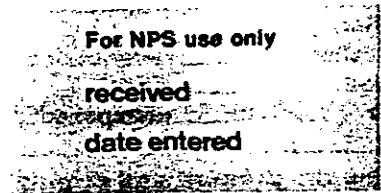


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



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

1. Name

historic Grimshaw Silk Mill

and/or common Freeman Shoes

2. Location

street & number 1200 North 1100 Street not for publication

city, town Reading vicinity of congressional district

state PA code county Berks code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Heritage Investment Group c/o Brian Schlappich

street & number 502 Walnut Street

city, town Reading vicinity of state PA

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Berks County Courthouse

street & number 33 North 6th Street

city, town Reading state PA 19601

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title PA Comprehensive Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1 October 1978 federal state county local

depository for survey records Harrisburg

city, town state PA

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Looming above the neighboring residential rows of Reading is the massive block of the Grimshaw Silk Mill. By its size it was an important source of employment in late-nineteenth century Reading, providing a workplace for the women and girls of the residential neighborhood in which it was erected. Though its general rectangular form with rear service wing and powerhouse is typical of industrial architecture of the late nineteenth century, its handsome overlay of Victorian pilasters, beltcourses, and keystones gives the building added architectural interest.

The mill is far longer than it is wide (50 X 250 feet), with its principal facade along 11th Street, and its rear opening onto an alley, assuring light and air to the interior. The basement that equalizes the slight slope of the site that rises North from Marion Street, is of local rubble stone. Above the stone base rise the brick walls of the main block. The plane of the brick wall is punctuated by regularly spaced pilasters approximately twelve feet on center which rise to the cornice and match the structural bays of the building. Each bay contains a pair of segmentally arched, small paned nine-over-nine sash, with brownstone keystones in each arch. Recessed brick courses between each story mark the floor levels in the Victorian mode of representing structure that tends to be found in more significant buildings, but is rare in factories. The facade is capped by a pressed metal cornice that projects out above the pilasters as if fusing the entablatures and capitals in one form. Entrances at the corners of the 11th Street facade leading into the first floor provide access to the more public spaces, while the rear stair tower that projects from the principal volume was the chief means of access to the mill floor.

The rear is more highly articulated and shows the level of sophistication developed by the Paterson Mill designers. The stair tower is given emphasis by projecting from the rear with alternating windows at mid level marking the main stair. That wing is the sole surviving above-ground portion of the 1887 building to escape the tornado of 1889. A bulls-eye window adds a bizarre accent to the stairlanding. In the center of the long alley facade is a tower capped by a pyramidal roof that contains the toilets for each floor. The resulting configuration put most worker access at the rear, brought workers in past the offices for supervision and placed them in production spaces with centrally located toilet facilities. A power plant and tall chimney that powered the spinning and weaving machines completed the exterior.

The interior shows conventional mill flooring with a central row of square wood columns supporting the middle of each of the heavily built-up beams. Joists running with the length of the building are bridged at the center. Floors are of maple diagonally laid for structural rigidity, as well as for ease of sliding heavy goods along the floor. The top floor is enlivened by massive wood trusses that combine wrought iron tension members with long span timbers and angled roof braces. Skylights punctuating the roof in alternate bays add to the lighting of the great hall.

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The other interior features are plain as could be expected. Only vertically panelled entrance doors embellish the otherwise severe building. The building survives in excellent condition, describing the nature of work in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and remains as an imposing landmark in the neighborhood.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Grimshaw Silk Mill marks the extension of the silk industry into the small cities of America, forming satellite extensions to the Paterson, New Jersey based silk trade. The mill building was erected by the capital and resources of the citizens of Reading, who responded to the suggestion of the Grimshaw Brothers of Paterson, that "if properly encouraged" they would supply the machinery, technology, management and a market for a silk mill. That building, erected in 1887 for \$65,000, employed 300-400 young women of the community in spinning and weaving finished silk from the imported raw silk supplied by Grimshaw. During the working day of 9 January 1889, that building was destroyed in a windstorm, killing seventeen and injuring one hundred women in the greatest catastrophe in Reading history. It was rebuilt by Reading contractors L.H.Focht who is remembered as the builder for many of Frank Furness' designs, and who was the principal contractor of the city. He produced one of the most elaborately styled mill buildings of the region with articulated brick work, and elaborate cornices adding to its interest. It is that second Grimshaw Mill that survives to provide such a powerful sense of the relationship between community initiative, industry and residence in American cities in the nineteenth century.

The silk industry is of more than passing interest in nineteenth century America. It had evolved in Paterson, New Jersey, where it was one of the offshoots of the Society for Establishing Useful Manufacturers founded in 1791 by Alexander Hamilton. That group initially had explored technologies developed in Britain in cotton manufacturing, but by the early nineteenth century, with the innovative work of immigrant John Ryle, silk manufacturing was added to Paterson. That industry was dramatically expanded by the popularizing of the raising of silk worms for production of raw silk as a cottage industry. Mulberry Trees - and unfortunately the Tent caterpillars - are relics of that fad which collapsed at mid century, leaving only the weaving of finished cloth and tailoring of finished clothing. It was that type of production that the Grimshaw Brothers undertook. Eventually when they and other Paterson mill owners saw the need to expand their work force, they pursued that goal by supplying technology for factories in small cities along rail lines leading from the Paterson Region. The Tilt Brothers for example, added the Adelaide mill in Allentown to their Paterson production center. Interestingly, when Grimshaw sold the mill, it went to the Dery family who owned a silk mill in Catsaqua. According to L.R. Trumbull's History of Industrial Paterson, New Jersey (1880), the Grimshaws were of significance in their own right. Natives of England, they arrived in Paterson with their entire family after the "Cobden Treaty" of 1860 admitted French silk to England duty free. By 1880, they were among the city's largest manufacturers, employing 700 hands, at the factory, and others in home workshops, with productions of fancy silk goods valued in

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Trumbull "became as familiar as a household word," and if it is not "in everybody's mouth, it is as least in everybody's face".

The Reading Mill has added interest, first as the invested capital of the citizens of Reading, but also as the site of a great disaster. Though similar community financed industries appeared elsewhere in Pennsylvania, for example in Marietta, there is no record of Reading's citizens ever again to being persuaded to "properly encourage" an industry to locate in this city. On the other hand, community self-help among the Pennsylvania Dutch was not uncommon. In 1849, community subscription raised the capital to build a cotton mill in Reading, and it could be argued that the tax incentives and bonds of modern development continued the notion to the present. The mill itself was larger than most in the clothing trades in Reading. Typical sizes for the numerous shoe and shirt factories ranged from five to fifty hands, with the Curtis and Jones shoe company, among the largest, with 175 hands in 1889. Grimshaw of course employed 400 women in 1889 - but did not reach 700 employee level attained by Curtis and Jones in 1902. No romanticized accounts of mill work for young women, in the manner of Lowell, Massachusetts have come down to us, but by newspaper accounts of the Grimshaw Mill, work was repetitive, but not arduous.

The disaster was among the most publicized events of nineteenth century Reading. Though it is hard to envision in a pre-television age, news photographers took views that were sent around the country where they were quickly purchased by the public. Special trains were chartered to view the disaster and a "Sorrow Song" was published that further enlarged the notoriety of the event. Evidence of shoddy workmanship in the original building caused the Grimshaw Brothers to supervise the reconstruction, which they turned over to Reading contractor L.H. Focht who probably also designed the mill.

Focht is of considerable importance in his own right; his biography in The History of Berks County, PA, lists numerous projects for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, which were designed by the well-known architect, Frank Furness. In other instances, Focht worked on churches such as St. Michael's P.E., Birdsboro, designed by Furness. Though Furness had no hand in the rebuilt Grimshaw Mill, perhaps Focht learned to manipulate brick with such originality from working with the Philadelphia architect. He himself was a builder of some sophistication having worked for the Schuylkill Navigation Co., and later for Burton and McDonald, Bridge Builders of Philadelphia. With such projects as A.J. Cassatt's barn (designed by Furness) and buildings at Haverford College, Focht showed a considerable range of clientele, and building types.

Finally, the Grimshaw Mill is of importance as an excellent example of the medium sized manufacturing building of the late nineteenth-century. As noted earlier, this is an especially sophisticated example of the building type, with an overlay of structurally expressive pilasters and belt courses. Its survival in the midst of a residential neighborhood describes the relationship between work and residence in the nineteenth century.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see attached

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UMT References

A

1	8	4	2	2	2	1	0	4	4	6	7	1	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

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G

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H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

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

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title George E. Thomas, Ph.D.

organization Clio Group, Inc. date 10 September 1984

street & number 3961 Baltimore Avenue telephone (215) 386 - 6276

city or town Philadelphia state PA

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register _____

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration _____

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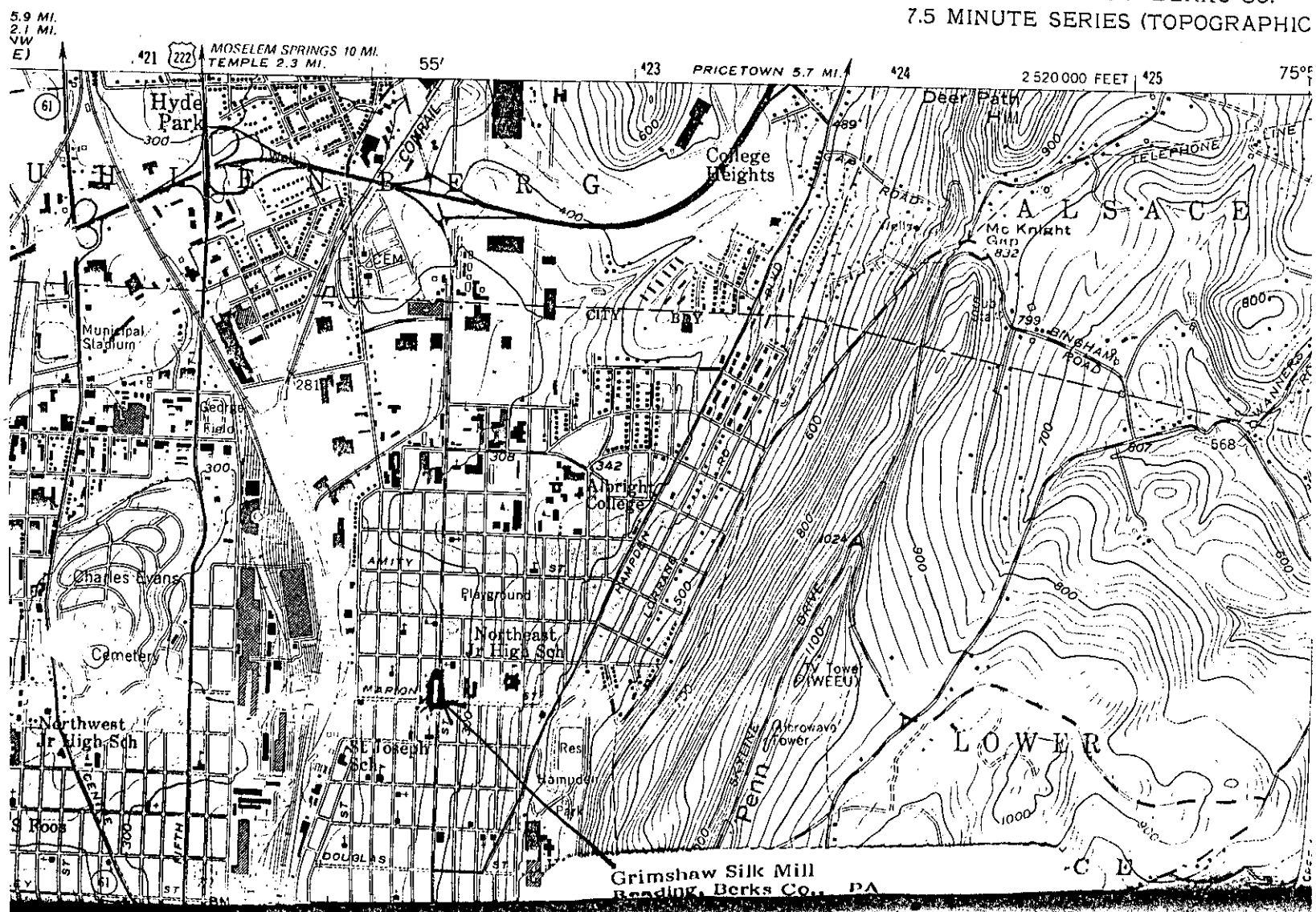
Boundary Description

Beginning at a point one hundred and thirty four (134) feet East of the Northeast corner of Mulberry and Marion Streets, thence North along property now or late of George D. Horst one hundred (100) feet to a point; thence West along the same thirty four (34) feet to a point; thence North along the same eighty five (85) feet to a point; thence West along the same twenty seven (27) feet to a point; thence North along the same eighty nine (89) feet to a point; thence East along the same parallel with Perry Street one hundred and fifty one (151) feet to Eleventh Street; thence South along Eleventh Street two hundred and seventy four (274) feet to the corner of Marion Street, thence West along Marion Street ninety (90) feet to the place.

Boundary Justification

The above site contains the buildings and service alleys for the mill.

READING QUADRANGLE
PENNSYLVANIA—BERKS CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



5.9 MI.
2.1 MI.
VW
E)

MOSELEM SPRINGS 10 MI.
TEMPLE 2.3 MI.

PRICETOWN 5.7 MI.

2 520 000 FEET

Grimshaw Silk Mill
Reading, Berks Co., PA