

Boundaries

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	
COUNTY:	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON NAME:  
**Old Slater Mill**

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Roosevelt Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Pawtucket**

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

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:      STATE:      CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:      STATE:      CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:      STATE:      CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)			(Check One)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered			<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Moved		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Boundaries: Four parcels identified by the numbers 564, 565, 566 and 287 comprise, as the result of urban renewal, the permanent total area of this landmark containing 184,113 square feet.

Parcel 565 contains the Old Slater Mill itself, the Wilkinson Mill and the Sylvanus Brown House. It is the original holding of the Slater Mill Association and contains 45,036 square feet. Bounded northwesterly by Roosevelt Avenue 80.32 feet; northeasterly by a way called Slater Avenue and Parcel 564 in two sections of 50.39 feet and 235.39 feet respectively; southeasterly by the Blackstone River 275 feet more or less; southwestly by Parcel 566 in two sections of 92 and 82 feet respectively; northwesterly by Parcel 566 38 feet; and southwestly again by Parcel 566 20 feet to the point of beginning on Roosevelt Avenue.

Parcel 564 containing 48,558 square feet is currently an undeveloped parking area, but eventually will be properly developed and landscaped for parking by visitors. Bounded northwesterly by Roosevelt Avenue 170.57 feet; northeasterly by Leather Avenue 262 feet; southeasterly by the Blackstone River 179.77 feet; and southwestly by Parcel 565 in two sections of 235.39 feet and 50.39 feet respectively to the point of beginning on Roosevelt Avenue.

Parcel 566 has been cleared of buildings as part of an urban renewal project and landscaped as open space to provide an attractive setting for the mill complex in Parcel 565. Parcel 566 contains 39,767 square feet. Bounded northwesterly by Roosevelt Avenue 347.3 feet; northeasterly by Parcel 565 20 feet; southeasterly by Parcel 565 38 feet; northeasterly again by Parcel 565 in two sections of 82 feet and 92 feet respectively; southeasterly by the Blackstone River in two sections of 210.45 feet and 95.79 feet respectively; southwestly by Main Street 66.05 feet; and southwestly, westerly and northwesterly by the corner of Main Street and Roosevelt Avenue 31.04 feet.

Parcel 287, on the east side of the Blackstone River, contains 50,752 square feet. It has been cleared of buildings as the result of an urban renewal project and, now landscaped as open space, provides a fine prospect of the buildings comprising the mill complex across the river in Parcel 565. Bounded northwesterly by the Blackstone River 500 feet more or less; northeasterly by Manning-Heffern Funeral Home at 68 Broadway 115.45 feet; southeasterly by Broadway in four sections of 106 feet, 101.6 feet, 64.62 feet and 204.75 feet respectively; and southwestly by Main Street 19 feet more or less.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		41° 52' 40"	71° 22' 58"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 4.23 (total of four parcels)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Edwin W. Small, Assistant to Director, Northeast Region

ORGANIZATION: National Park Service, New England Field Office      DATE: 9/18/72

STREET AND NUMBER:  
1400 John W. McCormack Post Office & Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: Boston      STATE: Massachusetts      CODE: 25

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name N/A for Registered National Historic Landmarks

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
-Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

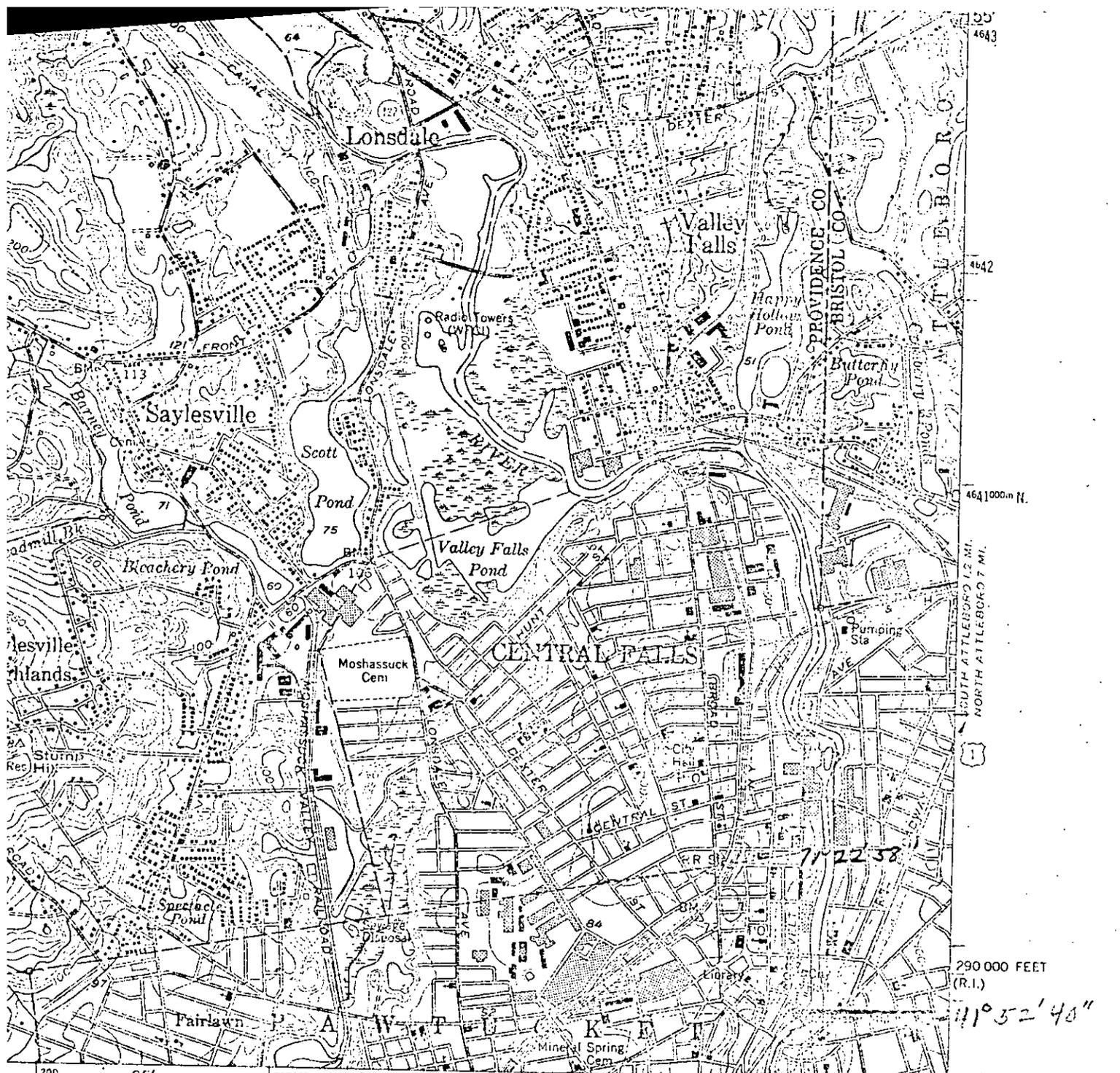
Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



300000 M. INTERIOR - GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. - 1965  
 MARVILLE 1.4 MI.  
 CENTERDALE (JUNC. U.S. 44) 4.9 MI.  
 PROVIDENCE (JUNC. U.S. 44) 3 MI.  
 RUMFORD 2.6 MI.  
 PROVIDENCE (JUNC. U.S. 44) 3.5 MI.

1 MILE  
 7000 FEET  
 4 METER

**ROAD CLASSIFICATION**  
 Heavy-duty 4 LANE 16 LANE Light-duty   
 Medium-duty 4 LANE 16 LANE Unimproved dirt

U. S. Route State Route

**PAWTUCKET, R. I.-MASS.**  
 N4152.5-W7122.5/7.5

1949

AMS 6767 IV NW-SERIES V815

12  
EQUEST

290 000 FEET (R.I.)  
 41°52'40"  
 41°52'30"  
 (EAST PROVIDEN  
 6767 IV SE

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

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

CITY, TOWN Pawtucket

STATE Rhode Island

COUNTY Providence

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

CODE 44

CODE 007

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Old Slater Mill Association

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

CITY, TOWN Pawtucket

STATE Rhode Island

VICINITY OF

## 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

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

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

CITY, TOWN Washington

STATE District of Columbia

# SIGNIFICANCE

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

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 inheritance 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  
(continued)

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Old Slater's Mill, Pawtucket, Rhode Island

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

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 mechanics 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 than 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.

(continued)

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Old Slater's Mill, Pawtucket, Rhode Island

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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 its 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, 1790, 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

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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 industrialist.

# DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED (Brown House)	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE 1962

## 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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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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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.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Old Slater Mill, Rhode Island

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PAGE 1

Old Slater Mill Association. The Slater Mill Historic Site; A Photographic Guidebook to the Museum and its Collection (Pawtucket, R.I.,

Old Slater Mill Association. "History of the Old Slater Mill," (unpublished report, n.d.).

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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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Old Slater Mill, Rhode Island

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(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.



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings

Old Slater Mill, Rhode Island

The Old Slater Mill, Roosevelt Avenue, Pawtucket, memorializes the beginning of the American cotton spinning industry. Using British inspired machinery, the mill in 1793 inaugurated cotton manufacturing in the United States.

Samuel Slater, who built the mill in Pawtucket, was born in Duffield, England, on June 9, 1768, and became an apprentice in a cotton mill on January 8, 1788. For the next six-and-a-half years, Slater worked there and acquired a thorough knowledge of Sir Richard Arkwright's cotton manufacturing machinery. After completing his apprenticeship, Slater remained at the mill until he decided to emigrate to America, which he did on September 1, 1789.

Once in the United States, Slater successfully applied his knowledge of cotton manufacturing. He wrote to Moses Brown, a Providence merchant, on December 2, 1789, stating that he could reproduce the machinery that he had worked with in England. Brown's reply on December 10 drew Slater to Rhode Island, he arriving in Pawtucket on January 18, 1790. And on April 5, 1790, Slater agreed to produce replicas of Arkwright's cotton machinery. On Monday, December 29, 1790, the new machinery, set up in a fulling mill on the Blackstone River in Pawtucket, was placed in operation.

Slater's ingenuity stimulated the construction of America's first cotton mill. Work on the building began in 1793. When completed that July, the wood structure stood two-and-a-half stories high and measured 44 by 30 feet. Production began on July 12.

In the years after 1793, Slater erected several additional cotton mills in New England. When he died on April 21, 1835, he was a successful, prosperous, and highly admired innovator and industrialist.

The Old Slater Mill includes Slater's original mill, additions made during Slater's lifetime, and an addition added after his death. The Old Slater Mill Association has restored the building and maintains and operates it as a memorial to Slater and the birth of the American milling industry.

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Rhode Island	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. XVII-b "Commerce and Industry"
3. NAME(S) OF SITE Old Slater Mill	4. APPROX. ACREAGE
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) Providence County, Roosevelt Avenue, Pawtucket	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Mr. Henry A. Street, Jr. President Old Slater Mill Association, Post Office Box 7	
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant) Pawtucket, Rhode Island The Old Slater Mill in Pawtucket memorializes the beginning of the cotton spinning industry in the United States. Using British inspired machinery, the mill opened in 1793 and not only made its owners wealthy, but stimulated widespread imitation in America.  Samuel Slater was responsible for the mill in Pawtucket. Born in Duffield, England, on June 9, 1768, he received a good education. Near his fifteenth birthday, Slater became associated with the industry that dominated his life, cotton milling. He accepted an apprenticeship with Jedediah Strutt, a cotton miller, on January 8, 1783. For the next six-and-a-half years, Slater worked in Strutt's mill and developed a thorough knowledge of Strutt's partner's (Sir Richard Arkwright) cotton manufacturing machinery. The apprentice also learned the secrets of the machinery of James Hargreaves and Samuel Crompton. Shortly after obtaining his majority, Slater completed his apprenticeship. But he remained at Strutt's, as a supervisor and the boss for the erection of a new factory. Despite his progress and apparently assured future in the English milling industry, Slater had begun to consider migrating to the United States.  America appealed to the shrewd Englishman for several reasons. First, Strutt spoke pessimistically about the progress of the cotton industry in Great Britain. Second, Slater had heard of alluring opportunities for the ambitious in the New World. Late in the summer of 1789, Slater acted upon his desire. He bade his mother farewell, telling her that he was going to London. In leaving home, he wore a disguise to evade detention because of his training, England attempting to protect her cotton industry by prohibiting the migration of mill workers. He escaped detection and sailed for America on September 1, 1789. Sixty-six days later he landed in the United States.  <p style="text-align: right;">(continued)</p>	
8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works) E. H. Cameron, <u>Samuel Slater, Father of American Manufactures</u> (Portland, Me., 1960); E. H. Cameron, "The Genius of Slater," reprinted from <u>The Technology Review</u> , 57 (May, 1955); John Chamberlain, <u>The Enterprising Americans: A Business History of the United States</u> (New York, 1963). <u>D.A.B.</u> Also, <u>Old Slater Mill Association</u> , "Old Slater Mill," (n.p., n.d.) "History of Old Slater Mill," (unpublished report, n.d.).	
9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, IIABS, etc.)	

10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Good	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Museum	13. DATE OF VISIT 1965
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) S. Sydney Bradford	15. TITLE Staff Historian	16. DATE	

\* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

STATE	NAME(S) OF SITE
Rhode Island	Old Slater Mill

Once in the new republic, Slater effectively applied his aggressiveness and knowledge of cotton manufacturing. The new immigrant, after working for a while in New York City, wrote to Moses Brown, a wealthy Providence merchant on December 2, 1789, stating that he could reproduce the cotton machinery that he had worked with for almost eight years in England. Brown's reply on December 10 resulted in Slater's going to Rhode Island, he arriving in Pawtucket on January 18, 1790. And on April 5, 1790, Slater signed an agreement that provided for, among other things, his making replicas of Arkwright's cotton machinery. Hardly had that agreement been concluded, before Slater, who forgot nothing, insisted that the carpenter who was to help him should be placed under bond not to tell others of the design of the machinery. Then Slater set to work. So good was his memory, that he failed in only one detail. But the problem, involving the carder, was soon solved. On Monday, December 20, 1790, the new machinery, set up in a fulling mill on the Blackstone River in Pawtucket, was successfully placed in operation. A major American industry had been founded.

Slater's reproduction of British cotton machinery stimulated the construction of America's first mill devoted to the spinning of cotton yarn. Work on the building began in 1793. When completed that July, the wood structure stood two-and-a-half stories high and measured 44 by 30 feet. Production began on July 12. In order to provide light for the workers, largely children, in the early morning and late afternoon, cotton-wick candles were used. But the children operating the machines worked in an unheated building in winter. And even Slater wrote on November 14, 1793, that "The children are quivering this morning at seeing it Snow and Cold and no Stoves." Cold or not, the mill continued to operate, with Slater retaining an interest in it until 1829.

The former Englishman's ingenuity transformed the once-poor mechanic into a wealthy and eminent American citizen. He had married Hannah Wilkinson on October 2, 1791, and they had nine children before her death in 1812. He subsequently married Esther Parkinson, a widow, in November 1817. In addition to propagating children, Slater expanded his own interests in cotton manufacturing. In the years after 1793, he erected new mills near Pawtucket, and developed cotton factories in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut. He reached the height of his career in 1829. An uneasy period in the cotton industry in the same period 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 highly admired innovator and industrialist.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in E. H. Cameron, Samuel Slater, Father of American Manufactures (Portland, Maine, 1960), 75

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STATE Rhode Island	NAME(S) OF SITE Old Slater Mill
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Present Condition of the Site

The Old Slater Mill includes Slater's original mill, two additions made during Slater's lifetime, and a third addition added after Slater's death.

The original mill stands in about the middle of the enlarged mill. Slater's first building resembled a New England barn, having vertical sideboards nailed to its horizontal timbers. Clapboard formed the exterior covering, whitewashed plaster the interior wall. A bell tower projected upward from the front end. Since its construction, the original mill has been, it seems, largely rebuilt.

Two of the Mill's subsequent enlargement and alterations occurred before Slater's death in 1835. An addition on the east had been made by 1817. It added 40 feet to the building, and is, apparently, the least altered part of the entire structure. The south wing, with a new bell tower, had also been added by 1835. Sometime after Slater's demise, a north addition of almost 57 feet was constructed. Furthermore, a shed was attached to the south side of the earliest section sometime between 1835-1865. And by 1877 the mill's roof had been raised and a third story built.

Forty-four years after 1877, a group was formed to preserve the mill. The Old Slater Mill Association, which was formed in 1921, undertook the restoration of the mill in 1924-25, returning the building to the way it appeared around 1840. The shed on the south side was also removed. Now painted red, with white trim, the historic mill houses exhibits concerning Slater and the history of the cotton industry.



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PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

**1** NAME

HISTORIC

Old Slater Mill

AND/OR COMMON

Old Slater Mill; Slater Mill Historic Site

**2** LOCATION

CITY, TOWN, Pawtucket

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY Providence

STATE Rhode Island

**3** PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT National Park Service

DATE OF PHOTO 1964

NEGATIVE FILED AT Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 20240

**4** IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

Slater Mill, taken from the northwest.



*Cantuck's Bridge and falls.*

2/2 111

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Old Slater Mill

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Old Slater Mill; Slater Mill Historic Site



**LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN

Pawtucket

\_\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island



**PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT

ca. 1812-1817 print

DATE OF PHOTO

unknown

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Rhode Island Historical Society

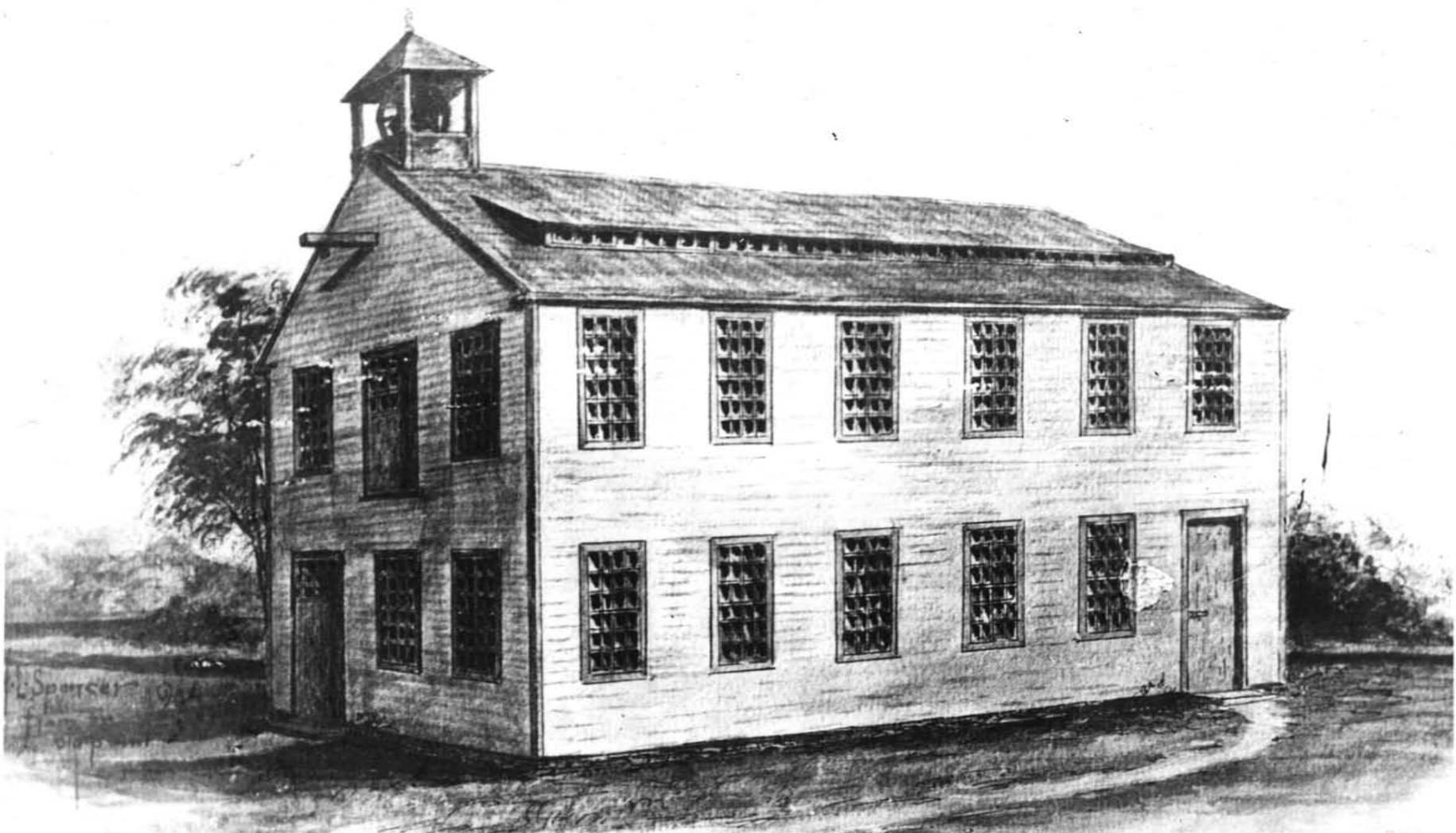


**IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

Print of watercolor view of Slater Mill with east addition.



The Old Slater Mill, Pawtucket Rhode Island. ~

Built by Samuel Slater in 1793, and in which was first introduced in America the spinning of Cotton by machinery.

*(From an Old Print)*

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

**2** LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Pawtucket VICINITY OF COUNTY Providence STATE Rhode Island

**3** PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Drawn by H. S. Spencer 1907 DATE OF PHOTO Unknown  
from an old print.

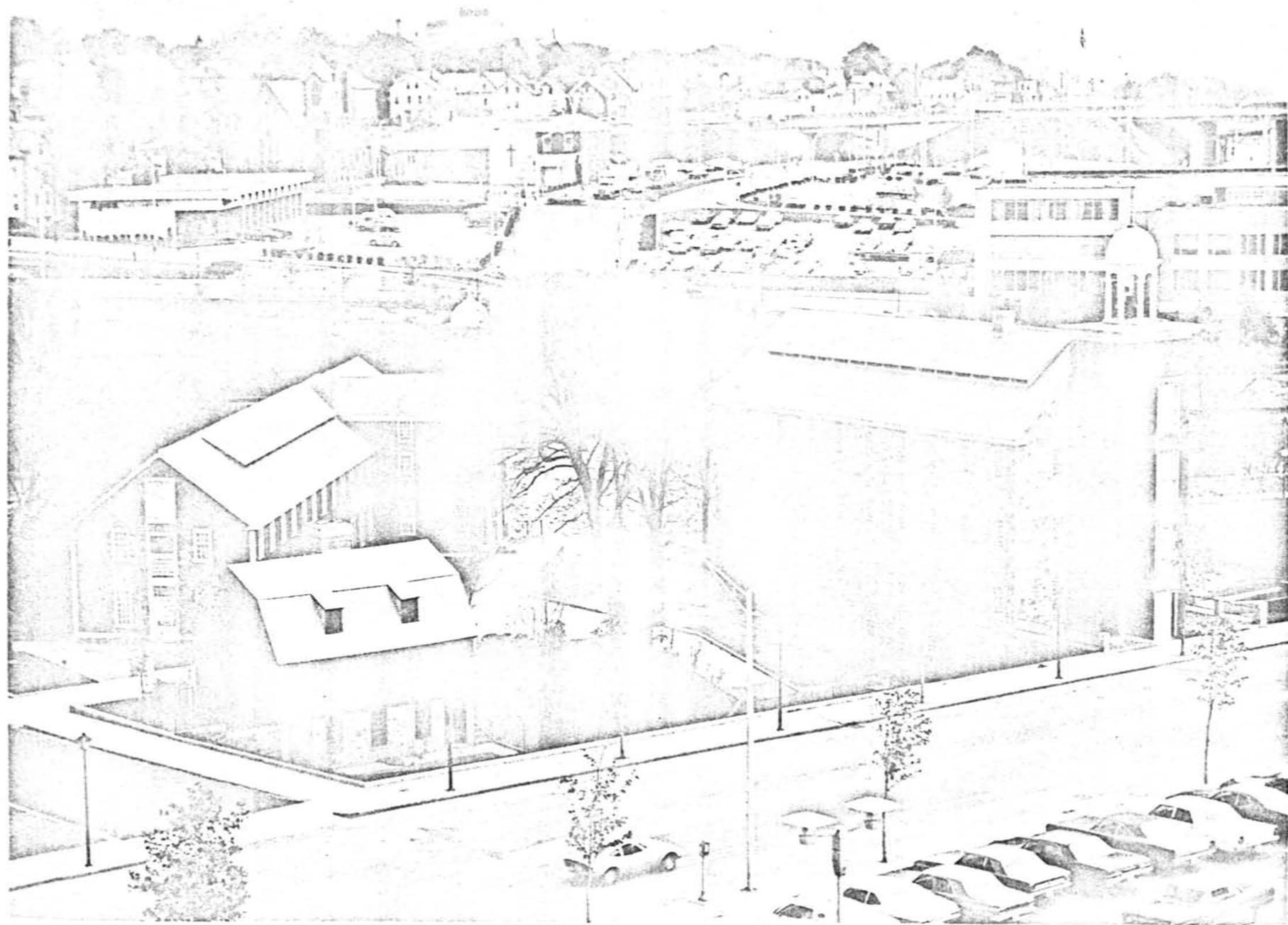
NEGATIVE FILED AT Slater Mill Historic Site

**4** IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT. GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

"Slater's Mill as erected in 1793"



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**2 LOCATION**

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**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Slater Mill Historic Site

DATE OF PHOTO 1973

NEGATIVE FILED AT Slater Mill Historic Site

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

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PHOTO NO.

Taken from the northwest, (left to right) Slater Mill, Sylvanus Brown House, Wilkinson Mill.