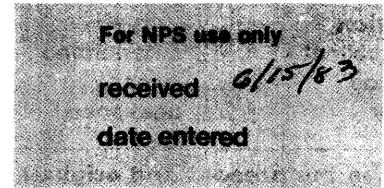


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Rockford Mill

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Shell Rock River at 4th and Main Street not for publication

city, town Rockford vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Iowa code 19 county Floyd code 067

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. Robert A. Lohr

street & number 605 East Main Street

city, town Rockford vicinity of state Iowa

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Floyd County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Charles City state Iowa 50616

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title n/a has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Rockford Mill is a fairly well preserved example of a small frame mill with stone foundation, the last known surviving water-powered mill in Floyd County, Iowa. The mill retains its original front facade beneath a more recent east side addition.

The original two story gabled frame mill building is rectangular on plan (44' by 38') and is oriented east west, perpendicular to the Shell Rock River. The stone foundation, random coursed ashlar, stands one half story above the ground level, and two stories above the tail water level. The millrace enters on the west end of the mill, discharging into a concrete outlet immediately to the south. The exterior of the mill is of clapboard, with no side windows above the stone wall. On the west end, two narrow 2/2 windows on the first floor, flank two windows above in the gable end. The arrangement is slightly asymmetrical. On the east front, now covered by a shed roofed drive through addition, is the original first floor facade (with the painted sign "W. H. Winslow" above) which consists of matching wide side doors which flank a central entrance. The same gable end windows are in the east facade. The stone foundation wall has a door in the center of the south side, and two pairs of windows on each level on the river front facade are set into a frame wall section above the millrace. The roof is composed of corrugated metal sheeting.

The mill dam dates from c. 1918, and consists of diagonal posts and planking which point upstream. The entire dam is now encased within concrete. The western portion of the mill block was donated to the county for use as a park by the present owner.

The mill has undergone some changes in terms of its structure and setting. A shed roofed addition on a stone foundation on the south side was demolished when it collapsed. Most recently it housed a sawmill and storage room. In 1909 an additional frame addition adjoined the first, but was gone after 1948. In 1952 the present owner added the shed roof drive through addition on the east facade, which housed scales and a corner office. He also added a basement level floor, and new eighty ton capacity storage bins upstairs. A chimney in the northwest corner was removed.

The mill has been associated with various out buildings on the mill block. A series of ice houses stood to the north, as early as 1875. The current tile ice house dates from the 1930's. A series of brooder houses stood to the south. An electric power sub-station stood immediately north of the mill. The poles were recently removed and the land returned to the owner. Only the mill itself, without the dam or any part of the Mill block west of the river is included in the nomination.

Inside the mill, 12" by 12" posts and beams supplement the load bearing foundation and support the 2" by 12" tongue and groove flooring. Refer to historical significance for a list of mill related equipment which remains in the mill.

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
___ 1900–	___ communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates 1871–c.1900 **Builder/Architect** J. T. Graham and D. D. Cutler

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Rockford Mill is one of a few dozen extant water powered flour mills which survive in Iowa. It is the last surviving mill in Floyd County and it owes that survival to a wide range of uses to which it has been put by its many owners. Its original structural integrity is retained, and several components of milling and electrical power generating systems survive. Its builder and long time operator, J. T. Graham typifies the highly transient milling profession.

J. T. Graham

J. T. Graham (1824–91), born in Vermont, first became acquainted with the milling profession while he was in Sacramento, California during the Gold Rush. He produced the first flour in that state at his mill which burned within a year of its construction. His gold mining efforts were more successful and in 1853 he settled in Iowa where in Clayton County he built and operated several mills. In 1860 he built a mill at Marble Rock south of this site, in Floyd County, and lost that mill to a flood the next year. He then built a mill on Lime Creek at Rockford and operated at that site for nine years. Finally in partnership with D. D. Cutler he built Rockford Mill on the Shell Rock River in 1871. After 1875 he was sole proprietor until his death. Graham introduced flour milling to several Iowa counties and many communities. His product at Rockford was called "Lilly of the West" Pearl White Flour.

In 1880 the Rockford Mill boasted five run of grinding stones and an eight foot drop in the water level between head and tail levels. Two three and a half foot Leffel turbines produced 58 horsepower. The mill was unique in the county in that ninety percent of its work was custom grinding. Wheat and buckwheat, cornmeal and feed were all processed. The natural elements conspired against milling operations. In 1887 lightning damaged the mill and in the next year, a flood damaged the dam. About 1910–18 a gasoline engine explosion caused a bulge in the northern stone wall of the mill. In 1889 the grinding stones were replaced with the more modern rollers.

A series of owners operated the mill after Graham's death. In 1899 H. W. Winston attempted unsuccessfully to make electrical power for the town, but couldn't make it pay. A generator and governor survive with patent date 1898. Feed milling appears to have dominated mill operations after the turn of the century. By 1909 a fifty horsepower gasoline engine provided the power to provide water to the town. A primary responsibility was the filling of the town's cisterns. In that same year mill equipment on the first floor included two sets of rollers, a corn sheller, and a cob crusher, while that on the second floor consisted of two bolters and a cleaner. A saw mill occupied the southernmost side addition. Rockford Light and Power Company occupied the building in 1913, combining feed milling, with water and power production functions. Cedar Valley Electric Company operated in the building between 1916 and 1920. Feed milling operations continued until the Second World War when a labor shortage halted operations. After the war, the silted mill pond and deteriorating dam provided inadequate power and in 1952 the present owner was forced to rely upon electrical power alone. By this time, the Rockford Mill was the last feed milling operation in the county and was serving a large market area. A decline in general farming spelled the end for local feed milling.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet, 9-2.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Rockford Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UMT References

A

1	5	5	0	4	7	3	0	4	7	5	6	2	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Refer to Continuation Sheet, 9-3.

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

state n/a code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO date May 10, 1983

street & number Historical Building
East 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines, state Iowa 50319

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 *John A. Anderson*

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department

date 5/19/83

For NPS use only

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

Beth Anderson
Keeper of the National Register

date 7/28/83

Attest:
Chief of Registration

date

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

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

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet Statement of Significance Item number 8

Page 2

In 1870 Floyd County had four water powered mills in operation, three of which were on the Shell Rock River in the western part of the county. By 1880, Graham's Mill was one of seven mills, all but two of which were on the Shell Rock River. The Red Cedar River to the east with its larger volume of water flow enabled the two larger mills to handle three fourths of the trade level which was shared by the other five mills. Graham's mill claimed twenty percent of the Shell Rock River basin trade in the county in 1880. Only two mills on that stream did ninety percent custom work. A nearby competitor, on the site of one of Graham's earlier mills on Lime Creek in Rockford, was Savier's mill which boasted a higher horsepower, and considerably greater profit return on its operations. It however was to burn in the 1890's. Rockford Mill, while small in scale, survives alone in the county, having outlasted its competitors both functionally and physically.

The mill retains several mill equipment elements. Two original mill stones survive, one on the site and one at Marble Rock Scout Camp. A 4" diameter line shaft, disconnected from the 28" turbine, is in the building. A 45" Samson Upright right hand turbine, installed in 1914, remains in place. A 28" Leffel Upright turbine which pre-dates the larger turbine, is also extant. A flour stencil at the local public library offers the following curious inscription: "White River Flour Mills: Minesota, 196. Manufactured From Selected Pwife Wheat By Graham and Cutler."

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Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 2

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The History of Floyd County Iowa. Chicago: Inter-state Publishing Company, 1882, pp. 891, 910.

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Rockford, Iowa. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1909, 1918, 1948, 1948 corrected.

Unidentified 1875 map of Rockford, Iowa.

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Continuation sheet Geographical Data

Item number 10

Page 2

That portion of the east half of the Mill Block in Rockford Company's Second Addition to the incorporated town of Rockford Iowa on which the mill building is located, described as follows; Beginning at the point where the east end (southern face) of the dam across the Shell Rock River intersects with the east bank of the said Shell Rock River, thence southeast along said bank for seventy five feet, thence east northeast seventy five feet, thence north northwest parallel to the eastern edge of 4th Street S.E. one hundred and fifty feet, thence west southwest seventy five feet to the east edge of the same Shell Rock River, thence generally southeast along same bank to the point of beginning, seventy five feet. This parcel includes only the mill building itself, including the mill race and outlet basins, and excluding the dam itself.