

Mansfield Hollow/Kirby Mill Hydro-Power Project Mansfield, Connecticut

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken by Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc. (AHS) for the Mansfield Hollow Hydro-power project in Mansfield, Connecticut. The project area is located on the Natchaug River, adjacent to a standing former textile mill built in 1882 by the National Thread Company. In 1899 the property was acquired by the Willimantic-based American Thread Company as part of an attempt to consolidate American thread production, but



it was soon sold to George Kirby, who manufactured optical goods there until the 1960s. The primary purpose of the hydro-power project was to provide electricity for the current occupants of the former mill buildings, which are used for light industry and offices. The project involved the construction of a two-story turbine house, a new reinforced-concrete headgate structure, a subsurface headrace or penstock, and an open tailrace. The mill building and associated property are listed on the National Register

of Historic Places as part of the Mansfield Hollow Historic District. Because the project required a permit from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), it had to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their actions on historic properties. Because remnants of prior mill and waterpower features were in the Area of Potential Effect, machine-assisted archaeological excavations and monitoring were conducted under Section 106 to identify and document important historic waterpower and mill remains. The archaeological work documented a number of important buried mill elements, including two turbines, two wheel pits that contained evidence of earlier water wheels, an 1882 headrace, one complete building foundation, and other stone walls that may have been parts of building foundations. The information obtained through the monitoring revealed an incremental evolution of water power at the mill site from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, that included the re-use of earlier mill components.