

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Minnesota
COUNTY: Ottertail
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE FEB 24 1975

1. NAME

COMMON:	Phelps Mill
AND/OR HISTORIC:	The Maine Roller Mill

2. LOCATION

<i>N side of confluence of Lion Lake with Otter Tail River</i>			
STREET AND NUMBER: NW$\frac{1}{2}$NW$\frac{1}{2}$ Sec. 35, T134N, R41W			
CITY OR TOWN: Phelps		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 7th	
STATE Minnesota	CODE 22	COUNTY: Ottertail	CODE 111

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY <small>(Check One)</small>	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE <small>(Check One or More as Appropriate)</small>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Ottertail County Board	
STREET AND NUMBER: Ottertail County Courthouse	
CITY OR TOWN: Fergus Falls	STATE: Minnesota

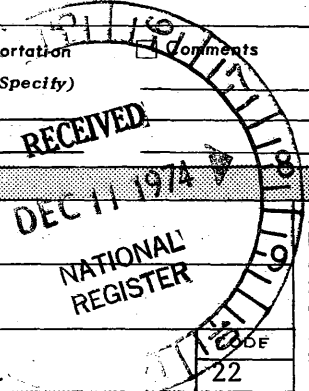
5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Ottertail County Courthouse		
STREET AND NUMBER:		
CITY OR TOWN: Fergus Falls	STATE: Minnesota	CODE: 22

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Statewide Historic Sites Survey		
DATE OF SURVEY: 1974 <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local		
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Minnesota Historical Society		
STREET AND NUMBER: Building 25, Fort Snelling		
CITY OR TOWN: St. Paul	STATE: Minnesota	CODE: 22

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Phelps Mill is located within Maine Township, Ottertail County. The town of Maine, Minnesota is located two miles north of Phelps Mill on County Road #45. The site is in the NW $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{2}$ Section 35, T134N, R41W.

Phelps Mill is situated in a beautiful natural landscape setting. At a location where the Ottertail River is narrow and swift, the mill was built into the east bank. Lion Lake, a small spring fed lake, is situated to the east and empties into Ottertail River just before the dam.

The water powered mill complex is derived from these components: the flour mill, the buckwheat and rye mill, the turbine houses, later additions and the dam.

The flour mill stands four stories tall and measures thirty-sixty feet long by thirty-five wide. The building is framed with hand-hewn timbers and covered with wood clapboard planks painted white. The bottom story rests on massive wooden pilings pounded down into the ground. Rectangular window moldings embellish the six-over-six windows and wood shingles cover the gambrel shaped roof. A single brick chimney is located near the apex of the east gabled wall and round ball finials are positioned at either end of the peaked roof.

The machinery within the flour mill originally consisted of rollers, round wheels, scalpers, a centrifugal, purifiers, dust collectors, separators, extractors, and smutters. A large amount of this equipment still remains within the structure.

The buckwheat and rye mill was added to the north side of the flour mill in 1895. This mill addition stands three stories tall and measures thirty-six feet long by twenty-five feet wide. This building is timber framed and covered with red painted pressed metal siding. Rectangular window moldings with pressed metal entablature embellish the six-over-six sash windows. The roof is a tarred, flat slanting surface which slopes to the west. A single brick chimney is positioned on the east central edge of the roof.

The turbine houses are two individual one story additions positioned on the west elevation. The iron girders are riveted to the wood pilings to support the oak sluicibox and framing of engine houses that encloses the machinery. The upper portion of the engine house is clapboarded and the roof wood shingled.

Later additions to the mill structure include a one story sloped shed roof that extends the full length of the eastern elevation, a steamboiler, radiators, a four story chimney and an office appendage positioned on the south facade. The one story office addition is woodframed and covered with pressed metal sheeting which is presently painted white.

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SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1889-1939**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE -

The location for the present mill and dam on the Ottertail River (Maine Township, Ottertail County) was purchased by William E. Thomas in 1886. The next year was spent constructing a dam, however, it was not until 1889 that work began on the erection of the mill.

The flour mill took eight months to construct and by December of 1889 "The Maine Roller Mills" began operation. The flour mill was designed to grind at a capacity of sixty to seventy-five barrels a day and produce various grades of flour as "patent, straight, bakers, and low grade flour...brands of flour it ground included 'Gold Foil Patent', 'Silver Leaf Fancy', and 'Baker's Choice'."¹

Business boomed from the beginning for William E. Thomas and it lasted until he sold the operation. A three story mill addition was built in 1895 to meet the demands for grinding feed, buckwheat and rye.

The wood dam, which was built in 1887, developed serious leaks in 1908 and was replaced by the concrete and rubble rock dam that stands today.

Ray Phelps was the head miller from 1906 until the mill closed in 1939 and his long influential association with the mill brought about the mill's local name. William E. Thomas sold the operation in 1920 to the Farmers Merchantile Company for \$33,500.00. Various factors influenced his decision to sell but the realization that commercial milling was outstripping the available market is likely the deciding factor. The Farmers Merchantile Company struggled unsuccessfully with Phelps Mill until 1928, when it was sold to H.G. Everson who paid \$10,500.00 for the property. Unfortunately for Everson, the situation deteriorated to a point that the milling operation was shut down permanently.

Phelps Mill stood abandoned for twenty-six years until the Ottertail County Board purchased the property in 1965 for parkland. The mill is now a very popular tourist attraction set in its beautiful natural surroundings. A great deal of time and effort has gone into stabilizing and rebuilding of Phelps Mill through the efforts of the Ottertail County Board who is sponsored through private, county and state funding.

1. Bergantine, Rosanne, Phelps: A Peak Into Its Past, p. 4.

(see continuation sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bergantine, Rosanne, Phelps: A Peak Into Its Past, 1970; pp. 1-25
 "Phelps Mill", Fergus Falls Daily Journal, May 20, 1965
 "Phelps Mill", Minneapolis Tribune, July 10, 1955
 Minnesota Historic Sites Survey - Phelps Mill, compiled by John J. Hackett, Survey Specialist, August 1974.

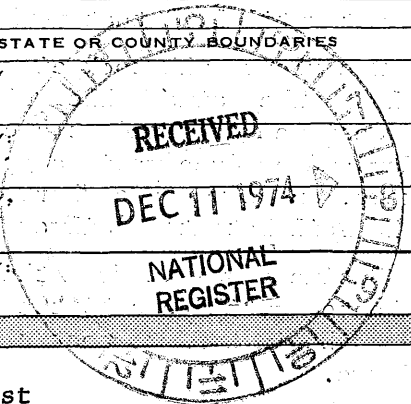
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		46° 22' 52"	95° 49' 15"	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: John J. Hackett, Survey Specialist

ORGANIZATION: Minnesota Historical Society DATE: 20 November 1974

STREET AND NUMBER: Building 25, Fort Snelling

CITY OR TOWN: St. Paul STATE: Minnesota CODE: 22

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>Russell W. Fridley</u> <u>Russell W. Fridley, Director</u></p> <p>Title <u>Minnesota Historical Society</u></p> <p>Date <u>December 7, 1974</u></p>	<p>NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION</p> <p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date <u>2/24/75</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Notary Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date <u>Feb 21, 1975</u></p>
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(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

7. Description

The dam is upstream from the mill and originally built of wood in 1887. This dam was replaced in 1908 with concrete, rubble stone and steel and is presently undergoing repair.

The mill stood empty for twenty-six years after it proved unprofitable to operate. Yet, the building has resisted the onslaught of weather, souvenir hunters and vandals. The Ottertail County Board purchased the property in 1965 and the complex is being stabilized and under a restoration in conjunction with the development of Phelps Mill County Park.

8. Significance

The Phelps Mill is significant, therefore, as a representative of pioneer agricultural industry in Ottertail County during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Whereas other mills in the county have been extensively modernized or demolished or deteriorated through disuse, the Phelps Mill has remained relatively intact and is presently undergoing preservation work to insure its future. Plans for the site indicate development of an on-going program for the interpretation of the milling industry and its role in the agricultural development of the county.

