

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED APR 28 1975  
DATE ENTERED MAY 12 1975

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  Tunnel Mill (J.A. Stout Mill)  
AND/OR COMMON Tunnel Mill

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER E of Racine on Bear Creek  
Section 34  
CITY, TOWN Racine County Summer Township VICINITY OF First  
STATE Minnesota CODE 27 COUNTY Fillmore CODE 045

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: none

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Lawrence Maus  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN Rochester VICINITY OF STATE Minnesota

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Register of Deeds -- Fillmore County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN Preston STATE Minnesota

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Statewide Historic Sites Survey  
DATE 1973  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Minnesota Historical Society - Building 25, Fort Snelling  
CITY, TOWN St. Paul STATE Minnesota

# 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Tunnel Mill is located on a three quarter mile horseshoe bend of Bear Creek in northwestern Fillmore County, Minnesota. Built on the lower edge of the one hundred and fifty feet deep valley and at the end of a six hundred foot long mill race, the mill derives its name from the fact that the builder and original owner, J.A. Stout, tunneled underneath the bluff through limestone bedrock, shortcutting the bend of the creek. Consequently he took advantage of the natural twenty five foot drop in the creek bed and eliminated the need for a mill pond.

The Tunnel Mill is a timber and frame structure with horizontal clapboard siding. While of venacular, industrial design, the strong emphasis on verticality, the twin circular windows beneath the gable overhang and the extensive overhang to the eaves reflect the Italianate influence of the period.

J.A. Stout originally constructed only the main portion of the building in 1871, utilizing locally quarried limestone for the base. He added the shed addition in 1881 as a sorghum mill. The original grain mill produced upwards of fifty barrels of flour per day during peak periods while the sorghum mill produced two thousand gallons of molasses in its first year of production. Most of the belts and pulleys are intact in the building as is the tunnel although now unused and dry. Most of the other milling equipment, however, was removed when the mill ceased operation in the 1930s.

Now standing unused except for storage for the old miller's house nearby, the mill is becoming increasingly vandalized and deteriorated.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1871, 1881

BUILDER/ARCHITECT J.A. Stout

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Completed in 1871 by J.A. Stout, the locally renown miller and mill builder, the Tunnel Mill is the last surviving mill in the important "western concentration" of grist mills in Fillmore County, Minnesota. To explain, Fillmore County which is located in the southernmost tier of counties in southeastern Minnesota, is naturally blessed with great rolling agricultural lands, and quickly cascading creeks and rivers. The latter form the edge to the deep Root River valley basin, a major tributary to the upper Mississippi River. Consequently, with the great wheat "booms" of the 1850s and 1870s, Fillmore County was geologically well suited to develop the greatest number of grain mills ever built in Minnesota. The mills were concentrated in two areas; on the southeastern edge of the county which saw well over one hundred and fifty mills being constructed between 1855 and 1900, and in the smaller northwestern corner of the county where over fifty mills were built during the same period. The Tunnel Mill is the last vestige in the latter in this great milling area.

During the early years and before the development of the modern roller milling technology in the 1880s and 1890s, this county superceeded in quantity and quality even the world renown mills of St. Anthony Falls at Minneapolis.

The mill, like many of its neighboring companies, added a sorghum mill to supplement the grain milling.

Water supplied all power to the mill during its operation from 1871 to the 1930s. But instead of water power being supplied by an adjacent dam which is the normal procedure, the Tunnel Mill capitalized on the natural advantage of its site. Bear Creek, its source of water, takes a three-quarter mile, horseshoe, bend around a hundred and fifty foot bluff. Stout hired four men during what local oldtimers describe as "one long, cold, hard winter" to construct a tunnel shortcutting the creek and supplying the power. Local histories claim the tunnel took the better part of a year to build using three tons of powder to blast the six by six by six hundred foot tunnel through the limestone bedrock. The tunnel created a twenty-five foot drop in the creek bed, more than sufficient to power the mill. It is the only known mill in the state to be powered in such a manner and represents a unique and rather ingenious engineering solution to an age old problem.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History of Fillmore Co., Minn., ed. by Rev. Edward D. Neill, pub. by Minnesota Historical Company, Minneapolis, 1882.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 20 acres

UTM REFERENCES NO UTM CD

A			
ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	
C			

## Latitude and Longitude

NW	43°	45'	48"	92°	23'	02"
NE	43°	45'	48"	92°	22'	42"
SE	43°	45'	40"	92°	22'	42"
SW	43°	45'	4"	92°	23'	02"
B						
ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			
D						

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

$S\frac{1}{2}$  of  $SE\frac{1}{4}$  of  $SW\frac{1}{4}$  Section 34. Summer Township

## 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

Thomas Lutz - Historic Sites Survey and Planning

ORGANIZATION

Minnesota Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

Building 25, Fort Snelling

CITY OR TOWN

St. Paul

DATE

21 March 1975

TELEPHONE

612 726-1171

STATE

Minnesota

# 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE Russell W. Fridley  
State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

3/28/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 5/12/75

ATTEST:

Ronald M. Stuebing  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

5/19/75



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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**Note: These changes apply to  
Tunnel Mill in Fillmore County,  
Minnesota.**

**REFERENCE NUMBER:** 75000978

**STATE:** MINNESOTA

**COUNTY:** Fillmore

**RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC):**

**CITY:**

**VICINITY OF:** Spring Valley

**ADDRESS:** off Co. Hwy. 1

**CERTIFICATION DATE:**

**REMOVED DATE:**

**COMMENTS:**

*Nina M. Archabal*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Nina M. Archabal**  
**State Historic Preservation Officer**

**JUN 17 1988**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**