

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: McMichael Grain Elevator

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

Grain Elevator Design in Minnesota

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 205 Main Avenue NorthCity or town: Harmony State: MN County: FillmoreNot For Publication: Vicinity: **3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:**Date**_____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:**Date**_____
Title :**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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(s)

☐

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☒

Object

☐

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

0

Noncontributing

0

buildings

0

0

sites

1

0

structures

0

0

objects

1

0

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: storage

COMMERCE: warehouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Wooden Cribbed Elevator

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: _____

Foundation: STONE: limestone

Walls: METAL: steel

Roof: METAL: steel

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) "Grain Elevator Design in Minnesota" defines characteristics of grain elevator design that relate to the historical significance of the structure. The McMichael Grain Elevator is an example of traditional wood frame country grain elevator construction with all of its essential historic character defining features (workhouse, headhouse, driveshed, storage bins) preserved intact. The design emphasizes function over form and there is very little in the way of exterior detailing (Photos 1-5 & Fig. 4-7). The internal grain bins are crib-framed and have a total storage capacity of 10,000 bushels (approximately 12,500 cubic feet). Originally covered with wood shiplap siding and wood shingles, the entire structure is presently metal-clad. The foundation walls around the base of the workhouse are made of rough-cut fieldstone laid in irregular courses. Two historic structural components, the elevator office and the powerhouse, have been removed and the existing balloon-framed driveshed and concrete driveway are twentieth-century construction. On its west end the original workhouse has been enlarged with a balloon-framed addition built over a crawl-space. These alterations notwithstanding, the core of the elevator has not been substantially altered since its construction. The McMichael Elevator retains critical design elements that demonstrate its historical integrity.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

Narrative Description

The basic functions of the country grain elevator were to receive, store, and ship grain harvested on local farms. The grain arrived at the elevator in farm wagons (later farm trucks) that were unloaded into the receiving pit; the grain was then conveyed to an elevating leg which transferred it into the elevator's internal storage bins. To load-out the grain for shipment, the elevating process was reversed and the bulk grain was discharged through a system of metal spouts into railcars lined up alongside the elevator. Historically, the building also housed important office functions related to grain marketing. In addition to grain handling, elevator operations included various sideline business ventures. Later in its history, the McMichael Elevator was used primarily as a feed mill where animal feed products were processed, stored, and sold to farmers.

While no as-built plans or original construction records are known to exist, the design of the McMichael Elevator is in all respects typical of small grain elevators erected throughout the Midwest, where cribbed wooden elevators were a common sight along the railroads built through grain producing regions. The names of the architect and builder are unknown, but the elevator owners would likely have employed a professional to superintend the original construction; and most if not all of the McMichael company's line elevators probably shared the same basic design, based on a more or less standardized plan.¹ Old photographs document some of the changes made to the McMichael Elevator's exterior; however, no interior views are known to exist. Historical maps and aerial photographs show the elevator and its setting in plan-view.

The heart of the grain elevator is the tower-like workhouse (also known as the "working house" or "main house"), which encloses the ground floor spaces where most of the grain receiving and unloading operations took place. The building footprint is approximately 38 ft. long and 28 ft. wide. The workhouse contains the receiving pit (commonly referred to as the "boot") into which farmers emptied their grain wagons (later trucks) and the bottom part of the vertical conveyor which lifted the grain to the top of the elevator. The smaller, gable-roofed headhouse ("cupola") is situated atop the workhouse, set slightly forward of the elevator's center of mass. The peak of the headhouse roof is approximately 65 ft. above ground level. So named for its position at the "head" of the elevator, it is distinguishable by its gable roof and windows. Within the headhouse are the upper portion of the elevator leg and the rotating funnel or chute which directed the grain into the storage bins. Its position above the grain storage area allowed the grain to be distributed into the storage bins by force of gravity. The headhouse was also where the grain was weighed and graded, and grain stored in the elevator was sometimes moved from one bin to another, using the leg. When the grain was off-loaded into railcars or trucks, the grain exited from the headhouse through chutes in the south wall of the workhouse. A simple wooden ladder provides

¹ Robert M. Frame, III, "Grain Elevators in Minnesota," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Section E, p 8.

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

interior access from the working floor to the headhouse. The original window and door openings appear to have been retained.

Structurally, the elevator is an amalgam of timber, crib, and balloon framing constructed with sawed pine lumber (Photos 7–8). The principal structural support system for the workhouse and headhouse consists of heavy timber frames similar to those used in building traditional wooden barns and mills. Strong and durable, the frames are built upon stone footings and carry nearly the entire structural load of the grain bins and elevating machinery. At some point during the early 1900s the timber framing in the basement and crawlspace was reinforced with steel I-beams to improve stability and increase the structure's load bearing capacity (Photo 11). The exterior walls, on the other hand, are balloon-framed with two-inch dimensional lumber and all of the floors (except in the driveshed) are made of one-inch planking laid over two-inch joists. The roofs are constructed with all-common rafters. The mass and proportions of the combined workhouse-headhouse produces the iconic "prairie skyscraper" silhouette. Where exposed, the wood framing appears to be white pine; the wood is soft, fibrous, and covered with a distinctive reddish-brown patina. The circular kerf marks and machine-cut iron nails indicate ca. 1880 construction. There is little evidence of decay or water damage caused by roof leaks or insects. Very little routine maintenance appears to have been carried out in recent years and the interior surfaces are coated with a thick layer of dust and detritus. The floors in the workhouse and headhouse are thickly mantled with accumulations of bird and rodent droppings.

The elevator was designed to provide economical bulk storage for wheat and other agricultural products in separate but interconnected wooden bins. Consequently, most of its volume is taken up by the twelve grain storage bins, which provide a total storage capacity of about 10,000 bushels (roughly 600,000 lbs.) of wheat. Having multiple storage units made it possible for the elevator to handle different varieties of grain which could also be segregated on the basis of moisture content and other qualities. The grain bins are arranged upright in rows and appear to be similar in size. The three bins at the west end of the workhouse were apparently added after the elevator was originally built, most likely in 1911 (Figure 3, Photo 9). The top of each bin is connected with the distribution system in the headhouse and the bottom extends down through the ceiling of the workhouse. The bottoms of the bins are fitted with hoppers, which are tapered to prevent grain kernels from becoming stuck during unloading. All of the bins are crib-framed with two-inch pine lumber, a process sometimes referred to as "stacked" construction, an important historic character defining feature in traditional wooden grain elevators. The interlocking two-by-six boards are laid flat, one on top of the other, and spiked together at the corners (Photo 6). The cribwork is strong, durable and water-resistant and enhances the elevator's overall structural rigidity.

As built, the workhouse was supported by a fieldstone foundation made of rough-cut dolostone. The stonework screens the in-ground receiving pit and elevator boot and helps carry the weight of the workhouse floor and the exterior walls. The stone was probably quarried locally and hand-dressed on-site before being laid in irregular courses; the joints are filled with stone chips and lime mortar. Some of the stones have become loosened and there is visible evidence of repair work (Photo 12). Although unsightly, this condition does not appear to be endangering the elevator's structural integrity. The addition on the west side of the workhouse was constructed

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

without any foundation walls and is supported by concrete piers set upon concrete footings (Photo 13).

The primary function of the elevator's exterior walls and roof are to shelter the interior storage bins and grain handling machinery against weather and intrusion. The original wall cladding material, as shown in old photographs, was wood (probably drop siding, a popular type of weatherboard product). The roofs were covered with machine-cut wooden shingles. While wood siding and roofing would have doubtless made the elevator weatherproof, the boards and shingles would have been susceptible to warping and decay over time—more importantly, they represented a potential fire hazard. Catastrophic grain elevator fires and explosions caused by lightning strikes and by sparks or burning brands given off by steam locomotives were common and by the 1890s fire insurance companies were offering grain elevator owners reduced rates if they used fire-proof materials for roofing and siding. The McMichael Elevator was most likely made an "iron-clad" elevator sometime during the early decades of the twentieth century—unfortunately, the conversion from wood to steel is not documented in historical records or photographs. The existing sheet metal cladding is typical of the "elevator sheet" products made of lightweight galvanized steel that became widely available during the early twentieth century. The sheets are nailed directly onto the studs and rafters with galvanized wire nails. There is some rust and corrosion and a few of the roofing sheets are missing, admitting rain, snow, birds, and rodents. In its current condition, the wall and roof systems are structurally stable but do not provide a fully weather resistant enclosure.

Like most other country grain elevators, the subject property has been structurally modified over the years. The elevator originally contained an office which, in addition to serving as the operator's headquarters, may have also contained retail space and a storeroom. The 1931 fire insurance underwriter's map shows the elevator office, coal storage shed and powerhouse as structural appendages on the west and east sides of the working house. Their existence is also recorded on early state highway construction plans and aerial photographs flown between 1938 and 1968. The ghost of the gable-end of the office/coal shed roof is still clearly visible on the west-facing wall of the workhouse. No traces of the powerhouse survive. Assessing the historical integrity of interior features is somewhat problematic due to the lack of original construction documents. The original grain receiving area was probably little more than a wooden shed with a lean-to roof and a plank floor where horse-drawn farm wagons made their deliveries to the elevator. After inspection and weighing, the grain would have been unloaded manually, by shoveling the bulk grain into the dump pit through a hole in the workhouse floor. According to newspaper reporting, "dump logs" were first installed in 1907—these were narrow wooden ramps built flush with the driveway floor that allowed the elevator operator to tilt the front of the wagon upwards, dumping its load into the receiving pit. Dump scales were added in 1911. The configuration of this part of the elevator probably remained largely unchanged until the 1930s, by which time trucks had replaced wagons and the entire receiving area had to be rebuilt on a larger scale with modern materials. The replacement driveshed is balloon-framed and features corrugated metal siding and roofing, large service doors at both ends, and a poured-in-place concrete floor and driveway. The enclosed truck dumping area is approximately 14 ft. wide and 38 ft. long and provides about 20 ft. of overhead clearance. The driveshed construction appears

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

to have included renovation of the dump pit and reinforcement of the workhouse framing system with steel I-beams.

The workhouse roof retains its original gable shape and its ridgeline is oriented parallel to the axis of the elevator. As noted previously, the roof covering the headhouse has been altered from its as-built, cross-gabled configuration; placed slightly forward of the center of the elevator's mass, it matches the orientation and pitch of the main roof. The driveshed roof has a half-gable (lean-to) roof with a normal pitch. None of the roofs have gutters, downspouts, lightning rods or other details. Wooden sash windows with glass panes provide daylight and ventilation in the headhouse and help ventilate the area above the grain storage bins.

The leg ("bucket elevator") is the elevator's principal piece of machinery (Photo 10). It is essentially an endless vertical conveyor belt consisting of two pulleys, one in the boot (underneath the workhouse floor) and the other in the headhouse, over which runs a continuous chain belt. Buckets attached to the belt scoop up the grain in the boot and carry it to the head, where it is directed into spouts, through which it is discharged into the storage bins (Photo 14). As built, the elevator machinery would have been horse-powered but at some point in the last century a gasoline engine was installed and the entire plant was also wired for electricity. The existing elevator leg is driven by an electric motor and is not original equipment. The original elevator leg was enclosed in a wooden housing which has been replaced with a steel casing. One of the framing boards next to the leg bears the hand-lettered inscription, "John Weise 1935 / Harmony, Minn.," which probably indicates the date of installation. Some of the other mechanical equipment also appears to be of mid-twentieth century origin. Old photographs show the elevator equipped with a cyclone dust collector and a grain drier which are no longer extant.

The vacant grain elevator presently occupies a small lot covering 0.10 acres, situated at the intersection of First Avenue, Main Avenue, and US Highway 52, near the northern edge of Harmony's central business district. The elevator was located within the original railroad right-of-way, a short distance from the railroad depot (still standing at 90 Second Street NW), where it formed part of a row of three country grain elevators erected alongside the railroad siding (Photo 1, Fig. 10). A narrow gravel drive between the elevator and the historic depot marks the route of the abandoned railroad. The building footprint covers most of the parcel and the surrounding area has been substantially altered by grading and filling associated with nearby highway, street, and utility construction.

The McMichael elevator is in a good overall state of preservation. Its primary architectural character-defining features (workhouse, headhouse, and drive shed) remain intact and the structural system appears to be sound. In its current condition the building retains a high degree integrity in the aspects design, workmanship, materials, and feeling integrity, particularly when compared to other 19th century country grain elevators. Much of the original timber framing remains; more importantly, all of the crib-framed interior grain storage bins (a critical historic design feature of the elevator) have been preserved intact. While the original wood exterior wall cladding and roofing have been replaced with sheet metal and equipment has been upgraded through the years, these changes occurred during the property's period of historical significance. The elevator has never been moved and retains integrity of location. However, the streets near

McMichael Grain Elevator

Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN

County and State

the property have been reconstructed in recent years ad the tracks have been removed. Both of these changes have diminished the integrity of feeling and association. Overall, the property maintains good integrity and meets the MPDF requirements.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore 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.)

- ☐ 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1879-1977

Significant Dates

1879 (construction)

1977 (railroad abandoned)

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The McMichael Grain Elevator qualifies for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places on the basis of its historical and architectural values. It clearly meets the registration requirements for the country elevator property type delineated in the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Grain Elevator Design in Minnesota."

The elevator's historic significance under National Register **Criterion A** is the product of its association with the broad patterns of agricultural and transportation history, specifically the development of grain farming and railroads in southeastern Minnesota during the late nineteenth century, themes delineated in the statewide historic context "Railroads and Agricultural Development." From the perspective of local community history, the McMichael elevator illustrates the importance of the Reno-Preston railroad line in shaping the early history of the town of Harmony and surrounding rural townships. It is also significant for its association with the A. & T. McMichael Grain Company of McGregor, Iowa, an important regional grain trading firm.

The property meets National Register **Criterion C** as a well-preserved example of the wooden crib-framed country grain elevator property type described in the previously referenced "Grain Elevator Design in Minnesota" multiple property study. Furthermore, it illustrates the changes in technology and process brought on by decades of use. Built in 1879, it is the oldest known surviving example of the property type in Fillmore County. The property is in a good state of preservation and retains integrity of those physical characteristics necessary to convey its historic significance, specifically the functional arrangement of the workhouse, interior storage bins, headhouse and driveshed, and its traditional wood framed construction. Although it has been altered from its original appearance, the elevator nevertheless possesses the physical characteristics required to strongly represent the historic context.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The following timeline provides a chronological outline of the McMichael elevator's historical development:

- 1879 Grain elevator built at Harmony for the A. & T. McMichael Grain Company
- 1914 McMichael Elevator purchased by Thomas Harsted
- 1917 Elevator purchased by Harmony Feed & Fuel Company
- 1935 Modernization of elevator leg and grain handling machinery (approximate date)
- 1975 Harmony Feed & Fuel renamed Harmony Agri Services, Inc.
- 1977 Railroad abandoned
- 2019 McMichael Elevator donated to the City of Harmony

Based on the available documentary evidence, it can be stated unequivocally that the subject property was built simultaneously with construction of the Caledonia, Mississippi & Western

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

(CM&W) narrow-gauge railroad and was one of two grain elevators erected on the siding adjacent to the Harmony station during the winter of 1879-80. Throughout the 19th century, railroads constructed through newly settled and developing agricultural regions sought to attract grain elevators by offering them land and privileges. At Harmony station, the CM&W provided the building sites for both elevators (all of the real estate along the siding was part of the railroad's right-of-way); the elevator owners most likely furnished the construction labor and materials. Work on the McMichael elevator may have begun prior to the sale of the first platted lots in mid-November and was still underway the following February, according to local newspaper reporting.² The names of the architect and contractor are not mentioned in any of the local newspaper reporting and no original construction documents survive. However, a brief notice printed in the Preston newspaper suggests that a certain Mr. Shaw, who was in charge of one of the grain elevators in Preston, may have also overseen construction of the McMichael elevator in Harmony, where he was seriously injured in a fall in late December. Construction of the elevator was well underway by the time the first train rolled into Harmony station on December 26, 1879.³

With a storage capacity of 10,000 bushels, the McMichael elevator was relatively small in comparison with other Midwestern line elevators, which often held between 20,000 and 40,000 bushels of wheat. It was designed on the basis of what the owners predicted was the Harmony area's potential for grain production and was comparable in size to other elevators then being built along the Reno-Preston railroad line. The decision to build modest-sized elevators may have reflected the railroad's freight rates (which were based on the theory of charging "all that the traffic would bear") as well as the chronic shortage of boxcars during the harvest season. The preconstruction planning must have started while Thomas McMichael was residing in Dubuque, where the parent company of the Caledonia, Mississippi & Western Railroad was headquartered. The railroad's engineering department most likely determined the location of the elevator. The total cost of construction was not publicly announced, but an elevator of this size would have likely cost between thirty-five hundred and four thousand dollars. According to the 1912 property tax list, the elevator property (land and building) had an assessed value of just over four thousand dollars, for which T. McMichael & Son was assessed \$45.70.

The McMichael Elevator was built in the style that had become the standard plan for small country elevators and was specially designed for elevating, storing, and loading grain into rail cars. According to the Railroad and Warehouse Commission annual reports, it was part of a chain of line elevators owned and operated by the A. & T. McMichael Grain Company. Although specific documentation is lacking, it is surmised that the elevating machinery was

² See the articles in the *Preston Republican*, November 12, 1879 and December 4, 1879; and the *Chatfield Democrat*, December 13, 1879 and February 14, 1880. Until the railroad right-of-way through the town of Harmony was subdivided, the Milwaukee Road apparently paid the property taxes on all of the grain elevators. Deed records indicate the railroad land along the grain elevator siding was not subdivided until ca. 1910. The Harmony grain elevator owners' names appear on the county personal property tax list for the first time in 1911; *Harmony News*, January 25, 1912.

³ The individual referred to may have been Samuel Valentine Shaw (1820-1889), who immigrated to Fillmore County from Otsego, New York; he is buried in the Crown Hill Cemetery at Preston. Shaw's accident at the elevator construction site was reported in the January 1, 1880 issue of the *Preston Republican*; the article does not identify which elevator he was working on when the accident occurred.

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

originally horse-powered.⁴ The first carloads of grain (harvested in 1879) were shipped early in 1880. Archival documentation for the elevator's day-to-day operations is practically nonexistent. Documentary evidence for changes in the elevator's physical appearance which occurred during its period of historical significance consists almost entirely of articles, notices and advertisements printed in local newspapers. As noted in the foregoing narrative description, photographic and cartographic documentation also exists for important structural modifications which took place after 1914. Some of the building materials (timbers, nails) are datable and thus provide clues for reconstructing the property's developmental history.

The McMichael elevator was the westernmost of the three grain elevators erected along the railroad siding in Harmony between 1879 and 1895 (Fig. 1 - 2).⁵ The other grain elevator built in 1879-80 was operated by McCormick & Company until ca. 1898 and was later merged into the Wolsted Grain Company, forerunner of Harmony Agri-Services, Inc. The third grain elevator was built in 1895 for the E. L. Tollefson Company. All three elevators shared the same basic design elements and were constructed of the same materials. They were small elevators, designed to receive, store, and ship grain in bulk, with storage capacities ranging from 6000 to 12,000 bushels. The principal commodities handled were wheat, barley, oats, and flax. During the twentieth century their operations shifted from grain handling to processing animal feed and all three elevators eventually developed important sideline enterprises, including livestock shipping, feed milling, and retail sales of coal, seed, salt and other merchandise. The middle (McCormick) elevator is non-extant; the 1895 elevator is still standing but has been vacant for several years.⁶ The McMichael elevator was selected for this application based on its prominent location to the entrance to Harmony's Main Avenue and proximity to the Harmony Depot structure (Photo 1, Fig. 5) as well as its superior integrity.

Day-to-day operations at the McMichael elevator were supervised by the elevator manager, a company employee who served as the owner's agent.⁷ The manager was assisted by one or more part-time helpers. Farmers delivered their grain to the elevator in wagons, each wagon containing 100-125 bushels (roughly equal to the amount of grain typically harvested from a five-acre field). By the 1880s, almost all the grain handled by country elevators in southern Minnesota was bought and sold in bulk by weight—there is no record of grain being handled in three-bushel (160 lb.) sacks at any of the Harmony elevators. The transactions were executed at the elevator,

⁴ According to the histories of Houston and Fillmore counties published in 1882, the McMichael grain elevators at Caledonia and Canton were both horse-powered. Although steam powered engines had been used in mills and terminal elevators since before the Civil War, the owners of small country elevators probably could not afford to install the big, heavy and expensive to operate machinery. After 1900, most elevators traded their horses for gasoline or electric motors.

⁵ Plat of Harmony published in *The Standard Atlas of Fillmore County* (Chicago, 1896), 44; reproduced here as Fig. 1; cf. Fig. 2.

⁶ The ownership histories of the three elevators are entwined. All ended up being purchased by the Wolsted family, doing business as Harmony Feed & Fuel Company (est. 1915) and Harmony Agri-Services, Inc. (est. 1975).

⁷ The identities of two of the managers at the McMichael elevator are known: C. B. Hellickson (ca. 1898-1899) and E. R. Means (1913-1914). Hellickson held several local government offices, was president of the First National Bank, and later owned a meat market and the local Ford dealership. Means, who was originally from Spring Valley, appears to have been hired in response to a notice he placed in the "situations wanted" section of *The Grain Dealers Journal* 32 (1914):622, 709, 809.

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

where prices (which fluctuated widely) were determined by market quotes from the Chicago Board of Trade which were communicated daily over the telegraph. Most of the grain was delivered to the elevator between late September and the end of November, although there was also a fair amount of business in the spring, when market prices tended to be highest. If a farmer did not care to sell his grain immediately after harvest, he had the option of storing it at the elevator (for which the elevator charged a fee) or storing it in his own granary. The McMichael elevator's trading territory (i.e., its grain supply area) probably extended over a six-to-eight-mile radius, encompassing all of Harmony Township as well as parts of parts of adjacent townships.

The amount of wheat shipped from the McMichael elevator in any given year cannot be determined. Nevertheless, some idea of the scope and scale of the elevator's business can be extrapolated from the county and regional data provided by agricultural census returns and grain market reports. With the exception of barley, the amount of other cereal grains shipped was probably small. After wheat ceased to be the most important cash crop, hogs claimed the attention of many Fillmore County farmers and for country elevators, shipping hogs and mixing animal feed rations appears to have become more profitable than grain handling. Based on newspaper reports and census data, all of the Harmony grain elevators eventually marketed hogs, which were shipped by train to La Crosse or South St. Paul. The elevator operators generally appear to have paid little attention to the beef cattle industry.

Like most country elevators, the McMichael elevator added sideline ventures to supplement its grain receiving, storage, and shipping business. Processing grain (primarily oats and barley) for animal feed was a traditional grain elevator sideline and after ca. 1915 all of the elevators in Harmony functioned as feed mills, producing rations for livestock. Because of its location near the railroad depot, the elevator was easily supplied with various lines of merchandise, in particular farm supplies. This seems to have been a gradual development—advertisements for elevator sales of coal, salt, fertilizer and other farm supplies do not appear in the Harmony or Preston newspapers until the late 1890s. How much retail trade was actually transacted at the McMichael elevator during the historical period is impossible to estimate.

The curtailment and eventual abandonment of wheat growing in the Harmony area after 1900 led to the McMichael elevator's economic obsolescence. The elevator was offered for sale early in 1914, following a visit by Thomas McMichael and his son, Thomas, junior, who announced their plans to close the elevator by the first of June. They placed an advertisement in *The Grain Dealers Journal*, a widely circulated Chicago-based trade publication, which describes the subject property as a "modern elevator" containing twelve storage bins. The following notice appeared in the April 2 edition of the *Harmony News*: "FOR SALE—Will sell Harmony Elevator and contents – For Terms Inquire of E. R. Means [the elevator agent] – T. McMichel [sic]." The response was apparently not satisfactory and in late June the McMichaels placed another advertisement, which read: "WANTED—Nine farmers with \$500 to buy our Elevator. Ship your own grain and hogs. T. McMichel, Jr."⁸ It is not known if any offers were tendered, but in late

⁸ *The Grain Dealers Journal*, 32 (1914):988; *Harmony News*, April 2, April 9, April 16, 1914, and June 25, 1914. The McMichael elevator in Preston was offered for sale at the same time; *Preston Times*, April 15 and May 13, and July 29, 1914.

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

July the property was purchased by Thomas A. Harstad, a local farmer and entrepreneur, for \$3000 (equal to about seventy-eight thousand dollars in 2020). Two years later, title to the elevator passed into the hands of Joel Wolsted, a well-known Harmony resident whose family owned a growing grain and feed business.⁹ The Wolsted family eventually acquired all three of the Harmony grain elevators, which formed the core of Harmony Agri Services, Inc.

The history of the Wolsted family's ownership of grain elevators at Harmony can be traced to Ole Joel Wolsted (1852-1922), the son of Norwegian immigrants who was part-owner of the grain elevator built in 1895. This venture was a product of Wolsted's partnership with E. L. Tollefson (1837-1911) of Mabel and operated under the name Tollefson & Company.¹⁰ By 1895, Wolsted was a prosperous farmer with diverse business interests. In 1904, his son, Joel Wolsted (1881-1963) joined Tollefson & Company and took charge of its Harmony grain elevator; according to a story printed in the Preston newspaper, he had been managing a grain elevator northwest of Saint Paul for a year previously.¹¹ In 1909 he founded the Wolsted Grain Company, which in 1915 was renamed Harmony Feed & Fuel Company, reflecting the company's shift from grain dealing to feed milling and coal sales. A prominent Harmony businessman and civic leader in his own right, Joel Wolsted played a pivotal role in the consolidation of the three grain elevators into a single commercial enterprise. Control of the company passed to his son Roderick Daniel Wolsted (1916-1982), whose heirs reorganized the business under the name Harmony Agri-Services, Inc. in 1977.¹²

Historic Context: Wheat Farming and Railroads

The early history of Harmony was closely intertwined with the development of farming and railroads; indeed, at the time of its founding, the chief reason for the town's existence was to provide a growing agricultural district with a conveniently located farm trade center and railway shipping point. Farming was the area's main attraction to early settlers, who began to arrive during the 1850s, when Minnesota was a territory. There was a major surge of population growth after the Civil War and by the end of the 1860s the influx of immigrants had transformed Harmony Township from a sparsely settled wilderness into a bustling rural community with almost a thousand inhabitants. By far the largest proportion of the population growth consisted of farmers, farm laborers, and their families. Most of the arable land in Harmony Township was under cultivation by the 1870s and the amount of improved farmland steadily increased until the end of the century. Early agricultural output was by necessity directed largely toward subsistence but as the farming communities matured ever-increasing amounts of grain and livestock were

⁹ Harstad's purchase was reported in the *Preston Times*, August 5, 1914; news of the sale to Joel Wolsted appeared in the *Harmony News*, August 9, 1917.

¹⁰ Ellef L. Tollefson's family immigrated to Fillmore County from Norway; he opened a general store in Mabel shortly after the town was founded; he later established a private bank and was heavily invested in real estate and other business ventures. Commonly known as "Wolsted's Elevator," the Tollefson and Wolsted grain elevator was taken over by the Equity Cooperative Exchange (a farmer-owned cooperative enterprise) in 1919; ownership of the property apparently reverted to the Wolsted Grain Company sometime in the 1920s.

¹¹ *Preston Times*, July 13, 1904.

¹² Information about the Wolsted family and their connection with the historical development of grain elevators at Harmony was compiled from census data, real estate records, newspaper articles, business directories, fire insurance underwriters maps, and the Harmony Agri-Services website.

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

raised for the local market. While mid-nineteenth century descriptions of Fillmore County unfailingly exhorted its suitability for growing spring wheat as a cash crop, until the arrival of the railroads, poor transportation facilities severely limited farmers' access to good markets—although some of the wheat produced by pioneer farmers undoubtedly found its way to local grist mills, the closest primary grain markets were in Winona and LaCrosse.

Deficiencies in transportation infrastructure notwithstanding, farmers in southeastern Minnesota enthusiastically embraced spring wheat as a staple crop during what has been called the “King Wheat” era. By 1870 Minnesota ranked seventh among the states in wheat production. The first shipment of wheat exported from Fillmore County was marketed on the Chicago exchange in 1858 by Milo White of Chatfield, and by the time of the 1860 census Fillmore County was one of nine Minnesota counties harvesting 100,000 bushels or more of wheat. According to census reports, total wheat production statewide exceeded 2.2 million bushels in 1869; this figure increased to 24 million bushels harvested in 1879, when Minnesota ranked fifth among the states in wheat production. The number of farms in Fillmore County growing wheat greatly increased between the late 1850s and the 1870s, when most local farmers devoted the greater part of their cleared land to the production of grain crops. Excited by rising market prices, it was widely reported that some farmers did not even attempt to grow other crops. In 1878 the editor of the *Rushford Star* proclaimed: “In the history of Fillmore county wheat has never looked as well as now. The yield will be immense and the farmers are, of course, jubilant.” Wheat acreage in Harmony Township increased tremendously during this period. According to the federal census, in 1879 farmers in Harmony Township planted 7322 acres and harvested 60,228 bushels of wheat. For the county as a whole, the census reported 165,904 acres and 1,626,889 bushels of wheat—probably the high-water mark for spring wheat production in the Harmony area. Wheat production declined in subsequent years across southeastern Minnesota due to a combination of factors, including falling market prices, bad weather, and ruinous crop damage caused by insects and plant diseases. At the same time, Minnesota’s wheat belt was rapidly migrating farther west, into the Minnesota and Red River valleys (and eventually the Dakotas). As wheat acreage declined, more land was planted in corn, oats, and hay, the foundation crops of the Corn Belt farming system. Nevertheless, spring wheat was still being grown on farms in the Harmony area in the early 1900s.

Railroads came to southeastern Minnesota comparatively late. The first railway to reach the Mississippi River north of Prairie du Chien was the La Crosse & Milwaukee, which entered LaCrosse in 1857. Railroad construction proceeded slowly in the wake of the Panic of 1857, but the end of the Civil War led to a flurry of railroad building. Construction of the St. Paul & Pacific Railroad (which would later become the “River Division” of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul system) was completed between Saint Paul and La Crescent in 1869-73, affording the first direct route between the Twin Cities and Chicago. Another river road, the Chicago, Clinton, Dubuque & Minnesota, was built along the west side of the Mississippi in 1871; its narrow gauge (3-foot width) tracks connected Dubuque with Lansing, Brownsville, and La Crescent. A narrow-gauge feeder line, the Southern Minnesota Railroad, was constructed in 1866-70, following the valley of the Root River through Hokah, La Crescent, Rushford, Lanesboro, and Spring Valley. In 1878-79 another narrow-gauge branch line, the Caledonia, Mississippi & Western Railroad, was built from “Caledonia Junction” (Reno) on the Mississippi River across

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

southern Houston and Fillmore counties, linking the older settled communities of Caledonia, Spring Grove, and Preston, which overnight became important grain collection and shipping points. By design, construction of the narrow gauge triggered a flurry of townsite development at Newhouse, Mabel, Canton, and Harmony, and each new railway village quickly sprouted one or more grain elevators. In 1880, the Minnesota Valley and the Caledonia, Mississippi & Western were both merged into the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, which operated them as branch lines within its Dubuque Division (later renamed the Southern Minnesota Division) for the next 96 years. The 55.77-mile Reno-Caledonia-Spring Grove-Mabel-Canton-Harmony-Preston line was converted to standard gauge (4 feet 8-1/2 inches) in 1901. Harmony continued to have rail service until the branch line was abandoned by the (soon to be bankrupt) Milwaukee Road in 1976. According to local informants the tracks through Harmony were torn up in 1978.

By 1880, Fillmore County was well served by an integrated system of railroads and grain elevators. The average distance between stations with grain elevators was about eight miles and a majority of the farms were within ten miles of a railroad shipping point. The improved transportation facilities in turn attracted more farmers as well as merchants, shopkeepers, mechanics, artisans, and professionals. Grain dealers quickly dispatched agents to establish new trading territories along the narrow gauge. By the end of the 1890s Minneapolis was the chief market for southeastern Minnesota grain, except that used by the local flouring mills, whose numbers were by then in rapid decline. By the 1920s the Milwaukee Road and other railroads were in direct competition with trucks for shipping grain, although railcars continued to be loaded at the McMichael Elevator until the 1970s.

Historic Context: The A. and T. McMichael Grain Company

The A. & T. McMichael Grain Company was founded in 1878 by two brothers, Alexander and Thomas McMichael. A third brother, George McMichael was employed by the company for a number of years as a local elevator manager but apparently did not have a stake in ownership. The McMichael brothers began their careers as grain merchants during the 1860s when they were living in Brownville, Minnesota. The firm moved its head office to McGregor, Iowa, in the fall of 1880 and the company was managed from there until the early 1900s. Between 1879 and 1914, the company built and operated a network of line elevators in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and South Dakota. Its agents bought wheat, barley, and other cereal grains from farmers, which the firm traded on regional exchanges. In contemporary newspaper stories Alexander and Thomas McMichael are frequently referred to as "heavy" grain dealers, indicating the size of their business was greater than other traders. During the 1890s the firm owned a seat on the Chicago Board of Trade, the most important grain exchange in North America, and reportedly handled up to a million bushels of wheat annually. After Thomas and Alexander dissolved their partnership ca. 1890, the company was renamed T. McMichael & Son, with William M. McMichael replacing his uncle as the firm's junior partner. After William's death in 1898 the company began winding down its grain elevator operations and the last of the company's grain

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

elevators in Minnesota were sold in 1914. T. McMichael & Son remained in the grain trading business, with offices in McGregor and Chicago, until the 1930s.¹³

While the McMichael company apparently did not publish any kind of annual report, some idea of the scope of its grain elevator and warehouse business can be gleaned from the reports issued by the Minnesota Railroad and Warehouse Commission, the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners, and the Railroad Commission of the State of South Dakota, which list the grain shipping stations on the various divisions of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul system (the “Milwaukee Road”). In addition to the elevator at Harmony, the company operated grain handling facilities at Brownsville, Caledonia, Canton, Frontenac, Mabel, Newhouse (originally “Newport”), Preston and Spring Grove, Minnesota; at Dubuque, Lansing, McGregor, New Albin, Postville, Ruthven, Waterville, and Waukon, Iowa; at De Soto, Wisconsin; and in Aberdeen, Alpena, Armour, Bryant, Delano, Emery, Erwin, Ethan, Menno, Mount Vernon, Naples, Oldham, Parkston, Tripp, White Lake, and Willow Lake, South Dakota. Abbreviated descriptions of some of the company’s local operations (as well as biographical data on some of the elevator managers) can be found scattered through the Fillmore, Houston, and Allamakee county histories and in stories printed in local newspapers. Its grain elevators and warehouses are also mentioned in the grain business trade literature, business directories, and gazetteers.

Biographical Information

The three McMichael brothers—Alexander, George, and Thomas—were born and raised at Kirkconnel in the county of Dumfriesshire in southwestern Scotland. Their parents were William and Rachel (Proudfoot) McMichael.¹⁴ The family emigrated to Upper Canada ca. 1852 and settled on the southeast shore of Lake Huron, near Toronto, in what was then Canada West (modern-day province of Ontario). Upper Canada was a popular destination for Scottish emigrants in search of a better life and the McMichaels may have been encouraged to emigrate by family and friends already settled in Canada. By the middle of the 19th century Ontario was an important grain farming region and the family seems to have prospered. In 1860 the three brothers (accompanied by other family members) joined the steady flow of Canadian immigrants to Minnesota and settled at La Crescent in Houston County, where they established themselves as merchants. Soon afterwards they became engaged in grain buying and selling in the village of Brownsville, an important steamboat shipping point two hundred miles below Saint Paul, where they were based until the late 1870s.

Alexander McMichael, the eldest of the three brothers, was born on July 16, 1831. After coming to Minnesota, he went into business with his brothers in Brownsville, where the 1865 *Minnesota*

¹³ The only published history of the company is a brief sketch contained in Alexander’s *History of Clayton County, Iowa* (1882), which states A. & T. McMichael established themselves as grain merchants in McGregor in the fall of 1880 and had grain elevators in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin which handled over a million bushels annually (p. 513). P. M. Naveson included a brief, somewhat garbled account of the McMichael grain business is included in her article, “Newhouse Just Withered Away,” *Winona Daily News*, March 12, 1966.

¹⁴ The family name was the common Anglicization of the Gaelic *MacGille Mhicheil* (“son of the servant of St. Michael”) and there were multiple variations in spelling among the various North American branches of the family. The editors of the *Harmony News* consistently rendered it “McMichel” (possibly a typographical error).

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

Gazetteer and Business Directory lists them doing business as McMichael & Co., dry goods and groceries; the 1878 edition of the same gazetteer identifies the company as A. & T. McMichael, dealers in “produce” (i.e., farm produce, which would have included grain). In 1862 Alexander married Margaret De Lormier (1845-1927) in Dubuque, Iowa. She was the daughter of Pierre-Louis (Peter) De Lormier (1783-1871), a French Canadian who had settled at Dubuque in 1833, where he came to own several businesses and served as mayor in 1847-51. Alexander and Margaret had five children, all but one of whom died young. The family was living in Brownsville at the time of the 1865 and 1870 censuses; in 1873 they moved thirty miles downriver to Lansing, Iowa. According to the Dubuque city directory for 1880, Alexander also maintained living quarters above the company’s office at 595 Main Street, but the family home was in Lansing, where they occupied the fine brick house that is still standing at 371 Diagonal Street (now the Thornton House bed-and-breakfast). Sometime after the partnership with Thomas was dissolved ca. 1890, Alexander became an associate of the Duluth grain baron George Grenville Barnum (1843-1936), founder of the Barnum Grain Company, and for several years he represented Barnum’s interests on the Minneapolis Board of Trade. (Barnum’s company eventually formed part of the foundation for what became General Mills.) Alexander died in 1914 and Margaret passed away in 1927; they, along with their children, are buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery in Lansing. On November 6, 1894, their daughter Bertha (born in 1870) married Charles Donnelly (1869-1939) at her parents’ home in Minneapolis. Born in Wisconsin, Donnelly made a living as a newspaperman before receiving his law degree from Georgetown University and later became a railroad executive; he joined the legal department at the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1903 and was president of the company from 1920 up until his death. Bertha McMichael Donnelly continued to reside at the family home on Saint Paul’s Summit Avenue until her death in 1970.

George McMichael, the middle brother, was born in 1834 and would have been in his teens when the family immigrated to Canada. He was in business with Alexander and Thomas at Brownsville from 1860 until 1863 and in 1864 he established himself as an independent grain and stock dealer in Wabasha, Minnesota. This venture was apparently not entirely successful and he returned to Houston County in 1864. On May 12, 1864 he married Emma Trembley in Caledonia, where he managed one of his brothers’ grain elevators; he later managed the McMichael elevators at Spring Grove and Newhouse for a few years before moving to Saint Paul. George and Emma eventually settled in Frontenac, Minnesota, where the McMichael firm owned a grain elevator; the 1895 state census has them residing at Florence in Goodhue County, and lists George’s occupation as “wheat buyer.” The 1882 *History of Houston County* includes a brief biographical sketch of George McMichael in the section devoted to Caledonia.

Thomas, the youngest of the McMichael brothers, was born on July 15, 1837. The earliest notice of his grain dealing at Brownville dates from 1860 and by 1865 he was the managing partner of McMichael & Company, forerunner of the A. & T. McMichael Grain Company. On January 3, 1861, he married Harriet Powlesland in Dubuque. Born in 1841, Harriet was a native of Devon, England, the daughter of George Powlesland (1815-1882) and Grace Palmer Powlesland (1817-1898); the family immigrated to northeastern Iowa before settling in Crooked Creek Township in Houston County in 1852, where George Powlesland was a farmer, tanner and currier. Thomas and Harriet had six children together, five of whom lived to maturity. The censuses taken in

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

1865, 1870 and 1875 found the family residing in Brownsville.¹⁵ In 1874 he was a patron of A. T. Andreas' famous *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota*, which included a lithograph of his handsome, two-story house in Brownsville. Well known in equestrian sporting circles, McMichael owned trotting horses and served as a judge in the equestrian department at the county fair. He apparently shuttled back and forth between Brownsville, Dubuque, and McGregor until 1880, when he made McGregor his permanent residence and company headquarters.¹⁶ He oversaw the company's grain elevator operations and, in the process, must have acquired a comprehensive knowledge of the grain trading business. His business travel is well documented in Minnesota and Iowa newspapers and in grade trade publications—although his fame as a grain dealer was never as great as that of his contemporaries William Wallace Cargill (1844-1909) or Frank Peavey (1850-1901). He was obviously well liked by the newspapermen in the towns where he owned elevators—with the notable exception of S. W. Kingsbury, publisher of one of the Preston newspapers, who vented the widespread agrarian discontent with grain dealers in a column about the McMichael firm's "artful tax dodging."¹⁷ His hometown newspaper, the *North Iowa Times*, treated him as prominent businessman and a pillar of the community.

The company was renamed T. McMichael & Son ca. 1890 when Alexander left the firm and Thomas' eldest son William moved into the junior partner role. After William's untimely death in 1898, Thomas resumed day-to-day management of the firm, assisted by his surviving son, Thomas McMichael, Jr., who had been living in Lake City, Minnesota. In 1908 the family (Thomas, Sr., Harriet and their daughter Florence) permanently relocated to Denver, Colorado; newspaper stories indicate Mrs. McMichael had lived with her daughter Rachel (born 1873) in Chicago (ostensibly for health reasons) from time to time since the late 1890s. The editor of the McGregor newspaper expressed regret at losing "this estimable family." From his new home in Denver, McMichael continued to visit his remaining business interests in Iowa and Minnesota until the last of its grain elevator assets were liquidated. In 1910 an erroneous report of his death appeared in the McGregor newspaper, prompting the editors of *The Grain Dealers Journal* to announce: "Press reports that T. McMichael was dead are groundless, as the pioneer grain dealer, since his reported death, is alive and well, with his family in Colorado, as his many friends will read with pleasure." His last recorded appearance in Harmony occurred in May, 1914, shortly before the elevator was sold. Thomas McMichael died at his home in Denver on November 23, 1923; Harriet died on July 6, 1926. Their daughter Florence continued to reside in Denver until her death, aged 105, in 2012.

¹⁵ The following item appeared in the September 3, 1870 issue of the *Houston County Journal* (Caledonia): "Thomas McMichael, of Brownsville, is refitting his elevator, and will be in the wheat trade this season, more extensively than ever. We recommend Mc [sic] to the farmers of this vicinity."

¹⁶ *North Iowa Times* (McGregor), November 11, 1880. The Dubuque city directory for 1880 lists A. & T. McMichael, grain and produce dealers, with offices at 595 Main Street, and shows Alexander residing above the office, while Thomas had a house on Locust Street between 9th and 10th streets.

¹⁷ See the "About Taxes" editorial in the *Courier*, April 14, 1898. The editor of the competing Preston newspaper described McMichael (whom he had just met for the first time) as "a bearded, brainy, jolly Scotchman" and contrasted this characterization with the "populist stories told by the residents"; *Preston Times*, November 28, 1898.

McMichael Grain Elevator

Fillmore County, MN

Name of Property

County and State

William M. (Will) McMichael, son of Thomas and Harriet McMichael, was born in Brownsville in 1863. The details of his early life, education, and career are not known. He became junior partner in the McMichael grain dealing business ca. 1890 and briefly moved from McGregor to Chicago, where the company had an office in the Board of Trade Building. He was apparently the driving force behind T. McMichael & Son's expansion of its grain elevator business into eastern South Dakota. His death by suicide in 1898 was widely reported in regional newspapers and trade publications. According to his hometown newspaper, McMichael had recently closed his office in Chicago and moved back to McGregor, where on the morning of August 4 he had come to his downtown office, gone upstairs and shot himself in the heart. Unbridled speculation in grain futures was one of the causes of the Panic of 1893, which saw the collapse of grain prices—by 1898 the market rate for a bushel of wheat had dipped below 12 cents on the Chicago Board of Trade exchange. William's son John F. McMichael, "a great favorite" of his grandfather, managed the company's elevator at Preston for a time before relocating to Denver, where he died in an automobile accident on July 29, 1913.

National Register Eligibility

In summary, the McMichael Grain Elevator qualifies for listing in the National Register under **Criterion A** because of its association with the agriculture, which spurred the development and sustained the town of Harmony. It is also eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of engineering because of its association with the design and construction of wooden crib-framed country grain elevators, an important historic property type. The elevator attained historical significance when it was built during the winter of 1879-80 and it was used continuously for grain storage and shipping until the 1980s; its specific association with railroad transportation lasted until the Reno-Preston line was abandoned in the late 1970s. For purposes of National Register registration, the property is considered locally significant and its period of significance lasted from 1879 to 1977. The property satisfies the registration requirements for wooden crib-framed country grain elevators delineated in the National Register multiple property documentation form, "Grain Elevator Design in Minnesota," and retains historic integrity of the essential physical characteristics necessary to convey its significance.¹⁸

¹⁸ See the National Register registration requirements for country grain elevators in Robert M. Frame, III, "Grain Elevators in Minnesota," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form0, Section E, pages 13-15.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Frame, Robert M., III. "Grain Elevators in Minnesota." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form 1990.

Johnson, Millicent Yates. *Let's Have Harmony: A Centennial History*. Harmony Centennial Committee, 1996.

Minnesota Digital Newspaper Hub. Digitally scanned Minnesota newspapers, 1836-1922. Searchable website created by the Minnesota Digital Newspaper Project, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

Vogel, Robert C. "Intensive Survey and National Register Evaluation of the Historic McMichael Grain Elevator, Harmony, Minnesota." Report prepared for the Harmony Area Historical Society (2020).

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 by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): FL-HRC-008

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 579938 | Northing: 4823069 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the nominated property form a quadrilateral polygon with four unequal sides, enclosing an area of 0.10 acres. Beginning at the southeastern corner of the parcel, the boundary runs north along the western boundary of the highway right-of-way; thence northwest along the lot line of the adjacent parcel; thence southwest along the lot line of the other adjacent parcel; thence southeast along the route of the abandoned railroad line (see Photo 1, Fig. 8 - 10).

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries described above encompass the site historically occupied by the McMichael Grain Elevator.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Robert C. Vogel
organization: Pathfinder CRM, LLC.
street & number: 319 South Division Avenue
city or town: Spring Grove state: MN zip code: 55974
e-mail rcvogel@pathfindercrm.com
telephone: 507-498-3810
date: November 2022

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Index of Figures

Name of Property	McMichael Grain Elevator
City or Vicinity:	Harmony
County:	Fillmore
State:	MN

Figure 1. Historical map of elevator row, excerpted from the plan of Harmony village published in the 1896 county atlas. The McMichael Elevator is at the western end of the grain elevator complex.

Figure 2. Historical photograph of “elevator row” ca. 1900; photograph in the possession of the Harmony Area Historical Society.

Figure 3. Floor Plan. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

Figure 4. North Elevation. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

Figure 5. South Elevation. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

Figure 6. East Elevation. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

Figure 7. West Elevation. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

Figure 8. Property Location. Copy from USGS Harmony, MN-IA Quadrangle 7.5 minute series
1:24,000 scale NAD83

Figure 9. Property Location/Boundary. Fillmore county MN tax map Parcel number 15.0088.020

Figure 10. Site Plan. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

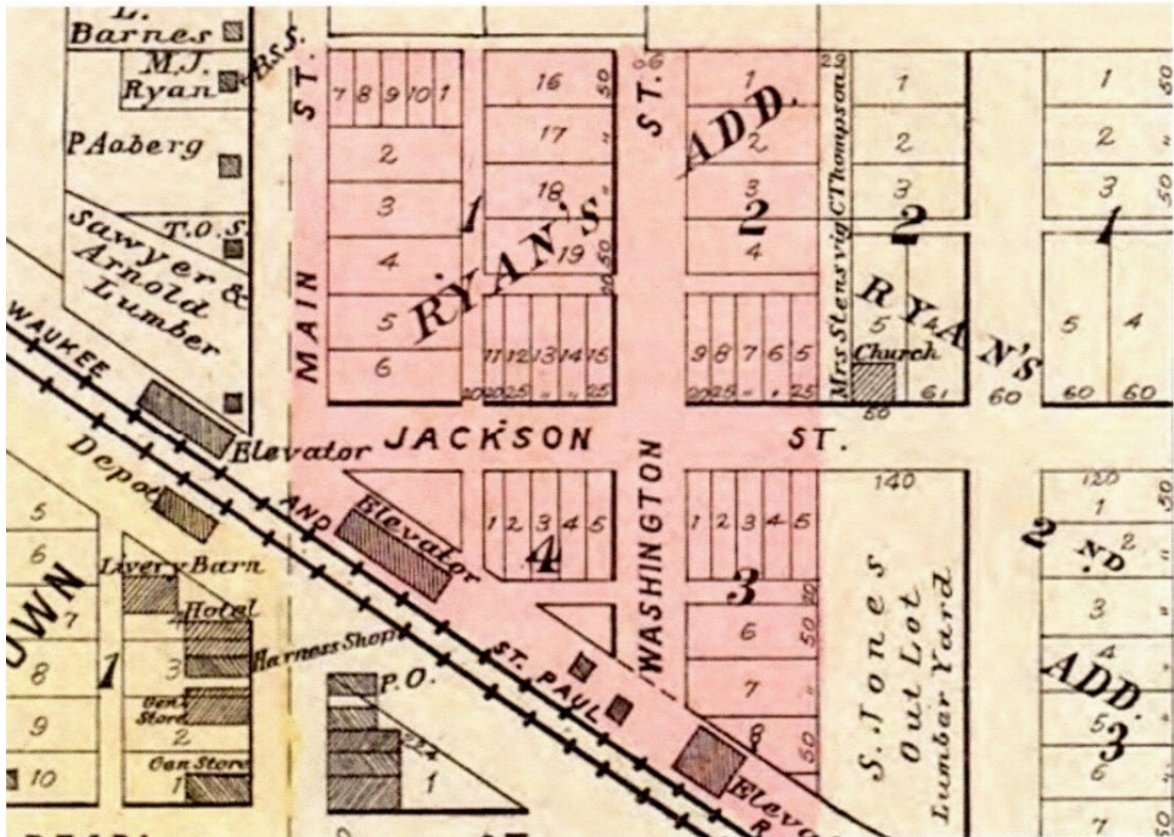


Figure 1. Historical map of elevator row, excerpted from the plan of Harmony village published in the 1896 county atlas. The McMichael Elevator is at the western end of the grain elevator complex. (See Statement of Significance, footnote 6, supra.)

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

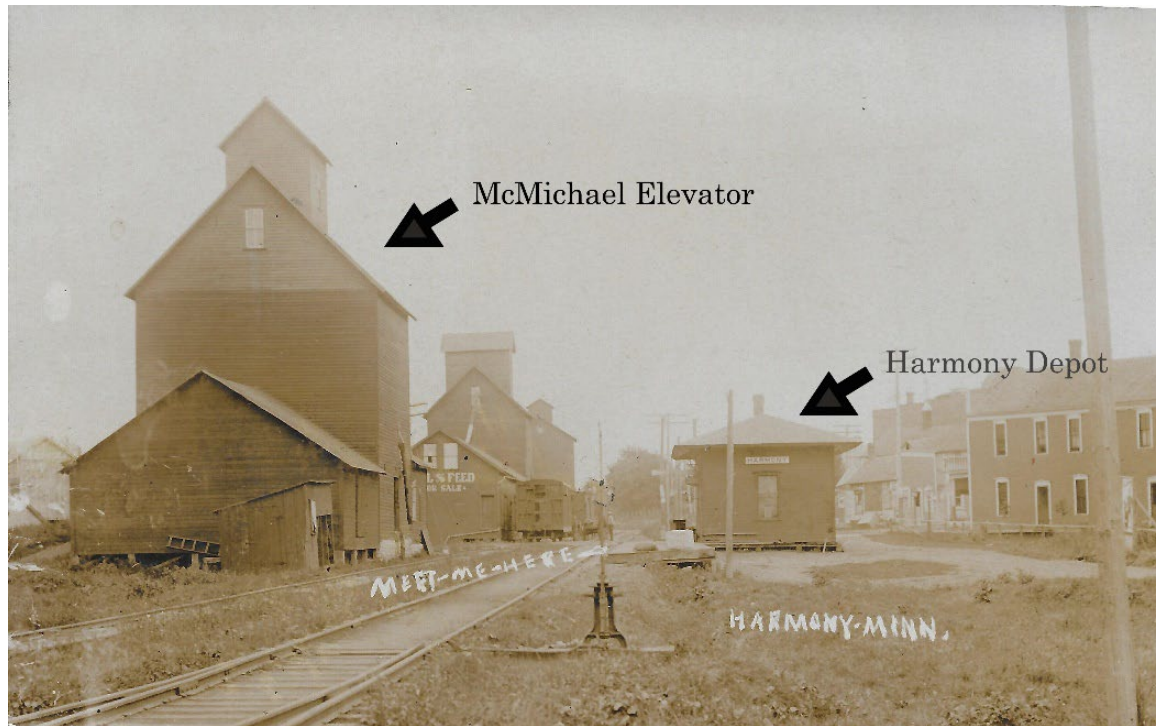


Figure 2. Historical photograph of elevator row, from a ca. 1900 photo in the possession of the Harmony Area Historical Society. Facing east. (See Statement of Significance, footnote 5, supra)

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

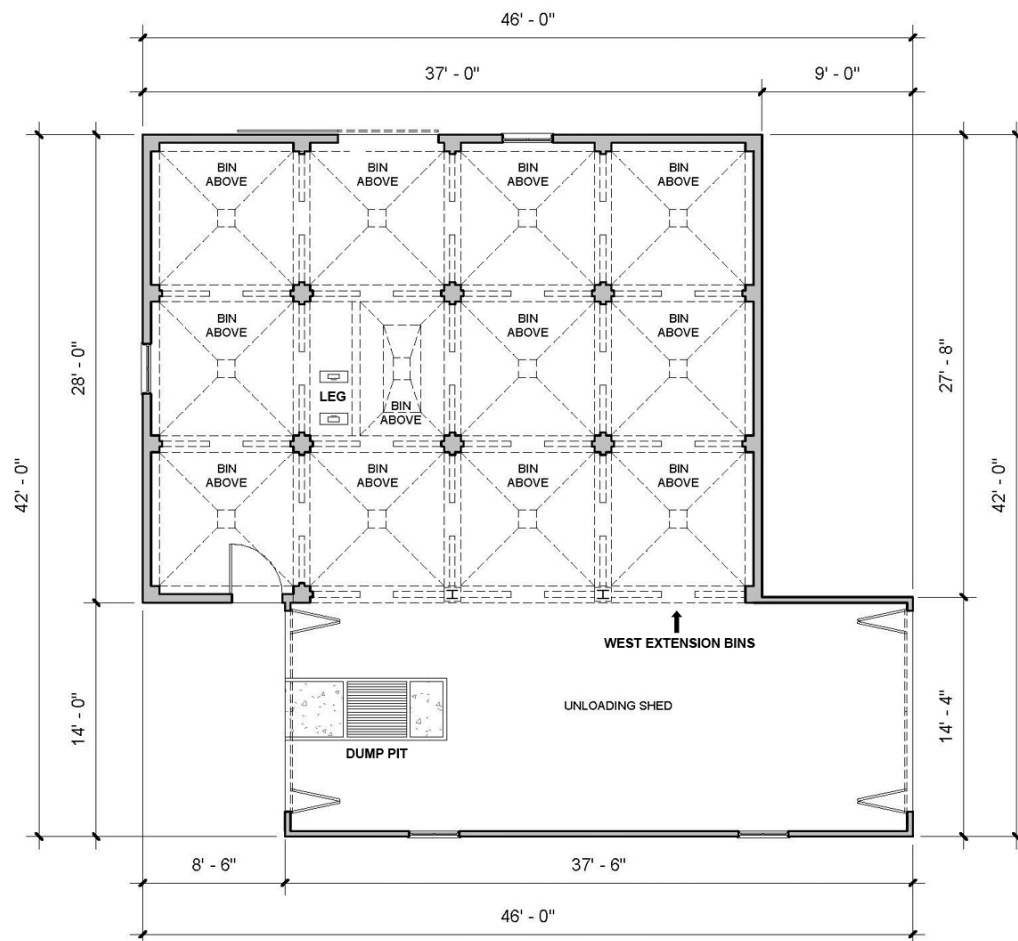


Figure 3. Floor Plan. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

Name of Property

County and State

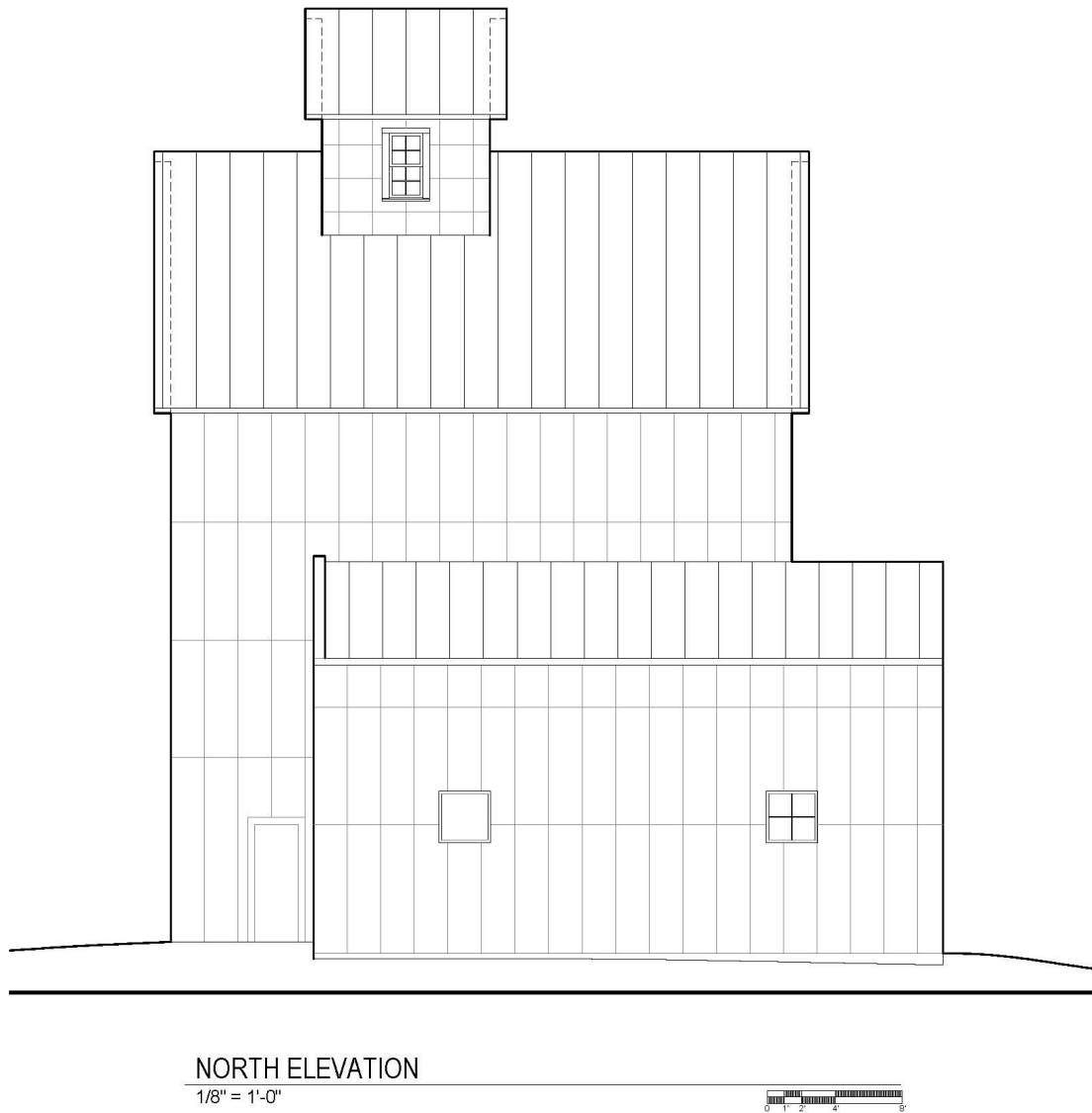
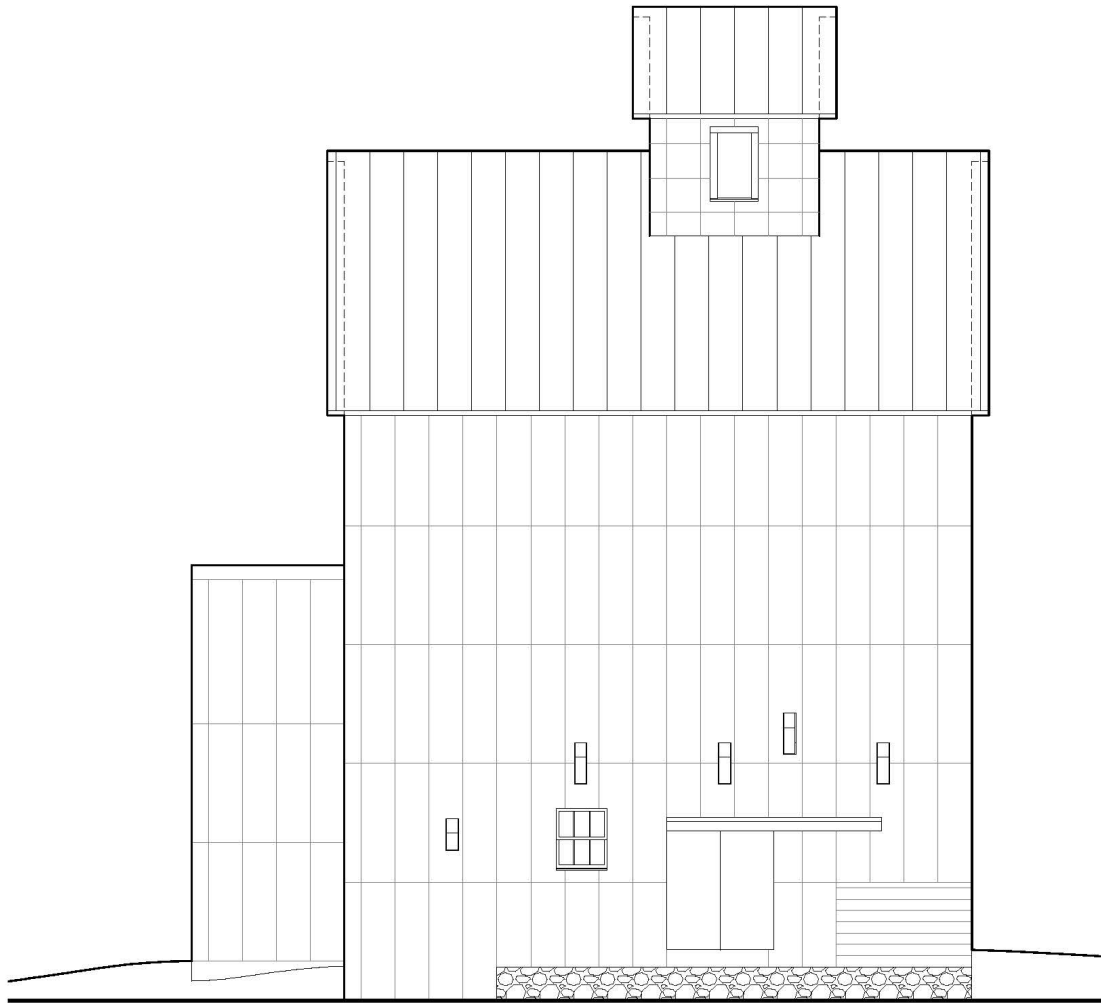


Figure 4. North Elevation. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State



SOUTH ELEVATION

1/8" = 1'-0"

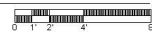


Figure 5. South Elevation. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

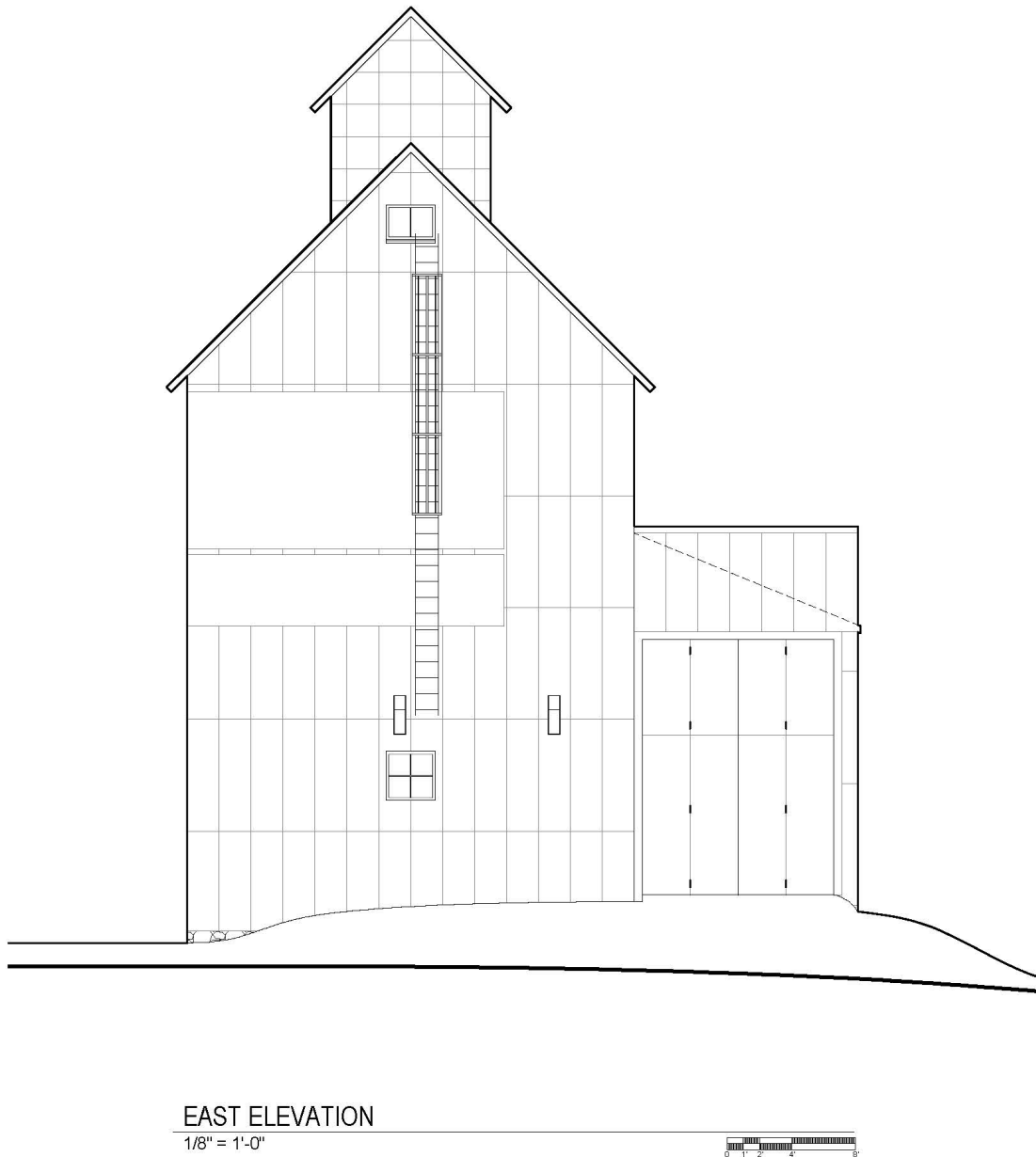
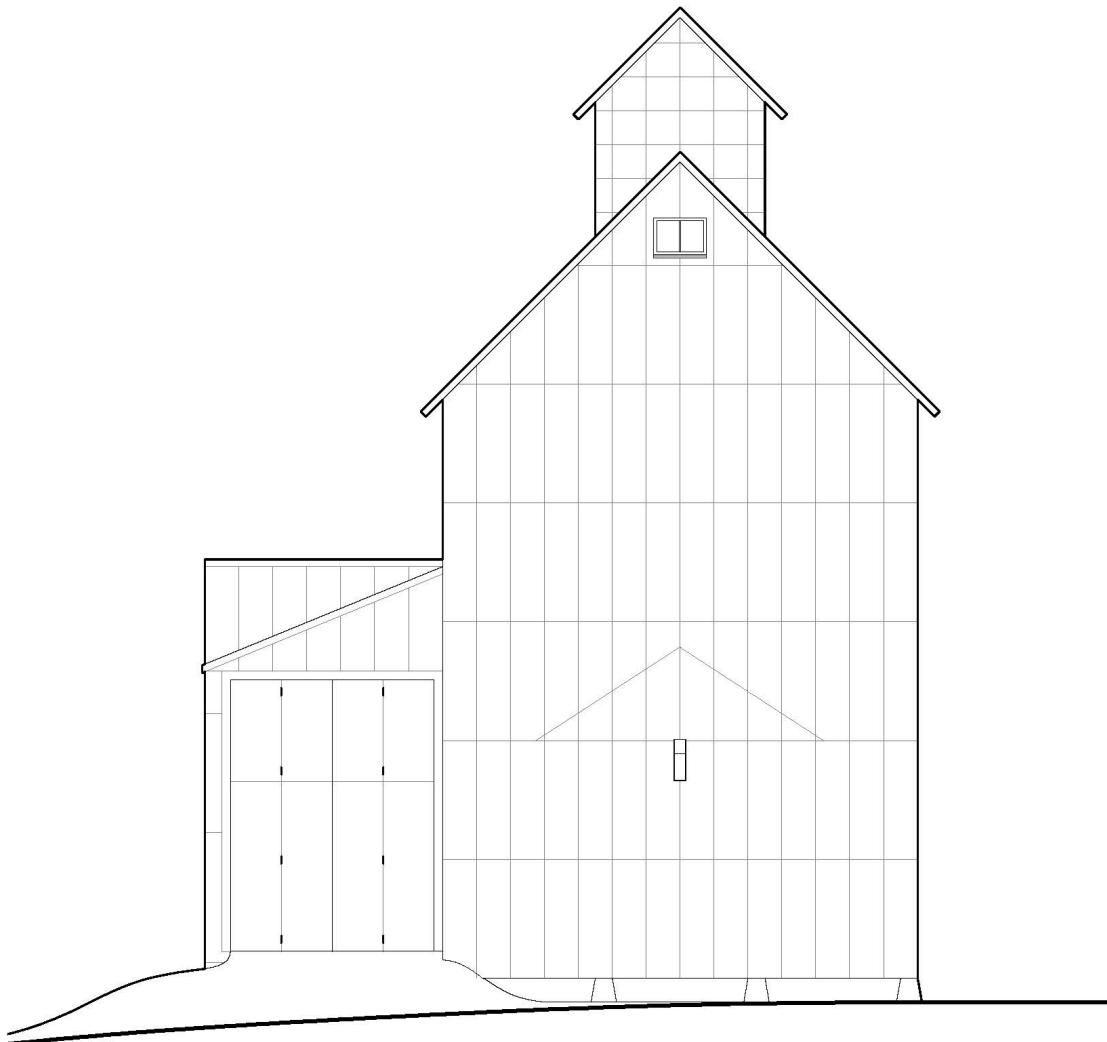


Figure 6. East Elevation. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State



WEST ELEVATION

1/8" = 1'-0"

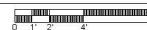


Figure 7. West Elevation. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

County and State

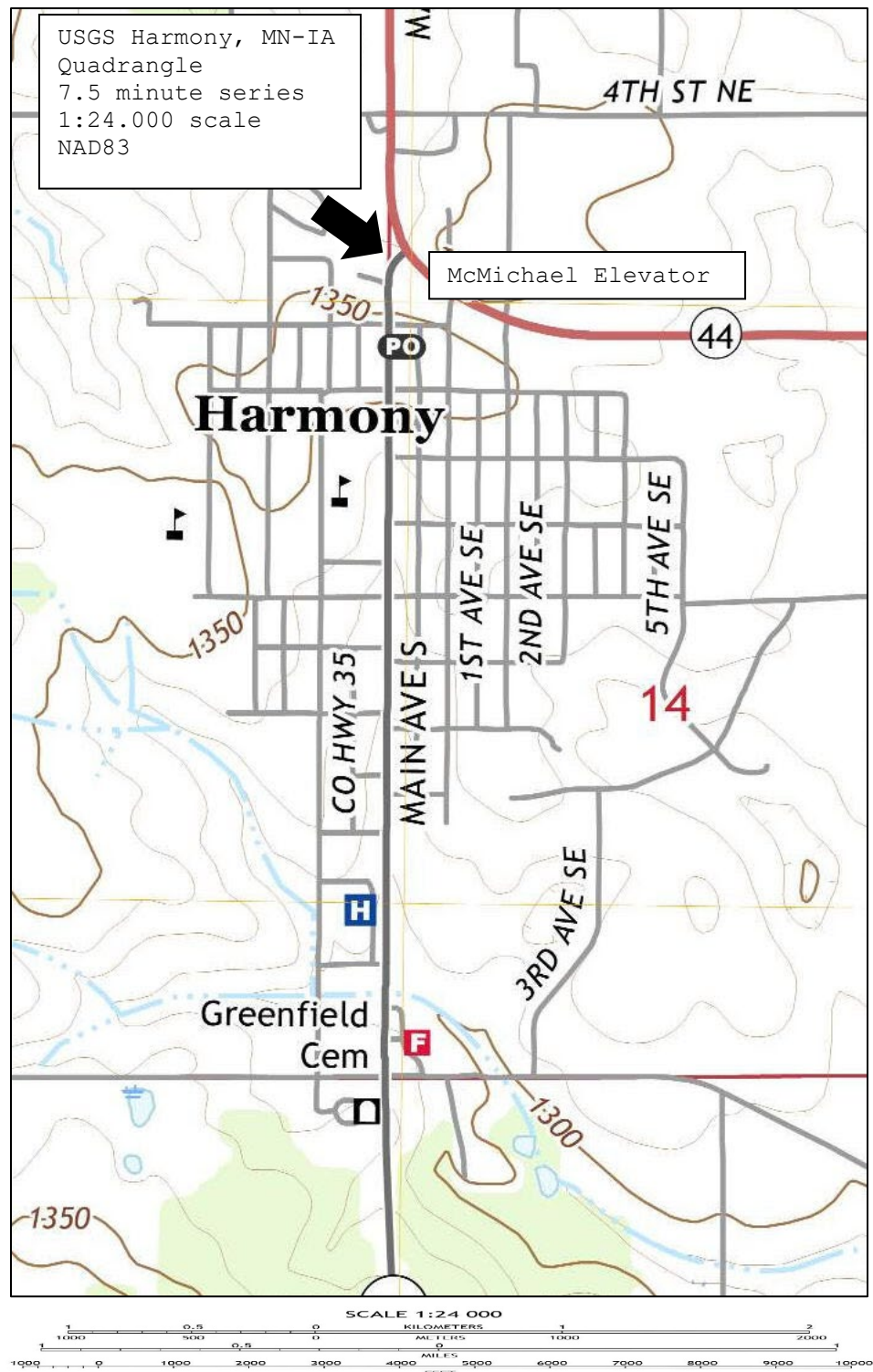


Figure 8. Property Location. Copy from USGS Harmony, MN-IA Quadrangle 7.5 minute series 1:24,000 scale NAD83

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

Location map
Fillmore county MN tax map
Parcel number 15.0088.020

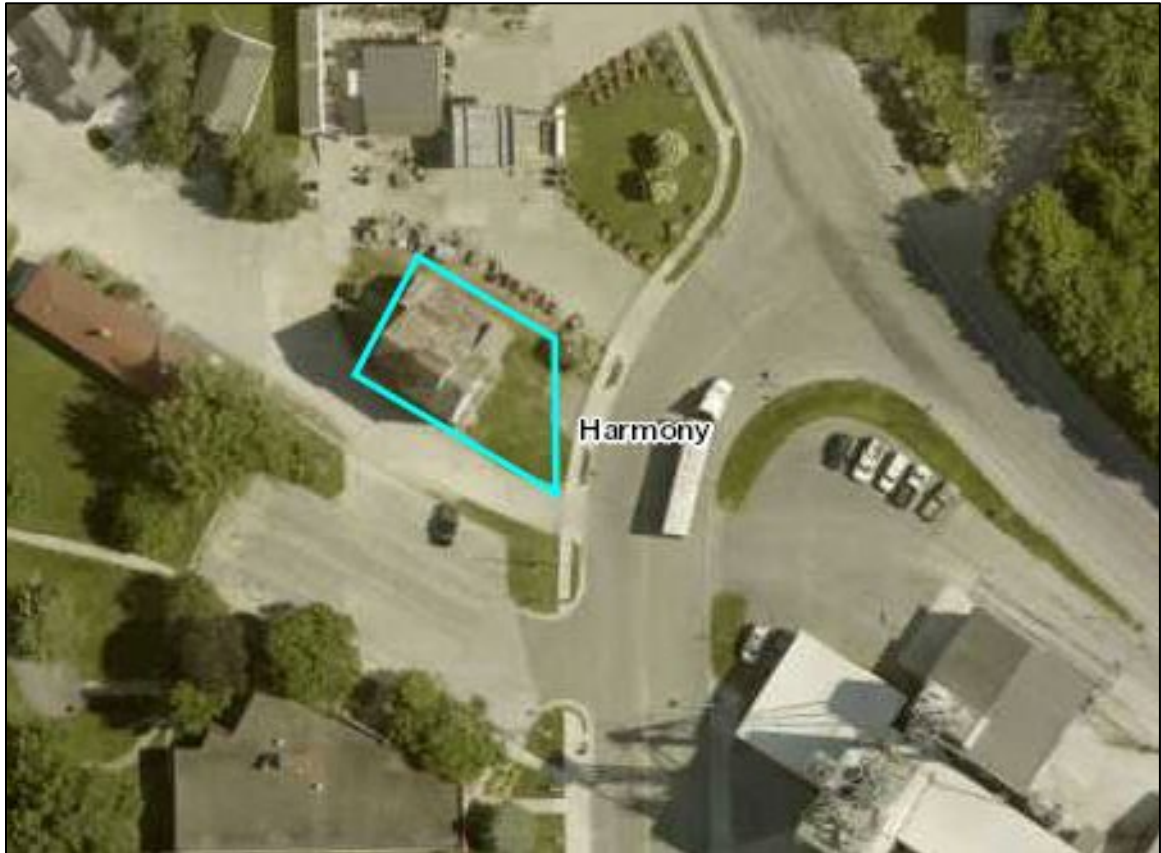


Figure 9. Property Location/Boundary. Fillmore county MN tax map Parcel number 15.0088.020

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

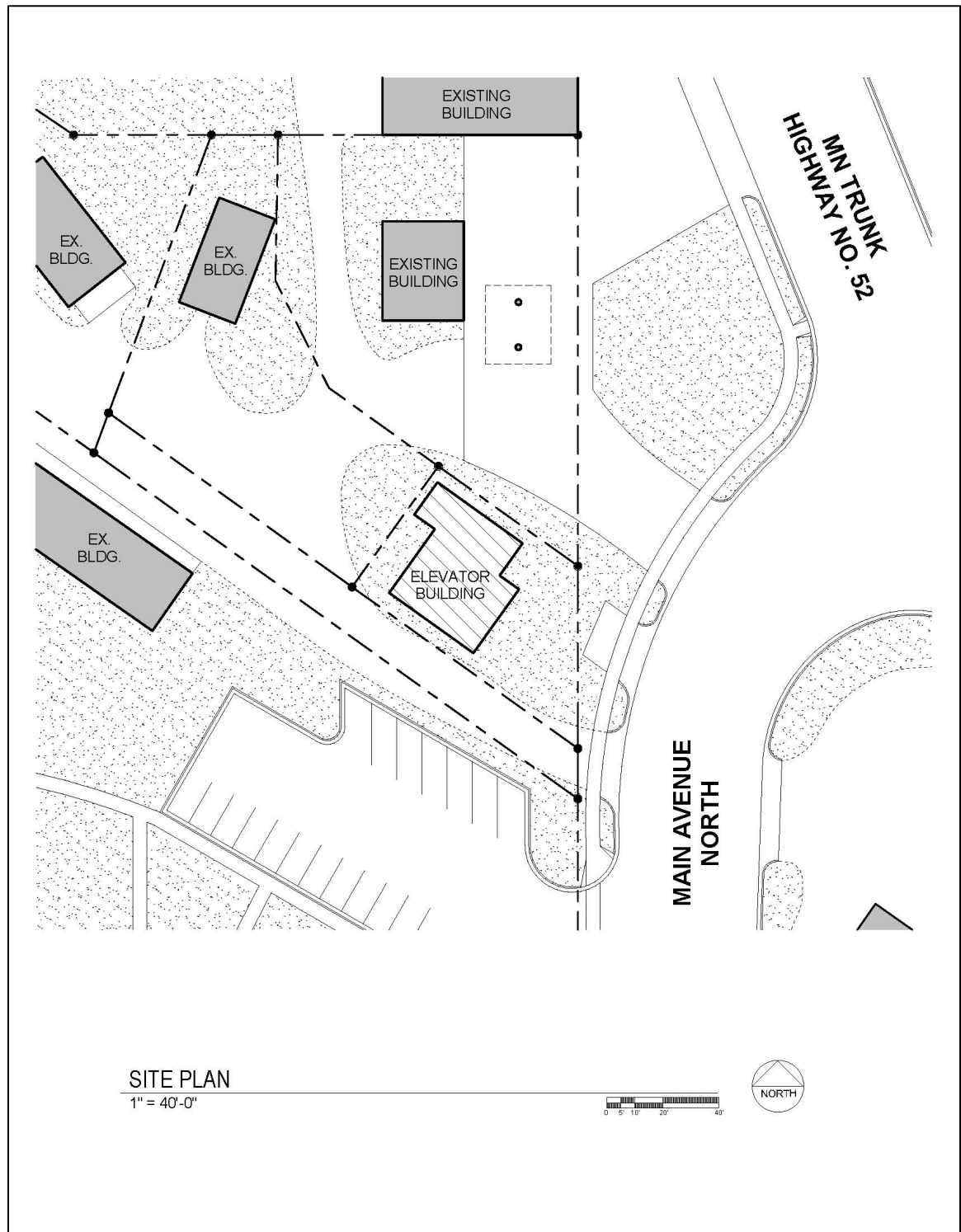


Figure 10. Site Plan. Pathfinder CRM, LLC 2022

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	McMichael Grain Elevator
City or Vicinity:	Harmony
County:	Fillmore
State:	MN
Photographer:	Robert C. Vogel
Date Photographed:	November 2022
Location of Original Digital Files:	319 South Division Avenue, Spring Grove, MN:

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo #1 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0001)
Overview of historic property and setting. Aerial southeast view.

Photo #2 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0002)
View of east elevation. Facing northwest.

Photo #3 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0003)
View of south elevation. Facing northwest.

Photo #4 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0004)
View of drive shed and north elevation. Facing south.

Photo #5 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0005)
View of drive shed and west elevation. Facing east.

Photo #6 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0006)
Interior view of the bottom of the grain bin showing "crib" board construction.

Photo #7 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0007)
Interior view of working house framing.

McMichael Grain Elevator

Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN

County and State

Photo #8 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0008)

Interior view of fanning mill and working house framing.

Photo #9 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0009)

Interior view of working house floor; west extension with three additional grain bins.

Photo #10 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0010)

Interior view of leg, working house floor.

Photo #11 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0011)

I – Beam support.

Photo #12 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0012)

Fieldstone foundation.

Photo #13 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0013)

Addition pier support.

Photo #14 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0014)

Headhouse spouts to storage bins.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State



Photo #1 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0001)
Overview of historic property and setting. Aerial southeast view.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State



Photo #2 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0002)
View of east elevation. Facing northwest.



Photo #3 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0003)
View of south elevation. Facing northwest.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State



Photo #4 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0004)
View of drive shed and north elevation, Main Avenue North visible on the left. Facing south



Photo #5 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0005)
View of drive shed and west elevation. Facing east.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State



Photo #6 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0006)
Interior view of the bottom of the grain bin showing "crib" board construction.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State



Photo #7 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0007)
Interior view of working house framing.



Photo #8 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0008)
Interior view of fanning mill and working house framing.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State



Photo #9 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_0009)
Interior view of working house floor; west extension with three additional grain bins.



Photo #10 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_00010)
Interior view of leg, working house floor.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State



Photo #11 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_00011)
I – Beam support.



Photo #12 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_00012)
Fieldstone foundation.

McMichael Grain Elevator
Name of Property

Fillmore County, MN
County and State



Photo #13 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_00013)
Addition pier support.



Photo #14 (MN_Fillmore County_Mc Michael Grain Elevator_00014)
Headhouse spouts to storage bins.