

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUL 18 1985

date entered AUG 15 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Samuel Thompson Dickson House

and/or common N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 225 SouthWest Third Street N/A not for publication

city, town Chatfield N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota code 22 county Fillmore code 045

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name John and Alice Flick

street & number 225 SouthWest Third Street

city, town Chatfield N/A vicinity of state Minnesota

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Fillmore County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Preston state Minnesota

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Minnesota Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date August, 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Minnesota Historical Society-Ft. Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date N/A

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Sam T. Dickson Mill House is a square, two and a half story residence built of locally manufactured brick. It is built into a slope near Mill Creek in Chatfield allowing its basement to be open to the street on the Third Street side. It suffered no major structural changes or remodelings during its 120 year history and all of its architectural features have been resored in recent work.

Windows and doors are placed symetrically and spaced evenly. On the first and second levels front, doors at the center are flanked by six over six muntined windows, one to each side of each door. A six over six muntined window is centered in the gabled side (the third half story) facing the street and on the opposite side of the structure.

A dormer in the roof facing east and a small one story wing on the basement or first level on the west side of the building has been preserved.

Chimney flues discovered during restoration work on either side of the center windows and doors on the street side and opposite side of the building have been preserved though they are no longer used. Research prior to restoration indicated that the building probably never had fireplaces but the symmetrical arrangement of rooms inside allowed access to a flue in each room. The flues were brought together at the peak on each gable end. The chimney stacks on each gable end have been restored.

The home's two porches, both on the street side, have been restored. The first is an extension of the roof line on the small one story west side wing. The other is a small porch providing shelter for the main basement entrance at the center and providing a walk out area for a second story door at the center of the building.

All gabled roof lines are original.

## 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/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
X 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
___ 1900-	___ communications	X ___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1863 **Builder/Architect** N/A

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Sam T. Dickson Mill House is commercially and industrially significant as the home of Samuel Thompson Dickson, owner of the Nonpariel Flour Mill, which was located near the house, and the North Branch Flour Mill, located about one and one-half miles south of the NonPariel on the North Branch of the Root River.

Thomas B. Twiford, an organizer of the Chatfield Land Company which founded Chatfield in 1853 and encouraged its settlement in the spring of 1854, built a sawmill in 1854 which was converted and expanded into a flour mill when it was acquired by Sam Dickson in 1855. The completed three-story frame structure was named the Nonpariel (i.e. unrivaled or having no equal). It was powered by means of a mill race cut between two points on Mill Creek just above the creek's junction with the Root River and later, during winter months, with a steam engine.

Little is known of Dickson's life before arriving in Chatfield in 1855 and after leaving in the 1890s. It is known, however, that Dickson, a native of Sangamon County Illinois, arrived in Chatfield with \$2,000 which he promptly and successfully invested in land speculation. He acquired the mill, improved it and did a profitable business.

As an example, in one year in the 1860s the mill realized a profit of \$90,000. A third of it was paid to the miller in charge in keeping with the terms of a prior agreement. The remainder was retained by Dickson. He dismissed the miller and from then on hired millers at a salary of only \$50 a month, gaining considerably by the new arrangement. The mill house, built in 1863, with its simple unembellished design and still sound construction, stands alone as solid evidence of Dickson's success and thrift.

In 1873, as half-owner, he built the North Branch Flour Mill in partnership with two other men. It went into production early in 1874 and was soon turning out 150 barrels of flour every twenty-four hours. After three years, the mill's capacity was doubled.

In 1887, Dickson acquired full ownership of the North Branch Flour Mill but from then on operated it only intermittently. With local agriculture already diversified, flour prices falling, and Minneapolis mills dominating the flour market, both of Dickson's mills were soon no longer the source of easy profits they once had been.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

THE CHOSEN VALLEY by Margaret Snyder, W.W.Norton & Co., New York; 1948  
HISTORY OF FILLMORE COUNTY by Rev. Edward D. Neill, Mn Historical Co., Mpls, 1882  
EMMA CHERMAK DIARY by Emma Chermak;  
HILDA BREKKE PRIVATE COLLECTION by Hilda Brekke, Chatfield, Mn, 1863

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Chatfield Quad.

Quadrangle scale 7.5

### UTM References

A 

1	5	5	6	5	0	1	4	0	4	1	8	5	1	4	5	1	6	1	0
Zone			Easting						Northing										

B 

Zone			Easting						Northing										

C 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 8-9-10, Block 38, Villare (now city) of Chatfield; also beginning at S Corner of said Bl 38 in Chatfield, thence S 45 deg. W 200 ft; thence N 19½ deg W 122 ft; thence N 7¼ deg, W 240 ft to W Cor of Bl 38 aforesaid; thence s 45 deg E 300 ft

to place of beginning, containing 3/4 acre more or less.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Brett J Kruempel, City Historian

organization Chatfield Historical Society

date September, 1984

street & number 413 SouthEast Main Street

telephone 507-867-3870

city or town Chatfield

state Minnesota 55923

## 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

*Russell W. Fridley*

title Russell W. Fridley  
State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6/27/85

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 8-15-85

for *Melores Bryan*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Statement of Significance Item number 8

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In 1874, the State Geologist reported thirty-two flour mills on the Root River and its affluents, sixteen of them within twenty miles of Chatfield. In 1878, the Minneapolis Tribune (April 15) cited thirty-seven flour mills in Fillmore County with a total of 151 run of stone.

Before the world price plummeted in 1882, repeated wheat crop failures in the Chatfield area had forced local agriculturists to diversify thus saving them from the worst effects of slavery to a one-crop system but also bringing to a close the heyday of flour milling in the area which had lasted nearly thirty years and made "Uncle Sam" Dickson a wealthy and influential owner of flour mills.

There were few sole owners of more than one flour mill in the area and of those, only Dickson was exclusively engaged in milling and wheat buying. Two large barns, which then stood between the house and mill, provided ample storage for the purchased grain. A spur line of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, completed in 1878, ran between the mill and the mill house and barns and terminated there at the center-piece of Chatfield's industrial development in the flour milling period.

The frame barns eventually fell into disrepair and were removed. The spur railroad line was entirely discontinued and the tracks removed within the last twenty years.

Dickson retired to California in the 1890s. The Nonpariel Mill property was first rented and then, after Dickson's death, sold at auction. In 1903, while the mill was being remodeled by its new owner, it caught fire, burned to the ground, and was not replaced. Yearly floods washed away the debris and filled the mill race.

The North branch Flour Mill was acquired by the Chatfield Electric Light and Power Company in the 1890s and was used to provide the community with its first source of electricity. The power generated there was limited, however. It soon could not meet the growing demand and other sources were found.

The North Branch buildings were dismantled and removed. What was left was swept away by floods. The mill dam survived some years longer but then succumbed to the floods also.

Chatfield's third mill, the Elmira Flour Mill, was located one and one-half miles northwest of the Nonpariel on Mill Creek. It was originally owned in equal partnership by Dickson and James M. Cussons. Cussons purchased Dickson's interest by the mid-1870s and became the mill's sole owner.

The Elmira Flour Mill continued to be used until before the First World War, though

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eventually only for grinding livestock feed. The mill was abandoned before the War's finish, the frame structure was not maintained, and successive floods damaged the foundation. Today, only a few of the stones remain to mark where the mill once stood.

The Cussons mill house, nearby, was substantially altered, added to, and remodeled over the years. Though still standing, it bears little resemblance to its original appearance.

The Sam T. Dickson Mill House, on the other hand, suffered no major and few minor alterations during the 120 years between its construction and its recent restoration. The house's original appearance remained intact, acquiring only a worn look in recent years while the structure itself remained sound.

Mills stand in Rushford, Lanesboro, and in Sumner Township in Fillmore County and at Simpson in Olmsted County. Mill houses also stand at the Rushford and Simpson (Fugel's) mills providing only scant physical evidence of a once extensive and thriving industry in the region.

The Sam T. Dickson Mill House, as the excellently restored home of a major owner of flour mills in the region, is therefore a rare and valuable survivor and the best representative structure from the flour milling period in the Chatfield area history.