



## NHL Executive Summary



**Name of Property:** Reeve REA Power Generating Plant

**City, State:** Hampton (vicinity), Iowa

**Period of Significance:** 1938-1948

**NHL Criteria:** 1

**NHL Theme:** Theme VI. Expanding Science and Technology  
2. Technological applications

**Previous Recognition:** 1990, National Register of Historic Places

**National Historic Context:** XII – Business  
H. Power & Lighting  
1. Electric



**NHL Significance:**

- The Reeve REA Power Generating Plant in rural Franklin County, Iowa, is nationally significant for its exceptional ability to convey the pivotal role of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) in electrifying rural homes.
- Authorized by the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, the REA was a New Deal program intended to help address rural poverty, modernize American farms, and stimulate the national economy. It was the only federal agency specifically focused on nationwide rural electrification. Between 1935 and 1950, the percentage of rural households with electricity rose from 11 percent to 78 percent, thanks in large part to the REA and the rural electric cooperatives it supported.
- On December 30, 1936, the Federated Cooperative Power Association in Iowa received a loan from the REA to build a diesel-generated power plant. The cooperative's Reeve Plant was among the first four power generating plants to receive an REA-backed loan for power generation. This loan program signified an instrumental change in the REA's policy that helped the agency overcome obstructions from private utilities that were unwilling to sell power to rural cooperatives at affordable rates.
- As a diesel-power generating plant, the Reeve Plant represents the contribution of that critically important technology in the history of power generation.
- The period of national significance begins in 1938, when the plant was completed and came on-line to produce energy for six surrounding counties, and extends to 1948, when it moved to stand-by status for a larger power plant run by a larger cooperative serving the same area.

**Integrity:**

- The Reeve REA Power Generating Plant retains an exceptional degree of integrity. The plant's high degree of integrity of association with the REA and power generation is manifested on the building by the letters "R-E-A" on the air intake houses and the lightning bolt emblems on the upper part of the building.
- The location and setting remain unchanged. In addition to the primary resource (power plant), twelve other resources related to power generation during the period of significance contribute to the property's significance.
- The power plant retains a high level of integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. Now a museum, the building reflects both the exterior and interior much as it was during its period of significance. After being decommissioned in 1950, the Reeve Plant remained property of the local power cooperative until 1975 when it was sold to a private owner. In 1988, ownership was transferred to the Franklin County Historical Society, who created and opened the plant as a museum.
- Historic finishes and equipment contribute to a high degree of integrity of feeling. The building retains the first diesel generator that was installed and in operation at the plant; the other three were removed by a previous owner.
- The Reeve REA Plant is unparalleled amongst other REA plants from the late 1930s in its integrity and ability to convey the story of REA power generation.

**Owner of Property:** Franklin County Historical Society

**Acreage of Property:** 1.48 acres



### **Origins of Nomination:**

Following its listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1990, the Chief Historian for the National Park Service recommended pursuing NHL designation. The NHL nomination was not pursued until 2017, when a representative of the Franklin County Historical Society and retiree from the Corn Belt Power Cooperative again raised the possibility of completing the NHL nomination, and a Letter of Inquiry was submitted to the National Park Service who encouraged preparation of an NHL nomination. The Franklin County Historical Society then pursued avenues for funding the undertaking.

**Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:** Designation of the Reeve REA Power Generating Plant complements existing NHLs related to power generation and rural electrification by recognizing the contributions of the REA and rural electric cooperatives.

**Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:** None known.

### **Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of September 18, 2024):**

- United States Senator Charles E. Grassley
- Cara Miller, Executive Director, and Candy Welch-Streed, Director of Partnerships, Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area
- Jacob Olberding, Executive Vice President and General Manager, Corn Belt Power Cooperative
- Ron Dunt, City Manager, Hampton, Iowa
- Charles P. Brown, President, Franklin County Historical Society
- U.S. Representative Randy Feenstra, 4<sup>th</sup> District, Iowa
- Gary McVicker (District 1), Richard Lukensmeyer (District 2), and Chris Varness (District 3), Franklin County Board of Supervisors, Iowa

### **Landmarks Committee Comments:**

- Revise statement regarding the 1942 fence to indicate that it is a contributing landscape feature and clarify the date of construction of the northern section of the fence.
- Add a sentence about the distinctiveness and symbolism of a civic building in a rural landscape.
- Indicate approximate distance from Des Moines and consider adding a regional location map to help readers get a sense of the plant's location within Iowa.

### **Landmarks Committee Recommendation:**

The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior designation of the Reeve REA Power Generating Plant near Hampton, Iowa, as a National Historic Landmark with any additions and corrections as noted by the Committee being made prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for action.

### **Advisory Board Recommendation:**