NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10/90)

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Oneida Milling and Elevator Company grain elevator

other names/site number Colorado Milling and Elevator Company grain elevator #013744

2. Location

street & number _____ n/a not for publication

city or town American Falls X vicinity

state Idaho code ID county Power code 077 zip code 83211

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination X 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant __nationally X statewide __locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official — Date 29 Mar 93

John R. Hill, Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___meets ___does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register. — Beth Boland — 7/16/93
___ 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:) _____

for Signature of Keeper — Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
___ private	___ building(s)	___	___ buildings
___ public-local	___ district	___	___ sites
___ public-State	___ site	___	___ structures
_X_ public-Federal	_X_ structure	1	___ objects
	___ object	___	
		1	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

n/a

No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: AGRICULTURE/storage Sub: Granary

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub:

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation

walls concrete

roof concrete

other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

_X_ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

___ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

___ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

___ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

___ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

___ B removed from its original location.

___ C a birthplace or a grave.

___ D a cemetery.

___ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

___ F a commemorative property.

___ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Agriculture	1912-1925	1912
Commerce		1925

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

Flinton Construction Company, Appleton, Wisconsin

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): n/a

___ 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:

X State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other

Specify repository: ________

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than 1

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	1/2	3/4/7/2/3/0	4/7/3/8/3/8/0
2	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /
3	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /
4	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /

___ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Madeline Buckendorf
organization Independent contractor date July 15, 1992
street & number 1402 Blaine telephone (208) 454-3435
city or town Caldwell, Idaho state Idaho zip code 83605

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name ________
street & number ________ telephone ________
city or town ________ state ________ zip code ________

The Oneida Milling and Elevator Company grain elevator is located in the American Falls Reservoir, which covers the original American Falls townsite. The town and most of its structures were moved in 1925 when the reservoir was filled behind a new dam built by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Present-day American Falls now stands approximately one-half mile southeast from the old townsite now covered by the reservoir. Built in 1912, it was the first concrete grain elevator built on the original American Falls townsite; all previous grain elevators were of wooden cribbed construction. The elevator is a reinforced-concrete cylindrical structure with a continuous squared concrete section running down the length of its southeast side. Its dimensions are: 106 feet in height; 36 feet in diameter; and 112 feet in circumference. All original interior equipment, exterior legs, attached wooden warehouse and scalehouse were removed in 1925. Wooden flooring dividing the cylindrical portion into five grain storage bins was torn out in the 1960s. The grain elevator is the only visible structure remaining on the old American Falls townsite.

The Oneida Milling and Elevator Company grain elevator is situated in the American Falls Reservoir near the shoreline of the southeast side of the Snake River, approximately one-half mile from the present location of the city of American Falls. Built in 1912, it is the only visible structure located on the original townsite of American Falls. The original townsite was vacated and most structures moved when the Bureau of Reclamation bought or condemned properties to make way for an enlarged reservoir and new dam in 1925. Remnants of some concrete foundations and sidewalks can be seen in low-water years, but no other standing structures remain. The exterior concrete walls and concrete roof of the grain elevator are intact and in good condition. All interior equipment, exterior conveyor "legs" and wood-frame warehouse and scalehouse were removed in 1925 when the Bureau of Reclamation compensated the Colorado Milling and Elevator Company for the property and it was found that the structure could not be moved. Wooden flooring in each compartment and remaining ladders were removed by the Bureau of Reclamation for safety purposes in the 1960s.

The 1912 American Falls Press called the construction of a concrete elevator "something of a novelty,"[1] though similar elevators were built soon afterward in other areas of southern Idaho. The grain elevator's foundation is sunk 20 feet into the ground in order to lay on bedrock, and the elevator itself extends 106 feet above ground. The circumference measures 112 feet, its diameter is 36 feet, and the walls are 8 inches in width. The use of reinforced concrete was a relatively new technology for agricultural buildings in southern Idaho.

Approximately 1450 barrels of cement and ten railroad carloads of sand and gravel were used to make the concrete. It was then poured into wooden forms; after each section had sufficiently set, the form was moved up and concrete poured on top of the previous section. This type of elevator or silo construction has been described as "monolithic."[2] Iron rods, or rebars, were placed vertically in the

[1] "Two Elevators Near Completion," American Falls Press, 13 October 1912, 1.

[2] J. R. McCalmont, Silos: Types and Construction (Washington, D.C.: Farmers Bulletin No. [N.A.], Agricultural Research Administration, 1948), 19-27.

cement every ten to 12 inches, and horizontal iron bands were set every 10 to 12 inches. The amount of reinforcing iron used equaled one ton to each foot in height. The silo portion of the elevator was composed of five bins and estimated to have a holding capacity of 65,000 bushels.

An 8 x 12-foot square eastern-facing section of the elevator originally enclosed an electric-powered motor, conveyor mechanisms, a wooden ladder and pulley-operated manlift. Six double-hung sash windows are placed vertically in this section, with a casement window at the top level. Two double-hung sash windows with three-over-three lights also were placed in the main portion of the elevator at the top floor, on either side of the square section. A wooden frame warehouse and loading area were attached to the south side of the silo portion immediately adjacent to the railroad tracks.

Though all equipment and external wooden additions have long since been removed, oral, written, and photographic sources have provided fairly detailed information about how the elevator operated. During the 1910s and 1920s most grain was bagged in the field and hauled by horse and wagon to the grain elevator. A wagon was pulled into the scalehouse, then several sacks were cut and placed into a dumpscale for weighing. The grain was then poured directly into a receiving bin below the floor. A dumpscale could only be used for 12-to-14 foot wagons; otherwise the grain was dumped directly into the receiving bin. The grain was tested in a small separator at the office to check its quality. It was then transported by means of a conveyer system up through the square section to the appropriate storage bin. "Buckets" or cups carried grain up the concrete addition to the bin in which the grain was stored. From there the operation became more labor intensive. A worker would go up to each bin by means of a manlift, or in later years, by climbing a wooden ladder inside the square section. A metal distributor spout had to be manually attached to each bin, and grain had to be shoveled towards the back of the bin in order to make room for more storage. When it was time to ship the grain, a stopper had to be pulled by hand to allow the grain to flow down the external leg to another bin underneath the warehouse. There the grain was lifted by means of another conveyor system to the top of the shed, then dumped through a flexible "arm" into waiting railroad boxcars. A 15-horsepower motor (4 feet by 3 feet in size) ran most of the machinery, with another 3-horsepower motor for the conveyor.

The present environmental and physical setting of the grain elevator is markedly different from its past setting. Water covers the original townsite for most of the year until it is drawn down in the fall. All landscaping has long since disappeared, except for a few stumps that mark where trees once grew. One can ascertain where some of the original streets were located when the water is low. Only the concrete grain silo acts as a visible year-round reminder of the original townsite of American Falls and its most important commercial enterprise--dryland wheat production.

The grain elevator's setting reflected its commercial importance to the original community. It was located immediately adjacent to a spur of the Oregon Short Line Railroad in the center of the original American Falls industrial and commercial district. Several other grain elevators of wooden crib construction were located along the spur, but the concrete elevator of Oneida Milling and Grain Company exceeded them in size, cost of construction, and prominence. It also reflects a substantial

investment of a major out-of-state grain business in the burgeoning wheat-growing industry of American Falls. The production and marketing of dryland wheat remained the most important industry in American Falls and Power County until well after World War II.

Considering that the grain elevator has been partially submerged in water for nearly 65 years, the concrete remains in fair condition. There is evidence of spalling and deterioration on the surfaces that are under water a majority of the time, especially where the frame warehouse was originally attached. The bottom portion of the square concrete section was partially razed when all machinery and equipment was pulled from its interior in 1925. The elevator itself is not listing or showing any signs of shifting, and there are no visible cracks in the cement. Exterior concrete surfaces have been slightly vandalized with graffiti by local youths who painted their graduation dates as high as possible on the structure when the bin floors were still intact.

The concrete grain elevator serves as the only visible locator of the former American Falls townsite. Many historic photographic views of the town were taken from the top of the structure, and its position in other historical photos can help to determine where other original sites and structures were located. The elevator rising out of the water is a striking reminder of the impact of a major federal reclamation project on the community, and the eventual change from dryland farming to irrigated methods.

The Oneida Milling and Elevator Company grain elevator is historically significant because of its association with grain production in Power County and out-of-state investment in that production. The structure remains as the only visible marker of the original townsite of American Falls, a community relocated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in order to create a reservoir. The reservoir was built in order to provide a secure water supply to southcentral Idaho agriculture. Though outside the scope of this nomination, the grain elevator merits further investigation as an example of the influence of new technologies on grain elevator construction in the early twentieth century. The structure's visibility provides further opportunity for the local community and the Bureau of Reclamation to interpret the area's history and the Bureau's role in shaping it.

The original American Falls townsite was located near historic transportation routes through Idaho. The Wilson Price Hunt exploration party first camped near the falls in 1811; John C. Fremont reported being at "American Falls" in 1843. Thousands of emigrants followed the Oregon Trail over what later became the first industrial section of town and the present-day location of the Oneida Grain Elevator. In the 1880s the Oregon Short Line (OSL) Railroad connected the Union Pacific system from Granger, Wyoming, westward to Huntington, Oregon and Pacific Northwest coastal regions. With its junction at Pocatello, the OSL also connected to the Union Pacific's main line at Ogden, Utah. American Falls was one of the OSL's temporary head-of-rail construction points; later a permanent station was established as the first townsite was platted in 1886. It remained a part of Oneida County until 1913, when Power County was created out of portions of Oneida and Blaine counties.

American Falls served as a trading center for cattle and sheep ranchers of the area before the twentieth century. Small irrigated acreages existed in a few places, and dryfarming had started in the southern portion of the original Oneida County as early as the 1890s. With the opening of more public land under the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1902, farm families (many of whom came from Northern Utah) moved to the dryland areas of Oneida County, including the lower Arbon Valley of present-day Power County. Settlement increased as dryfarming was promoted by agricultural colleges and the railroads. Successful experimental dryfarms in Northern Utah, increasing international demands for wheat, and higher than normal amounts of precipitation during the early 1900s also caused agricultural expansion into lands previously thought too arid to farm. Idaho's experience was part of national trends in dryfarming in the Far West: New scientific approaches to dryland cultivation spawned such strong interest that the first annual National Dry Farming Congress was held in 1907 at Denver, Colorado.

Heavy promotion of agricultural opportunities in Idaho, along with larger tracts of cheap land made available through various government land grants, attracted many new emigrants with previous experience in dryfarming. A large number of German-American, Russian-American, and Scandinavian-American emigrants from the Dakotas and other midwestern states took up land claims in present-day Power County. Wheat became the area's major crop as national and international markets expanded, and Power County's soil proved to be well-suited for dryland grains. The Oregon Short Line Railroad, which bisected the original American Falls townsite, provided ready transportation to outside markets. A commercial district had already developed on the northwest side of the tracks in the area called

Riverside Addition, which was platted in 1906. By 1910 wooden cribbed grain elevators, warehouses, and a brick flour mill were established there. Cheap electrical power was already available for commercial enterprises, for the Idaho Consolidated Power Company had located its plant at the nearby falls in 1902.

As early as 1911 John K. Mullen, president of the Colorado Milling and Elevator Company of Denver, expressed interest in seeing Turkey Red wheat grown in southeastern Idaho. Turkey Red had been brought to America by German-Russian immigrants in 1874, and had proved to be a high-quality dryland grain. It was grown in Utah as early as 1904, and Mullen had seen it successfully grown in the southeastern portion of Colorado. The Colorado Milling and Elevator Company already owned several grain elevators and milling operations throughout Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Utah, and Oregon. Mullen, who got his business start in Oneida County, New York, began to look at Oneida County, Idaho, for further investment. He first contacted the OSL in 1911 about its rates from American Falls to Kansas and Nebraska. He then purchased the warehouse and elevator of the Keith-Greene Grain Company of American Falls, a small enterprise owned by Mrs. Mary Keith of Chicago, Illinois. The portion of the property immediately adjacent to an OSL railroad spur was owned by the Fall Creek Sheep Company, one of the oldest businesses in the area. The 1912 American Falls Press called Mullan's purchase "one of the most important grain deal of its kind here, and one which will directly benefit our farmers..."[3] Chester Greene, formerly of the Keith-Greene operation, served as manager of the newly formed Oneida Milling and Elevator Company, a subsidiary corporation of Colorado Milling and Elevator.

Mullen hired the Flinton Construction Company of Appleton, Wisconsin to build the concrete grain elevator. Its president, W. L. Flinton, came to American Falls and personally supervised the construction of the grain elevator. Construction was started in August, and by November of 1912 the elevator was ready to receive grain. A picture of the completed grain elevator appeared in a Boise newspaper, with the following caption: "It indicates the growing importance of South Idaho's grain crops."[4] Colorado Milling and Elevator continued to expand its operations in southern and eastern Idaho, acquiring or building grain elevators and mills in Idaho Falls, Twin Falls, Jerome, and Hollister. In 1917 the subsidiary corporation of Oneida Milling was dissolved and folded back into the Colorado Milling and Elevator Company, but local residents and newspaper articles still referred to the site as the Oneida Milling and Elevator Company.

During the next twelve years, over 3,500,000 bushels would pass through the Oneida elevator. Wheat prices soared during the pre-war and First World War years, and Power County became one of the largest wheat-producing areas in the state. A post-war agricultural depression and a serious drought

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[3]"Grain Buyers to Locate," American Falls Press, 2 May 1912, 1.

[4]Idaho Daily Statesman, 7 October 1912, 3.

year in 1919 caused a drop in the wheat market and a slowdown in dryland farming. The drought also helped to fuel plans for an irrigation storage reservoir at American Falls. Plans for such a supplementary irrigation source had first been envisioned by I. B. Perrine in the early 1900s. He, along with Pennsylvania coal magnate J. H. Kuhn, had developed Milner Dam and the Northside Canal project downstream from American Falls in southcentral Idaho. State, federal, and local governments, along with numerous private and corporate water-users, had to cooperate before the vision became reality.

In 1923 the largest irrigation district in Idaho was formed. Thirty individual districts and forty irrigation companies reached an agreement to combine their water storage and distribution efforts, culminating in Irrigation District #36. With the help of Senator William E. Borah, federal monies and technical assistance from the United States Bureau of Reclamation was obtained to build the dam. When surveyors laid out the boundaries for the storage reservoir it was discovered that a good portion of the original American Falls townsite, including the site of the Oneida Milling and Elevator Company, would be inundated. The Bureau of Reclamation then had to buy out the property owners of the original townsite and move their structures. They dealt with over 1200 individuals to complete this process. It took five years to gain title to all the lands in the reservoir, and cost the Bureau of Reclamation nearly twice what it cost them to build the dam itself.

Grain elevator owners in the old commercial section of town initially were not happy with their property appraisals by the Bureau of Reclamation. Several threatened not to rebuild in the new townsite. How these disputes were resolved was hinted at in the case of the Oneida Grain Elevator property. It was evaluated by five different appraisers for the Bureau of Reclamation in 1920; the appraisals ranged from $20,500 to $26,500. L. L. Evans, owner of the American Falls National Bank, told appraisers that the concrete elevator cost $65,000. Finally, the Bureau of Reclamation paid $43,500 to Colorado Milling and Elevator Company for the property. The relationship between L. L. Evans and Colorado Milling and Elevator Company is not clear; but local oral tradition indicates that the Colorado company owed money to Evans, and the elevator sale helped to pay off part of that debt. Colorado Milling and Elevator also agreed to relocate on the new townsite, but found that it was impossible to move their concrete elevator. The company initially planned to build a similar elevator on their new location, but the underlying soil was too sandy to support a concrete structure. Instead they built a wooden crib silo with the capacity of 75,000 bushels. Portions of the wooden crib silo built by Colorado Milling and Elevator were torn apart by fire fighters in the spring of 1991 because of concern over spontaneous combustion of green grain stored there. Sections of the second elevator are in the process of being dismantled.

The original concrete elevator remains in the reservoir, though all equipment and attached wooden structures were removed in 1925. The American Falls Press paid tribute to the Oneida Grain Elevator in May of that same year: "It has been a landmark visible for miles in every direction of the city, and may still remain one...With the top of the building projecting over the water, it could be used as a marker for the old Oregon Trail, a light house for the guidance of yachts in the lake, or an anchor for

a floating dock."[5] None of these uses came to pass, but the elevator still stands, a reminder of the origins of American Falls before the reservoir and the type of agricultural industry that flourished there.

[5]"Oneida Building New Elevator to Cost $30,000," American Falls Press, 28 May 1925, 1.

American Falls, Idaho. Booklet issued by the Oregon Short Line Railroad, Salt Lake City, Utah. Portland, Oregon: Sunset Homeseekers Bureau, c. 1910. On file at American Falls Public Library, American Falls, and Idaho State Historical Society, Boise, Idaho.

"American Falls--New Model City of the West." Souvenir Edition of The American Falls Press, [1925]. On file at American Falls Public Library.

American Falls Press. May, 1911-November, 1912; September, 1924-June, 1925.

Baum, O.S. [R.]. "Sometimes Dreams Come True." In "Power County Golden Jubilee Days," American Falls, Idaho: privately printed, June 14 & 15, 1958. On file at American Falls Public Library.

Historical Sketch of Power County. Boise, Idaho: Works Progress Administration, Historical Records Survey, [1941]. On file at American Falls Public Library.

Johnson, Harold; Steve Joseph, Chuck Mullen and Thule Egan Stone. Research paper prepared for Professor Henry J. Hulvey, [Idaho State University], December 10, 1973. On file at the American Falls Public Library.

Lamborn, John. "History of the Development of Dry Farming in Utah and South Idaho." M.A. Thesis, Utah State University, Logan, 1978.

McCallmont, J. R., Silos: Types and Construction. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farmer's Bulletin #[N.A.], rev. September 1948. Pp. 4-10, 16-27.

Nelson, Elias, Dry Farming in Idaho. Bulletin No. 62, University of Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton, Printers, 1908.

Neu, Emil, interview with Madeline Buckendorf, American Falls, Idaho, 9 June 1992. Field Notes on file at Power County Historic Preservation Commission, American Falls, Idaho.

Sketches of Colorado. Vol. 4. Denver, Colorado: The Western Press Bureau Company, 1911. Pp. 154-157.

State of Idaho Department of Farm Markets. Third and Fourth Annual Report, 1917-1918, Boise, Idaho. On file in State Documents, Idaho State Library, Boise, Idaho.

Various records of the Bureau of Reclamation, American Falls Project, on file at American Falls Public Library, Idaho State Historical Society and state offices of the Bureau of Reclamation, Boise.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1 Name of Property Oneida Milling and Elevator Company

County and State Power County, Idaho

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nomination boundaries are circumscribed as a square plot surrounding the silo, based on the following legal description:

The NW Quarter Quarter Quarter Quarter of the SW Quarter Quarter Quarter of the SW Quarter Quarter of the NW Quarter of Township 7, Range 31, Section 29.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Because the original site of the nominated property, [Lot 12, Block 61, Riverside Addition of American Falls, as platted by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1920], is under water and no longer evident, the nomination boundaries are based on the legal description locating the silo within the reservoir.