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**United States Department of 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 *How to Complete 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, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Chase Grain Elevator

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number	123 Railroad Street	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Sun Prairie	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county Dane	code 025
			zip code 53590

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James Haeger  
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/21/10  
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

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 commenting official/Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

Chase Grain Elevator

Dane

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

**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.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain):

*Edson H. Bell*

8.12.10

*[Signature]*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

- building(s)
- district
- structure
- site
- object

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

contributing	noncontributing
1	buildings
	sites
1	structures
	objects
2	total

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

N/A

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Tile Grain Elevator

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation STONE

walls OTHER: Structural Clay Tile

roof METAL

other WEATHERBOARD

**Narrative Description**

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

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Chase Grain Elevator, Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Chase Grain Elevator is an astylistic utilitarian building of structural clay tile with a standing-seam, metal, multi-gable roof (see Photo 1). The building is set on a stone foundation and was erected in 1922.<sup>1</sup> It is a “country” elevator, where farmers brought grain by the wagon- or truckload for shipment to market by rail. A circa 1944 scale stands just northeast of the elevator and contributes to the property.<sup>2</sup>

**DESCRIPTION**

The Chase Grain Elevator sits on the edge of an embankment above (and just north of) the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway (Milwaukee Road) corridor. The elevator stands in the rail yard, among a handful of warehouses and rail transport buildings that date from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Just west of the elevator is a circa 1890, brick tobacco warehouse. Now completely altered and converted to apartment use, the warehouse was operated as a feed mill in association with the Chase Grain Elevator from c. 1943 to 1953. The warehouse is not included in this nomination because its association with the Chase Grain Elevator was so brief, in comparison to its long tenure (50 years) as a tobacco warehouse. The Milwaukee Road Passenger Depot (not extant) stood west of the tobacco warehouse. A few warehouses remain east of the elevator. Spur lines ran north and south of the elevator. The northerly one served tobacco warehouses (not extant) north of the elevator, and was still in place as late as 1981.<sup>3</sup> The Chase Grain Elevator utilized the southern spur, which was removed in 2009, when the one remaining set of tracks was relocated closer to the embankment.

As was typical of country elevators, the plan of the Chase Grain Elevator integrates the grain storage bins, the “workhouse” (where grain handling such as receiving, weighing and loading took place), the office, and the “cupola” (which housed the top of the vertical conveyors) in one building. The bins are located at the south end (rear) of the building (see attached plan). The cupola straddles the bins. The workhouse is a tall, one-story, shed-roofed section at the north end (front), and the office is a smaller, gabled section at the east end of the plan. The footprint of the workhouse and bins section measures 34 feet (north-south) by 38 feet, while the office measures 21 feet (north-south) by 18 feet. The bins consist of two cylindrical silos, with a half-silo created from the space between the two silos forming what is called a “pocket bin.” The silos are 18 feet in diameter, rise 40 feet in height, and have a

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<sup>1</sup> “New Elevator Under Construction,” *The Sun Prairie Countryman*, October 5, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *Map of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin* (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Publishing Company, 1928 pasted over through 1943; and 1928 pasted over through 1949).

<sup>3</sup> Photo, c. 1981, Chase Elevator File, Box 4046, Sun Prairie Historical Society.

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capacity of 17,000 bushels. The bins are constructed of structural clay tile produced by the Brazil Hollow Brick & Tile Company of Brazil, Indiana (stamped on each tile), in accordance with the patent acquired by Thomas H. McCrea on February 10, 1920 for the construction of curved walls. In contrast, the walls of the rest of the building are plain, structural clay tiles, which do not bear any stamp. The grain elevator originally had 6/6 double-hung sash windows. Although none have been replaced, some are in deteriorated condition, and others have fallen out. Most first floor openings are currently boarded. The gable ends of the silo roofs, as well as the walls of the cupola, are finished with drop siding.

The north-facing (front) façade of the Chase Grain Elevator is composed of the office section (east), and the workhouse section (west; see Photo 1). The office section is side-gabled and possesses an off-center, paneled wooden door, and one window opening. The shed-roofed, workhouse section displays two, sliding, vertical-board doors, and one window. All appear to be original. A large, substantial, shed-roofed canopy, with a closed eave (a fire-resistive feature), extended across the front of the workhouse section to shelter trucks as they unloaded grain (see attached historical photograph). Sometime between 1971 and 1978, the canopy was torn off in an accident.<sup>4</sup> It appears as though part of the upper wall to which the canopy was attached was severely damaged in this accident. The wall was repaired with concrete block. This repair seems to have weakened the wall between the window and the larger sliding door; boards have been nailed to the structure to reinforce it. Beneath the larger sliding door are four sheet metal receiving chutes. Trucks dumped their grain into these chutes, and the grain slid into the receiving pit in the basement. The grain was then weighed, placed on the vertical conveyor, which carried it up to the top of the cupola and loaded it into one of the silos (see Figure 1). Rising above the ridge of the workhouse roof, the silos frame the cupola. Screened openings in the gable ends of the silo roofs and the cupola provide ventilation.

The south-facing (rear) façade of the elevator consists of the office section (east), and the silos and cupola (west; see Photo 2). The office section features two, regularly-distributed, 6/6 windows (boarded), and at basement level, an opening that originally held a sliding, vertical-board door (boarded). Each silo exhibits a small opening toward its base, perhaps for loading grain into boxcars. A clean-out chute is found at the base of the central, pocket bin. What appears to be a loading spout hangs near the roofline of the westernmost silo. The cupola, perched between the silo roofs, has no openings. Originally, two, evenly-spaced, 6/6 windows lighted the cupola. This alteration took place within the past ten years.

The office section (north), and the workhouse and silos (south) can be seen on the east-facing façade (see Photo 3). The office section possesses one window (boarded). An interior chimney of cream

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<sup>4</sup> Two different stories are remembered: either it was a wind storm, or a truck.

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brick pierces the roof. Behind the office, the upper wall of the workhouse can be seen. There is one window opening, which once held a multipane, awning window. The gable end of the silo roof displays a window opening as well, but the window is gone. Toward the base of the silo another small opening is found.

On the west-facing façade, the workhouse section displays an enlarged and boarded window opening at first floor level (see Photo 1). The remains of an original, 6/6 window can be seen above. The first floor window opening likely was enlarged c. 1944 to allow the transfer of grain from the adjacent warehouse for the short time that the two buildings were operated in association with each other. The gable end of the silo roof at the south end of this façade retains a screened opening (see Photo 4).

On the interior, the workhouse is open. A ladder on the brick wall between the silos rises to the cupola (see Photo 5). Two elevator "legs," housing the vertical conveyors, are sheathed in sheet metal and climb the western silo. An opening near the base of each silo appears to have been a loading chute, for loading grain into the silo either by hand or with a grain auger. In the northeast corner of the workhouse, a straight flight of wooden stairs descends a few steps to a landing, which leads into the office. From the landing, the staircase makes a 90-degree turn and continues to the basement. The office presently exhibits an open plan (as it appears to have had originally), although the remains of partitions are evident. Wooden flooring is found in the workhouse, while the office flooring is poured concrete. The walls and ceilings in both sections are exposed. In the basement, a low stone wall forms what was probably the grain receiving pit; it is set under the opening beneath the sheet metal chutes on the front of the building.

The c. 1944 scale is very simple. It consists of a long, rectangular concrete section marked with a steel edge (see Photo 6). The scale measures 40 feet (east-west) by 10 feet.

### **ALTERATIONS**

On the exterior, the Chase Grain Elevator has lost the canopy that extended across the front elevation of the workhouse section, and a portion of the wall that anchored the canopy has been repaired with concrete block. Although this is an unattractive blemish, the canopy was an ancillary feature, and even with the concrete block wall, the historical function of the elevator is still evident. Further, the current owners intend to replace the concrete block with tile. One opening on the west-facing (side) elevation has been altered, and the two window openings on the south-facing (rear) elevation of the cupola have been closed. The placement of these alterations on secondary elevations minimizes their impact. Throughout the building, original windows are in extremely deteriorated condition or have fallen out, but the original openings remain. The interior of the structure retains a high degree of integrity, both in its layout and with the presence of the vertical conveyors. The Chase Grain Elevator clearly conveys its historical use, and retains its design as a tile country grain elevator.

Chase Grain Elevator  
Name of Property

Dane  
County and State

Wisconsin

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the 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.
- 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.

### Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- 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.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce  
Architecture

### Period of Significance

1922-1959 (Commerce)

1922 (Architecture)

### Significant Dates

1922

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

McCrea, Thomas  
Chase, Frederick W.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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**SUMMARY**

The Chase Grain Elevator is significant at the local level under *Criterion A*, in commerce, for the important role it played in the distribution of grain, especially feed crops such as corn, oats, and barley. It received grain from local farmers and transferred it to railcars for shipment to market. The Chase Grain Elevator is also significant at the state level under *Criterion C*. First, it is a fine example of a “country” elevator, and one of only a handful of elevators in Wisconsin built of structural clay tile. It is the only known surviving tile elevator in the state. As a tile elevator, the Chase Grain Elevator is also eligible because it represents a significant phase in the evolution of grain elevator design and construction: early fireproof elevator experimentation, illustrating the transition from wooden to concrete elevators. Beginning around 1895, engineers intensively searched for the material and construction method for terminal elevators that would be both fire-resistant and economical. Although reinforced concrete was widely accepted as the best choice for terminal elevators by World War I, country elevators continued to be built of other materials, especially wood. Tile country elevators, never numerous, were no longer built after c. 1925. The period of significance in commerce extends from 1922 to 1959, the time during which it was used as a grain elevator. The period of significance in architecture coincides with the date of construction, 1922.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT: BRIEF HISTORY OF SUN PRAIRIE**

In 1839, Charles H. Bird became the first permanent European-American resident of what is now the city of Sun Prairie. Bird settled at the junction of the Madison-Milwaukee road, and the Madison-Columbus road. His farmstead soon became known as “Bird’s Corners.” In 1844, Colonel William Angell bought five acres from Bird. Angell and Bird founded the village of Sun Prairie in 1846, establishing a post office, which was briefly called Rome. The earliest businesses served travelers on the Madison-Columbus and Madison-Milwaukee roads. Edwin Brayton opened a small general store on Angell’s property in 1845. In 1850, two tavern/hotels were erected on what is now Main Street, north of the location of the Chase Grain Elevator. During the 1850s, Sun Prairie began to develop as an agricultural support community, as increasing numbers of European-Americans established farms in the area. These early farmers planted wheat, a very profitable cash crop. In 1859, the Madison and Watertown Railroad (later a part of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, also known as the Milwaukee Road) extended its line to Sun Prairie. Until the line was built into Madison in 1869, Sun Prairie was the terminus of the railroad and the shipping center for the grain cultivated in the region.<sup>5</sup> This period coincided with the peak of wheat cultivation in south central Wisconsin. During the 1860s, the community prospered. In 1865, Sun Prairie had 15 businesses, including three hotels, two

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<sup>5</sup> “SP history—a tale of growth,” *The Sun Prairie Star-Countryman*, June 18, 1987, p. 4.

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grain dealers, a bank, a drug store/grocery, two dry goods stores, a clothing store, a shoe store, and a lumber dealer.<sup>6</sup> Sun Prairie incorporated as a village in 1868, and counted 626 residents in 1870.<sup>7</sup>

During the 1870s, Sun Prairie's economy stalled due to the loss of the railroad terminus, and due to a steep decline in wheat cultivation in the area. For several years in a row, the wheat crop was decimated by the cinch bug. In addition, sustained, intensive wheat cultivation had depleted the nutrients in the soil. Sun Prairie recovered slowly, becoming an agricultural support center for the growing numbers of dairy farmers in northeastern Dane County. During the 1880s and 1890s, three creameries were established near Sun Prairie. Feed crops for dairy cattle, especially corn and oats, but also barley, were raised. By the mid-1890s, two other farming sectors had developed in the vicinity of Sun Prairie: tobacco cultivation and livestock breeding. The stockyards were adjacent to the railroad.<sup>8</sup>

In 1900, 938 persons lived in the village of Sun Prairie.<sup>9</sup> By this time, Sun Prairie had become a shipping center for large leaf tobacco. Tobacco warehouses were erected in the railroad corridor, near the site of the Chase Grain Elevator, between 1894 and 1910. As many as six were in operation at one time. Cigars were also manufactured in the village. However, tobacco culture in the area declined in the 1930s, and by 1943, Sun Prairie's tobacco warehouses had either been converted to other agricultural support uses, were vacant, or had been demolished.<sup>10</sup>

In the early twentieth century, Sun Prairie's economy diversified with the opening of the Sun Prairie Canning Company (organized in 1900) and the American Spark Plug and Porcelain Company (established in 1919). These businesses drew new residents to Sun Prairie, and by 1940, the population had risen to 1,625.<sup>11</sup> The canning company canned peas, corn, tomatoes, kidney beans, pork beans, beets, and sauerkraut. The firm changed hands several times but remained in operation through 1974. The factory, now titled the Fuhremann Canning Company Factory, stands at 151 Market Street, a few blocks north of the Chase Grain Elevator, and was listed on the National Register in 2004. The American Spark Plug and Porcelain Company, later called the Wisconsin Porcelain

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<sup>6</sup> *Wisconsin and Minnesota State Gazetteer and Shippers' Guide and Business Directory for 1865-66* (Indianapolis: George W. Hawes, 1865), p. 210.

<sup>7</sup> *The Legislative Manual of the State of Wisconsin* (Madison: Atwood & Culver, State Printers, 1871).

<sup>8</sup> Peter Michael Klein, *Sun Prairie's People, Part I: Shadows and Dreams* (Sun Prairie: Peter Michael Klein, 1993), pp. 77-80.

<sup>9</sup> *The Blue Book of the State of Wisconsin* (Madison: William H. Froehlich, Secretary of State, 1901).

<sup>10</sup> Barbara L. Wyatt, editor, *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), II:7-15; and *Map of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin* (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Publishing Company, 1894; 1899; 1912; 1928; and 1928 pasted over through 1943).

<sup>11</sup> *The Wisconsin Blue Book, 1942* (Madison: State Printing Office, 1942).

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Company, produced the porcelain used in the manufacture of spark plugs. From the 1920s through at least the 1940s, Wisconsin Porcelain was the leading employer in Sun Prairie.<sup>12</sup> It was one of the larger employers in the city as late as 2001.

Sun Prairie incorporated as a city in 1958, and has expanded rapidly since that time. In 1960, Sun Prairie counted 4,008 residents. By 1970, this figure had more than doubled, reaching 9,935.<sup>13</sup> The number of people living in Sun Prairie increased steadily through the 1970s and the 1980s. In 1990, the population stood at 15,333. In 2005, some 24,219 persons were living in Sun Prairie. The city's largest employers are General Casualty Insurance, the Sun Prairie School District, Verizon North (a cellular phone service provider), and the Wisconsin Cheeseman (a mail order food gift company). In addition, nearly two-thirds of Sun Prairie residents who are employed work outside of the city, many of them in Madison, about 10 miles to the southwest.<sup>14</sup>

**SIGNIFICANCE: COMMERCE**

The Chase Grain Elevator is locally significant under *Criterion A* in commerce for the role it played in the local grain trade. A grain elevator is an important link in the flow of grain from farm field to market. Following its construction in 1922, corn, wheat, oats, and barley grown in northeastern Dane County were loaded from the Chase Grain Elevator (the only elevator in Sun Prairie) onto boxcars and shipped to Milwaukee on the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad (the Milwaukee Road). Corn and oats were largely feed crops, cultivated in support of dairying and livestock raising, and were shipped to terminal elevators for delivery to larger markets. Wheat and barley, grown in lesser amounts in northeastern Dane County, were likely shipped to processors, the wheat to flour mills for baked goods, and the barley to malt elevators at breweries. During the 1950s, corn was the principal grain local farmers delivered to the Chase Grain Elevator.

Grain Cultivation in Dane County

From 1860 until 1930, Dane County led the state in the number of acres farmed.<sup>15</sup> As early as 1850, Dane County had the third largest number of acres planted in wheat, behind only Rock and Walworth counties. By 1870, Dane County had the greatest acreage planted in wheat, showing an increase of 800 percent since 1850. From 1850 through 1870, wheat accounted for 75 percent of the county's

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Michael Klein, "Walking Tour: King Street, South Bristol, Linnerud, Market, Main Street," Prepared for the Sun Prairie Historical Library and Museum, September 3, 1998, pp. 10-12.

<sup>13</sup> *The Wisconsin Blue Book, 1973* (Madison: Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, 1973).

<sup>14</sup> "Sun Prairie Master Plan 2020," Prepared for the City of Sun Prairie, June 4, 1999, pp. 27-29.

<sup>15</sup> *Back to Beginnings: The Early Days of Dane County* (Madison: Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission for the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial, 1998), p. 43.

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acreage planted in grain. Although the acreage of wheat plummeted after 1870, as late as 1890, 25,000 acres of wheat were cultivated in Dane County (10 percent of all acres planted in grain). This figure had dropped to 2,400 acres (about one percent of all acreage) by 1910.<sup>16</sup>

Feed crops, such as corn, oats, and barley, although unprofitable when raised for cash, were essential to dairy and livestock farming. As research at the University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture would show, these feed crops could be grown inexpensively, and in large quantities, and promoted increased milk and livestock production.<sup>17</sup> The increase in the cultivation of feed crops in Dane County reflected the rise in dairying and livestock raising. Less than 10 percent of the acres planted in grain in Dane County in 1850 were corn. This figure in Dane County increased by 800 percent between 1850 and 1870, and by another 300 percent between 1870 and 1890, rising from 4,000 acres to more than 91,000 acres. Dane County led the state in acreage planted in corn from 1890 through 1945 (when more than 154,000 acres were planted in corn). Corn accounted for less than 10 percent of Dane County's grain-planted acreage from 1850 through 1870, but by 1890 accounted for 37 percent of the acreage, a figure that increased to 57 percent by 1945. Dane County led Wisconsin, and Wisconsin led the nation, in corn grown for silage throughout the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup>

In 1870, Dane County had the third largest number of acres planted in oats (nearly 41,000 acres), behind only Grant and Lafayette counties. Dane County led the state in acreage in oats from 1890 through at least 1945 (over 111,000 acres). In 1850, oats accounted for 15 percent of the acreage in grains in Dane County. This figure fell to 13 percent in 1870, and grew thereafter, ranging from 36 to 41 percent from 1890 through 1945. Despite the fact that barley was not as extensively planted as other grains, Dane County led the state in barley acreage in 1870 (with nearly 6,000 acres). From at least 1890 through 1930, some 30,000 acres of barley were grown in Dane County annually, maintaining its position as one of the leading barley-producing counties in the state throughout the period. Barley accounted for 12-14 percent of the acreage planted in grains in Dane County from 1890 through 1930, but had dropped to 2 percent by 1945. Very little barley was grown in Wisconsin after the 1930s.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *A Century of Wisconsin Agriculture: 1848-1948* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 290, 1948), p. 90.

<sup>17</sup> Wyatt, II: 5-1.

<sup>18</sup> *A Century of Wisconsin Agriculture: 1848-1948*, p. 89; and Wyatt, II: 5-3.

<sup>19</sup> *A Century of Wisconsin Agriculture: 1848-1948*, p. 89; and Wyatt, II: 5-5.

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Sun Prairie's Grain Elevators

In 1865, Sun Prairie had two grain dealers: Charles Cook and J. S. Helmer.<sup>20</sup> The 1875 bird's eye map shows two frame buildings in the rail corridor near the present site of the Chase Grain Elevator. It is possible that one or both of these buildings was a grain warehouse.<sup>21</sup> The *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* for 1876-77 lists two grain dealers in Sun Prairie: Bowen & Swanton and A.E. Weigan & Son. Both firms were still in business in 1879.<sup>22</sup> Sun Prairie's first grain elevator likely was the E. A. Weigan Grain Elevator (not extant), which was in operation by 1884. Weigan is the lone grain dealer listed in the 1884 business directory, and he remained the proprietor until at least 1886.<sup>23</sup> Weigan's elevator was probably located just east of the present location of the Chase Grain Elevator. The 1894 Sanborn map of Sun Prairie indicates that R.W. Davis owned a wooden, horse-powered elevator on that site; this could have been Weigan's elevator. Davis' elevator rose 46 feet in height, and had a capacity of 12,000 bushels.<sup>24</sup> Davis was the only grain dealer in Sun Prairie in 1891 and 1894.<sup>25</sup> In 1897, James W. Chase (1852-1932) opened a lumberyard in partnership with F. Mann and Alvin Gross.<sup>26</sup> The Chase, Mann & Gross lumberyard was located in the rail corridor, east of the present site of the Chase Grain Elevator, and east of the Davis Elevator. By 1899, Alvin Gross had acquired the Davis Elevator, and was powering it with a gasoline engine. Meanwhile, James W. Chase had erected his own wooden elevator, 42 feet high, with a gasoline engine, right next door to the Gross Elevator, on the site of the existing Chase Grain Elevator. The first Chase Elevator had a capacity of 16,000 bushels, and included a one-story feed mill section.<sup>27</sup> By 1901, Chase and Gross had become partners in the operation of the two grain elevators. From that time on, there was only one grain elevator in Sun Prairie.<sup>28</sup> In 1903, Chase's son, Frederick W., bought out Alvin Gross in the grain elevator and feed mill business, which stood between the Chase lumberyard, and the Chase

<sup>20</sup> *Wisconsin and Minnesota State Gazetteer and Shippers' Guide and Business Directory for 1865-66.*

<sup>21</sup> *Bird's Eye View of Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin* (Madison: J.J. Stoner, 1875).

<sup>22</sup> *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1876-77* (Milwaukee: Murphy & Co., 1876); and *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Milwaukee: William Hogg, 1879).

<sup>23</sup> *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Chicago: R. L. Polk & Co., 1884; and 1886).

<sup>24</sup> *Map of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin* (1894).

<sup>25</sup> *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Chicago: R. L. Polk & Co., 1891; and 1894).

<sup>26</sup> *Looking Back: A Pictorial History of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin: 1860-1960* (Sun Prairie: The Star, 1991), p. 119.

<sup>27</sup> *Map of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin* (1899).

<sup>28</sup> *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Chicago: R.L. Polk & Co., 1901; 1903; 1905; 1907; 1909; 1911; 1913); *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co., 1915; 1918; and 1924); and *W.H. Lightfoot Company's Dane County, Wisconsin Directory: 1928-29* (Peoria, Illinois: W.H. Lightfoot Company, 1928).

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elevator.<sup>29</sup> Chase and Son operated both elevators through at least Dec 1912.<sup>30</sup> On February 5, 1922, Chase and Son's wooden grain elevator was destroyed by fire.<sup>31</sup> In October 1922, the existing tile grain elevator was erected.<sup>32</sup> Frederick W. Chase (1876-1944) was undoubtedly looking for a fire-proof elevator, after the loss of his wooden elevator the winter before. Thomas H. McCrea's silo/storage bin design, patented in 1920, and produced by the Brazil Hollow Brick & Tile Company, of Brazil, Indiana, probably attracted Chase's attention for that reason. The plan for the workhouse and office sections of the Chase Grain Elevator is said to have been Frederick Chase's own design.<sup>33</sup>

In 1923, Chase and Son was renamed the Chase Lumber and Fuel Company. The firm had had two locations in Sun Prairie since 1908, when it had taken over the Gibbons lumberyard on Main Street. Benjamin Chase, brother of Frederick W., managed the Main Street business until his death in 1931. James W. Chase died in 1932, and Frederick W. and Theodore Chase (the son of Benjamin Chase), took over leadership of the firm. In 1939, the Frederick W. Chase sold his interest in the Sun Prairie businesses and bought the DeForest Lumber and Fuel Company in DeForest, Wisconsin. Frederick W. Chase and his son, Fredric, operated that business together until Frederick W.'s death, resulting from a fall at the DeForest lumberyard. Fredric Chase continued to operate the DeForest business as the F.L. Chase Lumber Company. Meanwhile, Theodore Chase (1911-1984) continued to direct the Chase Lumber and Fuel Company in Sun Prairie, and acquired the Cottage Grove Lumber Company (Cottage Grove, Wisconsin) in 1957. His son, David Chase, joined the company in the late 1950s. In 1964, arson destroyed the Main Street branch, and Chase Lumber and Fuel rebuilt on the west end of the city, at its current location. In 1972, the Sun Prairie and Cottage Grove businesses merged. David Chase purchased the Central Waubesa Lumber Supply Company in McFarland, Wisconsin, in 1981. He took over the Sun Prairie and Cottage Grove lumberyards after Theodore's death in 1984. In 1994, the F.L. Chase Lumber Company merged with the other Chase companies, and all four firms were officially renamed "Chase Lumber and Fuel Company." Today, David Chase's children, Stuart Chase and Valerie Chase Steiner manage the business. The Chase family has also been civic-minded. Benjamin Chase served as village president in 1910 and 1911. Theodore Chase served as mayor of Sun Prairie from 1969 to 1975, and the current mayor, Joe Chase (great-grandson of Frederick W.) is serving his third term having been elected in 2005.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Obituary, Frederick Chase, *The Sun Prairie Star*, April 20, 1944.

<sup>30</sup> *Map of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin*, (1912).

<sup>31</sup> "Fire Destroys Chase Elevator," *Sun Prairie Countryman*, February 9, 1922, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> "New Elevator under Construction," *The Sun Prairie Countryman*, October 5, 1922.

<sup>33</sup> Chase Elevator File.

<sup>34</sup> *Looking Back: A Pictorial History of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin: 1860-1960*, p. 119; Frederick Chase, obituary; and Pamela Cotant, "Family Business: 'Lumberyard brat' climbs out of coal bins to build award-winning business," *Capital Region Business Journal*, December 17, 2007.

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In July 1937, the Chases leased the grain elevator to Clarence Zimbrich.<sup>35</sup> Zimbrich operated the property as the Sun Prairie Elevator Company and advertised that he paid cash for barley, oats, wheat, and corn. He also sold poultry supplies and equipment. Zimbrich purchased the elevator and the neighboring former tobacco warehouse (extant, much altered) from Frederick Chase in the October of 1943.<sup>36</sup> Zimbrich converted the old warehouse into a feed mill, and named his business the Sun Prairie Elevator Company. Sometime between 1943 and 1949, Zimbrich installed the existing scale and built a connection (since removed) between the elevator and the old tobacco warehouse.<sup>37</sup> By 1950, Zimbrich may not have been using the elevator itself. That year, he advertised, "corn shelling and cracking, feed grinding and mixing."<sup>38</sup> In 1952, he offered seed grain cleaning and treating, flour, animal feed, pesticides, and seed corn.<sup>39</sup>

Clarence Zimbrich sold the former tobacco warehouse to Ray Kaercher in March 1953.<sup>40</sup> Kaercher operated that building as a feed mill until going out of business on October 21, 1967. He then sold the feed mill to John J. Fitzgerald.<sup>41</sup> Fitzgerald operated the feed mill until at least 1983.<sup>42</sup>

Zimbrich continued to operate the Sun Prairie Elevator Company until March 1959, when he sold the building to Leonard H. Starker.<sup>43</sup> Starker's grain dealership was housed in the elevator building, although Starker apparently did not use the elevator. Starker advertised corn picking, shelling, and drying; he also bought corn.<sup>44</sup> Starker continued his grain dealership until 1978, when he sold the

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Jim Zimbrich, son of Clarence Zimbrich, August 24, 2006, Chase Elevator File.

<sup>36</sup> *Sun Prairie Countryman*, October 14, 1943.

<sup>37</sup> *Map of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin* (1928, pasted over through 1943; and 1928, pasted over through 1949).

<sup>38</sup> *Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, City Directory* (Manitowoc, Wisconsin: Johnson Publishing, 1950).

<sup>39</sup> *Sun Prairie Star-Countryman*, April 17, 1952; May 1, 1952; May 22, 1952; August 7, 1952; and September 11, 1952.

<sup>40</sup> *Sun Prairie Star-Countryman*, March 19, 1953.

<sup>41</sup> R.H. Kaercher to Department of Industrial, Labor, and Human Relations, December 19, 1967, Building Plans Correspondence of the Wisconsin Department of Labor and Human Resources, E File Number 126779, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

<sup>42</sup> *Sun Prairie Telephone Directory, 1972*; *Sun Prairie Telephone Directory, 1978*; and *Sun Prairie Telephone Directory, 1983*.

<sup>43</sup> *Telephone Directory for Sun Prairie and Cottage Grove*, April 1954.

<sup>44</sup> *Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, City Directory* (Manitowoc, Wisconsin: Johnson Publishing, 1964); and *Dane County Plat Book, 1964* (Rockford: Rockford Map Publishers, 1964), p. 83.

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elevator building to the Oconomowoc Canning Company.<sup>45</sup> The Canning Company bought the property solely to use the scale for weighing trucks bringing produce to the canning company.<sup>46</sup> The grain elevator has been vacant since at least 1978.

Until 1986, the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad retained ownership of the land on which the Chase Grain Elevator and neighboring properties sat. That year, the Milwaukee Road organized a real estate corporation to plat and subdivided the rail yard, and sold the land to the owners of the buildings located in the rail yard.<sup>47</sup> Certified Survey Map Number 5074 was filed October 15, 1986. The CMC Real Estate Corporation sold the land under the elevator to Stokely USA (then the parent company of the Oconomowoc Canning Company) on January 14, 1987.<sup>48</sup> Stokely USA sold the land and the elevator to the current owner, Vizun Properties, LLC, on May 19, 1997.<sup>49</sup>

**SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE**

The Chase Grain Elevator is significant under *Criterion C* at the state level as a fine example of a country elevator, and the only known surviving elevator in Wisconsin built of structural clay tile. Its significance is embodied in the materials and design of the main storage unit: the silos and pocket bin, built of structural clay tile produced by the Brazil Hollow Brick & Tile Company, of Brazil, Indiana, in accordance with Thomas McCrea's 1920 patent. As a tile elevator, the Chase Grain Elevator represents the era of early fireproof elevator exploration, a phase which lasted from c. 1895 to World War I for terminal elevator construction, but which persisted to c. 1925 in the erection of country elevators. This brief period was important in the evolution of grain elevator design and construction, and illustrates the transition from wooden to reinforced concrete construction. The Chase Grain Elevator retains good integrity.

Grain elevators store and transfer grain using conveyors and elevating machinery. They can be classified based on their size, location, and purpose. The two main types erected in Wisconsin from the 1870s through at least World War II were the "country elevator" and the "terminal elevator." The country elevator was generally located on a rail line in a small town in an agricultural region, where it received grain from local farmers in wagon or truck loads (about 100 to 150 bushels). The country elevator transferred bulk grain to railcars and shipped it to a terminal elevator or a grain processor.

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<sup>45</sup> *Sun Prairie Telephone Directory, 1972; Sun Prairie Telephone Directory, 1978; and Sun Prairie Telephone Directory, 1979.*

<sup>46</sup> Chase Elevator File.

<sup>47</sup> Certified Survey map Number 5074, October 15, 1986, Dane County Records, 8938:74.

<sup>48</sup> Dane County Records, 9391:13.

<sup>49</sup> Dane County Document Number 284571.

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The country elevator typically had a capacity of 15,000 to 35,000 bushels. In contrast, the terminal elevator was typically located at a major shipping point in the transportation network, where it received bulk grain delivered by rail from country elevators. Bulk grain was shipped from the terminal elevator either to processing plants or to even larger terminal elevators. The terminal elevator typically had a capacity of more than 100,000 bushels; some could accommodate millions of bushels.<sup>50</sup>

Development of the Grain Elevator

Prior to the development of the grain elevator in the mid-nineteenth century, grain that was going to market was packed in sacks and stacked in a "flathouse," a one-story, frame warehouse, to await shipment by water or by rail. In contrast to the flathouse, an elevator stored grain in bulk and could be engineered to load and unload bulk grain mechanically, eliminating the need for laborers, and loading and unloading sacks of grain. This saved time and money. The origin of the grain elevator is unclear, although the first grain elevator is believed to have been the Joseph Dart Elevator. Erected in Buffalo, New York in 1842-43, it was probably designed by Robert Dunbar, a Scottish engineer, for Dart, a grain merchant. The Dart Elevator is thought to have been a tall, wooden structure, with a steam-powered, bucket conveyor.<sup>51</sup> The Dart Elevator, which was destroyed by fire in 1861, was a terminal elevator, built to quickly transfer large quantities of bulk grain to ships with a minimum of laborers.<sup>52</sup>

Historians in Minnesota and Canada have documented a connection between the expansion of railroads and the spread of grain elevators in rural areas, noting that the railroads

... offered free sites and special privileges to companies to build beside their tracks specially designed wooden structures capable of receiving, storing, and shipping grain in bulk lots.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Robert M. Frame, "Grain Elevator Design in Minnesota," multiple property nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 1989, pp. E-2 and E-3.

<sup>51</sup> William J. Brown, *American Colossus: The Grain Elevator, 1843-1943* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Colossal Books, 2009), p. 116

<sup>52</sup> Ibid; and Reyner Banham, *A Concrete Atlantis: U.S. Industrial Building and European Modern Architecture, 1900-1925* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986), pp. 110-11.

<sup>53</sup> D. G. Stephens, "The Evolution of Canada's Grain-Handling and Transportation System," in *Grains and Oil Seeds: Handling, Marketing, Processing*, second edition (Manitoba: Canadian International Grains Institute, 1975), pp. 39-40; and Henrietta Larson, *Wheat Market and the Farmer in Minnesota, 1858-1900*, Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law, no. 269 (New York: Columbia University, 1926), p. 83; both cited in Frame, p. E-1.

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This appears to have been the case in Wisconsin as well; nearly all of the country grain elevators included in the Architecture/History Inventory of the Wisconsin Historical Society are located on rail lines. The Chase Grain Elevator illustrates this; it was built on land owned by the Milwaukee Road, who leased it to (James Willis) Chase and Son (Frederick W. Chase) for their grain elevator adjacent to the railroad.

It is uncertain when the first grain elevator was erected in Wisconsin. The earliest known Wisconsin example is the Robert Wentworth Grain Elevator, a wooden country elevator built in the community of Portage in 1862 (NRHP 1995, part of the Portage Industrial Waterfront Historic District). The first *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* to list grain elevators was the issue published in 1884. By that time, there were 88 grain elevators in Wisconsin, including the E. A. Weigan Elevator (not extant) in Sun Prairie.

Terminal elevators were erected in a few major transportation hubs in Wisconsin during the historic period, including Milwaukee, Appleton, Green Bay, La Crosse, and Superior. Many more country grain elevators were built in Wisconsin. The 1903 edition of the *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* recorded 163 country elevators (those with a capacity under 100,000 bushels) and 13 terminal elevators.

Country elevators can be divided into three ownership types: privately-owned, farmers' cooperative, and line elevators. Line elevators were owned by a grain company (such as W.W. Cargill, which originated in La Crosse, Wisconsin), a processor (such as a brewing company), or a flour mill. The Chase Grain Elevator was privately-owned, which appears to have been the most common type of ownership in Wisconsin. In 1903, 41 of the 163 country elevators (25 percent) were line elevators. Of these, 32 were owned by grain companies. Cargill owned by far the most, with ten country elevators (Cargill also owned terminal elevators in La Crosse and Green Bay). Nine of the line elevators were associated with flour mills. The other 122 country elevators in Wisconsin in 1903 were independently owned (75 percent), and none was owned by a cooperative association.<sup>54</sup> However, by 1924, 16 (14 percent) of the 121 grain elevators listed in the *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* were owned by cooperative associations, 20 (16 percent) were line elevators, and the remaining 85 (70 percent) belonged to independent operators.<sup>55</sup>

The number of country grain elevators in Wisconsin declined rapidly after World War II due to several factors. First, large corporate farms began to take the place of small, family farms, as increased mechanization and economies of scale gave the competitive edge to agribusiness. Second, improved

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<sup>54</sup> *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (1903).

<sup>55</sup> *Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (1924).

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roads and bigger, faster trucks made it easy for farmers to bypass the local elevator in favor of an elevator in a larger community where there were other attractions, such as greater shopping opportunities. Many country elevators were left half-empty. Soon, costs consistently surpassed earnings, and the elevator would go out of business. In the 1960s and 1970s, surviving grain companies merged with others and closed many country elevators. Finally, alternatives to rail transport drastically reduced traffic on the railroads, to which country grain elevators were so closely tied. The trucking industry had been cutting into the railroads' market share since the 1930s, a process that accelerated after construction of the interstate highway system began in the mid-1950s. The airline industry also benefited from federal subsidies and technological improvements during this period, eventually winning the contract to carry the U.S. mail, which had been a steady source of revenue for the railroads. In response, the railway companies consolidated, and eliminated as many unprofitable branch lines as possible, severing the rail connection between country grain elevators and market.<sup>56</sup>

Today, there are few country elevators in Wisconsin. In general, each elevator serves a larger rural area, and has a capacity of over 1 million bushels of bulk grain. Terminal elevators also have expanded their capacity, typically holding 8 to 10 million bushels. In 2009, there were at least 34 country grain elevators operating in Wisconsin, predominantly in the southern and west-central portions of the state. Seven terminal elevators were in operation in Superior, and three in Milwaukee.<sup>57</sup>

Construction of Grain Elevators

The function, design, and layout of grain elevators changed little over the historic period. In contrast, the materials employed in the construction of the storage bins, which are the major structural component of the elevator, changed tremendously. There are three eras in the development of terminal elevator construction: wooden construction, prior 1900; early fireproof construction exploration, c. 1895 to World War I; and dominance of reinforced concrete, WWI to WWII. Country elevators followed a similar pattern, except that wooden construction was employed through World War II, and the era of early fireproof exploration continued until about 1925. However, few brick, steel, or tile

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<sup>56</sup> Hans Dommasch, *Prairie Giants* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1986), p. 4; and Tom Murray, *The Milwaukee Road* (St. Paul, Minnesota: MBI Publishing Company, 2005), pp. 106-07.

<sup>57</sup> Farm Net Services, "Grain Elevator Directory," [http://www.farmersnetservices.com/directory/Category/grain\\_elevator\\_directory\\_state-by-state](http://www.farmersnetservices.com/directory/Category/grain_elevator_directory_state-by-state); and Burlington, Northern and Santa Fe Railway, "Grain Elevator Directory," <http://www.bnsf.com/markets/agricultural/elevator/elevdir.html>; both retrieved August 12, 2009.

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country elevators were built. Reinforced concrete construction was not common for country elevators much before World War II.<sup>58</sup>

Grain elevators were initially constructed of wood, and were either balloon-framed or wood-cribbed. Although wooden elevators (especially wood-cribbed ones) were structurally stable, fire was always a hazard. Between 1895 and 1910, engineers searched for a reliable and economical method of building fire-proof grain elevators, carrying out many experiments with different materials and construction procedures. Grain elevators were built of structural clay tile, steel, and concrete, before concrete emerged as the dominant material for terminal elevators. While terminal elevators were no longer built of wood after 1900, wood continued to dominate the construction of country elevators into the mid-twentieth century. However by the late twentieth century, concrete would become the dominant construction material for country elevators as well.<sup>59</sup>

Early attempts to create a fire-proof elevator took place in 1865-66, with two iron-tank designs by George H. Johnson, a draftsman for the New York Architectural Iron Works. One was located in Brooklyn, New York and the other in Philadelphia. Johnson also experimented with brick, patenting the first brick elevator in 1869, at Buffalo, New York. Johnson's brick design was also the first elevator with cylindrical storage bins, and storage bins that were exposed (not enclosed inside a rectangular building). Johnson's ideas did not catch on, and neither iron nor brick was much used for elevator construction.<sup>60</sup>

The search for an inexpensive, fire-proof grain elevator was intense during the period of 1895-1910, and it was centered in Minneapolis. Ernest V. Johnson, the son of George H. Johnson, developed the first (and leading) system for constructing grain elevators of structural clay tile. Johnson worked in collaboration with James L. Record of the Minneapolis contracting firm, Barnett and Record, which specialized in elevator construction. Johnson and Record obtained several patents for elements of a system of tile construction beginning in 1895. The pair tested their system by erecting a tile silo in Minneapolis in 1899, which they declared a success. In 1900, the Barnett and Record Company began constructing tile terminal elevators using the Johnson and Record patented system. One of the most notable of these is the St. Anthony No. 3 (extant), in Minneapolis, completed in 1901. The Barnett and Record Company erected several tile terminal elevators in Wisconsin, including the Wisconsin Maltng and Grain Company in Appleton (1901); the Pabst Brewing Company in Milwaukee (1901); Bernard Stern & Son in Milwaukee (1902). None of these appears to have survived. The Barnett and Record Company's last tile terminal elevator is believed to have been the Pillsbury "A" Mill in

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<sup>58</sup> Frame, F-12 through F-14.

<sup>59</sup> Frame, E-15 through E-17; and Banham, p. 113.

<sup>60</sup> Frame, E-21 and E-27.

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Minneapolis, completed in 1909. Other tile storage tank systems, all of them cylindrical, were patented by Witherspoon-Englar; by the J.M. Preston Company of Lansing, Michigan (1919); and by Thomas H. McCrea of the Brazil Hollow Brick and Tile Company in Brazil, Indiana (1920). It is not known whether any elevators were built with either the Witherspoon-Englar or Preston systems. The Chase Grain Elevator silos were built using Thomas H. McCrea's patented wall construction system, and structural clay tile produced by the Brazil Hollow Brick and Tile Company.<sup>61</sup>

Steel construction was first used to build the storage tanks for three elevators designed by Minnesota engineer Max Toltz for the Great Northern Railway, between 1895 and 1899. The elevators were located in Duluth, Minnesota; West Superior, Wisconsin; and Buffalo, New York. All three had enclosed storage tanks (inside the building footprint). The first elevators with exposed steel tanks were the Electric Elevator in Buffalo (1897, not extant), the Pioneer Steel Elevator in Minneapolis (1901, extant), and the Electric Steel Elevator in Minneapolis (1901-07, extant). Although the steel elevator was much admired in the grain trade press, the fact that the cost of the material and the specialized skills needed for its fabrication made it 10 to 25 percent more expensive than concrete limited the number of steel elevators (terminal and country) erected after 1910.<sup>62</sup>

The first reinforced concrete grain elevator was erected in Minneapolis in 1899 by grain dealer Frank H. Peavey and contractor Charles F. Haglin. The single-tank design for the Peavey-Haglin Elevator (extant, NHL) was patented in 1900. Peavey and Haglin's attempts at reinforced concrete elevators with multiple storage bins, erected in Duluth, failed in 1901 and 1903. However, by 1910, improvements in reinforced concrete construction combined with its low cost to make it the material of choice for terminal elevators. In 1929, A.E. MacDonald enumerated the advantages of concrete: superior fireproof qualities; low cost; speed of construction; stable environment for grain, which would keep well between shipping seasons; and low maintenance.<sup>63</sup> Even so, few country grain elevators were erected of reinforced concrete until after WWII.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Banham, pp. 133-37; "Fire-proof Grain Storage Buildings," *The Brickbuilder*, November 1902, vol. 11, pp. 232-36; Frame, E-25; and U.S. Patent No. 1,330,203.

<sup>62</sup> Frame, E-21 through E-24; and Milo S. Ketchum, *The Design of Walls, Bins and Grain Elevators*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1911), pp. 471-72.

<sup>63</sup> Albert E. MacDonald, "Grain Elevator Design and Construction – Part I," *Contract Record and Engineering Review*, January 16, 1929, p. 50.

<sup>64</sup> Ketchum, pp. 305-06; and *Grain Elevators of North America*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: Grain and Feed Journals Consolidated, 1942), preface.

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Initially, structural clay tile and steel systems were both highly regarded for grain elevator construction. In 1903, the grain trade magazine *Northwestern Miller* predicted:

... tile, next to steel, has the requisite strength and lightness and is bound to win favor...<sup>65</sup>

However, by the mid-1920s, the *Grain Dealers Journal* reported:

... tile tanks are no longer used in the construction of large terminal storage plants, [but] we occasionally hear of one being erected at a country point...[probably due to] the seductive arguments of the tile salesman.<sup>66</sup>

In the intervening years, several disadvantages to tile construction had become clear. A tile system took longer to construct (when compared with concrete), making it more expensive; it was hard to keep the storage tanks watertight, and rain could seep in between the joints; the size of the storage bins was inflexible, limited by the size of the tile, which typically created a bin that was too large for a country elevator; tile construction could be unstable, and was known to collapse; and tile was not truly fireproof. During the 1920s, the *Grain Dealers Journal* announced a number of tile elevator failures due to structural instability or fire.<sup>67</sup>

In his exhaustive treatment of grain elevators in Minnesota, Robert Frame concludes that, even in Minnesota, where tile elevators were developed, not many were constructed for either terminal or country use. Within 10 years of the introduction of tile, steel, and reinforced concrete systems for grain elevators, concrete was widely accepted as the best choice for terminal elevators. Tile country elevators were built into the 1920s, but not very many.<sup>68</sup> Tile elevators are even more uncommon outside of Minnesota, although several have been documented in Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.<sup>69</sup> Five tile country grain elevators in northwestern Oklahoma were listed on the National Register in 1983. Three tile terminal elevators were built in Wisconsin, two in Milwaukee and one in Appleton.

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<sup>65</sup> E.P. Overmire, "Modern Fireproof Grain Elevators, Part 2," *Northwestern Miller*, November 25, 1903, vol. 56, p. 1155; cited in Frame, E-26.

<sup>66</sup> "Another Tile Failure," *Grain Dealers Journal*, August 10, 1925, vol. 55, p. 160; cited in Frame, E-26.

<sup>67</sup> "Which is Better, a Concrete or Hollow Tile Elevator," *Grain Dealers Journal*, May 10, 1921, vol. 46, pp. 764-65; "Collapse of Another Tile Tank," *Grain Dealers Journal*, May 10, 1926, vol. 56, p. 525; and "Tile Tanks Are Not Fireproof," *Grain Dealers Journal*, May 25, 1926, vol. 56, p. 614; all cited in Frame, E-26.

<sup>68</sup> Frame, F-9 and F-10.

<sup>69</sup> Lisa Mahar-Keplinger, *Grain Elevators* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), p. 35.

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All are believed to have been demolished. The Chase Grain Elevator is the only tile country elevator identified in Wisconsin.

The Country Grain Elevator Building Type

The country elevator building type is characterized by its location, on a rail line in a small town in an agricultural region; by its small size; and by its layout. Typically, a country elevator integrates storage bins, workhouse, and office in one building. The storage bins are clustered together and the elevating equipment passes between the storage bins. The upper end of the elevating leg and the mechanism that distributes the grain among the bins are housed in a cupola on top of the bins. The workhouse includes facilities for unloading wagons and trucks, and for cleaning and transferring grain into the elevator. The country elevator may have an engine room or a free-standing powerhouse. Country elevators always have rail access and railcar loading facilities. Sometimes country elevators have separate annexes for additional storage. Country elevators also may provide additional services, such as grinding feed, and sell other products, such as coal, lumber and agricultural supplies. Country elevators may be built of one or more of the following structural materials: wood, steel, tile, brick, or reinforced concrete. Tile was rarely used, and its construction was limited to c. 1900 to c. 1925. Tile country elevators always have round bins, with double walls and steel reinforcing. The workhouse may or may not be constructed of tile.<sup>70</sup> The Chase Grain Elevator incorporates most of the distinguishing features of a country elevator. It is located on a rail line, with rail access and railcar loading facilities, and is set in the city of Sun Prairie, a small community in an agricultural region. The elevator's capacity, at 17,000 bushels, is small, even by country elevator standards. The Chase Grain Elevator unites storage tanks, elevating machinery, workhouse, and office in one building. Additional services, such as grinding seed and selling seed and feed, were provided on site. Coal and lumber were also sold by the same firm in adjacent buildings. The Chase Grain Elevator's silos and pocket bin, workhouse, and office, are all constructed of structural clay tile.

No comprehensive survey of grain elevators has been undertaken in Wisconsin, although the Wisconsin Architecture/History Inventory includes 53 grain elevators. Nine of them appear to be terminal elevators, located in Superior and Milwaukee, constructed of either concrete (7) or steel (2). The remaining 44 appear to be country elevators. Of the country elevators, 16 are wooden, ten are wooden with metal cladding, ten are concrete, five are brick, one is tile, one is steel, and one is stone. A review of current aerial maps suggests that at least 22 of the grain elevators (41 percent) in the inventory have been demolished, including 17 country elevators, among them all of the brick ones.

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<sup>70</sup> Frame, F-9, F-10, F-13, and F-14.

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In Minnesota, all tile country elevator construction is considered eligible, provided it retains sufficient integrity.<sup>71</sup> The storage bins are the key element in the country grain elevator building type, and must be intact for the elevator to be eligible.

... the integrity of a single bin or tank will be enough integrity for eligibility, if the bin represents a rare survivor of a construction method and/or patent. This is especially true...of tile or brick construction.<sup>72</sup>

Because country elevators typically incorporate the storage bins, workhouse, and cupola in a single structure, exterior structural integrity is also important, although changes in fenestration are acceptable. The loss of mechanical equipment does not impair integrity, because that equipment was often replaced during the historic period; conversely, its presence enhances significance.<sup>73</sup>

The significance of the Chase Grain Elevator is embodied in the tile material of the silos and pocket bin, and in the patented design of their structural system. The silos and pocket bin retain excellent integrity. The cupola, workhouse, and office sections retain good integrity, especially on the interior. Further, the elevating equipment is present, although it is unclear whether it is original. On the exterior, many windows have fallen out, although most original openings have been retained. The major exterior alteration is the loss of the canopy that extended across the front façade of the workhouse section, and a portion of the wall that anchored the canopy has been repaired with concrete block. Although this is an unattractive blemish, the canopy was an ancillary feature, and even with the concrete block wall, the historical function of the elevator is still evident. In conclusion, the Chase Grain Elevator retains integrity that is more than sufficient to convey its historical function, and its design as a grain elevator of the early fire-proof experimentation period.

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<sup>71</sup> Frame, F-14.

<sup>72</sup> Frame, F-15.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

Chase Grain Elevator  
Name of Property

Dane  
County and State

Wisconsin

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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

### Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in 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
  - Other
- Name of repository: Sun Prairie Historical Society

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 320060 4782820  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

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	Elizabeth L. Miller, Historic Preservation Consultant	date	September 1, 2009
organization		telephone	608-233-5942
street & number	4033 Tokay Boulevard	zip code	53711
city or town	Madison	state	WI

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

Chase Grain Elevator, Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 9 Page 2

Chase Grain Elevator, Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 9 Page 3

Chase Grain Elevator, Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 9 Page 4

Chase Grain Elevator, Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 10 Page 1 Chase Grain Elevator, Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Chase Grain Elevator is located on Lot 1, Certified Survey Map Number 5074, being part of the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 8, Township 8 N, Range 11 E, in the City of Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin (see CSM 5074, attached). The parcel encompasses less than one acre.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the Chase Grain Elevator coincide with the legal boundaries of the parcel on which it sits, and enclose all the resources historically associated with the property.

Chase Grain Elevator  
Name of Property

Dane  
County and State

Wisconsin

### 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.)

<b>name/title</b>	Anthony Humphrey and Steven McHoes (alternate contact: Elizabeth Humphrey, 608-212-7499)	<b>date</b>	September 1, 2009
<b>organization</b>	Vizun Properties, LLC	<b>telephone</b>	608-837-4199
<b>street &amp; number</b>	146 Vine Street	<b>zip code</b>	53590
<b>city or town</b>	Sun Prairie	<b>state</b>	WI

**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 Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Photos Page 1 Chase Grain Elevator, Sun Prairie, Dane County,  
Wisconsin

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**Chase Grain Elevator  
City of Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin  
Photos by Elizabeth L. Miller, July 2009  
Negatives on file at the Wisconsin Historical Society**

Photo 1 of 6

View of the north-(front) and west-facing façades, looking southeast.

Photo 2 of 6

View of the south (rear) façade, looking northeast.

Photo 3 of 6

View of the east-facing façade, looking west.

Photo 4 of 6

View of the south-(rear) and west-facing façades, looking northeast.

Photo 5 of 6

View of the interior showing two tile silos, the ladder climbing up to the cupola, and the vertical conveyors sheathed in sheet metal.

Photo 6 of 6

View of the c. 1944 scale, looking north.

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Chase Grain Elevator**  
 Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin

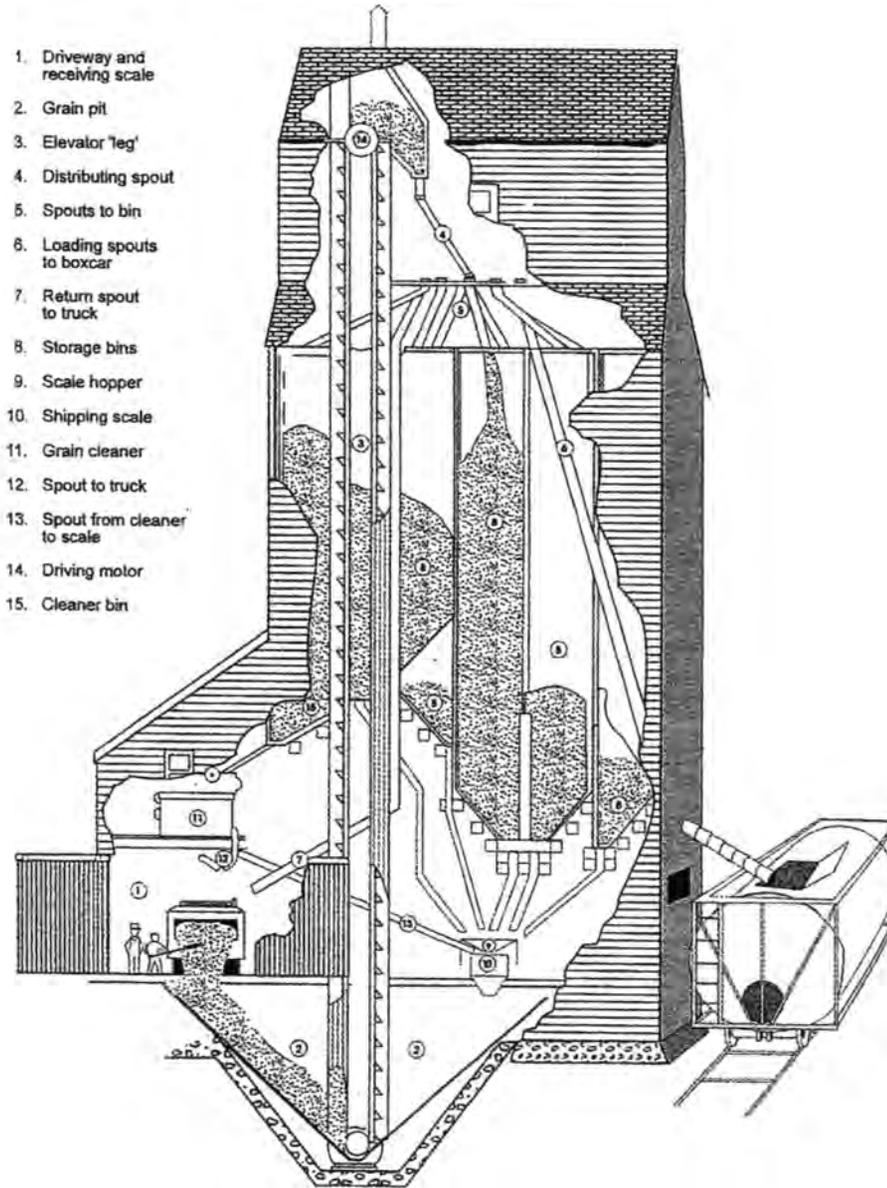


IMAGE COURTESY OF THE CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL GRAINS INSTITUTE  
 WWW.CIGI.CA

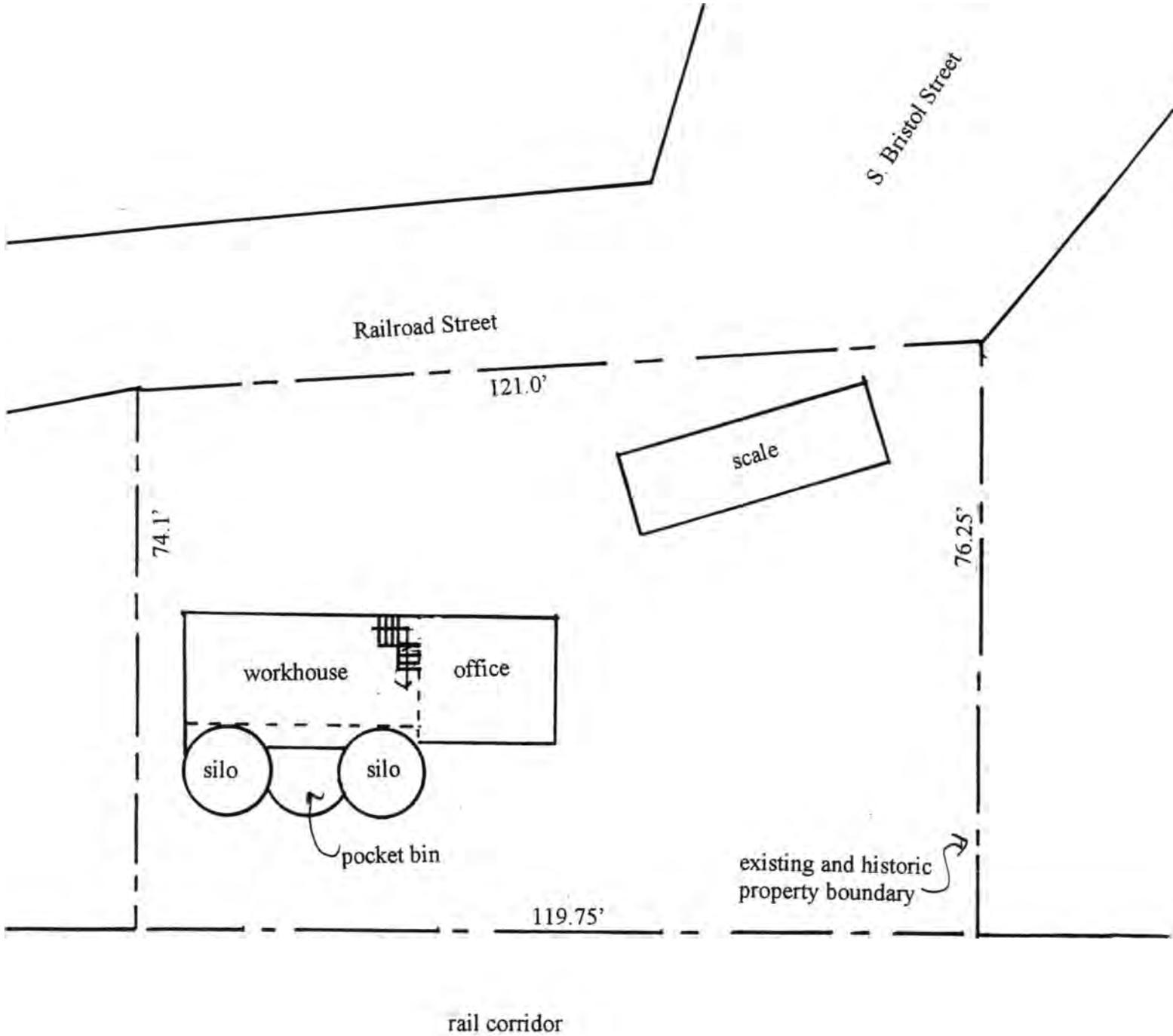
**FIGURE 2:**

**Chase Grain Elevator**

Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin

Scale: 1" = 20'

-  Contributing
-  Non-contributing



**FIGURE 3:**  
**Chase Grain Elevator**  
Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin  
Historical Photographs: c. 1923  
and c. 1940



Chase Grain Elevator, c. 1923  
Source: Sun Prairie Historical Society.

Chase Grain Elevator, c. 1940  
Source: *Dane County Plat Book*, (Rockford: Rockford Map Publishers, 1971).



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Chase Grain Elevator  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: WISCONSIN, Dane

DATE RECEIVED: 6/29/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/28/10  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/12/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/13/10  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000540

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 8.12.10 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered In  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



1 of 6

CHASE GRAIN Elevator

Sun Prairie, Dane Co, WI



2 of 6

CHASE GRAIN Elevator

Sun Prairie, Dane Co, WI



3 of 6

CHASE GRAIN Elevator

Sun Prairie, Dane Co, WI



4 of 6

CHASE GRAIN Elevator

Sun Prairie, Dane Co, WI



5 of 6

CHASE GRAIN Elevator

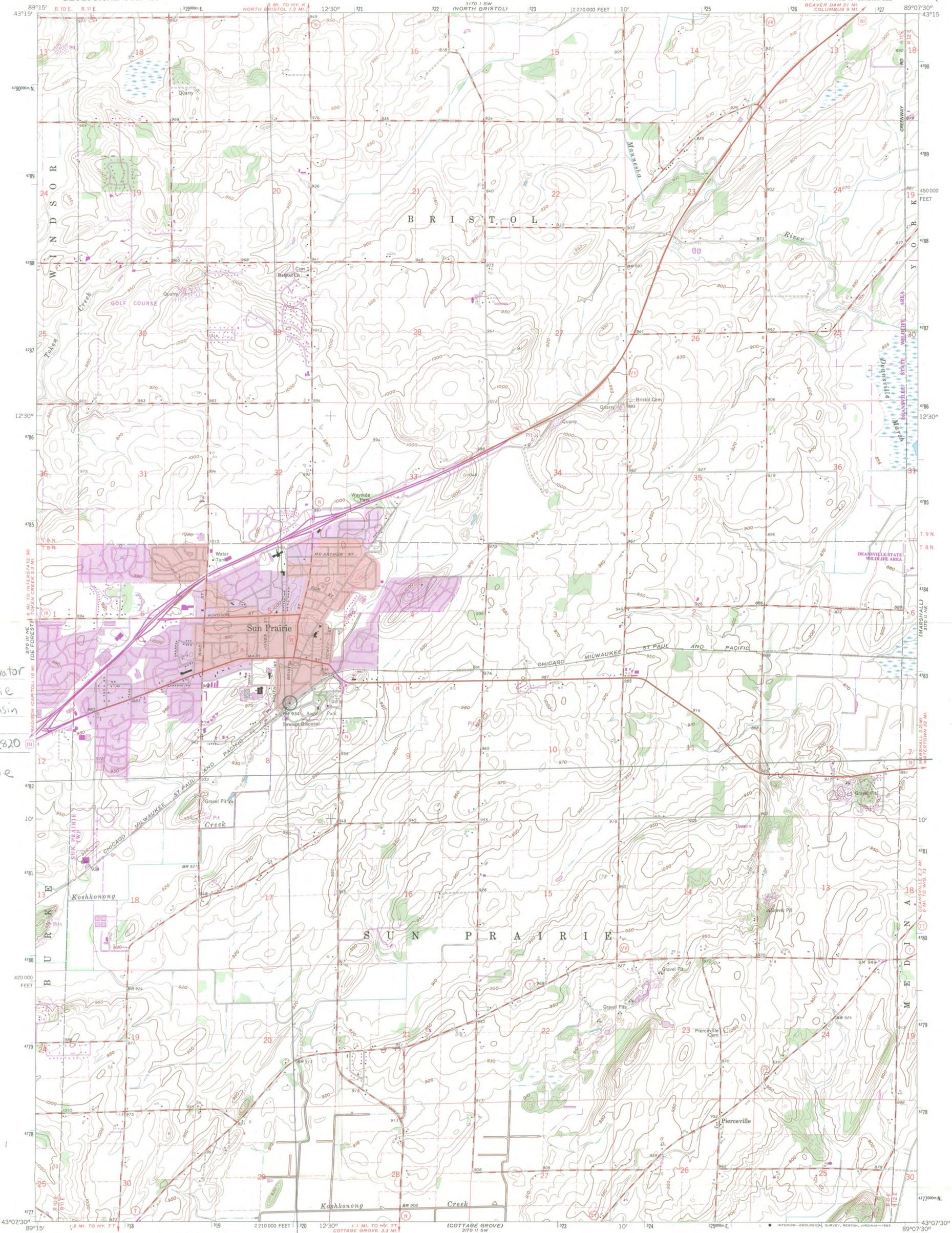
Sun Prairie, Dane Co, WI



6 of 6

CHASE GRAIN Elevator

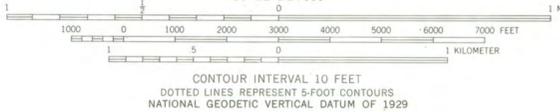
Sun Prairie, Dane Co, WI



Chase Grain Elevator  
City of Sun Prairie  
Dane Co., Wisconsin  
utm references:  
16/320060/4782820  
USGS: Sun Prairie

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
in cooperation with State of Wisconsin agencies

Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1960. Field checked 1962  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Wisconsin coordinate system, south zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 16, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983  
move the projection lines 4 meters north and  
9 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of  
the National or State reservations shown on this map



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U.S. Route	State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
AND BY THE WISCONSIN GEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY, MADISON, WISCONSIN 53706  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial  
photographs taken 1980 and other sources  
This information not field checked. Map edited 1982  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban area

SUN PRAIRIE, WIS.  
NW/4 SUN PRAIRIE 15' QUADRANGLE  
N4307.5—W8907.5/7.5  
1962  
PHOTOREVISED 1982  
DMA 3170 II NW—SERIES V861



**TO:** Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places

**FROM:** Daina Penkiunas

**SUBJECT:** National Register Nomination

The following materials are submitted on this 24th day of June 2010,  
for nomination of the Chase Grain Elevator to the National Register of Historic  
Places:

1 Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form

         Multiple Property Documentation Form

6 Photograph(s)

         CD with electronic images

1 Original USGS map(s)

3 Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)

         Piece(s) of correspondence

         Other \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMENTS:**

         Please insure that this nomination is reviewed

         This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67

         The enclosed owner objection(s) do \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_  
constitute a majority of property owners.

         Other: \_\_\_\_\_