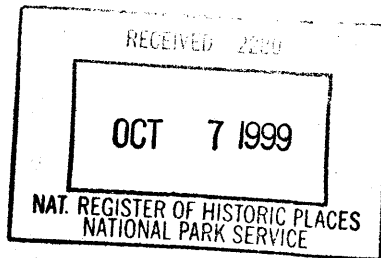


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



1310

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 an 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 Viola Cooperative Creamery

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 10500 Viola Road NE not for publication

city or town Viola Township (Viola) Rochester vicinity

state MN code MN county Olmsted code 109 zip code 55934

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Ian R. Stewart Date 9/16/99

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State of Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

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

Signature of certifying official/Title _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson R. Beall

11/12/99

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Name of Property

Olmsted County, MN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: processing

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/

Other: English Georgian Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls CONCRETE faced with brick

roof ASPHALT (asphalt shingles)

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.)

- 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.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or 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)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1924-1948

Significant Dates

1924

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Crawford, Harold H.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

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

Name of repository:

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Name of Property

Olmsted County, MN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 5	5 5 8 5 2 0	4 8 7 9 0 9 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
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 Garneth O. Peterson AICP

organization Landscape Research date June 14, 1999

street & number 1466 Hythe Street telephone (651) 641-1230

city or town St. Paul state MN zip code 55108

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Donald E. Helgerson

street & number 13919 37th St. NE telephone (507) 876-2034

city or town Dover state MN zip code 55929

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

Description

Viola Cooperative Creamery

The Viola Cooperative Creamery, erected in 1924, is located on an approximately 3/4-acre lot surrounded by cornfield on the west edge of the village of Viola, Minnesota. The creamery is in a prominent location, facing south toward Olmsted County Highway 2, a main artery to Rochester also known as Viola Road. A gravel township road adjoins the site on the east. An abandoned Chicago Northwestern rail bed, approximately 1/4 mile west, is being converted to a bicycle trail. Currently operating dairy farms are visible from the creamery along Viola Road and contribute to the building's setting and rural character.

The Viola Cooperative Creamery was designed by Harold H. Crawford of Rochester, Minnesota, and built by Peter Kramer of St. Charles. Crawford also designed at least thirteen creamery or dairy buildings in Wisconsin and Minnesota, including the nearby Eyota Creamery (NRHP, 1980) in 1923. The Viola Creamery replaced an earlier wooden building that burned, and is a smaller version of a somewhat standard creamery plan that has been identified as a "cross-gable" style. These buildings typically had an articulated entrance and arcade for unloading milk (no longer extant at Viola).¹

The creamery is a one and one-half story rectangular building constructed of reinforced concrete faced with variegated brown and dark-red brick. The building rests on a concrete foundation. It measures 58' x 34', with a projecting 9' x 22' receiving room at the front center (south elevation), and an approximately 9' x 7' well house on the rear (north) elevation.

A jerkin or clipped gable roof, originally clad with asbestos shingles, was replaced with asphalt shingles in 1998. Aluminum fascia and soffit were also added in 1998. A corbeled chimney extends from the west gable end. The projecting south office wing, also with a clipped gable, has a new cupola.

Exterior brick is laid in Flemish bond, with quoins detailing each corner. The office wing is defined by a central single-leaf wood entry flanked by three-over-three double-hung sash. An additional three-over-three double-hung sash is centered under the clipped gable, and two others are located on the east and west sides of the wing. Simple header brick sills and sides, with soldier course lintels, line windows and the entry. A horizontal band of metal flashing remains where the projecting arcade (removed ca. 1960) was originally attached to the office wing. Supported by four brick columns, the arcade provided a covered area for dropping off cream. An elevated driveway led to the level of the door, and the east side window was originally longer to allow for conveyance of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

cream cans into the receiving room. A square area on the west side of the door, outlined by header bricks, held the bulletin board that indicated current butter prices. Both the lower one-third of the east window and bulletin board area have been infilled with brick.

The west wing of the facade contains two fixed sash surmounted by smooth stucco panels. The sash are comprised of a narrow transom of three lights above a square divided by three vertical muntins. The lower square of the original sash was infilled with brick ca. 1970.

The east wing of the facade has a single-leaf wood entry of two panels with a square window divided into four lights; the door matches the central entry in the office wing. Above the entry is a six-light fixed sash. A window opening matching the size of the windows in the west wing was infilled with brick ca. 1970. Smooth stucco panels remain over the door and infilled window. A small square opening approximately one foot above grade was used in a later business enterprise in the 1970s.

The west elevation is dominated by a central, double-leaf entry that provided access to the boiler room. The entry, and the three-over-three double-hung sash that flank the entry, are at grade rather than raised in keeping with the fenestration on the facade. Two square openings (formerly windows) above the entry and sash have been infilled with brick. Another double-hung three-over-three sash is centered under the clipped gable.

Fenestration on the east elevation is more suited to function than symmetry, particularly in door placement. The double-leaf wood entry at the southwest corner offered access to a stairway and proposed elevator (not built). Three-over-three double-hung sash illuminate the stairway and attic level. A square, four-light casement-style window at the lower level opened from refrigerated storage to allow packed butter to be passed directly out for truck shipment.

The north elevation has an exposed foundation with a double leaf entry, originally at grade. This entry provided the main access to the work room, and the location for farmers to retrieve empty cream cans. The well house extends from the northeast corner and has a three-over-three fixed window. Other fenestration includes a fixed three-over-three square fixed sash over the door, and a paired sash west of the entry. The paired windows match those on the facade, with the lower portion infilled.

The interior was designed for efficient handling of cream for buttermaking. The cream was placed on a conveyor into the receiving room on the south facade. From there it was conveyed to the central work room where churns were located. The east wing held the stairway to the attic level (and unused elevator shaft), and the print room and refrigeration room at the northeast corner. Butter was wrapped in the print room, and stored in the refrigeration room until shipped. The west wing of the building held the coal bin, boiler, engine room and a bathroom with shower. The attic contained tanks for cold water, waste water and the buttermilk tank. All tanks operated on a gravity flow

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

system; buttermilk flowed down a pipe to the west side of the building where farmers used a spout to get buttermilk for animal feed.

The creamery closed in 1948 and remained vacant until 1957 when it was sold to Maurice Williams, who planned to remodel it into a filling station or apartments. The distinctive arcade had deteriorated and was removed by Williams.² Robert D. Applen purchased the building in 1961, and subsequently operated a bee-keeping operation in the building until 1979. Applen removed many of the interior tanks, poured a new floor in the main creamery room, and bricked in portions of the windows. Standing vacant since 1979, the Viola Cooperative Creamery was purchased by the current owner, Donald Helgerson, in January 1998.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

Statement of Significance

The Viola Cooperative Creamery is significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion A in the area of commerce as a representative of the cooperative dairy business that comprised a major economic component of the small towns and rural areas of Minnesota in the first half of the twentieth century. Creameries were an economic mainstay in rural communities that often lacked such institutions as schools, town halls or post offices. The cooperative creamery represented an important attempt by farmers to receive greater income and develop a better market for their products in a business that had long been dependent on one-crop agriculture.

The Viola Cooperative Creamery, built in 1924 and closed in 1948, also represents the high point of the smaller specialized creameries that served dairy farmers throughout the state. These creameries reflect a period when buttermaking had shifted from farms to factories, and benefited from advanced technology. Smaller creameries like Viola began to close after WW II as the dairy market, farming technology and operations changed, and greater centralization of the dairy products industry rendered small creameries with limited product lines obsolete.

Context--The Development of Creameries and the Cooperative Movement in Minnesota

Beginning of the Dairy Industry in the State

In order to place the Viola creamery in perspective, it is necessary to briefly examine the rise of creameries and the cooperative movement in the state, particularly with regard to its impact on southeast Minnesota. This context contributes to the statewide context "Railroads and Agricultural Development (1870-1940)."

Butter and cheese were among the earliest agricultural products in the state, with reports of cheese being marketed in St. Paul in 1852. At this time, butter and cheese were made largely on farms, although the first butter and cheese factories had been organized in New York state prior to the Civil War. The manufactured dairy products industry in Minnesota began as early as 1869, when two Owatonna men built a cheese factory and hired a New York cheesemaker as staff. Brownsdale in Mower County and Blue Earth in Faribault County also had early cheese factories. By 1876, there were 49 cheese factories in the state, including the Langdon Butter and Cheese Factory Company, organized in January 1876 at Cottage Grove. Langdon produced 52,000 pounds of cheese and 300 pounds of butter in its first season. In the early years, however, private entrepreneurs were not always assured that they would have enough product from farmers. By the late 1870s, cheese prices declined and put cheese factories out of business.³

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

The impetus toward increased dairying and the resulting buttermaking came from two directions: the push away from one-crop farming, and a pull from the emphasis placed on dairying as an income-producing strategy for farmers. Traditionally wheat had been a primary crop in frontier agriculture, and Minnesota's farmers were no exception. Wheat dominated agriculture in the state and especially prospered with high prices paid during the Civil War. By 1868, 62% of cultivated land in the state was devoted to wheat.⁴

Falling wheat prices in 1869 and 1870, stem rust, and an interest in diversification led fewer farmers to raise wheat, particularly in southeastern Minnesota. Rising land values and more dense settlement forced farmers to practice more intensive agriculture with a better return per acre than offered by wheat. Southeastern Minnesota farmers shifted to dairying, as increasing settlement offered a better market for dairy products than had existed previously.⁵ The State Dairyman's Association was organized in 1878, and advocated dairying as "more certainly remunerative than wheat growing because it is not so liable to injury by grasshopper depredations, unpropitious seasons, hail storms, etc., nor does it occasion depletion of the productive elements of the soil."⁶

Full-time dairying on farms did not occur everywhere immediately. Farmers were urged to diversify their farms with the "dual-purpose" cow, adding animals that could be used for both beef and some dairy activity. James J. Hill, in an effort to help keep farmers profitable along his Great Northern Railroad line, particularly sold the gospel of the dual-purpose cow, and demonstrated his principles on his North Oaks Stock Farm near St. Paul. Silos were also built for the first time in this era, thus making it possible to store silage to keep dairy cows fed over the winter.⁷

The dairy industry grew rapidly and as soon as 1882, a Minnesota Butter and Cheese Association, an organization of processors rather than dairy farmers, had been organized. Recognition of a scientific field of agriculture led to the development by 1890 of the Agricultural College and an Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of Minnesota.⁸ Theophilus Haecker became chief of dairy husbandry at the school in 1891, and exerted a major influence on Minnesota's dairy industry in its formative years. He developed a feeding standard for dairy cows, the first scientifically-based standards in the U.S. Haecker made a systematic study of dairy conditions in Minnesota in 1892, and learned about the cooperative creameries that had been established, notably the successful Clark's Grove Creamery (1927 building, NRHP, 1986) in Freeborn County. Haecker became the "Father of Dairying" and did much to disseminate knowledge of cooperative creameries in the state, making it a leader among cooperatives in the nation.⁹

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

The Development of Creameries

By the late 1870s, Wisconsin and New York had captured much of the cheese market, which led the Minnesota industry to move toward buttermaking instead. Buttermaking also required less equipment and less skill than cheesemaking, so home buttermaking continued for a longer period than home cheesemaking. Then technical innovations began to encourage factory production of butter. Because Minnesota was somewhat late in entering the dairy products industry, it was better able to take advantage of these innovations and focus on buttermaking.¹⁰

The earliest creameries developed based on a "gathered cream" system. Farmers delivered only the cream to the factory for buttermaking, keeping the skim milk on the farm for animal feed. Cream was separated from the milk by the gravity system, with the milk in deep setting pans, and cream that rose to the top skimmed by hand. This system did not always result in good cream, since the farmers were paid by the inch. The cream could be filled with air by stirring it, or keeping it until it was sour, both of which would result in a better "inch" test, with greater profit for the farmer, but a poorer product. By 1885 more than 70 creameries operated in Minnesota, relying on the "gathered cream" system for their product.¹¹

Great changes in the creamery system were introduced with the centrifugal cream separator and the Babcock butterfat test by the 1890s. The centrifugal cream separator worked on the principle that whirling caused the fat (cream) and milk to separate into layers, and when the machine stopped the cream could be skimmed just as when it was separated by hand. The cream separator was more efficient, however, than the gravity method because it enabled the removal of all cream from milk in a quicker and more efficient manner. In 1879, the Weston cream separator was produced in Denmark, and the De Laval cream separator made in Sweden.¹²

The Babcock tester provided a scientific method for measuring the percentage of fat in milk. Under the previous "inch" test, cream was purchased on the basis of weight, not its quality. The test required addition of commercial sulfuric acid to a sample of the milk to break up the milk solids. The sample, placed in a bottle, was whirled to separate the fat, which rose to the neck of the bottle for accurate measurement.¹³

The introduction of new equipment in the form of the cream separator and the Babcock test encouraged the development of more scientific dairying at the creamery, and again forced a change in how the system worked. For some time, whole milk was again hauled to creameries and separated there, with farmers again hauling the skim milk home. Later hand separators were developed and by 1900, available to farmers who then separated the cream at the farm and hauled it to the creameries for buttermaking.¹⁴

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

The Cooperative Creamery Movement

Despite its later leadership in the number of cooperative creameries, Minnesota was not the first state to have them. Cooperative creameries represented a step in the transition from the farm production of dairy products such as butter and cheese to a factory system. A cooperative creamery at East Hampton, Massachusetts, began in the early 1880s. The factory system moved along with the dairy industry, appearing in Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa in the following decades.¹⁵

As agricultural historian Steven Keillor has stated in his study of Minnesota cooperatives, "rural cooperatives were often formed to accomplish an economic function which private investors found unpromising from a profit-making perspective."¹⁶ Previous privately-owned cheese and butter factories had not always been successful because the owners could not depend on farmers to provide enough product to stay in business. Farmers could take their products to competing factories, depending on which entity was paying the highest price. Cooperatives were owned by their patrons, who were bound to the cooperative because they also received dividends from bringing their products to their own co-op.

A cooperative was based on several principles:

- one person--one vote
- membership open to anyone interested
- political and religious neutrality
- limits to returns based on stock ownership
- limited number of shares owned by one person
- emphasis on returning net margins to customers based on their patronage.¹⁷

The cooperative system ensured that a creamery had enough cream for butter by providing dividends to the participating farmers. It allowed the farmers to create an economic entity, pooling their resources to take advantage of the cream separator and butterfat tester to produce a higher quality product and greater financial returns.

In Minnesota, early cooperative creameries began in the late 1880s in several locations: the Vernon Cooperative Creamery in Dodge County; the Zumbro Cooperative Creamery in Olmsted County, the Biscay Cooperative Creamery in McLeod County and the Clark's Grove Cooperative Creamery in Freeborn County.¹⁸ Much has been written about the Clark's Grove Creamery because of its association with the Danes in Freeborn County, and because Professor Theophilus Haecker used it as an example of a model cooperative creamery in his effort to encourage dairying throughout the state. But Clark's Grove was not the first, or the only successful cooperative creamery, as a number of others were also in operation in the early period.

The first successful creamery in the state was at Rochester, owned by W.R. Cammack and a partner named Marvin. The creamery had been founded at Monticello, Iowa in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

1879, and two years later came to Rochester, where it absorbed several smaller creameries. Another cooperative creamery was formed near Rochester in May 1889. Known because of a letter detailing the organization that appeared in the *Farm, Stock and Home* (January 1890), the creamery was established by six farmers who sought to make their own butter. Although little is known of this enterprise, it was one among several that began in the latter 1880s.¹⁹

On January 6, 1889, farmers in southern Dodge and Olmsted counties were unhappy with the arbitrary price set on cream by the two nearby creameries, Marvin and Cammack's Creamery at Rochester, and Morris and Company at Stewartville. A group met and could not agree on one location, so cooperative creameries were built at Vernon and at Rock Dell. Butter was first produced in May 1889 and sold for nine cents a pound.²⁰

Germans at Biscay in McLeod County began their organization in 1889, after several previous efforts. The creamery's original promoter was Carl Haugen, who had come from Lake County, Illinois, where he had seen cooperative creameries in action. The Biscay creamery first produced butter in June 1889, and installed a cream separator in September 1892.²¹

The Clark's Grove Cooperative Creamery started with a group of Danish Baptists, led by Hans Peter Jensen and his brother-in-law, Soren Nelson, also a Danish-American. From Meeker County, Nelson had gone to Iowa to visit creameries using centrifugal separators with the intention of starting a creamery in Meeker County. On his trip back, Nelson shared his information with Jensen, who had visited his homeland in 1884 and observed cooperative creameries in operation. Jensen called a meeting of his neighbors on January 28, 1890, and they soon formed a creamery association based on the Iowa model. They also hired an Iowa buttermaker.²²

Steven Keillor stated that cooperative creameries in Minnesota have been portrayed as innovative, and a product of the Scandinavian-American farmers who settled the state and brought this concept from their homelands. In revisiting this interpretation, Keillor pointed out that the early cooperative creameries were a response to economics, in that farmers could receive a better price for their product if it was more efficiently produced at a creamery. The cooperative aspect was only a part of a series of innovations that improved the dairy products industry, along with hiring of specialized staff and technological innovations such as the Babcock butterfat tester and the cream separator. The factories worked on cooperative principles, to be sure, but the technology and a skilled buttermaker created a better product and better prices for farmers.²³

Keillor also questioned the validity of the "immigrant" heritage in developing the cooperative creamery model. Many of the best buttermakers were Danes, and they did provide a key technical role in the development of the creameries. But Keillor stated that

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

1879, and two years later came to Rochester, where it absorbed several smaller creameries. Another cooperative creamery was formed near Rochester in May 1889. Known because of a letter detailing the organization that appeared in the *Farm, Stock and Home* (January 1890), the creamery was established by six farmers who sought to make their own butter. Although little is known of this enterprise, it was one among several that began in the latter 1880s.¹⁹

On January 6, 1889, farmers in southern Dodge and Olmsted counties were unhappy with the arbitrary price set on cream by the two nearby creameries, Marvin and Cammack's Creamery at Rochester, and Morris and Company at Stewartville. A group met and could not agree on one location, so cooperative creameries were built at Vernon and at Rock Dell. Butter was first produced in May 1889 and sold for nine cents a pound.²⁰

Germans at Biscay in McLeod County began their organization in 1889, after several previous efforts. The creamery's original promoter was Carl Haugen, who had come from Lake County, Illinois, where he had seen cooperative creameries in action. The Biscay creamery first produced butter in June 1889, and installed a cream separator in September 1892.²¹

The Clark's Grove Cooperative Creamery started with a group of Danish Baptists, led by Hans Peter Jensen. Jensen's brother-in-law, Soren Nelson, also a Danish-American. From Meeker County, Nelson had gone to Iowa to visit creameries using centrifugal separators with the intention of starting a creamery in Meeker County. On his trip back, Nelson shared his information with Jensen, who had visited his homeland in 1884 and observed cooperative creameries in operation. Jensen called a meeting of his neighbors on January 28, 1890, and they soon formed a creamery association based on the Iowa model. They also hired an Iowa buttermaker.²²

Steven Keillor stated that cooperative creameries in Minnesota have been portrayed as innovative, and a product of the Scandinavian-American farmers who settled the state and brought this concept from their homelands. In revisiting this interpretation, Keillor pointed out that the early cooperative creameries were a response to economics, in that farmers could receive a better price for their product if it was more efficiently produced at a creamery. The cooperative aspect was only a part of a series of innovations that improved the dairy products industry, along with hiring of specialized staff and technological innovations such as the Babcock butterfat tester and the cream separator. The factories worked on cooperative principles, to be sure, but the technology and a skilled buttermaker created a better product and better prices for farmers.²³

Keillor also questioned the validity of the "immigrant" heritage in developing the cooperative creamery model. Many of the best buttermakers were Danes, and they did provide a key technical role in the development of the creameries. But Keillor stated that

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

Section number 8 Page 6

although the Clark's Grove Creamery was associated with Danish Baptists, they were not particularly focused on their "Danish-ness," in that they had no Danish school for their children, and they spoke English in their Sunday School. They believed they were Baptists first, and Danes second. For the cooperative creamery, Keillor concluded that their ethnicity was a supporting, rather than an innovating or originating role.²⁴

Building and equipping a creamery cost approximately \$4,000, and with a cooperative, the boards of directors signed loan papers for the funds. In Clark's Grove, with a high degree of homogeneity among the members, 81 charter members signed agreements to borrow the funds. They pledged five cents from each milk check, to be placed in a sinking fund for debt repayment. In Freeborn county, the Scandinavian-American creameries tended to donate labor and materials to the creamery construction, and rotate cream-hauling duties, all of which reduced costs. As a result, Scandinavian-American creameries tended to repay their loans with an average of 3.67 years; creameries operated by Germans and old-stock Americans, both of which tended to hire building and hauling, took an average of 6.25 years to repay their debts.²⁵

The cooperative creamery model grew rapidly throughout the 1890s, developing factory-made butter into a major product in the state. By 1910, cooperatives prevailed in the southeast and northwest portions of the state, while private creameries predominated in the Twin Cities and neighboring counties, especially Carver (see map).²⁶

Year	Total Creameries	Coop	Independent	Lbs. Butter Made	Butter Value ²⁷
1906	726	555	171	86,217,727	\$18,364,320
1915	865	655	210	126,150,665	\$35,591,816
1928	856	671	185	273,396,822	\$125,952,022
1936	875	631	244	290,474,359	\$92,273,997
1941	830	621	209	326,478,065	\$108,586,530
1945	744	579	165	233,435,650	\$108,799,688

After 1900, the advent of hand-powered centrifugal separators allowed farmers to separate cream on the farm and haul the less-bulky cream to the creameries. Cooperatives then faced competition from centralizers that received cream from outlying stations and then transported it to a central point. These creameries were strong competition for the cooperatives, since they did not need to be located in each community, and threatened the livelihood of the crossroads creameries.²⁸

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 7

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

Cooperative creameries were forced to accept all varieties of cream in order to compete with the centralizers and pay equal prices. The result was a decline in the quality of butter produced. Better cooperative creameries, however, were paying higher prices because they produced higher quality butter that brought a higher market price. The University extension division recognized that cooperatives were competing with and undercutting each other. In December 1918, the University sent out a letter urging cooperative creamery associations at a county level to encourage higher quality and help survival of creameries that were struggling. Freeborn County already had a countywide association, and McLeod and Houston counties also organized in response to the University letter. Within a few months, associations were formed in 15 additional counties, representing 226 cooperative creameries that produced about 40 millions pounds of butter yearly.²⁹

Dairymen had also discussed establishing a sales agency for butter. Most Minnesota butter went to eastern cities and creameries paid more for shipping partial railroad car loads than if they had a full load. In 1921, the Meeker County creameries began marketing their loads together, and formed the Minnesota Cooperative Creameries Association, Unit No. 1. The first co-op creameries joining the unit included those at Litchfield, Lake Stella, Dassel, Darwin, Kingston, Forest City, Grove City, Crow River, Danielson, Cosmos and Star Lake. The association also began buying supplies in wholesale quantities, and undertook an effort to standardize butter products, developing a sweet cream butter program.³⁰

From this beginning came a statewide association, formed in 1921--the Minnesota Cooperative Creameries Association. In 1924, the association held a contest to find a name more suitable for marketing butter than "Minnesota Cooperative Creameries Association." Judges, including the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul and Dean W. C. Coffey of the University of Minnesota College of Agriculture, read thousands of entries before settling on "Land O' Lakes."³¹

In 1924, the Association began bypassing the commission merchants and established contracts to deliver butter directly to retailers, and one year later, sold 79 million pounds of butter in one year.³² Having outgrown its crowded warehouse and office in St. Paul, in Sept. 1925 the association broke ground on a new main plant in the Northwest Terminal area of northeast Minneapolis. In 1926, the organization changed its name to Land O' Lakes Creameries, Inc., since their brand had become better known than their original name.³³

By 1935, Minnesota had grown to become the leading state producer of butter, producing over 273 million pounds, or 16.7% of the national output. The Minnesota dairy belt had become concentrated in a corridor extending northwesterly from Freeborn County through Steele, McLeod, Wright, Stearns, Douglas, Ottertail, and Clay counties. Since

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

1915, the volume of butter produced in the state had more than doubled. In 1915, over 126 million pounds of butter had been manufactured, 60.8% of it made by cooperatives.

The percentage made by cooperatives continued to climb until 1934, when over 273 million pounds of butter were produced, 71.1% made by cooperatives. Analysis also showed that although the number of cooperative creameries decreased from 646 to 635 over the two decades between 1915 and 1935, the average output of cooperatives increased from 118,834 to 299,144.³⁴

Cooperative creameries were important for the state by improving the quality of butter, reducing inefficiency and bringing a greater return to farmers for their product. The story of Land O' Lakes and its growth is well documented in the state's history. Land O' Lakes later diversified, as eventually three cheese cooperatives with 95 factories joined, powdered milk was produced, and a feed and seed division established. In the mid-1980s, Land O' Lakes represented 1,112 member cooperatives with 9,000 members who received \$7.6 million in patronage refunds.³⁵

Viola and the Cooperative Creamery Business

The cooperative creamery movement brought business to small towns and cash to farmers who would otherwise have been reliant on returns from crops at the end of the season. In many towns, such as Viola, the creamery was a primary business and income-producer in the community. The creamery building was also prominent, and comparable to churches as a community landmark. Viola's creamery was a small one and unable to expand when the butter market changed. Yet it mirrored the agricultural economy of Olmsted County and of the small towns that supported that economy. When agriculture changed in the post-World War II era, the creameries and small towns they served would also decline.

Viola Township was first settled in 1854 when three men from Iowa, George Whitman, Carl H. Bierbaum and blacksmith Michael Mark made claims near a spring. Within the first several years other settlers arrived including Luke Oaks, Zenas Swan, Abram and Lewis Harkins and Jacob Ostrander. The township was organized in May 1858 at Ostrander's home and named Viola at that time. Although there was a log school house and two German Lutheran churches in the southeast portion of the township, the community of Viola had its beginnings with construction of a "commodious town hall" built near the center of the township in 1874. The village of Viola grew up not at the town hall, but two miles away.³⁶ In 1883, township residents were described as German in the northwest and southeast corners of the township, with about a dozen Irish families in the southwest corner. The remainder of the residents were immigrants from "eastern and middle states." Most of the farmers raised wheat until the 1880s, when they had changed from "extensive grain cultivation to the raising of livestock."³⁷

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

Viola Township also began its well-known "Gopher Count" in 1874, an annual event held in June in which local young men hunted gophers and turned in the tails in competition for prizes. By 1881, a picnic, races and an evening dance had been added to the event; a parade and baseball game comprised part of the event by 1893, when 800 people attended. The count was first held in the town of Viola in 1897.³⁸

The town of Viola received its impetus for growth when a Chicago-Northwestern Railroad branch line was built from Eyota to Plainview. A station was established at Viola, along with a grain elevator, and the village was platted in September 1878. A store operated by Simeon Ford (who was also the postmaster) opened in 1878 and he was joined by other early merchants Plank & Watts. In 1890, George Toogood of Rochester opened his general store in Viola and began his career as a merchant in the village. Two churches, the 1866 Methodist Episcopal, and the 1867 United Brethren, also served the community. A Modern Workmen of America hall, built in 1893, seated three hundred.³⁹

In 1894, the *Viola Index* was published by Joseph Edwards, who noted that "within the last four years some forty buildings have been erected and still the good work goes on." The *Index* recognized an economy that depended on agricultural products, stating that between Dec. 1st, 1893 and Dec. 1st, 1894, 189 car loads of stock and grain had been shipped, along with 3500 pounds of dressed poultry. The grain inspector had examined sixty to seventy thousand bushels.⁴⁰

The railroad access and agricultural growth led the farmers of Viola to establish a creamery in 1900. Buttermaker C. Semeran received 6,225 pounds of milk on the first day of operation at the creamery, which was "situated in a conspicuous place and adds greatly to the improvements of our village." A 1900 newspaper account of the creamery gave a clear description of creamery operations and equipment:

The farmer drives his team under a covered platform on the east side, deposits his milk, which is weighed on a Fairbanks scale, then it passes into a large 400 gallon tank from which it passes through a De Laval separator, having a capacity of 5000 pounds per day. Afterwards he drives to the south side of the building. . . where he receives the exact amount of skimmed milk belonging to him and no more. A large Disbrow churn and worker is used and also a Victor tester. The engine room is neat, being of cement. A Union Steam pump furnishes water, while a Mankato Ideal Balanced Valve Engine furnishes power for the entire institution.⁴¹

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

By March 1901, the Viola Creamery Association announced the level of business from June 1, 1900 to February 1st, 1901:⁴²

Pounds of milk received	932,589
Pounds of butter made	41,810
Pounds of butter fat	34,344
Avg. yield for 100 lbs. of milk	4.48
Avg. price received for butter shipped	21.8 cents
Total paid patrons for butter fat	\$6,788

After a year, buttermaker Semeran left for Fairmont, and his place was taken by August Radke of Elgin. Radke brought fame to Viola, competing at the Buffalo Pan-American Exposition in Sept. 1901, and receiving a grade of 97 on his butter. The buttermaker received a gold medal and \$25. The *Olmsted County Democrat* noted that "Mr. Radke naturally feels quite elated and proposes to keep Viola butter up to the first place. With this end in view, he has offered a prize of \$25 to the farmer who brings in the cleanest milk during the year."⁴³ Radke's skills were obviously in demand. The annual meeting report in March 1902 stated that "August Radke will not accept the offer of \$75 per month from the Dover Creamery, but will stay at Viola and higher wages. He knows a good thing."⁴⁴ The creamery advertised Radke's expertise, noting his first prize award on its ca. 1903 letterhead.

By 1910, however, the creamery had shut down, due to "poor management and lack of co-operation among some of our best farmers." The newspaper encouraged the town to hire a good buttermaker and get the creamery started, and further, to start a Farmers' Co-operative Store to obtain groceries and clothing at wholesale prices. At that time, the village had a population of about fifteen families, while all of Viola township totaled 808.⁴⁵

It took another six years, but the creamery association was organized again on February 9, 1916, with operations in the old creamery building. That structure burned on Feb. 23, 1924. Buttermaker Elmer Hampel discovered smoke coming from the attic and sought help, but the fire was too advanced to save the twenty-year-old frame building. An ice house nearby, and all equipment except the boiler were destroyed. The association had \$6,000 insurance and decided to raise the rest to construct a new building. In the interim, cream was hauled to the Elgin creamery on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, where Hampel made their butter.⁴⁶

The Association rebuilt on the same site, hiring architect Harold Crawford of Rochester who had designed a number of creameries, including the one at nearby Eyota, the previous year. The new building opened for business on August 4, 1924. Described by *The Elgin Monitor* as "one of the most modern structures of its kind, the building is a model in convenience and arrangement and a monument to the industry in this section of the country." The article went on to describe the building and its machinery, and called it

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

"a credit to its builders and . . . and enduring monument to posterity. They have builded (sic) well."⁴⁷ The amount of attention given to the creamery opening by the newspaper of a neighboring community is a testament to the economic impact of the building in the vicinity.

A description of the creamery operation was given in an interview with Ervin Rosolack, who worked in the creamery in the 1920s and 1930s. Rosolack recalled that all equipment was powered by a steam engine, and the staff had to start at four A.M. each morning in order to get the boiler started and produce enough steam for all the machinery. Patrons brought in cream on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with the addition of Saturday in hot summer periods when it was difficult to keep cream from souring on the farm. Each patron brought in cream and the pounds were recorded. The cream was heated, then cooled to 48 degrees before it was pumped into the churn for making butter. The churn was operated until small kernels were produced and buttermilk was drained. It was pumped to a large tank in the attic and then sold to farmers for hog feed. The butter churn then continued until the small kernels worked into a mass of butter. It was tested for taste, and moisture, a significant measure that was regulated by law. Once all tests had been completed, the butter was printed and packed.⁴⁸

The Economic Impact of Creameries in Olmsted County

Olmsted County was noted as having the first successful creamery in the state, Marvin and Cammack's at Rochester, formed in 1881. In the 1880s, however, relying on wagon transportation, it was feasible to haul milk for approximately five miles, requiring creameries at close distance if farmers were to handle their products efficiently. Many creameries were established throughout the state to respond to the growing dairy industry. In Olmsted County, in addition to Viola's creamery (1900), the county also had creameries at Dover (1900); Eyota (1898); the Ringe creamery (1893); Stewartville (1900); and Predmore (1893). Byron had a cheese factory organized in 1873, but eventually it was sold to Marvin and Cammack of Rochester, who converted it to the Zumbro creamery (ca. 1891). Another cheese factory in Rock Dell Township also operated for a number of years but had closed down in about 1905 as farmers switched to buttermaking.⁴⁹

The location of a creamery was important economically to a community because of the retail business it attracted. In some areas of the state, the location had the potential to create a crossroads community. In Olmsted County, which had been settled longer, the creameries did not create the communities but simply enhanced their economic capabilities. Steven Keillor, in his study of creameries in Freeborn County, found that the cooperative creamery "contributed greatly toward a transformation in Freeborn County from a barter-and-credit economy to a cash economy." Previously merchants had to barter with farmers, often taking butter of undetermined quality and trying to market it, or extending credit until crops came in later in the season. Cooperative creameries declared cash dividends, allowing farmers to pay their bills and merchants to prosper. The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

economic impact in Freeborn County was great enough that some business people believed their villages would not survive if they did not secure a creamery, and they took steps to organize them.⁵⁰

The 1924 annual report for the Viola creamery showed the level of sales, with the firm taking in 463,921 pounds of cream, and producing 142,795 pounds of butter, for which they received \$57,565. The average price paid out to farmers was 43.87 cents per pound. In its new building, the creamery produced over 35,000 more pounds of butter than was manufactured in 1923.⁵¹ In Olmsted County in 1924, there were 11 creameries with 1,911 patrons. Together, these creameries received over 12 million pounds of cream and produced 3.5 million pounds of butter. They paid out to farmers over 1.2 million, at an avg. price of 43.70 cents per pound. In the state as a whole in 1924, 817 creameries (647 of them cooperative) produced 250.6 million pounds of butter at a value of \$99,726,494.⁵²

A simple analysis of these generalized numbers revealed that Viola was doing a strong business, and appeared to contribute about one-quarter of the Olmsted County business in 1924. While this comparison should not be held to an exact standard, it is clear that the creamery was a significant business in the economy of Viola in the 1920s.

Perhaps the importance of the creameries to these rural communities is best noted with the prominence that monthly and annual reports had in the local newspapers. Fewer records of the Viola Cooperative Creamery appeared because Viola did not have a newspaper during the period of operation. The cooperative creamery in the nearby community of Elgin, however, regularly printed not only the annual report of the creamery, but monthly reports of business, and monthly lists of the patrons bringing in the most butterfat on a monthly and annual basis. The list for 1929 was topped by farmer Emil J. Sell, who brought in 6,729 pounds of butterfat.⁵³ The monthly reports often indicated the amount of money paid out to each patron, a list that seems like an invasion of privacy today, but was apparently considered public information at cooperative creameries.

While systematic annual reports have not been located, the Viola Creamery occasionally printed the annual reports in newspapers. In 1936, the volume of business had increased over 1924, and allowed the creamery to pay off its mortgage. The 1936 report showed 527,490 pounds of cream received, and 172,910 pounds of butter produced. The total received for butter was \$55,446, with an average price paid to farmers of 36.49 cents per pound.⁵⁴ Compared to 1924, the farmers of Viola were producing more cream and resulting butter, but price per pound was reduced and the total received for the increase was only slightly more than in 1924.

A brief news article appeared as an annual report for 1938. In Viola that year, approximately 519,000 pounds of cream was purchased and 174,323 pounds of butter produced. \$42,138 was paid out to farmers.⁵⁵ In contrast, neighboring creameries were

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 13

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

doing a larger business. The St. Charles Creamery purchased 268,746 pounds of cream and paid out \$81,759. The Eyota Cooperative manufactured 458,307 pounds of butter and paid out \$113,758 to farmers. Dover Cooperative Creamery received 1.3 million pounds of cream, for which farmers were paid \$108,146, an average of 31.02 cents per pound. Dover shipped 397,032 pounds of butter. Plainview Cooperative Creamery purchased 1.9 million pounds of cream, from which was produced 634,508 pounds of butter. Patrons (farmers) were paid \$172,554 for cream.⁵⁶

A 1938 analysis of the efficiency of Minnesota creameries according to location revealed that those in the southeastern portion of the state received the highest return on all butter, at 24.724 cents per pound.⁵⁷ In 1939, Olmsted County's total butter production was 2,937,138 pounds of butter, valued at \$733,014. The wholesale value of creamery butter in 1939, for the entire state, was \$72.6 million.⁵⁸

In comparison with other cooperative creameries in the state, Viola fell into the largest number of creameries, those producing between 125,000 and 249,999 pounds of butter.

Classification of 175 MN Cooperative Creameries according to Pounds of Butter Manufactured, 1934⁵⁹

<u>Lbs. of Butter made</u>	<u>No. of Creameries</u>	<u>% of Creameries</u>
Less than 125,000	9	5.1%
125,000-249,999	54	30.9
250,000-374,999	51	29.1
375,000-499,999	32	18.3
500,000-624,999	15	8.6
625,000 and over	14	8.0

In Olmsted County and the surrounding area, however, Viola was a relatively small creamery. As early as 1930, when the state guide categorized creameries by the amount of butterfat (cream) received, only two of the nine creameries in the county, Ringe Creamery and Viola, received less than 50,000 pounds of cream. Nearby Dover was in the 150,000+ pounds, and Eyota received 200,000+ pounds. Yet, as late as 1940, all the cooperative creameries were still in business.⁶⁰

Ervin Rosolack indicated that Viola shipped its butter to New York as "New York Extras."⁶¹ New York extras referred to a grading term used as a basis for quoting prices, begun in 1883. Butter was graded and received points for characteristics including flavor, body, color, salt, and packaging, all of which totaled 100 points. In the first decade of the century, "Extras" indicated that butter had scored 93 points in summer, and 91 points in winter.⁶² In 1918, it was common for butter to be marketed in eastern cities. At that time over one-half of Minnesota's butter was marketed in New York City, while approximately one-half of Wisconsin's butter was marketed in Chicago. The Minnesota

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

creameries which shipped to New York used the New York price quotation for "extras" as the basis of their price agreement.⁶³

In 1923, the butter market in Minnesota was described as two groups: those selling country creamery butter, for which the principal market was New York, and those selling centralizer creamery butter, for which Minneapolis and Chicago were the principal markets. Centralizers, in which cream from a number of locations was brought to a large central creamery, dominated the Twin Cities market.⁶⁴ But a number of cooperative creameries, like Viola and Dover, apparently shipped directly to eastern markets. Dover Cooperative Creamery had apparently joined Land O' Lakes for cooperative marketing, but had never shipped any butter to the Twin Cities headquarters for marketing. In 1928, Dover members decided to drop out of Land O' Lakes and continue shipping to Philadelphia and New York City.⁶⁵

Records of production at the Viola Cooperative Creamery have not been located. Records kept by the State Department of Agriculture that have survived include inspection reports and general subject files. The Viola Cooperative Creamery (Elmer B. Hampel was the buttermaker from 1916 until 1944) waged a constant effort to reach exact percentages of fat and moisture content in its butter. The law called for at least 80% butterfat by weight and no more than 16% water (or moisture). A sample sent in by Viola had resulted in a measurement of 16.20% moisture, and cause for concern by operator Hampel. Hampel was quickly reassured by the state Dept. of Agriculture commissioner that as long as they produced 80% butterfat, the slight differences in moisture would not be cause for prosecution by the state.⁶⁶

The creamery itself was also inspected, and two reports from this era have survived and show that in general, the business was well operated. In October of 1935, the Viola Cooperative Creamery received a 91 of 100 possible points. The creamery scored the maximum points on creamery surroundings, appearance and sanitation; creamery operation and helpers; and lost minimal points on the creamery interior and equipment ratings. The greatest deviation from the checklist was a loss of five points under adequate accounting and audits. The 1936 audit also lost five points on the audit, and minimal points elsewhere.⁶⁷

The creamery experienced some success by the mid-1930s. Elmer Hampel invited Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture J. H. Hay to attend a special celebration to burn the creamery mortgage at the annual meeting on February 9, 1937. He told Hay to "be sure and be here by noon as we will have an oyster feed at that time." Although Deputy Commissioner Hay wrote back that he "would pretty nearly walk half way to Viola for the fun of touching a match to such an awe inspiring document as a mortgage," he had to decline because of a previous engagement.⁶⁸

In 1938, the creamery association discovered that they had allowed their incorporation to expire. The creamery had been incorporated on February 26, 1916, and without having

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 15Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

renewed their incorporation, it had expired in February 1936. The state Division for Cooperatives noted that this situation occurred with many cooperatives, and suggested that Viola wait until the next session (1939) when it was likely the legislature would pass a "curative act" legalizing work completed by corporations after their incorporation expired. The Division for Cooperatives later worked with the creamery to prepare their renewal and update their articles of incorporation and by-laws, a process completed by June 1939.⁶⁹

By the 1940s, the Viola Creamery had started a milk route, picking up whole milk and hauling it to the St. Charles milk station where it was separated. The cream was hauled back to the Viola Creamery and butter produced. This process was more profitable for farmers, however, and they no longer had to separate cream at home.⁷⁰ Ultimately, however, this operation was not able to retain enough customers, and contributed to the closure of the Viola Cooperative Creamery.

It is difficult to speculate on how long the small creameries might have continued to provide service in Minnesota. By the 1940s, however, the world war and its impact, as well as changing tastes, had a detrimental impact on the dairy business and buttermaking. As a labor-intensive industry, dairying suffered during the war. Butter prices fell, and encouraged dairymen who were producing to sell whole milk, which was being bottled and converted to dried and evaporated milk to transport to servicemen. Whole milk brought a better return for farmers' labor. During the war, butter production dropped over 90 million pounds from 1941 to 1945, "due to a price structure rigged by Federal bureaus to discriminate against butter."⁷¹ *Land O' Lakes News* wrote in September 1944 that "butter today is purchased by the consumer at a price 5 cents per pound less than the average price paid by the consumer in the years 1921 to 1929. Such a situation in wartime when all other prices are high cannot be justified and cannot result in other than a decrease in butter production."⁷²

By March 1945, one of Land O' Lakes subsidiaries was a sales equipment division that provided equipment for creameries to whole milk conversion. Statistics showed that in the previous three years, approximately 275 plants previously handling only farm-separated cream had converted to whole milk operations. Plants making these conversions needed all new equipment and additional space for both storage and the equipment.⁷³

The Viola Creamery closed on March 21, 1948. The Creamery Association had been operating since 1916, and in the new building for 24 years. While the newspaper noted that the "competition of milk pick-up trucks became too severe for operation of a small creamery," that was only half the story.⁷⁴ Certainly farmers were no longer limited to a five-mile journey to haul cream with horse and wagon. But the change in dairy consumption, as more people grew accustomed to whole milk during the war, as well as an increase in the oleomargarine market, also conspired against the small creameries that focused only on butter. Without a larger customer base and the capital to invest in a

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 16

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

whole milk operation, small creameries were squeezed out in the new farming economy after World War II. By 1957, Olmsted County led Minnesota in butter production, with 14.6 million pounds of butter produced. The county still had eight creameries, five of which were in Rochester, and only three, those in Eyota, Byron and Stewartville, were still focused only on butter production.⁷⁵

The Viola Cooperative Creamery has retained much of its integrity, despite standing vacant for almost half the years from 1948 to the present. The original design of the building was compromised with the removal in the late 1950s of the distinctive arcade, which had deteriorated. The building's brick exterior and its massing, however, both clearly convey its original use as a creamery and as a prominent public building in the community. The creamery's location on the edge of the small town of Viola, and its setting, surrounded by cornfields with a working dairy farm one-half mile away, show the significance of the building and its association with the surrounding agricultural landscape. The Viola Cooperative Creamery's location, setting, and association all convey the feeling of rural community life in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Viola Cooperative Creamery represents a major economic component of rural Minnesota. The cooperative creameries that once appeared throughout the state were an important effort by farmers to build their income and better market their products in a changing economy. In Viola and numerous other communities, the cooperative creamery's economic prominence was displayed by regular newspaper listings of farmer's returns, as well as the amount of butter and other products produced each month.

The Viola Creamery also represents the small, specialized creameries that made only high quality butter sold to Eastern markets. In the years prior to World War II, the small creameries flourished as buttermaking utilized new technology. Changing consumer tastes, greater mechanization and increased mobility after the war made small plants that could not expand their product lines obsolete, and ended the heyday of the smaller creameries like Viola.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

Endnotes

¹ See Steve C. Martens' discussion, "Diffusion of Cooperative Creameries in Minnesota," presented at "Breaking New Ground" conference, March 1993.

² *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, May 18, 1957.

³ Merrill E. Jarchow, *The Earth Brought Forth: A History of Minnesota Agriculture to 1885* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1949), 211-213; Edward Van Dyke Robinson, *Early Economic Conditions and the Development of Agriculture in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: Bulletin of the University of Minnesota, Studies in the Social Sciences No. 3, March 1915), 81; Steven James Keillor, "Democratic Coordination in the Marketplace: Minnesota's Rural Cooperatives, 1865-1917" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1992), 360-362.

⁴ Jarchow, 175.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 175-187.

⁶ Robinson, 81.

⁷ For further discussion of James J. Hill's efforts at diversification, see Landscape Research, Garneth O. Peterson, "The James J. Hill North Oaks Stock Farm: James J. Hill and Agricultural Diversification in the Northwest" (Prepared for The Hill Farm Historical Society, 1996), copy on file at SHPO; see also A. W. Trow, "Building Silos, Growing the Corn, and Making Silage," in National Dairy Union, *The Creamery Patron's Handbook* (Chicago: National Dairy Union, 1902).

⁸ Robinson, 113; see also Garneth O. Peterson, "The Influence of Agriculture on University Education in Minnesota (1862-1945) in Landscape Research, *The University of Minnesota Preservation Plan* (Prepared for the University of Minnesota, 1996) for a detailed discussion of the development of the Agriculture College and experiment stations.

⁹ Everett D. Edwards, "T. L. Haecker, The Father of Dairying in Minnesota," *Minnesota History XIX* (June 1938): 148-161.

¹⁰ Keillor, 363-364.

¹¹ Martin J. Anderson, "The Development of the Dairy Products Industry in Minnesota," *Minnesota Dairy and Food Department Bulletin No. 52*, October 1913): 2-3; Mary C. Swain, "Early Cooperative Creameries in Minnesota," (University of Minnesota, typewritten term paper, 1930), 7.

¹² Edward Wiest, "The Butter Industry in the United States," Ph.D dissertation, Columbia University, 1916), 23-25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 25-27.

¹⁴ Anderson, 11.

¹⁵ Keillor, 357-358, Swain, 2-3.

¹⁶ Keillor, 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸ Swain, 14-15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7, 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

²² Keillor, 373-380.

²³ *Ibid.*, 357.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 373-385.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 400-402, 431-432.

²⁶ Robinson, 179; map, p. 200.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 18

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

-
- ²⁷State of MN Dept. of Agriculture, Dairy and Food Bulletin of Information (St. Paul: Dept. of Agriculture, 1946), 16.
- ²⁸Keillor, 450-456.
- ²⁹Kenneth D. Ruble, *Men to Remember: How 10,000 Neighbors Made History* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Co., 1947), 25-30.
- ³⁰Ruble, 38-42.
- ³¹Ruble, 93-98, 139-140. The Minnesota Cooperative Creameries Association effort was given a boost with passage of the Capper-Volstead bill in Congress, in Feb. 1922. The bill legalized marketing of farm products through a cooperative agency. The new association also established standards for butter composition, to be followed by all creamery members. Ideal composition for butter was set at 80.5% butterfat, 15.5% moisture, 3.5% salt and .5% curd.
- ³²Ruble, 147-150, 169.
- ³³D. Jerome Tweton, "The Business of Agriculture," in *Minnesota in a Century of Change*, ed. Clifford E. Clark, Jr. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989), 273.
- ³⁴E. Fred Koller and O.B. Jesness, Organization and Operation of Minnesota Cooperative Creameries (St. Paul: Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 333 reprint, August 1938), 6-10.
- ³⁵Tweton, 273.
- ³⁶Hon. Joseph A. Leonard, *History of Olmsted County, Minnesota* (Chicago: Goodspeed Historical Assn., 1910), 294-295. After several community referendums, the voters finally decided to move the town hall into Viola in 1914.
- ³⁷*History of Olmsted County* (Chicago: H. H. Hill and Company, Publishers, 1883), 887-888.
- ³⁸Mrs. Albert Molda and Mrs. Clair Smith, *History of the Gopher County 1874-1974, Viola Minnesota*. (1974) unpagued.
- ³⁹Ibid.
- ⁴⁰Ibid.
- ⁴¹*Rochester Daily Bulletin*, May 31, 1900.
- ⁴²*Olmsted Co. Democrat*, March 29, 1901.
- ⁴³*Olmsted Co. Democrat*, May 31, 1901, Sept. 27, 1901, Dec. 6, 1901.
- ⁴⁴*Olmsted Co. Democrat*, March 14, 1902.
- ⁴⁵Grant A. Campbell, *Viola Journal* "Prosperity Reigns," Jan. 1, 1910 (pamphlet).
- ⁴⁶*The Elgin Monitor*, Feb. 29, 1924.
- ⁴⁷*The Elgin Monitor*, Aug. 8, 1924.
- ⁴⁸Interview with Ervin Rosolack, April 1996, St. Charles, MN.
- ⁴⁹Leonard, 253, 262, 271, 275, 279, 293. By the 1930s, creameries in Olmsted County still included those at Dover, Eyota, Stewartville, Viola and Byron, along with six creameries operating in Rochester.
- ⁵⁰Keillor, 420-422.
- ⁵¹Undated newspaper clipping, ca. March 1925, in clipping file, Olmsted County Historical Society.
- ⁵²*Minnesota Lists of Creameries, Cheese Factories and Canning Factories*. Reported by the Secretaries to the Dairy and Food Dept. of the State of Minnesota. (St. Paul: State Food and Dairy Dept., 1912-1925).
- ⁵³*The Elgin Monitor*, Jan. 3, 1930, Jan. 24, 1930.
- ⁵⁴*The Elgin Monitor*, Feb. 12, 1937, p. 5.
- ⁵⁵*Rochester Post-Bulletin*, Feb. 15, 1939.
- ⁵⁶*Rochester Post-Bulletin*, Feb. 6, 1939, Feb. 7, 1939.
- ⁵⁷Koller and Jesness, 78.
- ⁵⁸*Minnesota Lists of Creameries*, 1926-1944 volume.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 19

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

⁵⁹Koller and Jesness, 10.

⁶⁰*Minnesota Lists of Creameries*, 1926-1944 volume.

⁶¹Rosolack interview.

⁶²Wiest, 133-135.

⁶³Roy C. Potts, "Marketing Practices of Wisconsin and Minnesota Creameries," (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Bulletin No. 690, July 23, 1918), 10.

⁶⁴Edmund Middleton Daggitt, "The Organization of the Twin City Butter Market," M.A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1923, 41-43, 85.

⁶⁵*Rochester Post-Bulletin*, February 7, 1928.

⁶⁶Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture, Cooperatives Dept., Subject Files. Viola Cooperative Creamery letters, Dec. 11, 1935, Dec. 14, 1935. (State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society). The Viola Creamery seemed to have trouble meeting the percentages again in Nov. 1936, when the Agriculture Dept. analyzed the Viola butter sample and found 79.32% fat and 17.33% moisture. Viola was notified "so that you may guard against further violations of this nature." (Nov. 24, 1936) The inspections continued and in 1938 Viola had adequate percentages, but received a score of 3 and the inspector called the sample "unsatisfactory." Much of the correspondence in the state archives involved the samples and responses to them by the state inspectors.

⁶⁷Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture, Dairy and Food Division, Inspection Reports of Creameries and Dairies, 1928-1944. Viola Cooperative Creamery. State of Minnesota Inspectors Report, Oct. 31, 1935, Oct. 14, 1936. (State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society).

⁶⁸MN. Dept. of Ag., Subject Files, Hampel to Hay, Jan. 11, 1937; Hay to Hampel, Jan. 16, 1937.

⁶⁹See letters between Hampel and the state Division of Cooperatives, March 23, 1938, Jan. 5, 1939, March 15, 1939, March 23, 1939, June 13, 1939, June 15, 1939.

⁷⁰Rosolack interview.

⁷¹*Minnesota Lists of Creameries*, 1946, preface.

⁷²*Land O' Lakes News*, Sept. 1944.

⁷³*Land O' Lakes News*, March 1945.

⁷⁴*Rochester Post-Bulletin*, Mary 18, 1957.

⁷⁵*Minnesota Lists of Creameries*, 1957 report.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Martin J. *The Development of the Dairy Products Industry in Minnesota.* Minnesota Dairy and Food Department Bulletin No. 52, October 1913: 1-23.

Campbell, Grant A. "Prosperity Reigns." *The Viola Journal*, Jan. 1, 1910. Pamphlet.

Cornish, Curtis and Greene Co., St. Paul, Minnesota. "Interesting Information for Those Engaged in Butter and Cheese Making, and Dairy Farming." Pamphlet. Sept. 1, 1896.

Daggit, Edmund Middleton. "The Organization of the Twin City Butter Market." M.A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1923.

Dairy Record. St. Paul, MN (weekly).

Edwards, Everett D. "T. L. Haecker, The Father of Dairying in Minnesota." *Minnesota History* XIX (June 1938): 148-161.

The Elgin Monitor. (weekly).

Erlandson, Victor A. *Minnesota's Cattle and Dairy Industry.* Dairy Supplement. St. Paul: MN Dept. of Agriculture, Dairy and Food Division, 1955.

Garey, L. F. and F. F. Elliott. *Systems of Farming in Eastern and Southern Minnesota.* St. Paul: University of Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 276, January 1931.

History of Olmsted County. Chicago: H. H. Hill and Company, Publishers, 1883.

Jarchow, Merrill E. *The Earth Brought Forth: A History of Minnesota Agriculture to 1885.* St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1949.

Keillor, Steven James. "Democratic Coordination in the Marketplace: Minnesota's Rural Cooperatives, 1865-1917." Ph.D dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1992.

Koller, E. Fred and O.B. Jesness. *Organization and Operation of Minnesota Cooperative Creameries.* St. Paul: Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 333 reprint, August 1938.

Land O' Lakes News. (monthly).

Leonard, Hon. Joseph A. *History of Olmsted County, Minnesota.* Chicago: Goodspeed Historical Assn., 1910.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

Martens, Steve C. "Diffusion of Cooperative Creameries in Minnesota." Paper presented at the Breaking New Ground conference, St. Paul, MN, March 1993.

Minnesota Historical Society State Archives. Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture, Cooperatives Dept. Subject Files. Viola Cooperative Creamery.

Minnesota Historical Society State Archives. Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture, Dairy and Food Division. Inspection Reports of Creameries and Dairies, 1928-1944. Viola Cooperative Creamery.

Minnesota Lists of Creameries, Cheese Factories and Canning Factories. Reported by the Secretaries to the Dairy and Food Dept. of the State of Minnesota. St. Paul: State Food and Dairy Dept. In volumes, 1912-1925; 1926-1944; 1945-1959.

Molda, Mrs. Albert, and Mrs. Clair Smith. *History of the Gopher Count 1874-1974, Viola Minnesota.* 1974.

National Creamery Buttermakers' Association, 1891-1941. Golden Jubilee Program. St. Paul, MN. April 15-16, 1941.

The National Dairy Union. *The Creamery Patron's Handbook.* Chicago: National Dairy Union, 1902.

Olmsted County Democrat, microfilm available at Olmsted County Historical Society, Rochester, MN.

Olmsted County Historical Society, Rochester, MN. Clipping files, creamery plans.

Peterson, Garneth O. "The Influence of Agriculture on University Education in Minnesota (1862-1945)," in *The University of Minnesota Preservation Plan.* Prepared for the University of Minnesota by Landscape Research, 1996.

Peterson, Garneth O. [Landscape Research]. *The James J. Hill North Oaks Stock Farm: James J. Hill and Agricultural Diversification in the Northwest.* Prepared for The Hill Farm Historical Society, 1996.

Pond, George A. and Truman R. Nodland. *The Changing Picture of Farming in Southeastern Minnesota.* St. Paul: University of Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 447, May 1958.

Potts, Roy C. *Marketing Practices of Wisconsin and Minnesota Creameries.* Washington, D. C.: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Bulletin No. 690, July 23, 1918.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 3

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

Quintus, Paul E. and T. G. Stitts. *Butter Marketing by Cooperative Creameries in the Middle West*. Washington, D. C.: Farm Credit Administration Bulletin No. 36, June 1939.

Richardson, John Lorin. "A Comparative Study of Cooperative Marketing of Butter." M.S. thesis, Purdue University, 1926.

Robinson, Edward Van Dyke. *Early Economic Conditions and the Development of Agriculture in Minnesota*. Minneapolis: Bulletin of the University of Minnesota, Studies in the Social Sciences, No. 3, March 1915.

Robotka, Frank, and Frank Shefrin. *Cooperative Creameries in the United States*. Washington, D. C.: Pan American Union Division of Agricultural Cooperation, April 1940.

Rochester Post-Bulletin. (daily)

Ruble, Kenneth D. *Men to Remember: How 10,000 Neighbors Made History*. Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Co., 1947.

Swain, Mary C. "Early Cooperative Creameries in Minnesota." Typewritten term paper, University of Minnesota, 1930.

Tweton, D. Jerome. "The Business of Agriculture." In *Minnesota in a Century of Change*, pp. 261-294. Edited by Clifford E. Clark, Jr. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989.

Wiest, Edward. "The Butter Industry in the United States." Ph.D dissertation, Columbia University, 1916.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Viola Cooperative Creamery
Olmsted Co., MN

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located in a parcel Ten (10) rods square in the southeast corner of the Southwest Quarter of Section 16, Township 107 North, Range 12 West, Olmsted County, Minnesota. This parcel is shown as the heavy black line on the accompanying map entitled, "Certification of Survey," June 1998.

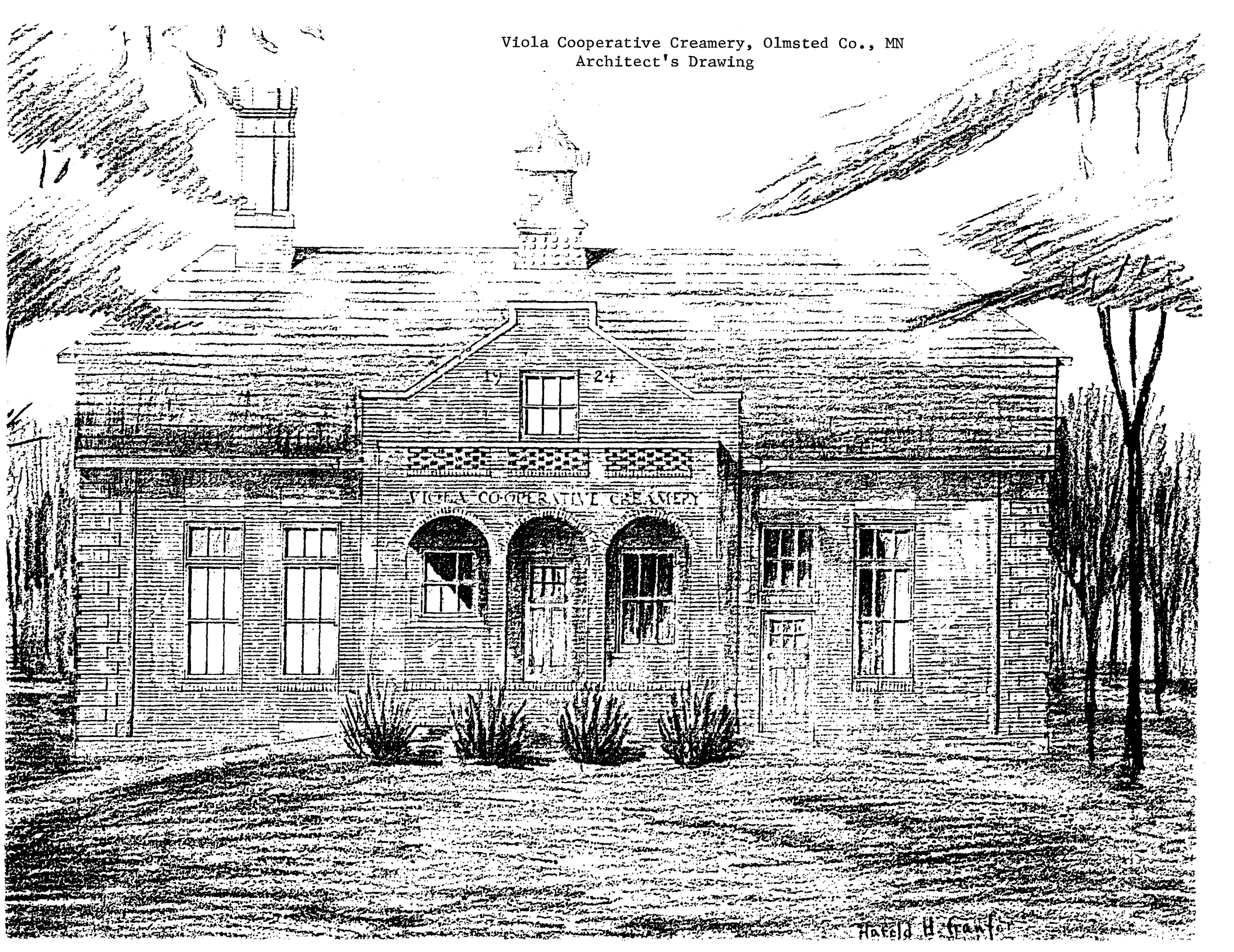
Boundary Justification

The boundary reflects the entire parcel historically associated with the creamery.



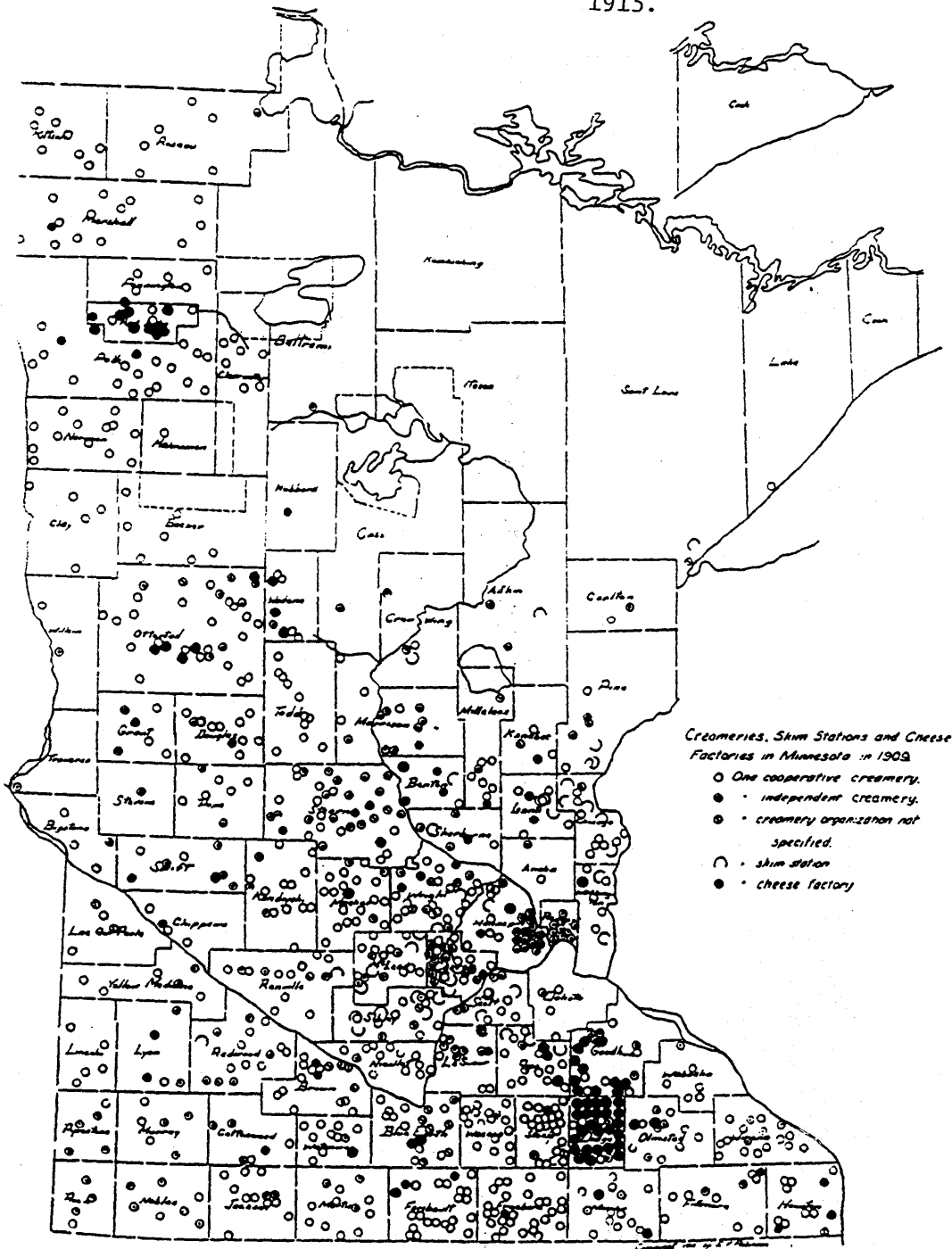
Viola Cooperative Creamery, Olmsted Co., MN
Date: pre 1957 before removal of the arcade

Viola Cooperative Creamery, Olmsted Co., MN
Architect's Drawing



Harold H. Crawford

From Edward Van Dyke
Robinson, Early Economic
Conditions and the Development
of Agriculture in Minnesota
1915.



EDWARD VAN DYKE ROBINSON

Figure 189. Distribution and organization of creameries, skim stations,
and cheese factories in 1909.⁴⁶

