United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form  

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections  

1. Name  

historic  
Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District  

and/or common  

2. Location  

street & number  Hillsdale Road  

state  Rhode Island  

3. Classification  

Category  Ownership  Status  Present Use  

X district  public  occupied  agriculture  

X building(s)  private  unoccupied  commercial  

X structure  both  work in progress  educational  

X site  Public Acquisition  Accessible  entertainment  

X object  in process  yes: restricted  government  

X being considered  yes: unrestricted  industrial  

X no  

Present Use:  

museum  

park  

private residence  

educational  

entertainment  

religious  

government  

scientific  

industrial  

military  

transportation  

other: Open Space.  

4. Owner of Property  

name  Rhode Island Hospital Trust National Bank, trustees for the estate of Theakston DeCoppet.  

street & number  1 Hospital Trust Plaza  

5. Location of Legal Description  

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.  Richmond Town Hall  

street & number  Town House Road  

6. Representation in Existing Surveys  

title "Broadbrush Archeological Survey, Exeter, R.I."  

has this property been determined eligible?  

yes  X  no  

date  1978  

depository for survey records  Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission  

city, town  Providence  

state  Rhode Island
The Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District takes its name from that part of the town of Richmond, Rhode Island in which it is located. A center for various kinds of milling from the last decade of the eighteenth century to the first decade of this century, Hillsdale produced textiles here in the western part of Richmond during the period 1830 to 1870. Presently, the mill village exists as a series of archeological sites: industrial, commercial, and domestic, strung out along Hillsdale Road and set in 68 acres of second-growth, hardwood forest. A small portion of a large, privately owned, wooded tract, the various components of the mill village have been preserved from subsequent reuse or development and feature a high degree of archeological integrity.

Previous Research and Recent History

Knowledge of the abandoned mill village at Hillsdale was brought to the attention of the State Historic Preservation Office by Rhode Island's Department of Environmental Management; and a program of documentary research and archeological testing occurred there in July, 1979, supported by the trustees of the property, Rhode Island Hospital Trust Company.

Twenty-seven hundred acres comprise the estate of which the Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District is a part. The land was brought together from many small parcels during the early years of the twentieth century by Theakston DeCoppet, a former New Yorker who took up residence in Richmond in 1916 after retiring from the New York Stock Exchange. Active in local affairs, he served as president of the Richmond Town Council for eight years and was known statewide for his philanthropy and conservation efforts. On the west side of Hillsdale Road, opposite the lower mill pond, he erected a beautifully, yet simply furnished house (#6) that today serves as the home of the caretaker. Just to the south stands a second house, a mid-nineteenth century farmhouse (#4), formerly occupied by the resident overseer/farmer.

Informants claim the present house was built around a late eighteenth century dwelling owned by an early gristmill operator.

DeCoppet's will, probated in 1937, noted that the property, "shall be administered as a forest reservation and sanctuary for the scientific care, study and preservation of all desirable plant and animal life within its limits until the General Assembly enacts legislation to hold the Hillsdale

(See Continuation Sheet #1).

property in perpetuity for the conservation of its natural resources." At some time in the future, the Department of Environmental Management will acquire the entire property. Although the District already enjoys a unique level of preservation as part of a larger estate, several threats to its continued preservation exist. During 1978, the caretaker of the estate demolished several sections of a mill's stone wall because its instability threatened the safety of the public. More significantly, proposed interstate highway I-895 may pose a much more disruptive threat should it be built.

Relation of Sites to Environment.

The land along Hillsdale Road was well suited for the establishment of water-powered mills in the nineteenth century. Just east of the road and along it for a distance of 3,400 feet runs the Beaver River, a narrow stream with water sufficient to have allowed the Hillsdale mill to operate the year-round in 1850. The Beaver also powered mills in a Richmond village north of Hillsdale known as Tug Hollow. The Beaver gradually dropped more than one hundred feet between Tug Hollow and formed a good head of water.

Although a finger of glacial outwash extends up into the Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District, the area soils are generally till, an unstratified mix of sand, clay, silt and gravel. Much of the mill district, like the majority of the estate itself is classified as forested land. The DeCoppet house and associated structures are excluded from this classification and are termed, instead, clustered residential land. It is probable that during the period of industrial activity, much of the district was cleared of the oaks, maples, and beeches which now stand on the land.

Structural Remains Inventory

Following is a list of structural features (within the Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District) numbered to correspond with the district map figure 2. All building foundations and structures are constructed of cut stone unless otherwise noted.

(See Continuation Sheet #2).

2Will of Theakston DeCoppet. Probate of Will, 1937. Richmond Town Hall, Richmond, Rhode Island.

3United States Census. 1850. Richmond, Washington County, Rhode Island, Schedule of Manufactures.
West side of Hillsdale Road, from south to north (see figure 2)

2. Cider mill dam, probably early 20th century.
5. Workers' quarters, probably 20th century.
12. Well, 19th century.
14. Former Hillsdale Road, 19th century.
15. Upper dam, 19th century.
17. Privy, 19th century.
19. Terrace, cobble and earth, 19th century.

East side of Hillsdale Road, from south to north

23. Wheelpit and tailrace, probably 19th century.
24. Gristmill, 18th century shingle mill in 19th century.
25. Ice house, probably 19th century.
26. Dam, 18th-20th century.
27. Foundation, 19th century.
29. Tailrace, 19th century.
31. Headrace, stone and earth, 19th century.
32. House cellar, no foundation stones, outlines visible, 19th century.
33. Dam, earth and stone, 19th century.
34. House foundation, 19th century.
35. Tailraces, (2), early 19th century.
37. Chimney base, 19th century (Dye House).
38. Retaining wall, early 19th century.
40. Privy, 19th century.
41. House foundation, 19th century.

(See Continuation Sheet #3).
42. Stone enclosure, 19th century
43. Retaining wall, 19th century
44. Barn foundation, 19th century
45. House foundation, 19th century

Archeological Evidence

Limited archeological testing was carried out at the Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District in order to determine the level of disturbance below grade and to evaluate the quantity and diversity of cultural materials present. Not every structure was tested; rather, excavations took place at each site type on the property: mill building, workers' housing, owner's housing, mill store. In all, eleven test pits measuring fifty by fifty centimeters were excavated to depths ranging from forty to fifty centimeters, where sterile soils were met.

Soils from all test pits proved to be undisturbed and the artifacts recovered from most units were found to be fairly uniform. Materials from the house sites and store, exclusively nineteenth century in origin and domestic or structural in nature, included hardwhite ware and pearlware, curved and flat glass as well as machine-cut nails. A different assemblage resulted from tests at the older mill building where nineteenth-century industrial materials (washers, bolts, iron fragments) were mixed with structural remains such as machine-cut nails and bricks.
Archeological Significance

The Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District represents a rural industrial community spanning several stages of industrial development. In the course of the 19th century, the community passed from the agriculturally-oriented activity of grist and saw milling to the mechanized, competitive manufacture of textiles. The intact archeological remains of mills and related buildings, water-power systems, dwellings, and outbuildings contain information on the physical, social, and economic changes to the community as a result of industrial growth and decline.

Contained within the DeCoppet Estate, yet outside the boundaries of the Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District are the remains of numerous rural farmsteads which operated during the occupation of the mill village and are presumably in a similar state of preservation. These sites were not examined at this time due to their indirect relation to the district. Archeological investigations of both the farmsteads and mill village sites could yield information on the comparative economic status of agricultural and industrial labor in a rural township and, also, indicate the existence of economic relationships between the mill village and outlying farms.

In the large, urban mills of nineteenth-century New England sizable differences in economic and social status existed between labor and management. In rural milling centers where the owner was often a local resident who employed a small number of fellow residents, there may have been more cultural similarities than differences between owner and workers. As the Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District includes house sites of both mill workers and a mill owner, excavation at these locations would unearth a material culture indicative of cultural heterogeneity or homogeneity at Hillsdale.

These are a sampling of questions applicable to research at the Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District. A program of archeological investigation within the district would certainly result in new topics for study.

Interpretive Significance

As a portion of privately held conservation land, all of which may be owned and managed one day by Rhode Island's Department of Environmental Management, the proposed Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District possesses considerable interpretive potential. Hillsdale's initial mill ground corn and its last, pressed cider. Between the times of these mills, a textile industry grew and declined in contrast to the agricultural community around it. In viewing a large collection of archeological sites set within a forest sanctuary, visitors could learn about the coming of nineteenth-century industries to a rural, farming town.
Land Evidence Records (unpublished), Richmond Town Clerk's Office, Richmond, R.I.
Probate Records (unpublished), Richmond Town Clerk's Office, Richmond, R.I.
*United States Census*. 1850 and 1870. Washington County, R.I.
and standing structures that all related to the milling activities. The boundary was drawn to leave approximately 100 feet of space on all sides of a site or structure and the Beaver River and follows natural boundaries and arbitrary lines.

At a point 150 feet southeast of the confluence of Beaver River and Cider Mill Brook the Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District boundary begins, proceeding northeast 300 feet, then north-northeast 400 feet, then east 300 feet, then north-northeast 550 feet, then northwest 300 feet, then north-northeast 125 feet, then northeast 250 feet, then north-northeast 750 feet, then north 150 feet where it meets Hillsdale Road, crosses it, and runs along it 1050 feet, then west 1000 feet, then south-southwest 300 feet, then west 300 feet, then south-southwest 500 feet, then southeast 250 feet, then south 250 feet, then south-southeast 75 feet, then southeast 450 feet, then south 200 feet, then west 250 feet, then south-southwest 450 feet, then east 200 feet, then south 200 feet then west 300 feet, then south-southwest 900 feet, then south 300 feet, then southeast 575 feet across Beaver River to point of origin.
8. Significance

Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below |
--- | --- |
prehistoric | archeology-prehistoric |
1400-1499 | archeology-historic |
1500-1599 | agriculture |
1600-1699 | architecture |
1700-1799 | art |
1800-1899 | commerce |
1900- | communications |

Specific dates | Builder/Architect
--- | ---

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Chronology

The significance of the Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District is its typicality: Hillsdale presents a case study in rural nineteenth-century industrial development in Rhode Island. Water-powered industry had begun here at least by the first decade of the nineteenth century when a stone mill (figure 2,#24) ground grain on Beaver River south of the later textile mills (#30-36). By 1833, a woolen mill had been erected (#36) and at the end of the decade a dye house (#37), barn (#44), and three dwelling (#10, 41, 45) existed with the factory. Once in that ten year period the factory complex had been leased by its local owners to Providence manufacturers and on another occasion it was mortgaged to a different Providence group.

In 1850 when the Federal government collected information on the textile manufacturers at Hillsdale, Whitman Kenyon and Sons' business was somewhat larger than most other such businesses in Washington County: forty-nine thousand dollars were invested in the production of Negro cloth, a rough woolen material shipped to the south; nine men and six women were employed to run the sixteen looms that turned out two hundred thousand yards of cloth a year, valued at more than thirty thousand dollars.

At some point between 1839 and 1868 a second stone mill (#30) was constructed south of the first mill. In 1870 Horatio Kenyon's mill employed more workers (seventeen) on a greater number of looms (twenty-eight) to turn out more Negro cloth (three hundred and twenty-five thousand yards) which was, ironically, worth less than it had been twenty years before. Losing ground to the larger, more integrated and efficient mills elsewhere in southern New England, business waned at Hillsdale in the decade 1870 to 1880.

(See Continuation Sheet #4).

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7 United States Census, 1850 Washington County, R.I.
8 Ibid.
9 Land Evidence Records, Richmond, R.I. Book 10, page 543.
10 Hillsdale Mills not listed in United States Census, 1880 Washington County, R.I.
9. Major Bibliographical References


10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 68 (approx.)
Quadrangle name Hope Valley
Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District was drawn to include all archeological sites, their associated features, (see continuation sheet #6

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Stephen Cole, Archeological consultant
organization Rhode Island Historical Preservation date March 1980
street & number 150 Benefit Street telephone 401-277-2678
city or town Providence state Rhode Island

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

For HCBS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Chief of Registration

date July 10 1980
OLD MILL
HILLSDALE HISTORIC and ARCHEOLOGICAL DISTRICT
Richmond, R.I.

mill

Beaver
HILLSDALE HISTORIC and ARCHEOLOGICAL DISTRICT

Richmond, R.I.
Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District
Richmond, Rhode Island

Photographer: Myron Stachiw
Date: August 1979

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Old Mill. Stone supports for flume.
(figure 2, #39)

Photo #1.
Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District
Richmond, Rhode Island

Photographer: Myron Stachiw
Date: August 1979

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DeCoppet House. View southwest.
(figure 2, #6)

Photo #2.
Hilsdale Historic and Archeological District
Richmond, Rhode Island

Photographer: Myron Stachiw
Date: August 1979

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation
Commission

Eighteenth/nineteenth century farm house.
View west. (figure 2, #4)

Photo #3.
Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District
Richmond, Rhode Island

Photographer: Myron Stachiw
Date: August 1979

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Shingle Mill dam. View east.
(figure 2, #26)

Photo #4.
Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District
Richmond, Rhode Island

Photographer: Myron Stachiw
Date: August 1979

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

(figure 2, #16)

Photo #5.
Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District
Richmond, Rhode Island

Photographer: Myron Stachiw
Date: August 1979

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Foundation of store/dance hall.
(figure 2, #9)

Photo #6
Hillsdale Historic and Archeological District
Richmond, R.I.

A 19:279960:  4600530
B 19:279680:  4599390
C 19:279410:  4599490
D 19:279460:  4600580
The copy negative of the graphics is filed in the archaeology lab in drawer marked "graphics"