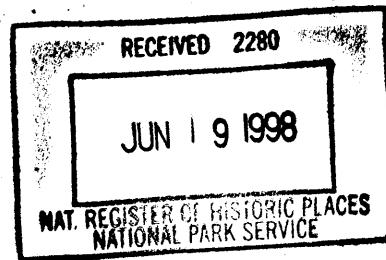


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name Of Property

historic name Ramsey Mill and Old Mill Park
other names/site number Hastings City Mills, Lower Mill

2. Location

street & number junction of 18th Street and the Vermillion River not for publication
city or town Hastings vicinity n/a
state Minnesota code MN county Dakota code 037 zip code 55033

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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] Tan Stewart, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date 6/11/98

Minnesota Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

[Signature] Edson H. Beall Signature of Keeper Date of Action 7.15.98

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): _____

Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park
Name of Property

Dakota 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
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property		
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)		
Contributing	Non-contributing	
0	0	building
2	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	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
N/A

6. Function Or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
INDUSTRY/Manufacturing Facility
LANDSCAPE/City Park
RECREATION/Outdoor Recreation

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
LANDSCAPE/City Park

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
No Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)
foundation stone
walls stone
roof N/A
other N/A

Narrative Description

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

(See Continuation Sheets)

Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park
Name of Property

Dakota County, MN
County and State

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.

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 for the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Building Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1856 - 1894; 1925 - 1946

Significant Dates

1856

1894

1925

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Parke, Ira (architect and builder)

Ramsey Mill and Mill Ruins Park
Name of Property

Dakota County, MN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 10.6

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>512360</u>	<u>4952480</u>	3	<u>15</u>	<u>512620</u>	<u>4952325</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>15</u>	<u>512600</u>	<u>4952480</u>	4	<u>15</u>	<u>512320</u>	<u>4952260</u>

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 Barbara Henning

organization Rivercrest Associates date April 23, 1997

street & number 203 North 13th Street telephone 217/632-2614

city or town Petersburg state IL zip code 62675

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete 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 _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for application 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 comment regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Service Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paper Work Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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Ramsey Mill and Old Mill Park, Dakota County, MN

Description

The Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park are located on the west side of the lower Vermillion River in Hastings, Minnesota at a point near where the river turns and runs north. The channel is approximately 50 feet across at the mill site. Certain geographical features dictated the location of a mill, in particular, the ability to harness a good fall of water. The Vermillion River descends about 75 vertical feet in the two-thirds of a mile from the top of the Upper Falls near Trunk Highway 61 to the base of the Lower Falls near Trunk Highway 291. During the period of mill operation, the Lower Falls created by the dam had a notable fall of approximately 19 feet.

The Ramsey Mill site is steep and picturesque, for the river has carved a deep gorge through sheer limestone walls. When in operation (1856-1894), farmers brought wheat to the mill by means of a steep drive down from 18th Street. The setting illustrates the importance of a waterfront location for water-powered mills and the extent to which it was necessary to go to reach the site. A city park since 1925 and largely undeveloped, the Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park are in a generally rural setting that reflects the mid-19th century period of mill operation. In addition, its standing as a picturesque and popular ruin after 1894 and a municipal tourist park after 1925 are amply reflected through its present condition as a stone ruin set in a serene and attractive setting. The nomination consists of two contributing sites. One is the Ramsey Mill Ruin, which includes the mill ruin, dam ruin, cooperage site, and house foundation; the other is Old Mill Park.

The mill proper, whose dimensions were 35x55', was constructed of locally quarried Oneota Dolomite, and rose an imposing number of stories over the basement. Because of the steepness of the site, the building extended 4 1/2 stories along the river and 2 1/2 stories away from the river. The basement of the stone mill rests on bedrock, and the first floor is stepped back from the river on a narrow rock bench. Walls are approximately 32 inches thick. The stone, irregular crudely fashioned blocks and rubble, is roughly laid up. Corner stones are slightly more worked.

A 2 1/2 story wood frame square storage room was located on the south end of the mill, and another storage space, larger and one story, was placed south of it. Both had stone foundations and could reportedly accommodate 10,000 bushels. A small one story frame office was once affixed to the northwest corner of the mill.

A long narrow (24 x 40') building located northwest of the mill was used for making and storing flour barrels, according to the Sanborn fire insurance map for 1884. By 1891 the cooperage portion was considered to be abandoned on the revised Sanborn map, likely a reflection of the switch to providing flour in sacks and bags. Despite surface reconnaissance and limited probing of the area, no firm evidence of the cooperage was found, although there is a level spot consistent with locations shown on Sanborn maps. Vegetation covers the cooperage site.

The Sanborn fire insurance maps for 1884 and 1891 provided valuable information on the types and numbers of milling machinery, as well as the height, materials, location, and size of rooms and buildings on the site. According to

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Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park, Dakota County, MN

these maps, the proprietor's two story, wood frame house was located, by 1884, 175 feet southwest of the mill. The house was situated on a small terrace supported by a simple stone retaining wall, portions of which remain. The house site is now a hole containing stone rubble and covered with a dense mat of vegetation. For safety reasons, it has not been thoroughly investigated. The date of destruction of the house is not known.

The mill as well as the cooperage were destroyed in an 1894 conflagration and were never rebuilt.¹ Three of the four walls of the mill ruin remain standing, although the riverside (east) wall partially collapsed in 1973. The roof, flooring, and window frames are all gone. No milling machinery remains on the site. The stone walls are in deteriorating condition, and in some cases huge lintels are held precariously in place by limited amounts of mortar, which is itself deteriorating. Graffiti defaces some of the stonework, but in only a handful of places, surprising given the remoteness of the setting. Walls are of varying heights, some rising their original full height. Portions of the west walls now stand separate, as narrow monoliths. The thickness of the stone (approximately 32 inches) contributes to the stability of the ruin, but deterioration is evident and some lintels are clearly unstable. No evidence of the frame office is visible on the site. The stone foundations of the storage rooms remain, in deteriorating condition. It is also possible to detect the inlet where the water entered the mill turbine as it rushed off the dam.

The falls that were formed by the dam are no longer present. The former presence of a dam is reflected by scattered dressed stone rubble along and in the river. The east abutment of the dam is still visible as a discolored scar on the slightly worked bedrock. It is not known when the dam was removed.

The Ramsey Mill initially had a traditional mill wheel. No mention was made of a turbine on the 1881 Sanborn fire insurance map, but a "turbine wheel shaft" was included in the 1884 version. There appears to have been no headrace or tailrace. The dam abutted the southeast corner of the mill, and the inlet at the southeast corner of the mill remains visible. The spent water then exited near the northeast corner below the dam. The waterwheel must have been an overshot, given the height of the dam. A short flume of the top of the same would have powered the wheel.

In addition to the mill ruins, Old Mill Park contains a small parking lot and modern picnic area with modest play equipment. The modern park area is located on a mowed terrace off of 18th Street. Below the terrace, the park is undeveloped. A concrete pad for a removed but modern park shelter is located directly below the main, mowed terrace of the park. The Ramsey Mill ruins are not visible from the upper, more formal park area in the summer due to a screen of trees. The mill ruins are located in a ravine which is visually separate from the picnic area. Largely undeveloped, the park is part of the Vermillion River Linear Park, a system under development in Hastings. A bike path which uses the former railroad trestle links Old Mill Park with the more recently (1995) developed adjacent Vermillion Falls Park. No evidence of the usage of the park after 1925 as a tourist camp is known, and there are therefore no contributing resources besides the mill ruins and the park site. The present park facilities are all of recent vintage.

¹*Hastings Democrat*, December 27, 1894.

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Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park, Dakota County, MN

Statement of Significance

Constructed in 1856-57, the Ramsey Mill was directly associated with some of the earliest efforts in Minnesota to establish a profitable merchant flour milling industry. Its evolution in the face of profound and highly influential technological change continues these direct and longstanding associations with Minnesota flour milling. One of three longstanding mills which operated along the Vermillion River in Hastings, the mill entered a new era of significance after 1894. In that year, fire (a common hazard because of dust generated during the milling process) completely destroyed mill operations. The Ramsey Mill was never rebuilt although the massive stone walls still stood. Some time after 1894 and certainly by the turn of the century, the mill ruin emerged as a popular, much visited and photographed picturesque landscape element. In 1925, the cultural significance of the ruin was officially recognized when the area was set aside as the city's municipal camping ground for tourists and it became known as Old Mill Park.

The Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park are significant under Criterion A in the areas of Industry and Entertainment/Recreation. Although of relatively small scale and enduring sporadic operation, the Ramsey Mill was directly associated with some of the earliest merchant milling in the state and illustrates efforts to remain competitive in the face of significant technological change in Minnesota flour milling practices which affected milling nationwide. In the area of recreation, Old Mill Park was created in order to preserve the mill ruin and make the scenic qualities of the site accessible to the motoring public. The following context is associated with the nomination: Early Agriculture and River Settlement, 1840-1870.

The Ramsey Mill Ruins site may have archeological research potential, especially with regard to the cooperage and the miller's house. This archeological potential remains unassessed at present; therefore, this nomination does not address Criterion D or list Archaeology as an Area of Significance.

Platted in 1853, Hastings was located in a major wheat producing area and enjoyed an excellent site on the Mississippi River well suited for shipping agricultural products. Beginning around 1858, wheat production emerged as a commercially important commodity in Minnesota. Before 1858, a combination of low prices, the financial panic of 1857, and limited numbers of farmers retarded development of the wheat industry statewide.²

By 1859, wheat was a major economic force in Hastings and Dakota County. According to one visitor that year, there "was wheat everywhere; wheat on the levee; wagon loads of wheat pouring down to the levee; wheat in the streets; wheat in the side-walks; warehouses of wheat; men talking of wheat; and, verily, wheat was the one idea of Hastings the afternoon we arrived there."³

²Merrill E. Jarchow, *The Earth Brought Forth. A History of Minnesota Agriculture to 1885* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1949), p. 165.

³Jarchow, pp. 165-166, quoting an unidentified writer.

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Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park, Dakota County, MN

During the 1850s, Hastings' early years of settlement, enterprising individuals claimed potential mill sites along the lively Vermillion River which coursed through Hastings. Among them was Elbert H. Halstead, who claimed the present Ramsey Mill site in 1855. That same year, he conveyed his claim to Alexander Ramsey and Dr. Thomas Foster.⁴

On December 5, 1855, title was formally transferred to Alex. Ramsey & Company, and the owners, Alexander Ramsey and Dr. Thomas Foster, immediately set about constructing what they named the Hastings City Mills. Ira Parke, a millwright from Wisconsin, was brought in to "plan foundations, etc." and it appears he functioned as both designer and builder of the mill. The owners purchased quarrying tools, set up a lime kiln, and obtained white oak for an 18 foot water wheel.⁵

According to a detailed account in the Ramsey Papers, the mill was constructed in 1856-1857:

Cost of Building from the Commencement December 5th, 1855 to this date October 31, 1857

Expenses of building mill to March 1, 1856	1038.57
Work of laborers on mill to May 1857	5228.61
Work of masons on mill to May 1857	4144.49
Work of millwrights on mill to May 1857	5400.81
Miscellaneous expenses on mill to May 1857	12319.25
Millwright work from May/1/57 to Oct. 31/57	1646.45
Lumber account from May/1/57 to Oct. 31/57	200.90
Blacksmithing & machine work from May/1/57 to Oct. 31/57	253.46
Hardware etc. from May/1/57 to Oct. 31/57	342.38
Erecting third story of mill, grading, etc. and completing mill building	2394.93
Interest on loans to Oct. 31 1857	<u>2000.00</u>
TOTAL COST OF MILL	\$34359.85 ⁶

Alexander Ramsey served Minnesota as Territorial Governor (1849-53), Governor (1859-63), and U.S. Senator (1863-

⁴Alexander Ramsey Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, microfilm #M203, roll 51, volume 118, p. 41.

⁵Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁶Ramsey Papers, roll 51, volume 118, p, 51.

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Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park, Dakota County, MN

75) while also becoming a wealthy man. He invested in property all across the state, sometimes through questionable or insider methods. His partner in the mill, 1851 Hastings arrival Dr. Thomas Foster, was a staunch political ally of Ramsey as well as his business partner. Assisting Ramsey, Foster served as secretary for an important treaty commission and drafted the report which ceded an estimated 35 million acres of Indian lands in present Minnesota, Iowa, and South Dakota. The treaty was signed in 1851 at Traverse des Sioux. But in 1861 Foster broke with Ramsey politically. Foster disposed of his interest in the mill, probably around the same time as his change in political allegiance.⁷

Governor Ramsey viewed the mill as an investment and was not involved in daily operations. Cash and ledger books from 1857 and 1858 reveal that the mill operators ground and sold limited quantities of flour and corn meal. According to the federal nonpopulation census for 1860, the mill "commenced operations January 1, 1860," and it appears the mill operated sporadically and with a series of operators over the years. For example, John Burns & Brother leased the mill in 1862. In 1867, Theodore Gardner and B.D. Cadwell contracted with Ramsey to run the mill from 1867 to 1872. The arrangement may have been short-lived or one of several of Cadwell's interests, for around 1867 Cadwell became associated with another mill in Hastings.⁸

In 1860 the mill was one among just 85 other grist mills in the state, three of them in Hastings. The 1860 manufacturing census recorded on June 1 of that year three Hastings mills, all of similar scope of operations, the "Stone Mill" (Ramsey Mill), Vermillion Mill (Gardner Mill), and Samuel S. Eaton's mill. In the first six months of 1860, the Ramsey Mill produced 2,000 barrels of flour worth \$10,000.⁹

In 1870, when there were 216 mills in the state, "Gardner & Cadwell's Ramsey Mill" boasted a capacity of 700 bushels and produced 10,000 barrels of flour worth \$55,400. Production remained static, and ten years later the mill also provided 10,000 barrels of wheat flour valued at \$55,000 over a one year period.¹⁰

⁷Marx Swanholm, *Alexander Ramsey and the Politics of Survival* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1977), *passim*; William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 4 vols., revised ed. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1956), I:166-304.

⁸Ramsey Papers, vols. 119-122; Nonpopulation Federal Census for Minnesota, 1860; *Hastings Gazette*, January 15, 1921; Edward D. Neill and J. Fletcher Williams, *History of Dakota County and the City of Hastings...* (Minneapolis: North Star Publishing Co., 1881), pp. 302, 305.

⁹"Flour Manufacture in Minnesota," *Minnesota Historical Society Collections* (41), p. 44; Nonpopulation Federal Census for Minnesota, 1860.

¹⁰Nonpopulation Federal Census for Minnesota, 1870, 1880.

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Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park, Dakota County, MN

In 1877, Alexander Ramsey was able to sell his investment to Frederick Voight, who ran the mill until at least 1884 and probably 1886. German-born Voight emigrated in 1854 and operated a sawmill in Wisconsin from 1856 until 1877 when he bought the Ramsey Mill, as it was then known.¹¹

Ownership was fluid and profitability apparently elusive. In May 1891 A.E. Jernander was shown as proprietor of the Ramsey Flour Mill on Sanborn fire insurance maps. In October 1891, just five months later, G.E. Davidson and E. Van Voorhis leased the mill. According to newspaper accounts, it had stood idle for five or six years; the precise role of Jernander has not been determined. Davidson and Van Voorhis provided both custom and merchant grinding. They offered custom grinding of rye, oats, and buckwheat to area farmers, and, at the merchant level, marketed "Davidson's Best" brand flour. By 1894, Davidson was apparently out and J.C. Hartin operated the then-named Ramsey Roller Mills with Van Voorhis.¹²

That the mill has been known by a number of names reflects the numerous changes in operation as well as technological changes. Certain names have more historical significance than others: Hastings City Mills was bestowed by the original owners; Ramsey Mill was a longstanding name, as was the Lower Mill. Old Mill Park is associated with the early 20th century transformation to a municipally sanctioned park. Other documented names for the property are Dakota Mill, F. Voight Flour Mill, Ramsey Roller Mills, and the Tourist Park.

By 1894, the Ramsey Mill had a daily milling capacity of 125 barrels. In December of that year, the mill burned when a south wind fanned flames of undetermined origin. The mill was a total loss. Van Voorhis & Hartin's loss in the fire was an estimated \$2700-\$2800. On hand that December night and consumed in the fire were 500 bushels of wheat, more than 300 barrels of flour, 50 barrels of rye flour, 10 barrels of buckwheat flour, two tons of feed, 1000 cotton sacks, 1000 paper bags, a barrel of machine oil, and a chest of millwright tools.¹³

The Ramsey Mill, the Gardner Mill, and the Ennis Mill were the primary longstanding mills in Hastings. By far, the Gardner Mill ranked as the largest and most well known. Located at the Upper Falls, the much-altered and expanded mill continues to operate in 1996 as part of an international agri-business.

During its nearly four decades of operation, the design and operation of the Ramsey Mill reflected advances in milling technology. Technological improvements by Oliver Evans in the late 18th century improved American milling and

¹¹*Hastings Democrat*, January 3, 1877; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Hastings, Minnesota, 1884, 1891; Neill, pp. 279-80, 322.

¹²"Ramsey Roller Mills," *Hastings Democrat*, July 21, 1892; *Hastings Democrat*, December 27, 1894; "Ramsey Mill walls still stand," *Dakota County Tribune*, April 4, 1963.

¹³"An Old Landmark Gone," *Hastings Gazette*, December 29, 1894.

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made it more economical and efficient. Evans' development of the conveyor (to move meal from one machine to another), the elevator (to shift from one floor to another), and the "hopper-boy" (to spread flour out for cooling) had two important effects. Fewer employees were necessary, and mills could be built many stories high. Evan's ideas resulted in the American multiple story mill such as the Ramsey Mill.¹⁴

Improvements from the period 1790-1870 ranked as refinements, rather than revolutionary changes. Among them were the introduction of turbines, the separator which gave wheat an initial cleaning and removed sticks, stones, and straws, and smutters which cleaned the wheat berry itself of smaller particles such as loose bran.¹⁵

When the Ramsey Mill operated in the 1860s, winter wheat was preferred because it ground better using traditional methods. Spring wheat contained middlings that discolored the flour and could not be reduced to flour without very careful attention. Winter wheat did not grow well in Minnesota, so millers were forced to make technological improvements in order to make Minnesota flour saleable. The first improvement was multiple reductions using millstones. This was perfected in the mills of southeastern Minnesota (Faribault, Dundas, Northfield, Hastings). The second improvement was the middlings purifier, also initially developed in southeastern Minnesota and perfected in Minneapolis. The middlings purifier necessitated the development of dust collectors because it used air jets in the purification process.¹⁶

The middlings purifier was immediately popular and revolutionized spring wheat milling. "Spring wheat was now 'king' in the Northwest and the Minnesota 'patent flours' took the highest place in eastern and, eventually, in foreign markets." As soon as practicable, millers switched to the New Process, installing middlings purifiers to work in conjunction with existing millstones.¹⁷

The next profound improvement--pairs of rollers--crushed or cracked the wheat berry. Initially, the material was subjected to finer grinding using traditional millstones. As the process was perfected, rollers (first of marble, then porcelain coated, then metal) entirely replaced the millstone. Developed in Germany, the process was brought to Minnesota around 1874. To underscore the presence of the latest refinement in their mills, garden variety "mills" became "roller mills." By 1894 (and probably earlier), the Ramsey Mill was known as the Ramsey Roller Mills.¹⁸

¹⁴Charles S. Kuhlmann, *The Development of the Flour-Milling Industry in the United States* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 19290, PP. 96-100.

¹⁵Kuhlmann, pp. 101-102.

¹⁶Robert M. Frame, *Millers to the World* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1977), p. 50; Folwell, III:69.

¹⁷Folwell, III:69, quoting; Frame, p. 53.

¹⁸Folwell, III:70; Frame, pp. 56-61.

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Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park, Dakota County, MN

The milling operation of the Ramsey Mill illustrated the late 19th century revolution of New Process milling. When constructed in 1856-57, the mill presumably contained such basic equipment as millstones, bolters, hopper boy, and transport devices. By 1881 technological changes had gradually been made. For example, the mill then contained four "buhr stones," one set of Grey rollers and one set of smooth rollers, but there were ten rollers in 1884. The presence in 1884 of two aspirators to remove dust, a centrifugal (probably linked to dust removal), and a dust house as well as five purifiers suggest that the conversion to New Process milling was in place.¹⁹

By 1891 the coorage was no longer in use, according to the Sanborn fire insurance map. The millers were bagging their "patent flour," as shown in the list of burned supplies in 1894 and scattered references to Davidson's Best, Belle of Hastings, and Pearl of Hastings brands of flour from the Ramsey Mill.

The Ramsey Mill exhibited features typical of the considerable changes in milling procedures from the late 19th century, including a turbine, middlings purifiers, rollers, and aspirators to move dust. In 1891 but one run of stone remained at the mill, and it was considered a very modern mill when it burned in 1894, "equipped with the latest improved machinery."²⁰

In spite of these modern improvements, owners of the Ramsey Mill found it difficult financially. At its burning in 1894, it was noted that the current mill operators, Van Voorhis & Hartin, "have been doing a good business....they are the first firm who have operated this mill in years who have at the same time been able to make it pay."²¹

RAMSEY MILL RUINS AND OLD MILL PARK

Mills, mill races, and mill stones have long evoked positive emotions. Even such a resolutely modern journal as the *Northwestern Miller* (published in Minnesota) embraced the romantic associations of mills from a by-gone technological era. Writing of "the old mill on the Elkhorn," James Lane Allen penned the following in 1889:

No other landmarks point so plainly to the erstwhile quieter manners and ways of rural life, or recall with vividness so overshadowed with regret the happy rustic pictures of bygone years. Weather-stained and crumbling creek-side mills of the past!²²

The "crumbling creek-side" ruins of the Ramsey Mill rapidly became the subject of commercial postcards, souvenir

¹⁹Frame, p. 61; Neill, pp. 279-280; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Hastings, Minnesota, 1884, 1891.

²⁰*Hastings Democrat*, December 27, 1894; Sanborn maps, 1891.

²¹*Hastings Democrat*, December 27, 1894.

²²*The Holiday Northwestern Miller*, Christmas 1889, pp. 19-20.

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Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park, Dakota County, MN

publications, and newspaper accounts after the fire in 1894. Postcards, stereo views, and photographs showing the mill are in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society and date from the 1910s. Based on a postcard sent from Germany in 1910, entitled, the "ruins of Old Lower Mill, Hastings, Minn." there was some level of international awareness.²³

As early as 1907, local appreciation of the picturesque qualities of the ruins was recognized and can be documented. In that year, the souvenir program for a German Catholic organization meeting in Hastings prominently displayed a photograph of the ruins of the Ramsey Mill on the Vermillion River ("Ruinen der Ramfen-Muhle am Vermillion-Fluffe").²⁴ Later souvenir programs also pictured prominently the "old Ramsey mill ruins" and the "ruins of the old Ramsey Mill on Vermillion River."²⁵

In 1916 the Dains Land & Townsite Company purchased eight acres of land, including the mill property, with the intention of developing it. The mill site was referred to as "the old park which has been used by the public these many years," and it appears that parklike usage of the land was common. The proposed development was apparently unsuccessful, and in 1925 local residents sought the site for a municipal camping ground. The site was then being used as a privately owned tourist camp.²⁶

Common across the country by the 1920s, tourist camps represented the next step from "gypsying" when daring automobilists traveled on uncertain roads and simply stopped by the wayside when it pleased them. Tourist or auto camps developed to provide some amenities and the certainty of having a suitable place for pitching a tent. Municipalities joined private ventures, considering the provision of municipal tourist camps a progressive means for competing for tourist dollars.²⁷

²³MHS Photograph Collection, Ramsey Mill, MD2.9.HS3.1; *Hastings Gazette*, July 1, 1965, with copy of the 1910 postcard.

²⁴Souvenir und Programm der Directoren-Versammlung der D.R.K. Unterstutzungs-Gesellarschaft von Minnesota und der Yahres-Versammlung des Staatsuerbandes der Deutsch-Katholischen Vereine von Minnesota, September 1907, p. 37.

²⁵Souvenir Program, 59th Annual State Convention, Catholic Aid Association of Minnesota, September 1939; Program, Third District Convention, American Legion, 1932.

²⁶*Hastings Gazette*, August 12, 1916; "The Tourist Park Site," *Hastings Gazette*, July 31, 1925.

²⁷Warren J. Belasco, *Americans on the Road. From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979), *passim*; Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West. The Tourist in Western America* (New York: Knopf, 1957; reprint ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 147.

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The campaign to make the Ramsey Mill Ruins site a tourist camp was a joint public and private effort. A local newspaper contended that "With proper care, under a municipal ownership plan, the Vermillion property could easily be developed into a tourist park that would serve as a strong incentive to motorists to visit the city." On September 11, 1925 came the announcement that the King Midas Milling Company, operators of the major mill complex (formerly the Gardner Mill) not far south of the Ramsey site, had deeded it to the City. The mill ruin was regarded as an "invaluable attraction." "...in all probability, had the mill and the property on which it is located not been obtainable, the Vermillion park site would have been rejected."²⁸

Hastings residents were aware of the economic value of the tourist dollar. "The best is none too good in this day of spirited competition for the patronage of tourists from all parts of the universe," according to a local newspaper.²⁹ Hastings residents proudly trumpeted the importance of the mill ruin and demonstrated their commitment to its preservation:

Tourist visitors who remove their travel stains and refreshen themselves at the Hastings tourist camp during the summer months will find one of the historic reminders of the pioneer Northwest in the Ramsey mill ruins which stand beside the lower falls of the Vermillion river....The "old mill" and its surroundings will be preserved with the utmost care to form an historical landmark of interest to visiting tourists.³⁰

The Ramsey Mill Ruins were included in statewide guides from 1938 and even in 1977. The "remains of an old mill erected by Governor Alexander Ramsey" are mentioned in the WPA Guide to Minnesota published in 1938, and WPA workers photographed the ruin in 1936.³¹ David Gebhard and Tom Martinson also described the mill in their 1977 guide to Minnesota architecture:

The ruins of this three-story stone mill sit delightfully and romantically in the woods next to the falls of the Vermillion River. In the United States it seems that the only romantic, picturesque ruins which survive are utilitarian structures--factories, mills, bridges, and fragments of roads and railroad lines.³²

²⁸"The Tourist Park Site," *Hastings Gazette*, July 31, 1925; "Famous Mill on Park Site," *Hastings Gazette*, September 11, 1925.

²⁹"The Tourist Park Site," *Hastings Gazette*, July 31, 1925.

³⁰"Ramsey Mill Ruins on the Vermillion," *Hastings Gazette*, October 30, 1925.

³¹MHS Photograph Collection, Ramsey Mill, MD2.9.HS.1, A.F. Raymond photographs, October 13, 1936, WPA Project 1836; Federal Writers' Project, *The WPA Guide to Minnesota* (Minnesota: Executive Council, 1938; reprint ed. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1985), p. 298.

³²David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 284.

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SUMMARY

Gebhard and Martinson aptly summarized the character-defining qualities that make the Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park significant. The ruins are a rare surviving remnant dating from 1856-57 of the important flour milling industry, but they also have standing as a picturesque ruin deemed worthy of preservation and admiration since the turn of the century.

The Ramsey Mill Ruins and Old Mill Park appear to retain all seven aspects of integrity. The location by the Vermillion River is unchanged, and the setting, a visually remote ravine, retains such character-defining qualities as the stone walls, river, and steep topography. Relationships between mill, cooperage and the miller's house site convey the historic sense of the place as well as providing direct associations with milling and appreciation of the cultural landscape in a park setting. The workmanship employed to construct the massive stone walls offers physical evidence of mid-19th century mill construction, while the design and materials for the mill and park site create the means for understanding and appreciating historic uses of the property.

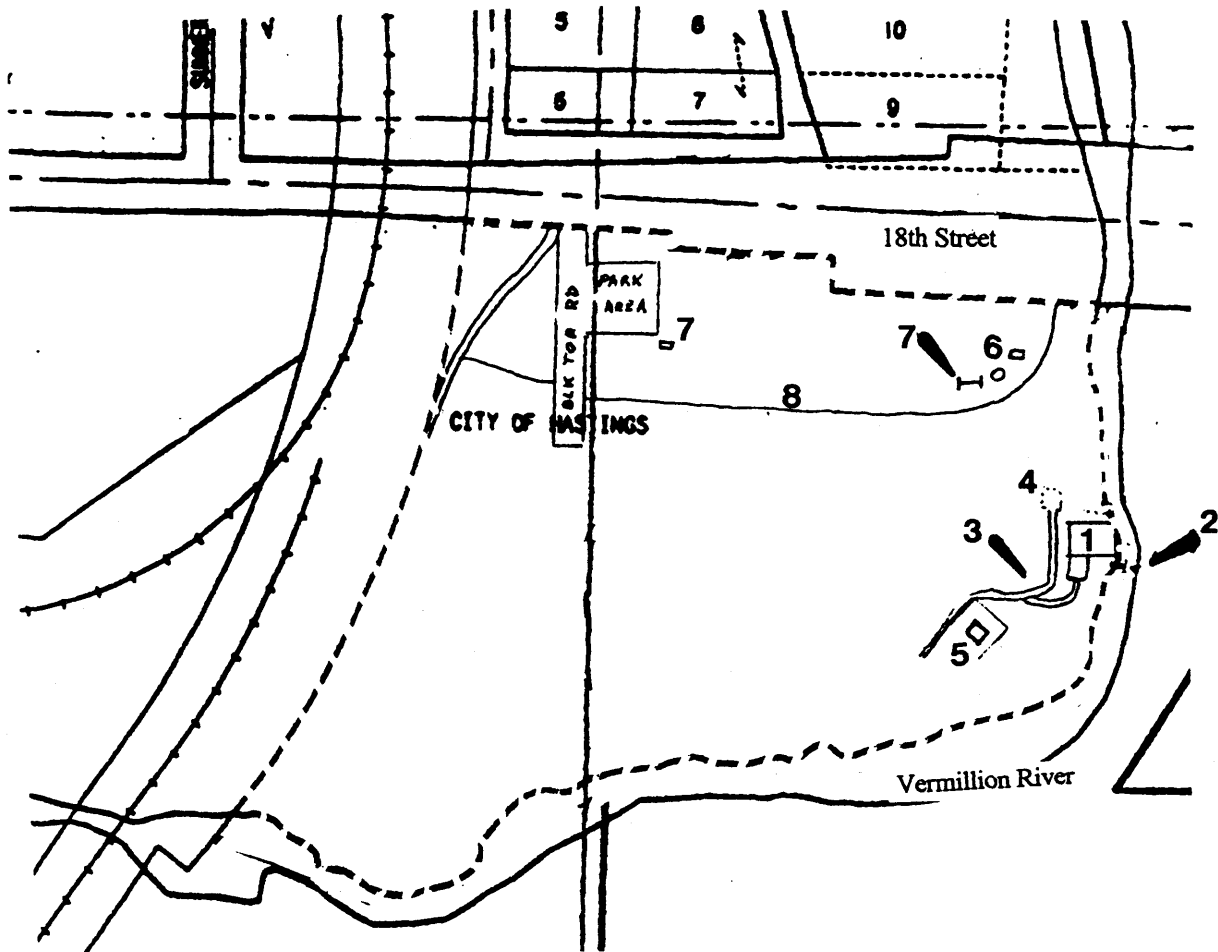
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North
1996
Scale: 1" = 200'

KEY

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Mill Ruin | 5. House Foundation |
| 2. Dam Site | 6. Playground Equipment |
| 3. Driveway | 7. Picnic Table |
| 4. Cooperage Site | 8. Change in Grade |

Note: Dashed line is nomination boundary. Dam Site is included in the nomination.

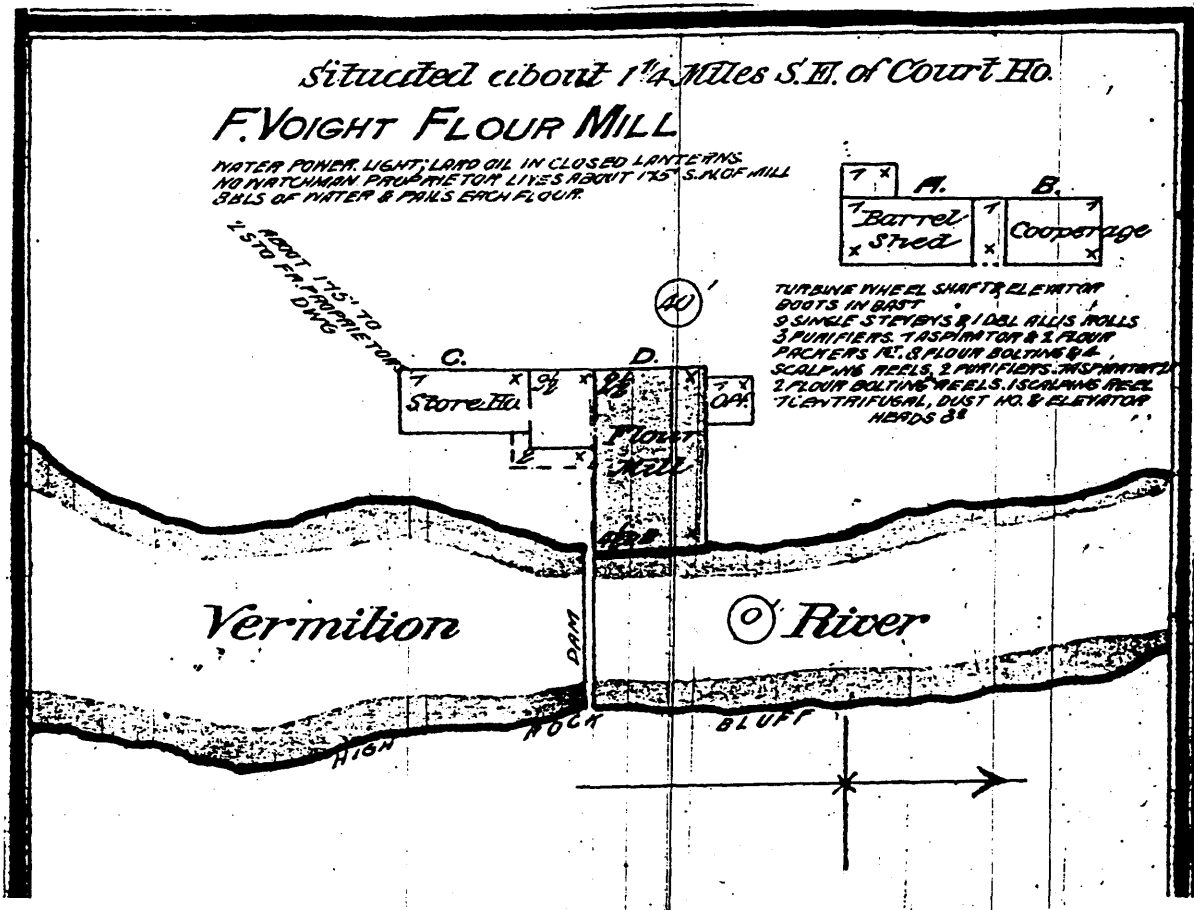
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Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Hastings Minnesota. 1884.

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Verbal boundary description

Old Mill Park, which contains the Ramsey Mill Ruins, is bounded on the south and east by the Vermillion River, on the north by 18th Street, and on the west by an abandoned railroad grade. It consists of Lot 2 and Part of Lot 3, Auditor's Subdivision No. 9. The dam ruins, which extend into the Vermillion River, are part of the Ramsey Mill Ruins.

Verbal boundary justification

The boundary includes the ruins of the mill, dam, cooperage, and proprietor's house that have historically been associated with the industrial and recreational uses of the property and that maintain historic integrity. The boundaries--river, road, and railroad route--form clear geographical edges for the park property and have been documented as having been directly associated with the historic uses of the site.