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INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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 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 Perris Depot

other names/site number Santa Fe Depot

2. Location

street & number 120 W. Fourth Street not for publication

city or town Perris vicinity

state California code CA county Riverside code 065 zip code 92570

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.)

[Signature] June 29, 1994
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
California Office of Historic Preservation
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:)

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper
Entered in the 8/5/94
National Register Date of Action

Perris Depot
Name of Property

Riverside, California
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	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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

N/A

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 & Culture/Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Wood Shingles

other _____

Narrative Description

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

Introduction. The Perris Depot is one of the most elegant of the small town railway depots. It was intended to be an important stop on a major transcontinental line, expensively built of brick, rather than the frame construction commonly employed in the area. Most small town stations, moreover, were built to standard plans; this one was carefully designed by a notable railroad station architect.

Perris Depot
Name of Property

Riverside, CA
County and State

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
- Exploration/Settlement
- _____
- _____
- _____

Period of Significance

1892-1944

Significant Dates

1892

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Levet Sr., Benjamin Franklin

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:

Perris Depot

Name of Property

Riverside, CA

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 11 478810 3736880
Zone Easting Northing

3 Zone Easting Northing
4 Zone Easting Northing

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 Ida Mae Minnich, Corporate Secretary

organization Orange Empire Railway Museum, Inc. date 7/23/93, revised 3/23/94

street & number P. O. Box 548 telephone (909) 943-3020

city or town Perris state CA zip code 92572-0548

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 Orange Empire Railway Museum, Inc.

street & number P. O. Box 548 telephone (909) 943-3020

city or town Perris state CA zip code 92572-0548

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 Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

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Perris Depot
Riverside County, CA

Narrative Description

The depot function has been at the present location since the railroad was first built in 1882, and the townsite first platted in 1886. The present depot building was completed in 1892. It sits along Fourth Street between C and D Streets in downtown Perris. The station lot comprises the space between the former Santa Fe main line track on the west, Fourth Street on the south, and the one remaining yard track on the east. Historically, there were several tracks in the local yard. The depot plat also includes a triangular landscaped area adjacent on the north.

Built of red brick, the Perris Depot is a classic example of High Victorian style, with a Queen Anne shingled, conical-roofed tower, an arched entranceway, round windows, and ornate finials. The gingerbread trim (the finials in particular) was machine cut and turned on lathes in an era when architectural decoration was turning away from hand craftsmanship, thus following the trend to industrialization in America.

The building is oriented on a north to south axis and consists of two flanking wings with a central cross-axial mass and a two-story tower. The southern wing has a hipped roof, small circular window openings, and raised loading dock openings with wooden doorways. The central mass has a main entrance on the east elevation. This entrance consists of an arched and inset entrance surrounded by small Romanesque columns that are connected by arched lattice work in their upper portions. The two broad-arched entry ways, one on each side of the building, are of similar design. A projecting semi-circular bay is located directly below a decorative two-story tower. The tower has a false observation deck with a conical roof and flagpole. Windows are of the wood sash type with decorative stained glass. Additional details include brickwork and shingling. The north wing has a hipped roof with gablet.

The interior contains a large freight room at one end, with three freight doors whose base height is on a level with the raised floor within. Small circular windows at the end and side walls are found in the upper freight room walls. Next to this room is a small freight office at the rear side and a smaller open entry directly opposite at trackside next to the tower. This entry opens to the ticket office with rounded bay. Directly behind it, at the rear, is another open entry. That entry opens to the freight office, ticket office, and the adjoining waiting room, which also has an entry door at trackside. Next to the waiting room at the end is a small baggage room with three wide doors - a smaller one at the end and one large door on each side.

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Riverside County, CA

Narrative Description (continued)

The doorways all have brick voussoirs. Brick-designed trimmings are evident in several places throughout the exterior walls and in the gabled ends of the upper-roof portions. Windows are mainly rectangular, with multipaned upper sash. Similar designs appear in the entry door windows. The design and attention to the architectural detail is evident throughout the entire building and is, surprisingly, quite elaborate and attractive for a small-town railroad station.

Integrity. The Perris Depot retains its integrity of location and design, still at its exact original site and essentially unaltered from its original design and construction. It stands today basically as it was in the 1890s, except that in later years a Swift train-order signal was added on the west side, plus an air conditioner. The interior is generally the same, except for modern facilities in the restrooms of the former waiting room. Other changes include gingerbread trim extended along the uppermost roof peak on the north office portion of the building. A large sign reading "Santa Fe Route" was fixed exactly halfway along the roof peak between the north side of the building and where the roof connects with the portion containing the tower.

There are plans to replace missing furniture in the ticket office, thus restoring the station in this respect to its appearance in passenger-carrying days of the 1920s. This will not involve any structural changes.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The period of significance for the Perris Depot runs from the time of its construction in 1892 to 1944. Even before it was completed, the site was the social and commercial center of the community. This is where the community received its merchandise, met friends, said goodbye to friends, embarked on a journey or debarked from one. The names of the leading mercantile houses of the city are still written in lampblack on the freighthouse walls, indicating the location where all the freight for that business was to be left. Furthermore, the Depot represents a very important architectural genre - Queen Anne. It is among the very few of the original buildings of this style that survives intact and unaltered. For these reasons, the Perris Depot should be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, at the local level of significance.

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Perris Depot
Riverside County, CA

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Prior to the arrival of the railroad, the Perris Valley (known then as the San Jacinto Plain) was largely vacant. With little reliable water and sparse vegetation, it had been largely bypassed by aboriginals and European settlers alike. A few miners worked gold diggings in the surrounding hills, but there were few bonanzas. Only one mine, the Good Hope, showed a profit over the years. Tin and asbestos were also produced, but never in significant commercial quantities. In 1882, the southern transcontinental railroad (composed of the Santa Fe, Atlantic and Pacific, and California Southern railroads) was completed through the region, linking Chicago with San Diego. Settlers as well as hopeful mineral seekers came to the region.

The original townsite of Pinacate was bypassed in the wake of land ownership disputes, and a group of investors persuaded the railroad to move its stop a mile and a half north in 1886. There had been various corporate shiftings and changes, but the railroad had by that time been absorbed into the main Santa Fe system. The railroad station relocation had been encouraged by the promise of the developers to name the new town after the line's Vice President and Chief Engineer Frederick Thomas Perris (1837-1916) and to build a new depot at the site. Though the townsite was platted by Mr. Perris in 1886, it wasn't until 1911 that it became an incorporated city. He was also responsible for laying out the California Southern line through this area.

The property now occupied by the railroad depot was deeded by T. J. Fording, one of the group of San Bernardino businessmen who financed the founding of the town, to the California Southern Railroad on February 12, 1886. A "warehouse" is shown at this location on the 1886 plat of Perris.

For some reason (most probably a slow struggle by the promoters to gather the necessary funds), it took another six years before the new depot was finished and presented to the railroad company in 1892. However, by this time, floods had several times washed out many miles of line southward toward San Diego, and a new line was built through Santa Ana Canyon, with Los Angeles the primary destination. San Diego has remained on a branch line to this day. Perris, too, was off the main line, and plans to build the railroad repair shop here had been abandoned in favor of National City and, later, San Bernardino. However, a branch line to Hemet had opened in 1888, and the new depot would be a nice transfer facility.

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Perris Depot
Riverside County, CA

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The Perris Depot, which replaced the earlier wooden warehouse on the same location, was built by J. W. Nance, a prominent Perris builder and investor, and was designed by Benjamin Franklin Levet, Sr. (1864-1949). The latter, a son-in-law of Fred Perris, was the architect of numerous other railroad depots in California, including the magnificent La Grande station located between First and Second on Santa Fe Avenue in Los Angeles. It was the Santa Fe's principal depot in Los Angeles from its opening in 1893 to the opening of Union Station in 1939. Levet, at age 26, was also credited with designing the depots in San Juan Capistrano, Mentone, Patton, and East and West Highlands, among others. They were variously described as Moorish Arabian, Victorian, and Gothic.

Two articles from the "Redlands Citrograph" recorded the progress of the depot:

January 16, 1892: "J. W. Nance has now 15 men at work on the new brick depot and the work will be pushed rapidly. The foundation is all in and the floor is being laid. In sixty days the building will be ready for occupancy and Perris will be able to boast of the finest depot on the Santa Fe road!"

March 19, 1892: "About 300 excursionists visited Perris on Wednesday, the occasion being the completion of a fine depot at that town. The depot was transferred to the Southern California Railway Company with appropriate ceremonies."

The great southern California land boom of 1886-87 had largely bypassed the region, but an irrigation district was subsequently established, and water was contracted from Big Bear Lake in the San Bernardino Mountains, proclaimed at the time to be the world's largest reservoir. So, not long after the depot was opened, settlers began arriving to establish small farmsteads whose long and narrow lots were well suited to gravity irrigation. Effusive tales of wonderful cornucopias spread widely, with all manner of exotic crops to be plucked once the land had water. Kadota Figs somehow had a particular appeal, and the largest of the early land subdivisions was called Figadota Farms. Unfortunately, the amount of water available from Big Bear turned out to be less than anticipated, and Perris Valley was cut off during the mid-1890s in favor of others with senior claims, particularly in the Redlands area. The depot turned out to be somewhat grander than business warranted, but remained the commercial and social center of the Valley for those who stayed to tough it out.

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**Perris Depot
Riverside County, CA****Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)**

The faith was rewarded when, what were believed to be, unlimited underground aquifers were discovered and developed during the mid-1900s. By 1910, another boom was under way, this time involving the cultivation of alfalfa. Again the depot and the railroad became the focus of intense activity. Alfalfa Days became the region's major harvest festival. Potatoes were introduced and the local White Rose variety became particularly prized, and a major traffic generator for the railroad.

For a time, the belief was encouraged that the direct line to San Diego would be rebuilt, and speculation was rife that electric interurban routes, already serving Riverside and San Bernardino, would soon be extended to Perris Valley. It was not to be. Elimination of service to Elsinore and Temecula through Railroad Canyon even ended the distinction of Perris as a junction point. Additionally, potato yields were declining somewhat by World War II because of aquifer depletion and salinization. The town languished as sort of a rural poverty pocket, with no sewers, unpaved streets, and a poor domestic water system. Despite all this, the Depot remained the most important building in the area.

World War II brought new activity, and the depot was again the major transportation center. In 1947, passenger service ended, but the coming of imported Colorado River water in 1953 gave the potato crop a new boost. The depot and the adjoining marshaling yard were bustling places during the annual "Spudrush" in late June through early August. By the end of the 1960s, though, the rising cost of the imported water, along with escalating land prices, in anticipation of urban sprawl, had made potatoes an uneconomical crop. In 1969, the freight agency was closed, and the depot structure was given to the Orange Empire Railway Museum for historic preservation. Title to the underlying property, however, remained with Santa Fe Industries until the recent transfer to public ownership.

In 1975, two of the four tracks in the station yard were abandoned, leaving only one siding to the east and the main line to the west of the depot. Freight on the branch line remained mostly agricultural.

The Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association has housed its public exhibits in the freight house since 1974. For a short time in the early 1980s, the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce used office space in the depot. None of these uses altered the physical structure in any way. Earlier, the railroad made minor alterations to accommodate changes after the end of regular passenger train service, but the only exterior modifications have been to rebuild one chimney and to enclose one entrance on the

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Riverside County, CA

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

western elevation. These alterations are easily reversible and do not impact the architectural or design integrity of the structure.

As a tribute to the Depot's historic significance, the Native Daughters of the Golden West placed an historical marker on the building in 1966.

Presently, the Orange Empire Railway Museum plans to develop the facility as the principal passenger terminal on its demonstration railway. With recent completion of the sale of the Santa Fe's Perris and Hemet branch lines to the region's transportation authority, it is expected that the depot will again serve the City of Perris as a passenger facility on the planned Metrolink rail commuter system. The City now has some 28,000 residents, as against less than 200 in the town in 1892 and 3,276 as late as 1963.

Like many other towns and cities in southern California, passenger train service in Perris declined as more and more people traveled in the privacy of their automobiles. However, from 1947, when service ended in Perris, to 1969, when the resident freight agency office was closed, the adjacent yard continued to be used for marshaling refrigerator cars to haul potatoes to eastern markets. The close of the agency responded not only to the decline in potato farming but also to the increased use of automobiles by traveling freight agents as they interacted with their shippers. Once again, the automobile diminished the need for the functions of the station.

Bibliography

1. Cavalier, Julian, Classic American Railroad Stations. San Diego, CA: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1980.
2. The Citrograph, Redlands, CA: January 16 and March 19, 1892.
3. Duke, Donald and Kistler, Stan, Santa Fe. Steel Rails Through California. San Marino, CA: Golden West Books, 1963.

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Continuation Sheet

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Perris Depot
Riverside County, CA

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4. Edmonson, Harold A. and Francaviglia, Richard V., Railroad Station Planbook. Milwaukee, WI: Kalmbach Publishing Co., 1977, pp. 24-29.
5. Environmental Impact Report for the State Route 74 Widening Project (Draft). Claremont, CA: GRC Redevelopment Consultants, Inc., August 1988.
6. Gustafson, Lee and Serpico, Phil, Coast Lines Depots. Palmdale, CA: Omni Publications, 1992.
7. Historic Property Survey Report, Hwy 74 (4th St.) Widening. Huntington Beach, CA: Scientific Resource Survey, Inc., December 7, 1987, and references therein.
8. Perris Progress, A Plaque for a Historical Monument, July 15, 1966.
9. Perris Valley A Homeland. Perris, CA: Chamber of Commerce [191?].
10. Perris Valley! Its History, Resources, Development. Perris, CA: The Perris Printing Company, January 1, 1891.
11. Tigner, J. H., The Italy of America. Los Angeles, CA: Home Printing Co. [1908?].

Verbal Boundary Description

See attached scale map.

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Continuation Sheet

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Perris Depot
Riverside County, CA

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the historic building and its immediate setting.

Photograph Labels

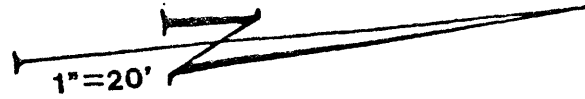
Name of photographer: Carlos T. Notarte
Date of photograph: March 1993
Location of original negative: Orange Empire Railway Museum
(The above information applies to photographs #1, 2, and 3.)

- #1. Looking south, photo shows north end of the depot and a portion of the area recently landscaped by the City of Perris. Fourth Street (State Highway 74) runs east and west adjacent to the south end of the depot, and is the main thoroughfare, in these directions, through the old downtown area.
- #2. Looking southwest, photo shows the east face of the depot. East of the building lies the railroad track, an alley way, a commercial building, and "D" Street, in that order. The latter is the main north/south thoroughfare through the old downtown area. The above obstructions prevent a photo being taken of a full front-face view of the depot.
- #3. Looking southeast, photo shows the west face of the depot. A full front-face photo is not possible because of a commercial building which lies west of the depot and the railroad track.

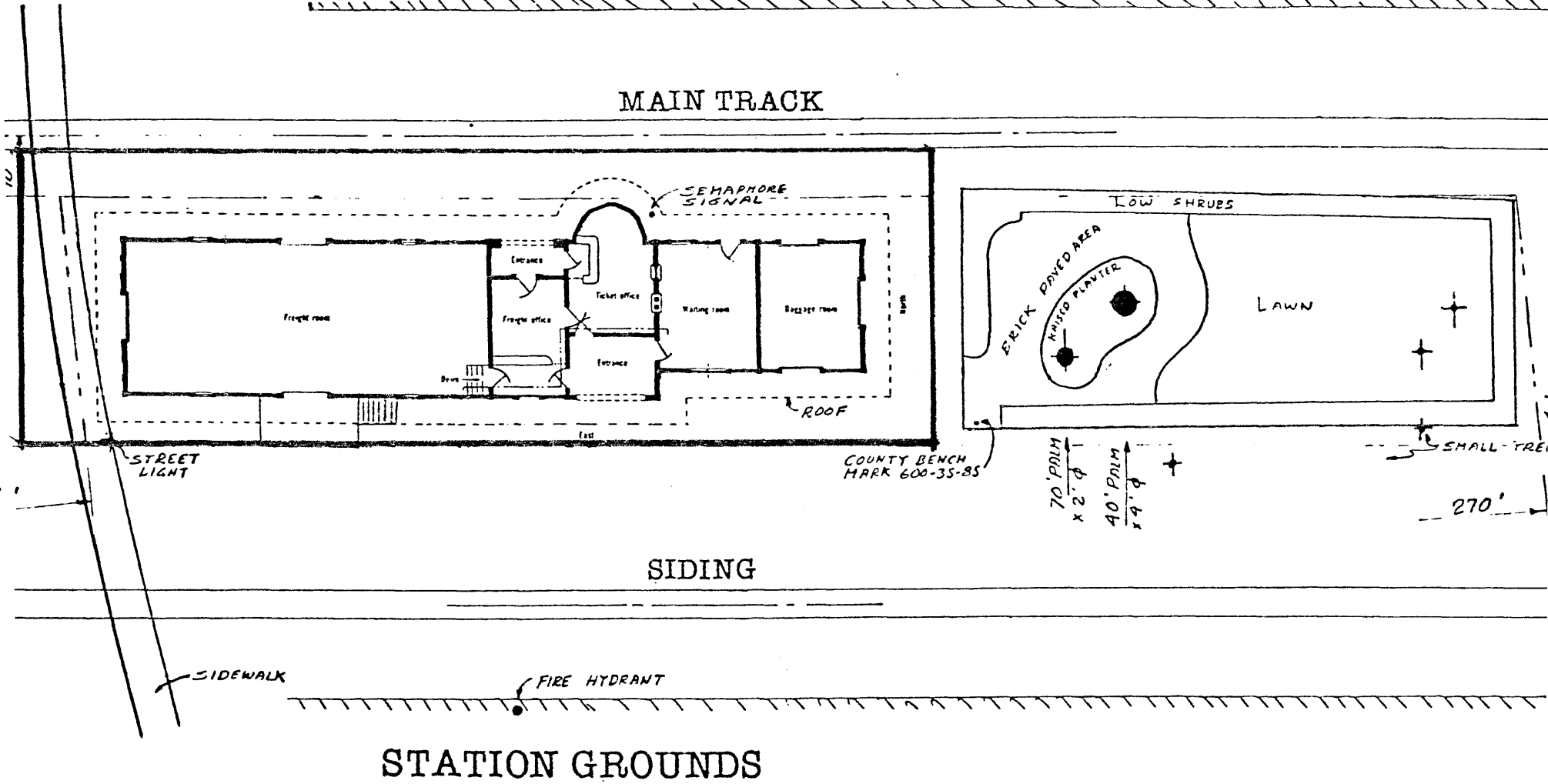
Name of photographer: Unknown. (Photo from the collection of Stan Kistler. Permission to use it received on April 17, 1992.)
Date of photograph: Early 1890s.
Location of original negative: Unknown

- #4. Same view as #3. Photo taken in the early 1890s. Shows historical and architectural integrity of the depot.

Riverside Co.
CA



MAIN TRACK



Scale Map - Perris D