

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Bonneyville Mills

AND/OR COMMON

Bonneyville Mills

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

2.5 miles east of Bristol on C.R. 131

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bristol

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3rd

STATE

Indiana

CODE  
018

COUNTY

Elkhart

CODE

039

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Elkhart County Park and Recreation Department

STREET & NUMBER

113 1/2 North Third Street

CITY, TOWN

Goshen

VICINITY OF

STATE

Indiana

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder's Office, Elkhart County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

219 South Second Street

CITY, TOWN

Goshen

STATE

Indiana

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Bonneyville Mills located on the south bank of the Little Elkhart River is now the hub of a 155 acre park with an extensive natural area being developed by the Elkhart County Park and Recreation Department. Constructed in 1832 this heavy frame timber mill building has remained in good condition. A few of the structural timber were replaced in a recent restoration.

Several shed additions have been made to the original 2 1/2 story (40 x 40) medium gable mill building. One of these additions, although starting as a shed became a full height component with the gable intersecting the main structure about midway. This portion is also topped by a small gable roofed cupola. The horizontal siding with approximately four inches to the weather is broken by few windows. The gable ends have six over six sash windows in the upper story and a half and the downstream side of the building has three small windows irregularly spaced on the first floor.

Built on a field stone foundation this building now has in operation its original turbine water wheels. These were used to provide part of the electricity for the mill when it converted to electric power in 1919. Most of the parts of the original grinding and drive system still exist and are now in use in the mill operation.

This building has been restored using Amish workmen and the same construction methods, techniques and tools used to build the mill in 1832.

Some stone foundation walls were replaced. Gears and parts were handmade when they could not be obtained. Wood siding was found to duplicate the existing siding, cobblestone walks laid down, and all railings, gates, etc., were installed using rough sawn lumber with mortise and tenon joints. Much of the information on the restoration was obtained from the last operator of the mill.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1832

BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Edward Bonney

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

When Edward William Bonney brought his young bride to York Township in northern Indiana in the early 1830's, he also brought with him a vision of a community to be called Bonneyville. Bonney, according to all the newspaper clippings, was a swashbuckling pioneer with handsome chiseled features, of a magnificent physique and the manner of a gentleman. He purchased a tract of land for \$600 on a site which he hoped one day would become an important part of northern Indiana. Shortly after he settled on his land, he purchased 80 acres on which he built a grist and sawmill near the Little Elkhart River. The native beams which support the mill had to be handcut, and the mammoth grinding stones were chiseled with wooden planes and hammers. A dam, made entirely from stone and reinforced by handmade cement of ground limestone and rock, stretched almost a city block across the river.

Bonney moved in the 1840's to Illinois. He is probably the Edward Bonney who wrote The Banditti of the Prairies or the Murderer's Doom! A Tale of the Mississippi Valley. This volume published in 1850 describes his adventures as an outlaw hunter and self-appointed agent of the law on the Midwestern frontier. In his efforts to track down bad men, he was not adverse to breaking laws; he was accused of murder and at times passed counterfeit bills.

The Mill's unique claim of importance, besides being the largest mill operated in this area at that time, was the first water powered mill not having an over-shot water wheel. It had, instead, a vertical shaft with a turbine-type wheel lying flat against the water flow. This was highly unusual for any mill in the 1830's. The sawmill has been torn down and no trace of it remains today.

Bonney's dream of establishing a city on the banks of the Little Elkhart River came to a tragic end when the railroad by-passed the community. The mill continued to function as a grist mill, becoming the oldest continuously operating mill in the state. Farmers brought buckwheat, corn and wheat to be ground from a radius of fifty (50) miles. Since the turn of the century, people from Bristol and Elkhart have come to the mill to picnic and fish. The site was especially popular as a gathering place for the Amish. Bonneyville Mill has functioned as an agricultural, industrial, (a saw and grist mill also as a generating plant) and for over 50 years as a recreation area.

After Bonney left Indiana, the mills passed through a succession of owners who continued their operation into the twentieth century. In 1969 a non-profit organization arranged purchase of the mills and adjacent land from Frank Mauck, the last private owner; the property was deeded to Elkhart County for preservation.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

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Major Bibliographical References

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Bonney, Edward. The Banditti of the Prairies or the Murderer's Doom! A Tale  
of the Mississippi Valley. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963.

Deahl, Anthony. A Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Elkhart  
County, Indiana. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1905.

Elkhart County Park & Recreation Department. "Bonneyville Mill Park." n.p., n.d.

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The park's unique setting and history links present Elkhart County with its past heritage. The 155 acres at Bonneyville Mill Park offer a variety of terrains for gently rolling farm land to river and marsh areas. Much of this area has been left in natural state and provides many varieties of trees and shrubs, and a wonderful habitat for wildlife, birds and insects.



# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See attached continuation sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 155 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	6
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6	0	2	7	5	0
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4	6	1	9	1	4	0
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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE  

ORGANIZATION Leroy Troyer and Mrs. Chauncey Baldwin DATE  

STREET & NUMBER Leroy Troyer & Associates TELEPHONE 10/23/75

CITY OR TOWN 112 1/2 Lincolway East, 402 Prospect STATE  

Mishawaka & Elkhart Indiana

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:  
 NATIONAL   STATE X LOCAL  

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE   DATE March 30, 1976

TITLE Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION DATE  

ATTEST: DATE