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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Pennsboro B&O Depot
other name/site number:

2. Location

street & number: Corner of Broadway Street and Collins Avenue not for publication: N/A
city/town: Pennsboro vicinity: N/A
state: West Virginia code: WV county: Ritchie code: 085 zip code: 26415

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet.)

Susan M. Pierce
Susan M. Pierce
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
West Virginia Division of Culture and History

2/5/07
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 Certifying Official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Pennsboro B&O Depot
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County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper
Edson H. Beall 3-27-07
Date of Action

- 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): _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property:

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

Category of Property:

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Transportation/rail-related

Current Functions

Work in progress
Social/meeting hall
Recreation & culture/museum
Commerce/trade/specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE VICTORIAN: Eastlake

Materials

Foundation: Concrete
Walls: Brick
Roof: Metal
Other: Wood

Narrative Description

(See continuation sheets)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- 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.

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Criteria Considerations

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

Transportation
Architecture

Period of Significance

1883 - 1957

Significant Dates

1883, 1900

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

B&O Railroad

Narrative Statement of Significance

(See continuation sheets)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(See 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: Ritchie County Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References

Quad Map Name: Pennsboro

17 502678 4348403
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(See continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(See continuation sheet)

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11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Suzanne W. Hadley, Treasurer

Organization: Ritchie County Historical Society Date: September 2006

Street & Number: 310 Myles Avenue Telephone: (304) 643-4880

City or Town: Pennsboro State: WV ZIP: 26415

Property Owner

Name: West Virginia Department of Commerce, c/o Kenneth Caplinger, Acting Chief, Parks and Recreation Division, Division of Natural Resources

Street & Number: 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E., Building 3, Room 715

Telephone: 304-558-2764

City or Town: Charleston State: WV Zip: 25305-0662

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Architectural Description:

The Pennsboro B&O Depot is a one-story brick building of approximately 1,315 square feet. The Depot, which contains three rooms, stands on a small corner lot in the heart of historic Pennsboro, just north of the North Bend Rail Trail (formerly the B&O railroad). The building is believed to have been constructed in at least two phases, with the eastern end constructed in 1883 and the western end around 1900.

The lot on which the Depot is situated is less than an acre in size, with the back (north side) of the Depot set into an adjacent bank abutted by a city street. Steps lead from the platform to the street level on the west end. The railroad property actually extended well beyond the Depot proper, with three sets of tracks on the main line, south of the existing Depot, and two sets of tracks south of the separate freight depot (see below). An 1889 map of Pennsboro shows the B&O "station lot" at 1 ½ acres, all south of the main railroad tracks. 1916 and 1923 maps of Pennsboro show the existing Depot north of the main tracks (with the depot rooms delimited and identified) and the freight depot to the south, with a large platform extending from the freight depot toward the west.

The freight depot, a wooden building situated south of the main-line tracks, may have been the original Pennsboro depot building. It was reportedly built in 1857-58, and stood until the 1960s when it was demolished. This is probably the building described in Lowther's 1911 *History of Ritchie County* as follows: "The first depot building, which was located near sixty feet from the present one, on the opposite side of the street, was built in 1858 or '59" (p. 513). The only known photograph of the entire building (undated) shows what appears to be a square wooden building with large sliding doors, surrounded by a wooden platform, and surmounted by a pyramidal roof from which hangs a large sign prominently labeled "Pennsboro."

The existing Pennsboro Depot is surrounded by a number of historic buildings, including to the rear, the Wells Building (formerly mercantile), 1910, and the Bank Building (1903). Also behind the Depot stands the former Arlington Hotel (ca. 1900), which provided lodging for railroad passengers, who reached the hotel by a wooden boardwalk. Just across the street and to the southeast of the Depot are the buildings formerly housing the Pennsboro Wholesale Grocery Company (1906), Sigler's Pharmacy (1908), Barne's Jewelers (ca. 1910), and the Gaity Vaudeville Theater (later the Penn Movie Theater, ca. 1906). These four buildings now are part of Harvest Time Ministries. Just one-half block away are the former Odd Fellows Lodge Building (1924), now the home of the Pennsboro Branch of the Ritchie County Library, and the Flannigan Building (1917), formerly housing a pool hall and café, and now the home of shops and offices.

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In its early days, the depot was fronted by an elevated wooden boardwalk; along the east side, this boardwalk broadened into a wooden platform, probably used for loading/unloading of trains, and as a meeting site for the local gentry (old drawings and photographs show wooden carts as well as groups of men standing on the platform). In later years, the boardwalk was replaced with a brick platform/walk along the front of the building. This platform, most of which still exists, extends several hundred feet to the west of the depot.

The depot today is a low burned brick building with pilasters dividing bays, and a projecting bay for the station agent and operator. The brick exterior is painted a two-toned gray, date unknown. Wide eaves project over the front of the building, with corbeled brick under the eaves and at the gable ends. Antique metal platform lights (found stored inside the building) have recently been reinstalled over the platform at the front of the depot. The existing standing seam metal roof is not original to the building. A review by Historic Preservation Consultant Michael Gioulis, in 1995, noted that historic photographs indicate that at one time, the building had two different types of roofing, with a standing seam metal roof on the west end and a slate roof with metal cresting on the east end.

It appears the roof has been replaced at least twice, most recently in the 1990s, when restoration on the depot exterior began. This roof was painted red to match the color of the Williamstown, WV railroad depot. Gutters and downspouts were added to the building in the 1990s, when the existing roof was installed, and the soffits and braces were replaced. Also, extensive work was done at this time in an attempt to improve drainage behind and around the building, especially where it is set into the hillside.

While the depot restoration work of the 1990s focused primarily on the depot exterior – particularly the roof, repointing of some brick work, and improving the building’s drainage, work since 2000 has focused on the depot interior, including, notably, repair and (where necessary) replacement of the tongue and groove flooring, removal of false ceilings, repair and painting of the original bead board paneling, and installation of period-type ceiling light fixtures throughout the building.

Based on the historical record, as confirmed by Michael Gioulis, it appears that the existing Pennsboro Depot was built in at least two stages. As described in the following section (Section 8, “Significance”), the September 13, 1883 *Ritchie Gazette* reported the construction of a “not large,” but “handsome” Pennsboro Depot. Just 17 years later, the Depot was enlarged (ca. 1900), as indicated in a November 1899 item in the *Gazette*, which reported the impending enlargement.

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Several pieces of physical evidence support the belief that the east room was built separately from the remainder of the Depot: (1) the remnants of an exterior brick wall still stand between the middle and east rooms; (2) a full foundation lies between the east and middle rooms; (3) several early Depot photographs clearly show a different style/material roof over the east room as contrasted with the rest of the Depot.

Two early Pennsboro photographs (ca. 1890-98) and the Fowler Print (a drawing of Pennsboro dated 1899) show a depot building roughly 1/2 the size, but with features appearing similar to the west and middle sections of the existing building (i.e., one-story building with corresponding doors and windows and a forward-projecting bay to provide good visibility for the station agent/operator), with a roof gable over the projecting bay, slightly left-of-center as one faces the front of the Depot. (The projecting bay-with-gable architecture was commonly used in B&O stations and depots built around this time, as indicated by old photographs of such buildings as the Parkersburg station and the Toll Gate depot.)

Because the existing Depot building includes a projecting bay (like that in the early photographs) in the west room, it was assumed that the west and middle rooms were the first built, with the east room added later. However, recently discovered evidence (July 2006) indicates strongly that it was the east room that was built first, and thus, is the building seen in the early photographs and the Fowler Print. The evidence includes a recently discovered, very early (ca. 1900) close-up photograph – the earliest-known photograph of the entire Depot as it stands today – showing the outline – a “footprint” – of a left-of-center gable on the east front roof. (This footprint evidently was subsequently removed or obscured, when the roof over the east room was replaced, as it does not appear in later photographs).

The ca. 1900 photograph provided another important clue about which part of the Depot was built first. Specifically, the photograph shows a clear view of the building directly behind the eastern end of the ca. 1900 Depot. This behind-the-Depot building, long-since torn down, is *the same building* that appears directly behind the eastern end of the Depot in the 1890-98 photographs, and this shows clearly that the eastern portion of the Depot is the part that was built first – the part that *was* the smaller Pennsboro Depot photographed in the earliest pictures.

These discoveries led to two others, namely: (1) evidence of a large patch on the interior east room front wall, indicating the area where the projecting bay likely once stood and (2) evidence of a gable footprint (a framework in dark wood) on the underside of the east room roof. The base of the gable footprint, where the roof meets the brick wall, meets precisely the top of the patch on the wall, and it corresponds precisely to the left-of-center exterior roof gable footprint seen in the ca. 1900 photograph.

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Taken together, these discoveries are compelling evidence that the east room at one time (1883 to ca. 1900) was the *Pennsboro Depot*, with a projecting bay for the station agent/operator and a gable on the east front roof over the projecting bay. Around 1900 (for unknown reasons), the projecting bay and gable were removed from the east room, which thereafter was designated as the “baggage room.” Meanwhile, the depot was enlarged to over twice its size, with the addition of the middle and west rooms. At this time, the west room (built with a projecting bay) became the center of Depot operations.

As indicated in the 1916 and 1923 maps referenced above, the interior of the depot previously was divided into four major rooms; from west to east, these were a small waiting room, the ticket office/station agent/operator’s office, a larger waiting room, and the baggage room. In addition to these rooms, two restrooms and an electrical equipment room stood off the larger waiting room, with a third restroom off the smaller waiting room. Ticket windows opened from the office area to each of the two waiting rooms. In the 1940s, the westerly partition between the office and the smaller waiting room was removed, leaving a single ticket window opening into the larger waiting room.

The westernmost room of today is approximately 376 square feet in size, which includes the 34-square-foot projecting bay for the station agent/operator. The office area, including the projecting bay, previously occupied 126 square feet of the current 376-square-foot area. A heavy solid wood door (~ 10 feet long by 3 feet, 10 inches wide, surmounted by a 3-pane operable transom) opens from the west room onto the front platform. One large 4-on-4 window (3 feet, 10 inches wide by 7 feet, 6 inches long) is located on the far west end of the Depot; two 6-panel windows are located high up on the back wall, each measuring 4 feet, three inches wide by 3 feet long. (It appears that these two windows originally may have been twice as large; the bottom half of each window appears to have been bricked in, but the size of the original aperture is evident.)

Also contained within the area of the west room is a small restroom (~25 square feet), in the southwest corner of the room. This restroom was renovated in 2004, including installation of a space heater, to make it usable for visitors to the depot. The restroom door is surmounted by a 2-pane transom, which in turn is surmounted by a hatchway door extending to the molding at the top of the wall; the hatchway provides access to the depot attic. Another previously enclosed area, in the northwest corner of the west room, is believed to have been a closet. Due to extensive water damage, this enclosure could not be preserved, and thus was removed in 2003-04.

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Much of the original tongue-and-groove flooring (3 1/8-inch plank width) of the west room has been preserved or repaired; however, a stretch along the back wall was recently replaced, due to extensive moisture damage. The west and back walls of the west room are exposed brick; the other walls as well as the ceiling are the original beadboard, which in some cases has been repaired or patched. A simple molding runs along the ceiling, at the top of the beadboard walls, in both the west and middle rooms. Also, in both rooms, a wooden baseboard extends from the floor to a height of 9 inches around the bottom of the beadboard. Both the west room and the middle room of the depot have a chair rail extending around the walls at a height of 3 feet, 6 inches from the floor. The beadboard walls and ceiling were painted in the Summer of 2004, using authentic paint colors (light green with dark brown trim) matched to those at the Smithton, WV depot, which in turn were based on information obtained from the B&O Museum in Baltimore, MD.

Below the ticket window and along part of the back wall, a built-in, waist-high counter with wooden supports still stands. On the outside bathroom wall, there is another very small built-in shelf, also waist-high. A round opening, of the size to accommodate a stove pipe, remains in the ceiling of the west room. (Historic photographs of the depot exterior show brick chimneys appearing to be located above the west and middle rooms.)

The projecting bay in the west room, which on the back side extends into the space of the former office area, is elevated from the rest of the room by 6½ inches. Along the front of the projecting bay is a work counter approximately 30 inches high. On either side of this work area are long, narrow 4-on-4 windows, one facing east and the other, west. These windows would have permitted unobstructed sight of the railroad tracks in both directions. Two additional 4-on-4 windows are located at the front center of the projecting bay.

Several pieces of equipment presumably used by the operator and/or station agent remain on and around the work counter. Located on the counter is a built-in connection box with terminals apparently for electric or telegraph cable connections. Along the right-hand side of the counter is a 15" x 28" shelf built into the wall. Under the counter is a box with a crank, possibly for the telephone or telegraph. Also under the counter are several foot pedals, apparently for operating pieces of machinery, along with other boxes with connecting wires. Along the right-hand wall is a panel containing three switch boxes which are labeled with what may be track or train numbers. Also affixed to this panel is a box with numerous cable plug terminals. Historic photographs show numerous pieces of additional equipment along the walls in the operator's cubicle.

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Historic photographs also show a large regulator clock hanging on the wall on the left side of the operator's cubicle. Still fixed to this wall today is a breaker box (no longer functional) with five separate electric breaker switches. The historic photographs also show gas lighting fixtures within the depot office area, including the agent/operator's office. Today, a period-type light hangs from the ceiling in the cubicle; five additional period-type lights hang from the ceiling throughout the west room.

The middle room of the depot (363 square feet), is now a community meeting room named in honor of the late Sondra Hayhurst – the creator and leader of the 1990s “Save the Depot” organization. The room features a “Pennsboro” sign over the ticket window. The sign is a recent addition. Three long old wooden benches, imported from area churches, add to the “waiting room” ambience; one original bench from the depot also remains. Six period-type lights hang from the ceiling in this room (two rows of three lights each).

The ceiling, front and two side walls of the middle room are covered in beadboard which has been painted in the authentic railroad colors. (A round aperture in the ceiling, like that in the west room, apparently at one time accommodated a stove pipe.) The back wall of this room is exposed brick. There is a large (~ 6 feet x 10 feet) concrete patch-like area in the wall, of unknown origin. A number of large metal bolts extend outward from the patch into the room. Hanging on the brick wall are a wood-burned, wooden sign, a dedication, and a photograph collage honoring Ms. Hayhurst. Approximately two-thirds of the original tongue-and-groove flooring is in place; the remaining flooring, along the back wall, was replaced due to moisture damage.

There are two large windows in the middle room. The front window is a 4-on-4, 3 feet, 7 inches wide by 6 feet, 10 inches long. On the back wall, there is a 6-on-6 window set into the brick on the back wall. There is a large beam over the top of this window like the large beams over the windows in the west room. The back window in the middle room is 6 feet tall by 4 feet, 10 inches wide.

At the front of the middle room are heavy wood glass-insert double doors with a 4-pane transom that stands over the top. The width of the transom is just under 6 feet; the height is 28 inches. The height of the doors is 7 feet, 11 inches from the bottom of the transom to the floor. Each door is 29½ inches wide.

Also in this room, along the eastern wall, are doors opening into two small rooms that formerly were restrooms. The fixtures have been removed, and the rooms now are used for storage. Doors open from each end of the middle room, one into the west room and one into the east room. The doorframe for the west door is 7 feet, 3 inches tall and 3 feet, 9 inches wide; the frame for the east door is 7 feet, ½ inch tall and the width is 3 feet, 5½ inches wide.

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The east room at 576 square feet is the largest of the depot rooms. It is used as a display room for railroad artifacts, many of which were found in the depot when the Historical Society began leasing it. These artifacts include various-sized rails and nails, telegraph keys, numerous photographs, and the old wooden mail cart which was used to carry mail between the depot and the post office.

Upon entering the east room, labeled in all known existing records as the "Baggage Room," one encounters the apparent remnants of an exterior brick wall, three layers thick, approximately 12 inches deep. The wall extends laterally into the room approximately 25½ inches, and it also extends upward into the rafters.

To the right as one enters, the enclosure for the restrooms projects into the east room, occupying nearly 40 square feet. (A "first-person" account indicates that at one time, this enclosure included not only the two restrooms, but also a high-voltage electrical equipment room.)

Behind the back wall of the restroom enclosure, a large pipe extends through the roof, presumably for venting. Standing against the back of the restroom enclosure is a large wooden door which appears to be a sliding-type freight door which perhaps was previously installed at the front of the east room. (The same first-person account shows a sliding door at this location). Presently, the aperture at the front of the east room contains large wooden double doors, surmounted by a 4-pane operable transom. The double doors are held closed by a 2x4 plank held by two large metal brackets on either side, about half-way up the height of the doors. The combined dimensions of the double doors are approximately 9 feet tall and 6 feet wide.

The ceiling in the east room has been removed, revealing large heavy beams. As indicated previously, the underside of the east room roof shows the outline of the gable that previously existed over the room. Corresponding to this outline, the front brick wall includes a large patched area, presumably corresponding to the projecting bay that was removed. The back brick wall of the east room shows evidence that a partition once stood between the two ends of the east room, probably separating the Depot office from the waiting room.

Twelve period-type lights hang from the beams in this room, in four rows of three each. There are no windows along the front wall of the east room, but there is one 4-over-4 window in the eastern wall and two 4-pane windows in the back wall, 4 feet, 5 inches long and 3 feet, 8 inches wide. Like the windows at the back of the west room, the windows at the back of the east room appear to have been twice as long as they are now.

The end window in the east room measures 7 feet, 10 inches long by 3 feet, 10.5 inches. (A photograph from the early 1900s seems to show a solid east wall in the depot, with no window

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present.) It is uncertain when the window was added.) To the right of this window is a built-in cabinet, with two doors and shelves inside. The cabinet is surmounted by a wooden top.

Surrounding the back wall and part of the east and front walls of the east room, a 2 x 4 has been nailed into the bricks and across the middle of both rear windows. Large nails still protrude from the board. Its original function is not known (possibly it was part of the support for an old false ceiling); presently it is used as a display rack. The front brick wall of the room is partially covered by a plaster-like substance, as is part of the back wall. There are indications that there may have been at least one additional window (or a loading door) on the back side of the east room, i.e., there are wooden insets in the brick wall at roughly the same height as the wooden insets for the two existing windows. In addition, the brick work in the area where this supposed window or door would have been located appears different from the surrounding brickwork.

The entire floor of the east room was recently replaced by double layers of heavy-duty plywood when it was impossible to repair the original floor.

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Statement of Significance:

The significance of the Pennsboro B&O Train Depot is based on Criterion A for Transportation, because the Depot was centrally involved with transportation and communications developments that made “a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.” In addition, the Pennsboro Depot is significant under Criterion C, Architecture, because of its distinctive, classic design.

The period of significance of the Depot begins with its construction in 1883 and runs to 1957, a period 50 years before the present.

Pennsboro (Ritchie County, WV) is centrally located on what used to be the Parkersburg Branch of the B&O Railroad (originally the Northwest Virginia Railroad), sitting roughly half-way between Clarksburg and Parkersburg, WV. For many years, the fortunes of Ritchie County and the B&O Railroad were closely intertwined, and at the height of the B&O’s tenure, Pennsboro was a bustling center of commerce and communication. The B&O Depot was the nexus of this vital activity.

Before the building of the railroad, there was little where Pennsboro, WV now exists, save a rest spot for travelers along the old Northwest Turnpike, which ran from Clarksburg (then Virginia) to Marietta, OH. On early maps of the area, there is no Pennsboro, only “Martin’s Inn,” or even “Martin’s,” designating the stagecoach stop where weary travelers could rest and refresh themselves and their horses (Martin’s Inn is now known as the “Old Stone House,” and is the museum of the Ritchie County Historical Society).

According to Lowther’s *Ritchie County in History and Romance*, “... the history of the town proper [Pennsboro] begins with the coming of the railroad in 1858” (p. 116). The plat for the town of Pennsboro was recorded in 1856. Notably, this plat “... included thirty-two town lots and the railroad station” (*op. cit.*, p. 116; emphasis added). Thus it is evident that from the outset, the railroad and its depot were central to the identity and life of the town.

The Parkersburg Branch of the railroad line was constructed by the Northwestern Virginia Railroad Company, but was subsequently leased and operated by the B&O; and in 1865, the line became the B&O’s “Parkersburg Branch.” The development of the railroad figured importantly in the eventual (1863) creation of the State of West Virginia, for the construction of the railroad line was only grudgingly approved by the Virginia legislature, even though the citizens of the area were much-concerned at the poor transportation in the territory. Eventually, according to a recent history of the North Bend Rail Trail, including the Pennsboro Depot “... the reluctance

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of Virginia to provide internal improvements for its northwestern counties was one of the reasons the people who lived there felt so strongly about forming a new state” (*The North Bend Rail Trail: A Guide to the Trail and its History*, p. 27).

During the Civil War, the Parkersburg Branch of the railroad served as a vital East-West communication and transport link for the Union, and as a consequence, the line became a frequent target of attacks and sabotage attempts by Rebel raiders. Protection of the railroad became a priority for the Union Army, and as a result, “... throughout the war the railroad looked like a continuous military camp” (*op. cit.*, p. 28). Indicative of the situation, a special military district was created (District of Grafton), focused specifically on protection of the Grafton-Parkersburg line, and this protection “... sealed the fate of the area as Northern territory” (*op. cit.*, p. 27).

After the close of the Civil War, with the proven track record of the Parkersburg Branch for communication and transport, the stage was set for a remarkable era of economic and social growth along the line. Produce, livestock, freight, and passenger traffic all filled the cars, along with the U.S. mails, and telegraph lines (constructed by the B&O along the railroad tracks) carried urgent messages. At Parkersburg, a railroad bridge built by the B&O connected freight and passengers to lines running further into the West.

According to Lowther’s *History of Ritchie County*, the railroad was the “greatest incentive to immigration and development” in the area (p. 435). Numerous Ritchie County towns were created as railroad stops: Toll Gate, Ellenboro, Cornwallis, Cairo, Petroleum, and Pennsboro. Pennsboro in particular, with its central location along the railroad line, was poised to be key in the remarkable growth of the era. As late as the close of the Civil War, the town was still “... only a hamlet of about five houses with one store ...” (*op. cit.*, p. 513) and the original railroad depot. But after the war, the building of a stave factory close to the railroad depot was accompanied by the building of a number of new homes, and eventually the building of boarding houses, hotels, schools, churches, factories, and other businesses. The growth continued “gradual and steady,” leading to what Lowther termed the “greatness” of the town (*op. cit.*, p. 513), and by the 1920s, Pennsboro was the home of saw mills, a cigar factory, a glass factory, and “stores of all kinds: Grocery, drug, hardware, clothing, furniture and variety. Also, there were bakeries, restaurants, an ice plant, Coca-Cola plant, ice cream factory, many churches and nice schools” (*A Photographic History of Ritchie County, West Virginia*, p. 97).

Lowther described Pennsboro around 1911 as the largest town in the county, a “... busy, enterprising town of fifteen hundred inhabitants.” (*History of Ritchie County*, p. 513) with eight general stores, two harness shops, a drug store, a tin shop, a clothing and furnishing house, bottling works, a suspender factory, and a number of other establishments. The centrally-located “new” Depot (the existing Depot, constructed in 1883 – see Section 7 above) was one of the

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town's notable buildings, one in which the entire county took great pride, as evidenced in this report in the September 13, 1883 *Ritchie Gazette*:

Handsome Depot. The new depot constructed by the B&O RR Company, at Pennsboro, is a beauty. It is one of the handsomest buildings in the State and while not large is convenient. The road has nothing on the line to compare with it, from Grafton to Parkersburg. An immense business is done at Pennsboro. It is the terminus of the P&H and deserves this favor.

As a consequence of its railroad-based commerce, Pennsboro became "... the center of most of the early business enterprise [in the county] in the first part of the 20th century" (*Ritchie County in Vintage Postcards*; p. 45). The Depot was the nexus of the town's growth and commerce, with numerous trains arriving daily, including six regular daily passenger trains. Witnessing this vibrant railroad-based economy, the *Ritchie County Tyler Gazette Industrial* reported (around 1900) that Pennsboro was "... the largest shipping point on the Parkersburg Branch of the B&O for produce, cattle and tobacco." This long-lived distinction was reported in successive issues of the *West Virginia State Gazetteer* from at least 1891 through 1919. Witnessing the growth in railroad traffic at Pennsboro, the Depot was enlarged around 1900, as indicated in the November 16, 1899 *Ritchie Gazette*.

Another important development closely linked to the railroad was the rise of the oil and gas industry in the area. Beginning in the 1860s, oil and gas production began to flourish in and around Ritchie County. Between 1889 and 1915, there was a genuine "boom" in oil and gas, with numerous wells drilled and operated. The railroad was critical to this boom, with large quantities of supplies and materials shipping via rail. Glass and marble factories also depended on the railroad for materials and transport. The depots, of course, including the Pennsboro Depot, played a key role in these shipments.

Emphasizing Pennsboro's importance, in 1873 another railroad line was incorporated to serve Pennsboro: the P&H (Pennsboro & Harrisville, later the Lorama) Railroad. This line connected Pennsboro with the county seat of Harrisville (and later to the more distant town of Pullman) and besides carrying passengers, was an important carrier of freight, especially lumber for the stave factory in Pennsboro and sandstone from quarries located near Harrisville. The Pennsboro P&H Depot was located close to that of the B&O, and passengers from all along the B&O line came to Pennsboro to transfer to the P&H, then to continue their journey south. The B&O/P&H connection was a vibrant one, as seen especially at the time of the annual Ritchie County Fair, which was a stop on the P&H line, when hundreds of passengers filled the cars.

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Attendance at the Ritchie County Fair was just one of the many ways in which the railroad figured in the everyday lives of those living in and around Ritchie County. The railroad/telegraph connections opened vital lines of transport and communication that enabled citizens to reach beyond their immediate surroundings and into the larger world, impacting commerce, health, recreation, education, and virtually every aspect of life. Two representative telegrams from the late 1890s, transmitted from the Pennsboro Depot, bear witness to this activity.

To Buckhannon, WV: "Will come first of week. Just received letter." And to Emmitsburg, MD: Will load two loads steers and heifers today for Hagerstown. Meet me."

One can imagine the hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of such messages sent and received over the years at the Pennsboro Depot to gain an insight into the very substantial impact of the Depot on the lives of the surrounding people, farms, and businesses.

The significance of the railroad – and especially the Pennsboro Depot – to Ritchie County and the identity of Pennsboro became clear when the very existence of the building was threatened. Growth in truck and auto transport, boosted by construction of a major 4-lane highway along the route of the railroad, had exacerbated declines in freight and passenger volume. Passenger trains decreased and then were eliminated altogether, followed in a few years by the elimination of freight transport. In 1974, the Depot was closed, and soon came the announcement that most of the Parkersburg Branch (the portion from Clarksburg to Parkersburg) would be abandoned; removal of the rails followed shortly thereafter.

Following the 1988 demolition of the railroad tracks, the Pennsboro Depot stood vacant and unused, and was allowed to deteriorate until by the Spring of 1990, the City of Pennsboro was forced to consider condemnation. A group of public-spirited citizens stepped up, forming the "Save the Depot" organization and petitioning the City and CSX (the depot's then-owner) to stay action pending a fund-raising campaign to save the building. The response to this campaign was immediate and most impressive, especially considering the rural, far-from-affluent character of Ritchie County. Within just a few weeks, more than \$2,500 had been raised, with donations originating as far away as Pennsylvania, Colorado, Ohio, Arizona, California, and Washington. With this funding, plus the proceeds from numerous local fundraisers and two Federal/State grants, extensive, vital repairs were made to the Depot beginning in 1990 (see detail in Section 7 above).

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Eventually, the Ritchie County Historical Society assumed responsibility for the Pennsboro Depot, leasing it from the State of West Virginia (which had taken over the building from CSX) and making substantial renovations to the building's interior. Today, the Depot stands in the historic center of Pennsboro, surrounded by sister distinguished buildings, including the Wells Building (1911), the Bank Building (1903), and the old Penn Movie Theatre, constructed around the turn of the 20th century.

Running along the Depot is the busy North Bend Rail Trail, built over the site of the old B&O railroad tracks and still a focus of town, county, and tourist activity. Hikers, bikers, and horseback riders frequently stop to tour the well-preserved Depot interior and the numerous railroad artifacts on display. Civic groups meet in the recently-dedicated meeting room (formerly the central Depot waiting room) while the Ritchie County Historical Society, the North Bend Rail Trail Foundation, and various civic groups (especially Pennsboro's "Country Roads Festival" organization) hold open houses, cook-outs, and the like that invariably draw good crowds. There are plans to eventually use part of the Depot for a visitors center.

The long, colorful, and important history of the Depot surely renders it worthy of listing on the National Register.

(NPS Form 10-900)

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1916 Map of Downtown Pennsboro – no source identified.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Pennsboro B&O lot is shown on the accompanying map titled "Pennsboro B&O Depot and Boundaries of Railroad Lot," which is appended to the license between the State of West Virginia and the Ritchie County Historical Society (Deed Book #245, page 476).

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the area historically associated with the depot.

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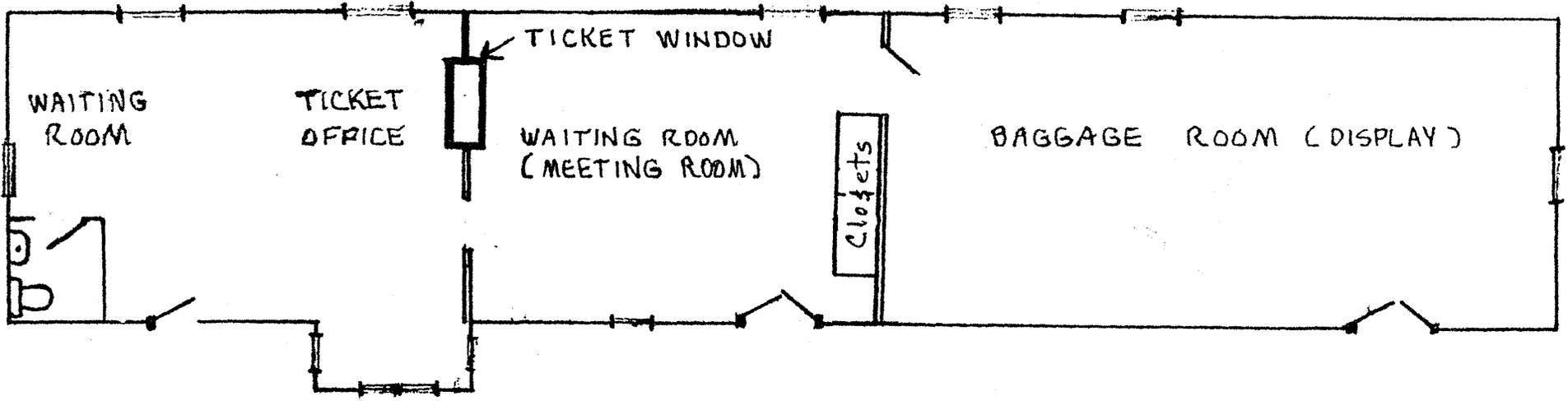
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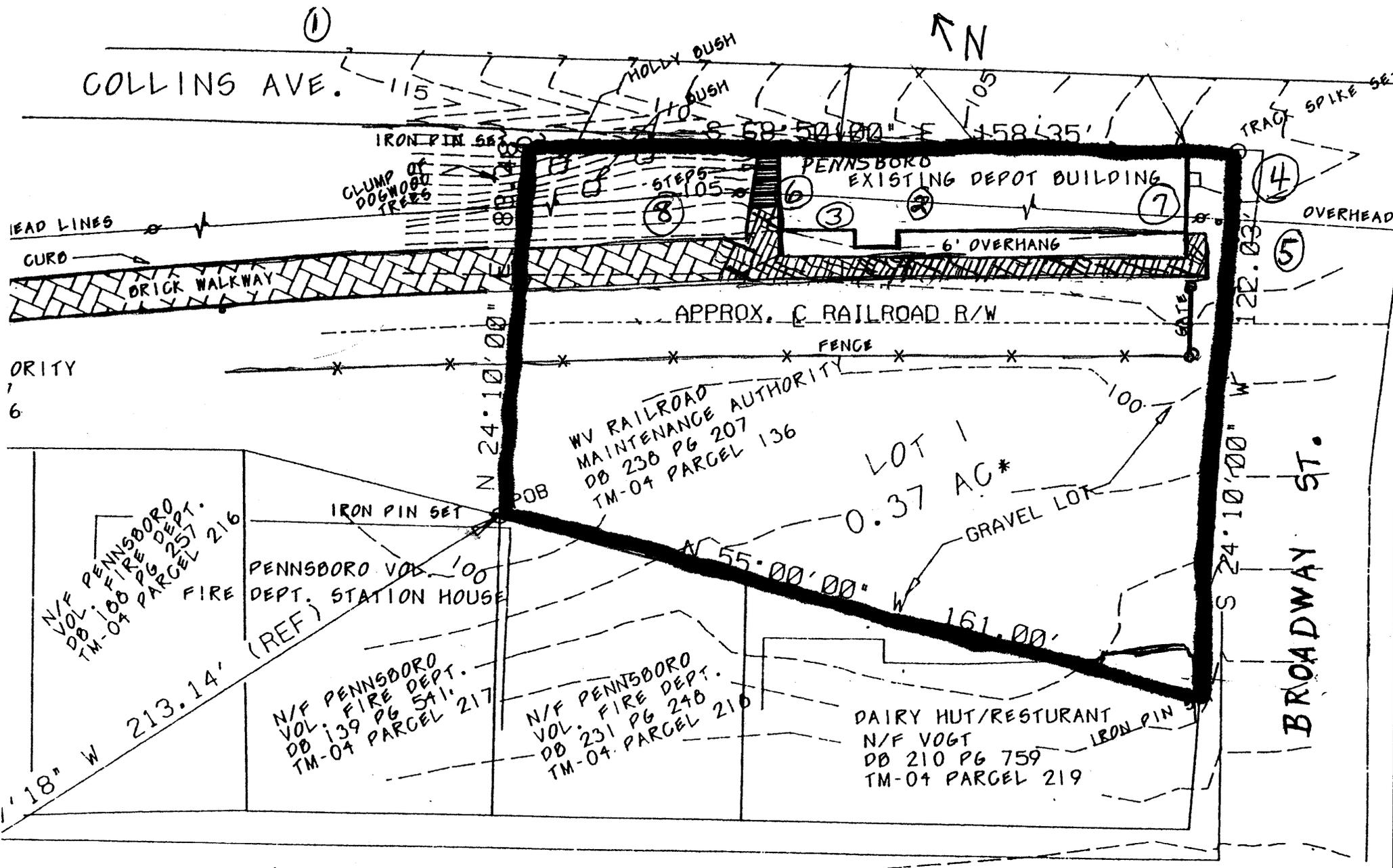
Name of Property	Pennsboro B&O Depot
Address	Corner of Broadway Street and Collins Avenue
Town	Pennsboro
County	Ritchie
Photographer	Charles Dotson
Date	July 26, 2006
Photos	Digital
Photo 1 of 8:	Rear and west end exterior, camera facing southeast
Photo 2 of 8:	Middle room (old waiting room), camera facing east
Photo 3 of 8:	Operator's cubicle, west room, camera facing southeast
Photo 4 of 8:	East end exterior, camera facing west
Photo 5 of 8:	Front and east end exterior, camera facing northwest
Photo 6 of 8:	West room, operator's cubicle on right, camera facing east
Photo 7 of 8:	East room, camera facing west
Photo 8 of 8:	West end exterior, camera facing east

PENNSBORO B+O RAILROAD DEPOT
RITCHIE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA



NOT TO SCALE





○ = Photo locations

KIMBALL ST.

Pennsboro B&O Depot and Boundaries of Railroad Lot (Ritchie County WV)