

Derek Abrahams
Lesson Plan #1
Using Local Primary Sources

Grade Level: High School

Objectives:

- Learn how and why the city of Fergus Falls (or choose your own city) developed in the late 19th century
- Learn how to use primary sources to do research
- Learn what is available to students to use for research at local museums
- Research their own topic using local primary sources

Overview: Students will use primary sources from the OTCHS to understand the importance of the Otter Tail River and development of mills in Fergus Falls. They will then use that information to try to develop a plan on how Fergus Falls can better use the river or old Red River Mill today and into the future. Finally, students will have the opportunity to choose their own topic to research using the materials available at the OTCHS.

Procedure:

1. Pass out map of Fergus Falls and Fergus Falls Mills Information handout (handout #1)
 - a. Have students place the old mills on a modern map of Fergus Falls so that they can see where the mills were located. (Only the Red River Mill stands today)
2. Pass out pictures of some of the old mills in Fergus Falls (handout #2) and have the students answer the following questions. Discuss possible answers with them. (Worksheet #1)
3. Pass out the front page from The Fergus Weekly Journal; November 21, 1895. Give students about 10 minutes to look over the front page and then pass out the following questions from Worksheet #2.

*** You can print off each of the pages and put it on tagboard or something like that. Lineup the pages labeled #1-3 from left to right across the top and the pages labeled #1A-3A from left to right across the bottom. This should form one complete page.*

4. Have students choose their own topic from the development of Fergus Falls and do the following: (even if you are not able to get to a museum to do research, you can still do this to show them how it works.)
 - a. Choose a topic
 - b. Decide what primary sources may be helpful in their research (maps, newspapers, diaries, military records etc.)
 - c. Explain how you would use each of these

Extra Credit:

Background information:

Pass out Handout #3. This is an article from the Fergus Falls Daily Journal written in October of 1980. It gives suggestions on how the river could be used today.

Pass out Handout #4 – This is a photograph of the Red River Mill still standing after the cyclone of 1919. They used revolutionary techniques in building the mill after a fire which is why it is the only mill still standing today and quite structurally strong yet today.

Have the students answer the questions on Worksheet #3 after looking at those handouts.

Worksheet #1

Importance of the River

1. What do you think the river was used for (not just the mills) in the late 19th century?(answers could include but not limited to transportation, power source, drinking water, irrigation, bathing, etc.)
2. Looking at your answers, why is it important for cities at this time to develop around rivers?
3. Look at the pictures. These mills are all located near the river and a dam. How was water used by these mills?
4. Look at the picture of the Red River Mill. It is located on the Otter Tail River. Why do you think it is called the Red River Mill?

Worksheet #2

The Fergus Weekly Journal

1. What are the three main reasons Fergus Falls was an ideal location for the production of flour? (Ans. Wheat easily transported by wagon, located on railroads for transportation and cheap water supply)
2. Why is Fergus able to supply flour for everyone 500 miles West? In other words, why don't they build mills or grow wheat between Fergus Falls and Portland? (ans. Not good land for wheat, cheaper for them to buy flour from Fergus Falls, no good water supply)
3. What are the only advantages Minneapolis has over Fergus Falls in milling? (ans. Reputation, markets and access to transportation)
4. What other type of mill is Fergus Falls interested in starting? (ans. Oat meal)
5. You will be assigned one of the following mills: Page Mill, Park Roller Mill, Red River Mill, woolen Mill, Farm Wagons, Foundry and Machine shop.
6. Write as much information about their mill/factory as they can find in the paper.

Worksheet #3

Modern Uses

Answer the following questions.

1. What does the article in handout #3 say could be done with the Ottertail River today (or as of 1980) to develop Fergus Falls?
2. Do you believe Fergus Falls has taken advantage of these suggestions or done anything to promote the river as of 2010?
3. What would you suggest we do to promote Fergus Falls using the river?
4. The old Red River Mill still stands today. It is currently for sale for \$1 million. If you had that kind of money, plus money to develop, what would you do with that building to develop it. Understand you cannot tear it down and because of some stipulations by the original seller, you cannot use it as a mill.

During the late 1800's Fergus Falls had developed into the leading flour milling city of this area. There were five mills running off four dams.

The Page Mill, built in 1885, was a six story wooden structure. It had a capacity of 600 barrels of flour a day. It was located at the present day broken down dam. The Page dam was built at a cost of \$20,000. There was also a cooper shop and houses for the workers. The complex was called Mill Park. In its latter days, business was not good because of its location outside the city and also the steep hills surrounding the river made it hard to drive wagons to the mill. It burned totally on November 15, 1893 at a loss of \$90,000-100,000.

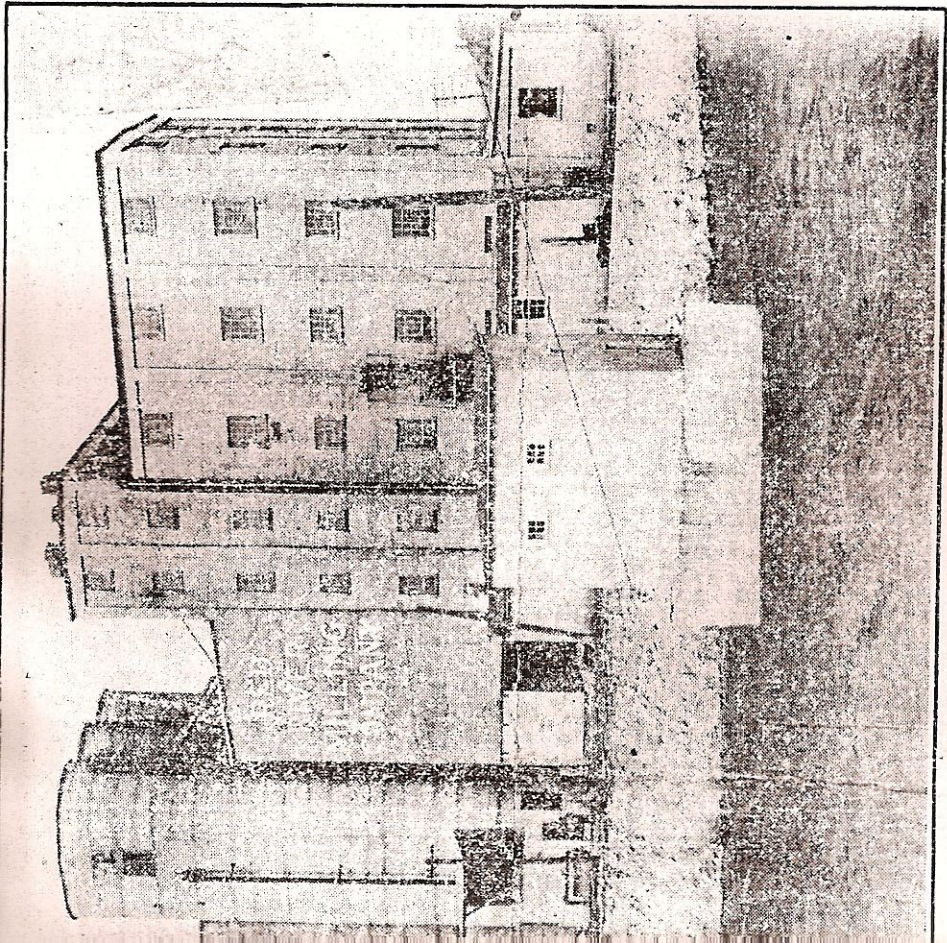
The Kirk Mill (Austin) was located at the Main Street bridge. It was built in 1881 and burned in 1902.

The Otter Tail Mill was located where the River Inn now stands. It was built in 1886 and was used as a feed mill before it burned in 1926. It shared power with the Cable Mill on Central Dam.

The Cable Mill (Big A) was located just south of Central Dam. It was built in 1881 and was empty for several years before it burned in 1926.

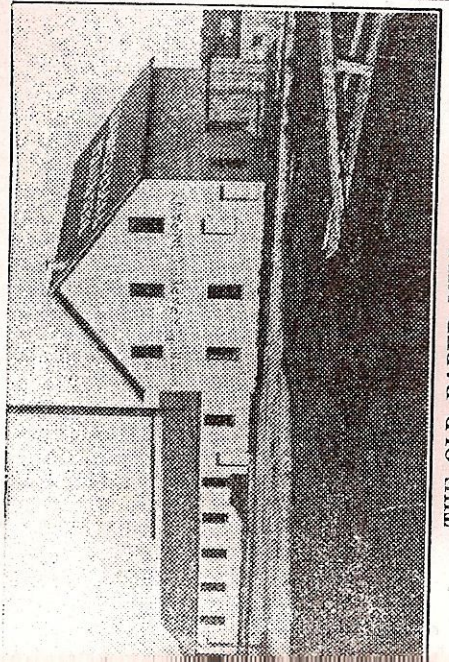
The Red River Roller Mill was built in 1872 and burned in 1915. Several years later it was rebuilt and is still used today. It is located at the corner of Unimand Stanten.

The major reason why the mills were never rebuilt (except one) is that in the 1900's it was cheaper to ship the wheat down to Minneapolis and have it made into flour and shipped back to Fergus than it was to grind it here.



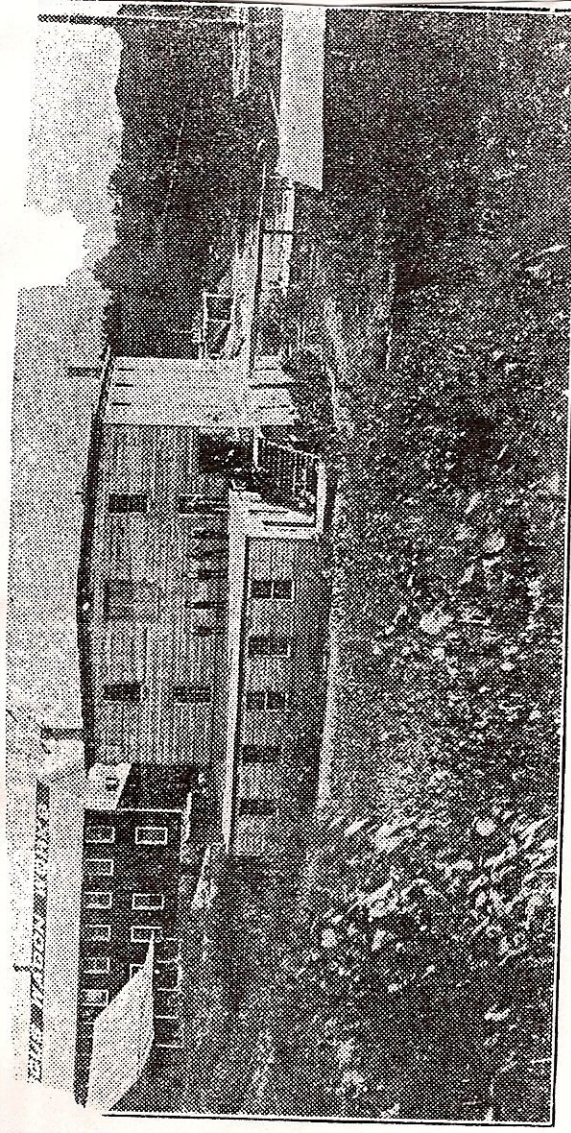
THE RED RIVER MILL

Eng in the direct path of the storm that withstood its fury.



THE OLD PAPER MILL

Mill was located on Union avenue just south of the river and made board paper from straw hauled from neighboring pioneer times.

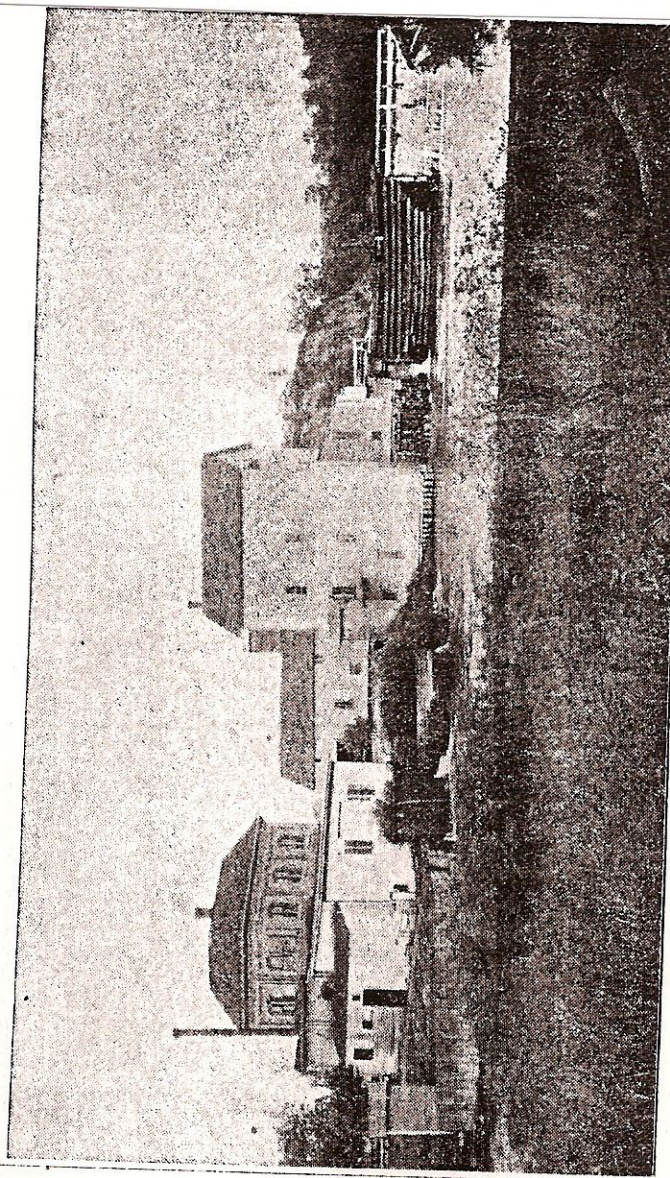


THE OLD WOOLEN MILL

The building shown in the foreground of the above picture is the old woolen mill, which was located beside a dam which is now submerged by the pond of the Pisgah dam. This building was located in the foreground of the above picture is the old woolen mill, which was located beside a dam which is now submerged by the pond of the Pisgah dam. This building was located in the foreground of the above picture is the old woolen mill, which was located beside a dam which is now submerged by the pond of the Pisgah dam.

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THE OLD KIRK MILL AND PUMP HOUSE

The Kirk Mill was located along side a dam just below Oak Grove Cemetery in the eastern part of the town.

77D Oct. 17, 1980

The river: *711* a focus for the future

By PAT WALKUP
News Editor

"Fergus Falls has turned its back on the river, but the Otter Tail was the reason for its founding." So begins the report, "Discovering the Past to Build for the Future," published recently by the Fergus Falls Heritage Preservation Commission.

A look at the history of Fergus Falls shows that early industry was dependent on the river, both for power and for transportation, but that as the town developed, much of this industry disappeared and development moved away from the river. Studies in the past — most notably in 1964 and 1971 — again pointed out the desirability of emphasizing the river as part of downtown development plans, but those plans, per se, never got beyond the drawing board.

In recent months, the river has again become a focus of various groups who want to build for the future of Fergus Falls. Uel Blank, professor of tourism at the University of Minnesota, told the Chamber of Commerce's Tourism and Convention Committee not to neglect the river.

"One of his major emphases was, we've got to focus on the river," Chamber Executive Director Dennis Butler said of the meeting earlier this year.

Then came the downtown marketing study done for the city by the K. Bordner Consultants firm of Bloomington. The Bordner study also emphasized the river, recommending that a major development — including offices, condominium and apartment living and a hotel — would best be located on the riverside to complement existing businesses downtown.

And, in case more support was needed for the idea, Butler points out that Milt Fletcher, a representative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce who recently keynoted the local chamber's retreat, also raved about the possibilities for the community to develop the river as an attraction for residents and tourists alike.

"The second largest industry in this county is tourism," Butler commented, noting that agriculture is the first. "The river is an attraction, but it can become a much bigger attraction." Whereas now, people who are already in town for some other reason might see and appreciate the beauty of the river, Butler foresees the possibility that the river could actually be the reason people would plan a visit to Fergus Falls. Especially those who are in the area anyway, he commented, might be motivated to make the trip into town if there were "a reason to come and see Fergus Falls because of what we have done with the river."

Increased tourism, of course, ends up being an economic

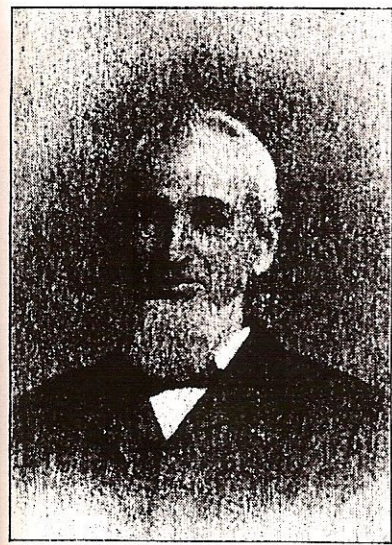


Grand Hotel Wreckage and Soldiers at rescue and clean up work. The City was under the National Guard for two weeks after the storm.
Photographed by Roy A. Baker, Fergus Falls.

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other milling centers and some of which they have not. It is on two great lines of railway running from the wheat fields of the north and west to Duluth and the great lakes, the route by which all flour made in Minnesota must find its way east, if it is to be shipped in the lowest and cheapest manner. Under the arrangements for milling in transit wheat can be bought here, unloaded, milled and again shipped as favorably as at any other point.

But the greatest of all reasons why Fergus Falls should be a great milling center is its cheap water power. No one realizes the advantage of water power more than those unfortunate people who are milling at points where it is necessary to operate by steam. When a dam is once constructed here and the mill is in operation about the only expense for power is opening the gates. Compare this with the cost of maintaining an expensive steam plant.



JOHN H. ALLEN.

consisting of engines and boilers, constantly requiring expenditures to keep them in order. Think of the amount of money needed to buy fuel where wood or coal is burned. Then there is the additional cost of engineers and firemen for twenty-four hours each day. If milling can be done profitably at points where steam is required there certainly must be a much larger profit where water power is to be had at a very low rate.

West of us is a large area of country which must always buy its flour. In the first place it is not a wheat growing country, but is settled by miners, stock raisers and their kindred lines.

Fergus Falls is especially anxious to have an oat meal mill started. Around here an immense quantity of oats are raised and there is no reason why so much money should be sent away for oat meal for table



ALVA H. KIRK.

use. The recent inventions in preparing oats for table use have wonderfully increased the amount consumed, and there are but few families that do not use it in some form at least once a day.

BEARDSLEY & FOSSEN.

What This Firm Is Doing in the Way of Milling and Dealing in Feed.

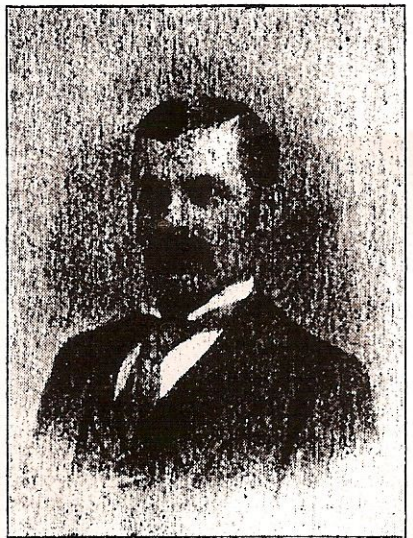
If there is a busy place in Fergus Falls it is Beardsley & Fossen's feed mill. If these energetic workers are not on the jump it is a dull day in town. Their mill, which is shown here, is as near the center of town as it is possible to get, so that they not only have a large grist business but they have a large trade in selling and buying feed. The mill is below the level of the street so that its full size does not appear in this paper. It is well equipped in every way for grinding feed, and it is kept busy from morning until night accommodating customers. Messrs. Beardsley & Fossen buy all kinds of grain used for feed, which they grind up and ship in ear lots to neighboring towns. They also buy flax for shipment and attend to the shipping of wheat. Both members of the firm are hard working industrious men and the people have full confidence in their honesty and integrity.



CHARLES H. ALLEN.

prosperous. The mill was built in 1881, having at that time a capacity of but 135 barrels per day. Its eligible location—it is in the very heart of the city—gave it a large trade at home, while the excellence of its flour soon found it many consumers in the surrounding country.

The success which the mill scored induced its owners to enlarge it and it is now grinding 300 barrels per day. In 1893 the mill was entirely overhauled and the newest and most improved machinery was put in. In fact it has been the policy of the owners to keep it up to date all the time. There is never any difficulty in disposing of the products of the mill. It has built up a steady and reliable trade not only in this country but in Great Britain. It not only ships its flour eastward but westward,



JOHN H. STAUFFER.

and for ten years Butte and Anaconda, the great mining centers of Montana, have consumed it largely. If one went into a kitchen in Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, Boston, Glasgow, Liverpool or London, he would find "No. 1, Fergus Flour Mills," up in the flour barrel or sack, as the case may be. A mill located here in the heart of the hard wheat country has a great advantage over its competitors in securing choice milling wheat. The Fergus Flour mills, for instance, buys what comes to its doors, but that is not anywhere near sufficient to run the mills. For the balance the manager goes into the sections which happen to raise the choicest wheat, and thus gets the very best, giving the customers of the mill the benefit thus



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THE FERGUS

Page Key ① Hot File - INDUSTRY - MILLING, Fergus Falls, 189

VOL. XXIII. NO. 1.

FERGUS FALLS, OT

A MILL CENTER.

Some of the Reasons Why Fergus Falls Is the Great Milling Center That It Is.

Cheap Power and Lands, Splendid Transportation Facilities, and Hard Wheat the Principal.

There is no point in Minnesota or even in the northwest which presents so many advantages for the milling of wheat as the city of Fergus Falls. In the first place it is situated in the

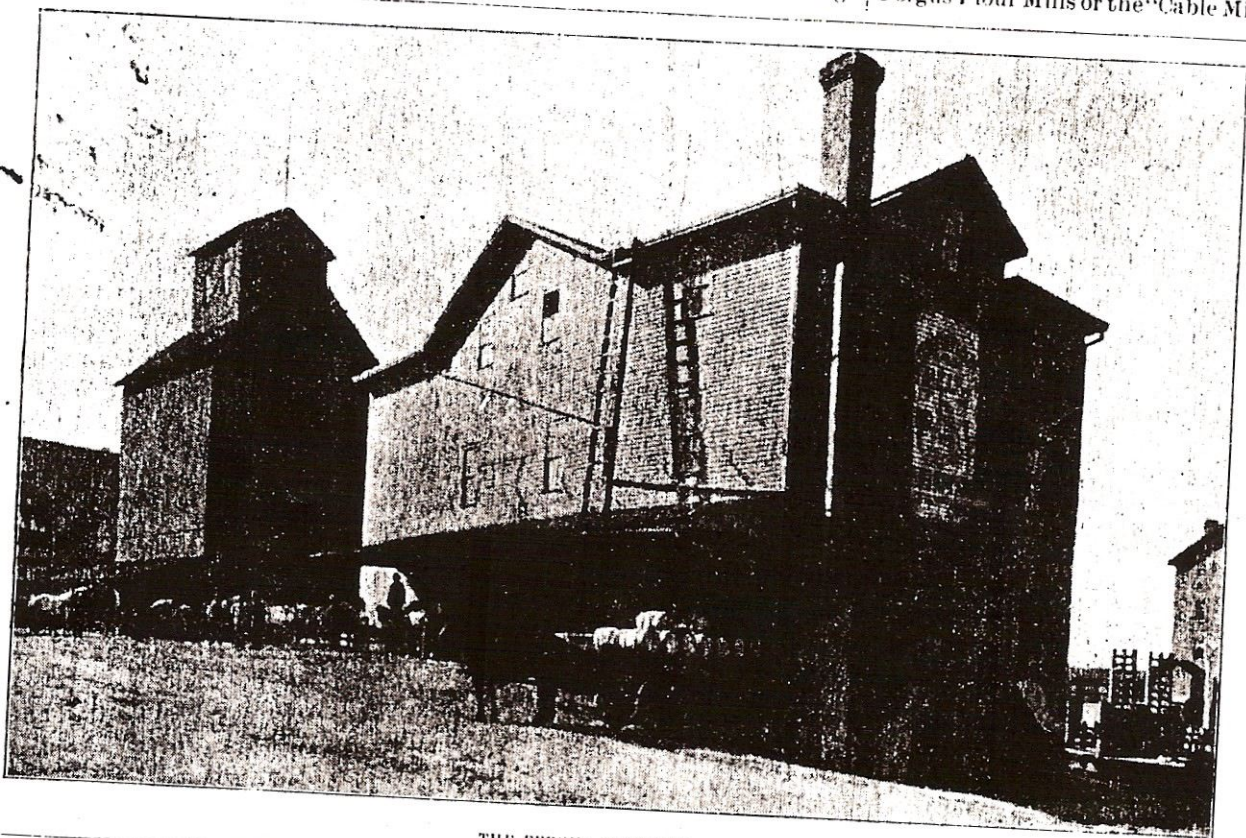
This field can be supplied with flour better from Fergus Falls than from any other point.

Fergus Falls has not, nor can have, any milling competitor west of it for 500 miles of the most fertile country on the globe, because there is no water power in all that region and when a water power is reached it is way beyond the wheat growing country. The only advantage Minneapolis has over this place as a point for manufacturing, results from its size, the greater development of its reputation, its markets, and the greater influence it has with transportation companies to get reduced freight rates. But this is only the common advantage

A BUSY MILL.

An Institution Which Has Made Fergus Falls a Familiar Name Throughout United States and Great Britain.

Until the burning of the Page mill something over a year ago, Fergus Falls had a larger flour milling capacity than any city between Minneapolis and the Pacific coast. In spite of its destruction Otter Tail to-day grinds more wheat into flour than a county between Hennepin, of which Minneapolis is the county seat, and Portland. Among the mills which are making Fergus Falls a familiar name in the kitchens of the world, the Fergus Flour Mills or the "Cable Mills,



THE FERGUS FLOUR MILLS.

at growing center of the north. Around about it, on all sides, the fields where the choicest of spring wheat is grown which is utterly essential for the making of highest grades of flour. While amount marketed here is in no sufficient to supply the milling and, the fact that so much wheat is bought direct from the producer makes a big saving in the cost of wheat. When it comes to the cost of wheat raised at other points Fergus Falls has every advantage of

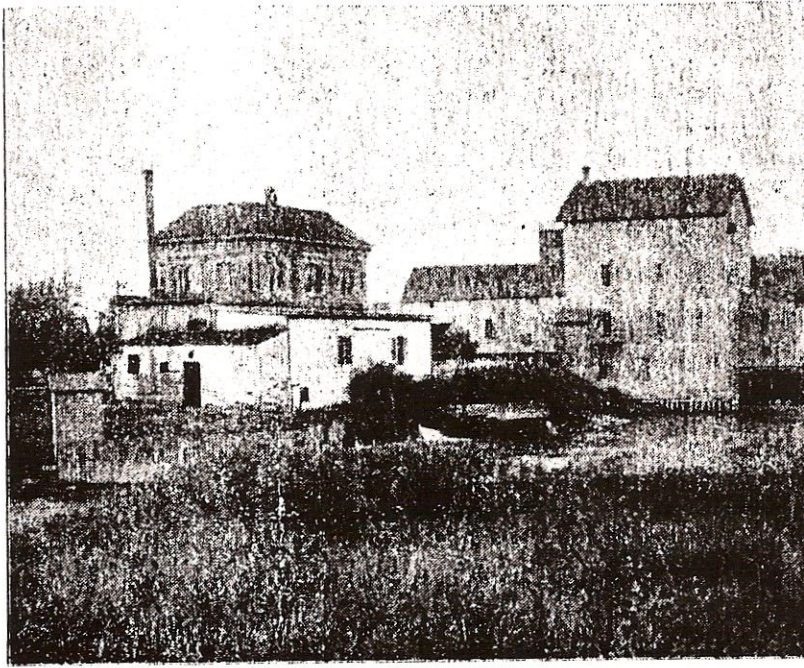
that a large well developed manufacturing city always has over a newer and smaller one. Even this advantage is not permanent; while, if it were, it is in this case more than counter-balanced by power and grounds at one-fourth the Minneapolis price of the same, and by the saving of 177 miles of freight on products destined for the markets of Western Minnesota, and of Dakota, Montana, and Manitoba; and a saving of 130 miles of freight on wheat in flour to be shipped to the eastward.

as it is nick-named here, owing to the fact that for many years it transmitted its power by cable, is the best known. It is to-day the strongest institution financially in Fergus Falls and none exceed it in northern Minnesota. It started in with an ample supply of money and has been very

FALLS WEEK

PAGES 17 TO 24.

FERGUS FALLS, MINNESOTA, THURSDAY



PUMP HOUSE OF WATERWORKS.

PARK ROLLER MILLS.

brands of the Fergus Flour mills is made by it.

The mill has an elevator capacity of 15,000 bushels in the mill, while the elevator beside it holds 40,000.

The corporation owning the mill is officered as follows: J. H. Allen, president and manager; B. F. Brown, secretary; C. D. Wright, treasurer. Mr. Allen gives the mill his entire time and attention. He has been president of the company since it was organized in 1881 and its manager since 1887.

Mr. Allen, who is a native of Wilton county, Maine, has long been engaged in the milling business. He came to Minnesota in 1854. He has served in the state legislature, been president of the council, chairman of the county board, and for eight years was receiver of the U. S. land office. He came to Fergus Falls in 1876. He married Miss Mary A. Gouiding in 1856 and has three children, Mrs. C. C. Bell, Mrs. L. J. Dobner and Chas. H. Allen, who assists him in the management of the mill.

Mr. John H. Stauffer, head miller, under whose supervision the flour is made, is a son of a miller and was born at Stevens, Lancaster county, Penn., in 1855. He went to work in his father's mill at an early age and has been milling ever since. He came to Minneapolis in 1879 and worked in the Crown roller mill for three years. In 1882 he came to Fergus Falls to work in the Red River Roller Mills. He worked there until 1886 when he came to the Fergus flour mills. Mr. Stauffer is an up-to-date miller and

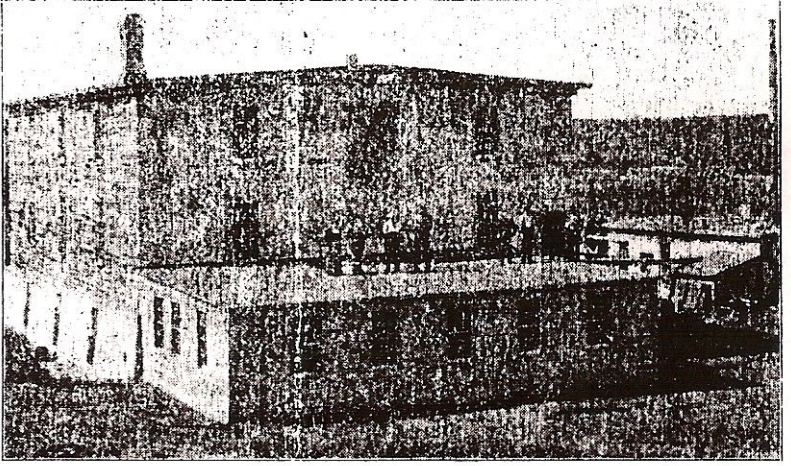
PARK ROLLER MILL.

A Fergus Falls Institution Which is Never Idle, But Whose Wheels are Always Turning.

Among the flouring mills of Fergus Falls none stands better than the Park Roller mill owned by A. H. Kirk. This mill is located on what is known as the Austin dam, being the second power in the series, and one of the very best. This mill has a capacity of 150 barrels per day, but a large portion of its business is grist work. People for miles around, not only in Minnesota but in the Dakotas, send their wheat here to have it ground into flour, paying toll and getting the off-sets back to use as feed. The mill was thoroughly renewed in 1891, when the newest and most up to date machinery was put in. The mill has a large local trade, the "Park" and "Favorite" brands being well and favorably known to all housekeepers around here.

The mill ships a large amount of flour, the shipping brands being "Ceres," "Sparkle," and "Crystal." Under the personal direction of Mr. A. H. Kirk, who is not only a practical miller, but a man who has contributed some most valuable ideas to the milling world, the Park has taken a high rank among the mills of Minnesota.

He was born in Brown county, N. Y. in 1847 and came to Minneapolis in 1871 where he engaged in the manufacture of flour mill machinery. Recognizing Fergus Falls as a great milling center



THE FERGUS FALLS WOOLEN MILL.

Red River Roller Mill.

The Red River Roller Mill, which is shown on this page, is situated in the center of the city of Fergus Falls. It is on the fourth dam, using that power jointly with the Fergus Manufacturing company, there being ample for both. The mill has a capacity of 450 barrels per day. Beside the mill, as shown in the cut is an elevator with a capacity of 30,000 bushels. Although most elegibly situated it is removed from other buildings so that there is no danger from fire outside. The mill has always done a large business both local and foreign, and has been very popular with farmers and consumers. The mill is controlled by James J. Hill, who wishes to sell it, or in case it can not be sold, to lease it. Extensive repairs have just been made to the mill building and dam. Every reason which makes Fergus Falls a great milling point applies to this mill and parties with capital sufficient to operate the mill will find this an excellent opportunity to secure a mill.

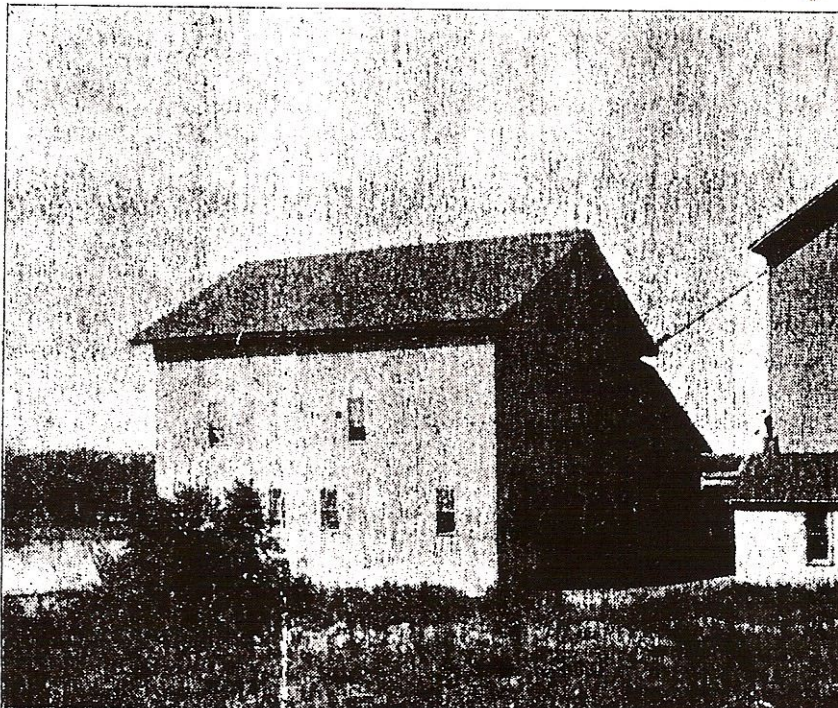
resented his ward in the city council two terms. He enlisted Feb. 2, 1863, in the Sixteenth New York Independent battery light artillery, and was discharged July 7, 1865. He is a member of the Knight Templars, I. O. O. F. and Knights of Pythias.

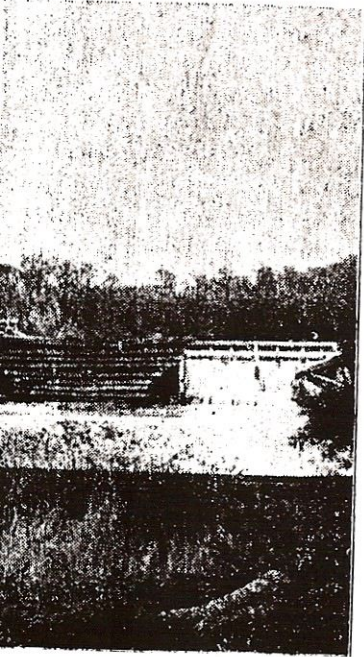
MAKE OUR OWN CLOTH.

Fergus Falls Now in a Position to Clothe Itself if the Sheep Will do Their Duty.

Very few people realize the fact that if all the woolen mills outside of Fergus Falls should burn down, there would be no scarcity of woolen cloth to make clothes. Such is the case, however, for the Fergus Falls Woolen Mill is now prepared and is making everything necessary to wear from the yarn which goes into your stockings to the cloth which makes the cap on your head.

The mill shown here, officially known as the Fergus Falls Woolen Mill, owned by Frank J. Evans and leased and operated by Walter Hogan, is well equipped and makes all kinds of woolen goods worn. Much of the





ne it runs both night and day to meet the demands of the trade. Even our own residents will be surprised to learn the character and volume of the business done.

The mill makes woolen blankets of the highest grade. It makes flannels

A STRONG FIRM.

Such Is Hoorn, Bergman & Co., Proprietors of the Fergus Falls Foundry and Machine Shop.

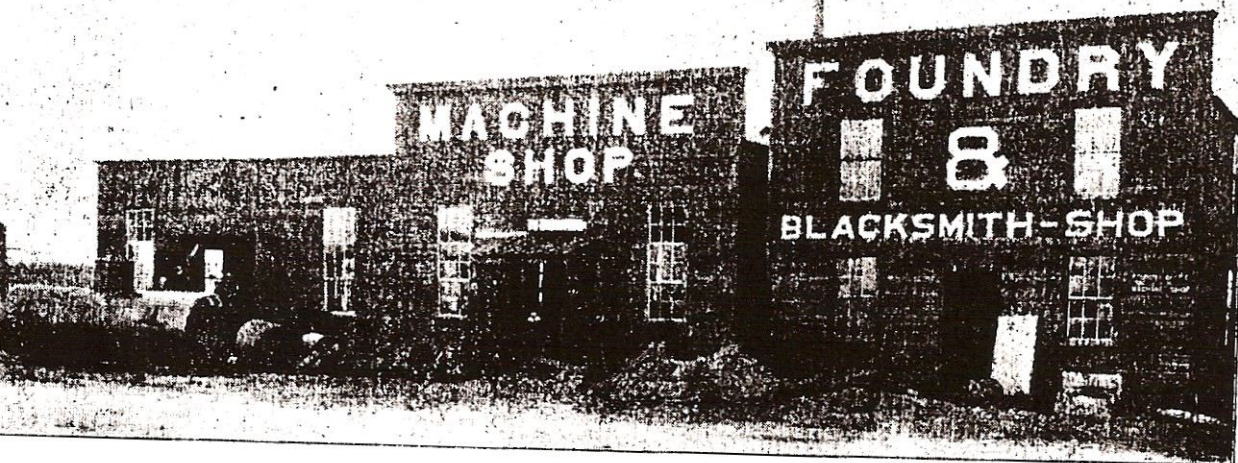
There is no more striking example of the renewed prosperity of Fergus Falls than the success which the new firm of Hoorn, Bergman & Co. have achieved. About five years ago they came here and found the Fergus foundry and machine shop idle. It was well equipped with machinery and facilities of all kinds for doing a successful business, but it had not been a success and was idle. This firm, which consists of C. L. Hoorn, H. P. Bergman and D. J. Chelgren, all skilled and practical workmen, saw that there was an opportunity to build up a successful business and they embraced it. The presence of so many mills, factories and shops in Fergus Falls and its central location struck them as certain to furnish business for a first class boiler factory and machine shop. They were not mistaken and since they opened up they have not been idle a day and much of the time have had work ahead, not only for themselves but for a number of employes. Their shops are well equipped with all kinds of machinery for working in iron, while the foundry is capable of turning out any casting



D. J. CHELGREN.

secured homes and are permanent fixtures, and more than this they are furnishing employment all the time for from three to ten men.

Carl Ludvig Hoorn, the senior member of the firm of Hoorn, Bergman & Co., was born in Sweden in 1841. He came to R. Wing in 1869, and for seventeen years was employed by Densmore Bros. In 1886 he moved to Cannon Falls, where he remained until 1891, when he came



FOUNDRY AND MACHINE SHOP OF HOORN, BERGMAN & CO.

l kinds. It makes suitings and goods which are a delight and sure to the wearer. The mill is operated on a combination plan. It

wool outright or takes the farm-wool, cards and spins it, taking its pay in wool. Mr. Hoorn is an expert woollen mill

He not only designs patterns, but he has invented a machine which makes the finest kind of woolen button-knives. Sixteen people are now employed in the mill.

liable to be needed in this section. When the firm first started up it had a large amount of repair work on



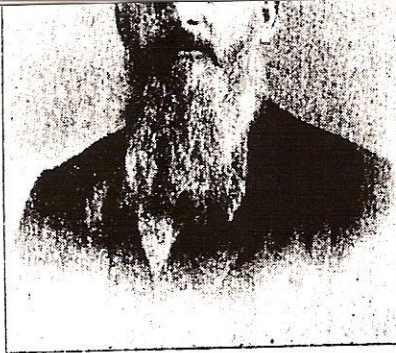
to Fergus Falls. Mr. Hoorn thoroughly understands the business in which he is engaged. In 1872 he married Miss Emily Berg and they have eight children.

H. P. Bergman, who looks after the business of the firm, is a thorough machinist. He was born in Sweden in 1858 and came to Minnesota in 1882. In 1890 he came to Fergus Falls to become a member of the present firm.

"FERGUS."

Name on the Great Majority of Wagons Used Around Here.

It is to be the settled belief of the United States that the country which uses as many home-made wagons as possible will be the most prosperous. This seems to be the belief of the people around Fergus, judging from the number of wagons which one sees on the prairie. The name "Fergus" upon them is every reason why this is the case. It keeps that money here in northern Minnesota and a wagon of excellent quality is secured. The Fergus works, of which B. F. Par-



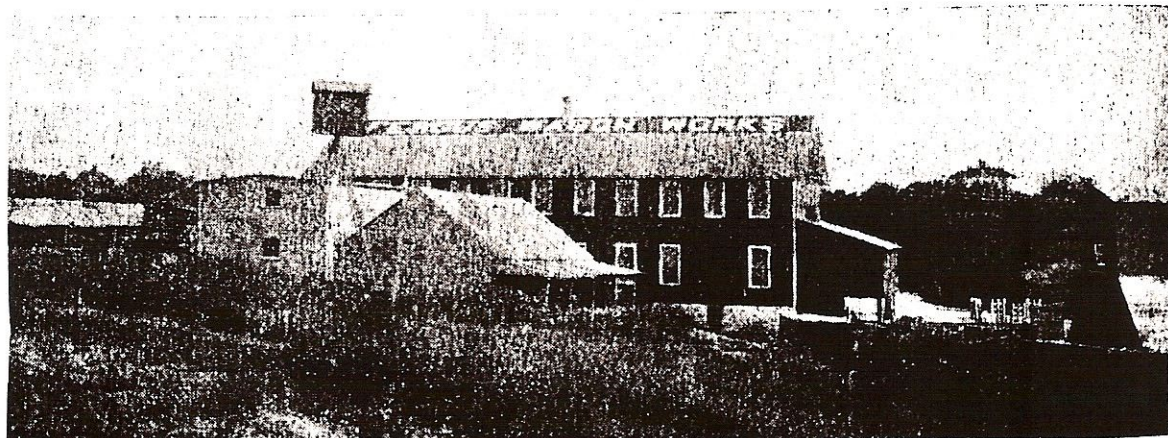
C. L. HOORN.

thrashing engines and this line of work has been plentiful ever since, owing to the satisfactory manner in

berg and they have three children. Daniel J. Chelgren, the third member of the firm is also a native of Sweden, being born there in 1850. He learned the machinists' trade and has worked at it all his life. He came to Minnesota in 1870 and to Fergus Falls in 1891 to engage in the present business. Mr. Chelgren married Miss Sophie Lungberg in 1893.

Benj. F. Partridge,

the well known bi-metalist, is a native of DePeyster, St. Lawrence county, N. Y., being born there in 1842. He came west, and for fifteen years was engaged in the insurance business at Springfield, Mo. For two years he was a member of the board of trade



FERGUS WAGON WORKS.

proprietor, were started in 1887. His business has steadily increased. The wagons made here are to be found in all parts of northern Minnesota and North Dakota. The workmanship and material put into them are the best while their cost is very noticeable by all who use them. This concern also turns out a large quantity of bob sleds which are sold all over the country, north and west.

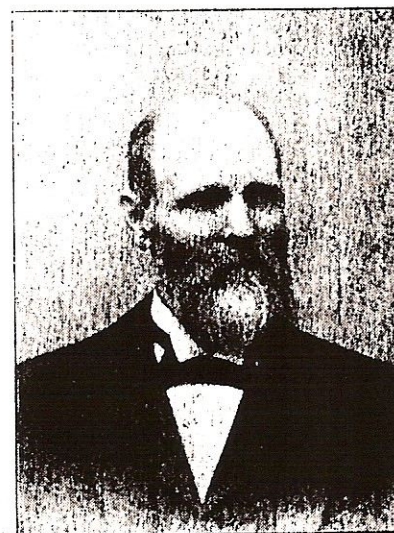
which they perform their work. In 1893 they remodeled the steam plant of the Grand hotel, which had been very expensive to heat, making it now one of

of St. Louis. In 1887, soon after arriving in Fergus Falls, he organized the Fergus Wagon Co., and became sole owner of the plant in 1890. In 1868 he married Miss Julia E. Sherwin, of Canton, N. Y. They have four children, three sons and one daughter. Mr. Partridge is a prominent member of the Congregational church, and does much to assist in the promotion of musical matters. In 1894 he became a strong advocate for



H. P. BERGMAN.

the cheapest buildings of its size to be had in the northwest. At present they are at work on contracts for putting steam plants into the public schools at Detroit; in the court house in this city and in the new theatre here, now in course of construction. They make not only boilers but steam engines, in short seem to do all that can be done in any machine shop of the ordinary kind. The firm has not only pleased its customers but it is more than pleased with the success it has met with here. They have each



BENJAMIN F. PARTRIDGE.

the restoration of bi-metalism, believing that the farmers, who are the consumers of the products of his factory, will receive higher prices for their produce when gold and silver are both used as primary money than under the present system, where gold alone performs the function of redemption money.

