

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED MAY 30 1978  
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**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

Rhodes Mill

AND/OR COMMON

Fertile Mill

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Fertile

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

Iowa

VICINITY OF

CODE

COUNTY

Worth

CODE

195

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

\_\_DISTRICT

\_\_PUBLIC

X OCCUPIED

\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_MUSEUM

X BUILDING(S)

X PRIVATE

\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_PARK

\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_BOTH

\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

X PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_OBJECT

\_\_IN PROCESS

X YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_NO

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Clarke and Margaret Halverson *Arvid & Anna Hargrave* ✓

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Fertile

VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa 50434

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Worth County Courthouse, Auditor's Office

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Northwood

STATE

Iowa

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Rhodes Mill, built in 1868, is a 2½-story building of oak and walnut construction on a rubble limestone foundation. The principal mass is 42 feet long and 34' wide. A small shed, originally built in 1919 and restored in 1971, is found on the northwest corner. To the east end of the mill has been added a two-story living area, with a walk-in stone basement and shallow gable roof, which extends the overall building length to 56 feet. Much of the exterior is covered with narrow clapboarding. The main roof and the roof of the monitor are covered with sheet metal. Windows in the mill are fairly small, set in plain frames. Those of the south (river) side are spaced symmetrically in four bays (with the end windows of the second story recent additions). Windows on the north side are irregularly spaced, due to a main entrance and door above which most likely was used to load flour or grain into wagons on the street below. Monitor windows have six lights each.

Most of the machinery in the mill is gone, but the present owner has restored two water turbines to working order. The owner plans to reinstall some grinding machinery, so that he can resume milling on a small-scale basis. The concrete dam dates from 1929.

The mill is located near the center of the town, on Fertile's main street and within the central business district. Across the river from the mill is a five-acre city park.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
—PREHISTORIC	—ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	—COMMUNITY PLANNING	—LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	—RELIGION
—1400-1499	—ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	—CONSERVATION	—LAW	—SCIENCE
—1500-1599	—AGRICULTURE	—ECONOMICS	—LITERATURE	—SCULPTURE
—1600-1699	—ARCHITECTURE	—EDUCATION	—MILITARY	—SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
—1700-1799	—ART	—ENGINEERING	—MUSIC	—THEATER
X 1800-1899	—COMMERCE	—EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	—PHILOSOPHY	—TRANSPORTATION
—1900-	—COMMUNICATIONS	X INDUSTRY	—POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	—OTHER (SPECIFY)
		—INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1868

BUILDER/ARCHITECT      William Rhodes

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

William Rhodes' mill at Fertile represents one of Iowa's earliest industries. From the first settlements of the 1830's until the 1880's, wheat was a principal cash crop, and hundreds of mills, large and small, were built to process the grain. Although the volume of wheat encouraged relatively large-scale, "merchant milling" operations by the 1850's, the majority of Iowa mills were "custom" enterprises, grinding the grain of local farmers in exchange for a portion of the product.

William Rhodes arrived in Fertile Twp. from Ontario in 1856 (the county histories credit him with being the "first settler"), and opened a sawmill on Lime Creek (now the Winnebago River) in 1857. This he operated until the Civil War, when he enlisted in the 32nd Iowa Infantry. Following his discharge in 1865, Rhodes returned to Fertile, where his mill had become the nucleus of a small town.

Iowa's wheat production increased substantially after the Civil War: by 1869 only Illinois grew more of that grain, and the 1870's were peak years for Iowa wheat and other grains (Johnson, pp. 177-78). Perhaps as a local response to this trend, Rhodes in 1868 built a flour mill at the site of his earlier operation, with a capacity of 50 bbl. of flour per day. By 1884, Rhodes was doing about \$10,000 worth of business a year, "mostly custom work" for local farmers (History of Mitchell and Worth Counties (1884), pp. 748,753). As wheat production declined toward the end of the century, Rhodes may have diversified his business to include the production of feed grains. He and his son were in business as late as 1918, although local milling was by then largely obsolete.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History of Mitchell and Worth Counties, Iowa. Springfield, Ill.: Union Publishing Co., 1884, pp. 747-753.  
 Clyde, J.F. History of Mitchell and Worth Counties, Iowa. Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1918 (2 Vols), Vol. II, pp. 40-43.  
 Johnson, Keach, "Iowa's Industrial Roots", Annals of Iowa (3 Ser.) Vol. 44 No. 3 Winter, 1978), pp. 163-190.  
 Swisher, Jacob. Iowa, Land of Many Mills. Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1940, pp. 225, 272, 294.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	4,6,5,8,2,5	4,7,8,9,9,9,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 55 feet by 265 feet, bounded on north by Main Street and on south by Winnebago River

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

Clarke Halverson

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Fertile

STATE

Iowa 50434

# 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

*Adrian D. Halverson*

TITLE

Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

5/12/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*William Halverson*

DATE

11/24/78

ATTEST:

*William Halverson*

DATE

Nov 22, 1978

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER