

# NORTH SMITHFIELD RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

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## BLACKSTONE VALLEY HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY



**Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission  
Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission**

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### **Cover Photographs:**

Slatersville Mill (BRVNHCC photo), Congregational Church in Slatersville  
(BRVNHCC photo), Slatersville Dam (BRVNHCC photo)

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor includes 24 communities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts that are linked by a common geography and by historical events that helped to shape the Industrial Revolution, which is central to America's economic, social and political development. Five Rhode Island communities – Burrillville, Glocester, Lincoln, North Smithfield and Smithfield – have joined together to participate in a study of their shared legacy, a rich cultural heritage that represents the dynamic interaction between nature and culture.

Heritage landscapes are special places created by human interaction with the natural environment that help define the character of a community and reflect its past. They are dynamic and evolving; they reflect the region's history and provide a sense of place; they include the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns; and they often have scenic qualities. These landscapes are central to each community's character, yet heritage landscapes are vulnerable and ever changing. For this reason it is important to take the first steps towards their preservation by identifying those landscapes that are particularly valued by each community – a favorite local farm, a distinctive mill village, a unique Native American site or an important river corridor. The program is funded by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission (BRVNHCC).

The primary goal of the program is to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that are significant and unprotected. The focus is on connecting landscapes to show how they are part of the larger heritage landscape that is the defining character of a community. Another important goal of the program is to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The methodology for Heritage Landscape Inventory programs was developed in Massachusetts and is outlined in the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's publication *Reading the Land*. This methodology, which was used to study Blackstone River Valley communities in Massachusetts in 2007, has provided a baseline for the HLI program in Rhode Island. In each community the town planner served as the Local Project Coordinator (LPC) to assist the RIHPHC-BRVNHCC consulting team. The LPC organized a heritage landscape identification meeting at which interested residents and town officials offered input by identifying heritage landscapes. This meeting was followed by a fieldwork session including the consulting team and the LPC, often accompanied by other community members. This group visited the priority landscapes identified in the meeting and gathered information about the community. The final product is this Reconnaissance Report, prepared for each participating community.

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## REGIONAL HISTORICAL THEMES

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Each of the five communities participating in the program is unique, yet there are strong connections in their historic patterns of development – the ways in which the land was used and in which that history emerges today.

Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley is located in the northern part of the state and comprises cities like Providence and Pawtucket as well as small towns. The rich natural resources of this region attracted and supported Native Americans for thousands of years. Narragansetts, Nipmucks and Wampanoags moved through the area fishing along the rivers and hunting in the uplands, and they established settlements where they cultivated crops and left behind burial and ceremonial sites.

Although this region was considered part of the Providence Plantation established in 1636, it was not until the late 1660s and early 1670s, just before the King Philip's War, that Europeans began to establish themselves in the Blackstone Valley. Early farms were supported by grist and saw mills on the many rivers that flowed through these communities. In 1731 the study area (Burrillville, Glocester, Lincoln, North Smithfield and Smithfield) separated from the town of Providence to become Smithfield and Glocester.

The water power at the early mill sites was a key factor in the shift of the region's solely agrarian economy to a new base of textile mills and agriculture. This began with the 1793 Slater Mill in Pawtucket and was quickly followed by many small mill villages, which were the nuclei of development throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The rise in the textile industry led to expansion of the agrarian economy to sustain the mill villages.

Transportation patterns connecting the villages and their mills were important to the growth of the region. Several main routes followed old Indian trails and eventually were supplemented by the first turnpikes. The Blackstone Canal was constructed in 1824-1828 roughly paralleling the Blackstone River, and serviced the mills and villages in the valley.

Most of the towns flourished during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a wider variety of industrial activities taking place – initially small-scale mills but by mid century larger mill complexes, most of which took advantage of the water power provided by the extensive network of rivers and streams. It was during this era that the present day village centers, which remain focal points in all five communities, emerged. Many of the communities developed their social infrastructure in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – schools, granges, churches, burial grounds.

The early twentieth century brought better transportation systems – improved roads for the new travel modes of automobiles as well as trolleys – and new recreational use of the region's many lakes. However, at the same time came the decline of industrial activity in the Northeast, hence the reduction in use of the many large mill structures.

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The second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought further improvements to the transportation system and new patterns of suburban development. The decline of industrial activity continued except in a few instances where modern companies such as Tupperware reused factory buildings. Other businesses that have helped to sustain the regional economy include institutions, corporate headquarters, and local commerce necessary in all communities. Today, many of the region's residents commute to Providence.



Blackstone River

Participating Communities

Other Rhode Island Communities in Blackstone Valley

## **BLACKSTONE VALLEY HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY**

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## NORTH SMITHFIELD HISTORY

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Although Native Americans, including the Narragansett, Nipmuck and Wampanoag tribes, occupied the North Smithfield area for thousands of years, there are few confirmed sites. Waterways such as the Branch and Woonasquatucket Rivers were fertile ground for fishing, hunting, gathering and some agriculture. North Smithfield was part of the Providence Plantation from 1636, but European settlers did not arrive until ca. 1666 when they moved out from Providence. During King Philip's War (1675-1676) two battles were fought in the vicinity of Nipsachuck, which includes the southwestern part of North Smithfield and part of Smithfield. North Smithfield was set off as part of Smithfield in 1731 and became the separate town of North Smithfield in 1871.

Agriculture was the mainstay of the economy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the requisite small-scale saw and grist mills to support farming. The first textile mill in this region was established in 1807 by Almy, Brown & Slater. Building on the precedent of the first cotton mill, the Slater Mill in Pawtucket, an entire mill village was conceived and first implemented at Slatersville. Scythe factories were constructed in Branch Village and Forestdale, where a cotton mill was also constructed in 1860. Welcome and Darius Farnum of Blackstone, MA built their textile manufacturing on the state line – part in Blackstone and part in North Smithfield at Waterford in the 1820s. Although most textile mills declined in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, North Smithfield experienced a small surge with construction of the Massachusetts based Blackstone Manufacturing Company mills that had begun in Massachusetts in 1809. The Branch River Woolcombing Company at Branch Village also was in operation into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it was there that the Andrews Mill became Tupperware in the 1950s. The Slatersville Mill also operated into the 1950s.

Early roads followed presumed Native American trails along the Blackstone and Branch Rivers. Great Road was laid out in the 17<sup>th</sup> century over Sayles Hill and through Union Village. Providence Pike connected Slatersville with Douglas Pike built in 1805. The Blackstone Canal was completed in 1828 with a stretch in the Waterford part of North Smithfield, but was supplanted by the Providence and Worcester Railroad in 1847. Other train service, mostly passenger service, in 1870s and 1880s included the Providence and Springfield Railroad and the Woonsocket line of New York-New Haven Railroad. The streetcar connected villages with Woonsocket and other outlying villages from 1890 until the 1930s when the automobile took over as the preferred mode of transportation.

Early settlers here were colonists from Providence and some Quakers from Massachusetts – many escaping persecution. Two centuries later at the time of the Civil War when mills were flourishing the first immigrants were Irish, followed by French-Canadians. After the Civil War and during prosperous industrial times the population rose to 2,000 in 1875. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century North Smithfield became a place to live for many Woonsocket workers. The 1900 population of 2,400 had nearly doubled to 4,190 by 1940. Suburbanization of North Smithfield has led to a population increase to about 10,600 by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## **PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES**

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North Smithfield's Heritage Landscape Identification meeting was held on May 13, 2010. During the meeting residents compiled a lengthy list of the town's heritage landscapes, which is included in Appendix A. Attendees were then asked to articulate the value of each landscape and the issues relating to its preservation. Based on the information gathered, community members identified a group of priority landscapes to be visited by the consulting team during the fieldwork. Each of the priority landscapes is highly valued, contributes to community character and is not permanently protected or preserved.

These landscapes, which are listed alphabetically, represent a range of scales and types of resources from individual properties to an entire mill village. Several include areas that have multiple layers. For example a mill village that is considered a heritage landscape may also include specific features that are individually recognized as heritage landscapes. Such layering shows the complexity and interdependence that are characteristic of most heritage landscapes. The descriptions and recommendations included here are an initial step in identifying resources valued by the community and suggesting action strategies.

### **Grange Road**

Grange Road, particularly in the area of Rocky Hill Road is part of the early road system of North Smithfield. Grange Road retains its narrow winding road alignment and is lined with low free-standing stone walls and mature tree canopies. The stone walls are worth noting as they are freestanding frontage walls of which there are few in North Smithfield; most tend to be retaining walls. Opposite Rocky Hill Road is the Primrose Grange (313 Grange Road) built in 1887 and modified in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was raised onto its high molded concrete-block foundation. Behind the Grange is a small family burial ground, one of many scattered throughout all communities in the study area. Farther south on Grange Road there are a number of picturesque farms with 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouses, outbuildings and fields that are contiguous and make up a handsome agricultural landscape.

Planning issues relating to the scenic character of Grange Road are loss of the very features that make it scenic – the stone walls, the trees, the narrow winding roadway. Also, the future of the Primrose Grange is questionable due to the fact that the building has no septic and rests on an undersized lot with no area in which to locate an onsite septic system. It is owned by the Grange which has a small membership and would like to sell the property to the town for \$1. There is no present use or an identified future use; yet, it is a focal point at the intersection of Rocky Hill Road with Grange Road.

Solutions include:

- National Register nomination for Grange Road – already determined eligible.

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- Preserve stone walls by informing residents of incentives and adopt a stone wall ordinance – See Stone Walls in **General Recommendations Section**.
  - Preserve scenic roads by identifying key features and adopting ordinances or standards for road improvements that preserve character – See Local Scenic Roads in **General Recommendations Section**.
  - Identify an adaptive use for Primrose Grange.

This last recommendation is a challenge that may be worth proposing as a study case for a college or university architecture, real estate development or planning or preservation planning course. The first steps are to complete a study of the needed land area, the possibility of purchasing a piece large enough from an adjacent parcel, and the probability of receiving special permits or variances for other non-conforming issues (such as setback and frontage). This information may already be known by planners in North Smithfield. Once these parameters are established creative new uses may be considered. The building is an important thread of local history and will serve the town better if and when a viable use is identified.



*Stone wall at corner of Grange Road and Rocky Hill Road*

### **Nipsachuck**

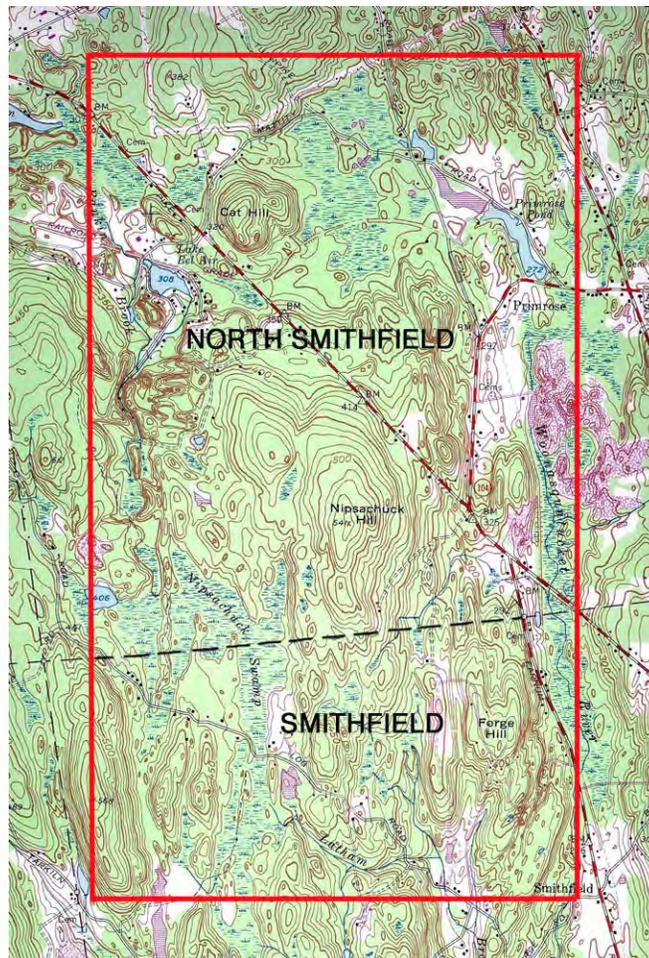
Nipsachuck is an 8,000+ acre area in the southwest part of North Smithfield and the northern part of Smithfield. It is an area of large parcels of rugged upland, mostly wooded with surrounding swamp and wetlands. The acreage in North Smithfield includes Nipsachuck Hill west of Douglas Pike (Route 7) and extends south of Rankin Path to Nipsachuck Swamp, encompassing swamp and uplands that are largely undeveloped. In addition to the swamp area there are examples of irregular kame and kettle topography and a long narrow ridge known as an esker in the Rankin Path area. Nipsachuck is believed to be an important site

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associated with Native American use for thousands of years and the site of important battles of the 1675-76 King Philip's War.

Within this area are stone piles and other shaped structures which are believed by the Narragansett Tribe to be associated with a sacred ceremonial landscape of the region's tribes that existed at Nipsachuck. The orientation of such structures is part of the identification and understanding of these cultural resources. One area that has hundreds of stone piles, believed to be ceremonial stone clusters, is partially enclosed by low stone walls on three sides. Another area of Nipsachuck, known as the Rankin Path area, has conical-shaped stone piles that are relatively tall and found along side of the esker mentioned above.

Issues include the identification and understanding of these man-made structures that exist within a relatively untouched natural area and preservation of highly sensitive and vulnerable resources. While education and information generally is a positive approach, many of these objects and structures are vulnerable to dismantling and many may be on private property; to enhance the preservation of these resources, the information on their exact locations should carefully restricted.



*USGS map showing the approximate Nipsachuck area*

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Solutions include:

- Documenting and mapping of resources some of which is underway with a battlefield mapping grant to the Narragansett Tribal Historic Preservation Office.
- Finding solutions for private property owners such as purchase of conservation easements in order to preserve areas from development while ensuring private property owners value of their land.
- Coordination and communication between town planner and THPO when development proposals for area are received by community.

### **Primrose Pond**

Primrose Pond is a 64-acre former ice pond at the headwaters of the Woonasquatucket River. It is a long pond north of Farnum Pike (Routes 5, 104) and is bound on the east by Pond House Road and on the west by Black Plain Road. Remnants of a dam, a small viaduct, and a mill trench are located along the southern edge. A saw mill that operated from ca. 1780 to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was located on the south end and an ice house built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was located on the western edge. The linear pond is surrounded by privately-owned parcels. The pond is also privately owned and only two non-owners have been granted boat access to the pond. There used to be a summer day camp on Pond House Road.

Use of the pond and documented invasive species such as varied milfoil are threats to this picturesque pond. The private ownership pattern of parcels along the pond frontage often leads to negative impacts on the quality of the pond water due to minimal controls along its edges. Often property owners are unaware of the ill-effects of certain activities such as lawn care or mulch piles or other types of dumping near the pond. This is particularly true where the pond is privately owned and there is no state or local jurisdiction.

Solutions include:

- Document the historic use of the pond and identify remnants of the dam and viaduct.
- Assist owner in applying for water quality testing.
- Develop brochure for property owners on methods of protecting water quality by not using chemicals on lawns, etc. This type of educational information can be general for all water sources and personalized to the specific resource with photographs and facts about the water source.

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An important partner in solutions for Primrose Pond may be *Save the Lakes* ([www.stlri.org](http://www.stlri.org)), an organization dedicated to preserving and improving fresh water in Rhode Island. Workshops presented by the organization have included information about backyard sustainable landscaping practices that protect the quality of water.



*Primrose Pond*

### **Slatersville**

Located in the northern part of North Smithfield on the Branch River, the village of Slatersville was established in 1806 by Samuel and John Slater, who had built the first successful water-powered cotton spinning mill in the country at Pawtucket in 1793. Slatersville, considered to be the earliest industrial village in America and a prototype for mill villages, is named for the Slater family who built the cotton spinning mill here and owned the mill village from the construction of the first mill building in 1806 until ca. 1900. The first mill building burned in 1826 and was immediately reconstructed.

Over the next 75 years buildings were added to the mill complex on the banks of the river. What became the traditional mill village pattern was established in Slatersville with company built workers' housing close to the mill, and supervisors and managers in larger dwellings farther away from the mill near the Slatersville Congregational Church (1838) and the Common, which is owned by the church. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the company came under new owners, who reduced the size of the mill complex and ran it as a bleachery of cotton fabric. It was then acquired by Henry Kendall whose company owned the mill village from 1915 until 1954 and made important improvements to the village while continuing to run a bleaching and dyeing operation.

Commercial buildings and businesses were part of the fabric of the early mill days with the first store built in 1806. More commercial buildings followed, including the three-story stone commercial blocks on Main Street in about 1850 and 1870. When Kendall purchased the village, he introduced village

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improvements, turning Slatersville into a quintessential New England village. Workers' houses were relocated and improved, landscaping was added and, with the construction of civic buildings such as the Town Hall on the site of an old hotel in 1921 and eventually the Kendall Dean School in 1936, this village became the civic and institutional center of North Smithfield as well as a well preserved mill village. The school was the first consolidated school in the village, built on land donated by the Kendall family with the stipulation that the property have some school use in the building in perpetuity.

Slatersville is marked by its topography, with the Branch River running through the lower part of the village and the dwellings, commercial and civic buildings high above on top of the steep slope between Main Street and the river. The old Slatersville Mill (10 Railroad Street) has been converted to 120 units of rental housing of which 10% meet affordability guidelines. Historic preservation and affordable housing tax credits were used to complete this successful project built to the *Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

The Upper and Lower Reservoir, their corresponding dams, canal trenches and spillways are west of the mill complex and offer archetypal scenic views of the industrial past. Mill housing lines Main Street with well preserved Federal and Greek Revival dwellings east of the Town Hall with other tenement houses west of the Town Hall on Main Street, north on North Main Street and across the river on Church Street. There are a few residential side streets branching off of Main. At the intersection of Main and Green Streets is the Slatersville Congregational Church with its tree-shaded Common in front. A block north of the Green is Ridge Street which was developed for the Kendall Company to the designs of the noted landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff. Farther northeast of the village center on Green Street is the cluster of the Kendall Dean School, the Union Grange and the Slatersville Cemetery – all resources that contribute to the significance of this heritage landscape.

Substantive issues relating to Slatersville include: reuse of some of the existing historic buildings; and retention of the green spaces such as the town common in front of the Slatersville Congregational Church, Eagle Park behind the North Smithfield Public Library with views of the Lower Reservoir and Dam, and the slope between Main Street and the Slatersville Mills along the Branch River.

A significant issue is slope erosion along the steep bank next to the Ernest F. Woodworth Trail between Main Street and the Slatersville Mill complex below. Introduction of low growing plant material with a spreading roots system will help to hold the soil on this steep slope. The proximity to the road and the negative impact of the erosion are reasons to address this issue.

The stability of the Lower Dam and Lower Reservoir, which are owned by Holliston Sand and Gravel, is important to and affects the whole community, particularly nearby structures. Preservation of these vital historic and scenic resources, which contribute to the character of the community, requires technical strategies relating to dam construction and water quality and may require incentives to owners due to the high costs of maintenance of dam structures.

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The National Park Service is conducting a Special Resource Study of the Blackstone Valley, which could lead to the designation by Congress of a new national park unit. Slatersville is among several sites that could be included within the boundary of a national park. Inclusion in a national park could have ramifications for the village; for example, tourism could increase.

In addition, the town is debating whether to establish a Local Historic District (LHD) in Slatersville. The proposed LHD boundaries are much tighter than those of the existing National Register Historic District. They include the Slatersville Mill, Town Hall and several residences, among other properties. The community is considering whether also to include the Kendall Dean School (1938), the Union Grange Hall (1897) and the Slatersville Cemetery, all on the outer part of Green Street.



*Historic aerial view of Slatersville*

Solutions include:

- Pursue Local Historic District designation and include the outer end of Green Street. Use basic parameters established in Development Plan Review of Zoning Ordinance, particularly those for Building Design as a base line for review authority.

The appropriate historic boundaries have been determined by the National Register nomination; however if the community chooses not to include the entire National Register district it would be more beneficial to the Town to create a smaller district rather than none at all. The mill is relatively stable and has been rehabilitated in an appropriate fashion. The Upper and Lower Reservoirs and Dams have issues beyond those that are addressed by Local Historic District Zoning and may have to be preserved through other mechanisms.

- Reaffirm Slatersville Area Plan of 1994 and its incorporation into Development Plan Review in the Zoning Ordinance.

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Consistently require compliance as there are appropriate measures that will help to preserve the village character.

The inclusion of Slatersville in a new National Park Service Visitors Center would increase tourism in Slatersville and seems likely to enhance preservation of the village's cultural resources due to increased awareness of local history that would be a natural result as well as a new way of viewing the actual resources that tell the story. It would be an opportunity to incorporate the important relationship between industry and agriculture that is more clearly seen in this region than in some other parts of New England due to the remaining agricultural landscapes that are so close to the clusters of villages in the study area and were an integral link in the success of manufacturing in the Blackstone River Valley.

### **Wright's Dairy Farm**

This 90+acre family owned and operated dairy farm located at 217 Woonsocket Hill Road is a rich agricultural resource that comprises homes, farm buildings, a commercial bakery, and acres of fields planted in corn to maintain approximately 135 milking Holsteins. In 1896 George Wright purchased the first parcel of land that would become Wright's Dairy farm and began delivering milk locally by 1900. The family homestead, located next to the main driveway to the farm, was constructed in 1914. By the 1930s the farm passed to the next generation and Ernest Wright converted home deliveries from cans to glass bottles. A new processing plant was established to accommodate new pasteurization regulations and milk was bottled on site and delivered by Wright's milk trucks.

In the 1970s there was a shift away from home delivery to a retail store at the dairy farm established by the next generation owner, Edward Wright. The milk continued to be processed here and was sold in the dairy store behind the farmhouse. By 1976 the sales of home-made pies expanded into a full bakery business along side the milk production and sales. Over the next 30 years to the present time both the dairy and the bakery businesses have grown, accounting for new buildings at the farm.

The commodious 1914 homestead is a two and one-half story gable-front dwelling with enclosed porch spanning the façade and open hipped roof porch along the east side and 6/1 sash in most windows. Running along the road edge is a low stone retaining wall with piers marking the entry path to the house. A large New England barn is set back from the road on the entry driveway. It has several additions including a gable-front ell off the front east corner (possibly an early milking parlor) and two extensions to the rear of the original late 19<sup>th</sup> century barn. The name "Wrights Dairy" is lettered across the façade. The roof is topped by two ventilators and the one rear addition has an elaborate metal ventilator. Other buildings include a modern loafing barn, the dairy and bakery which have additions including a large retail store (2005), a maternity barn, a large open hay barn, and a state-of-the-art milking barn in 2009.

Also included as part of the larger farm complex are two other dwellings – one is the ca. 1860 D. B. Mowry House, an Italianate bracketed five-bay, two and one half story farmhouse with side ell on the north side of Woonsocket Hill Road and

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the other is a mid 20<sup>th</sup> century one and one-half story cottage located west of the main farm complex.

Issues confronting Wright's Dairy Farm and similar establishments are related to the economics of milk and food production, increasing federal, state and local regulations, customer satisfaction, tourism and recreational choices, estate planning and interest level of the next generations to continue the farming business.

The owners of Wrights Farm have addressed these issues in a variety of innovative ways by: finding new ways to market their products; leasing land from other farm owners to grow corn for feed (hay and straw is purchased); applying for and receiving grants to participate in a manure storage project and assist in the construction of a new state-of-the-art milking barn; organizing the business into departments led by family members with varying skills; and maintaining and requiring a high level of communication among family owners.

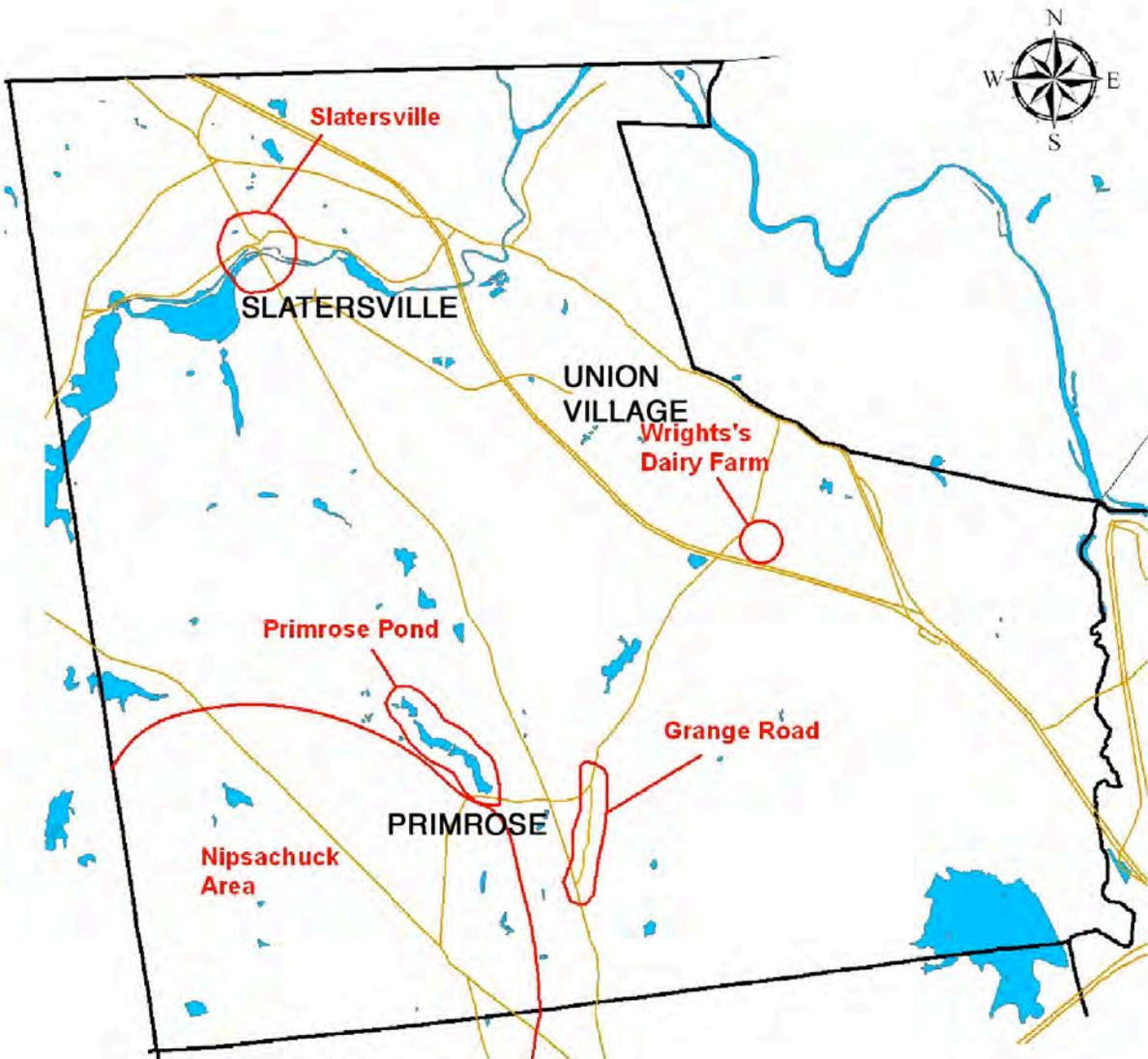


*Aerial view of Wright's Farm (Pictometry International Corp, 2007)*

Other solutions may include:

- Wright's Dairy Farm owners participate in programs that are available to Rhode Island farmers and may set an example for other local farming establishments. See also Agriculture in **General Planning Recommendations** section of report.
- Land use planning that leads to preservation of agricultural fields in North Smithfield and surrounding towns may be an important factor in sustaining this large dairy farm and other similar establishments. Farmers state that they continually need additional acreage for crops such as corn to feed cows at Wright's Farm. Use of Farm, Forest and Open Space Act to reduce taxes on farmland; purchase of development rights; rezoning of certain lands for agricultural business use.

- Consideration of additional products to support agri-tourism such as production and sale of ice cream, coffee, etc. that caters to one-time visitors as well as repeat customers.
- Look into partnerships with schools and other community groups, which may benefit from integration of dairy farming into curricula and may use dairy products.



Priority landscapes are shown in red

**NORTH SMITHFIELD'S PRIORITY LANDSCAPES  
BLACKSTONE VALLEY HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY**

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## **REGIONAL CRITICAL CONCERNS**

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In addition to the five specific landscapes identified as priority landscapes, which are described in the preceding section, North Smithfield residents identified roughly 50 landscapes overall, many of which reflected issues that are common to all five communities participating in the Heritage Landscape Inventory. The full list of landscapes that were identified for North Smithfield is in Appendix A, but the regional issues that they represent are summarized below.

### **Agricultural Landscapes**

Farmers are the stewards of agricultural landscapes that represent important scenic resources, provide fresh, locally grown food and other products to the community and convey the agrarian lifestyle of days past. Loss of active farming and development of agricultural property were concerns of residents who attended meetings in each of the study area's five towns. North Smithfield identified nine agricultural landscapes.

Preservation of agricultural land is best addressed comprehensively by establishing priorities. Priorities will depend on the physical attributes of each farm; its economic viability; the wishes of the owner; and the importance of the farm to the community. In part those were the questions asked during the landscape identification meeting in each community.

### **Burial Grounds**

Each town in the study area has a large number of burial grounds, which are identified on a statewide list. The inventory lists 67 burial grounds in North Smithfield, which residents identified as a group as critical because they are often not known, not accessible and threatened by lack of maintenance or development. Many of these are small family burial grounds which are seriously overgrown and have damaged or missing monuments.

### **Civic and Institutional Properties**

Many historic buildings, such as schools, churches, and granges, have outlived their primary or original function yet they are important as part of the historical record and often an important aspect of the visual and ephemeral character of the rural countryside or of a village center. Unless they have a valid present use, funds are typically not available to preserve them. North Smithfield identified these property types individually and mentioned others in the context of their relationship to village centers.

### **Lakes, Ponds and Reservoirs**

Bodies of water such as lakes, ponds and reservoirs, in each community of the study area, present challenges to nearby residents and to the town. Most lakes and ponds have a distinct historical background connected with early mills and recreational activities. Many reservoirs were created to provide drinking water.

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They are part of the background story and important to the quality of life today. Challenges are effects of present-day uses, which are more intense than in the past and in many cases, are impacting water quality. Invasive species tend to thrive due to the high level of nitrates in the water often caused by lawn and farm fertilizers.

### **Local Scenic Roads**

One of the many ways that North Smithfield residents see and enjoy their town is traveling along the public roads, many of which retain their historic alignment, narrow road width and scenic views over open fields. Stone walls line some of North Smithfield's rural roads and delineate the boundaries of former agricultural fields. Qualities that make a road scenic are stone walls, mature trees, few curb cuts, and views across fields. Threats are road widening, loss of trees and stone walls and many new curb cuts. Residents named as heritage landscapes several scenic routes in the transportation category and also named the road system with emphasis on scenic roads.

### **Mill Villages**

Mill villages along the rivers enrich the landscape, but pose challenging issues, particularly when they include large mill structures which are underused or no longer occupied. Small mill structures are easier to adapt to new uses while large mill structures tend to face more difficult issues such as contamination, complex ownership structure, as well as utility and infrastructure voids that are problematic. In addition the dams associated with mills, many of which are privately owned but publicly regulated, can be costly to maintain and rebuild. With the absence of industrial uses and reuse of some mill structures particularly for housing, there are new residents, some of who may be less connected with the community due to work locations outside of North Smithfield, but also there may be new residents who are interested in supporting community heritage and conservation issues.

### **Stone Walls**

Stone walls line roadways and cut across fields and woods marking property lines or outlining former pasture land, wood lots or other rural special places. They tend to have specific regional characteristics and contribute to the scenic and historic character of each and every community. In this northern region of Rhode Island stone walls are single and double width, of varying heights and are made of various sizes of rounded irregular fieldstones rather than flat fieldstones common to coastal regions in Rhode Island.

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## GENERAL PRESERVATION PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

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Recommendations pertaining directly to the priority heritage landscapes can be found in the section that describes the specific landscape. This section of the Reconnaissance Report offers more general recommendations relevant to preserving the character of the community that are applicable to a wide range of community resources and that cover some of the “Regional Critical Concerns” discussed in the preceding section.

North Smithfield’s residents place high value on the community's strong sense of place, which is created by its varied natural features and land use patterns that made use of the fertile land as well as the rivers and streams for water power.

The town is looking beyond the obvious resources to the more subtle values of landscapes, streetscapes, rural roads, mill village neighborhoods and other natural and cultural assets that define the overall fabric of the community. Like most municipalities, North Smithfield is facing multiple pressures for change that threaten land-based uses and natural resources, especially its remaining farms and mill villages. Special places within the community that were once taken for granted are now more vulnerable than ever to change.

Preservation planning is a three-step process: **identification, evaluation** and **protection**. It also is essential to form partnerships as no one entity and no one strategy is sufficient in effecting comprehensive preservation planning. In Rhode Island the RIHPHC ([www.preservation.ri.gov/](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/)), the BRVNHCC ([www.nps.gov/blac/](http://www.nps.gov/blac/)), Preserve Rhode Island (<http://preserveri.org/>) and Grow Smart Rhode Island ([www.growsmartri.org](http://www.growsmartri.org)) all are significant partners in preservation that can provide education, planning strategies and technical assistance for preservation activities.

Rhode Island’s mandatory comprehensive planning – resulting in Comprehensive Plans that must be updated every five years – recognizes the importance of natural and historical resources which are discussed in their own section in the plans. Heritage landscapes have been addressed by some plans and less so by others; however, now is the time to incorporate them into the Comprehensive Plan. The inclusion will enhance the overall planning for these rich cultural aspects of each community.

Traditionally preservation planning has involved a limited set of strategies that target specific types of historic resources. However, a more comprehensive approach has been gaining recognition, leading preservation planners to better understand the way in which planning goals as reported in Comprehensive Plans and the local zoning code may impact the cultural resources of the town. To this end the recommendations include some proposed changes and additions to local comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.

Recommendations that apply to a broad range of resources are discussed below. These recommendations are listed in the order in which they are most logically addressed when applying the three-step preservation planning process as described above. Thus the goal will be to (1) identify, (2) evaluate, and (3) protect using traditional as well as more progressive strategies.

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## Survey of Heritage Landscapes

While the heritage landscape inventory process helped to identify a wide range of resources that are valued by North Smithfield residents, only the priority landscapes are described in any detail in this report. Thus the vital first step in developing preservation strategies for heritage landscapes is to record more detailed information about these and other resources. One cannot advocate for something unless one knows precisely what it is – the physical characteristics and the historical development. It is this information that often engages the public in wanting to preserve resources.

Nearly all historic resource documentation in North Smithfield dates back 30 years or more, therefore updating of the survey will help to illuminate today's property condition and issues. The RIHPHC survey methodology is a starting point. Many of the heritage landscapes may be more critically understood with a cultural landscape identification approach as outlined by the National Park Service in Bulletin #30, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes* <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb30/>.

- Compile a list of resources that are under-represented or not sufficiently documented, beginning with the heritage landscapes already identified by the community.
- Document unprotected resources first, beginning with the most threatened resources.
- Make sure to document secondary features on rural and residential properties, such as outbuildings, stone walls, and landscape elements such as circulation networks, boundaries and land use patterns that are physically apparent.
- Record a wide range of historic resources including rural landscapes and industrial resources.
- Include heritage landscapes in the next Comprehensive Plan Update.

Ongoing community-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey would help to identify patterns of ancient Native American and later European occupation and to identify known and probable locations of archaeological resources associated with these patterns. Known and potential ancient Native American and historic archaeological sites should be documented in the field for evidence of their cultural association and/or integrity. Care should be taken to keep archaeological site information in a secure location with restricted access.

## National Register Program

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While the National Register does not automatically preserve a property, it does provide an opportunity for state review of proposed modifications in cases where federal or state monies or permits are being utilized.

Using the information generated in survey work and accompanying National Register evaluations, North Smithfield could expand its National Register of Historic Places program to augment the nominations that already exist. The 1980 Preliminary Report of North Smithfield's Historic and Architectural Resources recommended consideration of other properties for inclusion in the National Register. The list is included in Appendix B.

The first step is to re-evaluate each property on the potentially eligible list in Appendix B of this report, followed by developing a National Register listing plan, taking into consideration each property's integrity and vulnerability. Properties that are in need of recognition in order to advance preservation strategies should be given priority. In addition evaluation of archaeological sites and other historic resources not on this list for National Register listing (generated in 1980) may yield a longer list of potentially National Register eligible properties.



*Historic photograph of commercial block in Slatersville*

### **Community-Wide Preservation and Zoning Strategies**

Nearly all preservation strategies address village and neighborhood character in some manner. As described above, thorough documentation is an important first step in the preservation planning process, followed by National Register listing where appropriate. Following identification and evaluation, each community looks for strategies to protect the special areas in the community. There are traditional preservation planning strategies and land use and planning strategies that have been used to support preservation. Some of the tools are described below.

**Local historic district zoning** is one of the most effective traditional preservation strategies in many Rhode Island communities including North

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Smithfield. It is based on Rhode Island General Laws Title 45, Chapter 45-24.1 for *Historical Area Zoning*. A local historic district ordinance, which is adopted through a local initiative, recognizes special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected by the designation. These districts are one of the strongest forms of protection for the preservation of historic resources. They are adopted by the Town Council. North Smithfield's Historical District Zoning Ordinance applies to Union Village and the Blunders.

**A demolition delay ordinance** provides a time period in which municipalities and property owners can explore alternatives to demolition. While relatively rare in Rhode Island, demolition delay ordinances are employed more widely in other states. Such ordinances allow communities to defer demolition of historic structures for an allotted period of time. This delay may help to deter developers and owners from demolishing historic structures that need new systems or are in the middle of a lot making it more challenging to subdivide. In Rhode Island demolition delay has only been adopted in a couple of communities and is part of the zoning ordinance.

**Neighborhood architectural conservation districts** are local initiatives that recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected. They are less restrictive than local historic districts but still embrace neighborhood character. These districts are used in many states across the nation and are similar to local historic district designation but less restrictive; regulations tend to address massing and scale rather than materials and architectural detail. However Rhode Island's state statute for local historic districting can be tailored to the needs of a community in a more flexible way than in many states. Therefore the flexibility and the less restrictive standards of a neighborhood architectural conservation district may be less applicable than in other states. Perhaps in instances where a local historic district ordinance has been written for one part of a neighborhood or village in a town, a neighborhood architectural conservation district may be more appropriate for another neighborhood where there is a need to embrace neighborhood character without the restrictive regulations of an already established local historic district.

**Conservation cluster development** seeks to preserve open space while allowing for the same building yield with more compact development. While most ordinances are similar in goals and implementation there may be ways to make this approach to subdivision more enticing or a requirement for large parcels in particular. This would be a particularly effective way in which to develop a large rural parcel. It is a method in which to preserve certain land uses as well. For parcels in large parcel zoning districts subdivision should require the submittal of a conventional subdivision plan and a conservation development plan. The reviewing board should be able to approve the better of the two plans and offer an additional unit or percentage of units based on the size of the land area and development size. The open space set aside could be farm land that remains in agricultural use.

**Flexible zoning** gives the Planning Board the ability to shift some of the dimensional requirements in a subdivision in order to preserve certain features on

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a property such as key historic structures, stone walls, a stand of trees, or a promontory, as long as there is no increase in density.

**Overlay districts** provide a new set of rules for the development of land in a particular area that supersedes the underlying zoning can help to accomplish goals without creating a whole new zoning district. Overlay districts may be used to preserve certain vistas along rural roads, or certain development patterns in a village center.

### **Agricultural Landscapes**

As land use pressures intensify, farm owners now need multiple tools and partners to retain and work their land. Thus, preservation strategies require partnerships to assist in that stewardship. North Smithfield is presently developing an agricultural business zone which will allow more “as-of-right” development for agricultural development including infrastructure.

- Document historic barns and other farm outbuildings. Consider The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR) “Barns in the Highland Communities” report as a model.
- Encourage owners to investigate the sale of development rights through the *Farmland Preservation Act* (Rhode Island General Law Chapter 42-82) administered by Department of Environmental Management’s Division of Agriculture.
- Enroll farmland in program established by the *Farm, Forest and Open Space Act* (Rhode Island General Law Chapter 44-27) to ensure that the land is assessed at its farming use value rather than potential development use. Enrollment requires an approved conservation plan outlining best management practices.
- Adopt the *Right to Farm Act* (Rhode Island General Law, Chapter 2-23) in order to support farmers when there are conflicts in adjacent land uses.
- Form an *Agricultural Preservation Commission* to help advocate for farmers, develop zoning that is beneficial to farmers, and assist in implementing goals to preserve farming that appear in study area Comprehensive Plans and Updates.
- Join *Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership*, a newly formed coalition with a mission to enhance agriculture and local food systems and develop a five-year strategic plan to sustain and improve agriculture in Rhode Island.
- Support *Rhode Island Center for Agricultural Promotion and Education* [www.rifarmways.org](http://www.rifarmways.org) and its New England FarmWays program. This organization supports farmers in planning, research, management, marketing, local communication, tourism and other pertinent topics to local farmers.

### **Burial Grounds**

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While the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission <http://www.historicalcemeteries.ri.gov/> has a data base of all of its burial grounds, in most cases very little is known about the historic resources, current ownership and existing conditions of each burial ground, particularly the smaller, less well-known ones.

- Map all burial grounds in town preferably with GPS locations.
- Prepare updated inventory to identify burial grounds that are particularly vulnerable to change, followed by preservation plans for those that are at the highest risk.
- Consult organizations such as the Association for Gravestone Studies <http://www.gravestonestudies.org>, which are a good source of information for citizens interested in documenting burial grounds. Stone conservation work should only be undertaken by a trained conservator.
- Establish an Adopt-a-Cemetery program to provide care for burial grounds in poor condition.
- Adopt an ordinance that preserves and protects burial grounds and cemeteries as well as a buffer area around the same. North Smithfield has such an ordinance which preserves a 25-foot buffer area around the limits of burial grounds and cemeteries.

### **Civic and Institutional Properties**

Reuse of civic and institutional properties requires knowledge of land use regulations in the area, needs of the community and a conditions assessment of the property in order to understand cost and benefit of reuse options.

- Develop assessment report of building or structure to include architectural description, history, conditions, zoning, allowed uses, options, etc.
- Form friends groups to raise private funds to maintain civic and institutional properties and to solicit private partners such as local businesses to assist in funding preservation of historic civic and institutional buildings.
- Arrange adaptive reuse charrettes to brainstorm about ways in which to preserve under-used or vacant buildings.



*Primrose Grange on Grange Road is currently unused and in poor condition*

### **Lakes, Ponds, and Reservoirs**

Preservation of waterbodies such as lakes, ponds and reservoirs takes cooperation among abutters and other users of the waterbodies. Some of the challenge is lack of information about the ill-effects of certain types of activities.

- Develop water-quality testing program. Advertise results with interpretive information.
- Develop brochure for property owners on methods of protecting water quality by not using chemicals on lawns, etc. This type of educational information can be general for all water sources and personalized to the specific resource with photographs and facts about the water source.

An important partner in solutions for waterbodies may be *Save the Lakes* ([www.stlri.org](http://www.stlri.org)), an organization dedicated to preserving and improving fresh water in Rhode Island. Workshops presented by the organization have included information about backyard sustainable landscaping practices that protect the quality of water.

### **Local Scenic Roads**

Scenic roads are an integral part of the historic fabric of a community. They are highly valued by residents and visitors alike. Yet, roads must also accommodate modern transportation needs and decisions regarding roadways are often made with travel requirements as the only consideration. The visual quality of a road is made up of characteristics that are within the public right-of-way and those that

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are on private property including tree canopies, stone walls and views across open fields. Rhode Island has a Scenic Roadways program for the designation and preservation of scenic state roads. Only eight roads have been so designated one of which is in Lincoln – one of the towns participating in the Heritage Landscape Inventory program. The local Highway Department can request designation of a particular state road or sections thereof; however that would not apply to the many winding rural roads that are evocative of North Smithfield’s agricultural past. The best protection is for the town to adopt a local designation process with an ordinance that provides review for certain actions that may change the scenic quality of roads.

Protection of scenic roads therefore requires more than one approach.

- Complete an inventory with descriptions and photo documentation of each of the roads in North Smithfield including the character-defining features that should be retained. The 2006 Comprehensive Plan Update recommends a Scenic Roads Inventory as well.
- Adopt design criteria to be considered when approving removal of trees and stone walls, such as a provision allowing only one driveway cut per property on scenic roads. This is particularly applicable to subdivisions and not appropriate for working farms that often require multiple entrances. Once adopted, coordinate procedures between the Highway Department and the Planning Board that reviews subdivisions.
- Consider a scenic overlay district that may provide a no-disturb buffer on private property bordering on scenic roads or adopt flexible zoning standards to protect certain views.
- Develop local policies and implementation standards for road maintenance and reconstruction, including bridge reconstructions, which address the scenic and historic characteristics while also addressing safety. This is an important public process in which the community may have to accept responsibility for certain costs to implement standards that are not acceptable to projects funded by Rhode Island Department of Transportation. Such standards should have a section addressing the way in which the local Highway Department maintains roads, for example requiring a public hearing if any trees or stone walls are to be removed or if additional pavement is to be added to a town road during reconstruction or repair. Policies can be adopted by local boards having jurisdiction over roads, or can be adopted through an ordinance passed by the Town Council. In developing policies consider factors such as road width, clearing of shoulders, walking paths, posted speeds. A delicate balance is required.

### **Mill Villages**

Preservation strategies appropriate for mill villages often support economic development due to the cohesiveness of villages and the character of many of the buildings. To maintain the size, scale and massing within the village as well as preserve distinctive building types, local historic district designation is the most effective tool. Other zoning strategies may help to make large mill buildings

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more viable such as: overlay districts that may provide additional allowed uses; and flexible zoning that may allow flexibility in dimensional requirements. The Rhode Island Historic Homeowner's Tax Credit can be an important preservation tool for residences that are listed in the National Register, providing homeowners with a 20% tax credit for approved, exterior restoration work. The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit provides tax incentives for the rehabilitation of income-producing properties, as does the state Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credit (currently unavailable but could be re-instituted).



*Rehabilitated mill in Slatersville*

### **Stone Wall Preservation**

Stone walls are vulnerable to development of rural parcels, widening of rural roads and even as a source of revenue. There are two mechanisms that have been used in some Rhode Island communities – one is an incentive, the other is a regulation.

A state statute (R.I.G.L. § 44-3-43) provides a valuation exemption of up to \$5,000 that can be subtracted from the assessed value of a property that retains its stone walls. A municipality must adopt an ordinance to take advantage of this state statute. Within this statute the definition of “historic stone walls” is those stone walls that pre-date 1900 and are a vertical alignment of natural stones. The tax exemption can only be applied to walls that are at least three feet in height, at least 50 feet in length and are maintained.

Four communities in Rhode Island have developed regulatory ordinances that provide a modicum of protection. Each relies on the definition of “historic stone walls” in the tax exemption statute. The Town of Smithfield has developed an ordinance that has become the model for other communities - the Smithfield Stone Wall Protection and Preservation Ordinance. This law gives the legal authority to the municipality to fine an owner who removes stone walls without

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necessary permits or conditions in a permit. Other communities in this study area are working to adopt an ordinance similar to Smithfield's.

### **Funding of Preservation Projects**

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing preservation strategies. Both the RIHPHC and BRVNHCC have limited funding programs to assist communities in preservation-related issues. Communities that have adopted historic district zoning are eligible for Certified Local Government (CLG) status. Once designated a CLG by the RIHPHC, the community is eligible for some survey and planning grants through the RIHPHC. North Smithfield is already a CLG which means that it can apply for grants to assist in survey, National Register and preservation planning projects. Other funding sources include:

- *Preservation is Local* grants for planning and documentation projects that have been leveraged with CLG funding – grant program only operated in 2009 and future is unknown. RIHPHC Program.
- *Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)* funds for improving community facilities, neighborhood revitalization, and economic development. A limited funding source particularly for non-entitlement communities which includes all five towns in the study area.
- The *Federal Investment Tax Credit (ITC)* can make a difference in the financing of a project that is completing a substantial rehabilitation of an income producing property that is listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. A “certified rehabilitation” that is carried out in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation is eligible for a 20% investment tax credit. RIHPHC for information.
- The *Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credit* is presently not funded but may be re-instituted. It played a significant role in preserving many important historic resources and was particularly useful in the redevelopment of large mill structures. RIHPHC Program.
- The *Historic Homeowner's Tax Credit* can assist owners in the cost for rehabilitating their National Register-listed home. RIHPHC Program.
- Local funding sources such as the real estate conveyance tax payable to municipality may be redirected to preservation of heritage landscapes such as agricultural land. Use of these funds is community policy determined at the local level. Other sources may be local businesses that may benefit from preservation of property.

Funding for state programs varies from year to year. When planning North Smithfield's heritage landscape inventory program, contact relevant agencies to determine whether funding is available.

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## CONCLUSIONS

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The North Smithfield Reconnaissance Report is a critical tool in starting to identify the town's rich and diverse heritage landscapes and in beginning to think about preservation strategies. North Smithfield will have to determine the best way to implement the recommendations discussed above. One approach that might help North Smithfield begin the process is to form a Heritage Landscape Committee which would work with the North Smithfield Historic District Commission to implement a comprehensive landscape inventory and to guide implementation of recommendations of this report.

Landscapes identified in this report, especially the priority landscapes, will typically need further documentation. That documentation in turn can be used in publicity efforts to build consensus and gather public support for their preservation. Implementation of recommendations will require a concerted effort that includes partnerships among municipal boards and agencies, local non-profit organizations, and state agencies and commissions.

Distribution of this Reconnaissance Report to the municipal land use boards and commissions will assist in making this one of the planning documents that guides North Smithfield in preserving important features of the community's character. The recommended tasks will require cooperation and coordination among boards and commissions, particularly North Smithfield's Historic District Commission, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission. It also is advisable to present this information to the Town Council. Distribution of the report to the North Smithfield Land Trust, neighborhood associations and any other preservation-minded organizations such as the North Smithfield Heritage Association will broaden the audience and assist in gathering interest and support for North Smithfield's heritage landscapes. Finally, this report should be distributed to the owners of landscapes identified through this process, especially the high-priority landscapes. This could help owners understand the significance of their property, its importance to the community, and options for protection.

## APPENDIX A: HERITAGE LANDSCAPES IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY

This list was generated by local participants at the Heritage Landscape Identification Meeting held in North Smithfield on May 13, 2010. The follow-up fieldwork was completed on June 2, 2010. **There are undoubtedly many other heritage landscapes that were not identified at the HLI meeting noted above.** The chart has two columns, the names and locations of resources are in the first; notes about resources are in the second. Landscapes are grouped by land use category. Abbreviations are listed below.

CR = Conservation Restriction

LHD = Local Historic District

NR = National Register

PR = Preservation Restriction

\* = Priority Landscape

<b>Agriculture</b>	
<b><i>Aldrich Farm</i></b> Comstock Rd	On lane off Pound Hill Road with farmhouse built in three stages (ca. 1775, 1815, 1825). Spacious 1912 barn and other outbuildings. Potentially eligible for NR listing.
<b><i>Goodwin Brothers</i></b> Providence Pike & Greenville Rd	Market gardening with pick-your-own blueberries, strawberries, raspberries and pumpkins. Farm stand with large parking area on Greenville Road. 94 acres in farm land tax program. Five-bay cape with attached later barn was part of farm – no longer owned by same family.
<b><i>Green Acres Farm</i></b> Pound Hill Rd	Protected. Described as the quintessential New England farm the property was owned by Doris Green until her recent death when it was purchased by one of the owners of Wright’s Dairy Farm. Here the Wrights grow corn for the cows at the dairy farm. Early 20 <sup>th</sup> century farmhouse.
<b><i>Hi-on-a-Hill Herb Farm</i></b> 836 Old Smithfield Rd	Seventh generation farm specializing in herbs and conservation. Glacial erratics on farm. Set back from Old Smithfield Road. Known as the old Allen Farm with 19 <sup>th</sup> century farmhouse, barns and two newer family houses as well as other outbuildings and greenhouses.
<b><i>Martin Farm</i></b> Woonsocket Hill Rd	Well known vista of Martin Barn from Route 146. Historically known as Cyrus Arnold Farm for its mid 19 <sup>th</sup> century owner. The house was built in ca. 1815 and barn, which is situated on a hill, in ca. 1890– local landmark viewed across valley from Route 146.
<b><i>*Primrose Grange</i></b> 313 Grange Rd	Built in 1887 as a one-story building – enlarged in early 20 <sup>th</sup> century when raised and concrete block first story added. Still used as a meeting place.
<b><i>Smith-Andrews-Taft-Todd Farm</i></b> 670 Farnum Pike (Greenville Rd.)	NR. 18 <sup>th</sup> century house, barns, land, small pond. Ca. 1740 house – central 5-bay center chimney section of existing long dwelling – with two 3-bay lateral additions of ca. 1800, each with end chimneys. The pond is partially spring fed and flows into Great Cedar Swamp and Sandy Plains. Remainder of saw mill and dam also on property.
<b><i>Willowdale Farm</i></b> Iron Mine Hill Rd	75 acres with woodlot at the back and old logging trail that leads to woodlot. Pre-Civil War pegged barn. No longer a working farm. Unsure future due to taxes which is an issue for large landowners. Old burial monument dating to Civil War era.
<b><i>* Wright’s Dairy</i></b> 207 Woonsocket Hill Rd	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> c. farmhouses, cow barns, equipment sheds etc and surrounding pasture and agricultural fields where corn is grown for cows. 34 acres in farmland tax program.

<b>Burial Grounds and Cemeteries</b>	
<b><i>All Cemeteries</i></b>	Approximately 67 cemeteries and burial grounds identified and registered with Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries. Most of these are small family burial grounds such as North Smithfield Historical Cemetery #10 which is the Morrison-Streeter Cemetery in woods behind 956 Old Smithfield Rd. It has a stone wall on three sides and a wood fence on the west side.
<b><i>Smithfield Friends Cemetery</i></b> Route 146A	Religious Society of Friends more commonly known as Quakers. Meetinghouse is in Woonsocket; 18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> C. burial ground is in North Smithfield where about 300 Friends are buried. First meetinghouse built in 1719, burned in 1881 and current building replaced it.
<b>Centers/Villages</b>	
<b><i>Rankin Village</i></b>	From 1800s – some foundations remain. Documentation is unclear.
<b><i>*Slatersville</i></b>	NR. On Branch River in northwest section of town. Was the site of a grist and saw mills and known as Buffum’s Mills in 18 <sup>th</sup> century. In 1805-1807 Almy & Brown joined with Slater brothers to build first cotton mill here in 1807 which became the first industrial village in the United States. On hill above mill is original agricultural society (substantially altered), ca. 1850s to 1870s three-story stone commercial blocks, 1838 Congregational Church and Common which belongs to church, 1921 brick Colonial Revival Town Hall, variety of domestic structures from Slater’s Mill era.
<b><i>Union Village</i></b> Great Road	NR. LHD. Comprising nearly 30 residences spanning the 18 <sup>th</sup> to 20 <sup>th</sup> century. One of first settlers here was Richard Arnold (house is ca. 1690). Village evolved around crossroads of n-s and e-w routes with commercial enterprises - several inns opened here, first bank in this part of RI for which village was named. Providence-Worcester RR bypassed Union Village leading to decline as a nexus until streetcar passed through here making it a Woonsocket residential suburb. Rerouting of Great Road to North Smithfield Expressway in 1960 removed through traffic making it a bucolic residential neighborhood.
<b>Civic/Institutional</b>	
<b><i>Forestdale Schoolhouse</i></b> Main Street	NR. Part of Forestdale Mill HD. Built in 1877 and first known as the Branch School in District Number Three. Land was given by the Forestdale Manufacturing Company. In 1970s when abandoned as schoolhouse town leased to North Smithfield Heritage Association which uses it as headquarters.
<b><i>Heritage Hall</i></b> 101 Green Street	On the edge of Slatersville next to the Kendall-Dean School. Multiple uses: built in 1897 as St. Luke’s Episcopal Mission to serve Slatersville mills, later known as Lincoln Hall, Union Grange #13, now being restored and used by North Smithfield Heritage Association.

<b>Industrial</b>	
<b><i>Forestdale Mill</i></b> Main & Maple Sts	NR. Part of Village HD. On Branch River. Industry began here in 1824 as scythe factory also manufactured sabers used by Union Army officers in the Civil War. In 1860 large cotton mill built adjacent to scythe works. The mill burned in 1978.
<b><i>Granite Quarry</i></b> Iron Mine Hill Rd	The quarry is between Iron Mine and Rocky Hill
<b><i>Mammoth Mill Arches</i></b> Canal & Mill Sts.	Built near canal in 1836 by Welcome Farnum of Blackstone as one of largest woolen mills in area. Had three large arches – wheels –powered by water diverted from Blackstone Canal. Mill Number 1 burned in 1864 and rebuilt by Evans & Seagrave, abandoned in 1929. Destroyed in 1930 leaving only arches and some mill foundations.
<b><i>Slatersville Mill and Waterways</i></b>	In NR district. Eastern mills date to 1826, remains of western mills include part of gateway system. Reservoir, dam, canals.....regulated by gate system. Part of gateway broke away recently causing flooding. Old grind stone overgrown near waterways. Trench from Upper Reservoir flows behind houses on south side of Main Street. Eastern mills have been reused and rehabbed as apartments.
<b>Native American</b>	
<b><i>*Nipsachuck</i></b>	Swamp and hill area in southwest corner of town. About 8,000 acres in the towns of North Smithfield and Smithfield. Many features and sites associated with Native Americans. Site of two King Philip's War battles in 1675 and 1676. The battlefields are being mapped. Site of Rankin Village long abandoned but evidence in cellar holes and small burying ground. Potential ceremonial stone landscapes, indicated by piles of stones with specific orientations. Including parts of Black Plain Road; National Grid Easement.
<b><i>Native American Trails</i></b>	Those that have not become main roads are likely to be on private property with little information available.
<b>Natural / Open Space / Parks</b>	
<b><i>Audubon Property</i></b> Providence Pike (Rt.5)	Protected. Florence Sutherland Fort and Richard Knight Fort Nature Refuge is a 235-acre woodland refuge at the headwaters of the Woonasquatucket River – three small ponds.
<b><i>Great Cedar Swamp</i></b> Greenville Rd	On Cherry Brook – source for lumber to early settlers and into 19 <sup>th</sup> c. – Much of it filled and Route 146 cuts through swamp. Wildlife habitat now.
<b><i>Providence Pike Elm Tree</i></b>	Only one elm left on Providence Pike near the Slatersville Mills – opposite Church Street – once was a row of elms as on Ridge Road also in Slatersville.
<b><i>Mattity / Mattetokomitt Meadow</i></b>	Swamp in sw part of town – called Mattetokomitt Meadow on early 1690 map – now cedar swamp with lesser found cedar species. Headwaters of the Woonasquatucket River which flows into Primrose Pond. Native American features here, too.
<b><i>Pacheco Park</i></b> 11 Main Street, Slatersville	In Slatersville. Open space behind the mills. Scout Hall located in the park.

<b><i>Sandy Plains</i></b> Off Farnum Pike	On original Taft-Todd farm around and beyond the pond. Now partially covered by National Grid sub-station and extends into Great Cedar Swamp
<b><i>Sayles Hill</i></b>	Original Great Road went over Sayles Hill in 17 <sup>th</sup> C. New route of early 18 <sup>th</sup> C. went around hill. The impression of early road still visible.
<b><i>Scenic Views</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) From Route 146 at top of the hill across Cedar Swamp to Martins Barn</li> <li>b) Union Hill – Pomona Street – recently developed for housing.</li> <li>c) Brentwood Drive with view to Woonsocket and Cumberland.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Woonsocket Hill</i></b>	586’ hill at center of town with Mowry Fire Tower on top. Was thought to be the highest point in Rhode Island. Known as one of the beacon pole hills.
<b>Residential</b>	
<b><i>Brayton House Site</i></b> Great Rd	Original house built by James Brayton, former slave ca. 1790, remained in family until it burned in the 1970s. On Great Road across from Lapray Road.
<b><i>Buxton Street Houses</i></b>	Collection of 19 <sup>th</sup> century dwellings and several barns of note with the farmhouses. Most notable is the one and one-half story, mid 19 <sup>th</sup> century brick farmhouse at 251 Buxton Street.
<b>Transportation</b>	
<b><i>Black Plain Road</i></b>	An old road that now has much housing.
<b><i>Blackstone Canal</i></b> Canal Street	Remnant of canal in Waterford section of North Smithfield. The 45-mile long canal was built between 1824 and 1828 and functioned for only about 20 years. It was supplanted by the railroad for transportation of goods.
<b><i>*Grange Road</i></b>	Part of first system of roads in area. Several old dwellings and farms – good example of North Smithfield’s agricultural past. Stone walls of note.
<b><i>Great Road</i></b>	Followed the path of the Native American’s Great Trail.
<b><i>Iron Mine Hill Road</i></b>	Very old trail leading from top of Sayles Hill to Mattity Swamp.
<b><i>Historic Road System</i></b>	Scenic roads such as Grange, Rocky Hill and others laid over old trails with vistas, historic stone walls, and historic properties.
<b><i>Milestones</i></b>	NR. In Union Village at corner of Great Road and Woonsocket’s South Main Street. Also one on Route 146A on island at CVS.
<b><i>Old Smithfield Road</i></b>	Part of the cultural corridor – route of Providence Stage Line
<b><i>Railroad</i></b>	Through Primrose, across Greenville Road, Black Plain Road, Douglas Pike and Fields Station near Lake Belair.

<b><i>Ridge Road</i></b>	Some elms remain forming a canopy.
<b><i>Trolley Path Remnants</i></b>	Along Old Smithfield Road
<b>Waterbodies</b> <b><i>Brooks, Ponds, Rivers</i></b>	
<b><i>Blackstone River</i></b>	Northern part of North Smithfield – hemlocks with rocks = High Rocks area
<b><i>Blackstone Gorge</i></b>	Protected. In a park that is in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.
<b><i>Booth Pond</i></b>	Booth Pond is located within the Booth Pond Conservation Area bordering urban parts of Woonsocket and commercial development in North Smithfield. Known for its biodiversity of plants and birds. It has one of the highest number of dragonfly and damsel fly species in RI.
<b><i>*Primrose Pond</i></b>	Also known as Crystal Lake. 64-acre pond at headwaters of Woonasquatucket River. Surrounded by privately owned parcels of land. Was an ice pond.

## **APPENDIX B: EXISTING RESOURCE DOCUMENTATION AND PLANNING TOOLS**

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North Smithfield already has important planning tools in place to document current conditions within the town; identify issues of concern to town residents; and develop strategies for action. This section of the Reconnaissance Report identifies some of the existing planning documents and tools that provide information relevant to preserving heritage landscapes in the community.

### **Survey of Historic and Architectural Resources**

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission's (RIHPHC) Inventory of Historic and Architectural Resources is a statewide program that identifies significant historic resources in each municipality in the State. Historic properties are listed on RIHPHC data sheets, which record the basic information about properties: descriptions, location recorded on historic maps, and names associated with the property.

Most North Smithfield properties were recorded in 1973 and analyzed in *Historic and Architectural Resources of North Smithfield, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report* published in 1980. Some properties have been preserved using recommendations included in the Preliminary Report; others have been altered or lost; and still others remain undocumented.

Landscape survey work of the 1980s documents a 1927 stone bridge at Slatersville and a 1926 and a 1941 landscape around the Slatersville Finishing Company. The published 2001 report *Historic Landscapes in Rhode Island* describes three local properties: Christianson Orchards on Buxton Street, the Grange Road streetscape and Wright's Dairy Farm. All three are included in the master list in Appendix A and two of the three are priority landscapes in this project.

There are nine archaeological sites that have been documented and are on file at the RIHPHC. One is listed in the National Register; the other eight are eligible for listing and are potentially vulnerable due to road improvements or private development according to North Smithfield's updated Comprehensive Plan. Presently the Narragansett Indian Tribal Preservation Office is engaged in a mapping project – the goal of which is to identify and connect Native American burial and ceremonial sites in collaboration with the RIHPHC.

### **State and National Registers of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. North Smithfield has four National Register districts:

- Forestdale Mill Village Historic District,
- Slatersville Historic District,
- Smithfield Road Historic District, and
- Union Village Historic District.

Five properties are individually listed in the National Register including:

- Three Dog Archaeological Site, Farnum Pike
- William Mowry House, Farnum Pike
- Smith-Andrews-Taft-Todd Farm, Farnum Pike
- Tyler Mowry House, Sayles Hill Road
- Peleg Arnold Tavern, Woonsocket Hill Road.

These listings occurred in the 1970s and 1980s except for the Tyler Mowry House which was listed in 1996.

The 1980 *Historic and Architectural Resources of North Smithfield* also listed a number of properties that are potentially eligible for National Register listing. One, West Acres, has been demolished. The others are:

- Grange Road Historic District
- Aldrich Farm, Comstock Road
- Mowry-Connolly House, Iron Mine Hill Road
- A. Aldrich Farm, Iron Mine Hill Road,
- Ananias Mowry II House, Iron Mine Hill Road
- Metcalf Marsh House, Mechanic Street
- Andrews Tavern, Old Great Road
- Old Sayles Hill Road Historic Roadway
- House, 485 Pound Hill Road
- Nathan Staples Farm, Providence Pike
- Blackmar Wing Farm, 2338 Providence Pike
- Cyrus Arnold Farm, Woonsocket Hill Road

The 2006 Update to the town's Comprehensive Plan stated that two districts have been determined eligible for listing in the National Register including the Grange Road Historic District and Waterford Historic District along St. Paul's Street.

### **Planning Documents and Tools**

All municipalities in Rhode Island are required to write a Comprehensive Plan and to update that plan every five years. The town's latest update to the *North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan* was written in 2006. North Smithfield also has other important planning documents that provide a framework for town decision making such as the Slatersville Area Plan. Important regulatory accomplishments related to community character and heritage landscapes are:

**Conservation Development Zoning.** A mechanism by which to develop land by clustering the development together on small lots or one lot in residential districts and providing a percentage of open space in return for being able to cluster the development, which reduces infrastructure costs.

**Development Plan Review.** The guidelines set forth in this section of the Zoning Ordinance are in concert with preservation strategies particularly those that relate to building design.

**Historic District Zoning.** North Smithfield has two local historic districts – one in Union Village, the other known as the Blunders. An historic district commission administers the districts.

**Preservation and Protection of Cemeteries or Burial Grounds.** This ordinance preserves buffer zones around burial grounds or cemeteries in which there is to be no disturbance or disruption. This is particularly useful for the many old family burial grounds found on farms that may be subdivided for new housing development, or for other new activities on the land.

**Redevelopment Agency.** The Redevelopment Agency is established by ordinance to facilitate redevelopment in blighted or substandard areas. The first area to be addressed by this ordinance

will be Branch Village, an area in which no heritage landscapes were added to the list at the community meeting.

North Smithfield was one of six municipalities that participated in the 2003-04 Woonasquatucket Greenspace Protection Strategy project. Of the six municipalities that participated Gloucester, North Smithfield and Smithfield also are included in this Heritage Landscape Inventory program. The Woonasquatucket project looked at regional issues relating to the Woonasquatucket River watershed using the Comprehensive Plan outline as a guide. An important product of this project was the understanding of the complexity of heritage landscapes –the overlapping categories as well as overlapping municipal boundaries – and the importance of a regional approach to preserve and protect this heritage. Recommendations for each category – natural resources, cultural resources, and recreational resources – are guides to heritage landscape preservation priorities in this watershed.

