

**Site Inventory Form**  
**State Historical Society of Iowa**  
 (December 1, 1999)

**State Inventory No. 22-01286**  New  Supplemental  
 Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) 22-01381  
 Relationship:  Contributing  Noncontributing  
 Contributes to a potential district with yet unknown boundaries  
 National Register Status:(any that apply)  Listed  De-listed  NHL  DOE  
 9-Digit SHPO Review & Compliance Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Non-Extant (enter year) \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Miller Ice Cream Building

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 109 First Street NW

city or town Elkader

vicinity, county Clayton

Legal Description: (If Rural) Township Name \_\_\_\_\_

Township No. \_\_\_\_\_ Range No. \_\_\_\_\_ Section \_\_\_\_\_ Quarter of Quarter \_\_\_\_\_

(If Urban) Subdivision Original Town

Block(s) 9 Lot(s) S. 1/2 Lot 1

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification [Skip this Section]**

**4. National Park Service Certification [Skip this Section]**

**5. Classification**

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

*If Non-Eligible Property*

Enter number of:

— buildings  
 — sites  
 — structures  
 — objects  
 — Total

*If Eligible Property, enter number of:*

Contributing Noncontributing

1 — buildings  
 — — sites  
 — — structures  
 — — objects  
 1 — Total

**Name of related project report or multiple property study** (Enter "N/A" if the property is not part of a multiple property examination).

Title

Arch. & Hist. Resources of the Elkader Downtown Historic District MPD

Historical Architectural Data Base Number

22-030

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

09A10 Processing/Creamery (ice cream factory/store)

01A Single Dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

09D01 Flat Roof

foundation 10 Concrete

\_\_\_\_\_

walls 16 Clay Tile

\_\_\_\_\_

roof 08 Asphalt; 15C01 Rubber Membrane

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description** ( SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" representing your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria)

- Yes  No  More Research Recommended
- Yes  No  More Research Recommended
- Yes  No  More Research Recommended
- Yes  No  More Research Recommended

- A Property is associated with significant events.
- B Property is associated with the lives of significant persons.
- C Property has distinctive architectural characteristics.
- D Property yields significant information in archaeology or history.

County Clayton  
City Elkader

Address 109 First Street NW

Site Number 22-01286  
District Number 22-01381

**Criteria Considerations**

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

02 ARCHITECTURE

05 COMMERCE

**Significant Dates**

Construction date

1942  check if circa or estimated date

Other dates

**Significant Person**

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Architect

Builder

**Narrative Statement of Significance** ( SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bibliography  See continuation sheet for citations of the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form

**10. Geographic Data**

UTM References (OPTIONAL)

| Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|
| 1    | _____   | _____    | 2    | _____   | _____    |
| 3    | _____   | _____    | 4    | _____   | _____    |

See continuation sheet for additional UTM references or comments

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Marlys Svendsen, Svendsen Tyler, Inc.

organization City of Elkader

date 7/2011

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telephone 715/469-3300

city or town Sarona

state WI zip code 54870

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION (Submit the following items with the completed form)**

**FOR ALL PROPERTIES**

- Map:** showing the property's location in a town/city or township.
- Site plan:** showing position of buildings and structures on the site in relation to public road(s).
- Photographs:** representative black and white photos. If the photos are taken as part of a survey for which the Society is to be curator of the negatives or color slides, a photo/catalog sheet needs to be included with the negatives/slides and the following needs to be provided below on this particular inventory site:

|                          |                    |                  |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Roll/slide sheet # _____ | Frame/slot # _____ | Date Taken _____ |
| Roll/slide sheet # _____ | Frame/slot # _____ | Date Taken _____ |
| Roll/slide sheet # _____ | Frame/slot # _____ | Date Taken _____ |

- See continuation sheet or attached *photo & slide catalog sheet* for list of photo roll or slide entries.
- Photos/illustrations without negatives are also in this site inventory file.

**FOR CERTAIN KINDS OF PROPERTIES, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING AS WELL**

- Farmstead & District:** (List of structures and buildings, known or estimated year built, and contributing or non-contributing status)
- Barn:**
  - A sketch of the frame/truss configuration in the form of drawing a typical middle bent of the barn.
  - A photograph of the loft showing the frame configuration along one side.
  - A sketch floor plan of the interior space arrangements along with the barn's exterior dimensions in feet.

**State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line**

Concur with above survey opinion on National Register eligibility:  Yes  No  More Research Recommended  
 This is a locally designated property or part of a locally designated district.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluated by (name/title): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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| Miller Ice Cream Building | Clayton |
| Name of Property          | County  |
| 109 First Street NW       | Elkader |
| Address                   | City    |

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## 7. Description:

According to the Clayton County Assessor, this building is estimated to have been built in 1942. The building is included in the 1951 Sanborn Map. According to newspaper accounts, the rear addition was added in 1953. The design and form of the building are consistent with the Assessor's date.

The Miller Ice Cream Building at 109 First Street NW is an example of a vernacular Flat-Roof one-story commercial building form used for small processing facilities such as this dairy during the 1930s and 1940s. The freestanding two-story building form has a narrow front with a rectangular footprint measuring 26 by 42 feet for the original building and 26 by 24 feet for the rear one-story addition. The building is tucked between two other freestanding commercial buildings – the former Northwestern Bell Telephone Co. Building to the south and the Lutz Locker Building to the north.

The building has a flat roof, concrete foundation, and oversized clay tile brick walls. The mottled brick blends at least eight different colored brick in the random pattern on the walls. Colors range from shades of tan, brown, and maroon to shades of olive and gold to charcoal and gray. The front façade has two entrances next to the outer edges and a pair of square plate-glass windows in between. The south entrance is recessed with square tile brick in darker colors covering the curved wall. The north entrance has a plate glass door. The upper level has two window openings, each containing a pair of single-light slider sash. A metal coping tops the parapet across the front that has no ornamentation.

The south facade has 1/1 double-hung windows evenly spaced along both levels while the north façade has fewer windows but includes a side entrance midway along the wall connecting to the service drive. Metal coping matches the material found on the front façade. The 1953 rear addition has a shorter height than the 1942 building but retains the use of identical oversized clay tile brick for the walls as well as a similar coping material. Sometime after 1983 the use of the building was converted from a ice cream store and dairy to a single-family residence.

## 8. Significance:

The Miller Ice Cream Building at 109 First Street NW is an example of a vernacular Flat-Roof one-story commercial building form used for small processing facilities such as this dairy during the 1930s and 1940s with this operation continuing until the 1980s. The building occupies a mid-block site along the west side of First Street NW where several other freestanding commercial buildings are located. The building is eligible for the National Register as a contributing resource in the Elkader Downtown Historic District under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the district's commercial buildings are associated with the historic contexts developed for the downtown in the "Architectural and Historical Resources of the Elkader Downtown Historic District" Multiple Property Documentation form covering the years 1846 to 1960. Under Criterion C, the district contains good examples of vernacular commercial buildings dating from the 1850s through the 1950s.

### *Elkader Downtown Historic District Background:*

The town of Elkader was laid out in 1846 along the banks of the Turkey River approximately 16 miles upstream from the Turkey River's confluence with the Mississippi River. The town was surveyed and

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laid out in 1846 with the Original Town Plat filed in June 22, 1846 by Timothy Davis, Chester Sage and John Thompson, friends and business partners, who began operating a sawmill on North Front (Main) Street in 1845 before the town was even platted. By 1849 they had a successful flour mill in operation. The new town was named for Abd el-Kader, an Algerian freedom fighter and world figure who was admired by Davis. The principal building stimulating development in the 1840s and 1850s was the Elkader Mill. After 1860 when the Clayton County voters selected Elkader as the permanent county seat, the downtown saw a variety of merchants set up shops, several hotels open, a number of newspapers begin publication, and small manufacturing concerns get underway in the city center. Elkader numbered 440 residents in 1860.

The new county court house saw its first section completed in 1869 opposite the downtown. New limestone buildings were erected along both North and South Main Street with public halls frequently located on upper floors. During the 1870s and 1880s 2-story brick buildings began replacing frame business houses. A permanent railroad connection was completed by the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul RR in 1886 but service remained poor as Elkader was located at the end of a spur rather than along a main line route. A more important transportation improvement during the 1880s was the completion of the Keystone Bridge across the Turkey River in 1880. Its completion prompted a period of economic vitality and community investment. The community was officially incorporated two years later in 1891 and a new waterworks system and city well were completed in 1896. Electricity was rejected by locals until the end of the decade in 1900, however. In the meantime, new churches were built in 1897 for the Congregationalists on the east side of the river and in 1897-1899 for the Catholics on the west side of the river. Coupled with a series of major fires during the 1890s, the downtown saw a period of rebuilding with a new hotel and bank at the entrance to the business district at the turn of the century. The new opera house was completed on North Main Street while other 2 and 3-story brick blocks appeared both north and south of Bridge Street.

By 1900, Elkader's population stood at its peak of 1,321 – an increase of 77 percent during the decade of the 1890s. Development continued in the downtown before and after World War I but at a much slower pace. Floods and fires damaged the Elkader Mill in 1902, 1906 and 1908, but it was nevertheless rebuilt by Schmidt Brothers & Co., retaining a key employer and anchor for Elkader's downtown. The business district began to extend to the west before and after the war with the principal changes seen along West Bridge Street. Here livery stables and wagon shops were replaced by automobile dealerships, implement companies and filling stations. Five stations eventually located along West Bridge with a sixth one block to the south along First Street SW. The national economic depression of the 1930s was coupled by the closing of the Elkader Mill in 1939 following a major fire. Natural disasters after World War I included major floods in 1922, 1947, and 1958 with a tornado destroying section of South Main Street in 1958 as well.

Despite these natural and human made disasters, Elkader saw steady but modest population growth from 1,223 in 1920 to 1,526 in 1960. The impact of the automobile was seen in traffic patterns, parking patterns, and traffic signs and the introduction of electricity saw several generations of street lighting come and go. The popularity of the opera house waned and the first floor became the municipal fire station while two movie houses came and one stayed in the downtown drawing evening crowds for entertainment and shopping. As many as 130 people resided in downtown flats during this period. A good system of inter and intra-state highways connected Elkader and its downtown to other parts of the

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state and country in a way that railroads had never served the community. By 1960, downtown Elkader was well-established as one of several geographically dispersed retail centers serving Clayton County. Virtually every storefront was filled with start-up businesses or multi-generational family stores as Elkader's downtown achieved a stable and healthy status for local and countywide residents.

### *Historic Background for Miller Ice Cream Building at 109 First Street NW:*

The Miller Ice Cream Building at 109 First Street NW takes its name from the second owner of the building, George Miller, who operated the business for 35 years and whose name continued with the company until it closed in 1983.

The building was constructed in 1942 for L.C. Lenth, owner of the Lenhaha dairy farm, which was located east of Elkader. Lenth acquired the dairy business in 1929 from Charles Peick who operated a home delivery dairy service. In acquiring the Peick Dairy, the *Elkader Register* noted in its April 18, 1929 article that "Mr. Lenth has an excellent herd of Holstein cattle, all purebreds, on the former George Bente farm, just east of town and it will be his aim to give the old patrons and the new ones, he hopes to get, equally as good service as did Mr. Peick." Sometime between 1942 and 1947, Lenth sold the dairy to Dennis Lambert. He in turn sold it to George Miller in 1947.

George Miller studied agriculture and dairy classes at Iowa State University before graduating from Purdue University with a degree in agriculture. He was plant manager for Johnston Ice Cream Company in West Union for 14 years before buying the Lenth operation. Business grew substantially under Miller's ownership and by 1953 growth in milk processing and ice cream making required a building addition. Over the next twenty years Miller's business expanded in conjunction with the post-war baby-boom from three employees and one delivery truck in 1953 to 14 full-time and two part-time employees and eight trucks twenty years later. In 1971, the dairy processed more than one million pounds of milk annually. Miller's products were marketed in Clayton, Fayette, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Dubuque and Delaware counties.

In 1977, the Miller Ice Cream Co. was sold to Ron and Rose Engelhardt. Ron had worked for Miller Ice Cream for 16 years prior to purchasing the company. The Engelhardts continued the dairy and when it closed as a processing facility in 1983, the business had 10 employees. The farm crisis of the early 1980s along with several years of flooding contributed to the dairy's decline according to Ron. In 1983 processing of ice cream in the building ceased. For some time thereafter, the Engelhardts continued operate "R and R Distributing," an ice cream distributorship, from the building.

### **9. Major Sources:**

*1984 History of Clayton County.* Clayton County Genealogical Society, Elkader, Iowa: Griffith Press, 1984.

Anderson, David C. *Reconnaissance Survey of Elkader Clayton County, Iowa.* Clayton County Historic Preservation Commission and Main Street Elkader, March 1, 1994.

Andreas, A.T. *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa.* Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875.

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Appraisal Records for Elkader Downtown Properties, Clayton County Assessor's Office, 1949 – 1965.

"Bird's Eye View Map, Elkader, Iowa, 1871." Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Doniat and Zastrow.

Elkader Historical Society/Carter House Museum research file for 109 First Street NW; files focusing on downtown Elkader buildings, businesses, civic leaders and related information. Compiled by Marge Costigan and other museum volunteers. Research files contain hundreds of historic photos, newspaper articles, publication transcriptions, property ownership records, and information from interviews. Digital copies of some research files were loaned to Marlys Svendsen, October 2010 and others were made available in March 2011 for duplication.

*Census of State of Iowa* for the years 1856, 1867, 1875, 1885, 1895, 1905, 1915, and 1925 as printed by various State Printers.

*Clayton County, Iowa, Memories & Heritage from the Photo Albums of Clayton County.* Elkader, Iowa: The Clayton County Register, 1997.

Downtown Building Survey (73 surveyed buildings) records including survey questionnaires, draft Iowa Site Inventory Forms and digital photographs. Main Street Elkader, 2009.

Downtown Elkader Business Questionnaires completed by property/business owners, 2010.

Downtown Elkader Individual Property Site Maps compiled by Eli Garms, Clayton County GIS, Engineer's Office, Elkader, November 2010.

Elkader Building Survey (62 surveyed buildings). Main Street Elkader, 1994-1996.

Elkader Historic Photograph Collection (digital). Elkader Public Library, Elkader. Digital files loaned to Marlys Svendsen, December 2008.

"Elkader, Iowa 1846-1971, the Past, the Present the Future." 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, *The Clayton County Register*, Elkader, Iowa, July 21, 1971.

Elkader Telephone Directories, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1932, 1933, 1960 and 1966.

Gottfried, Herbert and Jan Jennings. *American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1985.

Griffith, Katherine. "Elkader Opera House." Elkader, Iowa: Elkader Main Street, ca. 1992.

Insurance Maps for Elkader. New York: The Sanborn Company, 1895, 1902, 1913, 1930, and 1951.

"Keystone Bridge Centennial Edition." *The Clayton County Register*, Elkader, Iowa, July 26, 1989.

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"Miller's Ice Cream Company," *Clayton County Register*, November 10, 1983.

Olson, Edward W. *Look What you Started Mr. Davis...Elkader, Iowa: History, Facts and Folklore about Elkader, Iowa U.S.A.*, ca. 2010.

*Plat Book of Clayton County, Iowa*, Minneapolis: Warner & Foote, 1886.

"Plat of Elkader, June 22, 1846." Recorder's Office, Clayton County, Court House, Elkader, Iowa,.

Powell, Harry. "The Elkader Story." unpublished first draft, December 1980; copy available at Elkader Public Library.

Price, Realto E., editor. *History of Clayton County, Iowa from the Earliest historical Times Down to the Present, Volumes I and II*. Chicago: Robert O. Law Company, 1916.

Property Transfer Records for Blocks 3 – 10 and Fractional Blocks 3-6 in Town of Elkader, Clayton County Auditor's Office and Recorder's Office, Clayton County Court House, Elkader, Iowa.

Shank, Wesley I. *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary*. Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1999.

*Standard Atlas of Clayton County, Iowa*. Chicago: George A. Ogle & Co., 1902.

United States Census, 1850-2010. (population figures provided by State Library of Iowa, January 2011 and City of Elkader, March 2011).



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Miller Ice Cream Building  
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109 First Street NW  
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Clayton  
County  
Elkader  
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**Photographs:** 109 First Street NW, looking west and northwest (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).



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Miller Ice Cream Building

Clayton

Name of Property

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109 First Street NW

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**Photographs:** 109 First Street NW, looking southwest and southwest along First Street NW (Elkader Downtown Survey Photograph, 9/16/2010, Marlys Svendsen, photographer).

