

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Contoocook Railroad Depot
other names/site number NA

2. Location

street & number 868 Main Street NA not for publication
city or town Hopkinton (Contoocook Village) NA vicinity
state New Hampshire code NH county Merrimack code 013 zip code 03229

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James M. Conahan 1/30/06
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

Signature of Keeper
[Handwritten Signature]

Date of Action
3-16-06

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: TRANSPORTATION Sub: Rail-related

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION /CULTURE Sub: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY/Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/BRICK
roof WOOD shingle
walls WOOD weatherboard
other NA

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1

Description

The Contoocook Railroad Depot stands on a terrace above the Contoocook River in the village of Contoocook, in the town of Hopkinton, New Hampshire. The building stands adjacent to a former railroad right-of-way, no longer used as such and no longer retaining the tracks or other features associated with an active railyard. The depot's location near the former tracks required that the building be located north of the general alignment of buildings along Contoocook's Main Street. The depot is separated from the street by a parking area that was formerly a grass-covered park. A short distance to the northwest of the depot is a wooden railroad bridge (1889) that carried trains across the Contoocook River and today is the oldest surviving covered railroad bridge in the United States.

The Contoocook Depot is a rectangular building with its principal axis running roughly east and west, parallel to the former tracks. The building measures 50'-5" in length by 24'-5" in depth, and stands on a stone foundation that has brick underpinning at grade on all except the eastern side, where stone masonry is exposed above grade. The building has a basement under its western end. A brick chimney, serving a steam boiler, rises through the center of this basement and through the upper rooms of the building to penetrate the roof on the north side of the ridge.

The depot is of wood frame construction, one and a half stories in height, and is covered by a gable roof. Its exterior walls are clapboarded, and its roof is covered with wooden shingles. All windows in the building have six-over-six sashes. Window openings are characterized by flat exterior casings and have head casings with slightly peaked tops, suggesting the appearance of low-pitched pediments.

The Contoocook Depot is an excellent example of the type of passenger station that was common in substantial villages (as distinct from cities or rural hamlets) in the mid-nineteenth century. The building is large enough to have provided gentlemen's and ladies' waiting rooms at opposite ends of the structure, with a station manager's office and ticket booth at the building's center, and probably with a baggage room at the western end. The roof eaves project deeply on all four sides of the building, but especially on the two longer sides where the rafter tails extend some six feet beyond the walls to afford ample shelter from the elements. Although the building displays simple exterior detailing that derives from the late Greek Revival style of the mid-1800s, the pronounced overhang of the eaves diverges sharply from the Greek Revival aesthetic. The deep

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overhang of the eaves was achieved through the projection of the rafter tails well beyond the wall plates on the street and track sides of the building. To support these long cantilevers, diagonal braces extend outward from the walls of the building at about the level of the second floor. These braces intersect and support the undersides of the projecting rafters. The bottoms of the braces and the rafters are sheathed with wide boards, creating a soffit in the form of an inverted V. This specialized roof design proclaimed the building as a railroad depot, a type of structure that had been unknown in New Hampshire until about ten years before the Contoocook Depot was constructed.

The fenestration of the building is somewhat irregular, reflecting the interior arrangement and functions of the station. On the south or Main Street elevation, the building has two doors and five windows, irregularly spaced. Beginning on the west, this elevation has two windows. The westernmost window may have lighted a small baggage room or ladies' retiring room (now combined with the main room at this end of the building). The second window lights the main ladies' waiting room. East of this pair of windows is a door that originally provided street-side access to the ladies' waiting room. This door now opens at the foot of a flight of stairs that offer emergency egress from the second story. Next east, in the approximate center of this elevation, are two windows that light a toilet room and small kitchen. East of this pair of windows is a door leading into the original gentlemen's waiting room of the depot. A window east of that entrance lights the waiting room.

The north or track side of the building also has asymmetrical fenestration, with doors and windows placed in functional arrangements on both sides of a projecting bay window. As is common with most small-to-moderate-sized depots, the central bay window is three-sided, with narrow sashes on each slanted wall to provide visibility along the track in both directions. Beginning at its western end, the north elevation of the depot has a door that probably provided access to an original baggage room. This door now opens on an entry at the base of a flight of stairs leading to the second story. Next east are a window and a door, located close together, which light the original ladies' waiting room. Next is the projecting bay, which marks the stationmaster's office. East of the bay window is a door (formerly sealed) that provides track-side access to the gentlemen's waiting room. East of the door is a window that lights the waiting room.

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Both end elevations of the depot have two windows on the first story, and two windows directly above them in the gables of the building.

Standing directly in front of the bay window on the track side and penetrating the roof overhead is a tall wooden mast that supports the semaphore signal of the station. Photographs document the fact that this semaphore was installed sometime after 1906. Prior to that date, the Contoocook stop was served by a ball signal that stood some distance to the west of the station, close to the covered bridge.

The interior of the depot retains wall and ceiling finish of beaded pine "ceiling board" sheathing, applied horizontally to the walls in a manner that was characteristic of the late nineteenth-century practice of the Boston and Maine Railroad. Much of this pine sheathing is underlaid with lath and plaster, an interior finish that was common in mid-nineteenth-century depots and was often employed in buildings on smaller rail lines that were eventually consolidated into the Boston and Maine system. All areas of the first story are floored with varnished hardwood.

The Contoocook Depot has been somewhat altered in two identifiable periods. As originally built, and as recorded in the earliest photographs of the building, the depot had two stove chimneys that provided warmth in the two principal waiting rooms. By 1906, as shown in a photograph of that date, the easternmost chimney had been removed; the western chimney remains today. This change denotes a modernization of the heating system of the building that was undertaken by the Boston and Maine Railroad, which acquired the old Concord and Claremont Railroad line in 1887. In keeping with similar changes throughout the rail system, the Boston and Maine supplanted the traditional stove heat with coal-fired boilers that supplied nested steam or hot water radiators in the centers of each waiting room. The boilers also supplied hot water to pipes that were mounted horizontally on the outer walls of each waiting room.

Again in keeping with general changes throughout its system, the Boston and Maine Railroad covered the plastered interior walls and ceilings of its older depots with tongued-and-grooved "ceiling board" sheathing in the late 1800s or early 1900s. This change provided a durable and

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easily cleaned interior finish in heavily used depots that were exposed to smoke and soot. Installation of sheathed interiors was made practical by the advent of the four-sided shaping machine in the woodworking industry of the late 1800s. Together with the availability of inexpensive southern yellow pine lumber, new shaping machinery permitted the inexpensive production of unlimited quantities of hard pine interior finish, widely used in other buildings as well as in railroad stations. The sheathed interior of the Contoocook Depot remains largely intact.

The second period of alteration occurred after the last railroad corporation to own the building sold it for private use in the 1960s. The building was then adapted for use by a local insurance company and for other offices. At this period, two doors opening into the gentlemen's waiting room from the street side and the track side were closed, and former windows were converted to doors on the street (south) side of the building. The ceiling board sheathing on the interior was covered with modern pine sheathing or with modern ceiling materials. The current owners of the building have reversed these modern changes and finishes, leaving limited traces of the second period of alteration.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Transportation

Period of Significance

1849

1849-1955

Significant Dates

1849

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.20 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>19</u>	<u>279650</u>	<u>4788890</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James L. Garvin, Architectural Historian

organization New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources date October 2005

street & number 19 Pillsbury Street telephone 603-271-6436

city or town Concord state NH zip code 03301-3570

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Contoocook Riverway Association

street & number P. O. Box 789 telephone 603-746-3583

city or town Contoocook state NH zip code 03229

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Section 8 Page 1

Significance

The Contoocook Railroad Depot was completed in 1849 as one of the first substantial railroad passenger stations west of Concord on the Concord and Claremont Railroad.¹ The building is one of the best preserved of a small number of gable-roofed railroad stations surviving from the first decade of rail development in New Hampshire. The station exemplifies the pioneering period of rail development in the state. The Contoocook Railroad Depot is significant under National Register Criterion A as a building that served and controlled the junction of two of the earliest short line railroads of New Hampshire, the Concord and Claremont Railroad and the Contoocook Valley Railroad. The building provided essential passenger service and communications for these interrelated lines. Under Criterion A, the depot symbolizes the impact of a new technology on a village that had been at the periphery of Hopkinton's economic life. With the arrival of the railroad, Contoocook Village assumed greater economic importance than old Hopkinton Village, becoming the center of most of the town's manufacturing and commerce. The depot is therefore associated with a historic change that significantly contributed to the development of the community and state.

The depot is significant under National Register Criterion C as a rare and well-preserved example of the gable-roofed depots that provided a new architectural form to fulfill the functions of a previously unknown building type, the railroad station. It is one of the earliest and least altered depots of the 1850 period in New Hampshire. Displaying the Greek Revival style, with modifications that proclaim its identity as a new building type, the depot is an important artifact in the history and evolution of railroad architecture in New Hampshire.

¹ The first annual report of the Concord and Claremont Railroad, dated May 1849, states that "contracts for erecting and finishing most of the buildings [between Concord and Bradford] have been made, and the passenger and freight depots, and woodshed at Contoocookville are nearly completed." The same report shows that \$8,000 had been committed at that date for construction of depots. *First Annual Report of the Directors of the Concord and Claremont Railroad, to the Stockholders*, May 1849, page 3. The second annual report, issued in May 1850, states that "the track was completed and the road opened to Contoocookville, twelve miles, on the first of September [1849], and to Warner, eighteen and a half miles from the Depot in Concord, on the first of October last." By that date, \$14,054.52 had been spent on depot buildings, and an estimated \$4,500.00 more was needed to be spent on depots and repair shops to equip the road properly to Bradford. *Second Annual Report of the Directors of the Concord and Claremont Railroad, to the Stockholders*, May 1850, page 2.

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Under Criterion A, the period of significance extends from 1849 to 1955, the arbitrary fifty-year cut-off date for National Register listings. Under Criterion C, the period of significance is 1849. The Contoocook Railroad Depot possesses integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association for both periods of significance. The building's setting has lost some integrity through the partial removal of railroad facilities in the vicinity, including a long-removed engine house, although the wooden railroad bridge remains nearby and is one of the most significant railroad structures that historically characterized the rail center in Contoocook Village.

Significance, architecture: Because the Concord and Claremont Railroad remained a small and under-capitalized short line, and because capital investment in its property was limited even when the line was acquired by the larger Northern and Boston and Maine Railroads, the Concord and Claremont line always remained a virtual museum of early railroading structures and technologies. The long-continued practice of maintaining the Concord and Claremont Railroad with minimal investment caused the Contoocook Depot to survive to the present day as one of a very small group of comparable structures.

Stagecoaches were the first form of public land transportation and were the direct predecessors of railroads. Stage route provided precedents for many of the basic elements of railroad operation, including corporate structuring, tickets, waybills, mail delivery, and the interconnection of travel route served by various companies. The structures that served stage travel, and thus preceded railroad depots as transportation centers, were ordinary taverns. Taverns provided shelter for passengers, ticket sales, and mail and baggage accommodations for stage lines. Taverns took many forms, but almost all of them reflected a template provided by dwelling houses of their respective periods. Taverns were multi-purpose buildings, with the greater part of their facilities devoted to providing food and overnight shelter to their passengers, and with only incidental accommodations to their role as stopping places for public transportation.

Railroad stations, by contrast, represented an entirely original building type intended to serve a new technology and mode of travel. They provided no food, and offered only temporary shelter from the elements, but accommodated much larger numbers of travelers at any one time. As a consequence, depot buildings devoted most of their volume to large, warm waiting rooms, to

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Significance

mail and baggage storage, and to ticket sales, all provided adjacent to the tracks. Almost invariably, depot buildings offered both inside shelter from the elements, and also a measure of outside shelter afforded by widely overhanging eaves or adjacent sheds, especially welcome in warm weather.

The majority of railroad depots constructed prior to the Civil War outside of major cities (where monumental masonry buildings were common) were rectangular wood-frame structures, oriented with their major axes parallel to the tracks, characterized by detailing in a simple Greek Revival style, and covered by gable roofs that exhibit a broad, sheltering overhang on at least two sides of the building. It appears that a majority of these buildings were also provided with a bay window on the track side, permitting the station superintendent to survey the tracks in both directions.

The earliest depot buildings to survive in New Hampshire reflect the Greek Revival style in their details. These buildings also reflect the Greek Revival style in their overall design, with one important exception. Whereas Greek Revival-style buildings dating between 1830 and 1850 had raking and eaves cornices of a classic profile, placed close to the walls of the building, the earliest surviving railroad depots display roofs with exaggerated overhangs. Retaining the gable roof that was universal in the Greek Revival style, these buildings altered that type of roof by an exaggerated extension of their roof planes beyond the walls, creating sheltering eaves of six feet or more, especially on the track and road sides of the buildings. To support these unprecedented overhangs, diagonal braces support the tails of the rafters from below.

The exposed brace or bracket was unknown in Greek Revival architecture of the 1840s or 1850s. Exposed braces or truss elements were seen only rarely in the most modern buildings designed under the influence of romantic theorists like Alexander Jackson Downing. In such buildings, braces generally served an ornamental rather than a structural function. In railroad depots, by contrast, diagonal braces served to support the overhanging tails of the rafters. It was common to sheath the undersides of the braces and the projecting rafters of railroad stations, hiding these members and creating an enclosed soffit, as described above.

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By the 1870s, many new depots were being designed with hipped roofs. Hipped roofs had the advantage of permitting equal overhangs on all four sides of the building, and the hipped roof was aesthetically compatible with broad overhangs, being reminiscent of pavilion roofs that had long been used in tropical locales. The earlier hip-roofed stations tended to reflect the stick style, while the later stations were often clad with wooden shingles and reflected the shingle style of the late 1800s.

Only one other such building remains on the earlier portion of the Concord and Claremont line between Concord and the original terminus in Bradford. That building is a two-story station in Warner, also built in 1849 and now altered to serve as an apartment house. Despite its two-story height, this station measures twenty-four by fifty feet, the same as the Contoocook Depot. During construction of the Concord and Claremont Railroad toward Bradford, N. H., the first terminus of the line, for some months, was at Warner. The unusual two-story design of the Warner Depot may reflect the temporary need to provide housing for employees as the railroad was pushed through difficult terrain toward Bradford, which remained the end of the line until 1871. In comparison with the Warner station, the Contoocook Depot is the least altered.

Other comparable depots on the Concord and Claremont line, and on its sister Contoocook Valley Railroad, have disappeared. Very similar stations once stood at West Concord and Bradford, but no longer exist. The Contoocook Valley Railroad, built at the same time as the Concord and Claremont by the same builder, Joseph Barnard (and joining the latter just west of the Contoocook Depot), once had nearly identical depots. The destroyed station at Hillsborough Bridge, the original terminus of the Contoocook Valley Railroad, was a virtual twin to the Contoocook Depot. Like the Contoocook and Warner buildings, it measured twenty-four by fifty feet.²

Other surviving New Hampshire depots of the 1850 period depart in various ways from the Greek Revival vocabulary seen in the Contoocook building. Two comparable depots remain on the former Cheshire Railroad in Fitzwilliam Depot and Troy. The station in Fitzwilliam is a

² *Schedule of Property Transferred by the Northern Railroad to the Boston & Lowell Railroad Corporation, Under Lease, In Effect June 1, 1884.*

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windowless shell, but is slowly being rehabilitated by local volunteers. The Troy station was converted to a dwelling, but is being restored as a museum. Both buildings are contemporaneous with the Contoocook Depot, dating from the opening of the southern section of the Cheshire Railroad in 1849. Each is comparable to the Contoocook station in being a rectangular building with a deeply overhanging gable roof supported along its eaves by diagonal braces. The Cheshire Railroad buildings have no sheathing on the soffits of their rafters. The rafters are exposed to view and the intersections at the peaks of the outermost gable rafters are filled with exposed trusses. Both the exposed rafter tails and the trusses suggest the picturesque influence of Alexander Jackson Downing's influential book, *Cottage Residences* (1842). By contrast with this romantic detailing, the top casings of the doors and windows of each of the surviving Cheshire Railroad depots have slightly-pitched peaks that closely match those in Contoocook and express a conservative late Greek Revival style.

A Fitchburg Railroad depot of 1853 stands in Milford. Like the Cheshire Railroad stations described above, this building has a gable roof with pronounced overhangs that are supported by exposed diagonal braces. The building exhibits picturesque detailing that departs from the more conservative Greek Revival features seen on the Contoocook Depot. Its windows have segmental heads that suggest the Italian villa style, and the window and door heads are connected by a band of wooden corbels that encircle the entire structure. Its gables are pierced by bull's-eye windows.

The most elaborate of New Hampshire's surviving depots of the 1850 period is the Sullivan Railroad station that survives in Charlestown. Built circa 1849, this depot displays the rectangular plan and the deeply-projecting gable roof of its Contoocook, Warner, Troy, and Fitzwilliam contemporaries. While these structures display simple gable ends, enlivened in Troy and Fitzwilliam with applied ornamental trusses at the intersections of the outermost rafters, the Charlestown station exhibits a highly original gable design. The ends of the building are enclosed with sheathing that defines a deep elliptical recess, sheltering paired gable windows with arched tops. Similarly, the overhanging rafter tails are sheathed in a way that creates curved soffits that take the form of segments of ellipses. These seemingly original embellishments seem to have their origin in the practice of creating recessed elliptical second- or third-story porches in the front gables of prostyle Greek Revival houses and commercial buildings. A practice that was

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especially common in the lower Connecticut River Valley of New Hampshire and adjacent Vermont beginning in the 1830s. The arched embellishment of the projecting rafter ends may derive from similar treatments of the portals of covered bridges of the period, as seen in the surviving Thompson Bridge (1832) in West Swanzey, New Hampshire.

The stylistic differences among this small sample of surviving 1850-period depots illustrate the fact that, while the rectangular plan with deep roof overhangs was widely adopted at that period, individual rail lines varied the ornamental treatments of their stations to imbue their buildings with distinctive and recognizable architectural character.

Significance, transportation: From its completion in 1849 until the last trains ran through Contoocook Village in the 1960s, the Contoocook Depot acted as the point of contact between the manufacturing and residential village and the broader commercial world. The depot served as the primary site of commercial activity for the entire township of Hopkinton. In 1817, when Eliphalet and Phinehas Merrill wrote the first *Gazetteer of the State of New-Hampshire*, Contoocook Village had hardly come into existence, being then known as “Hill’s Bridge” and as the site of water-powered mills operated by Benjamin Hill. The Merrills described Hopkinton strictly in terms of the older main village: “there is in this town a handsome village containing about 50 dwelling-houses, a congregational meeting-house, several stores, mechanic shops, etc.” More than twenty years later, still before the advent of the railroad, Contoocook Village continued to be regarded as a place of largely unrealized potential. Writing in 1839, John Hayward described the village in *The New England Gazetteer* as “a thriving village on the Contoocook River, known as *Hill’s Bridge*, or *Contoocookville*, where [there] is a valuable water power, and several mills.”

During the early nineteenth century, the township of Hopkinton annually produced considerable quantities of sawn lumber in its several water-powered sawmills. Before the advent of the railroad, lumber that was surplus to the needs of local building was drawn by teams to the

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Merrimack River, where it was bound into cribs of sixteen-foot lumber. These were floated downriver to various markets through the locks that bypassed the falls and rapids.³

Despite such difficulty and labor in marketing local products, the people of Hopkinton were strongly opposed to the railroad when the idea was first broached in 1844.⁴ By 1849, however, Hopkinton town meetings began to vote on articles to accommodate the railroad, and many local citizens began to invest enthusiastically in railroad stock.⁵ In the fall of 1849, when the first train arrived from Concord, the Contoocook Depot became the site of a great celebratory banquet, served on tables placed under a shed at the station.

At first, rail connections from Contoocook largely focused on Concord. Travelers going east from Contoocook were able to connect to the Concord Railroad, thereby gaining rail access to Manchester, Nashua, Lowell, and Boston; or to the Northern Railroad, providing access to all towns on the route from Concord to West Lebanon on the Connecticut River and to White River Junction, Vermont; or to the Boston, Concord, and Montreal Railroad, thereby gaining access to Woodsville on the Connecticut River and to Wells River, Vermont. Trains traveling northwesterly on the Concord and Claremont Railroad's own tracks were limited at first by the tracks' termination in Bradford, New Hampshire, which was reached in July 1850. Not until the Newbury Cut was completed in 1871 were trains at last able to travel to Newport and finally, in 1872, to make contact with the Connecticut River at Claremont on the railroad's own tracks. Similarly, the Contoocook Valley Railroad, which connected with the Concord and Claremont in Contoocook, was initially completed only as far south as Hillsborough Bridge.

By 1855, barely six years after the arrival of the rails in Contoocook, Contoocookville had begun to reflect its future prominence as the active trading, manufacturing, and commercial center of the township of Hopkinton. In *New Hampshire As It Is* (1855), author Edwin A. Charlton noted that Contoocookville was "the junction of the Merrimack and Connecticut River Railroad and the Contoocook Valley Railroad, [and] is an active and thriving village." Charlton went on to note

³ C. C. Lord, *Life and Times in Hopkinton, New Hampshire* (Concord: Republican Press Association, 1890; reprint ed., Hopkinton, N. H.: New Hampshire Antiquarian Society, 1991), pp. 537-540.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-142.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-147.

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Significance

that “large quantities of lumber are manufactured here and transported on the railroads to various markets,” and that there were in the village “one woolen factory, with a capital of \$7000, and employing twelve hands; one tannery and currier’s shop, with a capital of \$6000; and nine sawmills.”⁶

By 1858, H. F. Walling’s *Map of Merrimack County* showed many manufactories and shops in Contoocookville. Among them were Kimball’s carpenter shop, Osgood’s carpenter shop, Merrill’s cooper shop, Joab and David N. Patterson’s woolen mill, Burnham and Brown’s sawmill, grist mill, and shingle mill, a carriage shop, a mackerel kit manufactory, another sawmill, a blacksmith shop, and Abbott’s hot houses. The compact part of the village also included two schoolhouses and the Contoocook Academy. By that time, the railroad depot was accompanied by a freight house, and the map implies that the building later known as the Kirk Building, which stands adjacent to the railroad station, was then owned by the railroad.⁷

As noted, the Contoocook Depot was located at the junction of the lines of two initially separate railroad corporations. A summary history of the incorporation and merger of the two lines that met near the depot is given in a description of the Concord and Claremont Railroad in the *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Railroad Commissioners of the State of New Hampshire* (1879):

This road is the outcome of a long series of conflicting and unsuccessful railroad schemes. The old Concord and Claremont Railroad Company, chartered June 24, 1848, proposed to build a railroad from some point on the Concord Railroad, in Concord or Bow, to the Sullivan Railroad, in Claremont; and the Central Railroad Company, chartered on the same day, proposed to build a road from Manchester to the Sullivan road, at or near Claremont.

⁶ Edwin A. Charlton, *New Hampshire As It Is*. Claremont, N. H.: Tracy and Sanford, 1855 (reprinted Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, Inc., 1997), pp. 248-250.

⁷ By 1850, the railroad corporation owned a dwelling in the village, which cost \$1,500 and produced \$200 of annual rental income. *Second Annual Report of the Directors of the Concord and Claremont Railroad, to the Stockholders*, May 1850, page 6.

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Significance

These two corporations, in order to obviate conflicting interests, and to concentrate efforts for construction of a single road on a route that would be best for all concerned, were united under an act for that purpose passed June 8, 1853, the consolidated company taking the title of the Merrimack and Connecticut River Railroad company, which became the owner of the old Concord and Claremont Railroad that was completed from Concord to Bradford, 27 miles, July 10, 1850.

The Contoocook River Railroad, chartered June 24, 1848, completed in 1849 from Contoocook to Hillsborough Bridge, 14.5 miles, and opened in December, 1849, was united with the Merrimack and Connecticut River Railroad, under an act passed July 12, 1856, and, under another act of the same date, the mortgagees of the Contoocook Valley Railroad, chartered June 24, 1848, to connect the Concord road in Concord with Peterborough, were authorized to sell the Contoocook Valley road, with all its franchises and property, to the Merrimack and Connecticut River road.

The Sugar River Railroad, chartered July 7, 1856, to connect Bradford with the Sullivan Railroad in Claremont, a distance of 29 miles, was completed in 1872, and was, under the provisions of an act for that purpose, organized in a consolidation with the Merrimack and Connecticut River Railroad, October 31, 1873, under the title of the Concord and Claremont Railroad. It is thus seen that six chartered companies are consolidated in the company as it now exists, and that the old Concord and Claremont Company was chartered twenty-five years before the new Concord and Claremont company was organized. . . . A controlling interest in the consolidation is owned by the Northern Railroad Company, who furnishes the rolling stock, and essentially manages its operations, which are well conducted.⁸

The later history of this line includes its lease by the Boston & Lowell Railroad between 1884 and 1887, operation by the Boston & Maine Railroad after 1887, sale of the line by

⁸ *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Railroad Commissioners of the State of New Hampshire* (1879), pp. 70-71.

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Significance

the Boston & Maine to Samuel M. Pinsley of Boston in 1954, and Pinsley's incorporation of the line as the Concord and Claremont Railway Company, first as a Delaware corporation and then as a New Hampshire corporation.⁹

Pinsley progressively obtained permission to abandon various sections of the Claremont and Concord Railway trackage, as follows: West Concord to Contoocook, and West Hopkinton to Emerson, 1960; West Hopkinton-Contoocook-Bradford, 1961; Bradford to Newport, 1964; Newport to East Claremont, 1977; Concord to West Concord, 1984; East Claremont to Claremont Center, 1988; and small abandonments between Claremont and West Claremont, 1988 and 1994. The trackage on the old Contoocook Valley Railroad between Hillsborough and Emerson had been abandoned in 1942.¹⁰

Throughout the period from 1849 to 1960, the Contoocook Depot was the commercial hub of Contoocook Village. The building not only served as the point of arrival and departure for travelers to and from the village, but also offered other forms of communication. The railway mail was delivered here, and for some years the depot served as the Contoocook Post Office. The depot was connected to the remainder of the consolidated Boston and Maine system by the railway telegraph, and also served the public as the local public telegraph office from 1866. The depot was connected to the Western Union system during the early twentieth century. When the first telephone connections were installed in Contoocook Village in 1884, one of two telephone offices was at the depot, with Amos H. Currier as agent.¹¹ The depot was the local office for Railway and American Express companies.

⁹ *Schedule of Property Transferred by the Northern Railroad to the Boston & Lowell Railroad Corporation, Under Lease, In Effect June 1, 1884* (includes an inventory of the Concord & Claremont [N. H.] Railroad, pages 10-14); Edgar T. Mead, *Through Covered Bridges to Concord: A Recollection of the Concord & Claremont RR (NH)*. (Brattleboro, Vt.: Stephen Greene Press, 1970); Robert M. Lindsell, *The Rail Lines of Northern New England*. (Pepperell, Mass.: Branch Line Press, 2000), pp.118-122.

¹⁰ Lindsell, op. cit., p. 119.

¹¹ C. C. Lord, *Life and Times in Hopkinton, New Hampshire* (Concord: Republican Press Association, 1890; reprint ed., Hopkinton, N. H.: New Hampshire Antiquarian Society, 1991), pp. 242, 352.

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Significance

Standing at the junction of the Concord and Claremont and the Contoocook Valley Railroad lines, the Contoocook Depot also served as the focus of a small but very active rail service center. The *Schedule of Property Transferred by the Northern Railroad to the Boston & Lowell Railroad Corporation, Under Lease, In Effect June 1, 1884* shows that the Contoocook rail center then contained the following buildings: the depot, measuring 25 by 50 feet; a depot "ell," measuring 13 by 24 feet; a freight house, measuring 34 by 50 feet; and engine house, measuring 21 by 50 feet; a water house, measuring 15 by 26 feet; a woodshed, measuring 30 by 147 feet; two hand car houses, each measuring 14 by 18 feet; another hand car house, measuring 12 by 12 feet; and a rail shop. Nearby stood a covered bridge, supported by trusses of Childs' patent; this bridge was replaced by the existing double Town lattice truss railroad bridge in 1889.

All of the structures of the Contoocook rail center, with the exception of the depot, freight house, and bridge, had been removed by 1904.¹² The freight house has since disappeared. The engine house and its connected water house are shown in a surviving photograph that can be dated between 1884 and 1887 by the presence of a Boston and Lowell Railroad locomotive. The locations of the engine house and wood house are shown on a Sanborn Insurance Company map of 1892.¹³

¹² Sanborn Map Company, *Contoocook, Merrimack County, New Hampshire, September 1904*.

¹³ Sanborn Map Company, *Contoocook, Merrimack County, New Hampshire, Nov. 92*.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is identified in the Town of Hopkinton tax records as Tax Map 101, lot 76. Its boundaries are indicated on the attached sketch map.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated property are those that have been and continue to be associated with the Contoocook Railroad Depot.

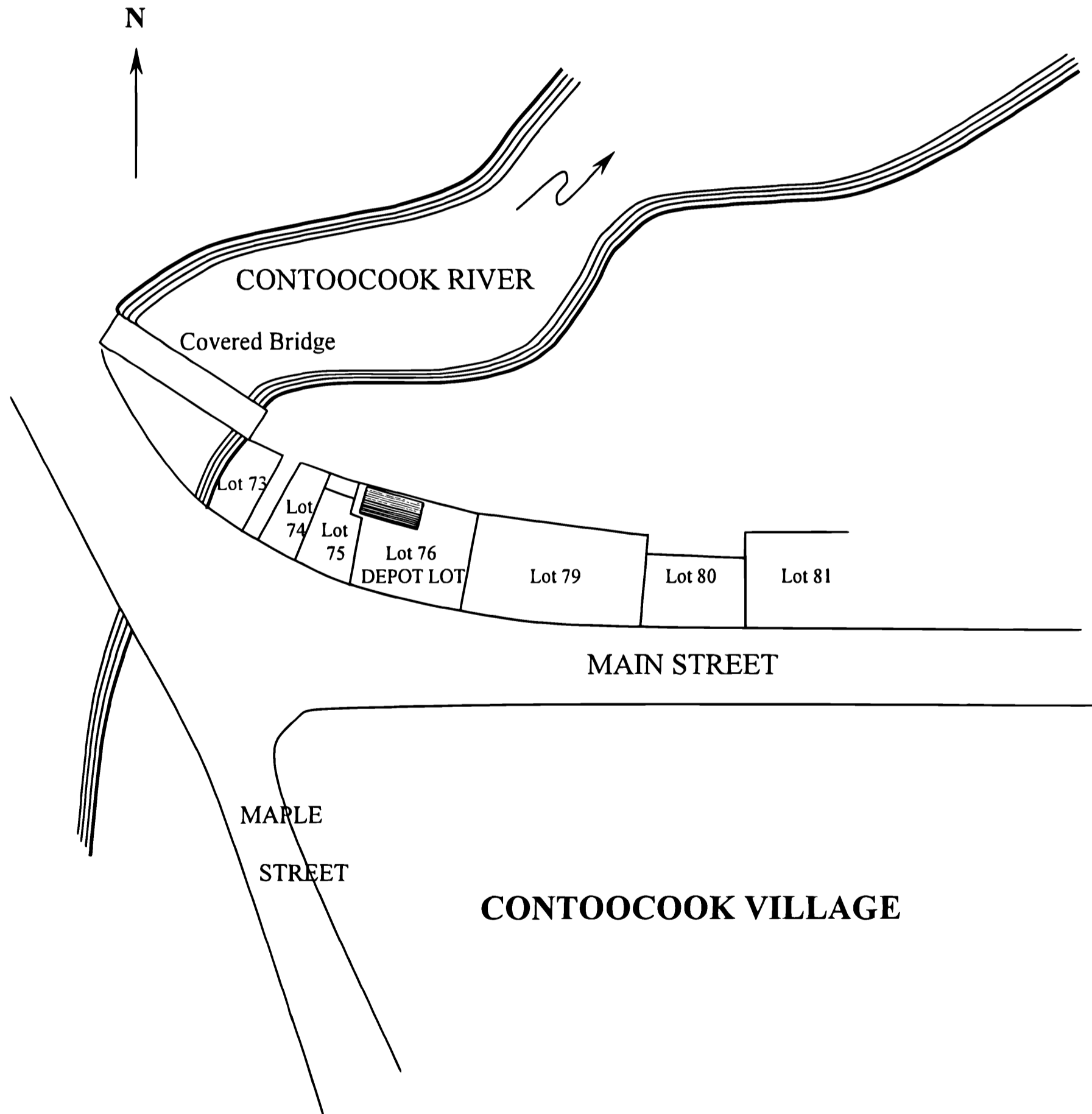
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Contoocook Railroad Depot, Hopkinton, N. H.

Property Sketch Map



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Contoocook Railroad Depot

Photograph Labels

The following pertains to all views:

- 1.) Contoocook Railroad Depot
- 2.) Contoocook Village, Hopkinton, N. H.; Merrimack County
- 3.) Photographer: Chip Chesley
- 4.) Photographs taken: November 2005
- 5.) Negatives at: Contoocook Riverway Association

Photo #1: South and east elevations.

Photo #2: East and north elevations.