



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS  
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION  
Old State House 150 Benefit Street Providence, RI 02903

Telephone 401-222-2678  
TTY 401-222-3700

Fax 401-222-2968  
[www.preservation.ri.gov](http://www.preservation.ri.gov)

MINUTES  
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION  
October 8, 2014

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA  
Ms. Morgan Devlin  
Mr. Mohamad Farzan, AIA  
Ms. Caitlin Greeley, Statewide Planning, representing Kevin Flynn  
Mr. Karst Hoogeboom, Chairman  
Dr. Patrick Malone  
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon  
Dr. Ronald Onorato  
Mr. Clark Schoettle  
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson representing Jonathan Stevens, State Historic Preservation  
Officer  
Ms. Ruth Taylor

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Joanna Doherty, Senior Architectural Historian  
Dr. Richard Greenwood, Deputy Director  
Dr. Timothy Ives, Principal Archaeologist  
Mr. Jeff Rosenberg, Senior Grants Coordinator  
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Al Cocce, AIA, representing John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner  
Ms. Janet Coit, Director DEM  
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board  
Mr. Pieter N. Roos  
Mr. Marcel Valois, Executive Director EDC

GUESTS

Edward Connors, National Register consultant  
Mr. Larry W. Mageau, owner Rosella Mill  
Mr. Milad Shabo, owner Naushon Mill

## II. AGENDA

### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 A.M., Karst Hoogeboom, Chairman, presiding.

### 2. Minutes of September 10, 2014

Mr. Sanderson distributed an amendment to the previously circulated draft Minutes of September 10, 2014. The amendment dealt with the report of the Loan Committee regarding 173 Weybosset Street, Providence and the action voted by the Commission. Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Mr. Abbott, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the amended Minutes of September 10, 2014.

### 3. Executive Director's Report

a) The position of Principal Architectural Historian is vacant due to Mack Woodward's retirement, and a request to refill the position has been approved by the State Division of Personnel. The position notice has been posted on the RIHPHC website and distributed via email.

b) State Fiscal Year 2014 reports were distributed.

c) The National Park Service has awarded a competitive \$25,000 grant to RIHPHC for documentation of African-American heritage in the College Hill Historic District. The grant is part of a national initiative to address the history of under-represented populations in the National Register of Historic Places. The grant application was drafted by Joanna Doherty.

### 4. State Historic Preservation Officer's Report

There was no State Historic Preservation Officer's report.

### 5. Report on Cultural & Creative Economy Bond Issue

Commissioner Devlin reported on the efforts by Preserve Rhode Island and others to promote support for Bond Question #5, the Cultural & Creative bond issue that would provide funding for specified performing arts facilities and for State Preservation Grants. A website "Yeson5ri.com" provides information about the projects that would be funded. PRI Executive Director Valerie Talmage has co-authored an "Op Ed" for the Providence Journal. Yard signs are promoting Question 5, and individual project sponsors are providing information to their

members and audiences.

## 6. National Register of Historic Places

a) Preliminary Presentation: Rosella Mill, 320 Washington Street, Arctic/ West Warwick  
Joanna Doherty presented information about the property. The Rosella Mill is a small, rectangular-plan, steel-frame building located on the east side of Washington Street in the village of Arctic. Its exterior walls are clad in brick and it has a flat roof with a parapet and concrete cornice on the west (front) façade. The building presents as one-story on the street, but the lot slopes down to the east, providing two floors. The Rosella Mill features large window openings on all four elevations, still in their original configuration. On all but the main façade, the window openings are filled with historic, multi-light, metal sash. On the main façade, the window and door openings are filled with modern metal units. The interior features well-lit, open spaces (there are no support posts on the second floor). Some remnant power shafting remains.

In September 1921, three brothers from Woonsocket -- Hector, Ulric and Aldor Poulin -- incorporated the Rosella Mills in the village of Anthony. In 1923, Hector and Ulric Poulin patented a continuous felt belt for use in the textile industry and assigned the license to the Rosella Mills. (Felt belts were used on the rollers on looms.) Between World Wars One and Two, the Poulins operated a second textile business, Claremont Mills, making the fabric for artillery gunpowder bags for DuPont. The fabric was woven from tussar silk, which is produced by Manchurian silkworms, who subsist on oak leaves. Tussar silk is stronger than the silk produced by mulberry-leaf silkworms and less flammable than linen or cotton. Sometime in the late 1920s/early 1930s, the Poulins relocated their businesses to a new mill at 320 Washington Street in Arctic. It is believed that the Rosella felt mill operated on the ground floor with the Claremont Mill below. Around 1932, Alberic Archambault became a partner in the businesses; he would become a prominent local judge. This partnership lasted into the 1950s (Archambault died in 1950, Hector Poulin died in 1958, Ulric had died in 1930). The Claremont Mill's business making powder bags ended by World War II, but Rosella Mill made felt blankets during the war and continued to operate into the 1980s. The ground floor is currently occupied by an auto parts store and a machine shop operates below.

During discussion, Dr. Onorato noted that the history of Rosella Mill is an example of the expansion of a Woonsocket textile manufacturing business into West Warwick. Mr. Abbott stated that the Rosella Mill reflects innovation in finding a specialized niche in the Rhode Island textile industry. Dr. Malone noted that Rosella Mill is an example of a "purpose-built mill" and demonstrates the early importance of defense industries in Rhode Island. Following discussion, on a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Dr. Malone, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for the nomination.

b) Preliminary Presentation: Naushon Mill, Valley Falls, Cumberland

Edward Connors presented information about the property. Located on a 4-acre site on the north bank of the Blackstone River in Valley Falls, the Naushon Company Plant comprises one main, two-story, brick, pier-and-spandrel building and four contributing auxiliary buildings. The plant was built in 1902-3 and extended along the Meeting Street elevation up to 1952. The Main Building, the dominant feature of the plant, was built for the weaving of gingham “wash goods,” which were popular in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and distributed nationally by Naushon through an innovative direct marketing program. By 1903 the plant housed 1,000 narrow and broad looms. The second floor of the main building, which housed the weave room, is lit by 12 sawtooth windows (now covered).

Much of the original 1902-3 plant survives with little alteration. A frame 1- and 2-story Office is attached to the northwest corner of the main building. Attached to and accessed from this office is a windowless brick vault, a contributing structure. A two-story Carpenter Shop/Store House is at the rear of the complex. A single-story Engine House and attached Boiler House are connected to the rear of the Main Building. The roof of the Boiler House has failed; although the present rehabilitation design envisions the reconstruction of this roof, it will be treated in this nomination as a non-contributing building.

The only significant demolition was the ca. 2008 removal of a 1906 frame dyeing/finishing building attached to the rear of the Main Building.

Significant under **Criterion A** on the state level as the physical expression of a specialized cotton goods weaving and finishing plant expanded and adapted for various types of textile manufacture until the 1950s. For six decades a succession of textile owners and lessees adapted this plant for the manufacture of cotton goods, cotton-silk blends and, later, to camel’s hair, worsteds and synthetics. The Naushon Company, adapting to changing markets and labor strife, failed in 1909. Tilton Mills (an affiliated successor) introduced worsted spinning and occupied the plant until its failure in 1914. A year later the plant was purchased by Boston-based Hansahoe Mfg. Co. and adapted for the weaving of cotton and silk blends until its collapse in 1925. Vacant for a few years, the complex was purchased at public auction in 1928 by Worcester Textile Company and converted for the manufacture of mohair and camel’s hair yarn as well as for knitting and weaving. Connecticut-based Sidney Blumenthal Co., originally a tenant of Worcester Textile, purchased the plant in 1937 as the weaving division of the home plant. Blumenthal also produced worsted, mohair and fancy mixed yarns—adding a line of synthetics in the late 1950s, at which time the company was absorbed by Burlington Industries. The plant was purchased by G&S Realty in 1962, leasing space to industrial tenants. Notable among these was the Standard Romper Company, makers of hygienic children’s clothing eventually marketed nationally under the brand name Healthtex. Textile manufacture continues on the first floor of the main building today where International Textile Manufacturing Company produces braided rugs.

The Naushon Company Plant is also significant under **Criterion C** as a well-preserved example of an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century, electrically powered factory building, the upper story of which was designed for weaving, the surviving sawtooth roof providing diffused light for the weaving

process. A sequence of battered brick flues evenly spaced along the rear (river-facing) wall were part of the plant's original ventilation/heating system. Further research may establish that these sturdy flues served double duty as buttresses addressing the fact that the prior use of the land (ca. 1850-1900) was for mining of graphitic coal by the Blackstone Mining Company. The earth beneath the mill was mined extensively and sinkholes occur in the area to this day.

Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Farzan, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for the nomination.

#### 7. Report on Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Grants

a) Jeffrey Rosenberg, Senior Grants Coordinator, reported that as of September 30, 2014, several grant projects previously approved by the Commission had withdrawn their applications:

Temple Beth El, Providence has been purchased by a private owner who intends to carry out a historic rehabilitation of the property but has declined grant funds.

Dunmere, Narragansett and Hazard's Castle, South Kingstown both decided not to sign the required historic preservation easement.

Two projects have indicated that the budget for their projects has increased and requests for additional grant funding are being reviewed by RIHPHC staff. In addition, a new project that involves the Cliff Walk in Newport has requested consideration for funding. Mr. Rosenberg expects to bring these questions to the Commission at its November 12 meeting.

b) Timothy Ives, Principal Archaeologist, reported on Phase I results of archaeological condition assessments along Rhode Island's South Shore and along the Block Island Shore. A large number of potentially significant sites have been identified, particularly on Block Island, and Phase II investigation will evaluate these sites National Register eligibility.

8. Other Business: There was no other business.

9. Next regular meeting date: Wednesday October 8, 2014 at 9:30 AM.

10. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM.

Minutes recorded by,



Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer