

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received FEB 21 1986  
date entered MAR 20 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Clarks Grove Cooperative Creamery

and/or common N/A

**2. Location**

street & number Main Street E. and Independence Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Clarks Grove N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota code 22 county Freeborn code 047

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Clarks Grove Cooperative Creamery c/o Mr. Richard Haug, Manager

street & number E. Main Street

city, town Clarks Grove N/A vicinity of state Minnesota 56016

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds - Freeborn County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Albert Lea state Minnesota

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Statewide Survey of Historic Resources has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Minnesota Historical Society-Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	<input type="checkbox"/> slightly		N/A

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Clarks Grove Creamery building faces north on County Road #31 in downtown Clarks Grove. Highway #31 is Main Street and the building is set back on the south east corner of Main Street E. at Independence.

The creamery is a two story 62' x 62' square masonry building with yellow/brown and rust colored wire-faced brick and yellow sandstone trim. It has a symmetrical facade with three unequal bays on the front and five bays on the east and west sides. The building sits on a concrete slab with no basement. A brick soldier course defines the foundation area. Sandstone trim is used at the dentilled cornice, continuous sills between the bays on the second story and sill course on the first story, coping, brick pier caps with bas relief designs, front entry surround, free-standing lamp standards at the front entry, and name and date blocks on the front facade.

All windows are wooden with wooden screens. The windows on the second story are 6-over-6 double hung with glass transoms. First story windows are three-part with flanking small-paned casements and a fixed center light with translucent transoms. Within the sandstone field around the front entry is double wooden doors with a transom above, and narrow small-paned fixed side lights separated from the doors by stone stylized buttresses.

The rear, or south facade of the building, has a porte cochere once used for milk trucks to deliver their loads. The loading dock was inside the port cochere. The design is intergral to the building. At the east and west ends were open low-sprung arches with keystones and the south side of the port cochere was open. Within the last 20 years, the port cochere was enclosed and a garge door added to the east side with a concrete block addition added to the west to accommodate storage of larger trucks. This addition is the only noticeable change to the building, aside from three bulk milk tanks which protrude from the three west rear ground floor window openings.

The interior first floor houses the buttermaker's office, men's restroom, workroom and all creamery equipment and was built as state-of-the-art in 1927. The second floor houses a large meeting room/hall with a stage, a kitchen, two dressing rooms, storage rooms, and a ladies' restroom. The community room is known as "Creamery Hall," and is intact, save the stage curtain, which is now in the possession of the Freeborn County Historical Society.

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Continuation sheet

Resource Count

Item number 7

Page

1

The Clarks Grove Cooperative Creamery Nomination  
contains 1 contributing building.

## 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1927 **Builder/Architect:** Carl H. Buetow & C. Kampfer of St. Paul  
**Builder:** James Nelson of Albert Lea

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Clarks Grove Creamery is significant as the first cooperative creamery in Minnesota and the oldest continually run cooperative independent creamery in the state. Its bylaws and certificates, written in Danish, became the model for cooperative creameries in Minnesota as popularized by Professor Theophilus L. Haecker of the University of Minnesota. It is also significant for its associations with the small Danish community in Bancroft township which migrated from Wisconsin in 1864 to settle south of the town of Clarks Grove. This group of Danes began the first and most successfully run cooperative creameries in Minnesota. Freeborn County had the largest number of creameries in the state during the 1920s and by 1928 ranked third in number of dairy cows used for milk production in the state, after Stearns and Goodhue counties. The 1927 creamery building at Clarks Grove was the most modern creamery building of its time when it was erected. For the next 25 years, its second floor "Creamery Hall" was the social center of the town and surrounding area. The building is architecturally significant as the best example in Minnesota of an intact third-generation creamery structure. Architecturally, its appearance is more akin to commercial architecture than to the functional look of the majority of creameries in the state.

The Danish community at Clarks Grove migrated from Wisconsin in the mid-1860s to settle on farms in the area. One of these immigrants, Hans Peter Jensen, visited Denmark in 1884 and came back with news of the cream separator and the co-operative movement which was beginning to flourish in northern Europe. In 1889, Soren Nelson, of Rosedale, Meeker County, visited Jensen on his return from Iowa creameries to found the first cooperative creamery in Meeker County. Co-operative separator creameries were already in operation in Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin by the late 1880s. Nelson's enthusiasm for the co-operative movement convinced Jensen to organize the first co-operative creamery in Minnesota, which was effected on February 11, 1890, with farmers from Bath, Riceland, Geneva and Bancroft townships. Riceland withdrew because of the distance, but founded their own co-operative creamery using the by-laws and constitution of the Clarks Grove Creamery Association. The Clarks Grove Creamery was a model institution and was run in a very business-like way. By 1911, it had around 100 patrons who owned 1,000 milch cows. It thrived and patronage grew. In 1927, the Association built the present substantial building, their second, after the first creamery building burned. It is a tangible remnant of the business acumen and success of the Clarks Grove co-operative creamery organization and its Danish patrons and founders. Freeborn County became the premier dairying producer in Minnesota. The cooperative organization gained steadily in popularity because it worked. By 1911, 27 out of the 28 Freeborn County creameries were cooperatives. In 1923, Minnesota had 4,500 cooperative associations of all kinds doing an annual business of \$44 million dollars a year. By 1927, the year Clarks Grove built the present building, cooperatives brought in \$200 million dollars a year.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet #3

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Clarks Grove, MN

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	1	5
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 Zone 

4	7	3	5	1	6	1	0
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 Easting 

4	8	4	5	4	5	1	0
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 Northing

B 

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 Zone 

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 Easting 

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 Northing

C 

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 Zone 

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 Northing

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F 

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G 

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H 

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 Easting 

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 Northing

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 1 and Lot 2, exclusive, Block G, Clarks Grove

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Norene A. Roberts

organization Historical Research, Inc.

date July 31, 1985

street & number 5535 Richmond Curve

telephone (612) 929-2921

city or town Minneapolis

state Minnesota 55410

# 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

*Russell W. Fridley*

Russell W. Fridley

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 2/13/86

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 3/20/86

*Jayne M. McClusson*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Clarks Grove Cooperative Creamery, Clarks Grove, Freeborn County, MN  
Significance

Continuation sheet

Item number

#8

Page 1

The movement spread quickly after Clarks Grove Creamery Association was organized in 1890. By the end of 1890, Riceland, Glenville, Armstrong, and Clover Valley had cooperative creamery associations in Freeborn county. Clarks Grove was not only the first cooperative, it was extremely well run. Each member had only one vote and this came to the attention of Professor Haecker at the University of Minnesota. In Minnesota, Theophilus L. Haecker was appointed instructor in the new dairy husbandry department at the University of Minnesota in 1891. He was a firm believer in and advocate for cooperative agriculture until his retirement in 1918. Haecker surveyed Minnesota creameries in the early 1890s and was particularly impressed with the most successful creameries in the state, a group of Danish cooperatives in Freeborn County, and particularly with the Clarks Grove association, which was well managed under by-laws and certificates written in Danish. Haecker published a pamphlet which contained suggestions on how to establish cooperative creameries with model articles of organization based on the Clarks Grove system. Haecker's writing and speaking led to rapid growth of cooperative creameries in Minnesota and eventually to cooperative farmers' elevators and other businesses in the state.

When the new creamery building was erected in 1927, the second floor was devoted to "Creamery Hall," the largest meeting/ community room in Clarks Grove. It is intact and has a stage at one end. The room has been used for meetings in the town and for social events in the surrounding area, including stage plays, music recitals, civic groups, and community gatherings. In the 1950s, the hall doubled as a school after the Clarks Grove school burned.

Architecturally, there are three generations of creamery structures in Minnesota. The Clarks Grove creamery building represents the most intact and most styled of the third generation buildings. Its design elements were affordable because the Clarks Grove Creamery Association was one of the best run cooperative associations in the state. The "extras" which went into the building's design are a visible testament to the business acumen and loyalty of the members, and the quality of the butter produced there. The earliest creamery buildings erected in Minnesota were frame one story rectangular structures with monitors on a simple gabled roof. This first generation structure type was gradually replaced during the 1890-1900 period by brick structures. Second generation creamery buildings were brick, but resembled first generation buildings in scale, mass, and shape. Third generation creamery structures began to appear in the state during the years after 1910. These brick or tile buildings were square, usually one and a half stories tall with hipped roofs and projecting hipped or gabled window gables. The 1927 Clarks Grove building, unlike most third generation structures, is a true two story building with less of the functional appearance and more decorative elements. It more closely resembles a commercial block than a creamery.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Clarks Grove Cooperative Creamery, Clarks Grove, Freeborn County, MN

Continuation sheet

Significance

Item number #8

Page

2

The farmers in Minnesota did not change abruptly from raising wheat to dairying. What actually happened is that three related trends flowed together: 1) the decline of wheat; 2) the diversification of crops and livestock; 3) and the rise of dairying. Wheat was the cash crop for the first generation of settlers during the 1850s, '60s, and '70s. Falling yields, however, were caused by soil depletion, chinch bugs and other pests and wheat rust. By 1878 wheat was in decline in southern Minnesota and prices were low, compounding the problems of farmers. Most farmers kept a few milch cows, but dairying grew slowly. Modern methods of acclimation were in their infancy and until corn, timothy, clover, millet, oats, and other small grains could be grown successfully, dairying and stockraising on a large scale was not possible.

The rise of dairying required a good deal of persuasion and promotion by such organs as the Minnesota Dairyman's Association, the University of Minnesota, and local groups, such as the Freeborn County Buttermakers' and Dairymen's Association (organized in 1903). But there were at least three indispensable technical developments that had to be introduced as well: 1) the silo, 2) the cream separator, and 3) the Babcock milk tester. The silo technique brought from Europe most resembles the making of sauerkraut with green fodder of the correct moisture content placed in the ground away from air and properly drained. The technique, described in 1877 in France, began to be used in the midwest in the 1880s. It solved the problem of how to winter large herds of dairy animals. The cream separator was simultaneously developed in Denmark, Sweden, and Germany around 1878. The separator separated whole milk into cream and skimmed milk, added improved quality and convenience to buttermaking and made it possible to produce butter in large quantities. The skimmed milk could be used to feed young livestock and hogs. The Babcock milk tester was perfected by Dr. Stephen M. Babcock of the University of Wisconsin and made public in 1890. It accurately measured the amount of butterfat in milk and was used for the next 50 years.

The switch from stock companies of businessmen to farmer cooperatives came at a time in the late 1880s and early 1890s when the technological developments were in place for successful dairying in the midwest. The first creamery in Freeborn County was organized in 1881 in Albert Lea. This pioneer effort, the Fountain Lake Creamery, was operated as a joint stock company and owned by Albert Lea businessmen, but failed. By 1890, however, the time was ripe for the cooperative movement. Large cream separators could be jointly owned by the cooperatives so that cash outlay for equipment was kept to a minimum for each member. Hans Peter Jensen saw the results of combining use of the cream separator with cooperative creameries in Denmark in 1884. It was this proven success and the stories of Iowa creameries which convinced him to establish the first cooperative separator creamery in Minnesota.

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National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Clarks Grove Cooperative Creamery, Clarks Grove, Freeborn County, MN

Continuation sheet Major Biblio. References Item number #9 Page 3

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