

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

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

For NPS use only
received NOV 15 1983
date entered DEC 15 1983

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

1. Name

historic Fairmont Creamery Company Building (FM04-12)
and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number Southeast corner SE of 6th Avenue and F Street N/A not for publication
city, town Fairmont N/A vicinity of
state Nebraska code 31 county Fillmore code 059

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 Dr. Sherman F. Ashby and Dr. Charles F. Ashby
street & number 633 North 11th Street
city, town Geneva N/A vicinity of state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds
street & number Fillmore County Courthouse
city, town Geneva state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date On-going federal state county local
depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society
city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

7. Description

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fairmont Creamery Building is a one story brick commercial structure located in Fairmont, an agricultural community in southeastern Nebraska. The building, constructed in 1884, is the original home of the Fairmont Foods Company, a nationally known business.

The Fairmont Creamery building is a one story brick structure situated on a tree-shaded corner lot in Fairmont, Nebraska (1980 population 767). This original home of the nationally known Fairmont Foods Company was constructed in the spring of 1884 in typical late 19th century commercial building style. Decorative features include keystone arches over the windows and a pressed metal cornice mounted on the street facades of the structure.

The floor plan of the structure when it housed the creamery business is unknown, however in 1908 the space was converted into a doctor's office and residence by Dr. S. F. Ashby.

The Fairmont Creamery building has been vacant for many years, though still owned by the Ashby family who boast three generations of medical doctors. Current plans for the building are uncertain, although the owners and townspeople want it preserved. Several options are being considered for adaptive re-use.

At the rear of the property is a brick carriage barn-garage dating to the early 20th century. This structure was used to house the cream wagons.

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

Specific dates 1884-1907 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Fairmont Creamery Company building in Fairmont, Nebraska is nationally significant in the area of industry as the original plant and headquarters (1884-1907) of the nationally known company. Fairmont was prominent in the dairy industry for nearly 100 years, known for its quality control and progressive methods. Architecturally, the building is locally significant as the finest example of 19th century commercial architecture in the town of Fairmont.

The Fairmont Creamery Company was incorporated March 29, 1884 with its general nature of business being the production and sale of butter, eggs and poultry. The company was founded by Wallace Wheeler, an implement dealer and Joseph H. Rushton a Fairmont attorney, with local townspeople and farmers owning the remainder of the \$5,000 total stock.

During 1884 and 1885, the Creamery operated only in the summer months due to a lack of raw materials, however the company was soon a profitable enterprise for its stockholders. During this early period, drivers made daily rounds to farmers, picking up the milk, and delivering it to the creamery. The producer was paid monthly for the cream skimmed from this milk. Later on, Fairmont provided skimming stations where the producer would bring his milk to be separated by a large power separator. The farmer then would leave the cream at the station and have the skim milk back home to be used there. When hand separators were introduced in Nebraska ca. 1900, the skimming stations were no longer needed. Farmers separated their own cream at home. Fairmont provided separators to patrons on contract and the company withheld part of each month's cream check to apply to the purchase.

The Fairmont Creamery Company's first product was butter. Edgar F. Howe came to Fairmont as a butter maker in 1886. During this first year, Howe was responsible for all operations at the creamery from firing the boiler at 5:00 a.m. to meeting and recording the activities of the cream route driver after 6:00 p.m. in the evenings. It was under Howe's able direction that the company began to expand and gain nationwide recognition. In 1888 Howe produced 210,000 pounds of butter and the need for more plants became inevitable. During the next seven years, six plants were started by Fairmont in other southeastern Nebraska towns, the first one being in Crete in 1889.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Fairmont

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

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| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

This property is situated on lot 591, original city of Fairmont and includes all the historically associated property.

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet Jeffries Spencer, Cultural Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society

date September, 1983

street & number 1500 R Street, P. O. Box 82554

telephone 402/471-3270

city or town Lincoln

state Nebraska

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

Morran D. Knott

11/4/83

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

date

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

date

12/15/83

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Fairmont Creamery Company got a great boost of confidence in November 1889 when its "Diadem" brand of butter won first prize at the American Dairy Show in Chicago. Howe made the prizewinning butter personally. That same year, Fairmont took first place honors at the National Buttermakers' Convention in Dubuque, Iowa. The company took other first place honors for Nebraska-made butter in many categories at the 1889 annual meeting of the State Dairymen's Association of Nebraska.

With the addition of the Crete plant in 1889, the Fairmont Creamery Company made a total of 410,000 pounds of butter.

During the first years of Fairmont's history, Howe devoted all of his time to supervising the making of butter in Crete and Fairmont. Edgar Howe served the Fairmont Company for over fifty years advancing from butter-maker during the "one man-one churn" days to president of the organization in 1933.

The Fairmont Creamery Company continued its rapid expansion after the turn of the century. The general offices were moved from Fairmont, Nebraska to Omaha January 1, 1907 which was a more convenient location and the original building in Fairmont was sold to Dr. S. F. Ashby. The company opened plants in other states from Portland, Maine to Spokane, Washington and from Devil's Lake, North Dakota to New Orleans, Louisiana. By 1930, the company had nearly 3,000 cream stations throughout the United States providing a market for the farmer's home-separated cream.

Fairmont's popularity with consumers was in part due to the complete line of dairy products offered. By the 1930's, the company also processed and sold eggs, poultry, fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and ice.

Eggs were first handled by Fairmont in 1889 and by 1893 they were being wholesaled at the Crete, Nebraska plant. In 1908, Fairmont was one of the first creameries in the country to pack and market frozen eggs sold to bakers. The Fairmont Creamery Company had reduced this process to a science and the Omaha and Crete plants were used by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in researching frozen eggs.

The first Fairmont poultry department was established at the Crete plant in 1910 and the company soon became nationally known for its Puritan and Plymouth brands of "milk-fatted" poultry. Commercial chick hatcheries and poultry supplies were handled at many Fairmont plants.

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Ice cream was first manufactured at the Omaha plant in 1907. Originally it was frozen by the old ice and salt method which was very slow. This evolved to freezing machines with hollow jackets through which refrigeration is mechanically circulated. By 1934, ice cream was made at nearly all plants.

Fairmont entered the cheese business on a large scale in 1915 at their Green Bay, Wisconsin plant and soon every Fairmont plant carried bulk and packaged cheese. Frozen fruit and vegetables were introduced in the 1920's without major renovation since all plants had refrigeration.

By the mid-1930's Fairmont produced more than 30 "Better Food Products" and operated by the motto "To make a good product better."

The Fairmont Creamery Company was always a leader in innovative ideas. As early as 1888, when Fairmont shipped tubs of butter from Fairmont, Nebraska to New York City, it was inner-lined with parchment paper, an original Fairmont idea which became universally used. When unpacked from the tubs, the butter came free and was in much better condition than unlined shipments.

Fairmont also was the first creamery in the United States to use the "Babcock Test", which was an accurate means of obtaining the percentage of butterfat content in cream. It was invented by Dr. S. M. Babcock of the University of Wisconsin in 1890. Fairmont first used this test in 1892 at the Friend creamery and thereafter it became a standard measurement in the industry.

In 1902, a laboratory was established at the Crete plant. Here researchers studied and developed methods for standardization of the acidity in cream for pasteurization, tested butter for the percentage of moisture and butterfat content and ran other tests to insure consistently excellent products. By 1906, a very comprehensive lab was built at the Omaha plant.

In 1920, Fairmont created what is believed to have been the first refrigerated ice cream delivery truck in the United States. This truck, built by an Omaha mechanic, was used to service retail stores from the factory.

The Fairmont Creamery Company established an experimental farm by the 1930's at Moorhead, Minnesota. There the company maintained purebred Guernsey cows and turkeys for breeder stock.

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In 1947, the Fairmont Creamery Company changed its name to Fairmont Foods Company and by the late 1950's and early 1960's, the company expanded into snack foods through the acquisition of several potato chip companies, cookie, cracker and frozen pizza manufacturing operations and a soft drink bottling company. Fairmont also continued to expand in the dairy industry with the acquisition of Abbotts Dairy in Philadelphia.

In 1967, Fairmont Foods purchased Utotem, a chain of nearly 350 convenience foods stores located in seven states; Utotem also owned three ice plants in Houston, Texas. During the 1970's, Fairmont Foods closed and disposed of several of it's original dairy and snack food operations and moved its headquarters from Omaha to Houston. In March 1979, Fairmont's Board of Directors formally approved a plan to concentrate the company's resources in the Utotem convenience store business. Fairmont Foods Company became a wholly owned subsidiary of American Financial Corporation of Cincinnati, Ohio in July 1980 and in 1982 changed its name to Utotem, Inc.

Today Utotem, Inc. operates approximately 960 stores in 12 states, mostly in the sun belt. The company also operates Giant Snacks, Inc. of San Lorenzo, California which manufactures beef jerky and beef sticks. Fairmont's remaining dairy operations consist of a fluid milk processing plant in Kansas City, Missouri and a cultured products plant in Council Grove, Kansas. The last ice cream processing plant, located in Omaha, was closed in December 1982.

The Fairmont Creamery Company building is significant in the area of industry on a national level as the original plant and general office of the company from 1884-1907, the first 25 years of the company's nearly 100 year history. Fairmont has been a leader in the dairy industry for it's excellent quality control in production and its progressive ideas. Many of these plans were implemented during this early period of the company's existence. Fairmont was shipping products nationwide from this original plant in the 1880's and as early as 1900, plants were being built in other states attesting to the excellence of the products manufactured.

Architecturally, the building is locally significant as an excellent example and the only virtually unaltered 19th century commercial structure in Fairmont.

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Richmond, James E., Vice President and Treasurer, Utotem, Inc.,
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