

# Crown Roller Mill

**1880, 1944, 1987**

The Crown Roller Mill was completed in 1880 and was among the first mills to utilize rollers (hence its name) and the gradual-reduction process.



*Minnesota Historical Society*

In 1856-58, the Minneapolis Mill Company and St. Anthony Falls Waterpower Company joined forces in building a dam above the falls to make waterpower available for manufacturing. The new dam guided the water into mill ponds on both sides of the river. When completed in 1865, a 900-foot canal brought waterpower to various sites.

Minnesotans grew spring wheat which required a different kind of milling process than the winter wheat grown in the East. The two-step process proved successful, commanding a higher price than Eastern flour. The better flour resulted in soaring

demand for Minnesota wheat. As a result, Minnesota millers expanded production. From 1870-1880, seventeen new flour mills were built on the west side of the Mississippi.

Charles Morgan Hardenbergh had an established iron works on the corner of South 1st Street and Fifth Avenue. In 1878, he decided to build a flour mill on the site. Construction began, the cornerstone was set on August 14, 1879, and the building completed in 1880. When completed, the mill was producing 1,000 barrels of flour a day. By 1881, it had a capacity of 2,000 barrels; and in 1890 a capacity of 2,500. The south end of the mill had a 66-foot elevator with a capacity of 98,000 bushels.

While most mills were plain utilitarian structures, Crown Roller had a full mansard roof, segmental arched windows, an ornamental date-and-name plaque, and stood six stories tall in cream-colored brick with a stone foundation. Commanding the highest spot in the milling district, it was the architectural jewel of the neighborhood.



*National Park Service*

Waterpower supplied the energy for all machinery in the mill. Water shortages in the 1880s resulted in the installation of a steam engine.

The owners limited the danger of fire through dust control equipment and firewalls, with hoses, fire extinguishers and water buckets on each floor.

The company worked to improve efficiency from 1880 to 1930.

By 1890, Crown Roller Mill was one of the three largest mills in the country. (The other two were the Pillsbury A Mill and the Washburn A Mill.)



*Minnesota Historical Society*

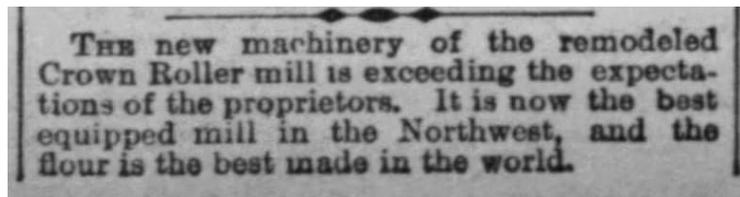


By 1890, four corporations controlled 87 percent of milling capacity, and by 1900, three corporations managed 97 percent. Crown Mill was at the center of these changes.

Crown Roller Mill was acquired by Northwestern Consolidated in 1891 and renamed Consolidated A Mill. It became the second largest flour mill on the west side. That same year, new machinery was added to the mill.

*Minnesota Historical Society*

By 1912, the Mill had a daily capacity of 3,500 barrels. Improvements continued to be made until the 1920s when demand was reduced.



*Star Tribune, March 8, 1891*



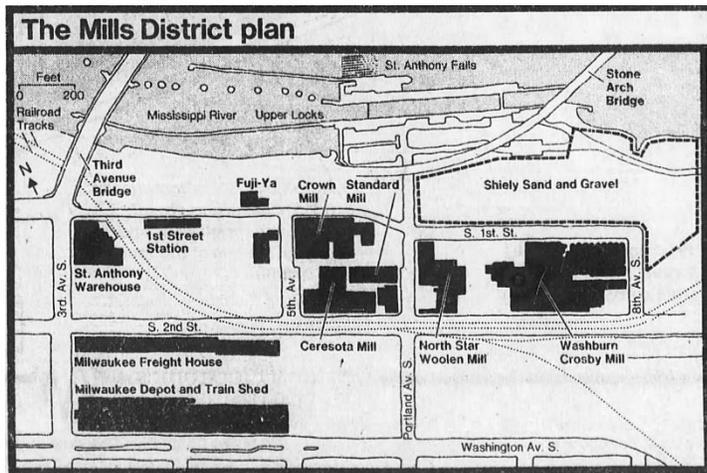
*Minnesota Historical Society*

In 1932, Northwestern Consolidated became a division of Standard Milling. In 1933, the mill was electrified.

Standard replaced the mansard roof in 1944 with a one-story brick addition which significantly altered the building's appearance.

On June 30, 1953, because the Mill had been operating at a loss, production was stopped at Crown Roller Mill. The building became a warehouse for Standard Milling until it was sold in the late 1950s.

Between the mid-1950s and early the 1970s, the building was used for warehousing and light industrial.



*Star Tribune, February 11, 1983*

The Crown Roller Mill was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 as part of the St. Anthony Historic District. The Crown Mill was only one of four mills still standing in the district.

The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* announced on February 11, 1983, that the City of Minneapolis had approved a \$250-million-dollar urban renewal plan for the 35-acre Mill District area, including Crown Roller Mill. The plan was to address urban renewal between

downtown Minneapolis and the Mississippi River.

Eight months later, in October of 1983, fire gutted the interior of Crown Roller causing portions of the exterior walls to collapse.

A debate arose in City Hall as to whether Crown Roller should be razed for new development or preserved.



*National Park Service*

**A slow-starting fire mushroomed into a billowing inferno Friday night, destroying the 104-year-old Crown Mill building along the Mississippi River and covering much of downtown Minneapolis with musty, brown smoke.**

**More than 60 firefighters from eight stations throughout the city fought the blaze, which climaxed at 8:50 p.m. when the brick walls on the top floors of the building, at the corner of S. 1st St. and 5th Av. S., collapsed onto the street. There were no reported injuries.**

*Star Tribune, October 22, 1983*

Fortunately, the preservationists prevailed, and the *Star Tribune's* headline of November 23, 1983, announced, "City panel backs funds to shore up Crown Mill walls."



Renovation by the Hayber Development Group began in 1987. Brick matching the original was used to rebuild the walls, and a new copper mansard roof was constructed.

During the remodel, the mill's two turbines were discovered intact. One was removed to accommodate the remodel, and the other was left in place.

A nine-story steel structure was built inside the former mill around a central atrium, and the building was converted into office space.