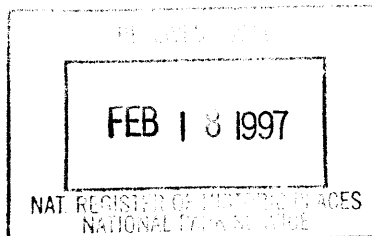


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Geraldine Milwaukee Depot

other name/site number:

## 2. Location

street & number: Railroad Avenue

not for publication: n/a  
vicinity: n/a

city/town: Geraldine

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Chouteau code: 015

zip code: 59446

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 X statewide X locally.

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency or bureau

(    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
   see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register  
   see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register  
   see continuation sheet
- removed from the National Register  
   see continuation sheet
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

*Edson H. Beall*

3/21/97

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### 5. Classification

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<b>Ownership of Property:</b> Building	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<b>Category of Property:</b> Private	Contributing	Noncontributing
<b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:</b> 0	<u>  1  </u>	___ building(s)
<b>Name of related multiple property listing:</b> n/a	___	___ sites
	___	___ structures
	___	___ objects
	<u>  1  </u>	___ TOTAL

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### 6. Function or Use

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<b>Historic Functions:</b>	<b>Current Functions:</b>
Transportation: Rail-related	Vacant/Not in Use

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### 7. Description

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<b>Architectural Classification:</b>	<b>Materials:</b>
Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Craftsman	foundation: concrete walls: wood roof: wood shingle other: n/a

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### Narrative Description

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The Geraldine Railroad Depot officially opened for business on January 23, 1914. The opening was heralded by the local paper with a description of the building:

"This depot is different from any other on the line between Lewistown and Great Falls. It is especially designed, patterned after the California bungalow, and the materials and workmanship are of the best. Each board and timber piece used outside in enclosing the structure is mitered, and the rafters are exposed in mission style."

The depot today remains in an excellent state of preservation. It is a single level structure measuring approximately 24 x 96 feet, wood-framed with a gable roof. Historic "Geraldine" signboards have been hung in each gable end. The depot sits south of the main railroad track through Geraldine and the long axis of the building is parallel to the track. The structure is largely symmetrical across that axis. Exterior walls are surfaced with lapped horizontal siding; wide siding is used below a belt rail and narrow-gauge siding is utilized above. Gable ends are surfaced with vertical board-and-batten.

It appears that the structure was originally roofed with cedar shingles, reroofed once with cedar and one time with asphalt. In October 1995, the building was entirely reroofed with masonite shingles. Rafter tips are exposed. Two brick chimneys and two metal ventilators are spaced along the roof's ridge line.

Both the north and south facades are visually defined by rectangular bays projecting outward beneath small cross-gables. These heavily-windowed bays are in the eastern half of the building, opposite one another, windows on the bays and on the north and south walls are largely 3-over-1 double hung. Entry doors on these walls are four-paneled wood. A sliding freight door, beneath a horizontal metal runner, is near the west end of both the north and south walls. The north wall has a centered horizontal bank of three, 3-over-1 windows, but the south wall has a bank of four.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Geraldine Milwaukee Depot  
Chouteau County, Montana

Page 1

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It appears that two of the three windows on the south bay were altered to accommodate rest rooms when agent's living quarters were partitioned off.

The building's interior includes a freight room at the west end and a former passenger area on the east end. The agent's office, which extends into the north bay area, divided the passenger area into two waiting rooms connected by an open passageway, in which is set the ticket window. Selected grain fir was used throughout for trim and finishing, floors are of hardwood maple. The fir paneling is varnished on the eastern end of the building; on the western end, it has been painted. Baseboards have been removed but wainscoting and finish rails remain. The building is heated by large hot-blast stoves with nickel trimmings, set in large floor pans. A ventilating system in the building changed the air every 5 minutes.

The freight room interior is less carefully finished than the depot's public space. It has plank wooden flooring, and is open above into the rafters. The original freight scales remain built into the floor, and a coal room occupies the southwest corner of the room.

In July 1942, the eastern waiting room was converted into a three-room apartment for the station agent, and a portion of the west waiting room was converted into a storage area. In contrast to these changes in the waiting area, the ticket office retains much of its historic configuration, with a built-in desk (in the bay), and original wood cabinetry.

In 1995 the overhead door installed on the west end by Central Montana Railroad was removed and the west wall restored to original configuration. All later wall decorations and other non-historic items have been removed. The building was repainted that year, in historic Milwaukee orange with maroon trim.

The original track side platform was wooden planks, later replaced with decomposed granite which has since been removed. The Central Montana Rail ran a drainage ditch between the track back sloping to within a few feet of the depot sometime after 1985.

### Integrity

The exterior of the Geraldine depot retains an excellent level of integrity. The building has been recently repainted, and still displays its original design configuration and materials. All fenestration appears to be completely original. The loss of the original depot platform is a minor negative element. Standing along the railroad tracks in the shadow of the grain elevators, the depot clearly marks the link between the railroad and this community.

Although several alterations have affected the interior, much historic fabric remains original, including wood floors and trim, ticket office and freight scales. Partitions have been removed from that portion of the waiting rooms that were remodeled for agents' quarters in 1942, returning the interior to its original three-room layout.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Areas of Significance: Transportation, Architecture

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1914 - 1946

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1914

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: John Swanson, Builder

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### Narrative Statement of Significance

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For 67 years, the Geraldine Milwaukee Depot served as a local base of operations for the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway. A hub for Geraldine's primary means of passenger and freight transportation, the depot building was a prominent local symbol of the Milwaukee Railroad's presence and importance, as well as the railroad's faith in the Geraldine community itself.<sup>1</sup> For these significant associations with rail-related transportation and settlement in Geraldine, the building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places according to Criterion A.

Architecturally, the depot's distinctive Craftsman design made it a standout among small town Milwaukee depots in Montana. The building is highly reflective both of the era in which it was constructed and of the near-standard configuration of small turn-of-the-century American depots. The building gains added significance on a statewide level under Criterion C, through its exceptional integrity, particularly on the exterior, and the fact that it is the only historic depot building surviving on its original site on the present Central Montana Railroad.<sup>2</sup>

#### Historical Significance

Settlement of the Geraldine area occurred during the open range era, when stockmen were drawn to the vicinity, which was known as a conducive open winter range for cattle grazing. Known early on as Winchell Springs, open ranges and cattlemen gave way to homestead farming during the early 1900s, when the railroads brought the homesteading era to Montana's central plains.

At the turn of the 20th century, three transcontinental railroads girded North America: the Union Pacific, the Northern Pacific, and the Great Northern Railway. These giants dominated the industry, forcing smaller rail lines such as the Milwaukee, Chicago and St. Paul to rely upon them for coast-to-coast connections. Eager to be independent of the big three, Roswell Miller, chairman of the board for the Milwaukee, set about charting a path from the Midwest to the Pacific, via the plains of North Dakota and Montana, then on over the Continental Divide to Tacoma.

Land survey and route planning began in 1905; construction began the following year. The railway was completed in record time, in 1909. Through Montana, the line ran up the Yellowstone Valley, across Central Montana, through the headwaters region of the Missouri River, over the Continental Divide near Butte, then out to the west along the Clark Fork River. By leasing and then acquiring the Montana Railroad (built in 1900 and known as the "Jawbone" to locals) the Milwaukee gained a clear path through central Montana between the Yellowstone and Missouri valleys and the Clark Fork. Major towns lining the route in Montana included Miles City, Harlowton, Butte and Missoula.

Once the main line was completed, the Milwaukee set about building and acquiring branch lines along its route to expand the railroad's market base. The longest branch line by far was the North Montana Line, which extended into the rich agricultural lands of central Montana. The North Montana line stretched along the old Jawbone route from Harlowton to Lewistown, and then extended on through the burgeoning industrial city of Great Falls to end near the Rocky Mountain Front at Agawam.

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<sup>1</sup> Hufstetler, Mark Central Montana Rail Historic and Architectural Survey

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Geraldine Milwaukee Depot  
Chouteau County, Montana

Page 1

During this era of railroad promotion and homestead immigration, news of the Northern Montana branch railroad's imminence drew settlement ahead of the tracks, beginning in 1909-1910. By the time the tracks were completed in 1913, there was already extensive agricultural development in the area. New homestead communities included Geraldine, a main stopover on the route between Great Falls and Lewistown, was named for the wife of railroad financier William G. Rockefeller, along with towns such as Square Butte Bench, Hawarden, Graceville, Eagle Butte and Clear Lake. Homestead claims near the Missouri River to the north and east of Geraldine encompassed approximately 15 townships or 540 square miles.

The lands along the Missouri River formed a rich agricultural basin (although the area to the Highwood Mountains on the west was largely grazing land and undeveloped). Grain buyers were in the area as early as September 1913,<sup>3</sup> and from this northern grain belt one and a half million bushels of grain awaited the arrival of the Milwaukee rails in the fall of 1913.<sup>4</sup> Previously grain from this area was hauled by wagons to Fort Benton and shipped via the Great Northern.

At least 10 wooden depot buildings were erected along the Milwaukee line between Lewistown and Geraldine. Nearly all of these were relatively small depots erected from standard Milwaukee blueprints. The Geraldine depot, however, was larger and reportedly of a custom design; it was the only custom-designed depot building erected between Lewistown and Great Falls.<sup>5</sup> Located approximately halfway between the two terminal towns, the Geraldine Milwaukee Depot was intended to serve as a secondary terminal. Tributary to a large area of agricultural land, Geraldine was also among the most successful of the Milwaukee Land Company's platted town sites along the new line. Construction of the Geraldine Milwaukee Depot began in December 1913, the month after the Milwaukee's rails had reached Geraldine from the east.

"Superintendent John Swanson, who will have charge of the depot construction, arrived Tuesday evening with a crew of fourteen men and on the following morning began unloading the ten cars getting ready for the cement work. He expects, with fair weather, to complete the building early in January."<sup>6</sup>

Four buildings originally stood with the Geraldine Milwaukee Depot. They included the agent's bungalow, section foreman's house and two section houses. All have since been sold and moved off site to other locations in town or nearby.

The exterior of the depot was completed by December 1913, and the Geraldine citizenry celebrated by holding a dedicatory New Year's Eve dance on the building's "splendid hardwood maple floor." A supper was served at the station at midnight and prizes were awarded for the best costumes. The festivities continued until 6 o'clock the following morning.<sup>7</sup>

The Geraldine Milwaukee Depot officially opened for business on January 23, 1914, with agent H.A. Sayre in charge. On September 1, 1914, the railroad instituted its regular schedule of daily passenger and freight trains along the line, and the Geraldine

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<sup>3</sup> *Geraldine Review* September 12, 1913.

<sup>4</sup> *Geraldine Review* August 22, 1913.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Geraldine Review* December 12, 1913.

<sup>7</sup> *Geraldine Review* January 7, 1914.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Geraldine Milwaukee Depot  
Chouteau County, Montana

Page 2

depot was a busy place.<sup>8</sup> That month alone, the station handled some \$17,000 worth of inbound and outbound freight and sold passenger tickets valued at \$8,000. In December of 1914, the first incoming load of freight arrived, when two carloads of coal came in from Roundup. In 1914, the Milwaukee drilled a well nearby so that a lawn could be planted. (This well can no longer be located.) Plans in the spring were for shrubbery, flowers and fountains to be added. However, the fountains were never built.<sup>9</sup>

During the first years of the line's operation, a day agent and helper along with a night agent and helper manned the station 24 hours. There were two passenger trains daily, one each way, with lunch stops at noon at local cafes. A lunch counter was planned for the depot but did not materialize. Freight crews also lunched here for many years.<sup>10</sup>

During the WWII years, considerable material and troops were transported on the line. Several times troop trains stopped for lunch. On one occasion, 364 men were fed at a local cafe. The soldiers put on a few minutes of close order drill before they marched back to the train.<sup>11</sup>

Following the war, business gradually declined. In 1955, the Milwaukee discontinued passenger service along the line. A single daily freight train continued to run through Geraldine, hauling most of the grain produced from the outlying area until the Milwaukee's demise in 1980. Burlington Northern assumed ownership that year, and their trucking line took over a large share of the grain hauling and still retains a good share of the northern portion of the section. Approximately three million bushels of grain yearly was shipped out of Geraldine between 1990 - 1995.

### Architectural Significance

The Geraldine Milwaukee Depot is a fine example of standardized railroad building. Measuring 24' x 96', the building is representative of numerous utilitarian depot buildings erected to serve rural communities. Unlike the more decorative and elaborate brick buildings erected in larger towns, the wooden buildings were all variations on the Milwaukee's "Standard Class A Passenger Station". The design of these depots was characteristically long and low -- a single-story rectangular building that housed a passenger service and waiting room on one end, and a freight room on the other, with an office and sometimes a small living quarters for the agent in the middle.<sup>12</sup> Built during the 1910s, these buildings exhibit simple Craftsman influences, primarily in such elements and detailing as the broad and gently pitched roof, bracketed eaves, exposed rafter tails, variation in exterior cladding patterns, multi-pane sash fenestration patterns, and paneled doors.

The Geraldine Milwaukee Depot reflects all of these design elements. Painted to the maroon and orange colors adopted by the line between 1928 and 1955, the depot retains excellent integrity on the outside, as well as inside, where intact ticket room, freight room with scales, waiting room, interior woodwork and flooring all remain. As the last Milwaukee Depot remaining along the portion of the line later acquired by Central Montana Rail it is important in the ways that it represents a style of building, as well as a form which became commonplace in the towns which lined the railway during the early 20th century.

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<sup>8</sup> Hufstetler

<sup>9</sup> *Geraldine Review* August 31, 1914.

<sup>10</sup> *Geraldine Review* June 13, 1914.

<sup>11</sup> Armstrong, Henry L. Personal Observation, 1943.

<sup>12</sup> McCarter, Steve Guide to the Milwaukee Road in Montana, p. 33, 36.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Geraldine Milwaukee Depot  
Chouteau County, Montana

Page 3

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Rail access to Geraldine ceased in the fall of 1982 due to a slide on Arrow Creek Hill. The slide was repaired, but in February 1983 the BN embargoed the entire line citing an unsafe trestle. Central Montana Rail bought much of the line and the Geraldine Milwaukee Depot, restoring service in 1985. In 1994, they announced a joint venture with a Portland, Ore. travel agency to develop a short-line railroad for tourism. The line when opened, will run between Denton and Geraldine.

In 1995, Central Montana Rail sold the Geraldine Milwaukee Depot to the Geraldine Historical Committee. On behalf of the community which it long served, the committee has undertaken efforts to preserve their depot. The committee sponsored this nomination, and is in process of restoring the depot, which today is the only Milwaukee Depot remaining along the Central Montana Rail portion of the line.

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### 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Chouteau County Records, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Fort Benton, Montana.

Duvall, Kay Farmer Spokes, Spurs & Cockleburs, 1976.

*Geraldine Review* Aug 22, Sept 12, Dec 12 1913; Jan 7, Jan 23, June 13, Aug 31, 1914. Geraldine, Montana.

Hufstetler, Mark Central Montana Rail Historic and Architectural Survey, Montana SHPO, 1990.

McCarter, Steve Guide to the Milwaukee Road in Montana, Montana Historical Society Press, Helena, Montana, 1992.

#### Photo Collections

Geraldine Historical Committee, Geraldine, Montana.

Mulvaney, Thomas Personal Collection, East Helena, MT

Schwinden Library Collection, Montana Agricultural Museum, Fort Benton, MT

#### 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 -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	12	555220	5272320

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): NE ¼ NW ¼ SE ¼ of Section 1, T21N, R11E

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#### Verbal Boundary Description

The Geraldine Milwaukee Depot is located on industry lots 43 and 45, southwest of the railroad main line tracks in the Geraldine Townsite, Montana.

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#### Boundary Justification

This is the property associated with the depot since its construction in 1914.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title: Henry Armstrong, Marcella Knedler  
organization: Geraldine Historical Committee date: March 1996  
street & number: Box 126 telephone: (406) 737-4204  
city or town: Geraldine state: MT zip code: 59446

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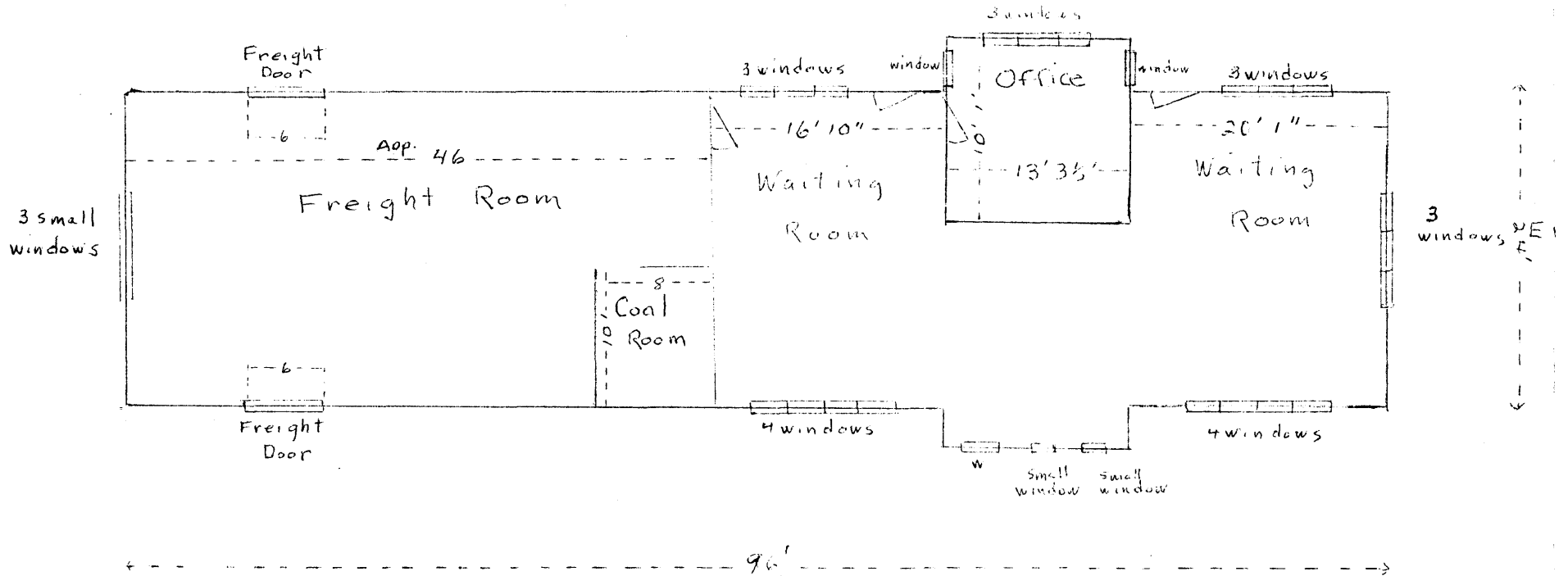
#### Property Owner

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name/title: Geraldine Historical Committee -- Monica Rice, president  
street & number: Box 126 telephone: (406) 737-4368  
city or town: Geraldine state: MT zip code: 59446



Tracks



Floor Plan  
Geraldine Milwaukee Depot  
Chouteau County  
Montana