Stone Mill Rag Room)

AND/OR COMMON

Crane Museum

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Off Main Street adjacent to Pioneer Mill about  
1 1/4 mile east of jet. State Rts. 8 & 9.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION 1

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Dalton

VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Massachusetts

25

Berkshire

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 checked="" 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	<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 type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

(Also write Mr. Winthrop Crane, Crane & Co., Inc.)

NAME

Crane & Co., Inc., Benjamin S. Sullivan, President

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Dalton

VICINITY OF

Mass. 01226

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Berkshire County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Pittsfield

Massachusetts

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

389

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<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    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Along an approximately 1-mile-long stretch of the Housatonic River south of Dalton proper, several late 19th-century red brick paper mills (listed in item no. 8 of this report) stand in stately testimony to the important position that Crane & Co. has occupied for decades in the American papermaking industry. These plants still operate in much the same fashion as they did years ago, although each bears one or more relatively recent additions and all use artesian instead of river water. One of the plants, the 1892 Pioneer Mill, occupies part of the site of Zenas Crane's Old Stone Mill and stands adjacent to the Crane Museum (Old Stone Mill Rag Room), a one-story gray fieldstone structure that constitutes the only remaining portion of Old Stone Mill. Zenas erected that sturdy edifice in 1844, and it served as a manufacturing and experimental facility until the 1890's when all but the Rag Room section was demolished. Because it is the only extant structure directly associated with Zenas Crane, because Winthrop Murray Crane began his industrial career in it, and because even in the midst of modern development it retains a measure of its original atmosphere of rural isolation, the Rag Room outstandingly represents the early history of both the Crane company and the Berkshire papermaking region.

The Rag Room, to which rags were brought originally for sorting at the start of the papermaking process, is a small structure measuring only three bays wide and seven bays long. In the original plant configuration it stood at the rear or southwest corner of the Old Stone Mill complex and abutted the other sections along a portion of its north end. Today this facade is totally exposed and forms the front entrance to the structure. Instead of a passage into another building the facade is now graced with a classic entryway added in 1930 when the structure was converted into a museum. Although the beams and planking of the slate-shingled steeped gable roof were replaced at that same time, the building retains its initial silhouette and general exterior decor.

On the front or north facade the "new" entryway features transomed double wood doors set in a paneled recess which has flanking Doric columns and an entablature with an inscribed frieze bearing the words "Crane Museum." Above this is a circular window with glass panes arranged in a global design. These decorative features represent the only significant change in the building's exterior. Along the west side are five original four-over-four double-hung sash windows in wood frames

(continued)

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# 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 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 Site: 1844-ca. 1890  
Subject: 1801-present BUILDER/ARCHITECT Zenas Crane

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In a recent doctoral dissertation guided partly by historian Brooke Hindle, Judith A. McGaw notes that "during the 1820's and 30's when the cyclinder paper making [sic] machine became common and the 1840's and 50's when Fourdrinier machines replaced the cyclinders, Berkshire County [Massachusetts] grew to be the leading paper making [sic] region in the United States, a distinction it continued to hold through the Civil War years."<sup>1</sup> This "Berkshire industry is held in the minds of Americans today," says paper historian David C. Smith, "because of the Crane" company, "the oldest paper manufacturer in continuous operation on the same site" anywhere in the country.<sup>2</sup> The firm has been "a pioneer and a powerful influence," asserts industry historian Lyman Weeks, "and [it] takes a conspicuous place as an historical landmark," outstandingly representing both the early development of the American paper industry and its evolution through the 1800's into the 20th century.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to its general contributions, Crane & Co. has historically been a leader in fine rag paper production. When founded by Zenas Crane in 1801, the firm, like most others of that era, produced about five reams per day. It grew with the Berkshire region, though, and eventually became the Nation's leading maker of banknote and social paper. In 1879, through the business acumen and manufacturing skills of Zenas' grandson Winthrop Murray Crane, who later became Governor of Massachusetts

(continued)

<sup>1</sup>Judith A. McGaw, "The Sources and Impact of Mechanization: The Berkshire County, Massachusetts, Paper Industry, 1801-1885 As a Case Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1977), 2.

<sup>2</sup>David C. Smith, History of Papermaking in the United States: 1691-1969 (New York, 1970), 20-21.

<sup>3</sup>Lyman Horace Weeks, A History of Paper-Manufacturing in the United States, 1690-1916 (New York, 1966), 127.

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# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet.)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY circa 1 1/2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	649760	4703340	B	18	649780	4703250
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	18	649620	4703200	D			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See last page of description.)

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

George R. Adams, Director, Historic Landmarks Project

ORGANIZATION

DATE

American Association for State and Local History December 1977

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1400 Eighth Avenue South

615/242-5583

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Nashville,

Tennessee 37203

## 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

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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with louvered wood shutters and stone sills and lintels. The rear facade displays another recessed double door, but instead of columns and an entablature, it has a heavy stone lintel which matches the lintels of flanking tripartite windows. Each of these two openings features a center-placed six-over-six double-hung sash window with flanking two-over-two sash windows. Above the door is a pair of mullioned nine-over-nine sash openings. All exterior woodwork is white-painted except the dark ground-level cellar door situated near the rear of the west side.

Attached to the rear three-fourths of the east side of the Rag Room is a low one-story red brick structure dating from the late 19th century and housing Crane & Co. motor vehicle facilities for Pioneer Mill. Fortunately a row of trees and shrubs and a white pickett fence along a stone wall block much of this addition from view at the front and rear of the Rag Room. This shield, plus the wide natural vista of trees, river, and mill race on the other three sides, gives the old stone building a somewhat rural-like atmosphere that captures part of the escence of the setting as it must have appeared initially.

Inside, the Rag Room consists of a single large chamber which houses a collection of artifacts and exhibits delineating the history of the Crane company and papermaking in Berkshire County. Among the items on display is a Henry Clay letter in which he thanked Zenas Crane for samples of social paper. No original mill equipment remains.

Boundary Justification: The boundary of the inventoried property includes only the Rag Room and a narrow peninsula of land (about 1 1/2 acres) that extends westward from the structure between the old mill race and the Housatonic. This area is bounded on the south by the river and on the north principally by an unnamed access road, and it makes up the last relatively untouched portion of the old mill site. Excluded is the red brick vehicle building which abuts the east wall of the Rag Room.

Boundary Description: As indicated in red on the accompanying maps [(1) U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, Mass., Pittsfield East Quad., 1973; and (2) AASLH Sketch Map, 1977], a line beginning at a point on the north bank of the Housatonic River opposite the

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southeast corner of the Rag Room and extending north approximately 300 feet along the outer plane of the east wall of the Rag Room to the south curb of the unnamed access road immediately north of said Rag Room; thence; southwestward approximately 500 feet along a line coinciding with the line of the south curb of said unnamed access road to a point on the north bank of the remaining section of the old mill race where said mill race empties into the Housatonic; thence eastward approximately 500 feet across the Housatonic and along its north bank to the point of beginning.

Museum Schedule: The Museum is open to the public from the first of June until the end of September, from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. There is no admission charge.

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(1900-2) and U.S. Senator (1904-12), Crane & Co. secured an exclusive contract to make currency paper for the U.S. Treasury Department. Since that time the firm has produced more than 95 percent of American currency paper as well as a sizable amount for numerous foreign governments. According to historical writer Penrose Scull, another of Zenas' grandsons, Zenas Crane, Jr., was chiefly responsible for the company's capturing the social paper market around the turn-of-the-century, but he had significant help from his friend Marshall Field who "pushed . . . Crane paper for social notes, announcements, and invitations penned by the elite of the Midwest."<sup>4</sup> Until then most fine social paper had been imported.

The Crane Museum (Old Stone Mill Rag Room is the oldest extant Crane & Co. structure. It was erected in 1844, shortly before the death of company founder Zenas Crane, and is the building in which Winthrop Murray Crane began his papermaking career. Small and rectangular with a stepped gable, slate-covered roof, the structure originally formed part of the multisectioned Old Stone Mill, which with this exception was demolished in the 1890's. Since 1930 the Rag Room has housed the Crane Museum of papermaking. Several late-19th-century red-brick Crane mills survive nearby in various degrees of alteration, but the Rag Room best represents the early history of both the Crane company and the Berkshire papermaking region.

History

The American papermaking industry began in 1690 when William Rittenhouse established a mill on Paper Mill Run in Roxborough, Pennsylvania. Unfortunately no structures closely associated with that pioneer facility survive. Other mills were established at Elizabeth, N.J., and Milton, Mass., in 1728, and it is to the latter of these that Crane & Co. traces its origins. Here late in the 18th century Stephen Crane, Jr., learned the papermaking business sufficiently to launch his own factory at Newton Lower Falls on the Charles River. In this mill and later in the Burbank Mill of Worcester, Mass.,

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<sup>4</sup>Penrose Scull, "The Story of 150 Years of Making Crane's Papers," Supplement, The Berkshire Evening Eagle, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, February 8, 1951, p. 3.

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Stephen's younger brother Zenas also acquired papermaking skills, and in 1801 he used them to introduce the industry to the Berkshire Mountain region.

Zenas left Worcester in the summer of 1799 at age 22 and traveled west in search of a suitable location on which to build his own mill. He sought a place that would offer a good market, a plentiful supply of rags from which to extract fiber for paper, and an abundant supply of pure water to turn rag-grinding equipment and to cleanse the fibers and prepare the pulp. After rejecting a number of sites he settled in Dalton, Mass., an agricultural community of about 1,000 persons on the swift-flowing Housatonic River in Berkshire County. Just 40 miles west via an old post road lay Albany, N.Y., from which paper could be shipped directly to New York City and other eastern markets. In 1801, after returning briefly to Worcester to secure two partners (Henry Wiswell and John Willard), Crane opened the first paper mill west of the Connecticut River. This marked the beginning of a long-lived family industry. Ever since that time, says Scull, "Crane mills have continuously been busy at the task of making fine paper under the watchful and skilled management of the Crane family."<sup>5</sup>

The opening of Zenas Crane's mill also marked the start of a significant chapter in the overall history of American papermaking. As Smith points out, "the general themes of the history of the paper industry from the early national period to the Civil War are those of slow and gradual movement westward and of growth in production and number of factories."<sup>6</sup> The Crane family's papermaking experience reflects both of these developments. Zenas' first mill was a small, frame, hand-manufacture, one-vat operation that employed seven workers and turned out about 2,500 sheets of paper per day "like most mills in the United States from the late 1790's to the advent of the machine," says Smith.<sup>7</sup> Crane sold his share of the business in 1807 but bought it back in 1810, and in 1822 he became the sole owner. By 1831 he had installed a cylinder papermaking machine and converted the hand-operated process to a mechanized one.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>6</sup>Smith, History of Papermaking in the United States, 17.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 51.

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Meanwhile other papermakers established mills on the Housatonic, particularly in and near Lee, Mass., and Berkshire County became a nationally known papermaking center. In her recent doctoral dissertation on mechanization in the paper industry, McGaw observes that "during the 1820's and 30's when the cyclinder paper making [sic] machine became common and the 1840's and 50's when Fourdrinier machines replaced the cyclinders, Berkshire County grew to be the leading paper making [sic] region in the United States, a distinction it continued to hold through the Civil War years."<sup>8</sup> This "Berkshire industry is held in the minds of Americans today," says Smith, "because of the Crane" company, "the oldest paper manufacturer in continuous operation on the same site" anywhere in the country.<sup>9</sup>

By the time Zenas Crane died in 1845 he had already transferred his papermaking facilities to his sons Zenas Marshall Crane and James Brewer Crane. In 1848 they installed the family's first Fourdrinier machine and thereby continued the firm's tradition of growth and expansion. During the next several decades various members of the Crane family bought or built paper mills along the Housatonic, and eventually all of these that survived the industry's frequent fires became part of Crane & Co., Incorporated. In 1820 the original 1801 facility, Old Berkshire Mill, was sold to David Carson, and in 1872 it burned. With the Cranes as partners, Carson rebuilt it in 1877, and although significantly altered, it continues to operate today. Old Stone Mill, Zenas' second plant, was largely demolished in the 1890's, but its rag room survived, and today it houses the Crane Museum. The Old Red Mill, which Zenas' partners bought in 1809, burned in 1870 and was not replaced until 1892 when Pioneer Mill rose on its site. Bay State Mill, erected about 1850 and operated until 1865 by Seymour Crane and James Wilson and afterward by Zenas Crane, Jr., burned in 1877 and was rebuilt that same year. The Government Mill, which the family purchased in 1879, burned in 1892 and was reconstructed in 1894. At least three additional facilities, including a new Government plant, were completed between 1930 and 1975. Along

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<sup>8</sup>McGaw, "The Sources and Impact of Mechanization: The Berkshire County, Massachusetts, Paper Industry," 2.

<sup>9</sup>Smith, History of Papermaking in the United States, 20-21.

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with the surviving older facilities they are situated along an approximately 1-mile-long stretch of the river immediately south of the main residential sections of Dalton.

Immediately after the Civil War, Crane & Co. manufactured paper machine-belted and for a brief period made faddish paper collars. The company's chief products, however, were fine papers for banknotes, bonds, and social correspondence, and in each of these areas the firm became the industry leader nationally. Even before the war the American Bank Note Company, which served the engraving needs of most American businesses and numerous foreign governments, had begun to buy most of its bond and currency paper from Crane. This business slumped somewhat after the war but soon recovered thanks largely to Winthrop Murray Crane who entered the family enterprise in 1870. In later years he became Governor of Massachusetts (1900-2) and U.S. Senator (1904-12) with powerful influence within the national Republican Party, but at Crane & Co. he started his career as a laborer in the rag room of Old Stone Mill. He moved on to greater responsibility quickly, however, and in 1873 he secured a contract for Crane to furnish a new kind of paper wrapping to the Winchester Arms Company. Known as Bullet Patch and developed by Crane & Co. especially for Winchester repeating rifles, it sold in large quantities and bolstered company finances significantly. Murray Crane's chief contribution to the company came in 1879, though, when he secured an exclusive contract for Crane & Co. to manufacture currency paper for the U.S. Treasury and then personally worked out the process for its production. Since that time the firm has made more than 95 percent of American currency paper as well as a sizable amount for foreign governments. Murray's brother Zenas, Jr., importantly influenced company fortunes too. Until the turn-of-the-century most fine social paper was imported, but under the prodding of Zenas, Jr., Crane produced a fine rag writing paper second to none, marketed it enthusiastically, and eventually capturing the United States market. Marshall Field, Zenas' friend, helped significantly, says Scull, when he "pushed . . . Crane paper for social notes, announcements, and invitations penned by the elite of the Midwest."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Scull, "The Story of 150 Years of Making Crane's Papers, 3.

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Between 1879 and about 1900 Crane's federal currency paper business tripled, and the American Bank Note Company steadily increased its use of Crane products as the country's needs for bonds and stock certificates grew. Crane & Co. managers had no time to gloat over this success, however, for by the turn-of-the-century scientists had developed a practical means of making paper from wood pulp, and according to Scull this had launched "a pell-mell race to build pulp and finishing mills filled with machinery of Rube Goldbergish design and dinosauric proportions."<sup>11</sup> Murray Crane soon proved that despite this revolution in paper-making there would always be room for a specialist alongside the giant firms that were evolving. Without disturbing Crane's lucrative currency paper, banknote, and social paper lines, he encouraged the manufacture of tracing paper for draftsmen, and it became one of the firm's best-selling items. These four products continue as Crane mainstays today, along with carbon paper and stationery. The company developed a superior carbon paper stock in the early 1930's and began manufacturing stationary about that same time. Previously Crane had sold its social paper to converters who cut, folded, and hand-bordered it, but in 1932 the company opened its own stationary factory. Crane & Co.'s place in the American papermaking industry has not changed significantly since that period.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 4.

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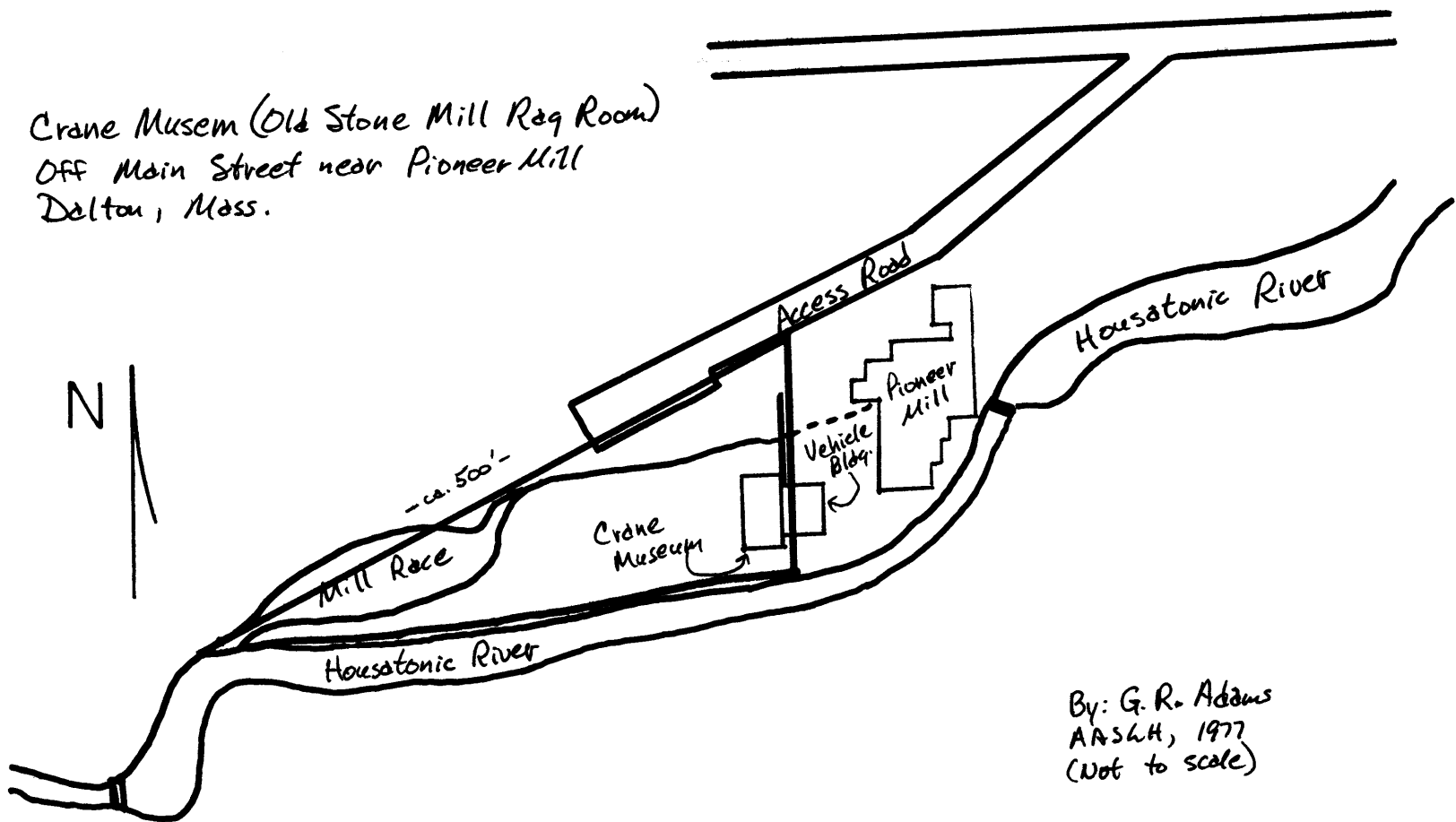
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Crane Museum (Old Stone Mill Rag Room)  
OFF Main Street near Pioneer Mill  
Dalton, Mass.



By: G. R. Adams  
AASH, 1977  
(Not to scale)

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