

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received SEP 30 1982
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Centennial Depot, Laramie, Hahn's Peak and Pacific Railroad

and/or common Nici Self Mueum

2. Location

street & number ~~NA~~ WY 130 not for publication

city, town Centennial vicinity of

state Wyoming code 056 county Albany code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	n/a in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	n/a being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Centennial Valley Historical Association

street & number Box 200

city, town Centennial vicinity of Laramie state Wyoming 82055

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Albany County Courthouse

street & number Grand Avenue

city, town Laramie state Wyoming 82070

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Albany County Historic Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Wyoming Recreation Commission, 1920 Thomes

city, town Cheyenne state Wyoming 82002

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>January 10, 1975</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Nestled in the mountains, the railroad structure in Centennial, Wyoming is a good example of a Wyoming railroad depot constructed in a small town during the early twentieth century. Although the depot was moved in January, 1975, the building has retained its architectural integrity. To ensure its preservation, the structure was relocated for health and safety considerations. Originally the depot was placed right next to the tracks. In the sales contract, the Centennial Valley Historical Association had to agree to move the depot. The structure is a one story, frame building with shingle siding and has a hipped roof. The foundation was constructed of railroad ties. The windows are double-hung and have protective bars. A bay window decorates one facade. There are three original entrances, now sealed, and one new doorway. Generally, the interior of the depot has retained its integrity.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Summer, 1907 **Builder/Architect** unknown—Contracted for Van Horn—Miller

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Syndicate

Constructed in 1907, the Centennial depot is the oldest surviving depot of a unique Rocky Mountain railroad. The Laramie, Hahn's Peak and Pacific Railway Company, formed in 1901, provided valuable rail service to a remote area of Wyoming, and was integral to the economic life of the Centennial Valley and the Medicine Bow Mountains. Ranching, lumbering, and mining interests all relied heavily on the 111 mile line. Originally planned in anticipation of a gold strike which never materialized, the railroad instead transported the more profitable products of the Centennial area: cattle, lumber, and coal. The Laramie, Hahn's Peak and Pacific was unique in that, unlike most of its contemporaries in the West, it survived both financial woes and severe Rocky Mountain winters. Known since 1951 as the Coalmont Branch of the Union Pacific Railroad, the line continues to serve the Centennial Valley. The Centennial depot symbolizes the role the railroad has played in the settlement of the region. In its 75-year history, the building has often served as a center of community activity. At one time, the U.S. Post Office was located in the waiting room; a small grocery store was once operated in a corner of the structure. Saved from destruction in 1974 by a group of area residents, the depot continues in the tradition of serving the community; the building now houses the Nici Self Museum, named for a long-time Centennial resident, and contains various exhibits relating to the history of the Centennial area. The Centennial depot is not only a well-preserved example of the classic western train station; it also serves as a symbol of community spirit in the settlement of the Rocky Mountain West. (See Addendum.)

In honor of the nation's 1876 Centennial, a rich vein of gold discovered in 1875 in Wyoming's Medicine Bow Mountains was named "the Centennial Mine." The tiny community which grew up nearby was also named Centennial, as was the surrounding valley. Within a few years, however, the gold was gone. Centennial should have become a ghost town, like so many other Rocky Mountain mining towns, but the community clung to life. Prospectors still roamed the area, and soon other industries, notably ranching, timbering and coal mining, discovered the riches of the Centennial Valley.

Around the turn of the century, a Boston financier, Issac Van Horn, became convinced that gold would be rediscovered in the Centennial area. Van Horn's plans revitalized the small town: streets were platted, lots were sold, and soon Centennial boasted a newspaper, bank, hotel, several saloons, even a country club. In all, over a dozen corporations were formed to promote the village. Issac Van Horn's most ambitious plan was put into effect in February, 1901, when the Laramie, Hahn's peak and Pacific Railway Company was incorporated in Cheyenne, Wyoming, with Van Horn as president and Fred A. Miller named vice-president. The railroad was formed to transport the expected windfall of gold.

Years of financial difficulties followed. Locals began to refer to the L,HP and PRR as the "Lord, Help Push and Pull Railroad." The Van Horn syndicate needed six years to lay tracks from Laramie to Centennial, a distance of forty miles. When the rails did reach Centennial, it was clear that the predicted gold discoveries would not occur; the railroad then turned south to transport the more profitable coal, cattle and lumber products which the area continued to produce.

9. Major Bibliographical References

The Centennial Post, 1902-1911
 Hollenbach, Frank R., The Laramie Plains Line (Denver: Sage Books, 1960).
 Wiegand, Catherine, ed., Centennial, Wyoming, 1876-1976. (Denver: Silers Printing Company, 1976)
 The New Empire: The Laramie, Hahn's Peak and Pacific Railway Company, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Boston: September, 1910.)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2 acres

Quadrangle name Centennial, Wyoming

Quadrangle scale 1: 24,000

UTM References

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 Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification Centennial Depot is located on the east side of Centennial, Wyoming. The nominated area includes the depot and the surrounding acres that are owned by the Centennial Valley Historical Association. A fence enclosed the two acres. The property is south of highway 130 and east of the Union Pacific Railway tracks, N¹/₂SE¹/₄ of Sec. 3,

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries R78W, T15N.

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jane J. Houston, Secretary

organization Centennial Valley Historical Association date July 15, 1981

street & number Box 200 telephone 307-742-7158 or 634-4955

city or town Centennial state Wyoming 80255

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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 *Jane J. Houston*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date September 27, 1982

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Jane McClelland
 Keeper of the National Register

date 11-8-82

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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*****Addendum

Correspondence from Jane Houston, Centennial Valley Historical Association Secretary, illustrates the community spirit generated by the preservation of the Centennial Depot and the care and attention expended on the rehabilitation of the structure:

Because of its use as a museum, the three original entrances were sealed from the inside, although the doors are visible from the outside. A new door was constructed at the opening for the loading dock. Two of the original doors led to the waiting room and the other to the living quarters of the agent. It has the protruding windows for viewing approaching trains. Varying types of windows make it difficult to determine which were the originals. Some are six lites over six lites, some are two over tow, and still others are one over one. For many years it has been painted white above and green below. Originally, according to the locally published newspaper, The Centennial Post of August 3, 1907, "The first coat has been put on the Plains Line depot. This building is being painted a bright yellow with maroon trimmings." On August 10, 1907, the following appeared, "T.B. Uhlen of Dexter, Missouri, nephew of M.T. Uhlen of Laramie, has been appointed agent for the Laramie, Hahn's Peak and Pacific Railway Company at Centennial. The station is being finished and is now commodious and attractive. There will be living rooms in the building for the family of the agent." Still later on September 21, "Carpenters are completing interior woodwork on the Centennial Depot. The hall and offices are prettily frescoed." Because of its poor condition, the "frescoing" has now been painted brown, though the walls remain either white or wallpapered with paper typical of that era. After the Union Pacific Railroad took over the line in 1935, two families of section workers sometimes occupied the depot. Residents made only a few changes, and the ticket window and counter are still intact. Concurrently with its railroad functions, the depot has housed a general store and at different times, the local post office. These functions have resulted in minor interior changes, though the exterior has remained pretty much as it was originally constructed.

When the Centennial Valley Historical Association acquired the depot, it was moved several hundred feet from the railroad tracks to a two-acre site. The foundation, as was the original, is railroad ties. It has been re-shingled with cedar shingles similar to the deteriorated wooden ones that were on the roof. Entry steps were built and the building was painted inside and out. Inside a door has been cut from the original loading dock to the living-office portion of the building. A portion of the loading dock has been partitioned off for a rest room and a utility room. Old plaster and wallboard were shoveled out (literally) of the structure in 1975 and the interior has been plastered, painted and three rooms wallpapered. It was possible to retain the original plaster and wallboard in the waiting room and ticket office. Hopefully the building more nearly resembles its original state now than when it was acquired. One room is furnished as an old time kitchen, another as a bedroom. The loading dock, hall, waiting room and ticket office contain various sorts of museum exhibits pertaining to the history of the Centennial area. Most exhibits are related to mining, railroading, and ranching - the three main industries of Centennial Valley.

The work described in the above paragraphs was accomplished with community volunteer help and the Centennial Depot stands as a symbol of historic preservation due to community spirit.

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The railroad had a constant fight with the twin financial woes of huge debts and substantial operating losses, which were common to mountain railroads fighting 75-mile per hour winds and - 50 degree temperatures. In 1912, Van Horn's dream went into receivership and in 1914, was sold to a group of Denver businessmen, who renamed the line "The Colorado, Wyoming and Eastern Railroad Company." Several other changes of name and ownership followed until, in 1951, the line became the Coalmont Branch of the Union Pacific Railroad. Through indebtedness, corporate shuffling, and fierce Wyoming winters, the "Laramie Plains Line" had survived, while most other small railroads in the Rocky Mountains had long since disappeared.

The Centennial depot is a reminder of the tenacity of a railroad and a town. Until the early 1970s, the depot served its original purpose, as a railroad office and home of the local agent. When it was closed by the Union Pacific, and threatened with destruction, a group of area residents, The Centennial Valley Historical Association, moved the structure a few hundred feet to its present location. It now serves as the home of the Nici Self Museum, displaying exhibits of the region's history, a history which owes much to a small, troubled railroad.