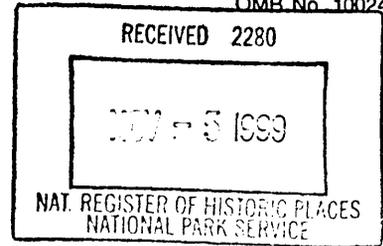


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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 an 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 Beaver Mills

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 93-115 Railroad Street N/A not for publication

city or town Keene N/A vicinity

state New Hampshire code NH county Cheshire code 005 zip code 03431

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.)

Nancy C. Dutton 10/20/99
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

NEW HAMPSHIRE
State of 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.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall 12/9/99
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Beaver Mills, 93-115 Railroad St.

Cheshire County, New Hampshire

Name of Property

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)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	2	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
5	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(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)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls BRICK

roof RUBBER

other N/A

Narrative Description

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

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Beaver Mills
Keene (Cheshire County)
New Hampshire

Section number 7 Page 1

Beaver Mills is a complex of two large, late 19th century brick industrial buildings and related structures, including a brick boiler house, two wood-frame storehouses and two garages, one wood-frame and the other constructed of concrete blocks. The mill complex is located in downtown Keene, New Hampshire, and was originally constructed in close proximity to the Cheshire Railroad. The three-story brick mill buildings were erected to accommodate multiple furniture and wood-working tenants. All of the buildings are utilitarian in nature with little in the way of decorative detailing. Over the years, numerous fires and the changing needs of the buildings' tenants have left their imprints on the complex; which has continually evolved from 1871-2 to the present day. In total, the district is composed of seven buildings, of which five are considered contributing and two are noncontributing due to age.

A description of the individual buildings which comprise the district follows, beginning with the mill closest to Railroad Street. Building numbers are keyed to the attached sketch map.

A. Mill #1 (115 Railroad Street), 1871-2 (with c.1915 and c.1920 additions). Contributing building.

The northernmost of the two large brick buildings, this 3 1/2-story, brick building actually consists of what were formerly two free-standing buildings linked c.1920 by an addition that attempts to match the original construction. Both the larger 200 x 50 foot building to the east and the 100 x 50 foot building at the west end were constructed in 1871-2. The three-story, flat-roofed addition which projects to the north of the west end of the building was constructed prior to the addition linking the buildings, probably about 1915.

The building is capped by a low gable roof with a wide brick cornice. A low brick parapet wall rises from the roof, marking the center line and fire wall bisecting the original 200 x 50 foot building. A brick shed containing the elevator house is located near the center of the south roof slope. Over the years, the brickwork on the building has been repointed in many areas with varying mortars and openings have been altered and patched as necessary to accommodate new window openings. Diamond-shaped iron tie rods are visible on the original buildings. The north facade bears the faint imprint of painted lettering between the second and third floors. Segmental masonry openings punctuate the building, capped by lintels of header brick. The original 12/12 doublehung sash were replaced in 1941 by metal 3 x 4-light windows with central pivot sash panels measuring 3 x 2 lights. New aluminum-clad wood 12/12 windows have recently been installed in all of the openings. Paired 9/9 windows fill the few wider openings on the building.

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Continuation Sheet

Beaver Mills
Keene (Cheshire County)
New Hampshire

Section number 7 Page 2

Window openings on the north facade are in alignment between the second and third stories and include both individual windows and pairs of windows which are more closely spaced. The original portion of the east mill building measures twenty-nine windows across. Three larger openings on the second floor reflect a 1941 alteration and now contain paired 9/9 sash. To the west, the c.1920 connector is six windows across. The windows of the connector display concrete sills and segmental arched lintels constructed of two courses of header brick.

A c.1920 addition projects from the north wall of the west end of the building and is eleven windows across. Just to the east of this projection, the addition partially cuts off one bay of windows which are original to the 1872 building. The eleven window openings lighting the projection are rectangular with concrete sills. To the west of the projection are three final bays of windows lighting the original 1872 building. On the first floor two original window openings were later converted to a door.

Vertical wood boards were attached to the first floor of both the north and west elevations of the building about 1970. These boards have recently been removed. One of the original entrances on the first floor of the north elevation has been filled with concrete block, probably also c.1970. There is one set of late 19th century vertical beadboard double doors over the loading dock although the doors have been damaged by the application of the vertical boards in 1970. The other existing doors are predominantly modern glass and metal units corresponding to the c.1970 alterations. Several of the openings are capped by c.1970 shed-roofed canopies, with the remnants of other gabled canopies are still visible on the brickwork. A single-story c.1920 entrance vestibule is located to the east of the projection. It displays a brick parapet and shed-roofed overhang and is partially covered with vertical boards.

The west gable end of the mill is punctuated by five evenly-spaced window openings on all three floors. As suggested by the patched brickwork, the center openings originally accommodated slightly larger loading door openings. The brick cornice on this elevation ends in shallow but wide cornice returns. A round opening filled with a later wooden square window punctuates the top of the gable. The former door opening at the center of the first floor has been filled with a combination of buff brick and concrete block.

The east end of the mill displays a flat-roofed, three-story profile. The elevation originally displayed five evenly-spaced bays of windows although several openings have been bricked in and a larger pair of windows has been installed at the center of the second floor, topped by a steel beam. On the long, south elevation of the building approximately twelve of the first floor openings have been filled with concrete blocks or covered with plywood.

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Continuation Sheet

Beaver Mills
Keene (Cheshire County)
New Hampshire

Section number 7 Page 3

This building is presently being rehabilitated for a combination of congregate living elderly housing and commercial/retail/office space.

B. Mill #2 (93 Railroad Street), 1871-2 (with c.1955 and c.1980 additions). Contributing building.

Set parallel and to the south of Mill #1 is this 3 1/2-story, brick building, originally nearly identical in size and detailing to the building at the eastern end of Mill #1. Like Mill #1 it is capped by a low-gable roof and displays a brick cornice which ends in shallow but wide returns on the gable ends. A square cupola with pyramidal roof was originally centered on the roof but was destroyed by fire in 1889 and not rebuilt. Rising from the roof are several wooden sheds.

Original 12/12 wooden windows set in segmental surrounds survive on the second floor. On the third floor the original windows have been replaced with rectangular 2 x 5-light metal sash with concrete sills, resulting in the flattening of the segmental lintels. The circular window in the west gable has been replaced by a small doublehung sash. First floor openings are for the most part obscured by a series of 1- and 2-story additions. Ducts and chutes and a single-story, tin-clad addition with a shed roof obscure much of the north side.

Extending to the west of the building is a long, two-story, wood-frame building, capped by a low gable roof and set at a slight angle to accommodate the train spur which originally curved to the south of the building. The building may incorporate parts of the single-story chair storage structure constructed here in the early 20th century. The building was subsequently raised to two stories between 1913 and 1924, according to Sanborn Insurance maps, and further expanded between 1950 and 1971 by the single-story addition spanning the north side and a single-story office connector linking the storehouse and main mill. The west addition is sheathed in a combination of wood clapboards on the second story with aluminum siding and some T111 siding at the base. It rests on a concrete foundation. Fenestration includes a rolling metal garage door and modern metal six-panel door on the west end. Many of the first floor windows on the north elevation have been covered; windows on the south side consist of a mixture of modern 6/6, 8/8 and 1/1 windows with some earlier 2/2 sash.

Spanning the south side of the brick mill is another single-story, wood-frame addition, constructed between 1950 and 1971. Extending to the east of the original brick mill is a large two-story, concrete and metal addition which nearly doubles the size of the original mill. It was constructed c.1980. Mill #2 is in industrial use.

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Continuation Sheet

Beaver Mills
Keene (Cheshire County)
New Hampshire

Section number 7 Page 4

C. Boiler House/Dry House, 1893 (with c.1915 addition). Contributing building.

Located between Mills 1 & 2 is a brick boiler house constructed after the original structure was destroyed in a major explosion in 1893. The east end of the boiler house is a single-story in height with a broad, gablefront and a circular window at the top of the gable. At the center of the building is a two-story section with a gable roof sheathed in sheet metal. Rising from the center of the roof is a tall brick smokestack, square in plan.

The west end of the building displays a flat-roofed, two-story profile and was constructed between 1913 and 1924 as a dry house or kiln. Four wooden 12/12 windows with concrete sills punctuate the second story. A garage door and shed-roofed overhang have recently been introduced on the first floor. A circular iron hatch on the facade bears the imprint of the "D.M. Dillon Steam Boiler Works, Fitchburg, Mass." A narrow two-story connector links the building with the mill to the south. The brick connector has a first floor garage opening with a blocked-down window opening above. All of the segmentally arched windows on the first floor of the north wall have been filled in.

D. Former Dry House/Store House, c.1890 (with c.1900 addition). Contributing building.

Located to the east of Mill #1 is a two-story, wood-frame building with a narrow, three-story projection on its west end. A two-story storehouse was on this site by 1892, the addition to the west was constructed prior to 1902, at which time the storehouse occupied the first floor with the dry house above. The building is sheathed in asphalt siding in a brick-like pattern, applied over wooden clapboards. The limited fenestration includes a broken 6/6 window on the second story and four-panel and vertical bead board doors fronting later concrete loading docks. A concrete block chimney rises from the ridge of the tin-roof. A covered bridge, conveyor and hot air ducts once linked this building to the adjacent mill and boiler house. A two-story connector sheathed in plywood links this building to the storage building to the south (Building F).

E. Garage, c.1975. Noncontributing building, due to age.

To the east of the storehouse/dryhouse is a single-story, shed-roofed garage building. It is sheathed in rolled asphalt siding over horizontal boards. There is a single modern overhead garage door facing north; the only other openings are vents. The exact date of construction is not known although Sanborn Insurance maps suggest it was constructed after 1971.

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Continuation Sheet

Beaver Mills
Keene (Cheshire County)
New Hampshire

Section number 7 Page 5

F. Storage Building, c.1900 (with c.1950 addition). Contributing building.

To the south of the garage described above is a wood-frame storage building consisting of a two-story section to the west and a later single-story addition to the east. Based on Sanborn maps, the west end was probably constructed c.1900 as a storehouse. Both the walls and the roof are sheathed in rolled asphalt siding. Fenestration consists of a somewhat random pattern of wooden 2/1 and 2/2 sash with exterior storm windows. The building has been occupied by the Monadnock Cutlery Company since about 1950. The single-story east end was constructed c.1950 for metal storage. This part of the building is sheathed in "brick-like" asphalt siding. A concrete block firewall separates the addition from the original storage building. A plywood shed rises from the rolled asphalt roof. Fenestration consists of 1/1 windows of varying sizes, protected by metal storm windows. With the exception of a 1/1 window and several metal doors, most of the openings have been covered over.

The building is currently used seasonally by the Monadnock Cutlery Company.

G. Former Truck Terminal Building (71 Harrison Street), 1952. Noncontributing building, due to age.

To the north of Mill #1 (but actually fronting Harrison Street) is a single-story, concrete block, former garage building constructed in 1952 for Bartlett's Express. The structure is capped by a low-pitch gable roof with an exterior concrete block chimney rising from the northeast corner. Two of the three original garage door openings on the gablefront have been covered with board and batten siding. The remaining opening now contains a storefront accessed by a set of glass and aluminum doors which are sheltered by a wooden shake shed roof. The remaining elevations are each punctuated by two or three 4 x 4-light metal windows with 2 x 2-light center pivot panels. The building served as a truck garage until about 1980. It is now in retail use.

Beaver Mills
Name of Property

Cheshire County, New Hampshire
County and State

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 67) 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

1871-1949

Significant Dates

c.1871

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Cheshire County Historical Society

Beaver Mills
Name of Property

Cheshire County, New Hampshire
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 5.5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	8
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7	2	2	4	3	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	7	5	6	6	7	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

3

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

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 Lisa Mausolf, Preservation Consultant

organization N/A date May 1999

street & number 20 Terrace Park telephone (781) 942-2173

city or town Reading state MA zip code 01867

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 see continuation sheet

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 to amend existing 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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Continuation Sheet

Beaver Mills
Keene (Cheshire County)
New Hampshire

Section number 8 Page 1

Constructed in 1871-2, Beaver Mills is one of Keene's largest brick mill complexes and one of the city's few extant late 19th century industrial buildings associated with the furniture and woodworking industries. It is significant under Criterion A for its associations with the city's furniture and woodworking industry. This was the largest mill complex devoted to woodworking in Keene in the late 19th century and brought together many makers renowned in their respective fields. Tenants in the Beaver Mills made chairs, bedroom furniture, boxes, pails and a variety of other wooden products. The buildings have been altered numerous times over the years to accommodate changing tenants but retain considerable integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The period of significance for the district is 1871-1949, reflecting the mills' original construction to the fifty-year cutoff of the National Register.

The Beaver Mill complex is significant for its associations with Keene's chairmaking and woodworking industries. Within the history of Keene the Beaver Mills is unique in bringing together so many different wood-working industries in a single complex and is an early example of "incubator space" industrial development. In several cases small shops moved to the Beaver Mills, attracted by the available space and access to the railroad and steam power. Both the Cheshire Chair Company and Keene Furniture moved in 1872 from smaller buildings on Mechanic Street to the new Beaver Mill complex.

For almost a century chairmaking was one of Keene's chief industries and in total the various shops in the city employed several hundred workers and produced upwards of a million chairs and porch rockers each year. Of Keene's major chairmaking companies in the late 19th century, one of the largest, the Cheshire Chair Company, was a long-term tenant of the Beaver Mills. Another major concern, the Sprague & Carleton Company began its production of porch rockers and settees in the Beaver Mills in 1899, finally moving out in the 1920s to build its own factory. The Norwood Calef Company made chairs here in the 20th century.

For many years Cheshire County was also noted in the manufacturing world for its wooden boxes. Many of Keene's box shops were headquartered in the Beaver Mills. J. Mason Reed, one of the pioneers in the box industry, came to Keene in 1881 and occupied the third floor of one of the Beaver Mill buildings until 1912. In 1892 Herschel Fowler moved his box factory from Swanzey to Beaver Mills and remained here until he built his own factory on Island Street. Charles Norwood also manufactured locked corner wood packing boxes at Beaver Mills for many years.

Keene also factors prominently in the area of woodworking and its machinery. A tenant at the Beaver Mills, John Humphrey is credited with the invention of the IXL turbine waterwheel in 1873 and was one of the earliest manufacturers of large-scale woodworking machinery in the country.

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Beaver Mills
Keene (Cheshire County)
New Hampshire

Section number 8 Page 2

Other important Keene products including woodenware, pails and buckets were all manufactured at the Beaver Mills.

The Beaver Mills is also significant as one of the City's few surviving late 19th century mills and the largest of its period. The Faulkner & Colony woolen mills on West Street were constructed in 1836, altered in 1859 and saw the addition of a new wing in 1900. The surviving mill buildings were redeveloped as the Colony Mill Marketplace in the 1980s and has lost much of its integrity. A number of small brick mill buildings are still extant on Mechanic Street, many of which were associated with woodworking industries. Constructed c.1850 these buildings each contained a separate maker of furniture, sashes and blinds, box shops and other related wood industries and have been converted to housing and/or offices, retaining varying degrees of integrity. Keene's other major late 19th century chairmaker (other than the Cheshire Chair Co.), the Burdett Chair Manufacturing Company, erected a plant of five large buildings on Washington Street in 1881. The factory was rebuilt about 1905 but today, only a one-story building remains. The Keene Chair Company manufactured chairs in a facility in South Keene, probably the two-story brick building which survives on Rt. 101 but has seen the replacement of all of its windows with modern anodized units. A number of other factories were constructed throughout Keene in the early 20th century although none rival the size of Beaver Mills. These include buildings on Water Street constructed in 1902 and 1903, the former box factory on Island Street, constructed in 1904, and J.A. Wright's silver polish factory on Emerald Street dating to 1902. Many of these have been converted to offices and have lost considerable integrity, leaving Beaver Mills the largest and best preserved of the City's late 19th century industrial complexes.

The mills which are today known as the Beaver Mills were originally constructed in 1871-2. Construction of the mills was encouraged by the Town of Keene, which voted in 1871 to exempt from taxation a manufacturing establishment which would invest at least \$50,000 in a facility in the community. The mills were constructed on Railroad Street, in proximity to the Cheshire Railroad tracks and Beaver Brook. According to a March 1872 mention in the New Hampshire Sentinel, the cost of the mills when complete was estimated at \$112,500; of this amount \$75,000 was raised by subscription with the remainder in the form of loans. The Beaver Mills Company was organized in 1871 for the manufacture of pails, operating a grist mill and furnishing power and space to various manufacturing enterprises. The original company conducted business until 1874 when a new company, known as the Hope Steam Mills, succeeded it. In 1880 the Hope Steam Mills were sold to Barrett Ripley for \$50,000; the Beaver Mills Company was incorporated the following year and the corporation assumed its original name.

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Continuation SheetBeaver Mills
Keene (Cheshire County)
New HampshireSection number 8 Page 3

As originally constructed the complex consisted of three main brick factory buildings, three and a half stories in height and capped by gable roofs. Two of the buildings were designed as identical double mills, each measuring approximately 200 x 50 feet and set parallel to each other. A third, slightly smaller building measuring about 100 x 50 feet was located a short distance to the west of the northernmost of the double mills. A brick boiler house, originally measuring 50 x 80 feet, was sited between the double mills and the remainder of the property was dotted by lumber sheds and storehouses.

From the beginning the buildings were occupied jointly by a number of small manufacturing establishments specializing in woodworking and furniture making. The northernmost building of the double mills (now part of 115 Railroad Street) was occupied by the owners of the complex - by the 1880s the Beaver Mills Company was located here, manufacturers of pails, tubs, bent-chair stock and lumber. The company also carried on an extensive business in lumber sawing and grain grinding as well as furnishing steam power for the other tenants in the building. A grist mill was located at the center of the building until it burned in 1893. At various times space in the western part of the building was leased to smaller establishments including Spalding's Chair Stock Manufactory (1884), C.M. Norwood's Box Factory (c.1890) and the Keene Hoop Company (c.1900-1910) and their successors, the O.D. Beverstock Company (c.1920), makers of bent stock for chairs, rims for sieves and wood hoops for objects such as buckets and toy drums.

The building to the west was leased early on by the Humphrey Machine Company, makers of turbine water wheels, wood-working machinery, including shoe-peg and pail machines, pumps and steam engines. In 1881 J. Mason Reed's Box Factory, makers of wooden locked corner boxes, began sharing the building with Humphrey and remained here until about 1910. By 1913 the building was completely occupied by Norwood Calef and Company, chair manufacturers. Between 1913 and 1924 a three-story addition was made to the eastern end of the building, linking it with the larger, adjacent mill. It appears that this was completed as part of an expansion by the Beaver Mills Company who from thence on occupied the entire building until 1938.

The original tenants of the brick building to the south (now 93 Railroad Street) were the Keene Furniture Company and the Cheshire Chair Factory. Established in 1868 on Mechanic Street, the Keene Furniture Company moved to the Beaver Mills in 1871. In 1880 the company employed sixty-five men in the manufacture of ash, walnut, mahogany and maple bedroom sets, turning out about two hundred sets a month, the bulk of which were shipped to New York, Boston and Philadelphia. By 1891 the number employed had risen to 85 and the factory occupied an area of 35,000 square feet of floor room. In addition to the brick building the factory included a three-story finishing building, dry kiln sheds and a large sample room (all no longer extant) and was serviced by a spur track which ran through the plant. After suffering two major fires in 1896, the

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Beaver Mills
Keene (Cheshire County)
New Hampshire

Section number 8 Page 4

Keene Furniture Company ceased operations. By 1902 the space formerly occupied by the Keene Furniture Company had been leased to the Diamond Match Company and Sprague and Carleton's Chair Manufacturing. Sprague and Carleton began in a small rented space on the third floor, eventually occupying the entire building for the manufacture of rock maple porch rockers and settees. At the turn-of-the-century Keene was known as the "porch chair center of the United States", producing nearly a million rockers annually. In the early 1920s the company built its own factory on Avon Street, vacating the Beaver Mill space to the Norwood-Calef and Company Chair Factory.

Occupying the west end of the building, the Cheshire Chair Company was organized in 1869 and relocated to the Beaver Mills when it was completed in 1872, enlarging its plant in 1874. The output of the company in 1880 was estimated at 6,000 to 10,000 chairs a month, mostly for Philadelphia and western markets; employment stood at 35. By 1891 the factory employed 65 or more. In addition to the brick building, the facility included two large storehouses (no longer extant). The chairs produced here included oak and maple cane-seated chairs, as well as splint and reed-seated chairs and chestnut wood seats. The company went out of business about 1912.

Given the occupants of the buildings, the risk of fire in the mill yard was very real. Over the years, the Beaver Mills buildings sustained damage in numerous fires. The most dramatic event occurred as a result of a boiler explosion on May 23, 1893. The boiler house including five boilers was entirely destroyed and a great gap fifty feet long and three stories high was torn in the wall of the main shop. Three men died in the explosion and three hundred men were out of employment until new boilers could be installed to power the box shops, furniture and chair companies. Smaller fires included a \$15,000 fire on March 27, 1889 in the upper story of the southern building containing the Keene Furniture Company shop. The roof was entirely burned, including the cupola, which was not replaced. Fire destroyed the Cheshire Chair Company's three-story wooden store house measuring about 60 x 100 feet in 1899; a replacement building of the same dimensions was destroyed by fire just sixteen months later. A fire on June 12, 1913 caused approximately \$4,000 damage to the Beaver Mills and \$3,000 worth of damage to Sprague and Carleton's shop.

In 1920 the Beaver Mills complex was acquired by the Beaver Mills Holding Company (Robert Calef, President), who also owned the Norwood-Calef and Company, chair manufacturers. The Beaver Mills was sold to the Keene Furniture Manufacturers, Inc. in 1938. The buildings sustained \$30,000 worth of damage in the 1938 hurricane. The sprinkler system and blower systems were completely demolished. After the bankruptcy of the Keene Furniture Manufacturers, Inc. in 1940, the property was purchased by the Farina family in 1941. Luigi Farina had founded the Princess Shoe Company in 1936 and the factory was previously located at 35 Church Street in Keene (it was heavily damaged in the 1938 hurricane). The Princess Shoe Company moved to the

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Beaver Mills
Keene (Cheshire County)
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building at 115 Railroad Street in 1941, after extensive renovations including the replacement of all the windows in the building. The nearly 350-foot length of the factory allowed the use of long, time-saving assembly lines requiring a minimum of movement of materials between operations. In 1953, the manufacturer of women's leather shoes employed 350 people and sold 450,000 pairs of shoes. In 1963 the business was purchased by the United States Corporation which continued to occupy the building at 115 Railroad Street until 1971.

Other portions of the complex were leased to other tenants and subdivided beginning in the 1940s. Bartlett's Express constructed a concrete block truck garage building facing Harrison Street in 1952. Monadnock Cutlery, manufacturers of surgical and manicure implements, was located in a wood-frame storage building at the east end of the property from 1949 until the early 1980s. In 1941 the Lynn Wood Heel Co. (later the Keene Wood Heel Company) purchased the 6.57 acres of the property to the south of the building at 115 Railroad Street, with the dividing line running through the center of the boiler house. As a result, Lynn Wood Heel, makers of wooden heels for womens' shoes, moved its production from Emerald Street to the former Keene Furniture/Cheshire Chair building at 93 Railroad Street. This building was later sold to the Abbott Company, makers of playpens. The Abbott Company was here from the mid 1950s to the mid 1970s. Whitney Brothers, toy manufacturers, have owned and occupied 93 Railroad Street since 1980.

The property at 115 Railroad Street was rezoned for business use in 1975 and was occupied by various commercial tenants prior to the current rehabilitation. The New Hampshire State Liquor Store occupied the west end of the building from the late 1970s until about 1986. The Fitness Factory occupied the third story of the building from 1986 until 1998. Other space has been occupied by various small stores and restaurants. In 1998 the building was sold to the Keene East Side Senior Limited Partnership and the Beaver Mill Realty Limited Partnership who are currently jointly rehabilitating the building for senior housing, offices and retail uses.

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Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated district are those indicated by a dashed line on the attached sketch map. The boundary depicted on the enclosed sketch map includes the following tax map parcels as defined by the local tax assessor's maps: 22-04-03; 23-4-9 and 23-4-10.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the district has been drawn to include that acreage which survives from the original parcel upon which Beaver Mills was constructed and which is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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List of Owners

Keene East Side Senior Limited Partnership (parts of Bldgs. A, C & F)
69Z Island Street
P.O. Box 603
Keene, NH 03431

Beaver Mill Realty Limited Partnership (Bldgs. D, E & G as well as parts of Bldgs. A, C & F)
69Z Island Street
P.O. Box 603
Keene, NH 03431

Whitney Brothers Co. (Bldg. B & part of Bldg. C)
93 Railroad Street
Keene, NH 03431

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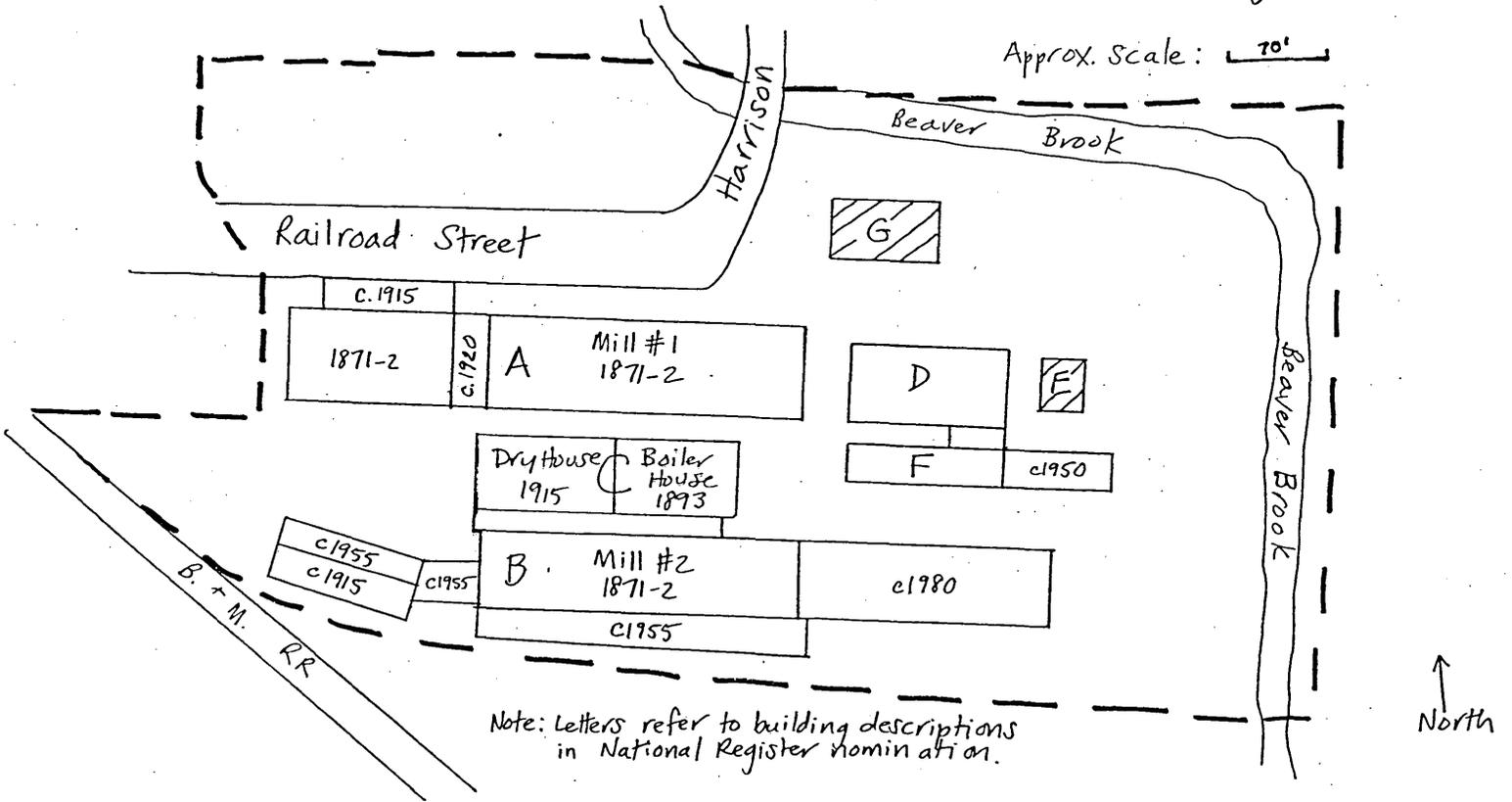
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BEAVER MILLS COMPLEX
KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Contributing - - - District Boundary
 Noncontributing

Approx. Scale: 70'



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