



**TOWN OF DUDLEY**  
**Massachusetts**  
**Historical Commission**  
Dudley Municipal Complex  
71 West Main Street • Room 207  
Dudley, MA 01571

Edward Bazinet, Chairman  
Michael Branniff, Secretary  
Louise Wieloch  
Frederick Meyer  
Joseph Antos  
David Butler  
Elaine Martin  
Phone 508-949-8004  
Fax. 508-949-7115

August 1, 2011

Ms. Brona Simon SHPO & Executive Officer  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125-3314

Dudley Historical Commission supports Stevens LLC's Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Application.

Dear Ms. Simon:

Stevens Linen Works (1846-2000) is now Stevens Mills LLC. The latest owner of a site that dates back to the eighteenth century.

The Merino Village was the focal point of a network of dams, spillways, gates, excavations and improvements, all designed to deliver a steady and dependable source of water power from an expanding interconnection of ponds, brooks, rivers and streams to a manufacturing center of steadily increasing sophistication and scale. The industrial advances of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century culminated in the improbable establishment of a thriving linen industry in Merino Village. This event marked Dudley's passage into the Industrial Age. Even our obscure hill town in Southern Worcester County had morphed into a cutting edge of the industrial revolution that transformed New England and the nation. All this industrial activity generated more economic development and opportunity.

The Stevens Linen operation was the main economic engine that enabled the community of Dudley to survive the terrible times of the Great Depression. Tax revenues to support municipal operations and payrolls enabled men and women of our town to put food on the table and were the literal salvation of Dudley during the Great Depression and its barren economic aftermath.

The basic excellence of the manufacturing operation laid out in 1846 by Henry Hale Stevens is underscored by the fact that the Stevens Linen operation continued to utilize the water power of Powder Horn Brook and its interconnections until converting to commercial electric power in 1960. The struggle over tariffs, margins and markets were unceasing. Under the stewardship of generations of the Crawford family, first as agents, then as owners, heroic efforts to sustain operations were continued through the last century.

New owners are now attempting to find a new and useful role for the Stevens Linen complex. The stakes are high for this community. A successful conversion into rental units (164) would revive the economic vitality of a community in need of all the financial help it can get. Its potential for financial relief is almost without limit. The dire financial situation relative to our tax base cannot be understated. This

renewal and reinvention also has the potential to educate a large portion of our population about the significance of the mill in local history and the importance of preserving that history.

An ex-Dudley official recently dismissed concerns for the fate of another iconic and historic structure as the product of “sentimentality.” The Dudley Historical Commission totally rejects her casual denigration as a betrayal of a heritage that makes our town a self-proclaimed “Special Place” and instead supports an educated, preservation-oriented view such as Mr. Peterson’s.

Preservation is a “Pledge of Allegiance,” to the historic values of our community. Its objective is to insure an appreciation of what it means to be a citizen of this “Special Place” will live in the hearts and minds of the people. It struggles to save unique and irreplaceable resources that are meant to be our gift to the future.

The Dudley Historical Commission supports this historic mill conversion. We support the Stevens LLC Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit application. These tax credits will facilitate this project and nourish, sustain, and keep true faith with the interests of our past, present, and future citizens.

We solicit your continued support for the award of these tax credits to the fullest extent possible. They will achieve all the desired results envisioned by the authors of the Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program.

Yours truly,

Michael Branniff  
Secretary  
Dudley Historical Commission

cc: Preservation Massachusetts  
Old City Hall  
45 School Street  
Boston, Ma. 02108  
Attn: Erin D. A. Kelly

National Trust for Historic Preservation Northeast Office  
7 Faneuil Hall Marketplace 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, Ma. 02109  
Attn: Rebecca Williams