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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions on back of form. 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 an 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 Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot

other names/site number Rock Island Depot

2. Location

street & number 1512 South Main Street N/A not for publication

city or town Council Bluffs N/A vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Pottawattamie code 155 zip code 51501

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Patricia Chinking 6-13-95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historical Society of Iowa
State of 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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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): _____

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Entered in the National Register 7.21.95
Date of Action

Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific
Railroad Passenger Depot
Name of Property

207

Pottawattamie, Iowa
County and State

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	
1		buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
The Advent and Development of
Railroads in Iowa: 1855-1940

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/rail-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone
walls brick
stone
roof tile
other

Narrative Description

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

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 a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or 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

1899

1899-1945

Significant Dates

1899

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Chief Engineer's Office, CRT & P RR

John Volk & Co.

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:

Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific
Railroad Passenger Depot
Name of Property

Pottawattamie, Iowa
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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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 Jan R. Nash

organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date February 1, 1995

street & number 931 Maiden Lane telephone (319) 354-6722

city or town Iowa City state Iowa zip code 52240

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Council Bluffs

street & number 209 Pearl Street - City Hall telephone (712) 328-4629

city or town Council Bluffs state Iowa zip code 51503

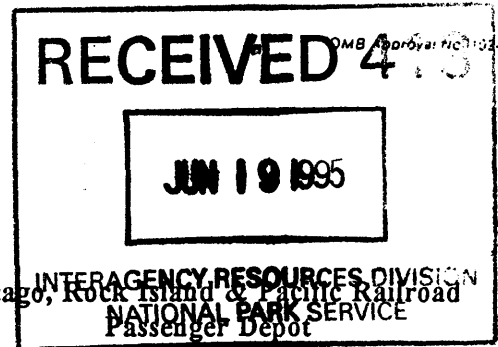
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain 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 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 Reduction Project (2606-0042).

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National Park Service

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CFN-259-1116

7. DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad passenger depot in Council Bluffs, Iowa, was built in 1899 from standard plans used by the railroad for medium-sized stations. Constructed as part of a corporate upgrade of depot facilities at the turn of the century, this depot shares not only its standard plan with other Rock Island depots, but also some of its building materials. Its design is somewhat Romanesque Revival, reflecting the lasting influence of Henry Hobson Richardson [1838-86]. However, the general Victorian affection for polychromatic architecture also is seen in the diversity of colored materials used in the depot. The plan consists of two single-story rectangular masses tied together by one massive hipped roof. Passenger waiting rooms and the office are contained within the larger rectangle; baggage storage and handling space was provided by the other.¹ On the track side of the depot, a two-story bay tower separates the two waiting areas and afforded railroad employees an unobstructed view up and down the tracks. On the other side of the depot, a porte cochere, or covered porch, provided shelter for carriages arriving at the station. The depot's masonry walls are of dark red rough-faced brick on the battered lower half and pale yellow pressed-brick on the upper portion. Door and window sills are cut stone, a pink granite. The same pink granite is used still as ballast for the tracks running alongside the depot. Molded terra-cotta trim is used in several places on the building and red tiles cover the enormous roof. The overhang of the roof is supported by large, regularly placed, wooden braces. Located at the southern tip of Main Street, the depot is separated from downtown Council Bluffs by some ten or 12 blocks and a manufacturing district. The depot sits on an angled northwest/southeast orientation, reflecting the angle of the trackage next to it. Surrounded by a grassy yard to the northwest and to the southeast, the depot today has an asphalt drive along its northeast side and the original brick paver platform on the southwest, track side. The railroad yard of multiple tracks which once ran along side the depot has been reduced by the removal of several middle sets of tracks, however the two farthest sets and the nearest set still exist. One set of tracks is active, serving the Iowa Interstate Railroad. A single mature ash tree is found on the northwest grassy side yard, apparently in the same location as the memorial tree planted in 1922 for the Rock Island's 70th anniversary ceremony. Nearby, two slight depressions in the ground remain and are thought to be the horseshoe throwing pits that helped passengers while away the time as they waited for trains. Several of the gooseneck platform lights are extant also. The open breezeway of this standard plan depot was filled by the railroad during the 1950s with harmonious but not matching

¹The Rock Island's freight depot (nonextant) was located about a block to the northwest of its passenger depot.

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Passenger Depot
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red and yellow bricks. Also, portions of the roof tiling damaged by fire were replaced in the 1980s using tile recycled from a public building being demolished. Other than these two alterations, the depot--the last passenger depot extant in Council Bluffs--remains in a remarkably intact condition.

DESCRIPTION

Exterior

The walls of the depot sit on a stone foundation² and are uniform in composition and construction. Dark red, rock-faced bricks, bonded with a thin red mortar, form the lower battered walls and yellow or light-buff smooth bricks, bonded with thin joints of yellow mortar, form the upper wall area. All bricks are laid in a stretcher-only pattern.³ These same brick types were used by the Rock Island in a number of its other depots from this time period and were likely shipped by the railroad from a central supplier to the various construction sites.⁴ The same bricks are found, singly or in combination, in Rock Island depots at: Ottawa, Illinois (1898/99); Wilton, Iowa (1898); Iowa City, Iowa (1898); Anita, Iowa (date unknown); and Atlantic, Iowa (1898).⁵ The Iowa City and Ottawa depots also are

²*Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil*, 15 April 1899. The foundation material is not visible to an observer today. The foundation of the 1950s breezeway walls is concrete.

³The walls are believed by the present owner to be load-bearing and no wood frame or iron superstructure was observed anywhere but within the roof structure.

⁴Loose bricks, both the rock-faced red and smooth yellow type, were found in the attic over the baggage room. Neither type of brick bears any imprint or marking which would identify or locate its maker.

⁵This list is not exhaustive and there may be other extant Rock Island depots constructed with these materials. Unconfirmed candidates include the 1899-1900 Peoria, Illinois, depot (NRHP, late 1970s) and the Frost & Granger-designed Rock Island, Illinois, depot built in 1901 (NRHP, 1982). Rock Island depots known to *not* share these common building materials include those at Stuart, Iowa (1878); Dows, Iowa (1896); and West Branch, Iowa (1897).

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based on the same standard plan as the Council Bluffs depot (Figure 1).⁶

Dressed stone sills at the windows and doors of the Council Bluffs depot are of a pinkish granite. This distinctive granite, flecked with black, white and clear quartz speckles, is a regionally abundant building stone and is still being quarried today. The likely quarry source for the depot stone and ballast rock is the Minnesota River valley, in the Ortonville, Minnesota, and Milbank, South Dakota, area.⁷ The Rock Island corporate builders combined native stone with the more uniform brick types in other depots as well, giving the company depots which both reflected the Rock Island "look" but also retained a local flavor. Another example is seen in the "Lake Superior sandstone" used in the Peoria, Illinois, depot.⁸ Alternatively, terra-cotta beltcourses are used to form the window sills in both the Atlantic and Iowa City, Iowa, depots while slabs of limestone or dolomite form the doorway sills.

Fenestration in the Council Bluffs depot consists of large, complex windows in the passenger waiting areas and simpler fixed and sliding sash windows elsewhere. In order to cast as much light as possible into the waiting areas, each large wall opening is filled by a single-light, double-hung window flanked by narrow vertical fixed lights. Above this arrangement are three fixed single lights. Sashes,

⁶The Iowa City depot, listed in the National Register in 1982, has been adapted for use as law offices in the main waiting room/ticket office space. The baggage room houses the offices of a local arts and culture magazine, *The Iowa City Magazine*. Inspection of the interior of the depot in October, 1994, revealed the same basic floorplan as in Council Bluffs. The east waiting room (equivalent to the southeast waiting room in Council Bluffs) houses two attorneys' offices and the law library. It appears the partition walls were free-standing and capable of being removed without damage to the original walls. The ticket office houses another lawyer's office and the passage way opened up between the two waiting rooms was as narrow as that in Council Bluffs. New offices, similar in construction to those in the east room, were being built in the west waiting room (equivalent to the northwest in Council Bluffs). The original tile floor of the west waiting room was visible and consisted of large dark and light squares making a checkerboard pattern over most of the floor. The border contained one floral band, followed by alternating brown and white bands, and finishing with a wide red tile band. Walls in the west room were divided into upper and lower finishes similar to the Council Bluffs depot, the upper area being plastered. The lower wall area was clad in shiny, glazed brick or tile, with one band of kidney-red color at the floor, one green band at the top where the plaster begins, and white-glazed tile/brick in between. Woodwork in the waiting areas was quarter-sawn oak. The exterior of the depot is strikingly similar to the Council Bluffs depot except a terra-cotta beltcourse forms the window sills. Unfortunately, in January, 1995, it was apparent that the breezeway was finally suffering the same fate as so many other Rock Island depot breezeways--it was being filled in and converted to office space.

⁷Samples of the Council Bluffs ballast rock were examined by geologist Brian Witzke, Iowa Department of Natural Resources/Geological Survey Bureau, who identified the likely quarry sources for this stone. Brian Witzke, personal communication with Jan Nash, 11 January 1995.

⁸National Register nomination, section 7, page 2, n.d. but ca. 1980.

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Figure 1. Rock Island depots constructed in Iowa City, Iowa, (1898)[upper] and Ottawa, Illinois, (1898-99)[lower] from standard plans similar to the Council Bluffs depot. Historic photograph of the Iowa City depot was taken from *Iowa City Historic Preservation Plan*, 1992; modern photograph of the Ottawa depot was provided by the Illinois SHPO.



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meeting rails, frames and mullions are of painted wood. Ground-level windows in the trackside tower are single-pane double hung sash windows topped by a single-light transom. Windows on the second level of the tower lack the high transom. Smaller four-light sash windows, arranged relatively high in the walls of the baggage room, appear at either side of the side doorways and on the end wall. Sills of all windows are granite while the lintels are formed by courses of yellow brick which protrude from the plane of the wall. Waiting room doors have four panels in the lower area and glazing above. Baggage room doors are solid wood with cross members for extra strength.

The massive hipped roof is covered everywhere with red tiles and is constructed of plank lumber over the portions supported by brick walls. Over the once-open breezeway, the roof is framed with heavy timbers, running lengthwise, with nails toenailed into the joints. Additional internal support for the breezeway roof is provided by a metal bracing system also running lengthwise. This metal support is located on the drive side and on the track side of the breezeway roof at the point where the roof would clear the vertical plane of the walls (had there originally been any) and projects as an overhang. The overhanging portion of the roof is supported by large wooden braces everywhere except the breezeway. Built-in wooden gutters at the roof's edge channel rain into downspouts and an underground collection point. The trackside tower's 12-sided roof is covered with the same tile, as is the port cochere on the other side.

The port cochere is supported by a rather elegant side wall. Composed of the same red and yellow brick, it is pierced by three very large openings with round-arch tops and flat granite sills.⁹ The point of change from red brick to yellow--also the springing line of the arches--is marked by buff-colored terra cotta abutments which are grooved to resemble stone. Molded dentils appear just below the cornice of each abutment. The masonry arches themselves are formed by wedge-shaped bricks.

Generally, the exterior architectural appearance of the depot is one of corporate confidence and solidity. The brickwork lacks applied decoration and relies instead on changes in color and texture to enliven the design. The major alteration, the infilling of the breezeway by the railroad in 1954, is itself a historically significant alteration tied to the efforts of the Rock Island to cope with an evaporating customer base. Precipitously declining passenger numbers and the increased use of the nation's highway system to move freight and mail eventually led to the collapse of not only the Rock Island line, but several other large rail lines by the 1970s. Extant Rock Island depots often reflect the struggle of the line during its last twenty years.

⁹In the Iowa City depot, these sills have an additional metal decoration placed on them which resembles a line of spear heads standing upright. While decorative, this metal detail also effectively kept the occasional idle bystander from sitting on the sills.

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Interior

For several decades in the mid-twentieth century the depot was shared with the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railway (c. 1939 to the late 1970s). Virtually no physical evidence remains of this shared space. Also, over the years the Rock's freight operations were transferred to this depot and the women's waiting room (on the southeast end) was converted to five offices. By the 1970s, the men's waiting room had been converted to freight space. Today, the interior has been returned to its earlier appearance and is devoted to a museum of railroad history. The original waiting rooms have display cases filled with railroad artifacts, photographs and memorabilia. The ticket office is interpreted as a period room with authentic artifacts.¹⁰ The breezeway exhibits a model-railroad group's extensive collection and the baggage room has been converted to meeting space with audio-visual capabilities. The interiors of these spaces are not historic in appearance.

When the depot was constructed in 1899, the two waiting rooms were included to provide separate quarters for the women and men passengers (Figure 2).¹¹ No passageway existed between the two rooms. The existing doorway was cut through the central masonry wall in 1954 and the doorway into the men's restroom was relocated to its present location in the passageway. The central office has ticket windows opening into both waiting rooms. The interior of the depot was described at the time of its construction by the local newspaper:

The waiting and office roms[sic] are elaborately finished in marble tiling, the mottled enameled wall work giving the rooms a very rich appearance. The toilet rooms are finished in white enamel and brass and are elegant in their appointments...The building will be heated

¹⁰Artifacts on the operator's table in the Council Bluffs Rock Island depot office were featured on the front cover of the spring, 1994, issue of *The Palimpsest* (Volume 74, Number 1), the periodic history magazine published by the State Historical Society of Iowa.

¹¹Early twentieth-century depot blueprints issued by the Chicago office of the Rock Island's Chief Engineer, J.B. Berry, (blueprints now in the possession of the RailsWest Railroad Museum) accommodate a surprising variety of climatic conditions and social restrictions--in addition to varying volumes of passenger and freight traffic. There are plans specifically for "cold climates" and plans which, like the Council Bluffs depot, have separate men's and women's waiting rooms. There are plans which divide passenger space into "white waiting rooms" and "colored" or "negro waiting rooms" (the latter always smaller than the white waiting room and with fewer benches). One elaborately divided floor plan--Depot No. 19, adopted in 1910--included a "white waiting room" from which opened a large "smoking room," the "men's toilet," a "ladies' retiring room," and the "women's toilet." The "negro waiting room" in Depot No. 19 was roughly the size of the ticket office, but did have small "toilet rooms" for both women and men. Finally, another plan divides the space into a "general waiting room" and a "smoking room," of roughly equal size. That plan would work today, though what once was regulated by gender-specific social mores is now restricted by law for health reasons.

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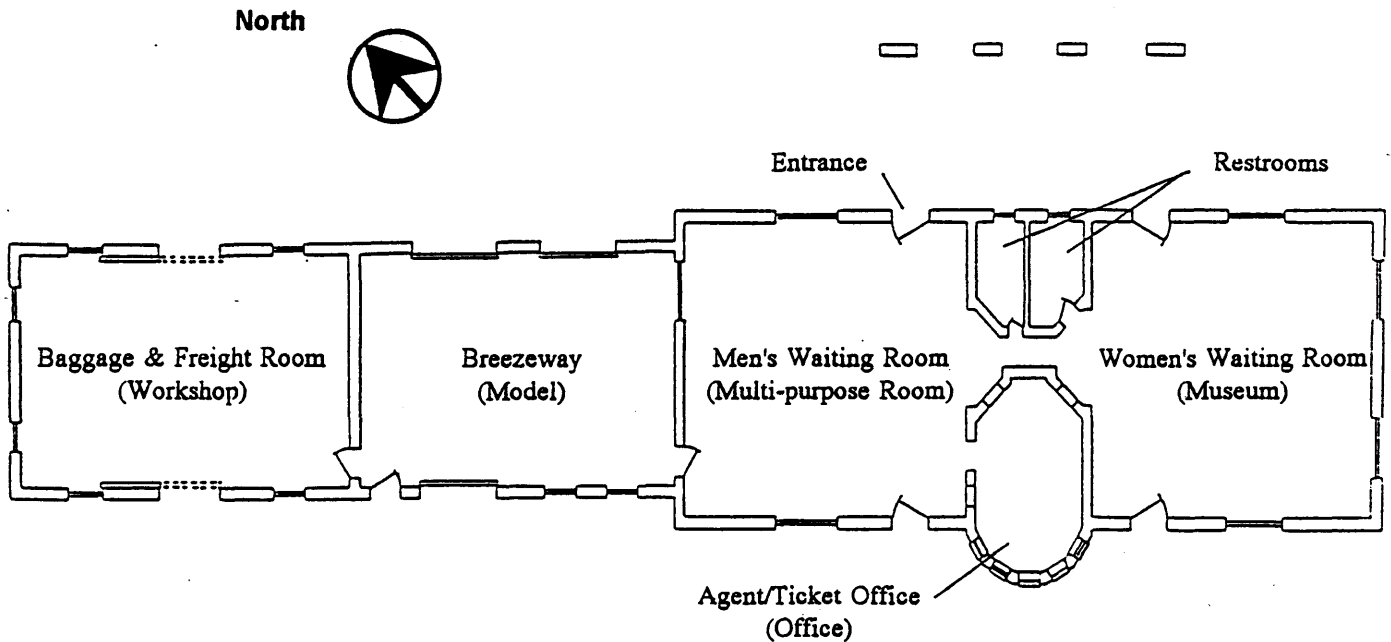
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Passenger-Depot
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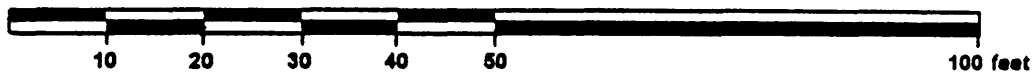
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Figure 2. Floor plan of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot. Current room functions are in parenthesis. (Modified from a floor plan provided by the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County.)



Floor Plan



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by steam, and electric light will be used. *Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil*, 07 August 1899.

Loose tiles, each marked "TIFFANY" and "CHICAGO" and matching those found on the "white enamel" restroom walls, were located in the attic of the depot.

The upper plaster walls of the waiting rooms are painted today, but a remnant of the original wallpaper has been preserved for display on the wall of the men's waiting room. Lower walls are covered with a brownish glazed tile or brick. Floors are covered with six-sided terrazzo tiles and have a Greek key border. Woodwork is quarter-sawn oak and door and window surrounds are topped with oak dentils, bead-and-reel molding and a prominent cornice. Door surrounds terminate in pink-marble plinth blocks at the floor.

Below grade, only the southeast half of the baggage room had a basement, now filled. A narrow utility "tunnel," housing plumbing and wires, ran from this basement to about the office area between the waiting rooms. Above the ground floor, the hipped roof creates a huge attic space and from a catwalk down the center of the attic one can access the second floor of the trackside tower. This small second-floor room has a plank floor but is otherwise unfinished. According to local historical society and museum personnel, this was to be the "superintendent's" office but was left unfinished because Council Bluffs was not the division point.¹² Since there is no staircase providing easy access to this office it is apparent this space simply is part of the "standard plan" which did not apply to the Council Bluffs station needs.

Landscape

The site of the Council Bluffs depot is a contributing resource. Grassy side yards, the original trackside platform of brick pavers and concrete sidewalks all enhance the historic character of the depot's appearance. Electric platform lights date to at least the 1922 Rock Island's 70th anniversary ceremony for they are seen in a historic photograph of the event (on display at the depot). Since the depot was electrified from the start, these platform lights may be original. Across the drive from the port cochere, to the north, rolling stock are displayed on a remnant set of tracks. The tracks stop short of the depot drive and are within a fenced area kept locked except while the museum personnel are present. A historic map (c. 1908) indicates trackage (nonextant) from this general area connected to the southeast into the Rock Island lines. North of the depot, these tracks led to the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul's freight depot and the manufacturing district. Provenance of the rolling stock and the extent of surviving trackage beyond the depot site was not confirmed.

¹²Robert E. Hastings, personal communication with Jan Nash, 08 September 1994.

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There are no known associated historic Rock Island buildings or structures extant in Council Bluffs. The c. 1908 map shows the CRI&P freight house located at that time about a block to the northwest. Also on this map, the Rock Island "grounds" (where its roundhouse and shops were located) appear about two blocks further west of the freight house.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The 1899 Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad passenger depot in Council Bluffs is significant as the last extant passenger depot in a town which once had eight such depots and in which the railroad industry played a key role. Council Bluffs was assured its status as a major railroad gateway to the West when, in 1862, President Abraham Lincoln decided the transcontinental railroad would cross the Missouri River at this site. Thereafter, most of the trans-Iowa railroads funneled their lines through the town for the river crossing and connections west. During the peak years of the 1890s, no fewer than 15 railroad lines operated 90 trains a day through town. The Rock Island depot has local significance under Criterion A as a well-preserved example of the influence of the railroads in Council Bluffs and of the importance of Council Bluffs in railroad transportation history. It also has local and statewide significance under Criterion C as a property type associated with *The Advent and Development of Railroads in Iowa: 1855-1940* (Conard and Cuning, NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1990). Specifically, the depot is a good example of second generation, replacement passenger depots built in Iowa during "the Golden age of Steam Railroading," ca. 1890-1920.

Criterion A

In early 1899, the Rock Island undertook to tear down its old depot in Council Bluffs and erect a new one on the same site as part of a major capital improvement project. Financed by a huge bond issue, and spurred by the prosperous times generally enjoyed by railroads after the panic of 1893, the Rock Island replaced many of its older depots in Iowa with sturdy new brick depots such as the one in Council Bluffs. The Romanesque depot, based on a standard plan and built largely from standard materials, represented for the Rock Island the culmination of decades of railroad building across the midwest. It projected a successful corporate image that the railroad wanted customers to associate with it, whether they happened to be in Illinois, Iowa or Oklahoma. For Council Bluffs, the depot represented the revival of prosperity for one of the town's major industries and a welcome upgrade of passenger facilities in town.

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Following President Lincoln's decision, the Cedar Rapids & Missouri River railroad (later absorbed by the Chicago & North Western) was the first railroad to reach Council Bluffs from the east in 1867. As such it became "the first to link the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, the first to couple Chicago and Council Bluffs."¹³ Later that same year, Council Bluffs was connected by rail to Saint Louis, Missouri, with the completion of the Council Bluffs & St. Joseph railroad. Two years later, in 1869, Council Bluffs not only saw the arrival of both the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroad and the Rock Island, but it also became a major freight and passenger stop with the completion of the transcontinental railroad.

The strategic position held by Council Bluffs at the crossroads of the continent meant that much of the town's economic and land-use history developed around the construction, removal, expansion and relocation of railroad-related facilities. The similar location held by Omaha, Nebraska, across the river, however meant that Council Bluffs did not occupy that strategic position by itself. Rather, Council Bluffs competed with Omaha for the various passenger and freight facilities needed by the multiple railroads passing through it. It also meant the railroads had a good bargaining position for how much and how well they provided services. The Union Pacific, for example, acquired 1200 acres of land in Council Bluffs in 1867 and agreed to build freight and passenger facilities there. In exchange, Council Bluffs provided the right-of-way needed by the UP to build its bridge across the Missouri River and over \$200,000 in bonds. To attract the CB&Q in 1868, Council Bluffs residents donated the land for its passenger and freight stations.¹⁴

By the 1890s, the landscape around and within Council Bluffs was dotted with passenger and freight depots, rail yards, shops, and roundhouses, all strung together with miles of trackage (Figure 3). Passenger depots, however, were far from being first rate and some lines failed to provide any facility at all. So uncomfortable and shabby were the depots, the city and citizens of Council Bluffs joined together in 1891 to seek relief from the state Board of Railroad Commissioners. In a complaint filed against eight railroad companies,¹⁵ the mayor and city council (joined in a similar petition by fifty citizens and business firms) stated:

We, the mayor and the members of the city council of the city of Council Bluffs, Iowa, beg

¹³Rebecca Conard and Tracy Ann Cunning, *The Advent and Development of Railroads in Iowa: 1855-1940*, NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1990, E-11 [hereafter *Railroads in Iowa*].

¹⁴"Railroad History of Council Bluffs," a brief chronological history compiled and published by the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County, n.d.

¹⁵CB&Q; Kansas City, St. Joseph & Council Bluffs; Omaha & St. Louis; Sioux City & Pacific; C & NW; Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul; Rock Island; and the UP. *Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners (Iowa) 1892:809.*

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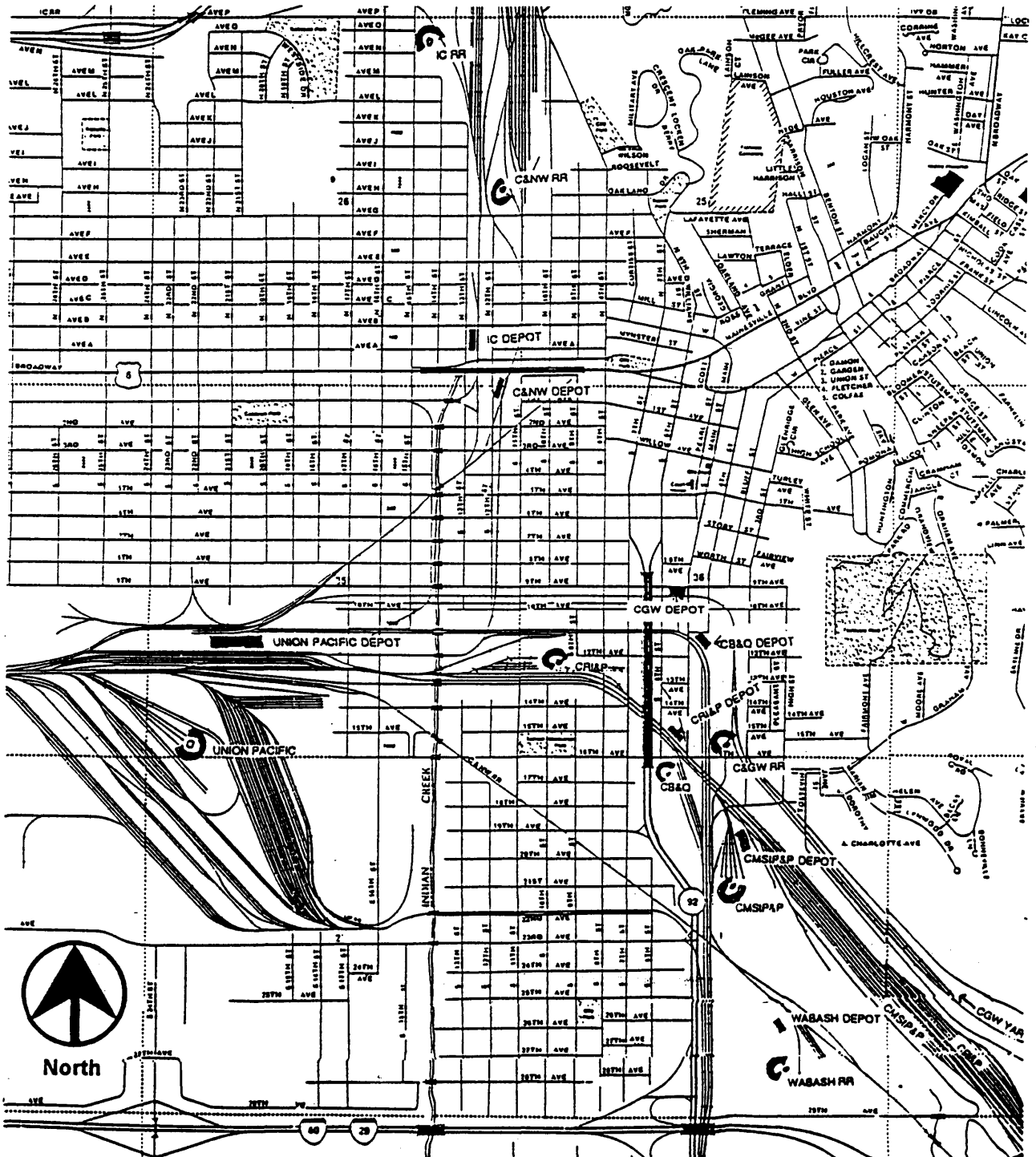
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Figure 3. Current map of Council Bluffs with locations of nonextant railroad buildings and structures indicated. Location of extant CRI & P passenger depot noted also. Compiled by Robert E. Hastings using historical maps dating to 1893. Facilities constructed and removed prior to 1893 do not appear on the map.



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leave to call the attention of your honors to the following facts: That this is a city of about 35,000 inhabitants, into which runs the Chicago & Northwestern, Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, *Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific*, Milwaukee & St. Paul, Union Pacific, Kansas City, St. Joe & Council Bluffs, Sioux City & Pacific and other roads--that the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, Kansas City, St. Joe & Council Bluffs, Wabash, Sioux City, Chicago & Northwestern Railroads have no passenger depots within the limits of said city, and no place provided for the safety, comfort and convenience of the citizens of said city and the general public patronizing their roads as passengers, nor shelter for them while waiting for trains (809)[emphasis added].

The complaint asked that *all* of the named railroads be "...compel[led]...to erect, equip and maintain their several roads with suitable passenger depots in this, the city of Council Bluffs" (809).

A year and a half later, after several inspection trips by the Commissioners traveling to Council Bluffs from Des Moines and delays resulting from negotiations and political changes,¹⁶ the Commissioners issued their order. The CNW, which already had plans to build a new depot when the complaint was filed, was found to have nearly completed a "commodious brick passenger depot...of convenient access by electric street car line..." which would provide "ample protection and comfort" for its passengers. Each of the other lines' facilities were analyzed and orders issued. The Commissioners' concern that passengers be afforded the benefits and protection of modern plumbing, heating and lighting was apparent. The CB&Q for example shared an old frame depot with the Kansas City, St. Joseph & Council Bluffs. That facility had only one waiting room, no "water closet" or "wash stand" and was "dilapidated and very much out of repair and in no way suited for the purpose for which it is used" (816). The CB&Q was ordered to construct a new depot within four months.

The Rock Island did not fare well in the Commissioners' assessment either:

The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company has an old frame building at the foot of Main street now used as a passenger depot. There is a baggage room, a waiting-room for men 21 by 23 feet, and a waiting room for women, of about the same size, with a ticket office taken out of the two rooms 13 by 10 feet. The rooms are warmed by soft coal stoves, and lighted by coal oil lamps. There is a closet opening off the women's waiting-room in no manner suitable for the purpose for which it is intended. No wash basin and no conveniences. There is also a small room used by the train dispatcher... (817)

¹⁶Documents entered into the Commissioners' report indicate at least some of the eight railroads had been negotiating unsuccessfully for some time to build a union depot. The nonexistent or substandard condition of the city's passenger depots was likely, at least in part, the result of the railroads' anticipated agreement on the new union depot.

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[T]he Commissioners find that the passenger depot of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company at Council Bluffs does not afford reasonable accommodations [*sic*] and convenience for the public doing business with said company, and said company is hereby so informed, and said company is further informed that in order to afford such reasonable and necessary accommodation that it should, and is hereby required, within sixty days from the date hereof, to repair, repaint, renovate the building now occupied as a passenger depot, and to construct suitable wash rooms and water closets for men and women, and make provision for properly warming and lighting the waiting rooms before and after arrival and departure of all trains carrying passengers. The platform should also be properly lighted (819).

The Commissioners were careful to fashion a conservative remedy for the conditions of each railway's specific situation. Yet they could not resist raising as a standard the Rock Island's new passenger depot, then (1892) under construction in Lincoln, Nebraska:

The Commissioners do not feel warranted in saying that the other companies doing business in Council Bluffs are called upon to build as expensive structures as the one voluntarily put up by the Chicago & Northwestern. Their attention, however, is directed to the [Rock Island's Lincoln depot], which appears to them to be a model worthy of consideration...built of pressed brick above the window sills with terra cotta and molded brick trimming...At one end of the depot building there is a room set apart for the use of ladies, and at the other end is a smoking room for men. In the center of the large general waiting room is the ticket and telegraph office...The baggage room is a separate building, which also contains the boiler room. This building...connected with the main building by a shed forty feet long. The coal bunker is below the platforms on a level with the boiler room and is provided with a hopper bottom so as to reduce the cost of handling. The building is to be heated by steam (820).

The description of the Lincoln depot bears many similarities in plan to those eventually constructed by the Rock Island in Council Bluffs and other towns along its line in the late 1890s. National events occurring shortly after the Commissioners' 1892 report likely cut short or delayed the Rock Island's resolve to upgrade its older depot facilities. The Panic of 1893 and the Pullman Strike of 1894 led to a reduction of railroad construction generally and resulted in an economic depression that did not end until 1896.¹⁷ By 1897, however, having survived a depression that ruined many smaller railroads, the Rock Island planned a reorganization of its debts and readied itself for moving forward to upgrade its physical facilities. On January 1, 1898, it issued "a general mortgage of \$100,000,000 to the Central Trust Company of New York and George Sherman, to secure an issue of general mortgage gold bonds

¹⁷*Railroads in Iowa*, E-14.

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to be used in retiring all outstanding bonds, and providing for additions to, and betterments and extensions of, the road."¹⁸

By early April 1899, when the Rock Island began to tear down the old frame depot that had stood for so many years at the south end of Main Street, the economy in Council Bluffs as elsewhere was in a strong recovery. The editor of the Council Bluffs newspaper, the *Daily Nonpareil*, waxed enthusiastic about their new railroad-generated prospects: "That Council Bluffs should be the objective point of a number of railroads that are now building and others that are proposed, has aroused the attention of [other business] investors..." and cited the "construction of railroad passenger and freight depots, three of which will be built here this summer, two of them being already underway" (*Daily Nonpareil*, 08 April 1899).

Today, only the Rock Island passenger depot remains. The other passenger depots are gone, as are the historic shops, roundhouses and freight depots, made obsolete over the years by changes in technology and the construction of the nation's highway system. The Chicago & Northwestern passenger depot, subject of the Commissioners' approval in 1892, was replaced by a newer, smaller station in 1953. The CB&Qs 1893 passenger depot, built under orders of the Commissioners, was purchased in 1972 by Blue Star Foods which stated plans to remodel the building (*Daily Nonpareil*, 13 June 1972). However, five months later the business announced it would demolish the depot to make a parking lot (*Daily Nonpareil*, 16 November 1972).

Criterion C

The railroads that survived the reorganizations and consolidations of the early 1890s thrived during what is now called "The Golden Age of Steam Railroading," from about 1890 to about 1920. Nearly every major rail company expanded and invested in its line in Iowa, replacing bridges and depots and building an inventory of yard structures based on specific functions. This period of expansion and prosperity was tied directly to the growth of agriculture in the Midwest and the rise of industries, such as meat-packing and steel and iron works, which utilized the rails' heavy- and long-distance hauling capabilities. As Iowa farmers prospered and increased production for commercial markets beyond the Midwest, the railroads--including the Rock Island--improved their main lines and built a network of spurs between smaller towns. The 1899 Council Bluffs depot is a relatively intact and well-preserved example of the new brick depots the Rock Island built during this prosperous period to replace its earlier frame depots.

¹⁸The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway System and Representative Employees, (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1900), 125.

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Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners (Iowa) 1892:809.

Sanborn Co. fire insurance maps, Council Bluffs, Iowa, 1891, 1896, 1928.

Map of Council Bluffs, c. 1908. [Collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City office.]

Map showing locations of extant and nonextant railroad buildings; compiled by Robert E. Hastings (1995) from historic city maps dating to 1893.

INTERVIEWS

James Beranek, photographer/author. Personal communication with Jan Nash, 16 and 19 January 1995; letter to Jan Nash dated 17 January 1995. (Beranek is conducting research for a book on Iowa railroads to be published by the University of Iowa Press.)

Robert E. Hastings, local historian/member, Historical Society of Pottawattamie County. Personal communication with Jan Nash, 08 September 1994.

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Brian Witzke, geologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources/Geological Survey Bureau. Personal communication with Jan Nash, 11 January 1995.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DISCUSSION

The overall measurements of the parcel are approximately 85' by 444' and the parcel includes the depot building, the brick and concrete walkways to the south, the asphalt drive to the north, and the grassy yards on either end of the depot.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary selected includes the depot and surrounding land which was historically associated with the operation of the depot. This land is the southwest half of the parcel acquired by the city of Council Bluffs from the railroad and under long-term lease to two local historical organizations.

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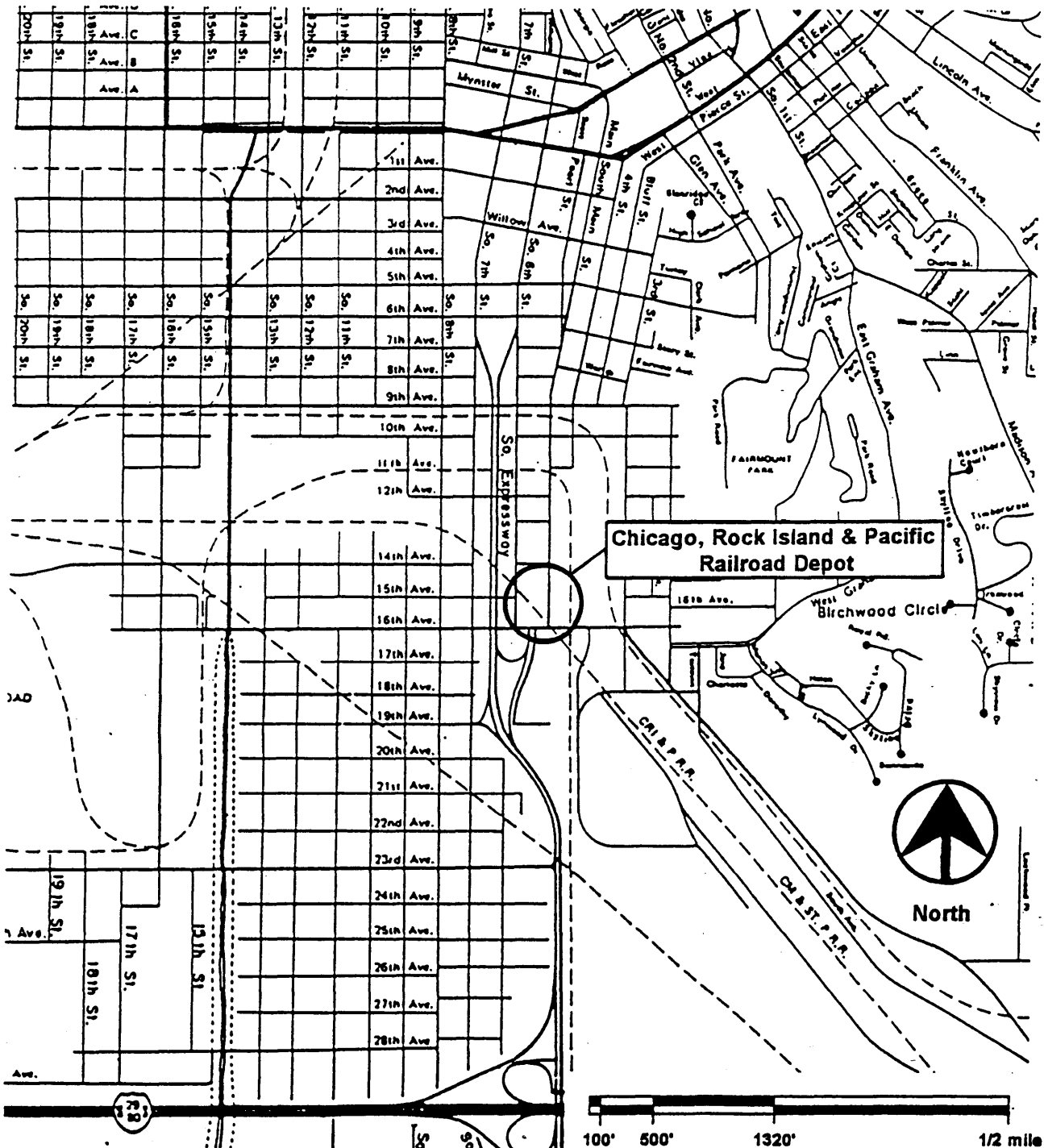
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CITY OF COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA



Source: Map prepared by the City Planning Department, Council Bluffs, not dated.

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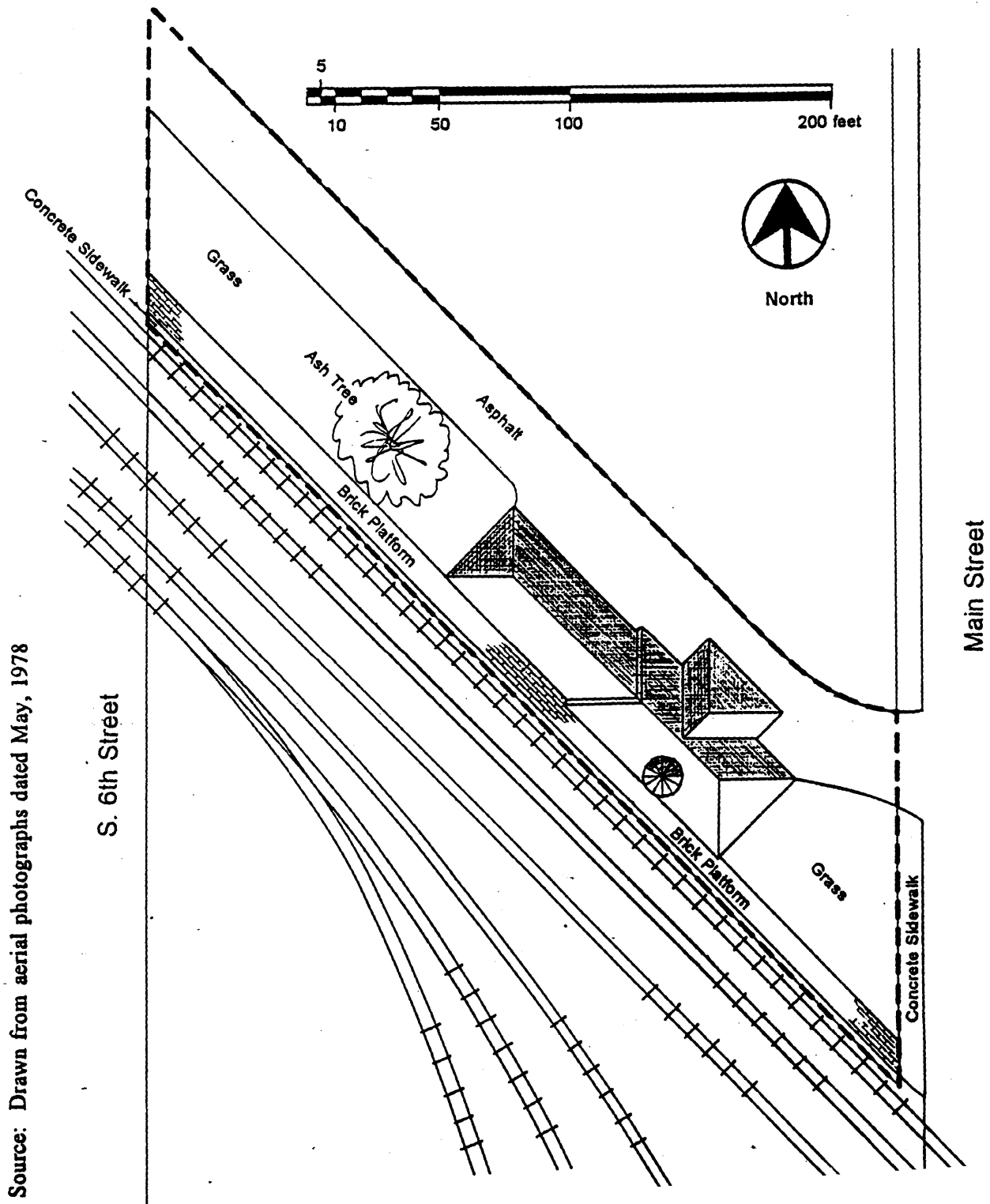
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Site Plan with nomination boundaries indicated.



Source: Drawn from aerial photographs dated May, 1978