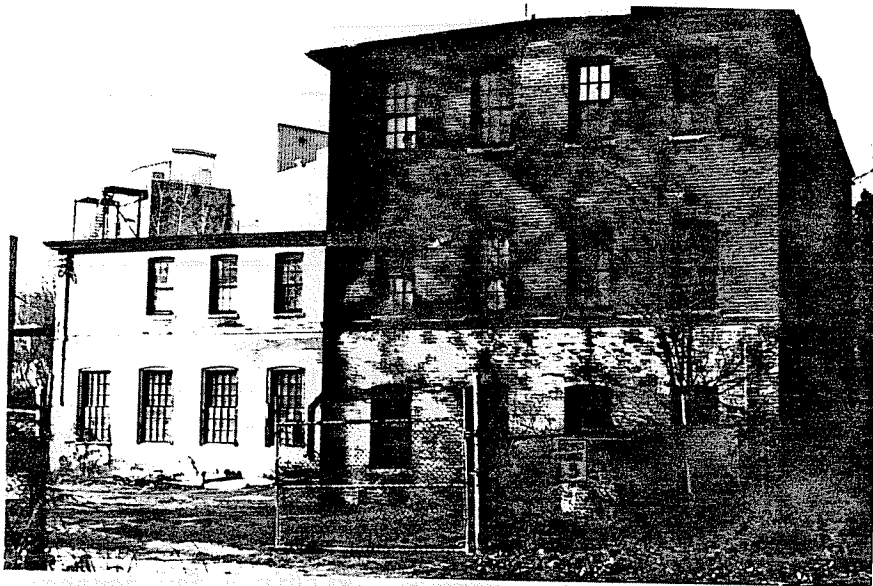


FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

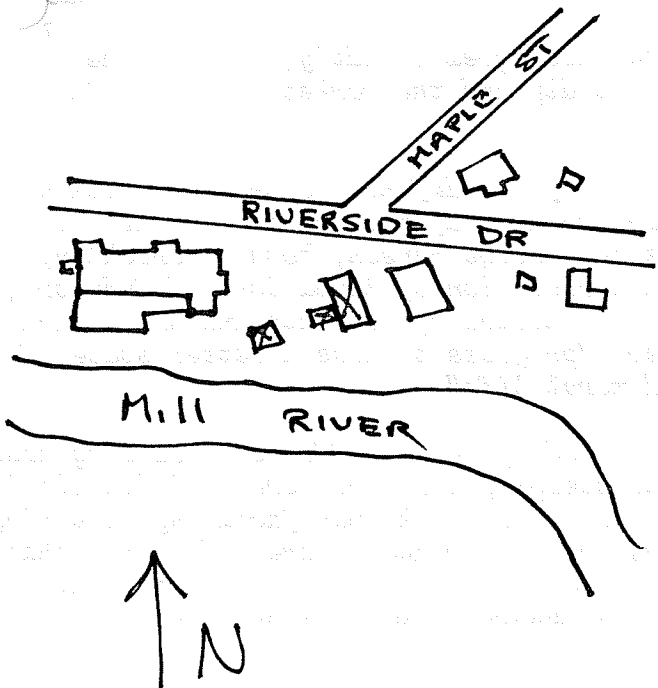
In Area no.	Form no.
	23A-286

235



1 Northampton  
 Address Riverside Drive  
 Name Nonotuck Silk Co. Building  
 Present use industrial  
 Present owner private  
 Description:  
 Date c. 1895  
 Source Sheffield, History of Florence  
 Architect \_\_\_\_\_

1. map. Draw sketch of building in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings. Indicate north.



Exterior wall fabric brick  
 Outbuildings (describe) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other features \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Altered \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Moved -- Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 5. Lot size:  
 One acre or less \_\_\_\_\_ Over one acre \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approximate frontage \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approximate distance of building from street \_\_\_\_\_  
 6. Recorded by E. Lonergan  
 Organization NHC  
 Date June 1980

(over)

7. Original owner (if known) Northampton Silk Co.

Original use \_\_\_\_\_

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates \_\_\_\_\_

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Conservation	_____	Recreation	_____
Agricultural	_____	Education	_____	Religion	_____
Architectural	_____	Exploration/ settlement	_____	Science/ invention	_____
The Arts	_____	Industry	<u>x</u>	Social/ humanitarian	_____
Commerce	_____	Military	_____	Transportation	_____
Communication	_____	Political	_____		
Community development	<u>x</u>				

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

*In 1835 Samuel Whitmarsh purchased nearly 300 acres of land on both sides of the Mill River in what was later to become Florence. Within a few months the Northampton Silk Co. was organized and by the next year there were one hundred acres planted with mulberry trees, and the old oil mill had been made ready to manufacture silk. This mill was on the north bank of the river at the foot of Prospect St. In 1837 a substantial brick factory, on a stone foundation 120' x 40' and four stories high was constructed a short distance down river at a bend in the river. A canal was dug from the dam near the old mill to the new factory.*

*For the next few years the business grew steadily, however the "mulberry craze" had caused speculators to invest wildly and the market crashed. In 1840 the property was advertised for sale.*

*Late the next year the trustees of the defunct Northampton Silk Co. sold the estate to Joseph Conant, the former superintendent of the Company, Samuel L. Hill of Willimantic, Connecticut, and William Coe and George Benson, both of Brooklyn, Connecticut. These people set up the Northampton Association of Education and Industry, an organization inspired by the "transcendental" communities of Hopedale and Brook Farm in eastern Massachusetts, and whose main goals were "progress towards a better state of society, and the development of a true social and moral life".*

*The large brick factory was fitted up and the "factory boarding house" established. A laundry, kitchen, dining room, and sleeping quarters were included within the building as well as the "Community store" and rooms for silk manufacturing, skeining and packing. By 1844 sixty-five to eighty members took their meals here and nearly that*  
continued.

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

- 1831 Town Map.                      1854 and 1860 County Maps.                      1873, 1884, 1895 and 1915 Atlases.  
*History of Florence* edited by Charles Sheffield, 1895.  
 1875-76 Northampton Directory and Historical Register, pp. 41-45.  
 1860-61 Northampton Business Directory and General Advertiser, p. 97.  
 Greenville Cotton Mill, No. 6050, Barlow's Insurance Surveys, 1879.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Northampton	Form No: 23A-286
Property Name: Nonotuck Silk Co. Building	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

9. Historical Significance

number slept here. The Association also owned several houses on Nonotuck St., one on Spring St. and two on Meadow St. In 1845 it was decided to manufacture cotton in the brick building and build a new mill for the silk business. This expense proved too much for the Community and they were forced to sell the brick factory and 100 acres of land to the Bensonville Mfg. Co. Even this couldn't substantially improve the Community's financial condition and they dissolved in November of 1846.

George Benson was the prime mover of the Bensonville Mfg. Co., which produced cotton cloth. The name of the Company was applied to the area, until its failure in 1850. The new Company also lent its name to the surrounding area--Greenville. However, when it was announced that a Post Office would be established here, the residents decided on a different name: Florence, the name of "the great silk emporium of Italy". This was suggested by Dr. Munde, who operated a water cure in the village; however his suggestion of "Arno" for the more prosaic Mill River never caught on.

By 1860 The Greenville Mfg. Co. employed 80 hands and turned out 20,000 yards of cotton goods a week. At this time the only building was the old four-story, brick mill. In the next twenty years three story additions were made to the eastern and western ends. An 1879 insurance survey described the layout of the activities in this mill complex. The first and second floors of the buildings were used for weaving, the third floors for picking, carding, spinning and winding, while the fourth floor of the old building was used for spinning.

Cotton manufacturing went into a decline and the Greenville Mfg. Co. went out of business. In 1886 the property was purchased by the Nonotuck Silk Co., a successor to part of the Florence Community's industrial holdings, which in turn grew out of the Northampton Silk Co. By 1895 the Nonotuck Co. had mills in Florence, Leeds and Haydenville along the Mill River and in Hartford, Conn. They manufactured "machine twist, sewing, embroidery, rope, etching, and knitting silks in fast colors, also silk hosiery and underwear." They employed 800 hands and produced between five and six thousand pounds a week. It was during this period that a two-story dyehouse and three-story addition were constructed. Today these buildings, along with the early 20th century power plant are the only remnants of this industrial complex which played such a large part in the history of Florence.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

