

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Round Valley Flour Mills

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Main and Greely Streets (southwest corner)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Covelo

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

STATE

California

VICINITY OF

CODE

06

COUNTY

Mendocino

CODE

045

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: vacant

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Round Valley Planning and Development Corporation, c/o Richard Wilson

STREET & NUMBER

Buck Mountain Cattle Company

CITY, TOWN

Covelo

VICINITY OF

STATE

California

95428

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Mendocino County Courthouse Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER

County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Ukiah

STATE

California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
"Historic Buildings File" - Mendocino County Museum

DATE

1978-79

FEDERAL STATE  COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS Mendocino County Museum

CITY, TOWN

Willits

STATE  
California

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Covered with weathered, wooden shiplap siding and a corrugated metal, gabled roof, the eastern rectangular section of the mill is aligned along an east-west axis. The prominent, eastern rectangular section of the mill is dominated by its decorative false-front facade and a gracefully rounded cornice. The upper, rounded section of the facade is adorned with a rusty five-pointed star and raised wooden lettering which reads: "1888-1914." Below the star are three windows on the second story. The ground floor has a large sliding loading door, a conventional front entry door, and two windows. The eastern face of the building is approximately 45 feet in length. The facade<sup>was</sup> added in 1914.

The northern wall, also of shiplap siding, consists of the two-story main building, plus a 1914 three-story addition on the west. The two-story section has five windows per story, while the three-story addition has two windows per story. The total length of this wall is approximately 68 feet. The western section with its gabled roof is topped at the northwest corner by a broken, wooden weathervane/flagpole. The weathervane visible in the photographs in Underfoot, has been removed for safekeeping.

The western shiplapped face of the mill includes nine windows, three per story. It is approximately 50 feet in length.

To help prevent fires from the engine room, corrugated tin was used in the construction of the south wall of the three-story section (Rohrbough 1979). The south tin wall has four windows. The south wooden wall of the main building has one window.

A wood-framed addition with shed roof and corrugated tin walls houses a steam engine room to the west, and encloses an open-air area to the east. The addition extends approximately 30 feet to the south of the three-story section. Vertically placed windows are on the western side of the addition. The south side of the engine room addition has one window and a sliding wooden door. The eastern face of the addition has seven closely-placed windows.

A rusty, 42-foot smokestack lying near the engine room addition at the southwest corner fell from the building about ten or fifteen years ago (Rohrbough 1979).

A conjectural reconstruction of the original 1888 blacksmith shop suggests a two-story wooden structure with false front (see Appendix; Weitzman 1976; 98), altered to its present appearance in 1914.

The present and past owners of the mill have expressed concern about vandalism. John D. Rohrbough stated that the mill has always been the victim of local vandalism (Rohrbough 1979). Richard Wilson, present owner, worried that someday the mill's luck will run out and the mill will be

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destroyed by fire. He related that efforts to board the windows and to notify local authorities about the problems have not appreciably slowed the continued deterioration (Wilson 1979). Deterioration of the machinery, known at present to be minimal, has not been thoroughly assessed.

The mill has remained virtually unchanged since the remodeling in 1914. Vandalism, deterioration from the elements, or construction on surrounding land has not occurred to such a significant degree as to seriously affect the architectural or historic integrity of the structure.

The mill stands alone on the northeast corner of a one acre parcel. Five black walnut trees grow around the building: two at the northwest corner of the building; two in the opposite southeast corner, and one at the southeast corner of the engine room addition. The tree at the corner of the addition is growing quite close to the structure. To the north and east, the lot is bounded by light commercial district. The south and west districts are residential neighborhoods.

Until sometime in the 1930s, a house, a well, and orchard occupied the northwest corner of the lot. The house was situated at the northwest corner, the brick-lined well was south of the house, near the middle of the lot. The orchard included apple, cherry, and plum trees. According to John D. Rohrbough, a "negro woman" named Ann Mitchell lived in the house until the mid-1930s. She took in laundry and did domestic work (Rohrbough 1979). Rohrbough did not know when the house was built, but he related that when the house was torn down (ca. late 1930s), newspapers dating from the "Civil War period" were found lining the walls of the structure (see also "Statement of Significance").

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1888-1914

BUILDER/ARCHITECT 1914: Engineer--Spaulding  
Carpenter/builder--Long

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Round Valley Mill continues to exist as a virtually unaltered example of a steam-powered, steel roller grain mill. Its weathered exterior, with functional structural characteristics and simple elements of decorative architectural style, conceals an interior fitted with the mill's original steam engine and redwood-spouted milling machinery.

The mill provided a seasonal food processing center for the rural Northern California town of Covelo in Round Valley, Mendocino County, from circa 1890-1940. The building's imposing size and central location allow it to continue to serve as a significant feature of Covelo's cultural setting.

The structure is a major focal point of the physical community; the machinery, some dating back to the 1880's, is a fascinating vestige of that period when Americans were entranced with rapid technological advance in the art of moving parts but still retained a strong sense of craftsmanship (Merritt 1979: 2).

A blacksmith shop (circa 1870-1880) originally occupied the present mill site and was housed in the older, surviving east wing of the building. Remaining evidence of this earlier historic use is a post with local cattle brands burned in the wood which still supports part of the east wing (Weitzman 1976: 97; Rohrbough 1979). In 1888, John S. Rohrbough (1859-1939), nephew of Round Valley cattle baron George E. White, developed the mill in Covelo as the town's major grain processing center (Carpenter 1914: 110; Weitzman 1976: 99; Rohrbough 1979). It replaced several smaller mills which had previously operated along local creeks (Rohrbough 1979). Rohrbough remodeled the mill in 1914. After a three story section was connected to the older structure, new machinery was introduced and older machinery was adapted to new demands (Weitzman 1976: 98, for conjectural reconstruction).

By the 1920s, Rohrbough's son, John D. Rohrbough (1900-living in Covelo, 1980), was assisting actively with the mill's operation (see Appendix "1924 Flow Diagram"). In 1937, the Rohrbough family ceased producing flour on a regular basis. Local lore suggests that the arrival of the "Wonder Bread" truck and its cargo from the "outside world," signaled the beginning of the end to locally processed grain-based foods (Rohrbough 1979). The mill's machinery was used irregularly to roll barley and wheat for hog feed until the 1960s (Rohrbough 1979). In July



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1975, the mill was again operated, by tractor instead of steam engine, to process a local harvest of soft white winter wheat (Weitzman 1976: 104).

David Weitzman, Covelo resident, expanded the social and historical significance of the mill when he used the building as an example for his discussion of American industrial history in Underfoot: An Everyday Guide to Exploring the American Past (see Chapter 5, "Meetings with the Miller," pp. 91-111).

Of additional interest is the mention of the mill and its relationship to the character of Ann Mitchell in a novel by Percy Marks. Marks, a native of Covelo, used his Round Valley experiences in writing two of his novels, Martha and No Steeper Walls. While Marks never achieved great literary status, his works were popular and still provide some interesting insights into an isolated rural culture. While the mill is mentioned only once in the novel, No Steeper Walls, Marks did introduce and describe a character named Ann Mitchell, a former slave, who lived in a house behind the mill. The few comments made by Rohrbough (see "Description") support the conclusion that Marks based his character on Covelo resident, Ann Mitchell. Given the fact that Mendocino County was settled primarily by whites, and that there have been few blacks prominent in local history, Marks' selection and portrayal of Ann Mitchell is an interesting footnote to local history.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

1. Archaeology - Historic: Archaeological evidence of the earlier historic use of the structure may still exist. As noted above, a blacksmith shop originally occupied the present mill site and was housed in the surviving east wing of the building. In addition, systematic archaeological investigation may also yield data relating to the location and possible cultural contents of a reported outhouse/latrine which once occupied the south portion of the mill site. (Rohrbough 1979). An archaeological investigation at the site of Ann Mitchell's residence, located at the northwest corner of the property might also yield historical information.
2. Agriculture: The function of the mill as a grain processing center relates directly to local agricultural practices. A detailed investigation of the mill's machinery may also provide more significant

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

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information concerning late nineteenth century agricultural technology.

3. Commerce: The mill's sphere of commercial influence reached beyond its own Round Valley. Flour was reportedly shipped to Spyrock, Alder Point, Laytonville, and Branscomb (Rohrbough 1979).
4. Industry: The mill's machinery survives intact. It provides a complete and very clear picture of the workings of a steam powered steel roller mill. The 1914 alteration was based on plans developed in San Francisco (Weitzman 1976: 99). Evidence relating to manufacturing techniques which were developed in a nineteenth century American urban center may still survive in rural Covelo when comparable information in the San Francisco Bay region has long since been lost to the effects of rapid urban change.

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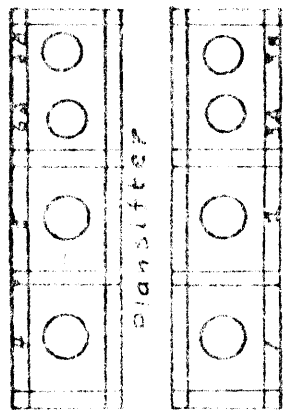
Wilson, Richard, Owner of the Round Valley Flour Mills. Covelo, Calif. Interview. 3 December 1979.



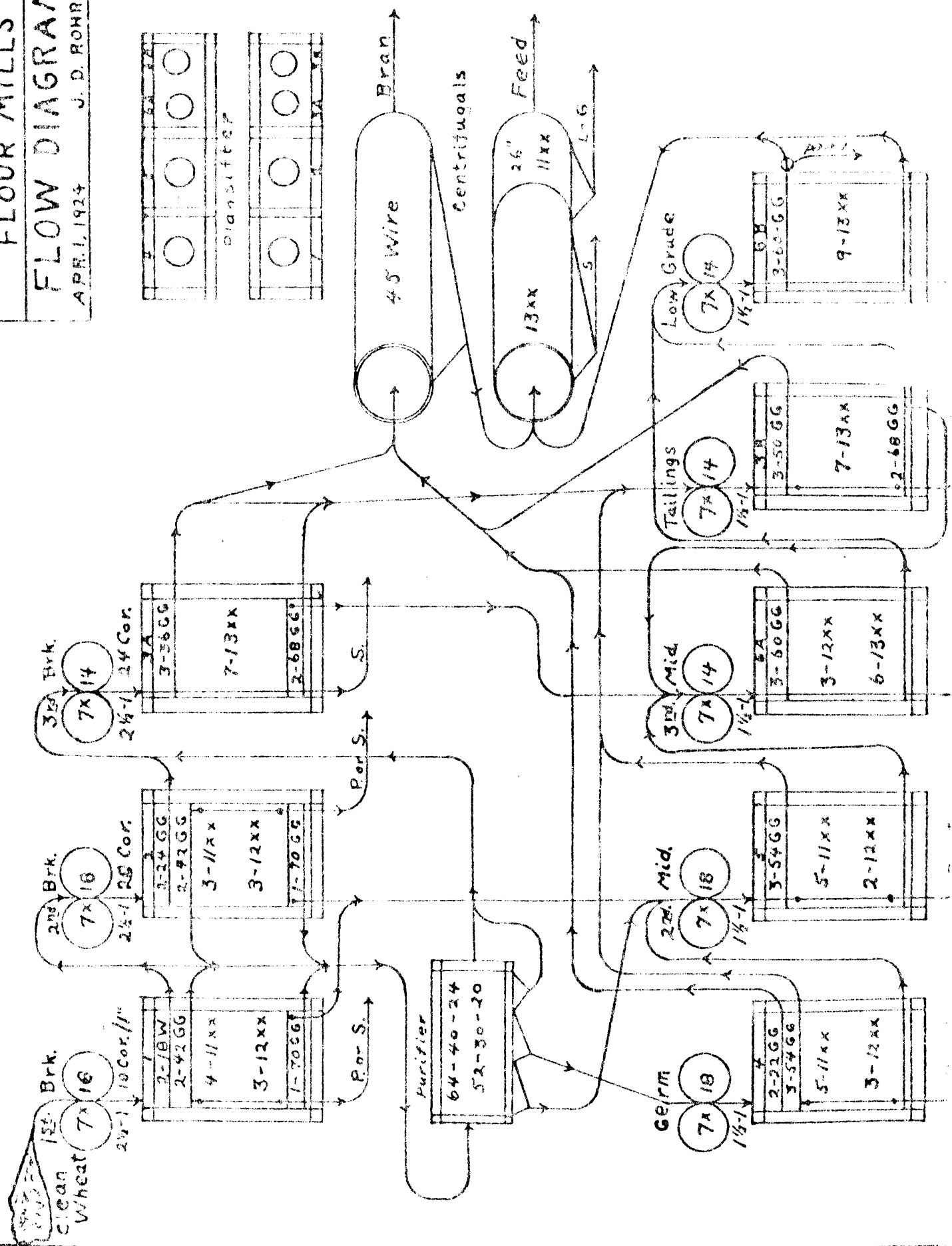
# ROUND VALLEY FLOUR MILLS

## FLOW DIAGRAM

APRIL, 1924 J. D. ROHRBOUGH

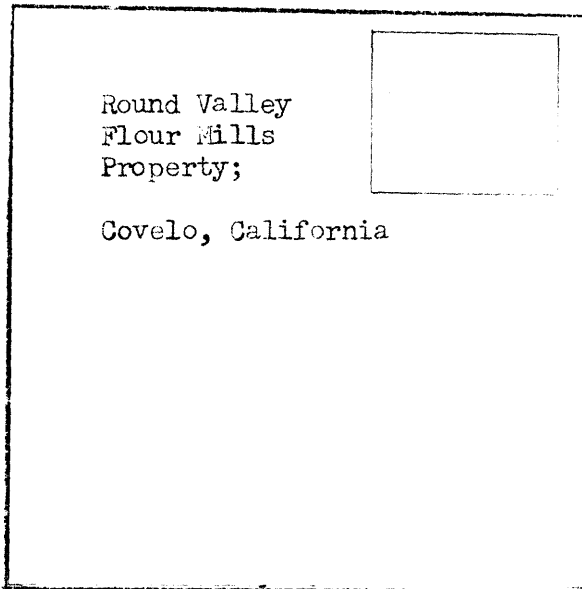


Appendix



SKETCH MAP FOR ROUND VALLEY FLOUR  
MILLS, COVELO, CALIFORNIA  
MENDOCINO COUNTY

Greely St.



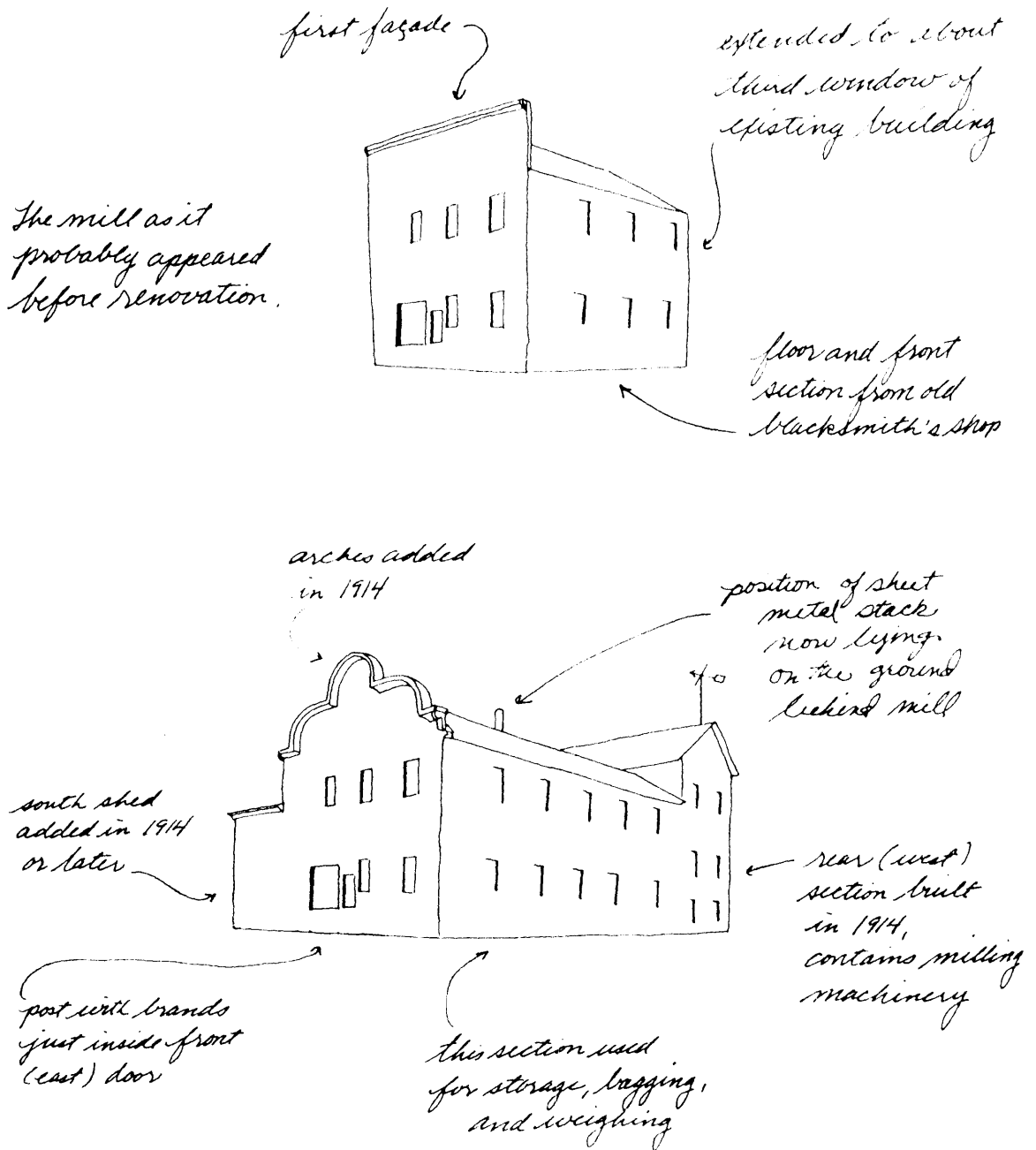
Ferry St.

Main St.

Grange St.



These sketches suggesting a conjectural reconstruction of the old mill ca. 1888 and subsequent additions ca. 1914 were based on John Rohrbough's tape recorded recollections.



Appendix • David Weitzman, Underfoot: An Everyday Guide to Exploring the American Past (New York, 1976).  
 Round Valley Flour Mill  
 Covelo, Mendocino Co., California

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