



## CHAPTER THREE: Findings of National Significance, Suitability, Feasibility, and Need for NPS Management

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## Evaluation of National Significance

In accordance with NPS Management Policies 2006 Section 1.3.1, cultural resources being considered for possible inclusion in the National Park System are evaluated by applying the National Historic Landmark (NHL) criteria contained in 36 CFR Part 65.

According to those criteria, national significance may be ascribed to various types of cultural resources, including districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture, and that possess a high degree of integrity.

NHL standards require that the resources meet at least one of the following criteria in order to be considered nationally significant:

1. are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained; or
2. are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States; or
3. represent some great idea or ideal of the American people; or
4. embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for the study of a period, style or method of construction, or that represent a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
5. are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture; or
6. have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts, and ideas to a major degree.

## Resource Evaluation

### Overview

The Blackstone River Valley is significant as the first industrial region in the United States. Extant resources within the valley convey this significance as they relate to criteria 1 and 5. These resources form a cohesive industrial district that evolved and defined the principles of the Rhode Island System of manufacture, which became a paradigm for further American industrial development. As the nation's first heavily industrialized region, the valley became the prototype for a sweeping social transformation that included a fundamental shift in the nature of work. Here, as Gary Kulik phrased it, "the cotton mills themselves became the incubators of a new discipline of work, driven by clock-time and the pace of modernity."<sup>44</sup> Collectively, the resources evaluated here convey the full scope of this pattern of industrialization and its consequences more fully than any individual site can and make it possible to understand the magnitude of industrialization and its effects on the physical and social landscape.

After evaluating a broad range of industrial sites in the Valley, seven outstanding resources have been identified because they best illustrate these nationally significant themes and possess a high level of integrity. The aggregation of these sites and districts forms a well-defined though non-contiguous industrial district. As the point of origin of the Rhode Island System of manufacture, these resources are the original and most highly developed expression of this industrial system. This is in part the result of the Blackstone River's natural drop – 430 feet over only 46 miles – which led to virtually the entire waterpower potential of the river being exploited. The Blackstone River became America's first "managed river," with 34 dams at its peak of development. Water power systems, including dams, reservoirs, and power canals developed along the Blackstone River and its tributaries, are particularly prominent at Slatersville and Whitinsville. The Blackstone Canal, which closely parallels the main stem of the river, represents a further manipulation of the natural water system. Conceived and supported largely by families prominent in the textile industry, the canal helped unify the Valley. Well-preserved segments of the canal are present in state parks in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island.<sup>45</sup>

44 "Notes on the Historical Significance of the Blackstone Valley," ([www.nps.gov/blac/parkmgmt/special-resource-study.htm](http://www.nps.gov/blac/parkmgmt/special-resource-study.htm), 1).

45 The Blackstone River and Canal State Heritage Park operated by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (MA DCR) in Uxbridge, MA and the Blackstone River State Park operated by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM) in Lincoln, RI.

The Blackstone River Valley retains an exceptional concentration of mill villages, collectively forming a cohesive and highly developed industrial landscape that illustrates this chapter in American industrial history.<sup>46</sup> In particular, the mill villages of Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale contain the manufacturing, residential, and civic infrastructure of sufficiently high quality and integrity to depict this pattern. Being among the earliest industrial centers developed in the Blackstone Valley, Old Slater Mill, Slatersville, and Ashton were linked by a tight network of financial and family connections. The mill villages of Whitinsville and Hopedale involved a different group of financial and familial interests representing the later development of the system. They illustrate how this economic model was adopted and adapted to other places within the Blackstone Valley and beyond.

One resource, Old Slater Mill, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966 and has therefore already been determined to be nationally significant. It will not be analyzed as fully in this study except in highlighting its relationship to other resources under consideration. Several resources including the Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale Historic Districts, possess historical significance and integrity and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Slatersville was found to be significant at the national level by the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Office. However, as an example of the situation recognized by NHL Criterion 5, the aggregate importance of these resources within a larger industrial district exceeds and enhances their individual value.

The Blackstone River Valley industrial heritage resources collectively meet NHL Criteria 1 and 5. This is because of their significant contribution to and outstanding representation of broad national patterns in U.S. economic and industrial history and their potential to provide an understanding and appreciation of those patterns. Collectively, they compose an entity of exceptional historical significance that illustrates the influence of Samuel Slater and the rise and evolution of the Rhode Island System of

manufacture, a dynamic force in American industrial history from 1790 to 1950.

### *Analysis*

Advances in historical understanding clearly show that there was no single, uniform Industrial Revolution. Industrialization followed several distinct paths; at least four in the U.S. alone.<sup>47</sup> One of the principal paths to the emergence of industry in the United States was distinguished by small-scale textile mills, operating on the factory system and forming detached mill villages located at previously isolated waterpower sites within a rural setting. In the early 19th century, this pattern of industrialization was represented throughout the Northeast. The textile industry was the first to which the factory system was applied in the United States. The textile mills were owned by individuals or partnerships and generally employed families initially drawn from the countryside. These distinctive features have commonly been used to define the Rhode Island System of manufacture.

Old Slater Mill (1793) in Pawtucket was the first successful water-powered cotton spinning mill in the United States. Coming on line a year before the first water-powered textile mill at Paterson, New Jersey, Old Slater Mill illustrates the birth of industrialization in America and the personal contribution of Samuel Slater who, having brought essential technology from his native England to America, is considered the father of American industrialization.

47 Walter Licht, Report of the Organization of American Historians and the National Park Service on the Blackstone River Valley Industrial Heritage Corridor," [www.nps.gov/blac/parkmgmt/special-resource-study.htm](http://www.nps.gov/blac/parkmgmt/special-resource-study.htm), 2; discussed in greater detail in his *Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1995). At least four paths toward industrialization in the United States are now evident.

1. The diversified manufacturing center: marked by small-to-medium size, family (or partnership) owned and managed enterprises, diverse product lines and work settings, specialization in processes and/or products, profiting in niche markets, reliance on skilled labor, and flexible, small-batch operations. Philadelphia is a quintessential example, but the same characteristics mark New York City (with less specialized products) and Newark and Trenton, New Jersey and smaller cities such as Albany, New York, Zanesville, Ohio, and Grand Rapids, Michigan.

2. The one-or-two industry city: marked by large-scale, corporately owned, bureaucratically managed, fully mechanized, standardized goods producing companies. This represents the big, smoke-stack industries, but concentrating on Lowell, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and Detroit misses the amount and quality of production and the technological innovations that occurred in less attention-grabbing instances and sites.

3. Industrial slavery: industrialization unfolded in the antebellum period in the South with the slave system in place, adding to the complexity of the greater story

4. The mill village: along the creeks and rivers of New England, the Middle Atlantic states and the South emerged countless mill village communities, starting with Samuel Slater's Pawtucket, Rhode Island mill in 1793. Their prevalence is notable. By the time Lowell, Massachusetts had been established in the late 1820s, more than 400 mill village communities had been created in the United States, marked by the employment of families and the clear imprint of their founders on their physical, cultural and social landscapes. The mill villages of the U.S. were not quaint, ephemeral entities. They served as sites of extraordinary technological innovation and substantial production and they endured, in some instances, far into the twentieth century to the very moment that the U.S. glaringly lost its smokestack industries.

46 The density of industrial development is one of the strongest impressions conveyed by the scholars who visited the area in February 2008 on behalf of the Organization of American Historians and the National Park Service: Alison Kim Hoagland: "No other place has such a concentration of surviving mills and villages that can so eloquently illustrate this chapter of American history;" Gary Kulik: "No other mill valley has the density of mills and mill villages, many of which remain in their original condition, others altered in ways that are themselves historically significant;" David Meyer: "The immense richness and density of sites within a distance of 45 miles between Providence and Worcester is not equaled anywhere else in the United States" (all [www.nps.gov/blac/parkmgmt/special-resource-study.htm](http://www.nps.gov/blac/parkmgmt/special-resource-study.htm)); Walter Licht: "What is remarkable to me about the corridor is the density of these villages, their interaction." (remarks at public meeting, Whitinsville, MA, Feb. 16, 2008, transcribed by Alice Darling Secretarial Services, available from Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor).

The village of Slatersville, Rhode Island (1807), founded by Samuel Slater and his brother John, is widely considered to be the first planned industrial textile community in America. It represents the stage of industrial development that would succeed the one reflected in Old Slater Mill. Slatersville's component parts and spatial organization – with housing, civic amenities, and commercial resources clustered around a factory and its intact power canal system – were duplicated throughout the Blackstone Valley and beyond. Indeed, the entire region exhibits an exceptional collection of mill villages based on the Slatersville model.

Industrialization is one of the paramount forces shaping American history. Since the early 19th century, every aspect of life has been dominated by this mighty process. The Blackstone Valley was where this vast transformation first gained a major and permanent foothold in the U.S., and the Valley contains an exceptional concentration of nationally significant historic resources. The region and its representative resources remains the best place to interpret the origin and rise of an important type of American industry.

### ***Relationship to the NPS Thematic Framework***

The Thematic Framework was adopted by the NPS in 1994 for evaluating and interpreting the role of historic sites in American history (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/thematic>). The Framework identifies eight major historic themes that encompass the full span of our nation's history. It is used in the identification of cultural resources that embody America's past and to describe and analyze the multiple layers of history encapsulated in each resource. With their aggregation of inter-related resources, the Blackstone Valley's sites and districts form a non-contiguous district composed of industrial history resources that strongly express three of the themes described in the NPS Thematic Framework: Developing the American Economy, Transforming the Environment, and Expressing Cultural Values.

#### *Developing the American Economy*

"This theme reflects the ways Americans have worked [and]...the ways they have materially sustained themselves by the processes of extraction, agriculture, production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. ...this theme encompasses the activities of farmers, workers, entrepreneurs, and managers, as well as the technology around them."

The Blackstone Valley is the birthplace of American industrialization, with the first successful water-powered textile mill in America established at Old Slater Mill in Paw-

tucket, Rhode Island, in 1790. The NHL district includes Slater Mill, the Wilkinson Mill, and the Sylvanus Brown House, which together tell the story of Samuel Slater and the beginnings of water-powered cotton spinning in America, the lives of the mill workers and their adaptation from farm to factory life, and to a lesser degree, early labor protests.

Industrial development in the Blackstone Valley operated within larger contexts, and the resources there offer compelling opportunities to interpret these contexts. One is the "cotton economy," in which the Valley obviously occupied a vital position. This overarching construct—"the major expansive force" in the economy between 1800 and 1850 in the words of historian Douglass C. North—was one of the few factors that held the North and South uneasily together. The Old Slater Mill Historic Site demonstrated the potential of this approach with its 2008 exhibit, "The Cotton Economy." The Valley's resources provide a basis for comparison and study of the textile industry's evolution, including its later migration to the American South, and serves as a starting point for the exploration of larger themes in American history. Examining this topic opens up the contentious issue of slavery and the North's role in perpetuating it. While the mill owners benefited from slavery as both consumers and suppliers, some idealistic manufacturers such as the Drapers of Hopedale strongly opposed the institution. Financial and trade issues can also be addressed, on both a national and international levels. The emergence of a vital hub of innovation in the Blackstone Valley, which helped spread technology to other industrial centers, is a topic with acute present-day relevance.

Following Slater Mill, dozens of mills were established across the Blackstone Valley, manufacturing textiles, machinery, and other products. Outstanding extant mill buildings that help tell this story are found at Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale. These factories and the housing and communal facilities associated with them illustrate the social and economic conditions in which the workers existed. The Blackstone Canal, carrying goods and materials in support of local industries from 1828-1848, was later adapted for industrial use, providing water power for mills.

These Blackstone Valley resources are well suited to convey the wide range of ideas that scholars of industrialization now address. In the initial phase of interest in industrialization, scholars emphasized technology and its physical manifestations, as well as traditional categories such as capital and labor. More recently, these fields of in-



quiry have expanded to embrace everything from the role of a vital commodity (the cotton economy) to the efforts of individual workers or families to make the most of their environment, even while living in standardized company housing.<sup>48</sup> The multiplicity of resource types reflects the many dimensions of the sweeping social and economic transformation in the wake of American industrialization and makes it possible to depict compellingly the lives of the working men and women who participated in this massive change.

### *Transforming the Environment*

This theme “examines the variable and changing relationships between people and their environment, which continuously interact. . . . The American environment today is largely a human artifact, so thoroughly has human occupation affected all its features. . . . While conservation represents a portion of this theme, the focus here is on recognizing the interplay between human activity and the environment as reflected in particular places.”

The landscape of the Blackstone Valley was transformed by industrialization, as natural resources were manipulated to provide water power and mill villages were established throughout the countryside. The Blackstone River became an engineered resource that, along with the mill ponds, reservoirs, and canal, formed a system upon which industrial activity in the Valley depended. The exploitation of the river and harnessing of water power is interpreted at Old Slater Mill Historic Site, which includes a working waterwheel. The extant sections of the Blackstone Canal also speak to this theme, as do the many ponds, reservoirs, and dams that survive in the Valley’s distinctive mill villages and which are particularly evident in Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale.

The Rhode Island System of manufacture involved the recruitment of entire families to work in the mills and the construction of housing, stores, schools, churches and other amenities to support these families. The first planned industrial textile village in America was established by John and Samuel Slater at Slatersville in 1807, and its principal characteristics were replicated in planned villages throughout the Valley. The Slater brothers and their partners transformed the Branch River, a tributary of the Blackstone River, from a free-flowing stream into an engineered power system, with dams, reservoirs, gates and raceways, and

built housing and services for their workers. This theme is illustrated by other excellent examples of mill villages—including mills, housing, and water systems—at Hopedale, Whitinsville, and Ashton.

The 19th-century landscape was shaped by pockets of industrial settlement in an agricultural region. The early industrial entrepreneurs of the Valley looked for places that possessed the resources that would support the development of a mill and its infrastructure and would allow them to secure the water rights that would enable them to impound and channel water resources for their textile operations. Many of the mill villages characteristic of the Blackstone Valley survived in their original form with little sprawl or expansion into the surrounding rural, agricultural landscape. Other villages expanded beyond their original boundaries and grew into larger urban centers such as Pawtucket and Woonsocket in Rhode Island.

### *Expressing Cultural Values*

This theme encompasses “expressions of culture—people’s beliefs about themselves and the world they inhabit,” as well as “the ways that people communicate their moral and aesthetic values.”

The mill buildings and mill villages, as well as the hill-top towns and farms of the Blackstone Valley, express the cultural and aesthetic values of their time through their architecture and landscapes. A variety of mill architecture survives in the Blackstone Valley, from the Old Slater Mill (1793 et seq.) to late 19th-century brick mills like that at Ashton. Of particular significance among the mill villages are Slatersville (described above), notable for being the first planned industrial textile village in America, and Hopedale. Settled in the 1840s as a religious commune, Hopedale grew into a major manufacturing center under the Draper family and was nationally recognized as a model company town. The street grid in the village center, with the large mill complex located at its core, architect-designed homes, and a large park designed by Warren Manning, all of which survive today, reflect both the social hierarchies and the planned, paternalistic nature of the community. The workers’ housing, mill owners’ mansions, civic amenities, and well-developed commercial center in Whitinsville are also illustrative of this theme.

The organization and design of the mill villages, and more specifically the mill housing, is a defining characteristic of the Rhode Island System of manufacture. Because Blackstone Valley mill owners sought to attract entire families to work in the mills and support the operation of the

48 See Gabrielle M. Lanier, “Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Assessment,” [www.nps.gov/blackstone/parkmgmt/special-resource-study.htm](http://www.nps.gov/blackstone/parkmgmt/special-resource-study.htm), 2.

mill villages, they created housing and community amenities that would be attractive to this workforce. The characteristic use of vernacular form for both mills and residential structures illustrates the attempt to make industrialization appear less threatening to traditional values. In their basic layout, the mill villages of the Rhode Island System display the paternalistic and hierarchical values that defined the system; worker housing typically consisted of small, multifamily dwellings as opposed to the large tenements and boarding houses found in industrial cities like Lowell. Corporate farms, like Castle Hill in Whitinsville, were also served by this family-based workforce and provided dairy products to the village.

### *Integrity*

National Historic Landmark criteria specify that a resource must retain the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historical significance. The essential physical features are those elements that define both why a resource is significant (NHL criteria and themes) and when it was significant (periods of significance). They include:

**Location** is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred. The actual location of a historic property, complemented by its setting, is particularly important in recapturing the sense of historic events and persons.

**Design** is the combination of elements that create the historic form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. This includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials. Design can also apply to districts and to the historic way in which the buildings, sites, or structures are related. Examples include spatial relationships between major features; visual rhythms in a streetscape or landscape plantings; the layout and materials of walkways and roads; and the relationship of other features, such as statues, water fountains, and archeological sites.

**Setting** is the physical environment of a historic property. It refers to the historic character of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves how, not just where, the property is situated and its historical relationship to surrounding features and open space. The physical features that constitute the historic setting of a historic property can be either natural or manmade and include such elements as topographic features, vegetation, simple manmade paths or fences, and the relationships between buildings and other features or open spaces.

**Materials** are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. If the property has been rehabilitated, the historic materials and significant features must have been preserved. The property must also be an actual historic resource, not a re-creation.

**Workmanship** is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. It may be expressed in vernacular methods of construction and plain finishes or in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. Examples of workmanship in historic buildings include tooling, carving, painting, graining, turning, and joinery.

**Feeling** is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. For example, a rural historic district that retains its original design, materials, workmanship, and setting will relate the feeling of agricultural life in an earlier period.

**Association** is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Therefore, a property where a nationally significant person carried out the action or work for which they are nationally significant is preferable to the place where they returned to only sleep, eat, or spend their leisure time. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character.

Any productive or extractive industrial facility or transportation system, if successful, changes over time to meet new needs or employ advancing technology. The Blackstone River Valley was an active industrial region for approximately 150 years, and during much of that time it was being expanded and improved. The Blackstone River Valley resources under consideration in this evaluation display the cumulative evidence of its manufacturing history, with structures of various periods co-existing – from the earliest days of industry to late-period resources. Of over 20 mill villages evaluated in the Blackstone Valley, four retain the most completeness in terms of overall physical features

to convey their significance. The mill villages of Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale all show this incremental, fundamentally conservative layering, often set against a backdrop of an enduring rural landscape. Even at Old Slater Mill, the birthplace of American industry, the earliest structure is embedded within later additions. The Blackstone Canal is an example of a resource that has retained much of the physical evidence of its period of operation, but its short lifespan is not typical of the industries that defined the region's character.

These representative Blackstone River Valley resources have overall integrity as a highly developed industrial district. A visitor readily comprehends the industrial character that defined the Blackstone Valley for almost 150 years. These villages contain a great diversity of factory and residential buildings that illustrate the development and impact of the Rhode Island System of manufacture, as described in the Historical Overview.

The mill village communities that defined the Blackstone River Valley and gave physical expression to the Rhode Island System survive to a remarkable degree and generally display their original spatial arrangement and inherent social stratification. In terms of *integrity of location*, the villages of Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale remain in their original locations with little disruption of historic points of access, internal circulation, or the spatial relationship among contributing features within each village. The historic relationship between the Blackstone River and its tributaries, the Blackstone Canal, and the Blackstone River Valley's primary industrial sites is readily visible in many locations. Integrity of location is further supported by the fact that, with a few distinct exceptions, the majority of physical resources remain in their original location. Notable exceptions include the John Slater House in Slatersville, moved to its present location in 1844, and the Mechanics Shop (also referred to as the "Little Red Shop"), which was relocated by the Draper Corporation to town parkland in Hopedale in 1950.

The element of *design integrity* is particularly well addressed in the mill villages of Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale. As described above, they remain remarkably intact compared to other village sites throughout the region. The relationship between the early reliance on water power and the design and location of industrial buildings is particularly evident at sites like Old Slater Mill and in the villages of Slatersville, Whitinsville, and Hopedale, where the early mill buildings are situated immediately adjacent to the river. Regardless of when each of these com-

munities emerged as a fully developed mill village, they all display their fundamental organizing principles. At the core of each of these villages is the mill complex, which is centrally located and dominates the landscape. Each village also includes a cluster of commercial buildings (primarily banks and shops) and civic buildings (schools, libraries, gymnasiums, etc.), most of which were constructed and maintained by the mill corporation. In Whitinsville, the town hall was constructed by the Whitin family. Less evident is local infrastructure like water and power, which also was often developed and provided by a community's industrial benefactors. This was particularly the case in Whitinsville and Hopedale. Finally, the variety of the design and location of housing in each village reflects the hierarchy of housing, the design and location of which is reflective of the employment status among the inhabitants.

Overall the *setting* of many of the mill villages has experienced only a modest degree of change. Though there have been some modern intrusions on the outskirts of these villages, by and large, they would still be recognized by their 19th-century residents. The presence of the reservoir and power canal systems in each of these villages offers a powerful illustration of the integrity of their setting. In general, the reservoirs and dams have changed little over time and continue to serve the community as recreational amenities. The Blackstone River and its tributaries and Blackstone Canal continue to form the spine of the Valley and provide an important organizing element for the distribution of these industrial heritage resources. Old Slater Mill and Ashton are immediately associated with the river, canal, or a combination of the two. Slatersville, Whitinsville, and Hopedale are each located on Blackstone tributaries – the Branch, Mumford, and Mill Rivers, respectively. While the agricultural land and open spaces that once dominated the larger landscape have been diminished by suburban development, the industrial landscape across the Blackstone Valley remains evident. The villages under consideration in this analysis are the best, though not the only, remaining examples of this once-robust industrial landscape. The remnant mill villages that dot the valley contribute to the larger setting of the subject villages.

In each of the mill villages under consideration, original *materials* continue to be evident and are a dominant feature of each site (e.g., the clapboard housing and stone mills at Slatersville or the bricks of Ashton). With rare exceptions, few structures have been affected by the application of asbestos or vinyl siding or the addition of modern commercial facades. Many of the structures and landscape

features under consideration here possess great integrity of workmanship. Much of the simply constructed industrial, residential, and commercial architecture in each of these villages demonstrates the skills of area craftspeople at the time of construction and the building technologies of the period. Several intact sections of the Blackstone Canal in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and its remaining locks, highlight the work of the laborers and engineers responsible for its construction. In Hopedale and Whitinsville, examples of more elaborate workmanship are evident in the many architect-designed civic structures, parks, mill owner housing, and late-period housing developed to attract and retain skilled laborers. The design and construction of numerous dams and raceways, particularly evident in Slatersville and Hopedale, also provide evidence of integrity of workmanship.

In many locations the sense or *feeling* of the industrial village as an isolated, self-contained place is retained. Although some previously open space has given way to development, the preponderance of resources continue to retain their integrity in terms of design, materials, and workmanship in the mill villages of Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale and permit an observer to understand and appreciate the historic character and value of these resources. Segments of the Blackstone River also possess values that conjure up this historic sense of a particular time, especially at points where it has been dammed, passes through existing developed areas such as Old Slater Mill in Pawtucket and Ashton, or through urban centers like Pawtucket and Woonsocket. Likewise, the Blackstone Canal offers similar opportunities, particularly where restoration efforts have already been underway and/or the tow path has been well preserved.

Figures 7 through 12 illustrate the historic integrity of these mill villages. Figures 7 and 8 depict Slatersville. Likewise in comparing Figures 9 and 10 of Ashton and Figures 11 and 12 of Whitinsville, the relationships among and the overall character of the built environment including the various types of structures, roads and waterways, parks and other landscape features remain remarkably intact.

### **Conclusion – Finding of National Significance**

Industrialization is one of the paramount forces shaping American history. Since the early 19th century, every aspect of life has been dominated by this mighty process. The Blackstone River Valley was where this vast transformation first gained a major and permanent foothold in the U.S., and the Valley contains an exceptional concentration

of historic resources that convey this national significance as they relate to criteria 1 and 5.

The region, with its representative resources, remains the best place to interpret the origin and rise of an important type of American industry. These resources form a cohesive industrial district that evolved and defined the principles of the Rhode Island System of manufacture, which became a paradigm for further American industrial development. As the nation's first heavily industrialized region, the valley became the prototype for a sweeping social transformation that included a fundamental shift in the nature of work. The multiplicity of resource types found in the Blackstone Valley reflects the many dimensions of the sweeping social and economic transformation that came in the wake of American industrialization and makes it possible to compellingly depict the lives of the working men and women who participated in this massive change.

Collectively, the Blackstone River and its tributaries, the Blackstone Canal, Old Slater Mill, and the villages of Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale convey the full scope of this pattern of industrialization and its consequences more fully than any individual site could, making it possible to understand the magnitude of industrialization and its effects on the physical and social landscape.

The landscape of the Blackstone Valley was transformed by industrialization, as natural resources were manipulated to provide water power, and mill villages were established throughout the countryside. The Blackstone River became an engineered resource that, along with the mill ponds, reservoirs, and canal, formed a system upon which industrial activity in the Valley depended. The extant sections of the Blackstone Canal also exemplify the substantial influence of the Rhode Island System of manufacture over the valley landscape. The exploitation of the river and harnessing of water power are clearly illustrated at Old Slater Mill Historic Site and by the many ponds, reservoirs and dams that survive in the Valley's distinctive mill villages; these themes are particularly evident in the villages of Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale.

The four mill villages also retain the manufacturing, residential, and civic infrastructure of high quality and integrity necessary to depict this pattern of history. The organization and design of the mill villages, and more specifically the mill housing, is a specific manifestation of the Rhode Island System of manufacture. With their emphasis on total family employment, Blackstone River Valley mill owners



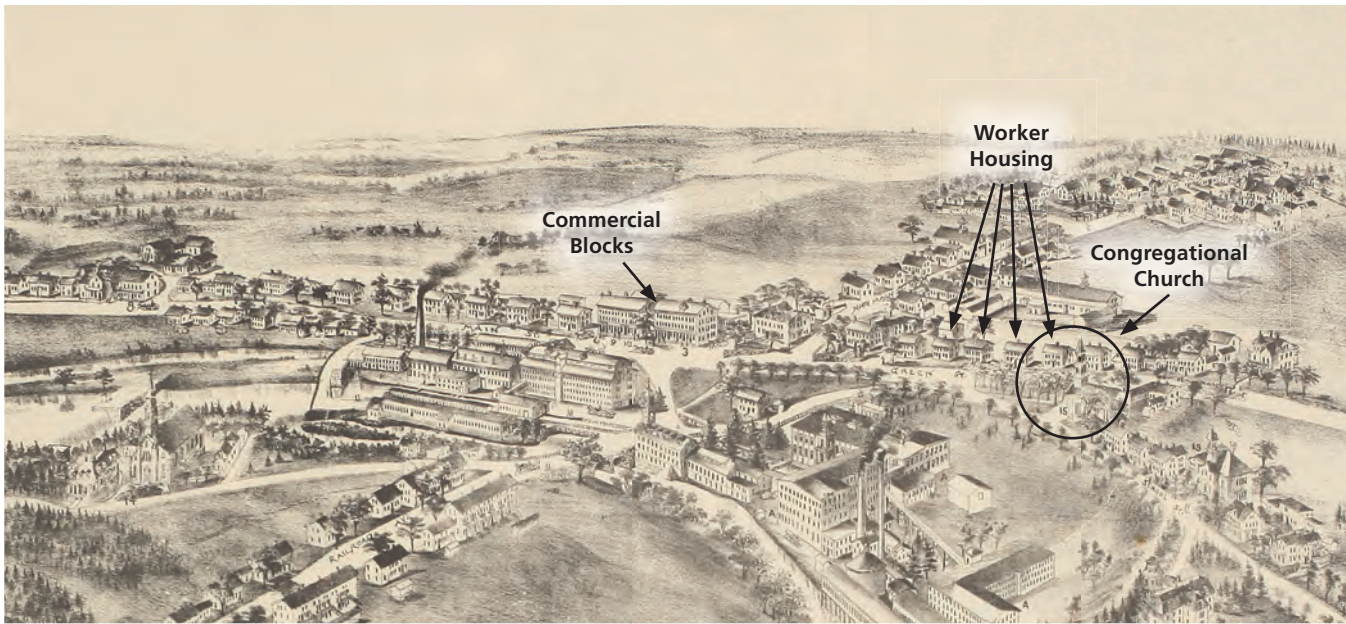


Figure 7: Slatersville, RI 1895 Bird's Eye View.



Figure 8: Slatersville, RI 2009 Aerial View. Source: Bing.com.

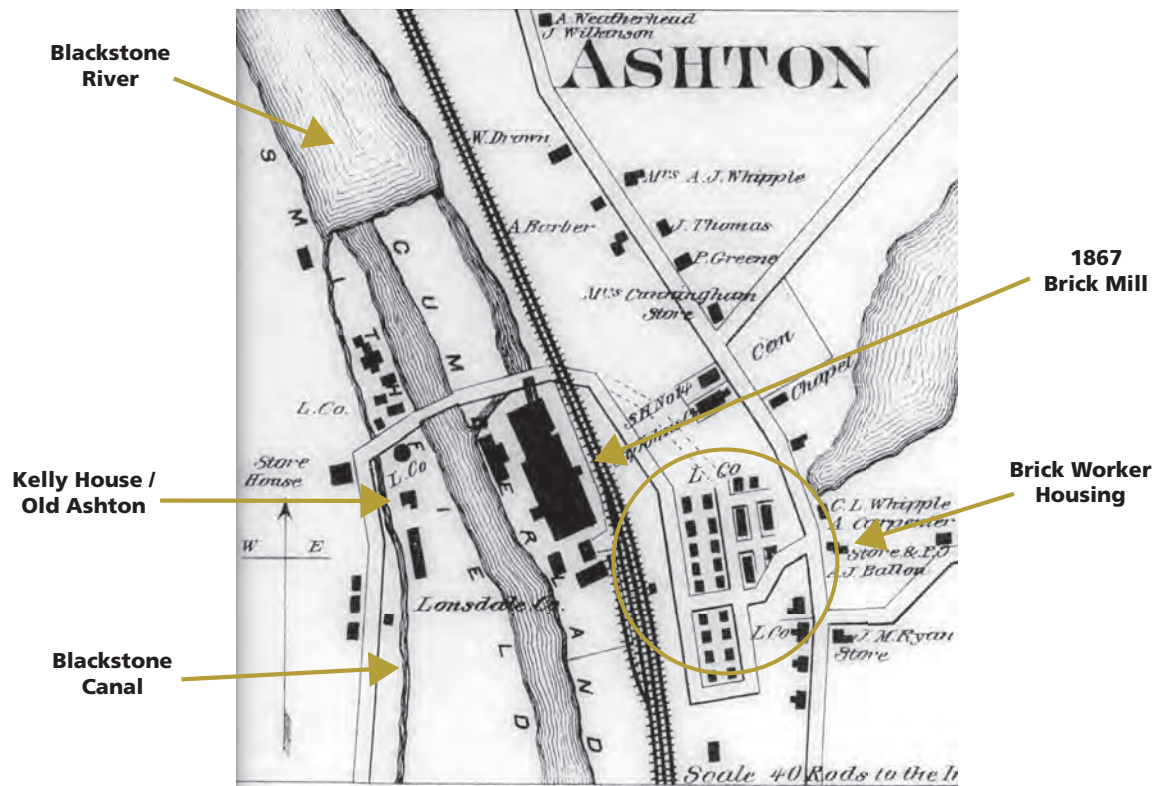


Figure 9: Ashton Village Circa 1870.



Figure 10: Ashton Village 2009 Aerial View. Source: Bing.com.



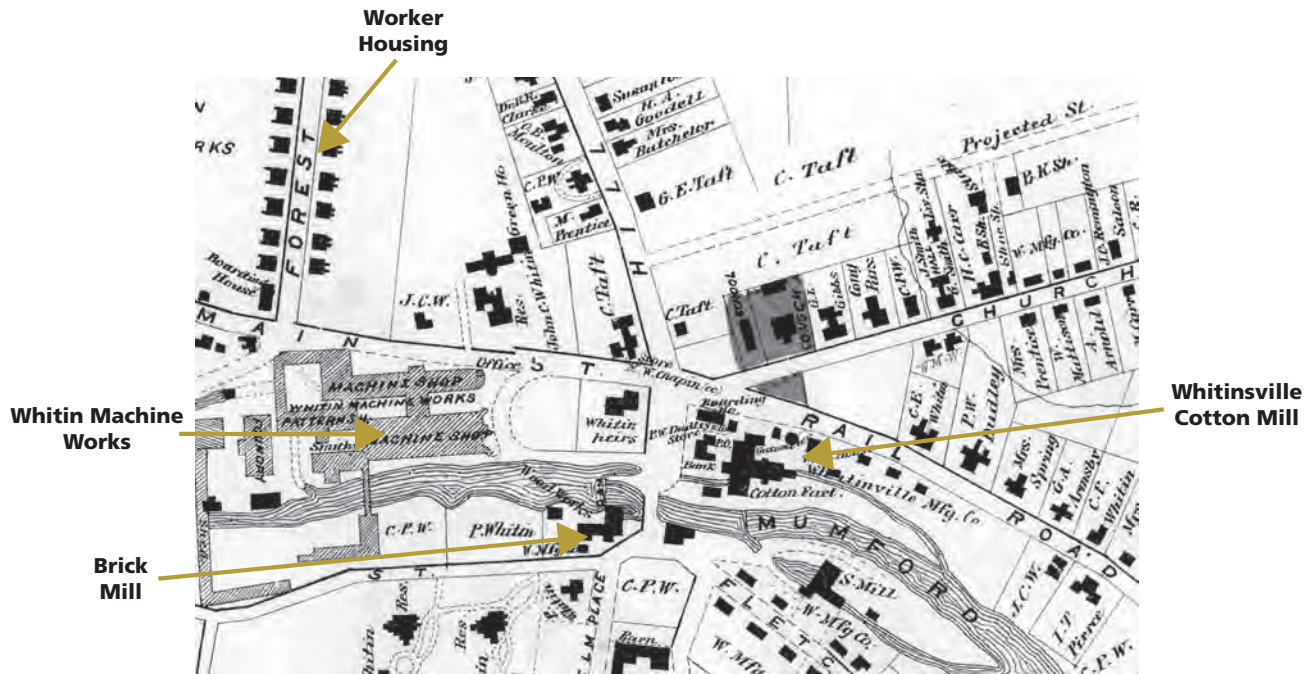


Figure 11: Village of Whitinsville, MA Circa 1880.



Figure 12: Village of Whitinsville, MA 2009 Aerial View. Source: Google Maps.

created housing and community amenities that would be attractive to such a workforce.

In conclusion, the Blackstone River Valley industrial heritage resources cited above collectively meet NHL Criteria 1 and 5, based on their significant contribution to and outstanding representation of broad national patterns in U.S. economic and industrial history and their potential to provide for an understanding and appreciation of those patterns. Collectively, they compose an entity of exceptional historical significance that illustrates the influence of Samuel Slater and the rise and evolution of the Rhode Island System of manufacture, a dynamic force in American industrial history from 1790 to 1950. These representative Blackstone River Valley resources have overall integrity as a highly developed industrial district in terms of their location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; a visitor readily comprehends the industrial character that defined the Blackstone River Valley for roughly 150 years.

In June 2009 the Significance Statement was submitted to the NPS Washington History Program Office for its review and concurrence. After a July 2009 site visit to tour the resources under consideration, the review was completed, and a letter dated August 4, 2009 indicated the Program Office's concurrence with a finding of National Significance, summarized as follows:

One National Historic Landmark, six National Register Historic Districts, and the Blackstone River and its tributaries within the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor meet the National Historic Landmark criteria. This conclusion is based on : 1) the important association of the property with the development of industrialization and 2) the high degree of integrity that allows for the property's national significance to be conveyed.

A copy of the NPS Washington History Program Office letter can be found in Appendix B.

## Suitability Analysis

NPS Management Policies 2006 state that an area is considered suitable for addition to the National Park System if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the National Park System, or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector. It is important to

note that the suitability analysis is not limited to whether resources are represented in the system, but extends the analysis to similar resources protected by other public entities and the private sector. Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis, by comparing the potential area to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. The comparative analysis also addresses the rarity of the resources and their interpretive and educational potential. The comparison yields a determination of whether the proposed new area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource-protection or visitor-use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas.

### ***Blackstone River Valley – Cultural Resources***

As was the case in evaluating national significance, in considering the suitability of cultural resources within or outside the NPS, the “Thematic Framework” is used to evaluate history and prehistory. The three thematic concepts applicable to the Blackstone River Valley as expressed in the Statement of Significance are *Developing the American Economy*, *Transforming the Environment*, and *Expressing Cultural Values*.

#### *Developing the American Economy*

This theme reflects the ways Americans have worked, including slavery, servitude, and non-wage, as well as paid labor. It also reflects the ways Americans have materially sustained themselves by the processes of extraction, agriculture, production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Topics that help define this theme include extraction and production, distribution and consumption, industrial towns, labor organizations and protests, exchange and trade, and economic theory. This theme is applicable to historic industrial districts such as the Blackstone River Valley and specifically to the mill villages.

There were several different models of American industrialization, and the resources of the Blackstone River Valley represent the Rhode Island System of manufacture, one of the most important and distinctive of these models. The particular area of significance for the Blackstone River Valley is production, as expressed in the Rhode Island System of manufacture of textiles and support industries in a cohesive, intensely developed area. The Rhode Island System was distinguished by small mills operating on the factory system and forming detached mill villages located at previously isolated water power sites within a rural setting.



The textile mills were owned by individuals or partnerships and generally employed families initially drawn from the countryside.

Units of the National Park System that reflect the theme of *Developing the American Economy* in the area of industry and that are comparable to similar resources of the Blackstone River Valley include:

1. **Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park, New Jersey** (authorized) – Paterson Great Falls offers an example of another distinct model of industrialization. Created by Alexander Hamilton and others to move the United States toward further economic independence from England, it is representative of privately financed and planned industrial development. Located in Paterson, New Jersey, the Great Falls of the Passaic are part of a National Historic Landmark (NHL) district and as the Great Falls of Paterson/ Garrett Mountain are also a designated National Natural Landmark (NNL). At the Great Falls, Alexander Hamilton implemented a plan to harness the force of water to power the new industries that he hoped would secure the new nation's economic independence by means of a new, publicly sanctioned, corporate structure: the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures (S.U.M). Although the initial vision enjoyed only limited success, Paterson later became a center for the manufacture of textiles, silk fabrics, railroad engines, paper, sail cloth, and hemp, among other products.
2. **Lowell National Historical Park, Massachusetts** – Lowell offers another distinct model of industrialization: the large-scale, corporate, vertically integrated system of manufacture. While it originated as a center for textile manufacturing, Lowell became the focus of many other industrial pursuits, among them machinery firms established to meet the demands of textile manufacturers throughout New England and steam locomotives for the region's expanding rail network. Other textile-related firms manufactured and distributed a broad array of mill fixtures, tools, and textile machine parts.
3. **Springfield Armory National Historic Site, Harpers Ferry National Historic Site, and Charlestown Navy Yard at Boston National Historical Park** – These three examples represent still another distinct model of industrialization: federally supported and funded industry limited to production for national defense. Springfield Armory was founded in 1794 and developed and

produced firearms for the military until 1968. It was responsible for many innovations in arms design and production in the realm of interchangeable parts and precision manufacturing. The United States Armory and Arsenal was established at Harpers Ferry in 1799 and transformed the location from a remote village into an industrial center. In this setting, inventor John H. Hall pioneered interchangeable firearms manufacture from 1820 to 1840 and helped lead the change from craft-based production to manufacture by machine.

The Charlestown Navy Yard at Boston National Historical Park was established in 1800 by the U.S. government and served as a ship-building and repair center until 1974. The men and women of its workforce built more than 200 warships and maintained and repaired thousands. From its inception the yard was in the forefront of shipyard technology, from building the Navy's only ropewalk, supplying the Navy with most of its rope supplies, to becoming a center of missile and electronics conversions.

4. **Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Pennsylvania** – Hopewell, an iron "plantation," or a facility that produced lower-grade ("pig") iron, presents another distinct model of early industrialization. Operating from 1771-1883, it represents the relatively isolated, self-sufficient village established to conduct extractive industry.
5. **Edison National Historic Site, New Jersey** – Edison NHS is an example of a research and development facility designed to create products that could be profitably manufactured or licensed. For more than 40 years, the inventions developed at Thomas Alva Edison's laboratory had enormous impact on the lives of millions of people worldwide.

Sites outside the National Park System that express the theme of *Developing the American Economy* in the area of industry and which are comparable to similar resources in the Blackstone River Valley include:

1. **Old Slater Mill Historic Site and Museum, Pawtucket, Rhode Island** – Old Slater Mill is the earliest example of a textile mill within the larger landscape of the model of industrialization known as the Rhode Island System of manufacture. An NHL, the Old Slater Mill complex includes the Old Slater Mill, Wilkinson Mill, and Sylvanus Brown House, which together describe the influence of Samuel Slater and the advent of American industrialization. The property is owned by the Old Slater Mill

Association and is operated as a museum that is regularly open to the public.

2. **Hagley Museum and Library/Eleutherian Mills, Delaware** – The Hagley Museum/Eleutherian Mills is another example of early industrialization. This National Historic Landmark is the site of the 1802 works that revolutionized gunpowder manufacturing and grew into the E.I. DuPont Company, a leader in several branches of industry. The NHL boundary includes DuPont’s residence, offices, mills, and structures for workers. The museum is open to the public and offers tours and educational programs.
3. **Harrisville Historic District, New Hampshire** – A center for the manufacture of woolen goods beginning in 1789, and now a NHL, Harrisville’s mills, stores, boarding houses, dwellings, and churches depict the life of an early 19th-century New England mill town. Many facets of the mill town’s form and organization may be attributed to the influence of the Rhode Island System of manufacture during this period. Historic Harrisville is a primary property holder in the district and owner of the Cheshire Mills, a key contributing complex within the district. There are no public programs in the district, and the goal of Historic Harrisville, Inc. is to maintain the “essential character of a small, quiet, relatively isolated village where real people live and work.”
4. **Boston Manufacturing Company, Massachusetts** – A National Historic Landmark in Waltham Massachusetts, this manufacturing complex, begun in 1813, gave its name to the “Waltham System,” an alternative model to the “Rhode Island System” exemplified in the Blackstone Valley. A model that attained a fuller development at Lowell, the Waltham System is characterized by a single, large, heavily capitalized, vertically integrated system of manufacture. The Charles River Museum of Industry uses the structures for exhibits and visitor programs. The museum is currently closed due to the spring 2010 floods.
5. **Cheney Brothers Historic District, Connecticut** – A National Historic Landmark, this 175-acre milling community in South Manchester, Connecticut commemorates and interprets the Cheney family’s silk-manufacturing enterprises. With over 200 mill buildings, worker houses, churches, schools, and the Cheney family mansion, this is a well-preserved example of a 19th- to early 20th-century paternalistic mill town devoted to a single industry. Established originally in 1838, Cheney Brothers became the single largest and most profitable

silk producer in the nation by the late 1880s. The Manchester Historical Society provides multiple educational and interpretive opportunities within the resources of the district, including access to Cheney company resources such as Cheney Hall, the Cheney Homestead, company firehouse, the Old Manchester Museum located in the former Cheney School, and the Manchester History Center located in the former Cheney Machine Shop.

6. **Coltsville Historic District, Connecticut** – Like Cheney Brothers, Coltsville is a paternalistic, planned manufacturing community concentrating on a single industry, in this case the manufacture of firearms. Coltsville was an extensive manufacturing complex established in 1855 by Samuel Colt as the location of the Colt Firearms Company. An NHL in Hartford, Connecticut, the Coltsville Historic District includes Armsmear, the home of Samuel and Elizabeth Colt. The site was the subject of a Special Resource Study conducted by the NPS to determine whether it met the criteria for designation as a unit of the National Park System. Coltsville was found to meet the criteria for national significance and suitability but did not meet the criteria for feasibility or the need for NPS management.

### *Transforming the Environment*

This theme “examines the variable and changing relationships between people and their environment, which continuously interact... The American environment today is largely a human artifact, so thoroughly has human occupation affected its features... While conservation represents a portion of this theme, the focus here is on recognizing the interplay between human activity and the environment as reflected in particular places.” Topics that help define this theme are: manipulating the environment and its resources; adverse consequences and stresses on the environment; and protecting and preserving the environment. The particular area of significance for the Blackstone River Valley is manipulating the environment and its resources, as evidenced in the exploitation of the river and surrounding landscape for the furtherance of industry, throughout the length of the Blackstone River and its tributaries. While the other topics defined by this theme are evident in the Blackstone, this is the topic most closely reflected in the statement of significance.

Units of the National Park System that reflect the theme of *Transforming the Environment* in the area of manipulat-

ing the environment and its resources, specifically related to water power, include:

1. **Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park, New Jersey** (authorized) – Located in Paterson, New Jersey, the Great Falls of the Passaic are included within an NHL district and have been designated an NNL under the name Great Falls of Paterson/Garrett Mountain. At the Great Falls, Alexander Hamilton implemented a plan to harness the force of water to power the new industries that he hoped would secure U.S. economic independence. Paterson became a center for the manufacture of textiles, silk, railroad engines, paper, sail cloth, and hemp, among other products.
2. **Lowell Locks and Canals District, Lowell, Massachusetts** – According to the 1977 National Historic Landmark nomination, “the Locks and Canals District encompasses all of the canals in the city of Lowell, their associated locks, and the mills that were powered by the canals. This canal system led to the supremacy of Lowell as the cotton textile manufacturing center of the United States, and contributed to the evolution of the first major American industrial city. The District contains virtually unaltered waterways, mills and machinery.”
3. **Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, West Virginia** - George Washington chose Harpers Ferry for a new national armory in 1794 because, he claimed, it possessed an “inexhaustible supply of water.” The park offers a place to explore the legacy of waterpower in America. Cradled between the free-flowing and often unpredictable waters of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, Harpers Ferry demonstrates the important relationship between nature and man’s early industrial activities.
4. **Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, Massachusetts** – According to the park’s website, Saugus Iron Works was “the first successfully integrated manufacturing facility for the production of cast and wrought iron in North America. The historic structures of the Iron Works are nestled along the banks of the Saugus River, an important natural resource for newly settled families and workers to the area during the 17th century.” The iron works began production in 1645. The Saugus River provided a means of transportation and waterpower. A canal fed water from a dam upstream into sluiceways leading to each building.

Sites of national significance outside the National Park System that reflect the theme of *Transforming the Environment*, specifically related to water power, include:

1. **Augusta Canal National Heritage Area and Historic Augusta Canal and Industrial District NHL, Georgia** – Located on the Savannah River, Augusta Canal is the nation’s only industrial power canal still in use for its original purpose. Native Augustan Henry H. Cumming built the Augusta Canal in 1845, intending that Augusta could one day become “the Lowell of the South.” By 1847 the first two of many factories that would eventually line the canal were built; a saw and grist mill and the Augusta Factory.
2. **Lightfoot Mill, Pennsylvania** – A National Historic Landmark located in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, “Lightfoot Mill represents an extremely rare archetypal example of a small, 18th century custom grain mill with an intact power transmission system. Surveys suggest that no other custom mills in the United States survive from this period with intact machinery. The basic technology of this mill dates from the mid-18th century, adapted to make use of several of the automating inventions of the famous American inventor, Oliver Evans, which were appended to the original works. The milling system functions today much as it did in the mid-18th century.”<sup>49</sup>
3. **Columbus Historic Riverfront Industrial District, Georgia** – An NHL in Columbus, Georgia, “dating from 1844 to 1900, this area physically documents the evolution of hydrotechnology and its contributions to the growth of an important southern textile center. Here is the best surviving concentration of 19th and early 20th century hydro-mechanical and -electrical engineering systems in the South.”<sup>50</sup>

### *Expressing Cultural Values*

This theme encompasses expressions of culture: people’s beliefs about themselves and the world they inhabit, as well as the way that people communicate their moral and aesthetic values. Topics that help define this theme include: educational and intellectual currents; visual and performing arts; literature; mass media; architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design; and popular and traditional culture. The particular area of consideration for the Blackstone River Valley is architecture. As expressed in the sig-

49 National Historic Landmark Program website.

50 National Historic Landmark Program website.

nificance statement, the mill buildings and mill villages, as well as the hilltop towns and farms of the Blackstone Valley, express the cultural and aesthetic values of their time through their architecture and landscapes.

Similar to the Blackstone River Valley, the following sites and districts embody the cultural and aesthetic values of their time through their architecture and their landscape. In addition to their respective time periods, they also differ in the reflection of each area's social or industrial purpose. Units of the National Park System that reflect the theme of *Expressing Cultural Values* in the area of architecture specific to industrialization include:

1. **Lowell National Historical Park, Massachusetts** – Lowell interprets a major alternate model of industrialization. The story of female labor and living conditions is told at the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center, located in a Boott Mill boardinghouse. The practice of employing single female workers in group housing is one of the defining points of difference that distinguishes Lowell from the Rhode Island System of manufacture, which preferred to employ family units.
2. **Keweenaw National Historical Park, Michigan** – Keweenaw, significant for its copper mining history, consists of two units located 12 miles apart. In addition, 19 official Keweenaw Heritage Site partners are located within and beyond park boundaries. The resources center on the mines and include company-planned aspects of the mining community. The park's enabling legislation notes that "the corporate-sponsored community planning in Calumet, Michigan, as evidenced in the architecture, municipal design, surnames, foods, and traditions, and the large scale corporate paternalism was unprecedented in American industry and continues to express the heritage of the district." The planned, paternalistic aspects in some ways resemble the mill villages of the Blackstone Valley, but Keweenaw was a later, isolated community, built on a larger scale and devoted to an extractive industry.
3. **Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Alaska** – This National Park includes the Kennecott Mill Town, the center of copper operations from 1901 through 1938. Like Keweenaw, the Kennecott NHL district was a self-contained company town that included a hospital, store, school, skating rink, tennis court, recreation hall, and dairy.

Sites outside the National Park System that reflect the theme of *Expressing Cultural Values* and relate to similar resources of the Blackstone River Valley include:

1. **Harrisville Historic District, New Hampshire** – A center for the manufacture of woolen goods beginning in 1789, and now a NHL, Harrisville's mills, stores, boarding houses, dwellings, and churches depict the life of an early 19th-century New England mill town. Historic Harrisville is a primary property holder in the district and owner of the Cheshire Mills, a key contributing complex within the district. There are no public programs in the district; and among the goals articulated on its website, Historic Harrisville, Inc. describes itself as maintaining the "essential character of a small, quiet, relatively isolated village where real people live and work."
2. **Pullman Historic District, Illinois** – A National Historic Landmark located in Chicago, Pullman was constructed between 1880 and 1884 for George M. Pullman (1831-1897), an engineer and industrialist. The Pullman Company made sleeping cars for the railroads. Pullman was a completely planned model industrial town intended to provide, on a thoroughly paternalistic basis, a dramatic and pioneering departure from the unsanitary, over-crowded, makeshift living conditions found in working-class districts in other 19th-century industrial environments.
3. **Old Salem Historic District, North Carolina** – An NHL in Winston, Old Salem is a restored example of an 18th-century theocratic planned community, established by Moravians in 1766. A governing board of church officials controlled the lands, plan, buildings, and industries. The planned industrial town was built in 1880 and designed by architect Solon Beman and landscape architect Nathan Barrett. There is a Visitor Center, and interpretive tours are conducted.
4. **Cheney Brothers Historic District, Connecticut** – An NHL, this 175-acre milling community in South Manchester commemorates and interprets the Cheney family's silk manufacturing enterprises. Established originally in 1838, Cheney Brothers became the single largest and most profitable silk producer in the nation by the late 1880s. With over 200 mill buildings, worker houses, churches, schools, and the Cheney family mansion, this is an excellently preserved example of a 19th- to early 20th-century paternalistic mill town devoted to a single industry.



### 5. National Coal Heritage Area, West Virginia –

Located in West Virginia, National Coal Heritage Area interprets the history of the coal industry. Due to the isolated locations of coal mines, it was necessary for coal companies to build towns and houses for their miners throughout the region. By 1922, nearly 80 percent of West Virginia miners lived in company houses.

### Conclusion – Finding of Suitability

As noted in the significance statement, no single, uniform process transformed the nation into a major industrial power. The course of industrialization varied by region, time period, and industry. Several distinct pathways to industrialization have been identified and, as a result, no one site can convey the full extent and complexity of American industrialization.

The sites described above represent various models of industrialization that emerged in response to different industrial requirements, types and availability of capital investment, ownership and management structure, and the nature of the labor force. While some closely parallel or reflect the Blackstone River Valley's experience, they all differ from it in some way. As a result these places complement, rather than compete with, the Blackstone River Valley in possessing resources that convey the complex story of the nation's industrial development. This is true across all three thematic areas – *Developing the American Economy*, *Transforming the Environment*, and *Expressing Cultural Values*.

Based on the analysis of comparable resources and interpretation already represented in units of the National Park System, or protected and interpreted by others, this study concludes that the resources of the Blackstone River Valley depict a distinctive and important aspect of American history that is not adequately represented or protected elsewhere and are therefore suitable for inclusion in the National Park System.

## Feasibility Analysis

Areas found suitable for potential designation as units of the National Park System are subject to a feasibility evaluation, which determines among other factors whether long-term resource protection can be assured and visitors accommodated. Factors used to examine feasibility include size and configuration; landownership; access; threats to the resource; and public support.

### Size and Configuration

The Blackstone River forms the natural spine of the Blackstone River Valley and is the source of the region's physical and historical identity. In its 46-mile journey from its headwaters in Worcester to its outlet on Narragansett Bay in Providence, the river meanders past quiet, wooded landscapes, courses through once-bustling mill villages, and is channeled through intensely developed urban centers. The Blackstone River is joined by four major tributaries (the Branch, Mumford, Quinsigamond, and West) along with many smaller branches, forming a watershed that encompasses 500 square miles and supports over 1,300 acres of ponds, lakes and reservoirs. Seventeen of the original 34 dams on the Blackstone River remain intact. Likewise, numerous historic dams and impoundments remain on its tributaries, including sites in Slatersville, Whitinsville, and Hopedale.

The Blackstone Canal largely runs parallel to the Blackstone River from Providence to Worcester. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) owns and manages a three-mile segment of the canal, located to the west of the river, and approximately 150 acres of land on either side of the canal trench, as part of Blackstone River State Park. In Massachusetts a four-mile segment of the canal including the tow path trail and three water-control structures are maintained by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (MA DCR) at the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park in the towns of Uxbridge and Northbridge. Within the state park, MA DCR also owns remnants of 2 locks and a canal landing.

Old Slater Mill and the four mill villages that form the core of historic resources in this analysis are non-contiguous and are located throughout the Blackstone Valley. Old Slater Mill and Ashton immediately adjoin the Blackstone River, with Ashton also being near a restored segment of the Blackstone Canal. Slatersville, Whitinsville, and Hopedale are all located along tributaries of the Blackstone River (the Branch River, the Mumford River, and the Mill River, respectively).

Likewise, a number of pre-existing gateway visitor centers are also located throughout the Valley. The Blackstone Valley Visitor Center is located in Pawtucket, Rhode Island immediately across the street from Old Slater Mill. Blackstone River State Park adjoins historic Ashton village in Lincoln, Rhode Island and is the location of the Captain Wilbur Kelly House, which offers visitor information and exhibits. In downtown Woonsocket, Rhode Island,

the Museum of Work and Culture offers visitor information and exhibits. In Massachusetts, River Bend Farm at the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, and the proposed Worcester Visitor Center currently do or will offer visitor information and exhibits. The facilities at Pawtucket, Blackstone River State Park, Woonsocket, and Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park are all located along the Blackstone River. A Blackstone River Bikeway has been under development for several years and will eventually parallel the entire length of the Blackstone River and canal to link Worcester and Providence. Some segments of the bikeway have been completed, particularly in Rhode Island, and offer links to these visitor service facilities and historic sites.

The mileage chart (Figure 13) describes the distances between the various historic and visitor services resources. The single longest distance exists between resources located in Pawtucket, Rhode Island and Worcester, Massachusetts – approximately 41 miles.

Old Slater Mill Historic Site NHL includes three buildings on the west bank of the Blackstone River in downtown Pawtucket: Old Slater Mill, Wilkinson Mill, and the Sylvanus Brown House. The approximately 4.2-acre site also encompasses an open-space parcel on the opposite side of the river, two dams, and a parking area. The configuration of the property is compact and well-contained within a single city block bounded by the Blackstone River, Roosevelt Avenue, Main Street, and Leather Avenue.

The Slatersville Historic District (North Smithfield, RI) encompasses an approximately 130-acre area that radiates from the intersection of Main Street, North Main Street, Green Street, and Church Street. The boundaries of the district are defined largely by parcel/lot lines. A variety of building types are located at the center or hub of the district, including the mill complex, a reservoir, religious, commercial and civic buildings, and a limited number of residences. As one moves to the edges of the district, the predominant building type is residential. Within one of the management options proposed in Chapter Four, local communities would be encouraged to create local historic districts to better protect the most essential, character-defining resources in the historic district. The proposed local historic districts would not necessarily have to follow the existing configuration of the National Register District boundary, and the lines could be more tightly drawn, as was the case

when North Smithfield's Town Council approved a Local Historic District within the village of Slatersville.

The Ashton Village Historic District (Cumberland, RI) encompasses an approximately 61-acre area, divided between the "lower village" and the "upper village." The lower village occupies land on the east bank of the Blackstone River and includes the mill complex, brick workers' housing, a dam, and a rail line. The upper village is organized along a roughly half-mile segment of Mendon Road (Route 122) and a portion of Scott Road and is situated at a dramatically higher elevation, overlooking the river. Religious, commercial, and civic buildings as well as additional worker residences characterize the upper village. Like Slatersville, the district boundaries largely follow parcel/lot lines, though the boundaries of this district are somewhat more compact. The Ashton Village Historic District has been designated a local historic district in the town of Cumberland.

The Whitinsville Historic District (Northbridge, MA) encompasses about 250 acres and approximately 350 structures built over the course of a century. The District is wide-ranging, with components on both sides of the Mumford River. At its core, where Hill Street, Main Street, Douglas Street, Linwood Street, and Church Street converge, are the three mill complexes, religious, civic, and commercial institutions including parks, libraries, and schools. As the district radiates out from the core, residential neighborhoods representing different economic strata within the community and periods of development are evident. The district also encompasses dams and reservoirs that were developed to power the village's industry. The historic district also includes the approximately 100-acre Castle Hill farm located across the river from the district's core area. The district boundaries largely follow parcel/lot lines. As noted in Slatersville, the designation of a local historic district would be encouraged but would not have to follow the existing configuration of the National Register District boundary, and the local historic district boundary could be more tightly drawn.

The Hopedale Village Historic District is roughly bounded by the Milford Town Line, Malquin Drive, Mendon Town Line, and Upton Town Line in Hopedale, Massachusetts and encompasses about 800 acres and almost 800 resources including buildings, designed landscapes, structures, and objects. The district has a fairly regular boundary that includes parklands, recreational fields, industrial, commercial, civic, and residential development. The district also encompasses the dams and reservoirs that were

51 Pedestrian access between the Kelly House and Ashton Village via Blackstone River Bikeway is considerably shorter.

	Old Slater Mill / Pawtucket	Ashton (Cumberland, RI)	Blackstone River State Park / Kelly House	Slatersville (North Smithfield, RI)	Woonsocket, RI	River Bend Farm (Uxbridge, MA)	Whitinsville (Northbridge, MA)	Hopedale	Worcester Visitor Center (proposed)
Old Slater Mill / Pawtucket	0	5.4 mi.	6.0 mi.	16.2 mi.	12.6 mi.	27.9 mi.	27 mi.	28.6 mi.	41.4 mi.
Ashton (Cumberland, RI)	5.4 mi.	0	1.9 mi. <sup>51</sup>	10.7 mi.	7.4 mi.	18.4 mi.	21.8 mi.	23.4 mi.	31.9 mi.
Blackstone River State Park / Kelly House	6.0 mi.	1.9 mi.	0	10.8 mi.	8.5 mi.	18.2 mi.	22 mi.	18.5 mi.	32 mi.
Slatersville (North Smithfield, RI)	16.2 mi.	10.7 mi.	10.8 mi.	0	3.9 mi.	7.6 mi.	11.8 mi.	13 mi.	21.9 mi.
Woonsocket, RI	12.6 mi.	7.4 mi.	8.5 mi.	3.9 mi.	0	10.4 mi.	15.1 mi.	10.6 mi.	25.1 mi.
River Bend Farm (Uxbridge, MA)	27.9 mi.	18.4 mi.	18.2 mi.	7.6 mi.	10.4 mi.	0	3.6 mi.	6.2 mi.	17.8 mi.
Whitinsville (Northbridge, MA)	27 mi.	21.8 mi.	22 mi.	11.8 mi.	15.1 mi.	3.6 mi.	0	10.2 mi.	14.2 mi.
Hopedale	28.6 mi.	23.4 mi.	18.5 mi.	13 mi.	10.6 mi.	6.2 mi.	10.2 mi.	0	19.2 mi.
Worcester Visitor Center (proposed)	41.4 mi.	31.9 mi.	32 mi.	21.9 mi.	25.1 mi.	17.8 mi.	14.2 mi.	19.2 mi.	0

Figure 13: Mileage Chart (by Vehicle).

developed to power local industry. The district boundaries largely follow parcel lines and in some cases fall just short of or just over the town's municipal boundaries. As noted previously, the designation of a local historic district would not necessarily have to follow the existing configuration of the National Register District boundary, and the lines defining the local district could be drawn more tightly.

Nearly all of the pre-existing visitor services resources are small in scale and are operated in conjunction with a larger entity. The Blackstone Valley Visitor Center is located on the ground floor of a rehabilitated department store that includes other commercial, retail, academic, and transportation functions. The Captain Wilbur Kelly House is a free-standing historic home that has been rehabilitated for use as an exhibit space. The Kelly House is part of RI DEM's Blackstone River State Park. The Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket occupies the ground and sec-

ond stories of a rehabilitated mill building. The museum is part of and is operated by the Rhode Island Historical Society. The visitor facility at River Bend Farm is a rehabilitated barn that is located in MA DCR's Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park.

### Conclusion

Despite the non-contiguous nature of the resources and the distances that separate them, the existing road systems and visitor infrastructure provide the necessary linkages to overcome this logistical challenge. The Blackstone River Bikeway, the gateway visitor facilities, and a corridor-wide system of directional signage all contribute in this vein. The configuration of the National Register Historic Districts varies in scale and geography, however, as noted in the analysis, for management purposes smaller, more tightly-drawn local historic districts may be designated to ensure

local protection of the most important, character-defining features in the historic district. As a result of these mitigating factors, the size and configuration of these resources supports the feasibility of a proposed new unit.

### **Land Ownership**

The vast majority of land under consideration in this study is currently in private ownership, while several key properties are publicly owned.

- In Pawtucket, the building housing the visitor center is owned by the City of Pawtucket's redevelopment authority (a public entity) and Old Slater Mill is owned by the private, non-profit Old Slater Mill Association.
- In Ashton Village, the properties are almost entirely in private ownership. Many of the housing units have been made available for lease. In Ashton Village a couple of major property owners hold multiple parcels. Much of the property, particularly in the area west of Mendon Road, is available as residential rental property, a percentage of which is made available as affordable housing.
- The Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket occupies a city-owned structure.
- The Village of Slatersville contains a combination of municipal and private holdings. Scores of individual properties are located within the Slatersville National Register District most of which are private residences.
- Within Hopedale's historic district, a substantial number of acres (particularly the parklands) are municipally owned. The town owns civic structures like the library and community center, as well as the Little Red Shop (an early industrial building). Otherwise, property continues to be held in private ownership. The National Register District encompasses nearly 800 properties, many of which are private residences.
- Most of the property within Whitinsville's historic district is in private ownership. The exceptions include some of the civic institutions like the town hall, library, community center, schools, and memorial park, which are owned by the municipality. Hundreds of properties are located within the National Register District, again most of which are private residences.

Land ownership and development varies greatly along the edges of the Blackstone River and its tributaries and the Blackstone Canal. The number of owners is presumed

to be considerable and has not been thoroughly evaluated at this time. The states of Rhode Island and Massachusetts each maintain a state park unit that encompasses a segment of the Blackstone River and Blackstone Canal – Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln, Rhode Island and Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park in Uxbridge and Northbridge, Massachusetts.

### **Conclusion**

Lands within the proposed park boundaries would encompass a variety of ownerships – the vast majority of which would be private. NPS ownership would be limited under any management option. Overall, any acquisition strategy would emphasize resource protection and public access. A partnership approach would be required to ensure that key resources within the park are protected.

### **Access**

All of the historic areas are currently accessible to the public for exterior viewing and walking tours. Old Slater Mill offers interior tours and exhibits of the mill buildings from May through October, six days a week; an admission fee is charged. The villages of Slatersville, Hopedale, and Whitinsville have all collaborated with the Corridor to publish guides for walking tours, highlighting and interpreting key resources within the community. Commission staff also offer guided walking tours of all of the historic sites under consideration. No structures are currently open to the public for interpretation or visitor services in Slatersville or Whitinsville. At Ashton, the nearby Blackstone River State Park does offer visitor services at the Captain Wilbur Kelly House, though outside the official district boundary. At Hopedale, the Little Red Shop has been rehabilitated and offers exhibits interpreting Hopedale's industrial past. The Little Red Shop museum is currently open Sunday afternoons and by appointment.

As previously noted, a number of visitor services facilities located throughout the valley offer maps, brochures, exhibits, and other information to orient the visitor to the Valley's resources: Pawtucket, Lincoln, and Woonsocket, Rhode Island; and Uxbridge, Massachusetts, with a fifth location proposed in Worcester. These facilities serve as visitor gateways, providing an overview as well as in-depth information on different facets of the Blackstone River Valley's history. Both the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center and the Museum of Work and Culture are open year-round, six days per week. The Captain Wilbur Kelly House Museum, located at Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln, Rhode



Island, is open from April through October, seven days a week. Finally, the River Bend Farm Visitor Center, located at the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, is open year-round, seven days per week.

The sites are served by a well-developed network of surface roads (often historic and scenic routes) and limited-access highways. Public transportation in the Blackstone Valley is limited. The City of Pawtucket is interested in establishing rapid bus service as well as pursuing the establishment of a commuter rail station on the border with Central Falls. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) commuter rail offers service connecting Boston with Worcester and Providence respectively. Both Worcester and Providence are served by Amtrak and have regular regional public bus service. Pawtucket also benefits from a smaller volume of local bus service with connections to Providence. The villages of Ashton, Slatersville, Whitinsville, and Hopedale are not well served by public transportation, though Ashton is on a bus route located along Mendon Road. The region is served by two major international airports – T. F. Green International Airport in Warwick, Rhode Island and Logan International Airport in Boston, Massachusetts.

The Blackstone River Bikeway offers another opportunity for access to the Blackstone River and Canal, as well as the industrial villages that are located along it. The bikeway is currently under development, with nearly 12 miles completed in Rhode Island and just over 2.5 miles completed in Massachusetts. The bikeway will eventually link Worcester and Providence. Similarly, reaching some of these sites by water is becoming increasingly popular as public access to the region's waterways grows.

### Conclusion

All of the sites and districts proposed for inclusion in the park offer published guides for walking tours, signage, and some interpretive media to enable current visitors to understand and appreciate the resources. However, few of them offer in-depth opportunities for visitors to access interpretive programming or exhibits. As noted previously (in size and configuration), the system of roads, directional signage, the recreational bikeway, and the gateway visitor facilities enable visitors to obtain access to these sites and districts from the nearby interstate highway and regional airports and provide physical linkages among them. Existing opportunities for visitor access to these locations as

well as the potential for future enhancements contribute to the feasibility of the proposed new unit.

## Threats to Resources

### *The Larger Landscape*

According to a Heritage Landscapes Inventory focusing on 10 Massachusetts communities in the Blackstone River Valley that was completed by the Commission and MA DCR in 2006:

In the Blackstone Valley, a great deal of recent development has already altered the character of some communities, and steps are being taken to manage future growth in a variety of ways. Partnerships between public and private organizations have aided in the protection of heritage landscapes through zoning bylaws, preservation restrictions, open space acquisition, and planning for smart growth.

Excerpt from *Heritage Landscape Inventory Regional Historic Context – Quinebaug-Shetucket and John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridors*, by Susan W. Frechette. pp.38-39.

A survey of five Rhode Island communities, cosponsored by the Commission and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, was completed in 2010.<sup>52</sup> Based on the observations of the study team, the state of the rural character of the valley in Rhode Island was similar to conditions identified in Massachusetts. The agricultural and rural character of the Blackstone River Valley's outlying areas is gradually being eroded by suburban development. In its recent report entitled "Losing Ground," the Massachusetts Audubon Society identified the Blackstone River Valley as a "sprawl frontier" having one of the highest rates of development in the state. The interrelationships among the valley's mill villages, urban centers, rural agricultural lands and open space, and the Blackstone River itself, contribute to a distinct "sense of place" that pervades the region and provides the essential context for its core industrial heritage resources. Protection of the region's larger rural landscape is an important part of preserving the integrity of the Blackstone River Valley's industrial heritage resources.

### *The Blackstone River & its Tributaries*

Despite significant improvements over the last 30 years, the Blackstone River remains subject to many stresses and

<sup>52</sup> The Rhode Island communities involved in the project include: Burrillville, Gloucester, Lincoln, North Smithfield, and Smithfield.

problems that affect its ecological, recreational and aesthetic values along its entire length. These issues include contaminated sediments; the impacts of permitted wastewater discharges on downstream water quality; the presence of hazardous waste sites, old dumps, and landfills that cause non-point source pollution; non-point sources of pollution that affect habitat and water quality and threaten drinking water supplies; and water withdrawals.<sup>53</sup> At present, the Blackstone River is considered suitable only for non-contact recreation. Many tributaries of the Blackstone River, including portions of the Branch and Mumford Rivers, are considered to be swimmable and fishable.

The Blackstone River Coalition, a bi-state organization representing many agencies, institutions, and individuals with an interest in the watershed, has been waging a campaign to make the Blackstone swimmable and fishable by 2015. The Coalition has worked collaboratively to develop and implement a strategic plan to improve the ecological health of the watershed.

The Blackstone River also harbors many cultural features such as dams, reservoirs, and other remnants of its industrial past. Some of the remaining dams continue to be used to generate hydropower, such as the Riverdale dam in Northbridge and the Tupperware dam in Blackstone – both in Massachusetts – and Thundermist Dam in Woonsocket, RI. A proposal to develop a hydropower plant in Slatersville is making its way through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) process. Most of these features are in private ownership; some are recognized as part of existing National Register districts, but none are listed individually on the National Register. As part of the larger water management scheme that pervaded the Valley and powered its industry, these features need to be recognized and their future management considered.

#### *The Blackstone Canal*

The Blackstone Canal is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as two separate districts – one in Massachusetts, one in Rhode Island. Segments of the canal trench and towpath, along with other canal features – some remarkably intact – survive in both states. The best-preserved section of canal in Rhode Island is located in the town of Lincoln, within the Blackstone River State Park. In Massachusetts, the best-preserved canal segments and features are found in Uxbridge and Northbridge within Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park. Studies and preser-

vation plans for both the Rhode Island and Massachusetts portions of the canal have been completed, with recommendations for prioritizing resources based on existing conditions and restoration potential. Much of the remnant canal is broken out among many different private ownerships.

#### *Old Slater Mill*

Old Slater Mill has been owned and operated by the Old Slater Mill Association since 1921 and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966. The state holds a 25-year preservation covenant for the exterior of the Wilkinson Mill that ends in 2015 and a 50-year preservation covenant for Slater Mill that will end in 2060. The trustees of the Old Slater Mill have expressed a willingness to sign a permanent historic preservation easement with the National Park Service.

Though the Old Slater Mill Association has maintained its commitment to preserving these resources and to providing public access and programming, its financial condition has fluctuated over its nearly 90 years. Over its own 25-year history, the Commission has provided funding support for preservation and the development of exhibits and programs. More recently the Commission has provided some staff support to Old Slater Mill. Maintaining financial stability has been one of the greatest sources of concern for the institution.

#### *Ashton Village, Cumberland, Rhode Island*

Ashton Village was designated a historic district (overlay zoning district) in accordance with Title 45, Chapter 24.1, of the General Laws of Rhode Island, as amended, which declares the preservation of structures of historic or architectural value to be a public purpose and authorizes the creation of the Historic District Commission (HDC) for that purpose in the Town of Cumberland. Ashton is one of seven historic preservation overlay districts created in the town. In a local historic district zone, all exterior alterations and new construction must be reviewed and approved by the historic district commission, which ensures that the historic character of the buildings is maintained when necessary changes are made. In addition, the town of Cumberland has adopted Development Plan Review Standards.

The Ashton Mill completed a rehabilitation project with federal tax credits in 2005 with a 5-year NPS review period.

<sup>53</sup> RI Rivers Council/ State Planning Council. RI Rivers Policy and Classification Plan (State Guide Plan 162). Originally adopted in Jan. 1998; amended May 2004.

### *Slatersville, North Smithfield, Rhode Island*

North Smithfield's Town Council approved the designation of a Local Historic District within the Slatersville Historic District in November 2010. The Local Historic District is concentrated in the center of the Village and does not include the Congregational Church adjoining the Village Green. The town's by laws allow the Local Historic District designation to expire in two years if it is deemed necessary. They are currently in the early stages of their effort. The Slatersville Mill Complex was rehabilitated for use as housing and received a federal historic preservation tax credit in 2007. In consultation with the RI State Historic Preservation Office, the National Park Service must review and concur with any proposed changes to the structure until 2012.

The Slatersville National Register District crosses several land use zones, the largest of which is Manufacturing, followed by Suburban Residential, Urban Residential, Rural Estate/ Agriculture, and Business Neighborhood.

### *Whitinsville, Northbridge, Massachusetts*

The Town of Northbridge has designated a core area of the National Register District (approximately 20 percent) as a Heritage District. It is an overlay zoning district addressing land use and is administered by the town's zoning board, though it does not address changes to the appearance and historic character of the structures in the zoning district. The Heritage District is concentrated on the downtown intersections of Hill, Church, Linwood, and Main Streets and encompasses community resources like the Town Hall, community center, library, schools, the memorial square, churches, the older mill buildings, and some private residential properties, it excludes the Whittin Machine Works complex. According to Northbridge's zoning bylaws, the purpose of the Heritage District is to preserve and reinforce the visual and historical character of the Memorial Square Area of the Town of Northbridge by regulating the type and intensity of uses that may be proposed within it. Specifically, the bylaws note that the intent is to provide for uses that are similar to those existing at the time of enactment of the section in 1980.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission holds preservation restrictions in perpetuity on several properties located within the heritage district, including: Northbridge Town Hall, Trinity Episcopal Church, Whittin Community

Gym, Whittinsville Mill and Forge (Alternatives, Inc.), and the Whittinsville Old Cotton Mill.<sup>54</sup>

Other land uses permitted within the National Register District include four different residential zones allowing for different densities of development and combinations of use, a substantial industrial use area encompassing the area around the Whittin Machine Works, and two business zones. The Castle Hill Farm area is zoned R-1 which permits the development of detached, single-family homes and a wide variety of other uses. The town has also expressed an interest in preserving and protecting the property.

### *Hopedale, Massachusetts*

Hopedale contains no designated local historic districts. A significant portion of the area within the historic district is town-owned and is presumed to be protected from development. Another area within the National Register district is zoned as Historic Multi Family. The Historic Multi Family zone encompasses a single block bounded by Hopedale, Freedom, Dutcher, and Chapel Streets and is occupied by a single multifamily structure, parking area, and small area of town-owned open space. Other land use zones within the historic district include town lands, two types of residential use, industrial, and general business.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission holds a permanent preservation restriction on the Bancroft Memorial Library.

### *Conclusion*

The analysis of threats to resources throughout the Blackstone River Valley and within the sites and districts that would compose the proposed park reveals much progress in terms of understanding and protecting resource values, but also indicates that there is still a continuing need. The National Park Service and the Commission contributed much both directly and indirectly to previous efforts. The remaining threats to the Valley's "sense of place" and to the integrity of the sites and districts that would compose the proposed park unit reinforce the need for a National Park Service presence.

### *Public Support*

Members of the study team have engaged in preliminary consultations with the members of the Commission, board members at Old Slater Mill, local municipal officials in the

<sup>54</sup> Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission, 2008 State Register as reported by Michael Steinitz.

affected communities, the academic community, and Native American tribes. In general, there is considerable and continuing support for the Corridor and rising concern that the Commission will soon expire. There is an expressed appreciation for the federal presence that the Corridor has brought to the Blackstone River Valley. Public meetings conducted during the study process and described in Chapter Six: Coordination and Consultation indicate broad public support for potential designation of a new unit of the National Park System.

### ***Feasibility Conclusion***

Distances among historic sites and districts and visitor services resources are bridged by a well-developed road system that enables quick and easy access to many areas via limited-access highways. Secondary roads offer a less direct but often more scenic and historic option for traveling between sites. Suggested auto and bicycle routes, signage, and other visitor service amenities could make navigating the region easy and informative for visitors.

Creating smaller, more tightly drawn local historic districts that encompass the most important character-defining features in these often large, historic districts could facilitate both management and protection. The wide-ranging scope of these resources can support many interesting and diverse interpretive opportunities.

Relative to feasibility, landownership patterns and resource protection requirements are closely related. To ensure that key resources across the Blackstone River Valley receive adequate protection, some measure of NPS full-fee or less-than-fee ownership may be necessary to protect the most significant or fragile of resources. However, much of the responsibility for the long-term care and protection of these resources would continue to fall to local municipalities and their residents. NPS support for protection activities would increase their likelihood of success.

Public support for a federal presence in the Blackstone River Valley is firm, and specific support for the formal designation of an NPS unit in the Blackstone River Valley has been verified via public comments received in response to the Preliminary Alternatives newsletter.

Based on its analysis of the factors addressing feasibility, as summarized above, the study team concludes that the resources meet the feasibility criteria for inclusion in the National Park System.

## **Need for NPS Management**

The need for NPS management is the final criterion for the potential establishment of a unit of the National Park System. The criterion requires a finding that NPS management would be superior to potential alternative management arrangements by other entities.

In the 1984 Assessment of the Blackstone River Valley, NPS found public support for a limited federal role in the Corridor that emphasized federal recognition, coordination of interstate efforts, mediating use conflicts in the river corridor, and studying and interpreting the Corridor's historical resources. This has been the role and function of the Commission, a federal body staffed by NPS, for nearly 25 years.

While the Corridor would continue to exist under non-federal management when the Commission expires in October 2011, the region will keenly feel the loss of the federal interpretive presence and technical support for resource protection and visitor services. No other organization within the Valley provides the same level of expertise in these areas as that offered by the National Park Service. Further, NPS has developed knowledgeable staff members who have served the region and its resources with a consistently high level of quality and professional depth that would be difficult for other organizations to replicate. NPS acquisition may be an essential strategy for ensuring protection of and public access to nationally significant properties within the Valley.

The Corridor and its Commission have created a new sense of cohesion among the two states and numerous municipalities. Although the continued presence of the Corridor will perpetuate some of this feeling, no substitute for the NPS presence is anticipated that will intensify (or even maintain) the understanding of the Blackstone River Valley as a unified and distinctive historical entity, as described in the Historical Overview and Statement of Significance.

Generally, a National Park Service presence in the Blackstone River Valley and more specifically, NPS resource protection and interpretive support of the core sites and districts considered in this analysis would be superior to conceivable management arrangements undertaken by other entities.

The study team finds that under the right conditions in terms of NPS authorities, financial resources, and staffing, and with broad-based, public support for an NPS presence and commitment to resource protection, the resources un-



der consideration would be best managed with the involvement of NPS.

## Summary of Findings: Criteria for New Parklands

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Based on extensive analysis and with the concurrence of the National Park Service's History Program Office in Washington, the study team concluded that the Blackstone River Valley's industrial heritage resources including the Blackstone River, the Blackstone Canal, Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District, and the villages of Slatersville, Ashton, Whitinsville, and Hopedale met the criteria for national significance. This is based on their significant contribution to and outstanding representation of broad national patterns in U.S. economic and industrial history and their potential to provide for an understanding and appreciation of those patterns.

The suitability analysis considered comparable resources representing various models of industrialization throughout the United States. While some of these resources were similar in some ways, they differed in others. These other places were more likely to complement, rather than compete with, the Blackstone River Valley in terms of possessing resources that convey the complex story of the nation's industrial development. Based on this analysis the study concludes that the resources of the Blackstone River Valley depict a distinctive and important aspect of American history that is not adequately represented elsewhere and is therefore suitable for inclusion in the National Park System.

The feasibility analysis indicated that the size and configuration of the non-contiguous sites and districts that would compose the proposed park would not be a prohibiting factor for management and is mitigated by existing roads and visitor infrastructure (e.g., visitor facilities, directional signage, and interpretive media). The area enjoys good highway access and is served by two international airports as well as intercity train and bus service. Visitor access has been facilitated by existing directional signage systems, published tour guides, and maps. Much of the primary resource base continues to be under private ownership and that is unlikely to change. Strategic NPS acquisition of key properties (in full or partial fee) for preservation or public access purposes would be one facet of the proposed park's resource management strategy. Partnerships with local communities and property owners to encourage resource protection would also be critical.

Finally, with regards to the need for NPS management the study concludes that given the appropriate authorities, financial and human resources, the resources under consideration would be best managed with the long-term involvement of the National Park Service.

In conclusion, the study team finds that, based on the factors cited above and the extensive analyses conducted during the course of this special resource study, the resources associated with the Blackstone River Valley are nationally significant and both suitable and feasible for inclusion in the National Park System. It further concludes that there is a demonstrated need for NPS management of these resources in partnership with others described in this report.