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NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Sleepy Eye Milling Company

other names/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: Fourth and Oak Streets N.E. ☐ not for publication N/A

city, town: Sleepy Eye ☐ vicinity N/A

state: Minnesota code: MN county: Brown code: 015 zip code: 56085

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property: Contributing	Noncontributing	
[x] private	☐ building(s)	4	2	buildings
[x] public-local	[x] district			sites
☐ public-State	☐ site	16	1	structures
☐ public-Federal	☐ structure			objects
	☐ object	20	3	Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official: Ian R. Stewart — Date: 12/11/90

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau: Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:)

Entered in the National Register

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action: 8 Feb 1991

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/Processing	AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/Processing

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Early 20th Century Industrial

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Sandstone
walls Brick
Metal
roof Concrete
other Ceramic Tile

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Sleepy Eye Milling Company consists of a complex of early twentieth century wood frame and brick buildings and structures situated adjacent to the former Chicago and Northwestern Railroad tracks on the north side of Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. Located immediately west of this group of interconnected mill buildings is a tall brick chimney stack, and across the railroad tracks to the north are fourteen round grain storage tanks which date from 1918. A tall 1901 wood frame grain elevator stands near these tanks.

Architecturally, the Sleepy Eye Milling Company buildings are best described as utilitarian and functional in design. They are constructed of wood frame and brick and their size reflects their use in the agricultural processing industry.

The following summary description of the mill buildings and structures corresponds to a map of the property included with this registration form.

1) Flour Mill, 1901-1902, contributing with a noncontributing addition of unknown date.

The rectangularly-shaped central mill is a five-story brick building in which the flour was packed, rolled, shaken, purified, and bleached. As originally constructed, it had on the first floor three feed packers, eight flour packers, and one separator. On the second floor were 48 double sets of rollers, ten wheat steamers, one blower, and one double set of bran rollers. The third floor contained 12 center reels, five dust collectors, one wheat scale, two double blowers, and one duster. Twenty-eight purifiers were located on the fourth level, and the fifth floor had 20 No.3 sifters, one separator, and two cyclone dust collectors. Most, if not all, of the original mill machinery has been removed over the past 60 years, although the building's 12"-square chamfered beams remain intact.

The mill building stands on a rock-faced, coursed stone foundation, has a water table, and is eight bays long, with each bay divided by a pilaster. Every bay except the west is broken by 3/3 warehouse windows, nearly all of which are covered with plywood. Each window has a stone sill and segmental brick arch. The east elevation has a series of similar windows on each floor, while the west wall is unbroken. Two large loading doors are located on the south side of the ground floor. Attached to the north wall is a one-story tile addition which stands on a coursed stone

[X] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
COMMERCE	1901-1921	1901
INDUSTRY		

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Sleepy Eye Milling Company Historic District is historically significant in the statewide context of Railroads and Agricultural Development -- 1870 - 1940 as the only remaining rural flour mill complex in Brown County, and one of the few extant mills in southern Minnesota. The buildings and structures in Sleepy Eye represent what was once a much larger and thriving commercial industry around the turn of the century, and collectively they form the most complete milling complex in the area.

As early as the 1850s, when southern Minnesota was initially settled, flour milling has been an important industry. Several pre-railroad towns were established around water-powered mills as settlers began to develop their land. In 1872 Sleepy Eye was platted in conjunction with the arrival of the Winona and St. Peter (later the Chicago and Northwestern) Railroad, which remained the only rail line in Brown County until the turn of the century. Like its neighbors throughout the county, Sleepy Eye benefitted from the new railroad since it provided easy access to both the agricultural areas of western Minnesota and the Dakotas, as well as the principal markets to the east. By the turn of the century the Sleepy Eye milling operation had become a vital mill site which significantly contributed to Brown County's role as one of the top outstate producers of flour.

The Sleepy Eye Roller Mill Company originated in 1882-1883 with one wood frame, 200-barrel-capacity building. By 1889, with 1,800 residents in the community, the mill could accommodate 300 barrels per day. In addition to its facility in Sleepy Eye, the company owned elevators in the nearby towns of Cobden, Davidson, Evan, and Morgan. The Sleepy Eye Milling Company produced a variety of flours with trade names such as "Cream of Minnesota," "Minnesota Gold," "Minnesota Apple Blossom," "Snow Flake," "Minnesota Chief," and "Cyclone." On 5 May 1891 the business was incorporated as the Sleepy Eye Milling Company. Its trademark was a depiction of Old Sleepy Eye, Chief Ish Tak ha Bah, who was a member of the Lower Sisseton Sioux.

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Fritsche, L.A. History of Brown County, Minnesota. Vol.1. Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Co., 1916.

Johnson, Robert J. "That Sleepy Eye Flour," Antique Trader Weekly 15 September 1976.

Neill, Rev. Edward D. History of the Minnesota Valley. Minneapolis: North Star Publishing Co., 1882.

New Ulm Review. January 13, 20, 27, 1909; February 3, 1909; March 17, 1909; January 15, 1910; December 14, 1910; January 18, 1911; January 26, 1916; February 2, 1916; March 14, 1917; December 5, 1917; February 2, 1921.

Sleepy Eye Scout. Vol.1, No.1, December 1908.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- ☐ 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

Specify repository: Brown County Historical Society - New Ulm, MN

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approximately 2

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	15	362640	4906250
B			
C			
D			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Sleepy Eye Milling Company Historic District is shown as the dotted line on the accompanying map entitled, "Sleepy Eye Milling Company Historic District."

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the flour mill, adjoining buildings, smokestack, grain elevator and bins that have historically been part of the Sleepy Eye Milling Company and that maintain historic integrity.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Koop/Historic Preservation Consultant
organization N/A date February 1989
street & number 615 Jackson St. NE telephone 612-623-8356
city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55413

foundation. It has a flat roof and multiple door and window openings. This replaced a two-story brick storeroom at an unknown date. Three small clerestories formerly capped the gable roof; they were removed in ca.1955 when the entire roof was sealed with concrete.

2) Power House, 1901-1902, contributing.

The Power House is a two-story brick building similar in design, and attached to the west side of the mill building. Erected on a coursed stone foundation, the power plant features windows identical to the mill, some of which have been enclosed with brick or glass block. The south wall was covered with a thin veneer of concrete in ca.1955, and there is a shed roofed enclosure on the first floor. The stepped parapet walls are capped with tiles. The Power House was built with a concrete floor and roof and equipped with two 1,000 horsepower dynamos to provide electricity for the entire mill complex. The Fraternal Order of Eagles presently uses the building for meetings.

3) Chimney, 1902, contributing.

Located some fifteen feet west of the Power House is a 175'-tall brick smokestack. It is circular in shape with a square base.

4) Cooper Shop, 1901-1902, contributing with six noncontributing additions in 1941, the 1960s, and the 1970s.

The original Cooper Shop is a long, narrow, two-story brick building with pilasters and double hung windows. As originally constructed, it was a freestanding building located about 125 feet east of the flour mill. A series of wings have been added to the Cooper Shop within the past 45 years. In 1941 a one-story tile block addition was attached to the northeast corner; at the same time a third story was erected in brick on top of the east end. In the 1960s a two-story tile block section was built on the southeast corner, and in the 1970s two one-story cinder block wings were attached to the 1960s addition. A one-story shed roofed frame wing covered with metal siding abuts part of the north wall. It was added in the 1960s.

5) Storage Building, ca.1919, contributing with two noncontributing additions in 1970 and an unknown date.

In ca.1919 a one-story brick storage building was constructed between the cooperage and the mill building. It stands on a concrete foundation and

has 6/6 double hung, glass block, and brick in windows with segmental arches. In 1970 a short two-story tile block loading dock was attached to the east end of the storage building. A diminutive brick wing is located in the southwest corner (date unknown), and a one-story brick refrigeration building (1970) abuts the south wall of this addition.

6) Elevator "E", 1901, contributing.

Standing about 120 feet northwest of the Power House across the spur railroad tracks is Elevator "E," a wood frame, crib constructed structure which is about seven stories high at its tallest point. It is sheathed with metal siding and has multiple window openings.

7-20) Grain Tanks, 1918, contributing.

Linked to the west side of Elevator "E" by a conveyor are 14 identical concrete grain bins. They stand 104 feet high and have a capacity of storing 231,000 bushels of grain.

21) Scale House, ca.1940, noncontributing.

This structure stands south of Elevator "E." It has a concrete foundation, steel frame, and corrugated metal siding.

22) Employees Building, ca.1960, noncontributing.

This one-story building is made of cinder block and has a flat roof.

23) Storage Shed, ca.1940, noncontributing.

This diminutive wood frame building is clad with metal siding. It stands just north of the Storage Building (No.5).

In 1901 the company announced a major expansion to include construction of a 3,500 barrel mill, a storage and cleaning elevator, and a new cereal packing house. The local newspaper reported that the new buildings were necessary because "for the past two years the company has worked full capacity night and day and has not been able to fill one-third its orders" (Sleepy Eye Herald 3 May 1901). According to one account, Governor Van Sant was present when the new mill opened. The company also constructed five new grain elevators west of Sleepy Eye, bringing to 25 the total number of elevators they owned and operated in Minnesota and South Dakota. By early 1904 the company had installed additional machinery for the mill to increase production to 5,500 barrels a day. It is thought that flour produced at the Sleepy Eye Mill earned the Grand Prize at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition.

The success of the Sleepy Eye Mill resulted in a diversification of products and continued expansion of their physical plant. In the early 1900s the mill began to manufacture chicken and poultry food, as well as a large line of cereals with such names as "Golden Harvest Breakfast Food," "Koffe-no" (a cereal beverage), and "Pankako," a pancake flour. In early 1906, W.R. Reid, superintendent of the Sleepy Eye Mill, developed and patented a dry process for cleaning wheat which utilized lime and required no water. The technique apparently intrigued the company's major Minneapolis competitors, because the Pillsbury-Washburn, Washburn-Crosby, and Northwestern Consolidated Companies purchased rights to use the new process in their mills. By 1907, the Sleepy Eye Mill was selling products in Europe and the company owned over 40 elevators in Minnesota and the Dakotas.

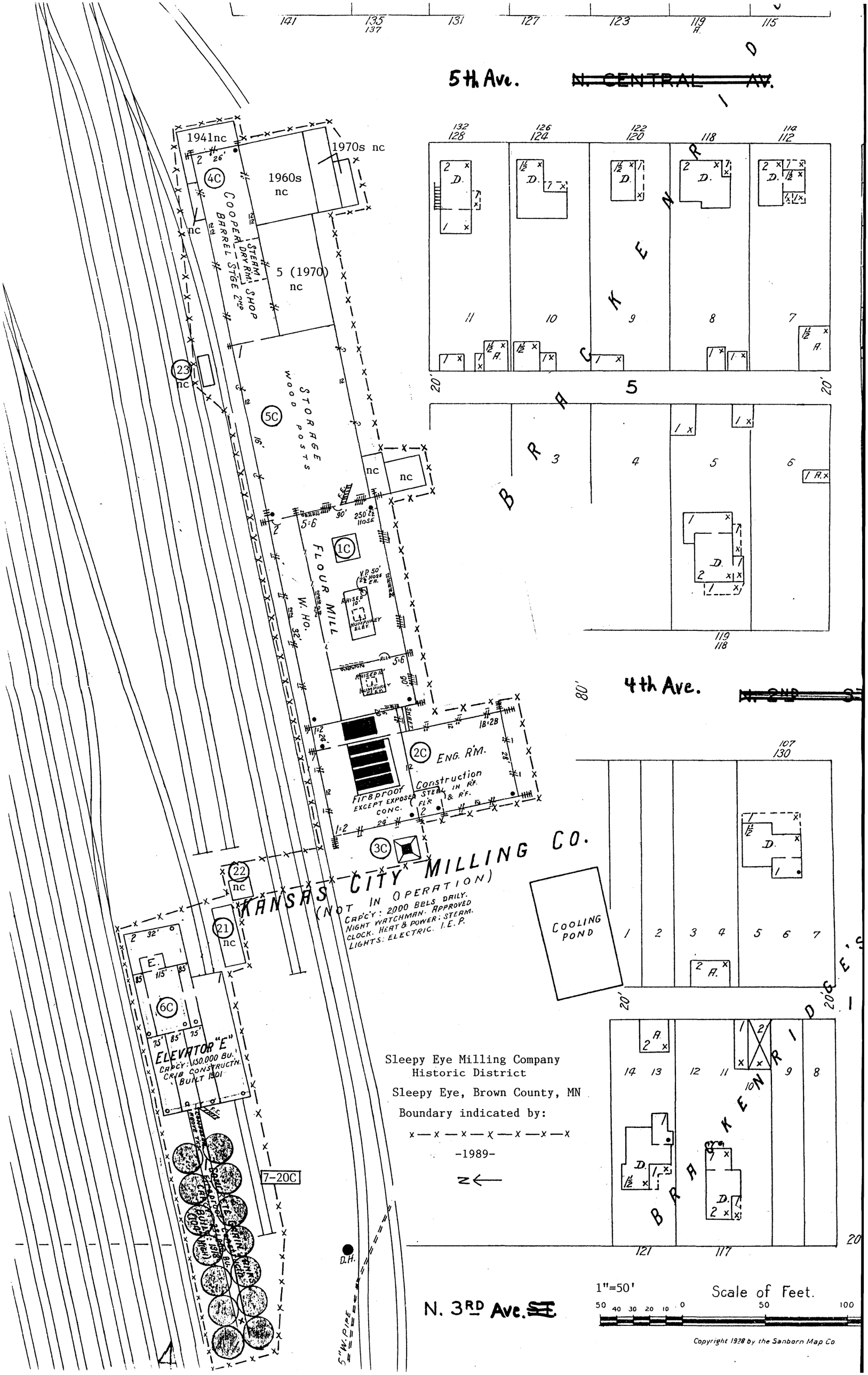
As early as 1900 the company began to distribute premiums to customers, incorporating the Old Sleepy Eye logo in all of its designs. Initially the mill distributed minor tokens such as envelope openers, pillow covers, and calenders. Then, in early 1903 the Sleepy Eye Mill entered into an $80,000 contract with the Weir Pottery Company of Monmouth, Illinois to manufacture over one million steins, vases, and jars using a blue and gray color scheme. Many of the pottery pieces were packed inside flour sacks and barrels as customer premiums.

Perhaps because of their rapid growth or mismanaged funds, in early 1909 the Sleepy Eye Milling Company went into receivership. An April meeting of the company's creditors resulted in a decision to move the management and sales office to Minneapolis. One year later Superintendent Reid resigned due to ill health, and one month later fifteen employees at the mill went on strike and eventually quit. In 1911 the Sleepy Eye Milling Company was purchased (along with the Albert Lea Mill and the Queen Bee

Mills of Sioux Falls, S.D.) by the United Flour Mills Co. Five years later the company was bankrupt and the mill closed. In late 1917 the Kansas Flour Mills Company purchased and re-opened the Sleepy Eye site, although because of falling wheat prices and lack of export trade the plant closed again on 15 February 1921. The mill buildings are presently used by Pietrus Foods, Inc. for processing eggs.

While flour milling holds an important place in the history of Brown County and the area, few buildings associated with the industry remain in the region. The largest company in Brown County, the Eagle Roller Mill in New Ulm, has ceased operations and only fragments of the complex are intact. The Springfield Milling Company's buildings have all disappeared, and the New Ulm Roller Mill was razed in the past ten years. Outside of Brown County, perhaps the most significant milling operation in the state was the 1890 Stockton Roller Mill, but it was recently destroyed by fire.

Even though the Sleepy Eye Mill complex is no longer used for processing grains, the major mill buildings remain in good condition. Like other mills, the Sleepy Eye Milling Company played a major role in the agricultural commerce of Brown County and the region. It owned a network of elevators (as many as 58 by one account) which stretched across three states, and provided a ready market for thousands of farmers. The Sleepy Eye property is significant as the most complete milling complex in southern Minnesota, representing a historically important agricultural processing industry.


5th Ave.
N. CENTRAL AV.
4th Ave.
N. 2ND ST.
N. 3RD Ave. SE
BRAKEN RIDGE
1941nc
1970s nc
1960s nc
5 (1970) nc
COOPER BARREL STGE 2ND
STEAM DRY RM. SHOP
STORAGE WOOD POSTS
FLOUR MILL
W. HO.
HUMPHREY ELEV.
ENG. RM.
Construction
FIREPROOF EXCEPT EXPOSED STEEL IN RF. FL'R & R'F.
KANSAS CITY MILLING CO.
(NOT IN OPERATION)
CAP'C'Y: 2000 BBLS DAILY.
NIGHT WATCHMAN. APPROVED CLOCK. HEAT & POWER: STEAM. LIGHTS: ELECTRIC. I.E.P.
COOLING POND
ELEVATOR "E"
CAPC'Y: 150,000 BU.
CRIB CONSTRUCTN.
BUILT 1901
7-20C
D.H.
5" W. PIPE
Sleepy Eye Milling Company
Historic District
Sleepy Eye, Brown County, MN
Boundary indicated by:
x — x — x — x — x — x
-1989-
1"=50'
Scale of Feet.
50 40 30 20 10 0 50 100
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