until his death in 1843. The Slater family continued to own Slatersville until 1900, when it was sold to James R. Hooper, who used the mill to bleach and dye cloth. In 1915, Hooper sold the village to Henry P. Kendall. Like the Slaters before him, Kendall took a personal interest in the village and initiated many improvement projects. He renovated many of the homes, made sure that the houses were maintained, lawns and shrubbery were planted, and he forbade the removal of any tree without his approval. Much of the traditional New England character of Slatersville is attributable to the efforts of Mr. Kendall.

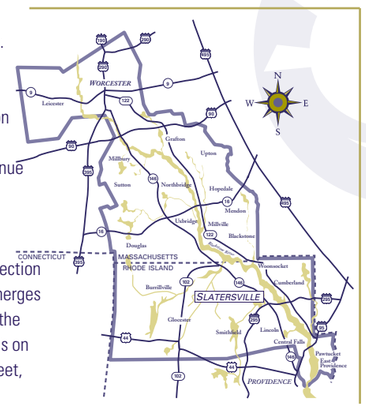
View of Slatersville c. 1860, looking north from Tabor Hill. The Center Mill can be seen in the right foreground. In the background is Main Street and School Street, including the First Commercial Block and the Congregational Church.

The current residents still exhibit the sense of pride instilled by the Slaters and Henry Kendall. While the surrounding areas have been developed, the village core has been preserved and Main Street looks much as it did in the 1920's after Kendall's renovations. Thus modern Slatersville is not only a mill village entering its third century, but the end result of a preservation project that has been lovingly carried out on a community level for eighty years.

DIRECTIONS

From Route 146: Take the Forestdale/Slatersville exit. From the south follow the Slatersville sign west for about 1 mile. At intersection with Green Street, at the common, take a left. Continue straight onto Main Street. From the north, follow the Slatersville sign west on Rt. 146A. Turn left at intersection with Green Street, which merges with Main Street just past the town common. The library is on the left, 20 North Main Street, North Smithfield, RI.

BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR



ALONG THE WAY

- **Parking** is available at the North Smithfield Public Library, which is on the left. The tour begins just behind the parking lot.
- **The tour takes about an hour** and covers about 1 mile. The route is not strenuous, but some might want to eliminate the walk down the hill to the Railroad Street Bridge.
- **Sidewalks are available for most of the tour,** except for the stretch between Town Hall and the church. Please take care while walking along the shoulder of the road. There is a crosswalk across Main Street in front of the library.
- **Facilities** are available at the Library and Town Hall during business hours.
- **Other Sites in North Smithfield:**

Forestdale: Forestdale was renowned for its scythe works that was begun in 1824 by Newton Darling. During the Civil War the scythe works produced 30,000 sabers for the Union Army. The Red Forestdale Schoolhouse, built in 1877, is the headquarters of the North Smithfield Heritage Association.

Union Village: One of the most attractive Federal-era villages in the Blackstone Valley is Union Village, situated on Route 146A. Union Village is a turnpike village established around a number of taverns built to service stagecoach travelers along the Great Road between Providence and Worcester. The village was named after the Smithfield Union Bank, the first bank in northern Rhode Island, which opened here in 1805.

In nearby Woonsocket visit the Museum of Work and Culture. Learn about the lives of the French Canadians who left the farms of Quebec for the factories of New England. 42 South Main Street, Woonsocket. For hours and admission fees, call 401-769-9675 or visit rihs.org/mowc.htm.

Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission in 1986, recognizing the national significance of the region between Providence, RI and Worcester, MA–the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is an affiliated area of the National Park Service.

This brochure was developed under the direction of The Rhode Island Historical Society in partnership with the Heritage Corridor Commission.

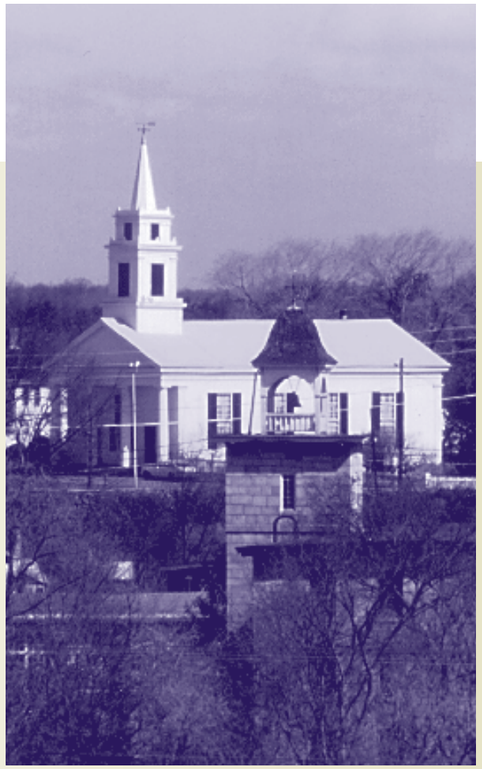
www.nps.gov/blac/index.htm

Thanks to the North Smithfield Heritage Association, Irene Nebiker, Ray Auclair and Moe Bourget for their assistance on this tour.

rev2012

SLATERSVILLE,
NORTH SMITHFIELD, RI

Walking Tour



America's first textile village.

John H. Chafee
BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY
National Heritage Corridor

SLATERSVILLE

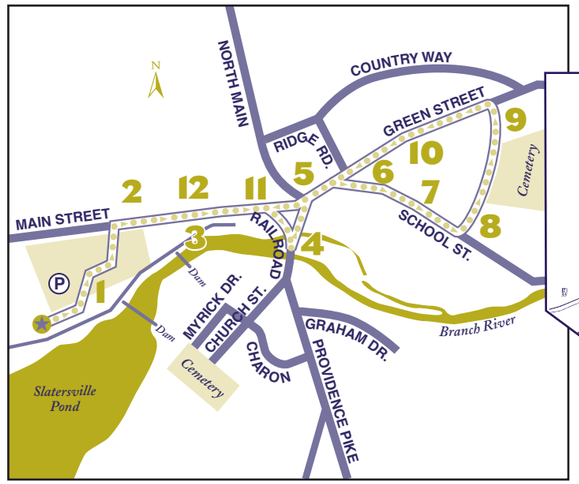
At first glance Slatersville appears to be a classic New England small town—crisp white houses stand neatly aligned along quiet streets that merge at the town common and the Congregational church. In reality, Slatersville is America's first planned industrial village and its true heart is not the quaint common, but the massive stone mill along the river.

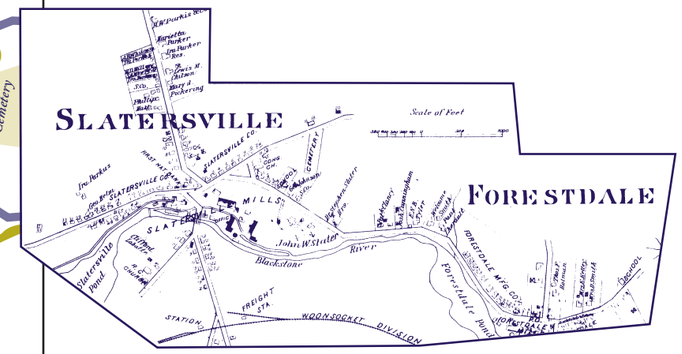
In 1803, John Slater, younger brother of Samuel Slater, came to America from England. Samuel Slater assigned him the task of finding a site for a new textile mill. After searching throughout the region, he chose Buffum's Mills, a small settlement along the Branch River where a sawmill, gristmill and blacksmith's shop were already in operation. In 1805, the Slaters' partners William Almy and Obadiah Brown began buying the land and water rights, and on July 4, 1807, the new stone mill opened. Unlike the Slater Mill in Pawtucket, this mill required a village to house the workers. The success of Slatersville proved that it was feasible to build mills outside of population centers, thus opening up the entire Blackstone Valley for industrialization.

Like his older brother, Samuel, John Slater gained experience by working in textile mills in England before coming to America. John Slater also took note of the improvements made in the English mills in the fifteen years since his brother immigrated, and helped to incorporate them into the Slater family mills.

John Slater became the resident manager of the mill and remained the driving force behind the village

The tour takes about an hour and covers about 1 mile. The route is not strenuous, but some might want to eliminate the walk down the hill to the Railroad Street Bridge.





SLATERSVILLE

1 SLATERSVILLE RESERVOIR

Follow the small path at the post office end of the parking lot towards the river. From here you can see two waterfalls. The larger dam, known as the Middle Dam, was built in 1849. It is 300 feet long, and causes a twenty-foot drop. Behind the dam is the 170 acre Lower Slatersville Reservoir. The smaller dam was built later to increase the water power. The sluice gate here controlled the amount of water flowing into the raceway that powered the Slatersville Mill.

Slatersville Middle Dam, c. 1900. In the foreground is part of the Western Mill complex, along with the system of canals that powered it.

2 WORKER HOUSING

Head back up the path towards Main Street. Across the street are six houses. It is believed that they pre-date the mill, but all were used to house workers. The ring on the stone wall in front of #27 and #29 was used to tie up horses.

Continue right on Main Street to the Library.

3 SLATERSVILLE LIBRARY/WESTERN MILLS

In 1821, the Slaters built an eight building mill complex, known as the Western Mills, on the western side of Railroad Street. Two of these buildings remain. One, the former store house, became the North Smithfield Public Library in 1966. Its rubble-stone construction shows us what the old Western Mill complex looked like. Proceed down the stairs to the left of the library and head east along the power canal to the former picker house that is currently not in use.

Main Street Slatersville during the 1890s. To the right are the Commercial Blocks, to the left is part of the Western Mills, including the library. Notice also the tracks in the street. They were for the horse drawn street cars that connected Slatersville with the other villages nearby.

4 SLATERSVILLE MILL

The original Slatersville Mill, built in 1807, burned down in 1826 and was replaced by the current mill, known as the Center Mill or the #1 Mill. It is a four-story building with a five-story stair tower. Behind the Center Mill is the Granite or #3 Mill, built in 1843, and along the power trench is a brick weave-shed, built in 1894. In front of the Center Mill is a wooden office building, the last remaining structure from the original mill. In 2007, the Slatersville Mills began a new life as apartments, the restored mills once again providing a focal point for the village.

Walk back up the hill to Main Street and take a right.

5 GREEN STREET: DR. ELISHA BARTLETT HOUSE (C. 1850)/ MILL HOUSING

The attractive Greek Revival style house at 2 Green Street was the home of Dr. Elisha Bartlett, one of the most remarkable residents of Slatersville. Born here

Kevin Kilyberg

Dr. Elisha Bartlett House

in 1804, he graduated in 1826 from Brown University with a medical degree. He took up practice in Lowell, Massachusetts and was elected the first mayor of that city in 1836. In 1842, he published the first thesis on typhoid in English, and two years later wrote an essay on the Philosophy of Medicine. Suffering from poor health, Dr. Bartlett retired to his home town about 1850 with his wife Elizabeth, who was John Slater's daughter. The house is built on the original site of John Slater's home.

Just past the Bartlett house are six mill houses built between 1810-1820. They are among the first to be built by the Slater Company. In the 1920's they were altered by Henry Kendall as part of his effort to make Slatersville look like a traditional New England village.

Proceed to the Common.

6 SLATERSVILLE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND COMMON

There are very few town commons in Rhode Island, but the small town green in Slatersville, located in front of the Congregational Church, serves as an important social center and focal point for the village. The green, laid out by the Slaters in 1838, also adds to the traditional New England essence of Slatersville. Feel free to take advantage of the benches here before continuing your tour.

Members of the Slatersville Congregational Church began meeting in 1816, and in 1838 the Slater family erected this church for the congregation. The church is a lovely example of the Greek Revival style topped by a three-stage belfry with an octagonal spire. The church's original steeple was blown off during the 1938 hurricane. Its replacement is much smaller.

Go past the church and turn right onto School Street.

7 JOHN SLATER HOUSE (16 SCHOOL ST. C. 1810)

Slater built his home in 1810. It originally stood where Dr. Bartlett's House is today. It was moved to this site in 1843 shortly after Slater's death. Slater's home is handsome, but modest. Additions have been made on each side, but the center section resembles the houses built for the mill workers.

8 PLAYGROUND/ SLATERSVILLE CEMETERY

Turn left off School Street into the playground. In 1816, the original Slatersville Meeting House was moved to this site to be used as the village school. The building was moved one more time to Green Street in 1887 when the Slatersville School was built. The 1887 school was used until the opening of the Kendall Dean School in 1936. One of the doorsteps for the old Slatersville School is still here. Can you find it?

To the right is the Slatersville Cemetery. Many prominent Slatersville residents are buried here. The Slater family plot is behind the wrought iron fence in the center of the cemetery.

Proceed past the cemetery. To the right is the Episcopal Church.

9 EPISCOPAL CHURCH/ GRANGE HALL

This building was erected in 1897 as a chapel for the St. Luke Episcopal Missionary. It was later used as a social hall, and in 1920 became the Union Grange Hall. It is now run by the North Smithfield Heritage Association as Heritage Hall.

Turn left onto Green Street.

John Slater House.

10 OLD MEETING HOUSE (55-57 GREEN ST.)

In 1808 John Slater held a lottery to raise $4,000 in order to build Slatersville's first church. Originally, it stood where the Congregational Church is today. In 1816 it was moved to School Street to serve as the village school. Then in 1887, it was moved to its current site, and is now a two-family home.

Continue west on Green Street to Town Hall.

11 NORTH SMITHFIELD TOWN HALL 1921

Built in 1921 on land donated by Henry Kendall, the North Smithfield Town Hall is an attractive brick neo-Georgian style structure. A hotel and boarding house stood here before the town hall.

12 SLATERSVILLE COMMERCIAL BLOCKS

The First Commercial Block (on the right) was constructed in 1850, when it housed the company store and the First National Bank. Many other businesses have used this space over the years, including barber shops and a hardware store. The stairway on the far side of the block leads to the old night-deposit vault for the bank. The Second Commercial Block was built in 1870. The upper floors of both buildings were used for workers' recreation - dances, social activities and later movies. Today, both are still in use.

The First Commercial Block (1850) as it appeared at the turn of the century. At that time it housed a bank, the post office, a cobbler, and a general store.

On the cover: Slatersville Congregational Church and Mill. Photo courtesy of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Postcards courtesy of Ray Auclair. Photo of John Slater courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society.