

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Earnscliffe Woolen/Paragon Worsted Company Mill Complex

other names/site number M&F Worsted, Artcraft Braid, Cathedral Art Metal Company

**2. Location**

street & number 25 and 39 Manton Avenue  not for publication

city or town Providence  vicinity

state Rhode Island code RI county Providence code 007 zip code 02909

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

- entered in the National Register
  - See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
  - See continuation sheet.
- other (explain)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Earncliffe Woolen/Paragon Worsted Company Mill Complex  
Name of Property

Providence County, Rhode Island  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box.)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
10	3	buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
11	3	total

**Name of related multiple property listings**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY: manufacturing facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY: manufacturing facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: 19th- and 20th -century industrial  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation STONE: granite; CONCRETE  
walls BRICK; CONCRETE;  
CONCRETE: block  
roof WOOD; ASPHALT  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
#
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
#

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

### Period of Significance

1898–1956

### Significant Dates

1898, 1921

### Significant Person

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Leach, George designer (Building 1)

Maguire and Penniman, contractor (Building 1)

Name of repository

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 4.4 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1   9	2   9   7   0   0   0	4   6   3   2   2   4   0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Edward Connors

organization Edward Connors and Associates date June 2006

street & number P.O. Box 154522 telephone 401 595-0699

city or town Riverside state Rhode Island zip code 02915

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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**DESCRIPTION**

**General**

Located in the Olneyville section of Providence, Rhode Island, the Earnscliffe Woolen/Paragon Worsted Company Mill complex is a group of eleven late 19<sup>th</sup>- to mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century, 1- to 3-story, brick industrial buildings. Roughly triangular in shape, the complex consists of several inter-related buildings, constructed over five decades, forming an accretive grouping. The 4.4-acre riverfront site is bounded by Manton Avenue on the west, Delaine Street (including the rear lot line of several residential properties along Delaine) on the north, and the Woonasquatucket River on the south and east. Paragon Pond Dam (RIDEM No. 139), adjacent to Building 5, has a closer historical association with the Providence Dyeing Bleaching and Calendaring plant across the river.<sup>1</sup> Although the Earnscliffe Woolen Mill (comprising Buildings 1-3, 1898-1910) was built as a steam mill, its finishing plant required process water which it drew from the Woonasquatucket.

Built by Earnscliffe for weaving,<sup>2</sup> dyeing and finishing of wool for fine men's wear, the earliest construction consisted of Building 1 (1898-99), which included office space, an engine-dynamo room and a small boiler house set off from the northeast corner of the building. This early power plant was replaced by the Second Boiler House (Building 6) between 1937 and 1950. Building 1 also had a central, 3-story tower, the lower two floors of which are now surrounded by 20<sup>th</sup>-century infill construction. Between 1926 and 1937 this building was extended more than 100' to the west (Building 1a).

In 1900 Earnscliffe built a spooling and winding building (Building 2) attached and perpendicular to Building 1 south and east of the tower. This was followed a few years later by Building 3, originally a 2-story structure housing new office space and shipping on the ground floor and a dressing area on the second floor. Earnscliffe

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<sup>1</sup> In 1906 the RI General Assembly granted a charter for the incorporation of the Woonasquatucket Reservoir Company, successor to the Woonasquatucket River Company (1824) and the Stillwater Reservoir Company (1853), "...for the purpose of erecting, establishing, maintaining, and keeping in order dams and reservoirs on the waters of the said Woonasquatucket river and its branches." The charter stated that the "...flow of water in the Woonasquatucket river and its tributaries has of late years proved insufficient to supply the factories and mills situated thereon with water during certain times of the year." Although the Earnscliffe Woolen Mill does not appear to have been an original signatory to the charter, Paragon Worsted's later association suggests that the guarantee of adequate process water was important to both companies. Source: *Rhode Island Acts and Resolves*, January Session 1906 (pp. 212-3) and RIDEM files for Paragon Pond Dam No. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Earnscliffe had installed 53 looms by 1901. Source: *Davison's Textile Blue Book*.

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Woolen failed in 1909. The plant was purchased by Paragon Worsted Company of Woonsocket. The company closed its Woonsocket plant, consolidating its operations in the former Earnscliffe plant by 1911.

In the period from 1921 to 1939, Paragon underwent a major expansion that included western extensions to Buildings 1 and 3 as well as a larger capacity Boiler House (Building 6), a new Wash House (Building 8), a Store House (Building 10), a Filter House (Building 9), and the construction of a new worsted spinning mill (Building 4) operated by an affiliated company, M&F Worsted Company.

The Paragon/M&F complex reached its fullest expansion between 1937 and 1950. This construction included an extension to Building 4, Building 10, two side wings to Building 5 (5a and 5b), and a single story addition (Building 1B) along the north elevation of Building 1.

Ten contributing buildings, one contributing structure, and three non-contributing buildings are inventoried below.

**Inventory**

**Contributing buildings**

*The following buildings are inventoried and numbered according to date of construction. The numbering scheme is not historic, and was created for convenience in identifying these buildings.*

**Building 1**

**Earnscliffe Weaving and Finishing Building (1898 et seq.)**

**25 Manton Avenue**

The original section of this building is a two-story, 160' x 60', granite foundation, pier and spandrel brick building designed by George Leach and built by the Providence firm of Maguire and Penniman. Framing is plank on timber construction supported by round-section steel columns and steel *I*-beams. A three-story central tower once stood unobstructed, but is now enclosed by 20<sup>th</sup>-century infill, leaving only the upper floor visible. The visible segmental arch windows of this tower are cement block-filled. The original tower roof, removed after 1921, housed a 10,000 gallon water tank for the plant's sprinkler system. A roughly 3-foot high parapet with concrete coping and a dentiled cornice of brick and cast stone defines the roofline. The shallow gabled roof is surfaced with asphalt and gravel. A 7-foot high monitor roof once intended to bring light to the upper floor is now enclosed in modern siding.

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Upper-story windows in the original wing have segmental-arched openings with wood frame, 12/12, double-hung sash with a 4-light segmental-arched transom. The sills are quarry-faced granite and the segmental arch is constructed of cast stone. Ground-floor windows are rectangular with quarry-faced granite lintels and sills. These were filled with cement block in the mid-1980s.

At the time of construction, this building housed Earnscliffe's weaving and wet dressing<sup>3</sup> operations (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) and the dye house and wet finishing operations (1<sup>st</sup> floor). The southwest end of the first floor also housed the company offices. A separate boiler house at the northeast corner of the building originally housed two boilers, the steam of which was fed to an adjacent engine room within the footprint of the main building. This room housed a 450 HP Corliss-type engine which delivered power to the plant's machinery through shafting and belting. Paragon demolished this original Boiler House between 1926 and 1937 for the construction of the present building (see Building 6). The original engine room also housed a dynamo for generation of direct current for electric lighting.

Between 1926 and 1937 Paragon Worsted extended this building about 115 feet to the southwest (Building 1A). The foundation of this addition is concrete. Original windows in this section are typical of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century industrial construction: metal frame, grouped in threes (a 28-light section flanked by two 21-light sections). Fixed sashes flank a central window with two eight-light hoppers.. Sills are concrete on the ground floor and brick on the upper floor. A number of these large window openings have been blocked down and fitted with smaller sash containing three horizontal lights. During the same period, Paragon built a single-story addition (Building 1B) running almost the length of the northwest elevation. Windows in this addition have brick lintels and sills and are either glass block-filled or cement block-filled with modern metal, three-light sash. The framing in this addition is round-section steel columns supporting concrete beams.

Artcraft Braid, a manufacturer of many types of braiding, purchased the Paragon Worsted plant in 1964 and is still in operation at this location.

*For a description of infill around the tower of Building 1, see Building 3.*

<sup>3</sup> Dressing is the process by which woolen warp is prepared for the loom, especially by the application of sizing.

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**Building 2**

**Earnscliffe Spooling and Winding Building (1900)**

**25 Manton Avenue**

A brick, two-story, shallow gabled roof building attached to and sited perpendicular to Building 1. Upper story windows have segmental-arched openings with wood frame, 12/12, double-hung sash with a 4-light, flat-headed transom; lower story windows are cement block-filled with modern inserts. Interior framing is standard mill construction - plank on timber supported by chamfered timber posts.

As originally built, this ell housed a stock room on the first floor and spooling/winding operations on the second. The building is currently occupied by Artcraft Braid.

**Building 3**

**Earnscliffe Dressing and Shipping Building (1904, 1907, 1931)**

**25 Manton Avenue**

Originally a 2-story, 100' x 50' brick building, joined to Building 2 and parallel to Building 1. Earnscliffe added a shallow-gable roof third story in 1907, matching the design of the original. Paragon extended the building 90 feet to the southwest (Building 3A) in 1931. Framing is plank-on-timber supported by chamfered wooden columns.

Windows in the upper stories of the original wing are 12/12, double hung, with a four-light transom. The transom is milled to fit the segmental arch opening. Sills are quarry-faced granite. In the newer section, windows are metal frame, grouped in threes: a 24-light window with two 8-light hoppers flanked by two 18-light windows with two 6-light hoppers. Sills are concrete. On the ground floor, windows are either cement- or glass block-filled, some with modern metal inserts. An overhead walkway spans the alley and connects this building to the northwest ell of Building 4.

The construction of this building in 1904 created the alleyway formed by the siting of Buildings 1, 2 and 3--a defining feature of this complex. This siting also permitted the infill that came to envelop the two lower floors of the Building 1 tower during the early-to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The first infill was a 2-story section in the crook of Buildings 1, 2 and 3 built between 1926 and 1930. This construction also included a 3-story elevator shaft and stairwell on the north elevation of Building 3. The second infill occurred southwest of the tower and included a stairwell for Building 1 and the 2-story construction that included the first floor concrete loading dock at the northeast end of the alley.



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In its original 2-story form, this building housed first floor office space (relocated from Building 1) and a shipping area. The second story housed another of Earnscliffe's dressing operations. After the 1931 expansion, the third story housed Paragon's sewing operation.

This building is currently occupied by Cathedral Art Metal (1<sup>st</sup> floor), Artcraft Braid (2<sup>nd</sup> floor), and artists' studios (3<sup>rd</sup> floor).

**Building 4  
M&F Worsted Co. Building (1921 et seq.)  
25 Manton Avenue**

Originally 80 by 125 feet, and sited along the river wall of the Woonasquatucket River, this brick-faced cement block, pier and spandrel building housed M&F Worsted, a worsted spinning operation closely affiliated with Paragon. The building rests on a raised concrete basement. Although windows are typically modern metal replacement types, some paired 1/1 double hung windows set in original segmental arch openings may be original. Sills and lintels are brick. Interior framing consists of plank on timber flooring resting on steel columns. Between 1939 and 1950, M&F extended this building 110 feet to the northeast (Building 4A). Windows in this addition are rectangular, metal frame, 30-light with two 6-light hoppers. A modern glass and metal entrance occupies the southwesternmost bay of the original 1921 footprint. A southwest addition beyond this entrance appears to be contemporaneous with and designed similarly to Building 10 (q.v).

This building housed Jewel Case after the closing of M&F Worsted. Cathedral Art Metal Co., a manufacturer of jewelry and gifts for religious occasions, now occupies this building along with space in Paragon Buildings 2, 3 and 5.

**Building 5  
Paragon Worsted Building (between 1926 and 1937)  
25 and 39 Manton Avenue**

Originally, a brick, three-story, 120 by 50 feet factory building attached and perpendicular to Building 3. This pier and spandrel building rests on a raised concrete foundation; the roof is shallow pitched gable. Interior framing consists of steel columns supporting concrete-encased *I*-beams and plank flooring. Windows are typically steel-frame, grouped in threes: a central 24-light window with two eight-light hoppers flanked on each

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side by two sets of 18-light windows with 6-light hoppers.<sup>4</sup> Ground floor windows are cement block filled; some have modern metal inserts.

Between 1939 and 1950 Paragon added two brick, 3-story additions to this building: a 60 by 20 feet southwest addition (Building 5A) and an L-plan, 30 by 80 feet overall northeast addition facing the river (Building 5B). Windows on these additions are predominantly grouped in threes: a 24-light center window with 8-light hoppers flanked by two 18-light windows. Other windows include 12-light metal frame and glass- or cement block filled openings. An inclined, overhead walkway of concrete-encased steel beams and brick walls connects this addition to Building 10. A second overhead walkway supported by steel beams with brick walls connects this building to the Filter House (Building 8).

The function of this building within the Paragon operation is unknown. Buildings 5 and 5B are occupied by Artcraft Braid and Cathedral Art Metal Co. The ground floor of Building 5A is now occupied by Camco Screen Printing.

**Building 6  
Paragon Boiler House (ca 1930)  
25 Manton Avenue**

Of irregular plan, 95 by 55 feet overall, this brick building originally consisted of a tall single-story, -plan chamber and a small triangular-plan chamber along the river. The main section is now subdivided to two stories. Both floors are concrete. Replacing the earlier Earnscliffe boiler house, this building was designed to house four boilers. Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century boilers, engine, and dynamo have been removed. Segmental arch window openings on this building have been filled or altered to accommodate modern inserts.

The first floor of this building houses three boilers; the second floor provides a maintenance shop for Artcraft Braid.

**Building 7  
Paragon Wash House (between 1926 and 1937)  
25 Manton Avenue**

A triangular shaped, single-story infill building southeast of the boiler house and sited along the river. This building shares a wall with the Paragon Boiler House and Earnscliffe Building 2. The river-facing wall was

<sup>4</sup> Some upper-story windows are configured asymmetrically in fours: three 18-light sections and a 24-light section.

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replaced with cement block sometime after 1969. Framing is a combination of timber and I-beam. The floor is concrete.

Original double-hung, 12/12 wood-frame windows<sup>5</sup> have been replaced with horizontal light modern aluminum inserts set in the cement block wall.

**Building 8**

**Paragon Filter House (between 1937 and 1939)**

**25 Manton Avenue**

A brick, 55 by 30 feet, two-story building on a raised concrete foundation. This building served to filter process water drawn from the Woonasquatucket for Paragon's worsted finishing operations. The ground floor, essentially a 10 foot-deep concrete cistern, is unused. A roughly 12-inch diameter steel pipe enters the northeast wall at grade.<sup>6</sup> The second floor has plank flooring. An elevated walkway connects this second story to Building 5.

Windows are metal frame with a concrete sill and a brick bonded arch lintel. Ground floor windows are 6-light; upper floor windows are paired 16-light, with an 8-light hopper or glass block-filled.

Artcraft Braid uses the second floor of this building for storage.

**Building 9**

**Paragon Worsted Store House (between 1926 and 1937)**

**25 Manton Avenue**

A detached, two-story, brick, 75 by 40 feet building with a shallow-pitched gable roof constructed as a store house for Paragon Worsted. Windows are 16-light, metal sash with an 8-light hopper. Interior framing consists of plank flooring supported by chamfered timber columns. The ground floor is concrete; the second floor is plank.

This building is leased to light industrial tenants.

<sup>5</sup> These windows appear in a 1969 photo in the RIDEM file for Dam 139.

<sup>6</sup> Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century maps show an open reservoir in roughly this location, apparently part of the system for drawing process water from the Woonasquatucket.

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**Building 10**

**M&F Worsted Extension (between 1937 and 1950)**

**25 Manton Avenue**

A two-story, flat-roofed, brick, pier and spandrel, 110 by 80 feet building attached and perpendicular to Building 4. The foundation is concrete. Windows are glass block filled with modern metal inserts; sills are concrete. A loading dock is situated in the crook of this building and Building 4A.

Shortly after construction of this building, Paragon built overhead walkways to connect it to Paragon Buildings 3A and 5A.

This building is currently occupied by Cathedral Art Metal.

**Contributing Structure**

**Chimney (between 1926 and 1937)**

**25 Manton Avenue**

Now truncated to a height of approximately 40 feet, a freestanding, brick, round-section chimney erected at the time of the construction of the Paragon Boiler House (Building 6).<sup>7</sup>

**Non-Contributing Buildings**

**Building 11**

**Garage (before 1956)**

**25 Manton Avenue**

A four-bay, hipped roof, roughly 40 by 20 feet x 20' cement block garage. This building was constructed privately on residential property that once fronted on the north side of Tanyard Lane. As such, it has no historical association with Paragon Worsted. The accompanying house was demolished sometime after 1956.

<sup>7</sup> The original chimney built for the 1898 boiler house was 100 feet high.

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**Building 12  
Shed (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century)  
25 Manton Avenue**

A roughly 10' x 15' steel clad shed sited east of Building 11 and likely associated with the same residential property.

**Building 13  
(before 1956 et seq.)  
138-142 Delaine Street**

A cement block, single-story, roughly 90 by 50 feet building fronting on Delaine Street and attached to the northwest elevation of Building 1B. Designated on the 1956 Sanborn map as a "factory building," this building now houses a Spanish-speaking Christian assembly and is unrelated to the operations of Artcraft Braid.

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**PHOTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

The information for numbers 1–5 below is the same for each photograph:

1. Earnscliffe Woolen/Paragon Worsted Company Mill
2. Providence County, Rhode Island
3. Edward Connors, photographer
4. June 2006
5. Original negative at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island

The following information is specific to the indicated photograph:

6. Alley between buildings 1A (left) and 3A (right). View looking northeast.
7. Photograph #1
  
6. Building 3A. View looking northeast.
7. Photograph #2
  
6. Building 4. View looking southeast.
7. Photograph #3
  
6. Building 10 at intersection with Building 4A. View looking northeast.
7. Photograph #4
  
6. Filter House. View looking north.
7. Photograph #5
  
6. Paragon Store House. View looking south.
7. Photograph #6
  
6. View downstream along Woonasquatucket River, showing Wash House and Boiler House (l to r). View looking north.
7. Photograph #7

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- 6. Building 1 interior. View looking north.
  - 7. Photograph #8
  
  - 6. Building 2 interior, second floor. View looking east.
  - 7. Photograph #9
  
  - 6. Building 3 interior. View looking south.
  - 7. Photograph #10

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

The Earnscliffe Woolen/Paragon Worsted Company Mill Complex is the physical expression of more than sixty years of woolen and worsted spinning, weaving, and finishing in the Olneyville section of Providence, Rhode Island. Located on the Woonasquatucket River, the Olneyville area of Providence has been an industrial center since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Rhode Island and Providence led the nation in the development and expansion of the manufacture of textiles, and Olneyville was an important center for this industry. With its concentration of mills constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Olneyville was one of the most densely developed industrial areas in the city of Providence and an important center for worsted production. The Earnscliffe Woolen/Paragon Worsted Company Mill Complex is a useful exemplar of the manufacture of wool textiles here.

The complex began in 1898 as the Earnscliffe Woolen Mill, a single steam-powered weaving and finishing building and was expanded by the addition of two more buildings before the company's financial failure in 1909. The Paragon Worsted Company purchased the Earnscliffe plant in 1910 and added several more buildings and an improved power plant between 1910 and 1950. Paragon's principals formed the M&F Worsted Company in 1921 to spin worsted yarn, and both Paragon and M&F operated here until the early 1960s.

Ten contributing buildings and one contributing structure survive. This complex meets National Register Criterion A in the area of industry.

**History**

In 1897 Walter A. Guile, a wool buyer, and H.J. Waterhouse, a designer, both associated with the nearby Riverside Worsted Mills,<sup>8</sup> leased about an acre of land along the Woonasquatucket River in Olneyville<sup>9</sup> and set

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<sup>8</sup> By 1899 the Riverside Worsted Mills was absorbed into Charles Fletcher's American Woolen Company, a conglomerate that acquired most of the woolen and worsted mills along the Woonasquatucket including National and Providence Worsted and the Valley Worsted Mill. Earnscliffe remained independent.

<sup>9</sup> Guile and Waterhouse leased 40,000 sq. ft. from the Anthony estate that included a former tannery established in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by John Pettis. Around 1810 Pettis sold the tannery to Alfred Anthony, who improved the operation to specialize in heavy belting, and eventually enlarged it to house 100 tanning vats (Source: Florence Simister, "Tanyard Lane" *Streets of the City* typescript. The 1875 Commonwealth Land Title map shows a waterpower system that included a headrace passing directly through the tannery (in roughly the location of present-day Building 3, see Figure 1, *Additional*



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up a partnership for the manufacture of fine worsted goods for men's wear. Although located along an existing water privilege associated with Providence Dyeing, Bleaching and Calendaring Company, Guile and Waterhouse built a brick, steam powered mill (Building 1) for the plant. Designed by George Leach and built by Providence-based contractors Maguire and Penniman, this original 180 by 60 feet building housed about 50 looms powered by two boilers<sup>10</sup> feeding steam to a 150 HP Watts-Campbell engine. The boilers were located in a small, separate room (now demolished) attached to the northeast corner of the building. The steam engine also powered a dynamo for generation of direct current for lighting. Within these two floors, Earnscliffe housed office space, weaving, dyeing, shipping and receiving, and the engine/dynamo room. The plant, , was in operation by mid-1898 with 240 operatives.<sup>11</sup>

Almost immediately, Earnscliffe announced plans to erect Building 2, a two-story building, 150 by 60 feet, for spooling and winding, both preparatory processes for worsted weaving. This building, set perpendicular to Building 1, was soon followed by Building 3 (1904), 100 by 50 feet, housing new office space (removed from Building 1) as well as space for worsted dressing operations.<sup>12</sup> By 1904-5 Earnscliffe had a workforce of 425—almost double the original staff--operating 70 broadlooms, with finishing as well as dyeing processes.

Earnscliffe Worsted continued its expansion through 1908, adding a third story to Building 2 for sewing operations, introducing two narrow looms to the weaving operation, and installing a third boiler. Despite this increased production capacity, Earnscliffe found itself in financial difficulty in the fall of 1909. The company fell into bankruptcy and was dissolved shortly after. Paragon Worsted Company, established in Woonsocket, a northern Rhode Island city, in 1909, purchased the Earnscliffe plant from the bankruptcy trustee in late 1910.<sup>13</sup>

Paragon Worsted was chartered as a Rhode Island corporation in 1909 as a worsted weaving mill operating in the former Sayles and Prendergast building on Main Street in Woonsocket.<sup>14</sup> The secretary and agent for Paragon was Arthur C. Milot, born in Yamachiche, Quebec, in 1861. Milot emigrated to the United States with

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*Information* section), returning water to the Woonasquatucket in the general vicinity of the present-day Boiler House, Building 6.

<sup>10</sup> These Manning boilers were 150 HP each, built by Bigelow Co., New Haven.

<sup>11</sup> A November 1897 article described "blue flagstone" parapet coping and cypress doors, sash and window trim. It appears that the flagstone parapet coping was never carried out or replaced over time with concrete. See "The Earnscliffe Woolen Mill," *Providence Journal of Commerce* 5 (November 1897): 402.

<sup>12</sup> *Callaway Textile Dictionary* (1947) describes dressing as "the processes concerned with preparing a woolen warp for the loom, especially the application of a size mixture."

<sup>13</sup> Paragon purchased the plant and equipment for \$30,000 on Nov. 21, 1910. Providence Deed Book 515: 212.

<sup>14</sup> Signatories to the charter were Fred E. Warner, Frederic DuLude, and Joseph C. Mailloux. The company was capitalized at \$100,000. Source: Articles of Incorporation 1907-1911, p. 354.

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his parents in 1878, finding work at a cotton mill in Taunton and learning some English. Moving to Woonsocket in 1889, he set up a hay, grain, and feed business. In 1904 Milot re-entered the textile business, forming a partnership with Joseph Hoyle to operate the Hoyle Bobbin Company (Pond Street, Woonsocket). Milot was secretary-treasurer of the company.<sup>15</sup>

With Paragon's acquisition of the Earnscliffe plant, Milot closed the Woonsocket mill, relocating to Olneyville. By 1919, he was the superintendent of Paragon. Through the early 1920s, the production capacity of Paragon remained about the same as that of Earnscliffe before bankruptcy. In January 1920 Milot and partner Pierre Fleurant incorporated as M&F Worsted for the purpose of spinning worsted yarn. The new company purchased adjacent land south of Paragon and built a two-story, 4600-spindle spinning mill in 1921. When Milot died later that year, management of the company passed to his son Aram.

Aram Milot's partner in the spinning mill, Pierre J. Fleurant, was born in Ste. Brigide, Quebec, in 1865. His family emigrated to East Douglas, Massachusetts, in 1870, removing to Woonsocket a few years later. At the age of eight Fleurant went to work in the Lyman Mill. By age 23 he had established himself in real estate, and by 1908, owned eighty-seven tenements and five stores in Woonsocket's Social District.

At the time Paragon purchased the Earnscliffe plant, the Woonsocket operation comprised 26 worsted looms. The bankrupt Earnscliffe operation comprised 70 broad and two narrow looms and a dye house, employing 450 operatives. Shortly after the acquisition, Paragon closed its Woonsocket plant and set up operations in Olneyville.

The production capacity of Paragon remained relatively stable throughout the 1920s. Despite the onset of the Great Depression, a *Providence Sunday Journal* article in 1931 noted Paragon's steady operation for several years despite the "general business trend."

Several features have contributed to this situation. The plant is not so large as to be unwieldy. It is directly controlled by the general manager, whose decisions on important questions pertaining to the manufacture and marketing of goods may be quickly secured without the delay sometimes due to manifold office channels, and the overhead expense is therefore reduced to a minimum. It has been the practice in this plant...to care for the upkeep of the mill with the profits. The consequence is that the machinery in use is of the most modern pattern and is kept

<sup>15</sup> Milot also had extensive real estate holdings in Woonsocket and was a director of the Tribune Publishing Company, publisher of *La Tribune*, at the time Rhode Island's only French-language daily newspaper.

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up to the highest state of efficiency that the plant may be in condition to compete with its manufacturing rivals without liability of loss.<sup>16</sup>

It is worth noting that Paragon and M&F prospered while a number of neighboring mills struggled and failed during the years of rising southern competition, trade unionism and economic depression. The American Woolen Company liquidated most of its New England mills by the late 1930s, including the nearby Valley Worsted and Riverside Mills.<sup>17</sup>

During the late 1920s and the Depression years, Paragon extended Buildings 1 and 3, built Buildings 5 and 9 as well as a new Boiler House and extended Buildings 1 and 3. By the end of this period Paragon employed 800 operatives; M&F employed 175. Wartime production further solidified the company's standing. By 1942 Paragon operated 166 looms; M&F housed 14,000 spindles.

The early post-war years were marked by physical expansion and emergent labor strife. Fifty unorganized weavers struck the plant in February 1946 due to what they described as poor working conditions.<sup>18</sup> After an unsuccessful CIO vote in the same year, the Textile Workers Union of America eventually organized the plant. By this time Paragon had added two wings to Building 5 and a north elevation addition to Building 1. M&F had increased its spindle count to 18,000 and tripled its building footprint from the original 1921 plant.

Despite Paragon's post-war performance, the combination of labor trouble and southern competition eventually caused the management to close the Olneyville plant in the early 1960s. In 1963 the company sold its fabric division to Indian Head Mills (Uxbridge Division).<sup>19</sup> Although Paragon had hoped to sell its dyeing operation to a new owner and keep that part of its Olneyville plant open, this never occurred. M&F Worsted continued to operate the spinning mill until 1964.

<sup>16</sup> "Paragon Worsted Company Operating at Capacity Rate." *Providence Sunday Journal* (23 August 1931): A10.

<sup>17</sup> Valley Worsted was liquidated in 1928, the Riverside Mills in 1937. The Manton Mill, however, survived until 1952. The neighboring Atlantic Mills, which remained independent of American Woolen Company, also survived until the early 1950s.

<sup>18</sup> "Fifty Unorganized Weavers Strike." *Providence Journal* (16 February 1946): 2.

<sup>19</sup> This company continued to weave worsted cloth under the name Paragon in its Georgia and Alabama plants. See "Paragon Worsted Sold to Indian Head," *The Evening Bulletin* (2 January 1963): 1.

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**Recent history**

Artcraft Braid purchased the Paragon plant in 1964 and continues to manufacture braiding at this location. Jewel Case purchased the M&F plant and occupied it for several years. The former M&F Worsted plant (and part of the Paragon plant) is now occupied by Cathedral Art, a manufacturer of religious gifts and jewelry. At present, a mixed-use proposal for the former Paragon plant is under consideration.

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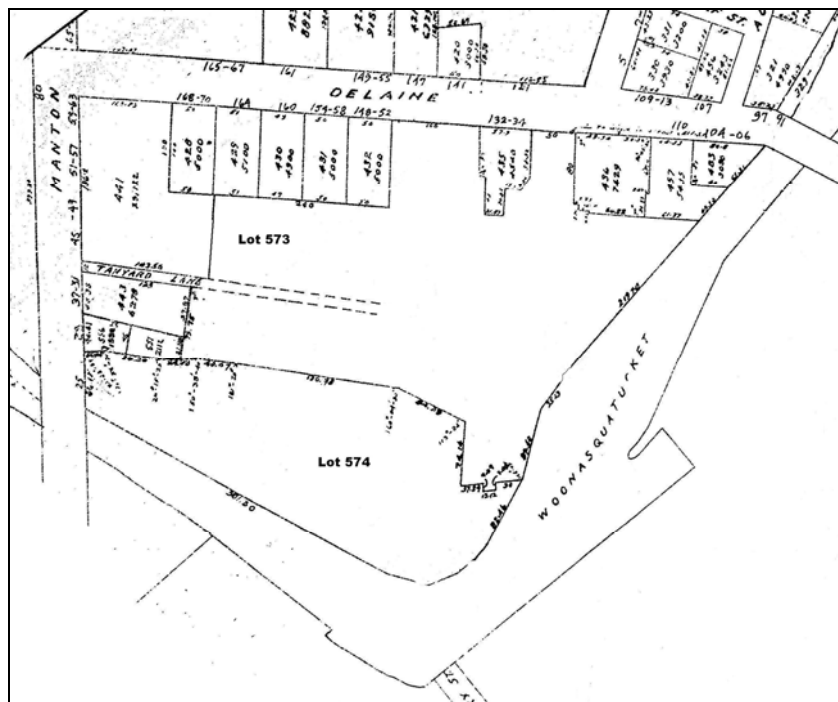
**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the Earnscliffe Woolen Mill/Paragon Worsted Company complex are contiguous with Providence Tax Assessor's Plat 62, Lots 573 and 574.

**Boundary Justification**

These boundaries, comprising 4.4 acres, define the land historically associated with the operation of the Earnscliffe Woolen Mill and Paragon Worsted Co. from 1898 to 1964.



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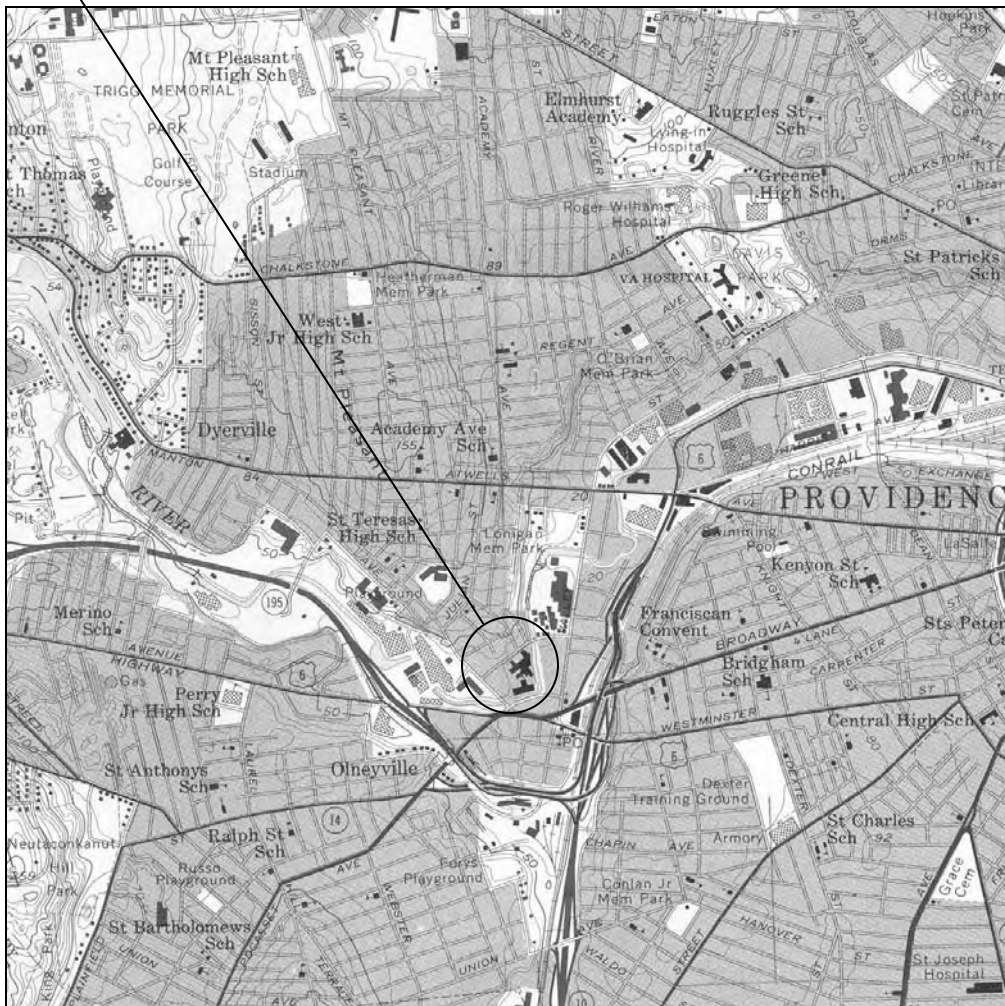
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Earnscliffe Woolen Mill/Paragon Worsted Co.  
25 and 39 Manton Avenue  
Providence, RI  
Providence, RI Quadrangle  
Scale: 1: 24,000





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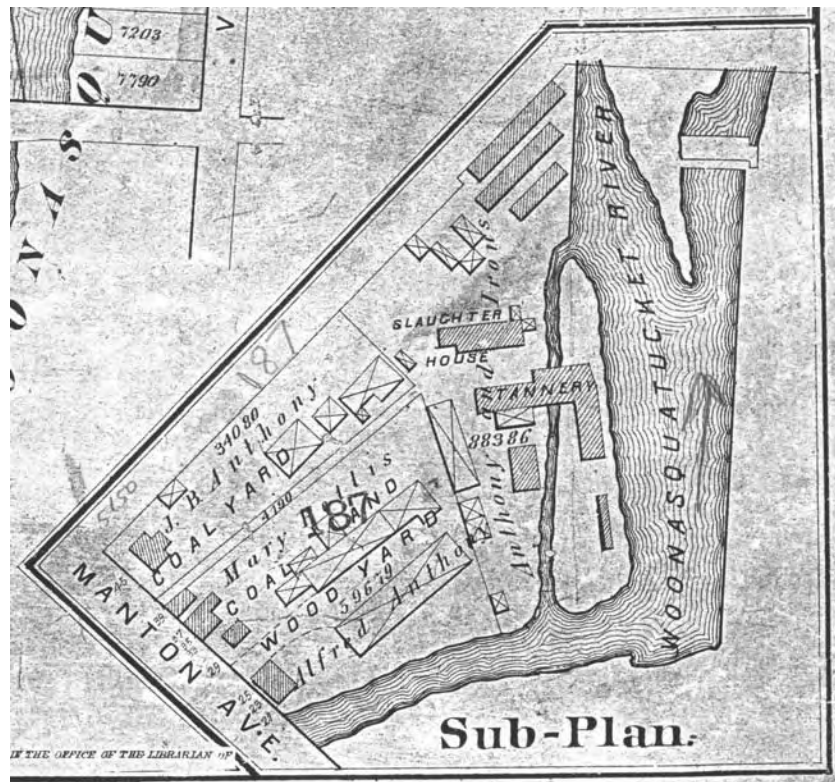
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



**Figure 1**  
Detail from 1875 Commonwealth Land Title Map  
showing Anthony and Irons tannery, slaughterhouse and hydraulic works on Woonasquatucket.  
The dam shown at upper right is about 100' downstream  
of present-day Paragon Pond Dam No. 139.

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**Figure 2**

Physical evolution of Earnscliffe/Paragon plant

From 1898 to 1950

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*The following article appeared in the Providence Journal, August 23, 1931. It is provided in this document because of the general overview it gives of the Paragon/M&F operation during the early years of the Great Depression.*

**Paragon Worsted Company Operating at Full Capacity**

Olneyville concern has held to active schedules for several years despite general business trend; now completing \$90,000 addition to its plant

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The textile industry contains examples of successful mills and mills not so fortunate as others. The successful mills, during the period of depression, have been steadily employed, while others in the same line of manufacture, but working under different conditions have felt the effect of an uncertain market for their products.

The Paragon Worsted Company, located in the heart of the Olneyville district of Providence, has been running steadily, night and day, for a considerable period of years to its capacity of practically 600 workers, stopping only on Sunday, because of the law which prohibits manufacturing on that day.

**Contributions to success**

Several features have contributed to the situation. The plant is not so large as to be unwieldy. It is directly controlled by the general manager, whose decision on important questions pertaining to the manufacture and marketing of goods may be quickly secured without the delay sometimes due to manifold office channels and the overhead expense is therefore reduced to a minimum. It has been the practice in this plant, the inquirer is informed, to care for the upkeep of the mill with the profits. The consequence is that the machinery is of the most modern pattern and is kept up to the highest state of efficiency that the plant may be in condition to compete with its manufacturing rivals without liability of loss.

It is within a short time that the heating and power plant has been entirely renewed, the installation including the most up-to-date appliances for the control of working conditions. Air circulation, humidification, and the distribution of heat are provided for at all times, and the interior of the mill may be kept at the required points of temperature and humidity necessary for the successful handling of the woolen fibres under all conditions of weather.

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**New addition nearly ready**

At the present time a new addition, three stories in height, and 50 by 90 feet in dimensions is nearly finished. In fact, some of the machinery is already installed, and the remainder will be set in place as soon as the construction workmen are through with their portion of the job. This new building is mostly made of glass and in consequence the workrooms on all the floors afford superior light. For that matter, the older part of the mill is especially well provided for in the way of light. In the cloth inspection department, for instance, huge plate glass panes unusual in factory construction, admit daylight without the sifting and dulling effect due to window sash divisions in the ordinary form of window construction.

From the wool tops, as they come from the dealer, the Paragon Worsted Company carries the fibre through all the processes up to finished suitings. The operation of drawing and twisting, as it is carried on, reducing the wool to the fine spun and twisted yarn, and then combining the threads into sightly and serviceable cloth, is an interesting one to watch. The principle of yarn making, of course, rests on the drawing out process to which the fibre is subjected while passing through many sets of rollers revolving at different speeds. The twist is given by the use of whirling spindles and the weaving is the same operation which hearty pioneers of New England performed on their homemade and home-installed looms, reduced to the terms of present-day efficiency.

**Machinery of latest models**

The spinning at the Paragon is done at the M&S [sic] mill, a subsidiary, the main building of which is adjacent to the main mill of the Paragon Company. The dye house, where all the forms of dyeing—slub dyeing, piece dyeing, and stain dyeing—are performed, is equipped with the latest models of machinery, and an ample water supply comes from the nearby river. Finishing apparatus, embodying the most modern machinery in that line, dries, folds, and presses the cloth ready for shipping.

Everywhere, in spite of the confusion incidental to the construction of the new addition while the older mill has been in continuous production, the observer will note cleanliness and good order. In the mill yard, as well as within the buildings, care is taken to give the plant a neat and attractive appearance. There is ample room on the land owned by the company for expansion as business requirements demand, and the various items of power and heat insulation are planned with this in view.

Aram A. Milot is the president and general manager of the company.























BLDG BLDG  
NO 16



EARNSCLIFFE WOOLEN/  
PARAGON WORSTED CO. MILL  
PROVIDENCE COUNTY, RI  
UTM REFERENCE:  
19 297000 4632240

