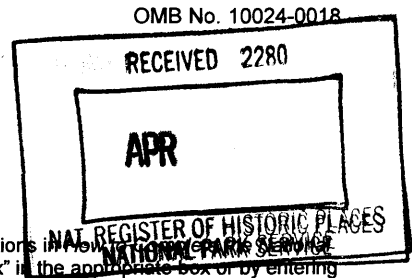


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Milwaukee Elevator

other names/site number Preston Elevator

2. Location

Street & number Fillmore Street and Root River State Trail not for publication N/A

city or town Preston vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Fillmore code 045 zip code 55965

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets    does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant    nationally    statewide X locally. (   See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Britta Bloomberg  
Signature of certifying official/Title

Britta Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

4/12/06  
Date

Minnesota Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria. (   See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

   entered in the National Register.  
   See continuation sheet

   determined eligible for the National Register.  
   See continuation sheet

   determined not eligible for the National Register.

   removed from the National Register.

   other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

5-31-06

Milwaukee Elevator  
Name of Property

Fillmore County, Minnesota  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

"Grain Elevator Design in Minnesota"

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Wooden Cribbed Elevator

foundation Concrete  
walls Steel  
roof Steel  
other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Period of Significance

1902

Significant Dates

1902

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hickok, L. O. (Builder)

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is: N/A

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed on the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
X Other

Name of repository:

Fillmore County Historical Society, Fountain, Minnesota

Milwaukee Elevator  
Name of Property

Fillmore County, Minnesota  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property** Less than 1 acre

Preston, Minn. 1965

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 574230 4835320  
Zone Easting Northing

3  
Zone Easting Northing

2

4  
See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Matthew Ottinger (with Susan Granger)

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date October 8, 2005

street & number 5100 54<sup>th</sup> Ave. N telephone 763-537-2192

city or town Crystal state MN zip code 55429

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Report (1024-0018), Washington DC 20503.

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Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota

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### 7. DESCRIPTION

The city of Preston is in southeastern Minnesota along the Root River. The surrounding area, sometimes known as Minnesota's bluff country, is defined geologically as a karst system and is characterized by a scenic river valley, rolling hills, and numerous caves and sink holes. The area also hosts countless small farms and a number of rural villages. Preston is the county seat for Fillmore County and is home to about 1,500 people.

The Milwaukee Elevator stands on the eastern side of the city on low-lying land along the Root River valley floor. Fillmore Street, the town's main thoroughfare, runs directly to the south of the elevator. A small gravel access road intersects with Fillmore Street behind the elevator to the west. The elevator is adjacent to the west side of the former Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul rail bed. A bicycle trail built over the old rail bed parallels the Root River and opens into a large trailhead parking lot to the east of the elevator property. The Trailhead Inn, a new motel that caters to visitors and bicyclists, stands directly to the north of the property.

The Milwaukee Elevator was originally surrounded by a railroad depot, other grain elevators, a lumberyard, and a flour warehouse. The area between the rail line and the business district housed a number of railroad-associated businesses including boarding houses and hotels for traveling salesmen. The courthouse square, which is in the center of the business district, is situated about a block and a half west of the rail line.

The property consists of the grain elevator, built in 1902, surrounded by a small area of grass. See accompanying map entitled "Milwaukee Elevator, Preston, Fillmore Co., Minnesota."

#### **Roof**

The roof was built with a gabled design. Below the upper roofline are two shed (half-gable) roofs on the north and south facades. The entire structure including the roof is covered in corrugated steel. The steel on the roofs likely covers wood shingles.

#### **Exterior**

The Milwaukee Elevator occupies a space of 28 feet by 28 feet and stands 55 feet at its peak and 40 feet at its side roofs. It originally had a 15,000 bushel capacity (Sanborn 1909: Sheet 5).

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Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota

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The elevator is rectangular in plan with corrugated steel covering the original wood drop siding. The east façade still shows the original siding along the foundation. According to Robert Frame, a milling historian, elevators of this type were by the 1930s commonly covered in low maintenance corrugated steel (Frame 1989: E 17).

The east façade, which is adjacent to the former trackbed, contains a window just under the roofline, possibly to look out for boxcars coming into position. Below is a hatch door; one obvious function was to communicate with the boxcars below. Half way down the structure is a large attached sign reading "Supersweet Feeds." Three quarters of the way down, a chute and pipe used to fill the boxcars with grain extends from the exterior. Directly below the chute and pipe is a window recessed in a concave square. Three hatch doors are built along the foundation.

The roof on the north façade is the shed (half-gabled) style. This side is plain except for a small rectangular window located near the northeast corner, presumably installed to provide light when the inside bin was converted into an office.

The west façade contains a vent, probably for air circulation, and a window just under the gabled roof, no doubt provided for an employee to monitor farmers bringing grain. At the base a large sliding door serves as the entrance for employees and customers.

A slightly raised ramp platform is attached to the west side of the elevator. The bituminous covered platform sits over a scale pit where the grain was weighed. The pit extends under the "leg"/lift (the motorized device used to carry the grain from the scale pit to the chutes leading to the bins) in the main body of the elevator. Made of concrete, the platform was the place where wagons would come and deposit their harvest. The concrete was poured to provide a large hole (currently covered with wood) in the middle of the platform into which grain was dropped or dumped. Large wood beams serve as a retaining wall next to the platform. The platform is reached via the gravel access road. A 55-gallon gasoline tank, used to fuel the leg/lift, once sat just west of the platform (Sanborn 1909: Sheet 5).

The south façade has no windows or doors. Below the shed (half-gabled) roof is an attached sign reading "Supersweet Feeds." Two more signs are attached below. The first reads "Grains – Feeds – Seeds;" the other one reads "Preston Farm Service."

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Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota

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### Foundation

The foundation was originally made of sandstone. Part of it was later replaced by poured concrete and concrete blocks, in all probability due to crumbling of the sandstone.

### Interior

The large sliding door on the west façade is the entrance to the elevator. The interior originally contained a central room and six bins, one of which has been converted to an office. The grain was stored in these bins until loaded onto train cars for transport east. The main room is directly underneath the gabled roof and is flanked by three bins on each side; the bins are under the shed (half-gabled) roofs.

The north side once had three bins. The east one was converted to an office perhaps in the 1940s. The west bin measures eight feet across, the center bin measures eight feet across, and the converted office measures six foot seven inches across.

The south side has three bins. The east bin is six foot seven inches across, the center bin is eight feet across, and the west bin is eight feet across. These dimensions mirror the bins opposite.

The interior shows intact wood-cribbed construction. Wood-cribbed construction was common for grain elevators due to its strength which was necessary to support the weight of the grain. Robert Frame's Multiple Property Documentation Form about Minnesota grain elevators cited civil engineer Alfred P. Boller who described wood-cribbed construction in 1866:

“The sides of the bins are formed of plank laid flatwise, usually two inches thick and spiked, the spikes being long enough to reach through two thicknesses of plank, and part way into a third” (Frame 1989: E 15).

The main room holds the steel leg/lift. The current electric leg/lift was installed in the 1950s to replace an earlier six horsepower gasoline engine-powered leg/lift. Once the grain was dropped through the hole in the ramped platform outside, the leg/lift transported the grain via large cups attached to the belt from the basement to the top of the elevator. The leg/lift is still intact and is in good condition; it appears to still function. A platform containing eight chutes going to different bins is at the top of the elevator. Employees on the ground floor could control the chutes with a wheel. Turning the wheel would direct the grain into the bins. Each of the five intact bins has a large square opening at waist height where the type of grain could be seen and

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Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota

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sampled. These openings are covered by removable flat wood panels guided with wooden slots located on the frame of the opening. Near this opening there is a smaller opening with a sliding cover, also used to view the grain.

### Summary of Changes

Over time the elevator and surrounding site have undergone some changes. The exterior was covered with corrugated metal sheets, probably by the 1930s. At one time a small, one-story building standing independent from the elevator contained the office. That was razed in approximately the 1940s at about the same time the northeast bin was converted into an office. The leg/lift was replaced in the 1950s by R.R. Howell Co., Minneapolis, Minnesota. The gasoline tank once used to fuel the lift is no longer on site. In 1977 the railroad tracks were removed. In 2002 the old grain which had been left under the floor in the elevator since 1977 was removed. A year later some deteriorated wood flooring was replaced in kind and sand was removed from the scale pit. Everything else is original.

The elevator is currently vacant. The Preston Historical Society plans to convert the elevator into a visitor center for the Root River State Trail and the town of Preston.



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Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota

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### 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Milwaukee Elevator, built in Preston in 1902, is locally significant and eligible for the National Register under Criterion C in the area of Engineering. The Milwaukee Elevator's eligibility was evaluated using the registration requirements for the historic context "Grain Elevators in Minnesota to 1945." The context is described in a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) prepared in 1989 by Robert M. Frame (Frame 1989).

The Milwaukee Elevator meets the MPDF's registration requirements for the property type "country grain elevators." The elevator was built by Hickok Construction Company, identified by Frame as one of the major builders of Minnesota's wooden country elevators. The elevator is therefore associated with a builder or contractor who presumably "made significant contributions to the design and construction of country elevators," one of the eligibility requirements in the MPDF (Frame 1989: F13-F14).

Because of its level of physical integrity, the Milwaukee Elevator also embodies the distinctive characteristics of country grain elevator engineering and construction, another eligibility requirement. The Milwaukee Elevator retains a typical layout with two rows of storage bins (a total of six) and a central working floor for the mechanical equipment (Frame 1989: F14). It is made of wood—the most popular material for country elevators in Minnesota—and its bins were built using cribbed construction, the predominant construction method used in about 90 percent of Minnesota's country elevators in 1929 (Frame 1989: E17).

With a footprint of 28 feet by 28 feet and a height of 55 feet, the Milwaukee Elevator is a somewhat small example of the typical country elevators described in the MPDF (Frame 1989: E17). The Milwaukee has a capacity of 15,000 bushels, while most country elevators in Minnesota held 25,000 to 35,000 bushels (Frame 1989: E7, E17).

Physical changes to the Milwaukee Elevator fall within the range of acceptable alterations described in the MPDF registration requirements. For example, the elevator is covered in "fireproof" corrugated steel siding following a common practice which, according to Frame, "appears to have continued practically unchanged" from the early 1900s through the 1970s and is therefore an expected part of elevator design and construction (Frame 1989: E17). The Milwaukee Elevator has lost its original office (a typical, small auxiliary structure), but this alteration does not compromise eligibility, according to Frame, because it occurred in an elevator "where the significance is embodied in the materials and design" of the main portion of the

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Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota

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elevator (Frame 1989: E15). While one of the Milwaukee Elevator's six bins was converted to serve as the replacement office, this change did not adversely affect the elevator's structural integrity and is therefore acceptable. Finally, while the original elevating equipment has been replaced, such replacements were common practice in Minnesota's country elevators and the change did not adversely affect the Milwaukee Elevator's design integrity (Frame 1989: E15).

### Country Elevators

The Milwaukee Elevator is a country elevator, one of two major functional types that accounted for most grain elevators built in Minnesota from the 1870s through World War II. The other is the terminal elevator. In general, country elevators were located in small towns where they collected grain in wagon loads delivered by individual farmers. Country elevators shipped the grain on to larger terminal elevators. Terminal elevators, on the other hand, were often located at larger nodes in rail networks. They collected grain in boxcar loads from country elevators and shipped the grain on to food processors or even larger terminal elevators (Frame 1989: E2, E7).

Country elevators were the most common type of elevator built in Minnesota. In 1906 there were about 1,350 country elevators standing in the state, and in 1922 there were about 1,500 (Frame 1989: E9).

Frame divided Minnesota's country elevators into four ownership types: line elevators, farmers' cooperative elevators, independently-owned elevators, and mill elevators which were owned by flour mills (Frame 1989: E8). Line elevators, including the Milwaukee Elevator in Preston, were groups or chains of elevators, often built down a single railroad line, that were owned by large entities such as grain companies or flour mills (Frame 1989: E7). Well-known Minnesota line owners included Northwestern Elevator Company of Minneapolis, and Cargill Elevator Company of LaCrosse and Minneapolis, which owned 180 elevators in 1910 (Keillor 2000: 193).

Line elevator companies usually worked with a single railroad company, according to historian John C. Hudson, and leased railroad-owned land on the railroad right-of-way, rather than building an elevator in the privately-owned portion of a townsite (Hudson 1985: 59).

Line elevators were not necessarily beneficial for farmers, according to L. D. H. Weld, Professor of Business Administration at Yale University who wrote in 1920, "They were apt to pay less than the wheat was worth: they were often guilty of undergrading or overdocking or underweighing" (Moore et al 1920: 1074). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Midwestern grain market was dominated by line elevator owners, grain buyers, large flour millers, and railroad companies

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Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota

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which collectively exerted considerable control over grain prices, shipping rates, and other market factors. Unfairness in this system helped spur populist agrarian reform movements, the rise of farmers' cooperatives, and government oversight of railroad shipping and grain markets (Frame 1989: E9).

The line elevator was the most common form of country elevator in Minnesota. In 1906 there were about 1,200 line elevators in Minnesota and about 150 farmers' cooperative elevators, although the latter were growing in number (Frame 1989: E9). In 1917 line elevators accounted for about 39 percent of the state's country elevators, farmers' cooperatives were 24 percent, independent elevators were 22 percent, and mill elevators were 15 percent. After about 1920 the farmers' cooperative was the dominant form of country elevator (Frame 1989: E11). (For a period in its history, the Milwaukee Elevator in Preston was apparently also a farmers' cooperative.)

According to Frame, country elevators were quite standardized in design and construction, perhaps in part because they were built by a relatively small number of construction companies (Frame 1989: E15-E16). They also changed little in design, layout, equipment, and services from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through World War II, except for increases in storage capacity and increases in the speed at which the equipment could move the grain (Frame 1989: E16).

### **Preston's Railroad Background**

The development of the community of Preston was linked to the development of Minnesota's railroad network, in much the same way that the construction of the state's grain elevators, whether line elevators or farmers' cooperatives, was dependent on the development of rail service.

Like many Minnesota farming communities, Preston was isolated until the arrival of rail service in the late 1870s. Although first settled in 1853 and platted in 1855, the village was not incorporated until 1871. Preston was born as a milling town on the south branch of the Root River and eventually had three competing mills that ground farmers' grain and formed the nucleus of a small farm community (Curtiss-Wedge 1912: 188). It was not until Preston achieved rail service in 1879 that the community began to grow into a full-service farming center that offered local farmers a profitable way to ship their grain; a broad range of hardware, lumber, equipment, and other supplies; and necessary doctors, lawyers, and other services.

Fillmore County had four railroad lines, only one of which passed through Preston. The four

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Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota

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lines were built in 1867-1890, and all four were still operating in 1960. They linked Fillmore County farmers and townspeople with major east-west rail lines that traversed southern Minnesota, and with north-south lines that linked the Twin Cities and cities like Kansas City and Chicago.

Fillmore County's first line, the Southern Minnesota Railroad, was built in 1867-1870. The tracks were built westward from La Crosse (on the Mississippi River) through the northern half of Fillmore County. The line came closest to Preston at Isinours, a village about five miles to the northeast. The line reached South Dakota in 1880, becoming one of southern Minnesota's most important east-west lines. In 1880 it was sold to the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul (Prosser 1966: 164).

In 1878 the northern edge of Fillmore County received the county's second line when the newly-formed Chatfield Railroad Company built a 10-mile set of tracks from the city of Chatfield (15 miles north of Preston) northward to connect with the east-west Winona and St. Peter Railroad (which was owned by the Chicago and North Western) in Olmsted County (Prosser 1966: 120).

In 1879 Preston (located in central Fillmore County) finally received its own rail service when the county's third rail line was built. It was owned by the Caledonia Mississippi and Western, a company organized in 1879 to build a line across southern Minnesota between the Mississippi River and South Dakota. The village of Preston, desperate for a rail connection, contributed \$25,000 in local bond funds toward construction (Gartner and Juenger 1980: 108-109). The only segment the company actually completed was built in 1879 from Caledonia (near the Mississippi River) to Preston, and for 25 years Preston served as terminus of the line. In 1880 the line was sold to the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul. While the line provided a vital link to terminal markets for farmers in central and southeastern Fillmore County, its 3'-wide narrow gauge tracks limited the amount of freight the cars could carry, limited the speed the trains could travel, and prevented the railcars from being transferred onto other carriers' standard gauge tracks.

In 1890 Fillmore County's fourth rail line, the Winona and Southwestern, was built through the western townships and the city of Spring Valley, 20 miles west of Preston. This line was part of a route between Winona and Kansas City. In 1901 the line came under the control of the Chicago Great Western Railroad, another of the largest rail companies operating in Minnesota.

In 1901 the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul rebuilt the tracks to Preston as a standard gauge line after pressure from the Minnesota legislature (led by Senator Richard E. Thompson from Preston). On November 11, 1901, the first broad gauge train came into Preston at 5:20 AM

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Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota

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(Gartner and Juenger 1980: 109). It was soon after these tracks were completed that the Milwaukee Elevator was built in 1902. Preston remained the terminus of the line until 1903 when rail service improved again. The tracks were extended from Preston five miles northeast to Isinours where they connected with the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul's major east-west line across southern Minnesota (the county's first line), providing superior connections for Preston farmers and businesses. As they had in 1879, representatives of the town of Preston provided cash and other incentives to encourage the railroad company to build. Trains began to travel between Preston and Isinours on November 6, 1903 ("After" 1903; Gartner and Juenger 1980: 110; Prosser 1966: 119).

### The Milwaukee Elevator

The Milwaukee Elevator was built when the rail line to Preston was improved with standard gauge tracks. To many Midwestern farmers, having access to a grain elevator located a reasonable distance away was an important factor that enabled them to shift from subsistence-level farming to more profitable cash grain operations. According to John C. Hudson, "The largest expenditure of time off the farm was spent hauling grain to market, and it was the need for a local grain elevator that most often prompted farmers to write letters to railroad presidents pleading their case" for railroad improvements including branch lines (Hudson 1985: 58).

The appearance of the Milwaukee Elevator garnered little conversation in the Preston newspapers. The main topic of discussion was the rail line itself, with articles on meetings between town and railroad officials, community incentives to the railroad, and obtaining the right-of-way becoming front-page news. It was not until the July 9, 1902, issue of the *Preston Times* that the new elevator was mentioned. The brief news note read: "Loomis and Companies [sic] new elevator is well under way and will be completed in time for the fall crops. With three elevators, three mills and a broad gauge the Preston grain market should and will be equal if not superior to any in this section of the state" (City 1902).

The Milwaukee Elevator was completed a few weeks later according to a story in the July 30, 1902, *Preston Times*. The Milwaukee Elevator was reportedly the largest on the railroad's branch, capable of handling 1,000 bushels of grain per hour. It was considered "modern in every particular" ("Preston's" 1902). It was thought that farmers would appreciate the fact that the elevator was the branch line's first dump elevator, allowing grain to be dumped into a receiving pit, rather than shoveled, which would save time and labor. The newspaper observed, "Preston is certainly a gainer in every way by the construction of this modern plant" ("Preston's" 1902).

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Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota

Preston's Milwaukee Elevator was owned by Loomis and Company and built by L. O. Hickok (City 1902). Loomis and Company was a major Minnesota grain buyer with offices in downtown Minneapolis (Minneapolis City Directory 1902). Hickok and Company, also headquartered in downtown Minneapolis, was one of the state's largest grain elevator builders (Frame 1989: F14; Minneapolis City Directory 1902).

The Milwaukee Elevator became one of three grain elevators in Preston and the largest and most modern. As such it was a primary vehicle through which local farmers marketed their crops. Like most small town elevators, the Milwaukee Elevator probably also sold seed grain, feed, coal, cement, plaster, and other bulk products to farmers.

The Milwaukee Elevator likely dealt in corn, wheat, oats, barley, and flax, which were the most common crops grown in southeastern Minnesota in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Garey and Elliot 1931: 39). While the percentage of land in Fillmore County used for these crops changed through the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all five remained major crops, according to the University of Minnesota (Pond and Nodland 1958: 15). The following table shows the percentage of tillable land planted to each crop in Fillmore County from 1928-1952:

	1928-29	1930-34	1935-39	1940-45	1946-52
Corn	19.1	19.3	18.9	22.1	24.9
Wheat	2.0	2.7	4.9	3.1	2.0
Oats	10.1	9.8	9.3	13.2	20.1
Barley	8.7	8.4	11.1	4.7	2.8
Flax	1.5	1.4	1.3	3.4	2.1

(Pond and Nodland 1958: 15)

The Milwaukee Elevator in Preston served the community for approximately seventy years, outlasting all other elevators in the city. Like most of Minnesota's line elevators that were eventually sold to smaller concerns, the Milwaukee Elevator was leased or sold through the years to a series of owners including farmers' cooperatives. (Unfortunately, tracing the ownership of the elevator is difficult because the land continued to be owned by the railroad and therefore ownership changes were not recorded with the Fillmore County Registrar of Deeds.) By the 1970s, because of competition from expanding over-the-road trucking, railroad shipping of grain had declined. The elevator and adjacent tracks fell into disuse and were left to neglect. The tracks were finally removed in 1977. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources eventually converted the former rail bed into a recreational path, the Root River State Trail, for biking, running, walking, and rollerblading (Gartner and Juenger 1980: 114). The former

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Milwaukee Elevator  
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elevator is now one of few remaining buildings in Preston that represents the town's historic role in marketing agricultural products for the region.

In summary, the Milwaukee Elevator is eligible for the National Register as a well-preserved example of the distinctive design and construction that characterizes country grain elevators in Minnesota. As more country elevators are altered or disappear, the Preston elevator becomes an even more important representative of a history in danger of being lost.

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### 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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### 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA, CONTINUED

#### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated property are shown by the solid line on the accompanying map entitled "Milwaukee Elevator, Preston, Fillmore County, Minnesota."

The northern boundary of the property is drawn 60' north of the southern line of Lot 5, Block 5, Barbara Kaereher's Addition.

The eastern boundary follows the western edge of the former Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul trackbed.

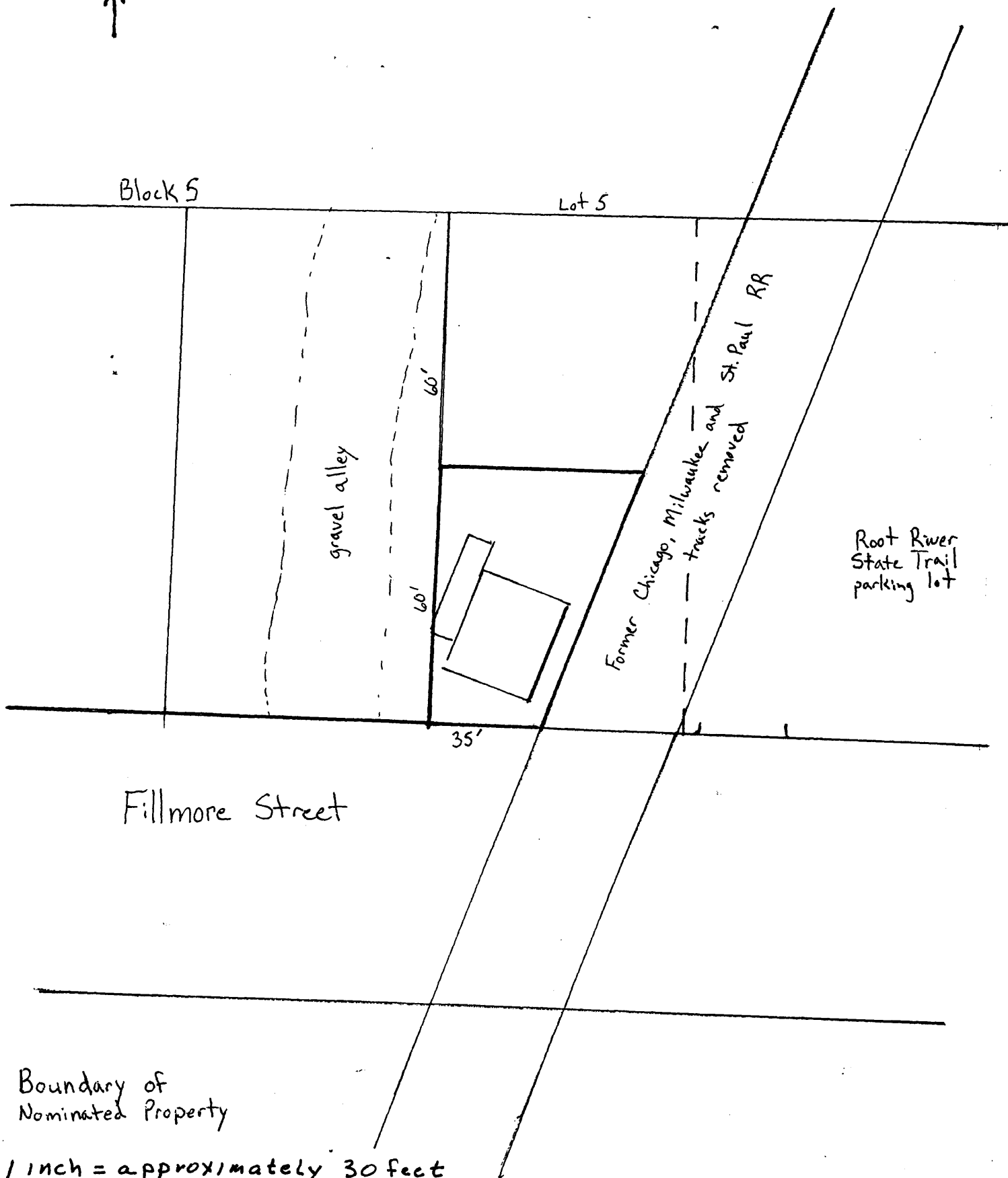
The western boundary is the western line of Lot 5, Block 5, Barbara Kaereher's Addition.

The southern boundary is the southern line of Lot 5, Block 5, Barbara Kaereher's Addition.

#### Boundary Justification

The nominated property is comprised of the parcel of land historically associated with the Milwaukee Elevator.

Milwaukee Elevator  
Preston, Fillmore Co  
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— Boundary of Nominated Property

1 inch = approximately 30 feet