

**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 any 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 Bernon Worsted Mill

other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 828 Park Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Woonsocket N/A vicinity

state Rhode Island code RI county Providence code 007 zip code 02895

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Frederick C. Williamson, State Historic Preservation Officer Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission

State or 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 this 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):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	_____ building
_____	_____	_____ sites
_____	_____	_____ structures
_____	_____	_____ objects
_____	_____	_____ 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**

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: Manufacturing facility \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE \_\_\_\_\_

walls BRICK \_\_\_\_\_

roof ASPHALT \_\_\_\_\_

other WOOD \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

**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 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**

(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)

ARCHITECTURE

INDUSTRY

**Period of Significance**

1919-1954

**Significant Dates**

1919-Date of construction

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data****Acreage of Property** 4.37**UTM References See continuation sheet.**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

A.	19	291782	4651938	C.			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
B.				D.			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		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 Virginia H. Adams, Matthew A. Kierstead, Jeffrey D. Emidy and Ileana Matosorganization PAI date December 2004street & number 210 Lonsdale Avenue telephone (401) 728-8780city or town Pawtucket state RI zip code 02860**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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Nadeau Corporationstreet & number 727 Washington Street telephone 508-399-6776city or town South Attleboro state MA zip code 02703**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### DESCRIPTION

#### Location-Setting

The Bernon Worsted Mill is located at 828 Park Avenue, in the southern portion of Woonsocket, Rhode Island. The site contains one industrial building, set at the western edge of an irregularly-shaped, 4.375-acre parcel. Asphalt paving surrounds the building, with mature vegetation at the eastern and southern edges of the property, a busy thoroughfare to the west, and residential development to the north. A residential neighborhood interspersed with commercial concerns (primarily along Park Avenue) surrounds the mill property.

#### General Building Description

The Bernon Worsted Mill, at 828 Park Avenue, in Woonsocket, Rhode Island is an industrial loft-type building that was constructed in 1919. It is rectangular in plan, and two stories in height, over a basement level that is exposed on three elevations. The exterior dimensions of the building are: approximately 290 feet along the twenty-bay, east-west axis, by approximately 80 feet along the seven-bay, north-south axis.

The structure has a shallow, double-pitch, built-up roof with a subtle longitudinal gable drainage pitch, and a slight overhang with exposed rafter tails and plank soffits. The south, west, and north walls are of brick pier and spandrel construction. The exterior of the north and south elevations of the building shows a change in construction at the thirteenth bay (counting from the front of the building). The westernmost 12 bays of the building are slightly wider than the easternmost seven bays. Additionally, east of the twelfth bay, there are two different pier widths that alternate to the rear wall. The east wall has a wood frame, covered in vinyl and asphalt shingle siding. The foundation is a concrete slab. An original, one-story, flat-roof, brick boiler room ell and a brick chimney are attached to the north side of the factory near the west end. A shallow, two-story, wood-framed addition is centered on the east end of the building, and contains lavatories. This was likely constructed concurrently with the brick portion of the mill, in 1919. A one-story, post-and-beam-framed wing that was added to the east of the lavatory addition between 1919 and 1930 makes up the east end of the mill. It has a flat, built-up roof, vinyl sheathed walls, and a concrete slab foundation. A one-story, shed roofed addition with a wood frame structure was constructed between 1931 and 1950 along the north elevation basement wall.

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The building is sited with its west elevation set back approximately 45 feet from Park Avenue, and appears as a relatively small building from the street. Because the land slopes to the east and south, the basement is fully exposed on both the north and the south sides, and the ground floor is partially exposed on the south section of the east elevation. The rear of the site consists of paved parking that is accessed from Blakeley Street on the north, and wooded areas. A small stream runs along the south side of the property and continues under Park Avenue.

The primary entrance to the building is located just off center on the building's west (Park Avenue) elevation. It consists of a wood door with one panel in the lower section and four panes of glass, separated by rails and stiles, above. The door is flanked by paired, fluted pilasters that support a simple pediment. The Airedale Worsted logo, a silhouette of an airedale terrier, is located on a circular background at the peak of the pediment. Centered above the door is a clock enclosed in a peaked cabinet, also with the Airedale logo. The northernmost bay of the west elevation contains a loading dock with a wood panel, overhead roll-up door that accesses the elevator. The next bay to the south is a former equipment entrance bay that has been infilled with wood panels and now contains a modern wood door with glazing. The center bay of the west elevation contains openings on both floors that were originally for materials handling. The top opening has been filled with wood panels, while the first floor opening has been infilled with wood panels and three windows. A modern entrance is located near the center of the south elevation. Multiple entrances of modern materials are located on the south and north elevations of the one-story addition.

The fenestration of the building is regular, with segmental arched openings on the west elevation, and, on the north and south elevations, rectangular openings on the first story and segmental arched openings on the basement and second story. The east elevation contains only five, rectangular, openings. The original windows on the west, north, and south elevations consisted of a large, single wood sash with 20-panes (four rows of five panes) in each. The sash pivoted as a single unit on the horizontal center axis. Each window had a paired sash transom. In the westernmost 12 bays of the building, these were six-pane sash, while in the westernmost 19 bays, they were four-pane sash. The original windows in the building have been replaced, and the window openings built in with wood to allow for the installation of a pair of double-hung sash in each opening. A small number of historic replacement sash remain on the north and south elevations however, most of the extant windows are modern replacements. Some original transom sash remain in place.

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The west elevation of the building contains paired, modern, one-over-one, vinyl, replacement sash windows with panels either over or in place of the original transom sash above. A large, 24-light, fixed wood sash window with paired, six-light, fixed, transom sash above is located on the second story of the west elevation of the elevator tower. The opening has been covered on the exterior with a wood panel.

The east elevation of the building has five window openings. The two on the projecting center bay each have the top sash of a two-over-two, double-hung window in place, without glazing, with a panel covering it on the exterior. The lower sash in these openings appears to have been replaced by a single pane of glass or plexiglass.

As discussed above, the twelve westernmost bays of the north and south elevations are wider than the seven easternmost bays. The expression of this in the building's fenestration is that the narrow bays have narrower windows set in them.

The north elevation of the building has a variety of window forms. The basement level window openings are filled with wood panels. It is not clear if original window sash are in place behind these panels. The first story has, in its two easternmost bays, historic, six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash replacement windows with four-light, wood, hopper sash transoms. The balance of the story has modern, one-over-one, vinyl sash windows, some with snap-in muntin grids. The transom space above these windows contains six-light or four-light, wood, hopper sash in many of the openings. In other openings, the transom sash have either been removed and filled or covered with wood panels. The second story of this elevation contains modern, one-over-one, vinyl sash windows with snap-in muntin grids in five of its six westernmost bays (the sixth bay is filled with wood panels). The other bays of this level contain two columns of five, aluminum, awning sash with wood panels above. There is no indication of whether or not original transom sash remain under these panels. The north elevation includes a bolted, structural steel fire escape located toward the east end.

The south elevation of the building has six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash windows. The first story has modern, one-over-one, vinyl sash windows, most with snap-in muntin grids. The transom spaces above these windows are filled with wood panels, some of which have asphalt shingle covering. There is no indication of whether or not original transom sash remain under these panels. The second story window openings have a mixture of historic and modern, replacement sash windows. The historic replacement windows are six-over-six, double-hung,

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wood sash windows, and the modern replacements are one-over-one, vinyl sash windows. The transom spaces above these windows are filled with the same materials as those on the first story. Like those below, it is unclear if original sash remain under the panels.

The main building's interior structure is of fire-resistive, post-and-beam construction. The floor joists and roof framing are supported by three rows of posts that run longitudinally through the building. The first floor is supported by square, wood posts in the basement, while the second floor and roof framing are supported by cylindrical, cast iron or steel posts. The posts in the twelve westernmost bays of the building are of a consistent diameter, while those to the east of the twelfth bay are of a smaller diameter. All of the posts have steel saddles at the top end, and those in the basement also have steel saddles at the bottom end. The floors of the building consist of tongue-and-groove, wood plank decking. The roof framing of the westernmost twelve bays consists of wood timbers running laterally across the building, supported by posts and the brick piers at the outside walls. The roof framing of the seven easternmost bays has primary lateral timbers supported by posts and end piers, with secondary timbers of the same thickness and depth hung from steel hangers transverse to the primary timbers.

The east addition has a wood post-and-beam frame, on a concrete slab floor. Two rows of posts run east-to-west through the addition. Wood brackets run from near the top of each post on an angle to the beam above.

Stairwells between the first and second floor were originally located at the center of the east and west ends. The east end stair has been altered. However, the west stairwell retains its original tongue-and-groove plank side walls and its second floor balustrade panels with a simple end post. A freight elevator is located in the northwest corner, enclosed in tongue-and-groove paneling.

The floor plan of the main building is predominantly open. In the basement, a small room has been partitioned off at the west end of the building, and a bathroom has been partitioned off at the southeast corner. The enclosed stairwell and elevator on the first floor, and the elevator on the second floor are the only subtractions from the otherwise open plans of the main building. The rear addition also has an open plan.

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

The Bernon Worsted Mill is significant as an intact representative physical expression of the twentieth-century industrial history and architecture of Woonsocket, one of Rhode Island's most heavily industrialized communities. The mill is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C. It is eligible under Criterion A for its association with the growth and eventual decline of the Woonsocket textile mill industry. It is eligible under Criterion C as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of early-twentieth-century textile mill architecture and engineering in Rhode Island. The period of significance begins in 1919, when the mill building was erected, and ends in 1954, the 50-year National Register eligibility cutoff date. This time span includes the construction of the building, the height of its use in the textile industry, and the start of its decline from that climax.

The City of Woonsocket was founded on the textile industry that developed in its villages in the nineteenth century. Beginning with cotton production in the first decades of the century, and later expanding to woolen and worsted production, the city's architectural stock and population grew as a direct result of the needs of the textile industry. With the continued refinement of worsted production techniques that were introduced to the United States through the city in the early years of the twentieth century, its reputation grew, bringing it to the forefront of textile production in the country. The Bernon Worsted Mill, as the home to a custom spinner of fine worsted yarns, is a significant element of the architectural and historical timeline of the development of the industry in Woonsocket.

Woonsocket

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, a number of villages grew up along the banks of the Blackstone River and its tributaries in the area now known as Woonsocket. Among them were the villages of Social, Woonsocket Falls, and Jenckesville, in Cumberland, and Globe, Bernon, and Hamlet, in Smithfield. The villages formed beginning in 1810, at Social, with the establishment of the Social Manufacturing Company, along the Mill River. The other villages, all of which would be in place by the mid-nineteenth century, soon followed suit. The mills located along the banks of the rivers in order to harness the power provided by their rushing water. The villages, in turn, formed around the mills to provide hands to operate the machinery within the buildings.

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By 1842, there were 20 mills in the villages of the land area of today's Woonsocket, most of which were involved in cotton textile production. The population of these villages numbered approximately 6,000 persons, a number which continued to rise steadily throughout the century (Fortin 1988:9).

On January 31, 1867, Woonsocket Falls, Social, and Jenckesville separated themselves from Cumberland and became known as the Town of Woonsocket. Four years later, the Town of Smithfield ceded the villages of Globe, Bernon, and Hamlet to Woonsocket. By 1880, the population of the Town of Woonsocket had reached 16,050 persons, over a 150 percent increase since 1842 (Fortin 1988:9). In 1888, the General Assembly and the citizens of the Town of Woonsocket both voted to establish the City of Woonsocket, which contained, among other localities, the six villages that had become the town over the preceding 21 years.

### The Woolen Industry in Woonsocket

In 1831, Edward Harris, of Limerock, in Lincoln, Rhode Island, came to the village of Woonsocket Falls and established a mill to manufacture woolen products. This is said to be the first woolen mill in the village, and in what would become Woonsocket. Twenty years later, Harris owned four woolen mills in the village. Harris's introduction of mechanized wool processing changed the future of textile production in Woonsocket. It began a shift in course away from cotton and toward woolen production, for which the city would become known during the balance of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1976: 20).

The cotton and wool textile industries coexisted in Woonsocket throughout the nineteenth century. Wool cloth manufacture produced two types of material, woolens and worsteds. Woolens are characterized by soft, bulky, relatively weak yarns in heavy woven fabrics with marked texture that often hides the pattern of the weave. Worsted yarns are strong and smooth, producing fabrics that are light, springy, closely woven, smooth to the touch, and have a visible weave pattern (Cole 1926:284-302).

Just after the turn of the twentieth century, a new method of production reached Woonsocket and pushed worsted manufacture to the forefront of the city's industrial pursuits. The adoption of the "French Process" of spinning in Woonsocket's mills was its first use in the United States, and made Woonsocket a gateway for the process to spread throughout the country. The French

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Process differed from the English, or “Bradford Process,” of spinning wool in four significant ways: the French Process sorted fibers based on fineness, rather than length; did not add oils to the fibers; combed fibers with heated pins and twisted fibers during combing; and used frame spinners, rather than mule spinners. (Thomas 1976:108-109). As a result, French Process yarns bested worsted produced by the Bradford system in both smoothness and softness.

The French Process came to Woonsocket at least partially as a result of the work of the city’s mayor, and later Rhode Island’s governor, Woonsocket native Aram J. Pothier. Pothier lobbied French businesses to locate operations in the city, citing two significant advantages: the skilled labor of its workers and their French-speaking background. Because of its long-time involvement in textile manufacture, Woonsocket’s working population was well trained in all aspects of the industry. Additionally, company representatives from France could communicate easily with the French-Canadian workers because many retained French as their primary language.

Closures in the textile industries of the Northeast were a major problem during the 1920s and 1930s. While Woonsocket was not immune to the effects of the economic downturn, the popularity of French Process worsteds provided the opportunity for the city’s textile industry to continue throughout this lull. Textile business declined overall, but rebounded in the late 1930s as the country’s involvement in World War II loomed on the horizon. World War II provided a last gasp of prosperity for Woonsocket’s industrial base, as demand increased dramatically not only for textiles, but also for rubber products and machine work for which Woonsocket already had functioning concerns. After the war, however, the decline that had begun in the 1920s returned, and as measured against the prosperous first half of the 1940s, hit with a disastrous effect.

Many of the city’s textile and other industrial concerns closed their doors in the aftermath of the war. Some consolidated operations as overland transportation improved with the advent of the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s; others moved to regions that provided less-expensive operating costs; and some simply went out of business for financial reasons, be they competition from overseas, tax increases, or declining demand. The one factor most often cited for the decline of the textile industry in the Northeast is the move by companies to the southern United States. In the 1950s, southern cities discovered the tools to lure manufacturing, particularly of textiles, away from the Northeast. Modern manufacturing facilities were constructed specifically for textile production. With air conditioning, windowless walls, and vast, single-level plans, they

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allowed a more efficient environment for the industry than the oft-adapted, nineteenth-century mill buildings that were in use in New England. Operating costs, too, were lower in the South than in the Northeast: electricity was less expensive, and labor costs were lower than in the northern communities (Fortin 1988:145-147).

In the end, Woonsocket's industrial focus decreased dramatically. In 1952, the closing of two mills alone caused the loss of 850 jobs. In 1954, closing seven mills cost the city over 2,200 jobs. Between 1949 and 1954, 4,125 jobs were lost in the city (Harris Library Vertical File n.d.). Between 1951 and 1954, fourteen textile mills ceased operation in Woonsocket (Fortin 1988:146). By 1970, less than 50 percent of the city's workforce was employed in the manufacturing sector, down from over 60 percent only 10 years earlier (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1976: 46). The decline has continued to the present time, with many mill buildings in the city vacant, hosting small industrial concerns, or under some use other than industrial production.

### Bernon Worsted Mill

The Bernon Worsted Mill was a beneficiary of the manufacturing success of Woonsocket caused by the presence of the French Process, but does not appear to have been directly involved with it. Bernon Worsted Mill appeared as a part of another movement in the woolen industry, that of smaller-scale, custom yarn producers. These companies were physically smaller than earlier woolen and worsted manufacturing companies, with fewer, more technologically-advanced machines, and produced smaller batches of more varied types of yarns. Their small size and advanced equipment made them capable of fine tuning production to meet the varied demand of weavers.

In 1919, Charles Augustus Proulx established the Bernon Worsted Mills on Park Avenue. Proulx was born in Woonsocket on February 11, 1872. He was a direct descendant of Francois Proulx, the first French-Canadian immigrant to settle in Woonsocket, who arrived from St. Ours, in Quebec, Canada, in 1814 (Harris Library Vertical File n.d.).

Charles Proulx attended school in Woonsocket and later entered the furniture business with his father, Joseph. The family's store was at 102 Arnold Street. After a few years in the furniture trade, Charles opened a sporting goods store that specialized in the sale of bicycles. The store was located in the American Block, on Main Street (formerly located at 129-137 Main Street).

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In 1905, at the age of 33, Proulx partnered with Gustave A. Friedrichs to establish the Woonsocket Dyeing and Bleaching Company, on Allen Street. The company dyed and bleached worsted yarns, printed worsted cloth, and manufactured cotton yarns, braids, tapes, and hosiery. Proulx served as treasurer of the company, remaining associated with it until 1923. In the interim, he helped to establish the Fairmount Dye Works, for which he also served as treasurer (Fitch 1989; Harris Library Vertical File n.d.).

Proulx's success with these two concerns led him to partner with Lawrence A. Jarret to establish the Bernon Worsted Mills in 1919. The establishment of the mill was a process that included all facets of its corporate and physical being. The stock of mill buildings in Woonsocket that were constructed during the nineteenth century allowed many concerns to spend their formative years in leased space or to buy existing buildings and alter them to fit the needs of the particular industry. In the years immediately following the First World War, however, available space became more scarce as Woonsocket's textile industry was at its peak, particularly in woolen manufacture. This scarcity or the unsuitability of existing spaces for Proulx's needs may have factored into his decision to construct a new building. The establishment of the mill in Woonsocket made new construction a viable expense because of the expertise and availability of the city's textile workforce.

The site that was chosen for the Bernon Worsted Mill was located in what was, in 1919, a sparsely developed section of Woonsocket, close to the border of North Smithfield. The parcel was located along Park Avenue, a primary north-south thoroughfare that ran into the center of the city from Great Road, which connected Providence with the upper Blackstone Valley, in Massachusetts. The property was owned in 1895 by Jonathan Blakeley, and bordered two large parcels to the east that were owned by George Ross and W.A. Cook. To the north, Blakeley, Grove and Cottage streets were in place. It appears, however, that the house lots between them had not all been delineated (Everts & Richards 1895).

By 1911, the neighborhood of the future mill property contained a few houses, mostly along Park Avenue, and notably, the Vose Street School, which was constructed in 1899 one lot west of Park Avenue, on Vose Street. A house was located at the northwest corner of the Blakeley property, and others abutted the property at the southeast corner of Blakeley Street and Park Avenue, the southeast corner of Blakeley and Grove streets, and at the northeast corner of Park Avenue and Merrill Court. The west side of Park Avenue had only five houses between Transit Street and the lot opposite the end of Blakeley Street. Off of Park Avenue, clusters of houses

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were located elsewhere in the neighborhood, including along the east side of Grove Street, at the corner of Park Avenue and Transit Street, and along the east side of Thomas Street (Sanborn Map Company 1911).

It is likely that residential development in the neighborhood continued at an even pace between 1911 and 1919, when the mill was constructed. With a large, open parcel, direct access to Great Road and the mills of downtown Woonsocket via Park Avenue, and a neighborhood in the process of residential growth, the Blakeley parcel provided three key ingredients to the future health of the concern: expansion space, ease of transportation, and an accessible workforce.

Bernon Worsted Mills was capitalized with \$500,000 in 1919. Charles Proulx served as the president; Lawrence A. Jarret held the positions of treasurer, secretary, and buyer, and in 1923, Ernest Barnes was the superintendent of the operation. The firm employed 175 people in 1923, and 200 in 1929 (Davison 1924:506, 1930:493).

In addition to his roles in establishing and leading the aforementioned textile facilities, Proulx was a respected member of the community. He was appointed chairman of the Woonsocket Police Commission by the Board of Aldermen in 1920, and served a three year term in that capacity. On July 21, 1931, in Boston, Charles Proulx passed away. A shrewd businessman, Proulx's worth is said to have been two million dollars at the time of the stock market crash of 1929. At his death, his worth had dropped to \$461,504 (Harris Library Vertical File n.d.). Proulx was buried in an elaborate family mausoleum in Precious Blood Cemetery, in northern Woonsocket, along the Blackstone, Massachusetts border.

The Bernon Worsted Mill continued under the leadership of Lawrence Jarret, Proulx's partner in the concern. Jarret continued to lead the company until 1936, when he sold the mill. He continued his career as a textile executive after the Bernon endeavor. In 1937, Jarret purchased the plant of the Fairmount Worsted Company, on Mendon Road, in Woonsocket. By 1964, he was the president of the Textile Processing Corporation, on Singleton Street, in Woonsocket.

In October of 1936, Jarret sold the Bernon Worsted Mill to the Yorkshire Worsted Mills, which was headquartered in Philadelphia. Yorkshire Worsted was said to have been one of the largest concerns of its type in the United States at the time of the purchase (Anonymous 1936a). Though it employed approximately 350 people at its height of operation, the Yorkshire ownership of the property was short-lived. In 1939, the mill was closed (Anonymous 1941a). In

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1940, the mill and its contents were sold to the William B. Dunn Company, a Providence machinery dealer. The Dunn Company dismantled all of the equipment in the mill and sold it, leaving the building empty in the summer of 1941 (Anonymous 1941).

Elsewhere in the area of the mill, residential construction continued at a brisk pace, with many multiple-family residences constructed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Aerial photographs of the area taken in 1939 show much of the land that was vacant in 1919 occupied by buildings.

In September 1941, the empty Yorkshire mill was sold to the Airedale Worsted Mills, which were owned by James and Joseph Axelrod, father and son. Up to that time, Airedale was located at 81 Allen Street, in the former Novelty Knitting Company Mills. Built between 1895 and 1911, the mill is located on the west bank of the Blackstone River, just north of Bernon Street. Airedale manufactured gabardine cloth in the mill before the move. The company employed approximately 65 persons before the move, but the expectation was that the number would grow to 100 on two shifts immediately upon entering the new facility and would continue to grow as time passed and if a third shift was added (Fitch 1989; Anonymous 1941a).

Joseph Axelrod was an extremely successful, self-made textile entrepreneur. He began his textile career in partnership with his father, James J. Axelrod, in 1938 with \$5,500 in capital, two employees and used looms. By 1948, he owned mills with assets of over 16 million dollars. In that year, he was president of Airedale Worsted Mills, the Dorlexa Dying and Finishing Company, and the Jeffrey Finishing Company, all of Woonsocket, the Crown Manufacturing Company, of Pawtucket, and the Damar Wool Combing Company, of Providence. Though not the sole owners, Joseph and his father also owned 80 percent of New Bedford's Wamsutta Mills, as well. Axelrod's search for skilled workers led him to establish the "Crown College" at Crown Manufacturing. The "college" offered training in many aspects of textile production, including picking, carding, and time and motion studies (Harris Library Vertical File n.d.).

The migration of textile industries from the northeast to the southern United States in the 1950s signaled the beginning of the end of Axelrod's empire, as it did for many other mill owners. By 1954, Dorlexa and Crown had closed, and the Axelrod interest in Wamsutta had been sold.

The Axelrod family operated the Airedale Worsted Mill at the Park Avenue building until 1956, when it consolidated its operations and moved the Woonsocket equipment to Clinton, Massachusetts. In July 1957, the vacant building was purchased by Dauray Textiles, another Woonsocket firm. Dauray was established in 1946, and prior to the move to Park Avenue,

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leased 20,000 square feet of space in the former Privilege Mill, on Winter Street. With the move to Park Avenue, the firm gained an additional 10,000 square feet of space, despite the fact that the sale of the building included a lease of the basement level, which was granted until 1963. Dauray processed novelty yarns, with natural and synthetic fibers including worsted, linen, cotton, rayon, Orlon, Dacron, and nylon. It employed 115 persons at the Winter Street plant and expected to reach 200 employees soon after the move to Park Avenue was completed. At the time of the move to Park Avenue, the president of the company was Emile A. Benoit, and its treasurer was Edouard Dauray. Deeds and tax records for the property show the 828 Realty Corporation, a subsidiary of Dauray Textiles, as the holder of the property (Pointon 1957).

In 1977, the mill was purchased by Crimptex, Incorporated, a producer of broadwoven fabrics. Crimptex relocated in 1998, to Hamlet Avenue, in Woonsocket. The mill was sold at that time to M.B.G. Realty, Company, LLC, a subsidiary of Achim Importing, of New York, New York. Achim is said to have used the space for the production of curtains and drapes. In 2004, the building was sold to the Nadeau Corporation, its current owner. It is currently slated for conversion to residential use under the name “Red Mill Lofts.”

### Architecture

Bernon Worsted Mill is a representative example of an early-twentieth-century New England textile mill. It is an example of the nineteenth-century tradition of an “industrial loft,” a specialized type of building often associated with textile manufacturing, consisting of two or more stories in a long, narrow configuration. This shape was originally developed to satisfy the combined needs for interior light and power transmission via lineshafting. Useable floor space in earlier nineteenth-century examples of the type was maximized by concentrating vertical circulation in exterior towers. At Bernon Worsted, the stairs were moved to the center of the ends of the building, and a freight elevator was located at the front corner of the building, to minimize intrusion into the work space. These buildings employed fire resistive, or “slow-burning” construction, with heavy, self-supporting masonry outer walls. The interior framing system, which supported the floor load, consisted of widely-spaced, heavy timber (or sometimes cast iron) posts, timber or steel beams, and thick, multilayer plank floors, providing limited surfaces for fire to take hold (Bradley 1999:25, 29–34, 93, 117–121, 126–129, 155; Brooks 1906:50, 54–68).

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### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### Boundary Description:

The property boundaries include three parcels as shown on Woonsocket Tax Assessor's Plat 17:

Lot 17-16: 2.64 acres.

Lot 17-31: 5,876 square feet (0.135 acres)

Lot 17-66: 1.6 acres

The total area of the three parcels is 4.375 acres.

#### Boundary Justification:

The boundaries include the full extent of contiguous historic and structural resources associated with the activity in the property during its period of significance. The boundaries follow legally recorded property lines, roads, and natural watercourses as described in Woonsocket Deed Book 1048, pages 598-600.

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(The information in numbers 1–5 is the same for all photographs)

1. Bernon Worsted Mill
2. Providence County, Rhode Island
3. Photographer: Jeffrey D. Emidy
4. December 13, 2004
5. Original Negatives on File at: PAL  
210 Lonsdale Avenue  
Pawtucket, RI 02860
  
6. View looking northeast, showing west elevation
7. #1
  
6. View looking southwest, showing east and north elevations (L to R)
7. #2
  
6. View looking northwest, showing south and east elevations (L to R)
7. #3
  
6. View looking east, detail of west elevation main entrance
7. #4
  
6. View looking south, detail of original window on north elevation
7. #5
  
6. View looking west, showing basement interior
7. #6
  
6. View looking west, showing second floor interior
7. #7

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6. View looking west from second floor, showing elevator shaft interior
7. #8
  
6. View looking south, showing west stairwell
7. #9

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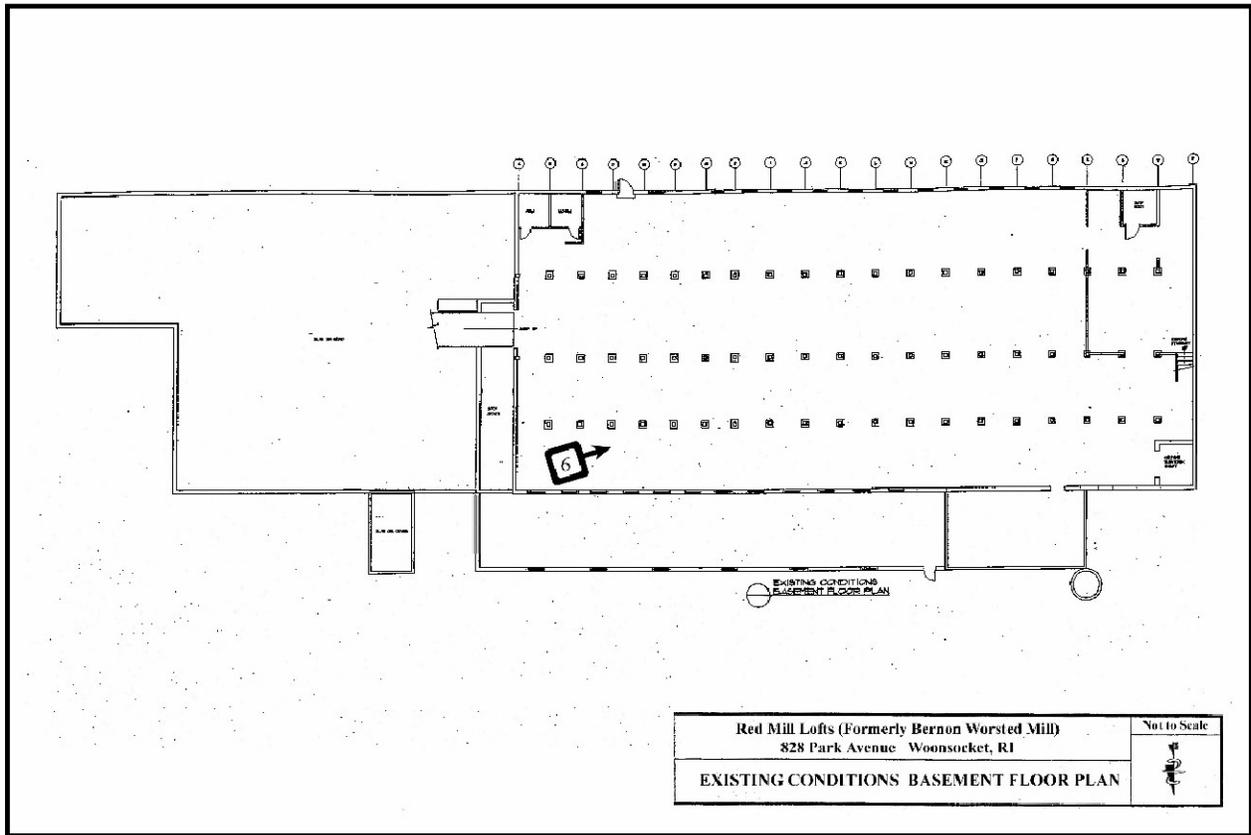
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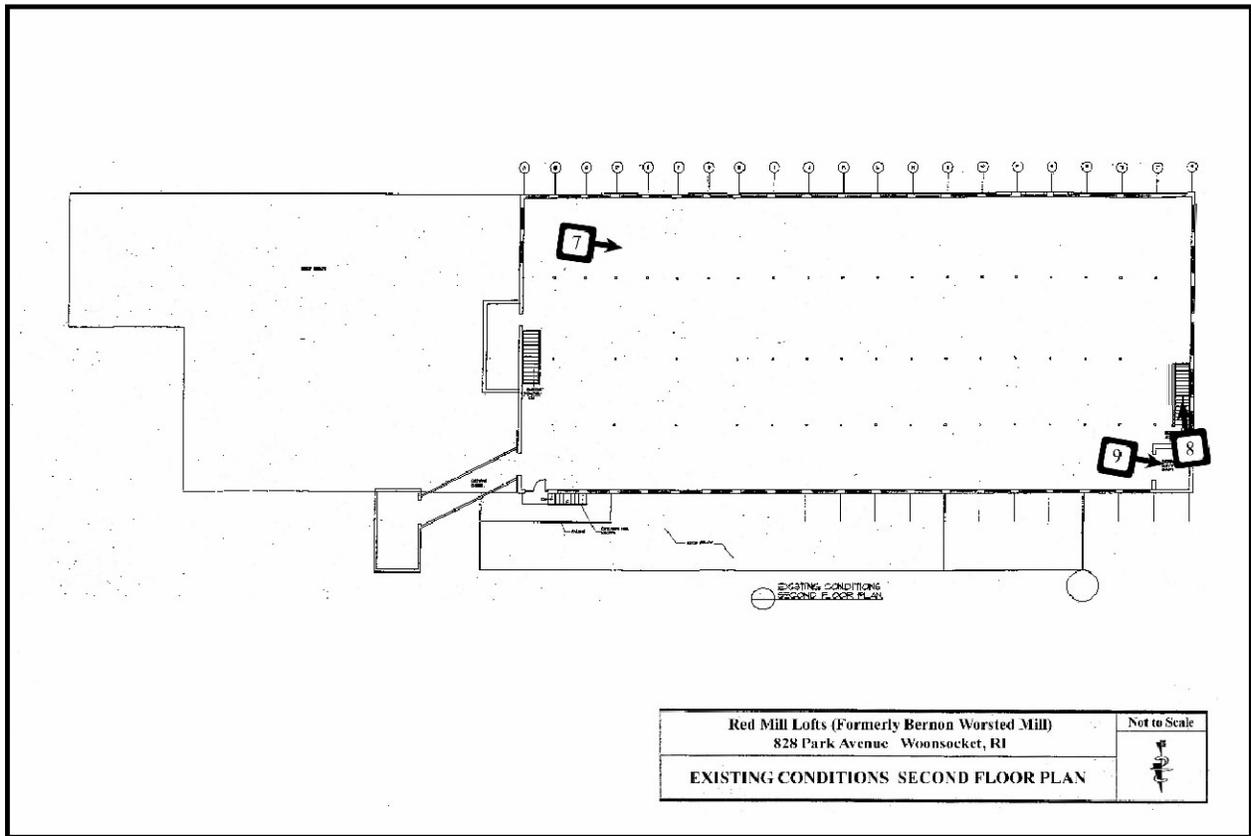
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H E L I E D

Woonsocket