Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74) NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Theme 7b2a
Theme: Commerce and Industry, Service.

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC: Old Slater Mill

AND/OR COMMON: Old Slater Mill; Slater Mill Historic Site

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: Roosevelt Avenue

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: Pawtucket __ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: Rhode Island CODE: 44 COUNTY: Providence CODE: 007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
X_DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X_OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	X_MUSEUM
__BUILDING(S)	X_PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	X_PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X_YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Old Slater Mill Association

STREET & NUMBER: Roosevelt Avenue (P.O. Box 727)

CITY, TOWN: Pawtucket __ VICINITY OF STATE: Rhode Island

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Pawtucket City Hall

STREET & NUMBER: Roosevelt Avenue

CITY, TOWN: Pawtucket STATE: Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: Historic American Engineering Survey (4 photographs)

DATE: 1971 X_FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X EXCELLENT	DETERIORATED	UNALTERED	ORIGINAL SITE
GOOD	RUINS	X ALTERED (Brown House) →	X MOVED DATE 1962
FAIR	UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

From the northern shores of Narragansett Bay it is only three miles up the Providence River to Pawtucket, "the place of the waterfalls." Here the Blackstone River makes it descent to the tidewater of the bay--a fall of nearly 50 feet within the 2 miles from Valley Falls to Pawtucket. These falls in Pawtucket mark the beginning of a manufacturing region that was among the most significant in early America.

Today the three buildings of the Slater Mill Historic Site represent all that is left of a whole community of mills, shops and houses associated with the early textile industry that lined both sides of the Blackstone River in Pawtucket, utilizing the dams there. Modern development and urban renewal have removed other remnants of the mill community, but the Slater Mill Historic Site preserves important elements representing different aspects of the community in a small complex. The Slater Mill itself is the most significant structure, recognized as the first successful cotton mill, though it is today hidden within additions and renovations around it. However, the home of an early machinist, the machinery shop located in the Wilkinson Mill, all the valuable old machinery displayed in the museums, the two early, and still functional, dams, as well as extant parts of the early waterwheel machinery under the mill structures are important features associated with the Slater Mill and form a complex which well illustrates the work done there.

At the end of 1792 Almy and Brown agreed to join Samuel Slater in the construction of a mill building; a mill which came to be known during Slater's lifetime as the "Old Slater Mill," although he was no longer associated with the Almy and Brown Company after 1797. This mill was similar to the small grist and fulling mills in the region: a simple box measuring 29 by 47 feet, and two-and-one-half stories high, with a bell tower at the front. The building had horizontal board sheathing on the exterior and all the interior walls were of whitewashed plaster. The machinery was powered by a waterwheel, probably of the undershot type, which was located to one side of the building under the cover of a small shed.

As illustrated in the accompanying sketches, the original 1793 section stands in about the middle of the enlarged mill of today. An addition on the east was made by 1817 which added 40 feet to the building, and is, apparently, the least altered of the entire structure. The south wing, with a new bell tower, had been added by 1835. Sometime after 1835 a north addition of almost 57 feet was constructed. Between 1835 and 1865 a shed was attached to the south side of the earliest section, and by 1877 the mill's roof had been raised and a third story built.

The Slater Mill, as the whole building is called, was restored in 1924 to reflect the mill's external appearance as it was during the 1830's: i.e. the restored building is comprised of the original 1793 section plus additions made in 1801, ca. 1817 and ca. 1830. The building is now painted red with white trim, although research indicates that it was painted yellow for a long period. The Mill space on the interior is open and used to display handicraft tools and textile machinery.

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8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
X 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	X INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		X INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1793 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Pawtucket, Rhode Island has been called the birthplace of America's "Industrial Revolution." Here the English immigrant Samuel Slater perfected America's first successful water-powered spinning machinery in 1790 and, together with the Providence merchants William Almy and Smith Brown, built this country's first successful cotton mill in 1793. Based on this beginning, together with the machine-building skills of local craftsmen who had earlier erected forges and mills for lumber and grain at Pawtucket's falls, the American textile industry was launched.

The Slater Mill Historic Sites is comprised of about four acres of parkland surrounding two dams built at the falls of the Blackstone River in 1718 and 1792. Clustered at the west end of the upper dam are three historic structures, the Old Slater Mill, 1793; the Oziel Wilkinson Mill, 1810; and the Sylvanus Brown House, 1758, which house the museum's important collections of early textile and machine artifacts.

Biography

Samuel Slater was born in 1768 in Derbyshire, England, traditionally an agricultural region, but during Slater's childhood, an area undergoing intense economic and technological changes. As he grew up on the family farm, the nearby river Derwent was being harnessed to power a growing number of cotton mills. His father had business dealings with a number of the early mill owners and when Samuel was 14 years old, his father arranged to have him apprenticed for a trial period to Jedediah Strutt, a partner of the prominent inventor Richard Arkwright. After his father died very suddenly, Samuel Slater signed indenture papers January 8, 1783, and left home to live with the Strutt family.

Paul Rivard, correcting a popular image of Slater's background, wrote:

> Contrary to the image that has sometimes been suggested, Slater was not a poor laborer; he was neither a mechanic nor a mill operative. Instead he was really a management trainee. Because of his father's high standing in the community Samuel was accorded the opportunity of pursuing the highest level of management training. He was one of Strutt's right hand men, he lived at the master's home, and through his untouched interitance he was also wealthy. (pp. 6/7)

Slater's training was concerned primarily with bookkeeping, mathematical calculations and administering a textile mill. The Arkwright machinery with which Slater became familiar during his apprenticeship included machines to card, draw out, and spin cotton and Slater came to have a thorough knowledge of them. Very importantly, he learned not

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9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cameron, E. H., "The Genius of Samuel Slater," reprinted from The Technology Review, 57 (May 1955).

Chamberlain, John. The Enterprising Americans: A Business History of the United States (New York,1963).

Old Slater Mill Association. Old Slater Mill: A Living Museum (Pawtucket, R.I., 1954).

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10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4.23

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	19	302300	4638700
B			
C			
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Since the whole 4.23 acre area owned by the Slater Mill Historic Site is but a small segment of what was the industrial textile community around the Old Slater Mill, Pawtucket, the landmark boundary follows the property line of the association, including the Old Slater Mill, the Wilkinson Mill, and the Brown House, as well as the two dams and some parkland and parking areas along both banks of the river, and north and south of the mill complex.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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

Blanche Higgins Schroer, Landmark Review Project, Historian

ORGANIZATION — DATE

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service — 9/15/75

STREET & NUMBER — TELEPHONE

1100 L Street NW

CITY OR TOWN — STATE

Washington, D. C.

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE — DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION — DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Included in the National Register: 11-13-66 date

Cornelius W. Heine 3-12-76

Chief, Arch. & Hist. Preservation Division date

Acting 3/12/76

Director, OAHP date

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Old Slater Mill, Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

Pawtucket had long been a major ironworking center before the textile industry developed there and the Blackstone Valley became one of the country's leading machine building regions. Foremost among Pawtucket's ironworkers was the Wilkinson family: Oziel Wilkinson and his five sons were all well-known machinists. One especially, David Wilkinson, is regarded as a leader of the machine tool industry. Oziel Wilkinson's daughter, Hannah, married Samuel Slater in 1791, and the Wilkinsons were business partners with Slater, as well as builders of much of the machinery he operated in his mills through the region.

Oziel Wilkinson built this substantial three-story stone building, located only feet from the Slater Mill, in 1810. The building has a brick stair tower and belfry on the northwest end, while the southeast end is located on the river bank. David Wilkinson located a major portion of his machine shop on the first floor of the mill. This shop continued in use by various machinists until after 1890 and much early machinery is still extant and functioning. The second and third floors were originally used as a cotton mill and later as warehouse space, and are presently occupied by the exhibits, work areas, offices and gift store of the museum.

The Sylvanus Brown is a typical gambrel-roofed, one-and-one half story Rhode Island farmhouse, but it was built and used in the 18th century industrial community of Pawtucket. From its construction in 1758, the house, originally located on Merrin Street, served as a multiple family dwelling and boarding house. Supposedly Samuel Slater spent his first night in Pawtucket in this house which was owned by Sylvanus Brown who made patterns and wood parts for Slater's machines.

The house was moved to the Slater Mill Historic Site in 1962 to save it from demolition. It has been restored and furnished in strict accordance with an 1824 inventory of the house's furnishings.

only how to construct and maintain the machinery, but their operation and potential as well.

Although after the Revolution America lacked the technology of the British, it did have the skilled mechanis needed to construct the machines. In shipbuilding regions, such as Pawtucket, Rhode Island, there were a number of spin-off industries which were grouped around waterfalls, and these were logical places for the development of early industry in America.

Attempts at machine spinning were encouraged by city and state officials and merchants as well as mechanics. Considerable small manufacturing activity began about 1786-1789 in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York City, Philadelphia and three towns in Rhode Island, including Pawtucket. Some of these operations relied on the jenny technology of William Hargreaves and not the Arkwright technology later perfected by Samuel Slater.

Rhode Island merchants were interested in the possibilities of textile manufacturing and began their own experiments in 1788, and Rhode Island mechanics toured mills in neighboring states to examine machinery and experimental models. The prominent Quaker merchant and intellectual, Moses Brown, of Providence, followed all of these experiments with interest and co-sponsored some small projects himself. Early in 1789, Brown decided to seriously invest in the business and bought up all the important machines in Rhode Island, including several jennies, spinning machines and a carding machine, and moved them to a fulling mill in Pawtucket.

Moses Brown consigned the operation of the little textile mill to his son-in-law William Almy and his nephew Smith Brown. The business, called Almy and Brown, was involved in making and marketing cloth. Of all the aspects of the new business, the development of power spinning was the most problematic. Moses Brown and managers, Almy and Brown recognized the need for qualified operators of the machinery and began to search for a person experienced in the management of these machines.

Meanwhile, in England completing his apprenticeship, Slater watched the remarkable growth in textile manufacturing, with much concern about his future in the industry. After Arkwright's patents on the machinery were overturned in 1785 the industry experienced wide-open competition. Probably "(M)ore that any other factor, it was Slater's concern for the over-extension of the textile industry in England that led him to come to America." (Rivard, p. 18). The English government, however, had placed restrictions on the exportation of machinery designs or the emigration of skilled mechanics, so Slater left England secretly, dressed as a farm laborer, but apparently without any real fear of detection since he carried his indenture papers with him.

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Arriving in New York in 1789, Slater soon began working in a small textile mill in New York City. There he learned of Moses Brown's experiments with the use of Arkwright-type machines. He began corresponding with Brown and left New York for Providence early in 1790. He began a ten week trial period with Almy and Brown, to demonstrate his ability at managing the machinery operation, which had to begin by rebuilding much of the Almy and Brown machinery.

During this short period Slater rebuilt one existing spinning frame. This first spinning machine was functional before Slater's trial period was over, but, although many new parts were built according to Slater's directions, this first machine was not built by Slater from scratch or through a single-minded "feat of memory" as many historians have described. Daniel and Richard Anthony, Oziel and David Wilkinson, Sylvannus Brown and other mechanics who had worked on the construction of earlier models continued to be employed by Almy and Brown and worked closely with Slater during these early weeks.

After his successful perfection of the Arkwright frame, Slater signed a contract with Almy and Brown which permitted the old machinery to be removed and provided money for the construction of more spinning equipment. Slater's most important work in 1790 was on the carding and preparatory machines needed in order to complete equipment for a series of steps in the spinning process. Of these machines, the development of a functional carding machine was the most difficult problem and was not resolved until December 1790. With the successful operation of the carder, however, the Almy and Brown spinning mill was assured success.

Although the construction of spinning machinery was mastered by the end of 1790, it was two years before the business had expanded enough to warrant a building specifically to house this type of machinery. During 1791 and 1792 Slater worked to establish the policies of industrial management which he had learned in England. Rather than in machinery design,it was in this management work that Slater probably made his biggest contribution to the textile industry in America. He insisted, for example, that a successful mill must operate its machinery at it fullest capacity. This was contrary to the Almy and Brown policy of producing materials only in response to orders received. Slater strived to insure that no machines remained idle and while he manufactured as much yarn as possible, he expected his partners to be developing markets to sell it. (Rivard p.24)

As soon as the technology was perfected, Slater hired and trained children to operate the machinery under his supervision, and by December 20, 1970, he had seven boys and two girls employed, ranging in age from seven to twelve years. One of these was Smith Wilkinson, Slater's brother-in-law who learned the management of the cotton business from Slater and later founded one of the largest textile businesses in the region.

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Old Slater Mill

At the end of 1792 Slater and his partners constructed a mill, part of which is incorporated into the structure remaining today. There, Almy and Brown, still under the direction of Moses Brown, were first involved in bleaching, dying and finishing cloth and yarn, as well as weaving and knitting. However, Moses Brown's plans were too ambitious and the knitting area was quickly given up, and under Slater's influence many of these original activities were abandoned or narrowed. Still, the mill housed a variety of operations besides spinning, including much of the picking process, and the starching of yarns, and the bleaching of cloth was done in an area just north of the building.

Slater sought for greater specialization and decided the business should produce a large volume of some very basic items. Therefore, the Old Slater Mill became wholesale outlet for several goods. It produced both "twist" yarns, a great deal of which was still used by Almy and Brown to supply their weavers who mostly worked in their own homes, and "stocking yarn" for knitting marketed directly to knotting shops. However, even in weaving Almy and Brown narrowed their activities to production of a few simple weaves.

In 1797 Slater decided to establish his own textile mill in partnership with his father-in-law and several brothers-in-law. This "White Mill" was built on the east bank of the Blackstone River, directly opposite the Old Slater Mill, and was much larger than that building. Here Slater employed his philosophy of manufacturing without interference from his more conservative partners, advertised his yarns throughout the East, and proved the viability of a much larger operation.

After 1798 when the White mill was placed in operation, the development of the textile industry dramatically increased, and at least eighty-seven mills were built during the next 12 years; including several more managed by Slater himself, and many along the Blackstone River. The other Slater ventures located in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut were nearly all promoted and organized under partnership arrangements by Slater himself. His major partners were members of his first wife, Hannah Wilkinson's family, several of whom were very successful mechanics, his brother John Slater, and his sons. Slater reached the height of his career in 1829. An uneasy period in the cotton industry in that year forced some retrenchment and consolidation, but Slater never approached financial disaster. Indeed, when he died on April 21, 1835, he was a successful, prosperous, and well-known industralist.

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Old Slater Mill, Rhode Island

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Paul E. Rivard. Samuel Slater: Father of American Manufactures; A Short Interpretive Essay on Samuel Slater's Role in the Birth of the American Textile Industry (Pawtucket, R.I., 1974)

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Old Slater Mill, Rhode Island

(Verbal Boundary Description)

Beginning in the northwest corner of the property on Roosevelt Avenue and Leather Avenue, the boundary runs east along the south curb of Leather Avenue, then across the Blackstone River, then southeasterly along the property line of 68 Broadway Street, then along the west curb of Broadway Street in a southwesterly direction to Main Street, then along the north curb of Main Street westerly, then across the river, then north along the east curb of Roosevelt Avenue to the beginning point.