

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received FEB 16 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Primrose Mill

and/or common

2. Location

off IA 2

street & number Twp. 68N R7E Section 23 not for publication

city, town Primrose vicinity of

state Iowa code 19 county Lee code 111

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"/> 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: VACANT

4. Owner of Property

name Jeff Adkisson

street & number 201 Washington Park, Apartment #1

city, town Brooklyn vicinity of state New York 11205

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lee County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Ft. Madison state Iowa 52632

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

Primrose Mill (1871) is a well preserved and most unique example of a steam-powered rural grist mill, built large in scale and with much attention to both detail and design.

The three-story brick mill (laid in running bond) has a rectangular plan and a combination gambrel-jerkinhead roof which is very unusual. A full raised basement with walls composed of 18" limestone ashlar blocks, supports the brick structure. Side and end windows are in line with those in the upper stories, and are bridged by semi-segmental arches composed of stone voisoirs. On the main facade, the original sash pattern was 9/6 with a larger upper sash. Two half windows are located on the first floor, east side above the original shed roof line of the power plant building which is no longer extant. Doors are centered on both floors of the south end (in "warehouse" fashion) and on the first floor of the west side. All doors and windows have limestone sills, and segmental arched headings (composed of two courses of rowlock arches).

A frieze of corbelled brick with dentil pattern and corbelled cornice traces the eaves line around the building. This cornice is partly returned at each corner. A gothic gable roofed dormer with a tall arched double-hung window is centered on each side above the eaves line.

The mill is internally supported by four vertical 9" by 9" wooden posts on each floor. Paired tie rods with star bolt plates reinforce each floor between ends and sides of the building. The star bolt pattern is symmetrical on all four facades, but fenestration is symmetrical on all save the east face of the building wherein the pattern is shifted to the north.

A single story gabled cider press building was located just north of the grist mill but was moved to Farmington in 1975. A mill pond remains to the north of the mill (not on the subject property at present). Apparently the pond supplied water for the steam engine.

The building, although vacant, is in sound structural condition. The first story window on the northwest corner of the west face has been enlarged into a door. Vents have been inserted into several windows on the east face. A barn-style roof vent has been centered on the ridgeline. A two-story (originally single story) brick power house with shed roof, once located along the east face of the mill, is no longer extant. Iron anchors which once stabilized the iron smokestack by anchoring guidewires remain in the east face.

The mill is located on the eastern edge of the village of Primrose and is the most prominent structure in the area, and is the only one built in brick.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1871–1900 **Builder/Architect** J. B. Pierce

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Primrose Mill is historically significant as an example of the importance of a grain mill to a small Iowa community and further as an example of the use of steam power as a source for energy for a mill in a sparsely settled region. The mill's operating history attests as well to the rapid turnover of operators which this profession suffered.

J.W. Pierce (1841-?), born in Prussia, emigrated to the United States in 1861 and settled in Primrose in 1868 where he became a retail dry goods merchant. In 1871, in partnership with Mr. Kumleh, Pierce built the steam powered Primrose flouring mill. By 1874, the partnership included Mr. Bruhne. Pierce's mercantile business failed in 1875, but with community assistance and support he was able to remain in business through at least 1880, but his involvement with the mill had ceased. The 1880 Federal Population Census identified Charles Ross, from Pennsylvania, as the miller as of June 1 of that year, but the Industrial Census for that same year listed the German born William Rakow (1843–85) as miller. Rakow was still operating the mill as of 1885 according to the State Census of that year. August C. Kiehbiel, a local Mennonite, was miller in 1895, his son Peter was the engineer in the power plant and another son, Edward worked in the mill as well. By 1900, Simon Rasch was the miller. Despite this apparent rapid turnover, the continuous milling operation attests to the need felt by the village and township for the services of a mill.

In 1880 the mill employed three hands for the entire year, and had a maximum daily capacity of 300 bushels of grain which were processed through four runs of grinding stones. A forty horsepower engine provided the power. During the year ending June 1, 1880, the mill produced 2,400 barrels of wheat flour, 2,080 barrels of rye flour, 3,000 pounds of buckwheat flour, 20,000 pounds of cornmeal, and 470,000 pounds of feed. The mill offered commercial and custom grinding.

Primrose Mill is closely identified with the German portion of the Primrose community. The original builders were German born, perhaps explaining the high degree of craftsmanship and attention to decorative elements which characterize the building. The village of Primrose, despite its small size (1887 population of 175) boasted both a German Lutheran and a Presbyterian church.

The market area served by the mill was probably larger than the Township of Harrison in which it was located. The willingness of entrepreneurs to invest in a steam powered multi-storied brick mill in an area that was close to water power sources (Des Moines River, six miles to the southwest) indicates the great importance which was placed upon obtaining a mill for each local community. While the use of steam power for milling purposes was already a thirty-year old technology even in Iowa, its application in this setting over a thirty plus year period is of historical interest.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet, Item #9, page 1.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Farmington

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	6	1	5	1	4	0	4	5	0	3	3	8	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 on south side of Mechanics St.
Beg. 200' south of pt. Y 1,350' east of NW corner of SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 23, Twp. 68N, Range 7W, thence 107' east, 100' south, 107' west, and 100' north to pt. of beginning, being a rectangular property which includes only the mill structure and its immediate adjacent area.

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

state Iowa code 19 county Lee code 111

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO date December 9, 1982

Historical Building

street & number East 12th and 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 24 November 1982

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

date 3/17/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET BIBLIOGRAPHY ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Andreas, A.T., An Illustrated History of Lee County, Iowa 1874. Chicago: Lakeside Building Publishers, 1874.

History of Lee County, Iowa. Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1887.

Sloat, Ted, "Favorite Stories of Primrose from the Oldtimers." Fort Madison Democrat, November 18, 1976, p. 12.

Sloat, Ted, "Primrose has much early-day heritage." Fort Madison Democrat, November 11, 1976, p. 14.

1870 Federal Census, Lee County, Harrison Township, Primrose, p. 16.

1880 Federal Census, Lee County, Harrison Township, Primrose, p.20.

1880 Federal Census, Special Schedule of Manufacturers, Lee County, Harrison Township.

1885 Iowa State Population Census, Lee County, Harrison Township, Primrose.

1895 Iowa State Population Census, Lee County, Harrison Township, Primrose.

1900 Federal Census, Lee County, Harrison Township, Primrose, p. 312.