

Lippitt Mill
825 Main Street
West Warwick
Kent County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-338

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS
R.I
2. WARWICK

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-338

LIPPITT MILL

Location: 825 Main Street, Lippitt (West Warwick), Kent County, Rhode Island.
Geographic Location Code: 38 - 0245 - 003
Latitude: 41° 42' 10" N Longitude: 71° 27' 30" W

Present Owner: River Point Lace Works, 825 Main Street, West Warwick, Rhode Island.

Present Occupant: River Point Lace Works.

Present Use: Textile manufacture (lace).

Statement of Significance: The Lippitt Mill has continuously produced cotton textiles since it began operations in 1810. It is the second oldest cotton textile mill in existence in Rhode Island at the present time (the Old Slater Mill of Pawtucket predating it by approximately sixteen years), and is representative of the once numerous small textile mills of the state that were managed directly by their owners rather than through salaried agents.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The original co-partnership was formed on November 9, 1809 and consisted of Christopher Lippitt, Charles Lippitt, Benjamin Aborn, George Jackson, Amasa and William H. Mason. The agreement was to run for ten years from January 1, 1810. On January 21, 1821, the co-partnership was reorganized with the same owners, and this time the firm was established for twenty years duration. There were a number of changes in shareholders over the subsequent years. The next recorded change in the firm occurred in May of 1853, when a state charter was granted to Charles, Christopher, Henry, Robert and Penelope Lippitt, Julia L. Sweet, Cornelia A. Andrews and Arthur M. Kimball for the incorporation of the Lippitt Manufacturing Company. On July 19, 1889, the estate, land, mills and water power were purchased by B. B. and R. Knight, prominent Rhode Island cotton manufacturers, who continued to operate the mill until 1923 when it was sold to the current owners, River Point Lace Works.

2. Date of erection: 1810.
3. Architect, builder, suppliers etc.: Col. Christopher Lippitt, Agent. Builder: George Burlingame.
4. Original plan and construction: The original plan was rectangular and designed as a two story building, to which a third story was added as an afterthought.
5. Alterations and additions: The original interior wood framing was changed to slow-burning timber mill construction, n. d. No. 2 Mill (1830); Boiler House (1865); Cloth Room (1866); Engine House (1871); Wheel House (1901). Picker House rebuilt and new elevator tower for original building (1912). Office Building and Cotton House, n. d. Water closet tower (east elevation of original building), 1917 - 1918.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

See preceding section on original and subsequent owners.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Drawing titled: "Sections and Roof Plan of Wheel House, Lippitt Mills," dated Dec. 17, 1900. Copy in the Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution.

Drawing titled: "Sheet No. 2, Detail of Water Closet Tower for No. 1 Mill, Lippitt Mill, B. B. and R. Knight." C. R. Makepeace & Co., Mill Engineers & Architects. Dated October 15, 1917. Copy in the Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Barlows Insurance Surveys, No. 7300. Lippitt Mill, Warwick, R.I. New York, n. d.
Plan and isometric drawing (from southwest). Copy in HABS Photo-Data Book.

Cole, J. R. History of Washington and Kent Counties (Rhode Island). New York, 1889. pp. 977-979.

Fuller, Oliver Payson. The History of Warwick, Rhode Island. Providence, 1875. pp. 225-232.

Greene, Arnold. 250 Years of the Providence Plantations.
Providence, 1886. pp. 256 and 416.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. Rhode Island Architecture.
Providence, 1939 (reprinted by DaCapo Press, New York,
1969).

No. 7300, Lippitt Mill, Lippitt, Warwick, R. I. Insurance
Survey Report dated September 18, 1882. Museum of
History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution.

Postal Card showing northeast and southeast elevations,
n. d.
Copy in HABS Photo-Data Book.

Sup'l No. 7300, Lippitt Co.'s Mill, Clyde, Warwick, R.I.,
Insurance Survey Report.
Copy in the Museum of History and Technology,
Smithsonian Institution.

U. S. Government. Documents Relative to the Manufactures
in the U. S. House Document #308, Vol. I, 1832-1833.
pp. 945-946, 957-959.

Whitaker, J. M. (surveyor). B.B. & R. Knight "Lippitt
Mill" (Cotton Mill) Lippitt, R.I. #15912. Dated
March 22, 1913.
Copy in HABS Photo-Data Book.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building has been in continuous operation as a cotton textile mill since 1810 and is representative of the once numerous small mills of the state.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 106' x 34'; 14 bays, three stories, plus basement and attic; rectangular in shape.
2. Foundations: Brick, probably on stone footings.
3. Wall construction: Wood frame with wood shingles on the exterior and wood lath and plaster on the interior. Original light wood framing of the interior was subsequently changed to slow-burning timber mill construction, n. d.

4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads etc.: None.
5. Chimneys: None.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Wood panelled doors and wood trim.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Double hung wood sash, 6/6, and wood trim.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with continuous clere-story windows on the northwest and southeast sides. Original wood shingles replaced with asbestos shingles, n. d.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Wood cornice, eaves project about 16".
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Cupola for bell, over main entrance northeast elevation. Metal clad roof. Water closet tower, southeast elevation, brick. Elevator tower, southwest elevation, brick. Stair tower, northwest, wood.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The three floors are identical rectangular areas divided into fourteen bays on the long axis (northeast/southwest) and four aisles on the short axis (northwest/southeast) by interior wood columns. The attic floor plan is also rectangular but narrower in width than the lower three floors.
2. Stairways: Wood stairway in northwest wood stair tower.
3. Flooring: Built-up wood tongue and groove flooring, approximate total thickness, 4".
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls: plaster on wood lath. Ceilings: exposed slow-burning timber construction.
5. Doorways and doors: Wood frames and wood panelled doors.
6. Special decorative features, trim: None.
7. Notable hardware: None.

8. Mechanical equipment: Electric: recent (c. 1900). Heating: exposed overhead steam pipes. Plumbing: water closet tower, southeast elevation. Original power: water (334 HP); steam (300); two tubular coal fired boilers. Present power: electricity.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: The Lippitt Mill is on the west side of Main Street at the intersection of Main and Wakefield Streets, on a parcel of land bounded on the east by Main Street and on the west by the Pawtuxet River.
2. Landscaping: None.
3. Outbuildings: No. 2 Mill (southeast of Lippitt Mill). Building connecting Mills 1 and 2 and abutting Mill No. 1 (Lippitt Mill) on the southeast end. Picker House, south end of Lippitt Mill. Boiler House (SW); Store House (SW); Office Building (NW), on Main Street.

Prepared by Robert M. Vogel and
Ted Sande
National Park Service
August 30-31, 1967
July, 1971

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This building was recorded as part of the New England Textile Mill Survey I; which was sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Merrimack Valley Textile Museum. The project was assisted by the Manchester (New Hampshire) Historic Association, the Manchester Housing Authority and Mr. Francis C. Welch, President of the Essex Company of Lawrence, Massachusetts.

The field work, historic research and record drawings were done in the summer of 1967 under the direction of Robert M. Vogel (Curator of Mechanical and Civil Engineering, Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution), Project Director; Larry D. Nichols (Architect, Cornell University), Project Supervisor; Ralston H. Nagata (University of Hawaii), Architect; and Phillip J. Black (University of Oklahoma), R. Randolph Langenbach (Harvard University), Stuart E. MacDonald (University of Minnesota) and Raul G. Reyes (University of Arizona), Student Assistant Architects.

Historic documentation and editing of the project data were done in

the summer of 1971 by Ted Sande (Architect, University of Pennsylvania), under the auspices of the Historic American Engineering Record of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service.

Addendum to:

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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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