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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (II known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Robbins and Lawrence Armory and Machine Shop, erected in 1846, is an attractive example of nineteenth century American industrial architecture. The building, which faces southeast, stands on the south bank of Mill Brook, at the intersection of Main and Maple Streets in Windsor, Vermont. About ten feet northwest of the Armory is the dam across the brook which was its original power source.

The three-and-a-half story Armory is a rectangular building, approximately one hundred feet long and forty-five feet wide. It is constructed of hand-made brick on a coursed rubble cellar foundation. The original wooden beams and rafters remain in place. The building has a pitched roof of slate, broken by eyebrow dormers which light the attic story, and is topped by an open hexagonal cupola of wood. At the west corner of the Armory is a square brick tower with wooden loading doors at each floor level. Windows throughout the building are twelve-over-twelve sash and capped by stone lintels; those on the northwest elevation were bricked in when another building, since removed, was constructed abutting the Armory. The building is structurally sound and generally in good condition.

Though some changes have been made in the building in the course of its history, the original lines of its main block remain essentially unaltered. The only change affecting the size of the Armory has been the addition at its southern corner of a two-story brick office wing with gabled roof, approximately thirty-five by forty feet in size.

Other alterations were made by the Central Vermont Public Services Corporation, an electrical utility, which purchased the Armory in 1926; these include the installation of garage-type doors on the northwest and southwest elevations and of partitions and plumbing to create a caretaker's apartment on the second floor.

Adjacent to the Armory are three intrusive structures—an electrical substation just south of the building and a switching station and another substation north of it—all of which are owned and operated by the Central Vermont Public Services Corporation. Power lines connecting these structures and neighboring utility poles also detract from the Armory's immediate setting.

In 1966, the Armory and approximately three-quarters of an acre of land were given by the Corporation to the newly created American Precision Museum, Inc. As funds allow, this organization is rehabilitating the building and developing it as an industrial museum. Alterations such as the garage doors and the second floor apartment will be removed; the office wing, historically associated with the Armory, will be retained for museum offices and exhibit space. The Museum also hopes to improve the setting of the Armory and has opened negotiations with the Public Services Corporation for acquisition of additional property and the removal of the intrusive structures noted above.

Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

7. Description: (1)

Robbins & Lawrence Armory and Machine Shop; American Precision Museum

Boundary

In addition to the property owned by the American Precision Museum, Inc., this designation also covers property owned by the Central Vermont Public Services Corporation but historically associated with the Robbins and Lawrence Company and its successor firms; thisproperty is included to provide additional protection for the Armory and its setting. Located within the boundaries but specifically excluded from the landmark designation are the intrusive structures—the substations and switching stations—discussed above. The National Historic Landmark boundaries are defined as follows: beginning at the northeast corner of Main and Maple Streets, thence along the northeast sideline of Maple Street in sections of 25.1 feet, 153.8 feet, 89.1 feet, 55.2 feet, and 175 feet, more or less, to a point, thence turning at an angle of 112.5 degrees thence along a line 20 feet north of the north bank of Mill Brook to the north sideline of Main Street, thence along the north sideline of Main Street to the point of beginning.

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Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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ATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE ^

7. Description

Robbins and Laurence Ar sty and Machine Chop; Asserted a bracision Museum

Boundary

The boundaries of the Mational Historic Landmark designation for the Robbins and Lawrence Armory and Machine Shop include both the building and its immediate site, owned by the American Precision Museum, Inc., and additional property, now owned by the Central Vermont Public Services Corporation, which is historically associated with the Robbins and Lawrence Company and its successor firms. The latter property is the location of intrusive structures—the substations and switching station discussed above—which do not contribute to the national significance of the Landmark building.

The Landmark boundaries are described as follows: beginning at the north-east corner of Main and Maple Streets; thence along the northeast sideline of Maple Street in sections of 25.1 feet, 153.8 feet, 89.1 feet, 55.2 feet, and 175 feet, more or less, to a point; thence turning at an angle of 112.5 degrees and running in a line to a point 20 feet beyond the north bank of Mill Brook; thence along a line 20 feet north of the north bank of Mill Brook to the northeastern sideline of Main Street; themse along the northeastern sideline of Main Street to the point of beginning.

| SIGNIFICANCE | | | |
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| Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century |
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| SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicab | le and Known) 1846 | | |
| AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Che | eck One or More as Appropria | te) | |
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

During the 1840's and 1850's, the Robbins and Lawrence Company of Windsor, Vermont, designed and manufactured machine tools that accelerated the industrial revolution in America by improving the production of interchangeable parts and thus stimulating mass production. Many of those tools, or their basic designs, are used today.

The company's rise to prominence resulted primarily from the efforts of Richard S. Lawrence, Frederick Webster Howe, and Henry D. Stone. Joining the firm at different times, the three inventive men, either individually or jointly, contributed the profiling machine, a milling machine, and a universal milling machine, plus additional machine tools, while working for Robbins and Lawrence. After the failure of the firm in the early 1850's, the three contributed to the development of machine tools in various ways.

The three-and-a-half story brick Armory and Machine Shop which stands on Mill Brook in Windsor is all that remains of the once flourishing Robbins and Lawrence factory complex. Built in 1846, the structure has been little changed in the intervening years. The American Precision Museum, Inc. now owns the Armory and is developing it as an industrial museum illustrating the history of machine tools and the products which their development made possible.

The American Precision Museum is open to the public from noon to 5:00 p.m. daily, May 31 through October 13; an admission fee is charged.

Historical Background

Industry came early to Windsor, Vermont. The community was founded in August, 1764, and by 1769 had a gristmill and a sawmill, both located on Mill Brook. Some seventy years after the town's establishment, a number of custom gun shops existed in and around Windsor. One of these, N. Kendall and Company, produced guns at the town prison, using prison labor for all but the finest work.

(Continued)

Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

(MATIONAL WINTERIC INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM LARGETHAS)

(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance: (1)

Robbins and Lawrence Armory and Machine Shop; American Precision Museum

Richard S. Lawrence, who was to help transform Kendall and Company into a major producer of machine tools, became an employee of the firm in 1838. Born in 1817, he had experienced a varied career by the time he arrived in Windsor. Shortly after his appearance there, his repair of a doctor's rifle so impressed its owner that he took Lawrence to Kendall and Company, who recognized in him a skillful and ingenious craftsman and hired him immediately.

Kendall and Company abandoned gun making in 1842, but the following year Lawrence and Kendall opened a small gun shop in Windsor. This business prospered and, in the winter of 1844, undertook a Herculean task. At that time, S. E. Robbins, a business man, joined the concern-which became Robbins, Kendall and Lawrence--and stimulated it to bid for a Federal Government order for 10,000 rifles. The new company's bid of \$10.90 per rifle was ten cents lower than any other, and a contract was signed on February 18, 1845, to be completed within three years.

The firm then had neither the men, the machines, nor the buildings required to meet this order, but Lawrence and his colleagues moved rapidly to overcome these obstacles. With only twenty-five workers in their plant, they began to recruit skilled laborers and subsequently formed a highly competent factory crew of some one hundred and fifty men. In April, 1846, laborers began the construction of a three-and-a-half story brick armory on the south side of Mill Brook, just across from the firm's original gun shop. Most important, Lawrence pushed the development of new machine tools to be installed in the factory.

Despite the long odds, the company fulfilled its contract--eighteen months ahead of the deadline--and made an excellent profit. Shortly thereafter, Kendall's partners purchased his interest in the firm, which then became the Robbins and Lawrence Company.

The firm now entered its most notable period. Three men supplied the genius that established the company as an innovator and developer in the field of machine tools. Lawrence, who had been with the firm for several years, continued to contribute mechanical inventiveness and business acumen. In 1847, Frederick Webster Howe joined the firm as Lawrence's assistant and the next year became the plant superintendent. A superlative machinest and an original thinker, Howe invented several machines that were used in industry for years after their development. He produced a profiling machine in 1848 that became widely used in gun factories. In 1849, Howe, in conjunction with Lawrence, developed a milling machine that remains basic to industry, and in 1850 made the first commercially successful universal milling machine. The final member of the Robbins and Lawrence triumverate was Henry D. Stone. In the 1850's he collaborated with Lawrence and Howe in devising improved machine tools, plus developing some on his own.

(Continued)

Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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8. Statement of Significance: (2)

Robbins and Lawrence Armory and Machine Shop; American Precision Museum

The brilliance of the work at Robbins and Lawrence achieved international fame in 1851. Taking advantage of an opportunity to participate in the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London that year, the Windsor concern exhibited six of the United States Army rifles that it had made. The firearms intrigued the Exhibition's visitors because of their interchangeability of parts, made possible by the machines developed by Robbins and Lawrence. A medal awarded by the Exhibition formally notified the world of the British opinion of the firm's rifles. Practically, the success of Robbins and Lawrence led to a contract with the British Government in 1854 for one hundred and fifty machine tools for a new state armory.

Despite its growing reputation, however, the firm was over-extended financially and soon failed. It had erected a new plant in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1853 to expand its output. One contract was completed in the new factory and another order for 325,000 rifles was expected. When 25,000 rifles had been produced, it was discovered that there would be no order for the remaining 300,000. Robbins and Lawrence had invested too heavily in expanding its works and the incurred debts, plus old obligations, pushed the concern into bankruptcy.

Following this failure, the Robbins and Lawrence Armory at Windsor was occupied by a succession of new manufacturing firms. During the Civil War, 50,000 rifles were made there for the Union armies. After the War and until 1888, the building was used as a cotton mill. It was owned by an electrical utility, the Central Vermont Public Services Corporation, from 1926 until 1966, when it was turned over to the American Precision Museum, Inc. This organization is now developing the Armory as an industrial museum illustrating the history of machine tools and their products. In addition, the Museum actively collects drawings, photographs, correspondence, catalogues, periodicals, and biographical materials for its reference files, many of which are housed at the Armory.

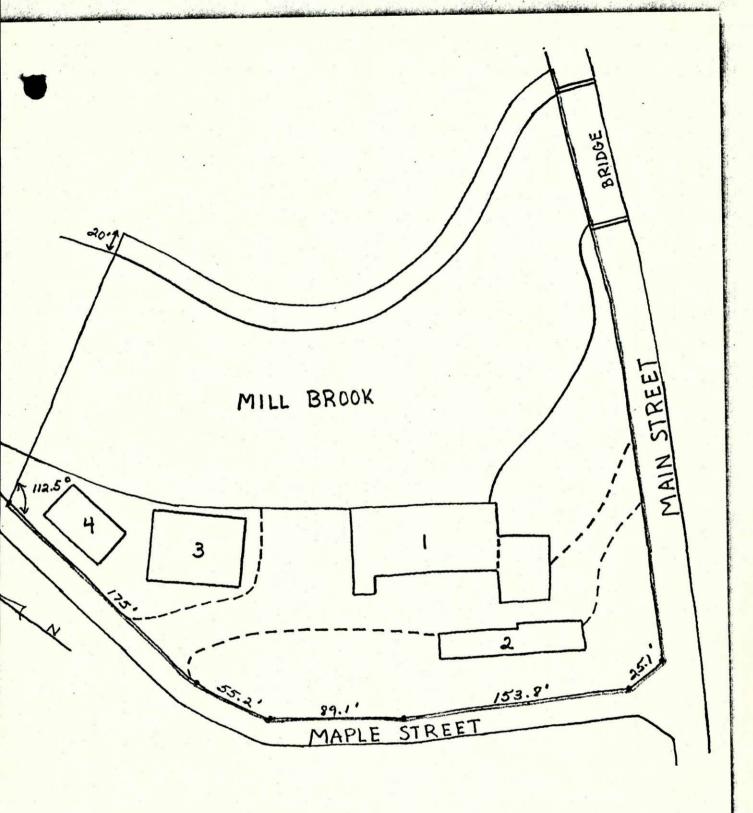
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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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switching station driveway ----

National Historic Landmark Boundary ———

ROBBINS AND LAWRENCE ARMORY AND MACHINE SHOP (American Precision Museum) Windsor, Vermont

sketch map - not to scale

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY MAP FORM

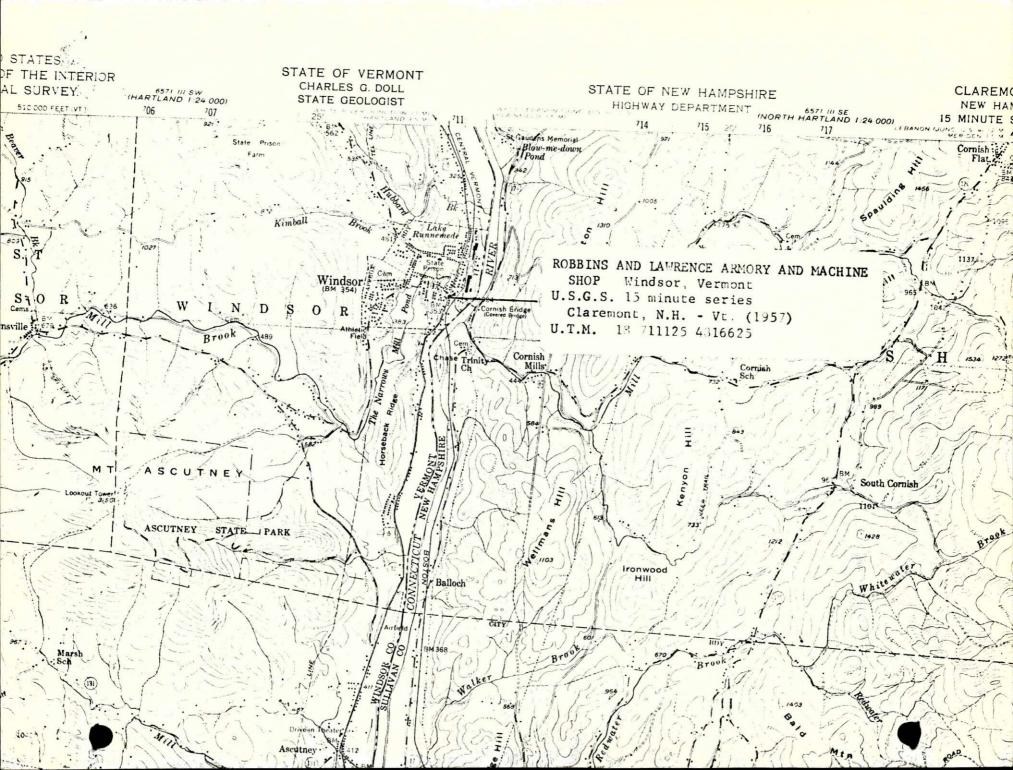
(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

| STATE | |
|----------------|-------|
| Vermont | |
| COUNTY | |
| Windsor | |
| FOR NPS USE ON | NLY . |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | |

| ne . | | | American Preci- |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------|
| MMON: | Robbins and Lawrence | Armory and Machine Shop; | sion Museum |
| D/OR HISTORIC: | Robbins and Lawrence | Armory and Machine Shop; | Cotton Mill |
| CATION | | | Building |
| REET AND NUMBER | ₹: | | Dullulig |
| | Main Street, corner | of Maple Street | |
| Y OR TOWN: | | | |
| | Windsor | | |
| ATE: | | CODE COUNTY: | CODE |
| | Vermont | 050 Windsor | 027 |
| REFERENCE | | and the second second second second second second | N. Carallana |
| URCE: | prepared by Polly M. | Rettig, Historian, Landma | rk Review Pro- |
| | ject, Historic Sites | Survey, from plat map sup | polied by pro- |
| LE: | sketch map, not to s | | y owner |
| TE: | November 1974 | Por | - J OWINCE |
| UIREMENTS | | | |
| BE INCLUDED ON | ALL MAPS | | * |
| I. Property broup | dariar where required | | |

- 2. North arrow.
- 3. Latitude and longitude reference.

INT: 155-72



Form Nc. 10-101

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

| STATE | |
|----------------|------|
| Vermont | |
| COUNTY | |
| Windsor | |
| FOR NPS USE ON | NLY |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |

| • | NAME | | (C | American | Preci- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| | COMMON: | Robbins and Lawren | ce Armory and Machine Shop; sion Museum | | | | |
| | AND/OR HISTORIC: | Robbins and Lawren | nce Armory and Ma | achine Shop; Cotton | Mill | | |
| • | LOCATION | | Kraft Colonia | Buildin | | | |
| | Main Street, corner of Maple Street | | | | | | |
| | CITY OR TOWN: | Windsor | | | | | |
| | STATE: | | CODE COUNTY: | | CODE | | |
| | | Vermont | 050 Windso | or | 027 | | |
| | MAP REFERENCE | | | in a survey which is the first of the survey of | W. Commercial Commerci | | |
| | SOURCE: | U.S.G.S. 15 minute series Claremont, H. H Vt. | | | | | |
| | SCALE: | 1:62,500 | | | | | |
| | DATE: | 1957 | | | | | |
| | REQUIREMENTS | | | | | | |
| | 2. North arrow. | ALL MAPS ndaries where required. longitude reference. | | | | | |

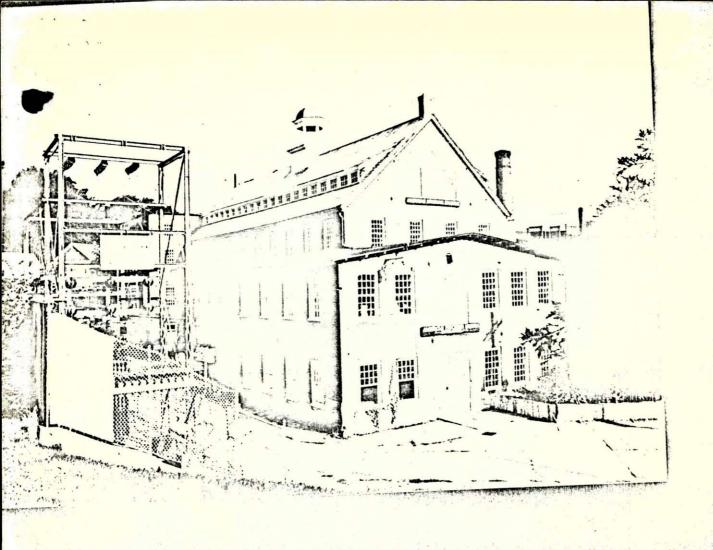
INT: 155-72

STATE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE Vermont COUNTY NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES Windsor PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM FOR NPS USE ONLY ENTRY NUMBER (Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph) DATE 1. NAME American Preci-COMMON: Robbins and Lawrence Armory and Machine Shop; sion Museum AND/OR HISTORIC: Robbins and Lawrence Armory and Machine Shop; Cotton Mill 2. LOCATION Building STREET AND NUMBER: Main Street, corner of Maple Street CITY OR TOWN: Windsor STATE: COUNTY: CODE CODE Vermont 050 Windsor 027 3. PHOTO REFERENCE PHOTO CREDIT: Polly M. Rettig, Landmark Review Project DATE OF PHOTO: September 1974 SEGATIVE FILED AT: Historic Sites Survey, 1100 L Street, NW. Washington, D.C. 20240

General view of building and setting taken from the northwest.

POOR QUALITY ORIGINAL_



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

electrical structure.

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| STATE | |
|---------------|------|
| Vermont | |
| COUNTY | |
| Windsor | |
| FOR NPS USE O | NLY |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |

| | | | The photography | | | |
|---|---|---|--|-------------|--|--|
| 1. | NAME | | American Pr | eci- | | |
| ,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,, | соммон: | Robbins and Lawrence | Armory and Machine Shop; sion Museum | 1 | | |
| | AND/OR HISTORIC: | Robbins and Lawrence | Armory and Machine Shop; Cotton Mill | Cotton Mill | | |
| 2. | LOCATION | | Building | | | |
| | Main Street, corner of Maple Street | | | | | |
| | CITY OR TOWN: Windsor | | | | | |
| | STATE: | | CODE COUNTY: | CODE | | |
| | | Vermont | 050 Windsor | 027 | | |
| 3. | PHOTO REFERENCE | , | Appropriate Manager of Control of Lands of Control of Lands | | | |
| | PHOTO CREDIT: | Polly M. Rettig, Landmark Review Project | | | | |
| | DATE OF PHOTO: | September 1974 | | | | |
| L | NEGATIVE FILED AT: | : Historic Sites Survey | | | | |
| • | 1100 L Street NW., Washington, D.C. 20240 | | | | | |
| 4. | IDENTIFICATION | to the second substituting of the property of | iskopyther to gode i prompto a maskine i wazwipaka majak wa sipinali wa 19 | Na Na | | |
| | DESCRIBE VIEW, DI | RECTION, ETC. | thwest showing building and intrusiv | | | |