

WASHBURN-CROSBY MILLING CO.
(Washburn "A" Mill)
701-729 South First Street
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS NO. MN-69

HABS
MINN,
27-MINAP,
20-

PHOTOGRAPHS, ~~MEASURED DRAWINGS~~ AND
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

ASBUT
EDUCATION

Washburn-Crosby Milling Complex
(Washburn-Crosby Milling Company)
701-729 First Street South at Portland Avenue
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-69

Addendum to

Washburn-Crosby Milling Company
701-729 First Street South at Portland Avenue
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS
MINN,
27-MINAP,
30-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE Minnesota		COUNTY Hennepin	TOWN OR VICINITY Minneapolis
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) WASHBURN-CROSBY MILLING COMPANY			HABS NO. MN-69
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE Washburn "A" Mill Complex			
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) First Street South, at Portland Avenue			
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) 1870's (National Register nomination)*		ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE)	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) This complex represents the growth and development of General Mills, Inc, and the radical transformations of the flour milling industry in the late 19th & early 20th centuries that made it a modern production industry. The Washburn "A" mill is the structure remaining*			
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)			
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) rock-faced limestone, heavy wood beam construction			
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) 7 story, rectangular building			
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE 1 story, 3 bay wide monitor atop roof, segmentally arch windows, walls that taper from 5 ft. thick at base to 20in. thick at top			
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) heavy wood beam construction visible throughout, some old machinery including teak sifting machines manufactured by the Great Western Mfg. Co. of Leavenworth, Kansas.			
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES *The mill building was originally constructed in 1874, but was rebuilt after a disastrous explosion and fire leveled it in 1878. The interior was later rebuilt in 1928 after it was gutted by a second fire (the exterior was retained),			
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE Good condition. Used as a warehouse			
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE *from the original complex established by Cadwallader C. Washburn in the 1870's. According to flour milling historian, Herman Steen, technological and organizational innovations undertaken by the Washburn Crosby formed the basis for General Mills becoming largest in the world.			
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) National Register nomination, prepared by			
COMPILER, AFFILIATION C. Lavoie, Historian, HABS/HAER			DATE Jan. 1989

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
WASHBURN-CROSBY MILLING COMPLEX

HABS No. MN-69

Note: Addendum to a one page report transmitted to the Library of Congress in 1991.

Location: 701-729 First Street South at
Portland Avenue
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

Present Owner: Riverside Industries, Inc.
P.O. Box 1125
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55440

Present Occupant: Riverside Industries, Inc.
leased to General Mills Corporation

Significance: The Washburn-Crosby Milling Complex was established by Cadwallader C. Washburn in the 1870's. This complex is an important link between the Washburn-Crosby Milling Company of the 19th century and the vast operations of the present-day General Mills Corporation.

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

See HABS Nos. MN-69-A-J for specific information on individual structures within the milling complex.

B. Historical Context:

In 1849 when Minnesota began to look like a promising place in which to have interests, a congressman from Alton, Illinois, Robert Smith, developed a long-distance love of the Falls of St. Anthony. On the representation that he wanted a farm on which to establish his family, he was able to persuade the Secretary of War to lease him the government mill and a large tract of land on the west bank. Actually, he never occupied the land or operated the mill. In 1851, having sought outright title to the best water power sites for a modest \$750, he leased them to Calvin Tuttle.

The properties which Smith had spent so much ingenuity in acquiring seem to have not served him except as items to be juggled nervously in endless dealings with creditors. In 1855 he became eager to sell eighty-nine acres of his land and, with them, the water power privileges. Cadwallader C. Washburn paid well and promptly, not realizing how long it would be before their active utilization could begin. For the purpose of leasing his power rights to mill operators he formed the Minneapolis Mill Company and a year later his cousin, Dorilus Morrison, entered into partnership with him. The corporation, chartered on February 27, 1856, had Smith as president

though he remained the most silent of the partners. Nine years later Washburn bought out his partner and invested an additional \$100,000 in the construction of the Washburn "B" Mill, then the largest flour mill west of Buffalo, New York. They called it "Washburn's Folly" for, as everyone in the frontier village of Minneapolis knew, a substantial stone mill of six stories, costing that much money, could not possibly prosper. Over the next decades, however, Washburn's milling operations revolutionized the flour industry, enabling 19th-century Minnesota millers to produce a higher quality flour from the hard spring wheat grown in the area.

Because the midwestern wheat was of a coarser variety than the softer New England winter wheat, Washburn was forced to find innovative ways to mill his wheat to create a similar high grade flour. Until then, the local mills had produced a discolored coarse wheat good mostly for bread only.

With the building of a new mill or rebuilding of a destroyed mill, Washburn was able to incorporate the latest advances in milling plus experiment himself with techniques and machinery. This determination to constantly improve through research and development led to the opening of a testing room (1893) and the first milling research program (1898) in the industry.

Also important were the company's marketing and advertising programs. With increased domestic surpluses, Washburn sent a representative to England to secure export rights. Thus the company was allowed to continue to expand as others worried about surpluses.

On August 19, 1880, Washburn Crosby created its own brand name - Gold Medal Flour - and thus eliminated the middleman and created a name for itself. 1893 saw Washburn, Crosby and Co. become the first milling company to advertise its flour nationally (in the Ladies Home Journal). Other advertising techniques included popular slogans such as "Eventually - Why not now?" and "Kitchen Tested" which referred to the research and development department - Betty Crocker Kitchens - the company's symbol of quality.

Diversification allowed vast expansions and growth of the corporation, until in 1928, when the corporation was reorganized and merged with other national mills to create a milling combination known as the General Mills Corporation. In 1937 General Mills was reorganized to become the operating company responsible for nationwide policy. Today General Mills ranks as a leading American industry with a fully diversified line of services and products.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

See HABS Nos. MN-69-A-J for specific information on individual structures within the milling complex.

Buildings within the complex include the following:

- MN-69-A Washburn "A" Mill (1878-1880)
- MN-69-B Mill Office (1880)
- MN-69-C West Engine House (1885)
- MN-69-D East Engine House (1894)
- MN-69-E Wheel House (1911)
- MN-69-F No. 1 Elevator (1906-1908)
- MN-69-G Feed Elevator (1928)
- MN-69-H Humboldt Mill (1878)
- MN-69-I Wheat House (1881)
- MN-69-J Utility Building (1914)

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

See HABS Nos. MN-69-A-J for sources of information.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5142, Historical Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Gary Anderson, Patricia Anderson, Kevin Donahue and Lisa McNelis, University of Minnesota, March 1986.