

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 5 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 7 1976

**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 *nr*  
Okeene Flour Mill  
AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Okeene

STATE

Oklahoma

— VICINITY OF

CODE

40

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

No. 6

COUNTY

Blaine

CODE

011

**CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Shawnee Milling Company

STREET & NUMBER

Box 1567

CITY, TOWN

Shawnee

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Oklahoma

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Blaine County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Watonga

STATE

Oklahoma

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Special Okeene Mill Survey

DATE

1975

— FEDERAL  STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Oklahoma Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

# 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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

Okeene Mill was founded in 1901, the year the present Rock Island and Frisco railroads reached the tiny agricultural community of Okeene almost simultaneously. Presence of the two rail routes contributed significantly to the development of the business in its early years. A typical small-town operation to begin with, it remained at the end of its first quarter-century of existence a 200 cwts. (100-barrel) mill with storage for 16,000 bushels of wheat in four bins inside the mill itself.

In these early years many farmers brought their grain to the mill for milling, taking their flour and its by-products (bran, shorts, etc.) back to the farm for home use. And in its first half-century of existence Okeene Mill concerned itself primarily with the production of family flour, mill feeds, corn meal, and corn chops. Significantly (see No. 8), none of these are now produced at Okeene Mill. As late as 1926, the mill was basically a three-story frame milling building, an adjoining one-story warehouse with flanking loading dock (mostly for local farmers with their wagons and Model T trucks), and nearby office structure.

Modernization over the years has destroyed much of this early-day physical plant. Its core, however, modernized and still productive, is incorporated in the greatly expanded present-day plant with its phalanx of concrete elevators and other structures. Capacity is now 3,100 cwts. of flour, with some 700,000 bushels of grain storage. On the west edge of the Okeene business district, on the Rock Island tracks and Ok 51 highway, and usually surrounded by rail cars, grain trucks, and giant highway hoppers for bulk flour, Okeene Mill projects the image of a successful small-town industry. More importantly, at least for the purposes of this nomination, it is also a still-struggling example of small-business ingenuity and perseverance in the face of bigness, standardization, and faceless, cost-conscious efficiency.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Okeene Flour Mill

package its products in attractive print materials that allowed frugal housewives to convert the empty sacks to children's clothes, draperies, and other household uses. Okeene Mill was also a leader in the promotional field. Two of its most successful: a "Biscuit Day" for merchants and, the best known by far, the "Okeene Mill Pancake Supper" that helped raise funds for civic, church, and school organizations throughout western Oklahoma. Today prints and pancakes alike have disappeared as the mill has turned to commercial bakery flour delivered in bulk by huge rail and motorized hoppers.

Okeene Mill's innovative approach to the milling industry also extended into the flour making process itself. Traditionally, grain and mill products were moved by a system of conveyor belts and cups. These were phased out at Okeene in the late 1950s in favor of a pneumatic system, one of the first to be installed in the southwest. Today it serves all phases of production, to the unloading of grain from trucks and rail cars, to the milling itself, to the loading of bulk flour back onto trucks and rail hoppers for transporting to purchasers.

Okeene Mill, then, is being nominated because its existence today as a small town anachronism was made possible by its successful attempt over the years to keep pace with the changing times. In so doing it is strikingly representative of the evolutionary development of the milling industry in the 20th century in all phases of its operation ... production, transportation, and promotion.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	___ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
___1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1901 to present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Okeene Mill, in its three-quarter-century existence, is both an anachronism and an industrial success story. In each case, curiously enough, it is strongly representative of a basic change in the American scene, particularly on the Great Plains.

It is an anachronism in that it is one of the last small-town flour mills to be found anywhere. (Okeene's 1970 population: 1,421.) In the first third of the 20th century almost every town of any size in strong wheat-growing states like Oklahoma and Kansas boasted its own mill. Each of these usually small "flouring mills" manufactured, and vigorously promoted in its immediate area, one or more of its own brand-name flours ... mostly for the domestic, or home-baking, trade. At the time of statehood (1907) Oklahoma had some 77 flour mills. (Curiously, it also has 77 counties.) As late as 1940 the state had 32 mills.

But eating habits were beginning to change. Bread and pastry consumption was falling as meat eating increased, and flour sales plummeted. Meanwhile improved milling methods and transportation facilities, along with other factors, was revolutionizing the milling industry itself (see below). Small-town mills began to fade like a rose in a hot August sun. Today Okeene Mill is one of but four still operating in Oklahoma. And much of its production goes in bulk to commercial bakeries throughout the Southwest.

That Okeene mill has continued, not only to exist, but to flourish as well, makes it an industrial success story. It is an anachronism because it remains in the small town in which it was founded - in 1901. But it has survived only because it has also been innovative in its approach to flour milling, has contributed a number of "firsts" to the milling industry in the southwest ... in short, because it has grown up with the industry itself.

The mill began as a 200 cwts. (100 barrels) operation. Today its capacity is 3,100 cwts. (1,500 barrels) of flour. And its work force has increased from five to thirty employees. Size alone, however, fails to tell the story, for the mill is still relatively small. As agriculture has undergone almost revolutionary changes since World War I, so has the milling industry. In 1926, for example, Okeene Mill was turning out mainly family flour ... in 12, 24, and 48-pound sacks for sale, as indicated above, through nearby retail outlets. Transportation was almost entirely by rail.

In the mid-1930s Okeene Mill claimed a first by using trucks to make state-wide deliveries. At one time it had a fleet of 16 trucks. The mill was among the first to

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

--- "Progress Helps Keep Okeene Milling On Top In The Flour Business,"  
Tel-Ectric Topics, Kingfisher, OK, December 1975

Wimberly, Owen, Manager, Okeene Mill - interview, December 1975

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. one acre  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1,4	5612,04	3,919,697,5	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kent Ruth, Deputy

ORGANIZATION

Oklahoma Historical Society

DATE

January 1976

STREET & NUMBER

Historical Building

TELEPHONE

405/884-5456

CITY OR TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*[Handwritten Signature]*

TITLE

SHPO

DATE

APR 2 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: *[Handwritten Signature]*  
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

11/9/96

DATE

10-3-76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER