

**DATA SHEET**  
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0669610  
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RECEIVED

MAY 23 1978

DATE ENTERED

MAR 30 1979

# 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

Paoli Mills

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

6890 Sun Valley Parkway (CTH PB)

\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Paoli (unincorp.)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

second

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE

55

COUNTY

Dane

CODE

013

**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** (See continuation sheet)

NAME

George R. Fetherston

STREET &amp; NUMBER

202 Church Street

CITY, TOWN

Verona

STATE

Wisconsin 53593

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds -- City-County Building

STREET &amp; NUMBER

210 Monona Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53709

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1978

\_FEDERAL  STATE \_COUNTY \_LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

# 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

The Paoli Mill, its race, dam, and millpond are nominated as a package because it is recognized that an important part of the mill's significance is its potential once again to operate. (Refer to the hand-drawn map)

Millsite: The Sugar River takes a wide bend around to the north of Paoli. In 1849 Peter Matts dammed the stream east of the hamlet and constructed a half-mile long mill race cutting across the Sugar River's meander. This shortened the effective stream bed considerably and made it practical to create a ten-foot head of water.

The dam has been replaced a number of times since 1849, and the site of Matts' original wooden dam is thought to be under water, thirty or more yards upstream from the present dam. The present dam dates from the 1930s and is constructed of concrete, although remnants of an earlier stone dam are visible. The dam has two adjustable spillways, the larger which may be opened in time of flood, and the smaller which regulates the flow of water in the race. A severe storm in the summer of 1977 washed out both spillways, but the owner intends to repair them this summer. When the dam is holding water, the mill pond covers roughly 2.3 acres.

The race is a half-mile long canal running west to east from the dam to the mill. Originally dug in 1849, it has repeatedly been dredged of silt. Presently it is fifty-four feet wide and three to four feet deep. The owner plans to dredge it this summer when he repairs the dam.

Sawmill: What seems like only a frame addition to the rear of the main part of the mill is actually the remnants of Peter Matts' 1849 sawmill. Only the major framing members remain of the original sawmill, which was situated on the north bank of the race. These members are massive hewn oaken beams, still tightly joined by mortise and tenon. Walls and roof of the sawmill portion do not appear to be original. This wing of the mill is not presently in use.

Stone gristmill: The main portion of the mill is a three-story stone structure approximately forty feet by sixty feet with a full basement, built outside the race. Walls are built of coursed yellow limestone rubble with cut limestone quoins, lintels, and sills. At the foundation, the walls are three feet thick; at each floor the wall thickness is decreased by approximately six inches, providing a ledge which supports floor joists. Interior structural framing is massive to support the heavy weight of milling machinery; occasionally whole tree trunks form pillars; flooring is three inches thick. The interior milling spaces have repeatedly been whitewashed. Most windows are original, with six over six lights.

Generally, the mill structure is in fair condition. The masonry is in excellent shape, but the roof and some beams in the basement, which have been rotted by seepage, need work.

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DESCRIPTION (continued)

Machinery: The stone gristmill contains the following machinery, all of which is in restorable condition, and most of which could be made operable with a minimum of work:

basement: Three vertical-type Leffel (James Leffel & Co., Springfield, Ohio) turbines capable of producing twenty, thirty, and forty horsepower, set in a concrete tub roughly ten feet below the surface level of the race. There is no evidence that the gristmill ever had a water wheel.

first floor: two roller mills manufactured by the E.P. Allis Co., Milwaukee, in the 1880s; one Stevens-type "Midget Marvel," a small multi-stage milling machine which combined all the steps of milling in a single compact package, c.1900-1910, manufactured by the Anglo-American Milling Company, Louisville, Kentucky.

second floor: E.P. Allis purifiers, c. 1880s.

third floor: E.P. Allis flour dressers, c. 1880s.

In addition there is an abundance of parts, grain conveyors, etc., lying around the mill.

Stone addition: Built in the late nineteenth century, this single-story stone addition to the rear of the mill contains a tall brick chimney; in the 1930s it housed a large boiler which was used to heat the mill. It is unknown if it ever contained a steam engine, perhaps there to provide auxiliary power. The masonry of the addition is similar to that of the main portion of the mill, although it has a shed roof and an arched doorway and window on the north side, near the tailrace.

Frame addition: The three-story frame addition to the front of the mill dates from around the turn of the century. It is a plain frame structure with a large overhang supported on three pillars, designed to facilitate the loading of grist onto trucks and trailers. The ridge runs north and south, perpendicular to that of the main part of the mill; a plain cupola sits atop the ridge.

Other buildings on the property: Built in the late 1930s, a frame storage building sits east of the mill, on the south bank of the tailrace. A small stone scalehouse, built in 1956, sits in front of the mill. One of the mill's original buhr stones forms part of the west wall of the scalehouse. Another of the mill's stones forms part of the wall of a service station in Whitewater, and another is part of a historical exhibit in South Dakota.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1946	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Industrial Archeology
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES See description c. 1870 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Paoli Mill is significant at the local level as an intact and well-preserved nineteenth-century Wisconsin mill. Structurally and visually an important building, the cultural value of the mill is multiplied by the survival of its milling machinery, turbines, race, and dam, all in operable or restorable condition. Additionally, the survival of vestiges of an 1849 sawmill at the site holds important potential for industrial archeological investigation.

The hamlet of Paoli owes its existence to the location of a mill site there. In 1848 Peter W. Matts, then sheriff of Dane County, secured title to this part of the town of Montrose, which included a prime water power privilege on the Sugar River. The following year he constructed a dam, race, and sawmill there and laid out the village of Paoli, which he named after a town in his native Pennsylvania. During the next decade-and-a-half Matts watched a small village grow up around his mill. Newcomers bought land from "Major Matts" and constructed their buildings with lumber from his mill. A large portion of the newcomers were southern Germans, and in the latter part of century Paoli became identified with that ethnic group.

The 1860s were the heyday of flour milling in Wisconsin. During that decade, the Minch brothers, Bernhard and Francis, recent immigrants from Bavaria, went to work for Matts at the mill. Progressively, they took over operation of the mill from Matts, purchased the site and mill privilege, and by the end of the decade they had constructed the three-story stone flouring mill which forms the core of the present structure. In 1870 the Minch Brothers milled 22,000 bushels of grain, making it comparatively a moderately sized mill, and sawed an undetermined amount of lumber.

By the 1870s local sawmilling was dying in southern Wisconsin. Pine lumber from the north, a more desirable building material than the native hardwoods lumber of the south, became cheap and available throughout southern Wisconsin with the coming of the railroad. Of more than sixteen sawmills operating in rural Dane County in the 1850s, only one is known to have survived the 1870s; of the sixteen, Matts' mill is the only one known to be extant.

By 1877 the Minch Brothers had discontinued sawmilling and were using the 1849 structure as a storage room. Local flour milling in Wisconsin declined in this period as the center of wheat agriculture moved west and large milling centers like Minneapolis became dominant. The Minch Brothers' mill survived the decline operating successfully as a custom mill well into the twentieth century and long remaining a focus of the flour, meal, and feed grain agriculture of the Paoli area.\* In the late nineteenth century the Minch's modernized their operation by replacing the runs of stone with up-to-date Allis rollers, purifiers, and dressers. They also added a single-story stone wing to the rear of the mill; the wing's tall chimney suggests that it housed a steam engine, probably to supplement the main mill's water turbines.



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SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

Today, the mill is a visual and historical landmark in south central Wisconsin. Its fabric owes its integrity to the sensitivity of its present owners, the Fetherston family. Fetherstons have been milling in Wisconsin for more than a century. Paul Fetherston bought the mill from a Minch descendant in 1938 and operated it through the Second World War. Since that time the mill structure has been used as a storage space for the Fetherstons' feed and seed business, but the owners have preserved the fabric of the building and machinery intact with the intent of operating the mill once more. In the summer of 1977 a major downpour washed out the dam at the millpond. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has given the Fetherstons a short time either to repair the dam or to lose their water power privilege; the DNR would like to see the Sugar River returned to its natural, pre-mill state. Paul Fetherston's grandson Dan, however, plans to operate the mill in the future, at least to use the turbines to generate electricity and to maintain the milling machinery, showing it in operation to curious passers-by and schoolchildren. Listing of the mill on the National Register will give the Fetherstons important encouragement in the continued preservation of the mill by confirming their belief in its cultural importance and by making them eligible to apply for preservation and restoration grants and to take advantage of the Tax Reform Act of 1976.

\*In the late 1880s Francis Minch was able to send his son Oscar to the university at Madison. Oscar graduated in 1893 and returned to Paoli as a partner in the mill; within three years he was elected to the Wisconsin Assembly as a Democrat and opponent of the Prohibitionist Party.

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4. OWNER OF PROPERTY (continued)

Sunset Stock Company ✓  
Commercial State Bank  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

9. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)

Abstract of Title, Paoli Mill, in the possession of George Fetherston.

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Keyes, Elisha W. History of Dane County. 2 volumes. Madison, 1906.

Law Makers of Wisconsin, 1899-1901. Milwaukee, 1899.

Ligowsky, A. Map of Dane County, Wis. Madison, 1861.

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10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The Water Power Mill Reservation including a strip of land 54 feet wide, occupied by race running through from E and W as laid out in the Village Plat of Paoli, Dane County, Wisconsin, termed in said Plat "Mill Reservation Saw Mill Flouring Mill" and Canal 54 feet wide", and recorded in the Register's Office of Dane County, Wisconsin, in Vol. B of Plats, page 40.

Also beginning at a stake in the E and W section line running through the center of Washington Street in the Village of Paoli, and 6 chains E of a stone placed in the NE corner of the Public Square of said Village, thence N 1 chain and 65 links to a stake; thence S 78° E 3 chains and 70 links to a stake, thence S 89 links to a stake on section line, thence W 3 chains and 45 links to place of beginning as aforesaid . . . .

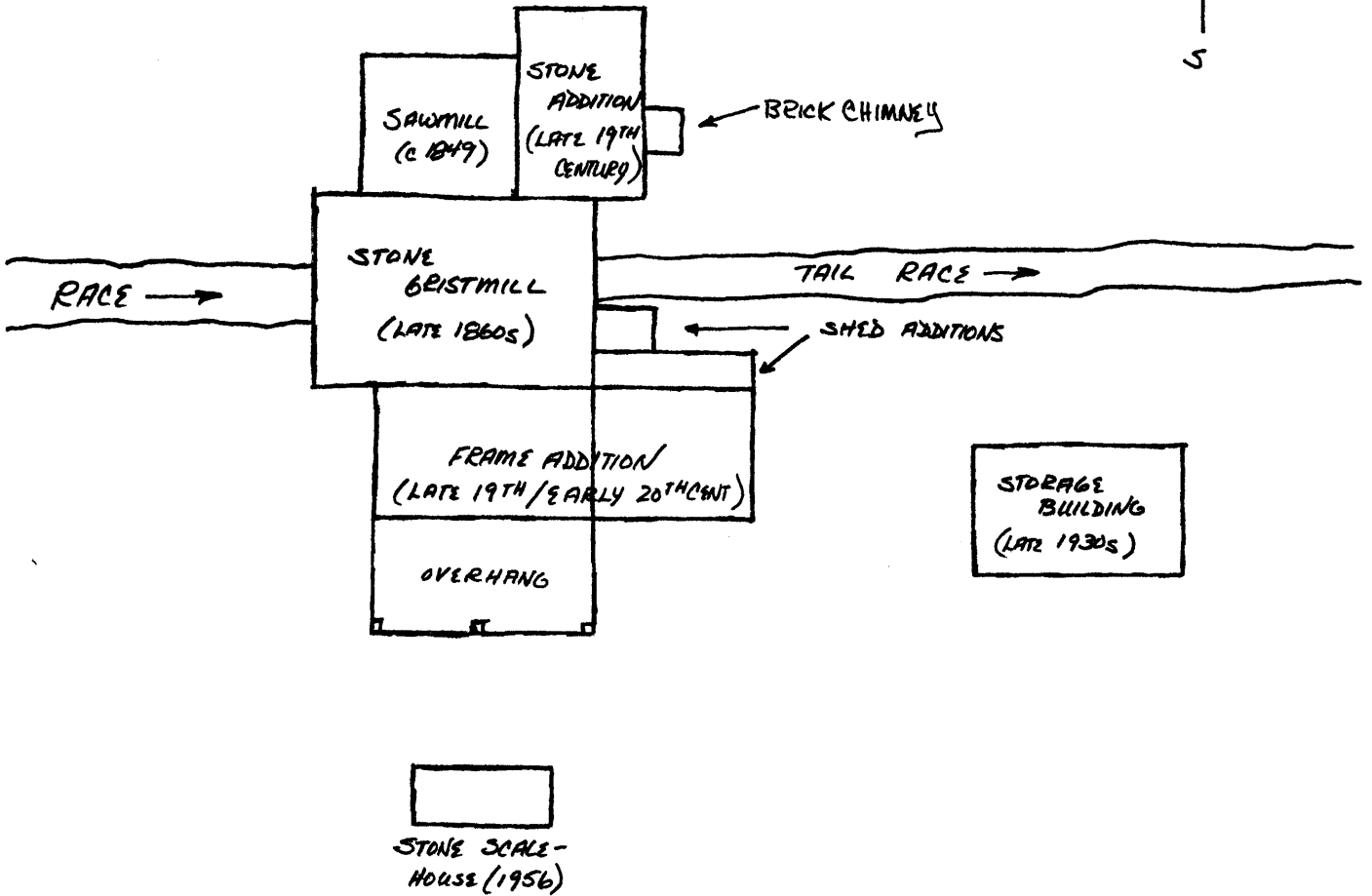
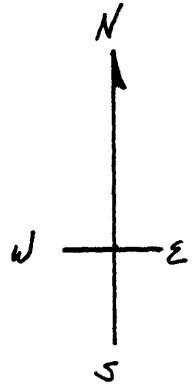


# PAOLI MILL - MILL BUILDINGS

plan



NOT TO SCALE



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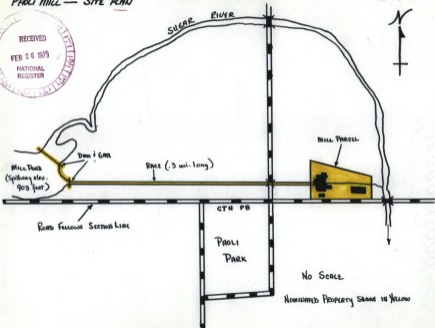
SUN VALLEY PKWY (CTH PB)

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DAD 3/17/78

# PAOLI MILL — SITE PLAN

FILE 30 819



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