

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Anchorage Depot  
Anchorage, Alaska

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

*Judith E. Bittner*  
Signature of certifying official

*July 23, 1999*  
Date

Alaska  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

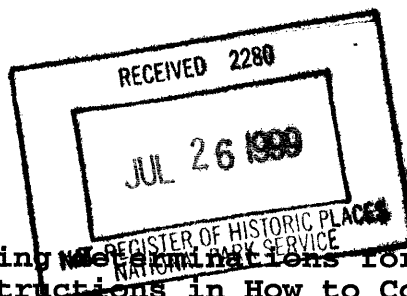
I, hereby certify that this property is:

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

*Edson H. Beal* *8/27/99*

*for*  
Signature of Keeper      Date  
of Action

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

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Anchorage Depot

other names/site number Alaska Railroad Depot

AHRS Site No. ANC-00362

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2. Location

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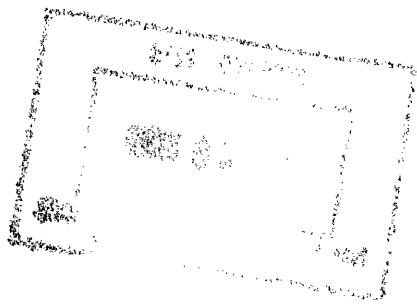
street & number 411 West First Avenue

not for publication n/a

city or town Anchorage vicinity n/a

state Alaska code AK county Anchorage code 020

zip code 99501



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**5. Classification**  
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**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**

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  1  </u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   n/a  

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

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**6. Function or Use**  
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**Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: Transportation Sub: rail-related  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: Transportation Sub: rail-related  
Commerce/trade business  
\_\_\_\_\_

=====  
**7. Description**  
=====

**Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)**

Modern Movement, Moderne  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials (Enter categories from instructions)**

foundation concrete  
roof asphalt  
walls concrete  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_

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

The Alaska Railroad Depot, built at Anchorage in 1942, is a Moderne style reinforced concrete building that measures 338 feet by 45 feet. It is oriented east to west and stands at the southwestern limit of the Alaska Railroad yards in the lower limits of the Ship Creek drainage. Paralleling the depot to the north are railroad tracks and Ship Creek. About a hundred yards east and west stand warehouses, and across the tracks to the north is the railroad's new administrative office building. The depot is at the base of a bluff, below the downtown area of Anchorage. About two hundred yards southwest of the depot is an area where several of the houses built by the railroad still stand, although most of the houses have been rehabilitated and converted to offices (A.E.C. Cottages 23 and 25 are listed in the National Register of Historic Places).

The original three-story, flat roofed depot building measured 218 by 45 feet. In 1948, the railroad added two story additions at the east and west ends. The building can be divided into three sections: the entrance, 45 by 45 feet; the wings on either side of the entrance, each 70 by 45 feet; and the additions, each 60 by 42 feet. The entrance, in the south elevation, is accented by a stepped out face and rises about three feet above the building's roofline. The building has been used for offices (although no longer the railroad's), train waiting room, and baggage/shop area.

A typical window on the first floor is a 6/9 wooden sash window, and on the second and third floors it is a 6/6 window. All windows are recessed with

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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.) n/a

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

transportation  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1942-1949

Significant Dates 1942  
1948  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder J.B. Warrack Company  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**  
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**(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)**

Brovald, Ken C. *Alaska's Wilderness Rails*. Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 1982.

Carberry, Michael and Donna Lane. *Patterns of the Past: An Inventory of Anchorage's Historic Resources*. Anchorage: Municipality of Anchorage, 1986.

Clifford, Howard. *Rails North, the Railroads of Alaska and the Yukon*. Seattle, Washington: Superior Publishing Company, 1984.

Cohen, Stan. *Rails Across the Tundra*. Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 1984.

Fitch, Edwin M. *The Alaska Railroad*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967.

Prince, Bernadine. *The Alaska Railroad in Pictures, 1914-1964*. Anchorage, Alaska: Ken Wray Publishing, 1964.

Wilson, William H. *Railroad in the Clouds: The Alaska Railroad in the Age of Steam, 1914-1945*. Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1977.

- Previous documentation on file (NPS) n/a
- 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:** Anchorage Museum of History and Art

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**10. Geographical Data**  
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**Acreeage of Property** less than one

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

	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>		<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
<b>1</b>	<u>06</u>	<u>344918</u>	<u>6790750</u>	<b>3</b>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>
<b>2</b>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<b>4</b>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>

**Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)**

The Anchorage Depot is in the southwest corner of the Alaska Railroad Terminal Reserve, Original Anchorage Townsite. The depot is on the north side of First Avenue, occupying the 400 block between C Street and Christensen Drive.

**Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)**

The boundary encompasses only the depot built in 1942 and enlarged in 1948.

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**11. Form Prepared By**  
=====

**name/title** James Blasingame, Vice President

**organization** Alaska Railroad Corporation  
(assisted by Rogan C. Faith, Alaska Office of History and Archaeology)

**date** March 24, 1999

**street & number** P.O. 107500

**telephone** 907-265-2680

**city or town** Anchorage **state** AK **zip code** 99510-7500



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concrete sills. Most of the doors are steel double-leaf, side-hinged, and half-glazed with the pane engraved with the railroad's logo. These have a 4/2 transom protected by a square concrete hood. Beneath each window on the original building is a spandrel measuring approximately 2 by 3 feet, consisting of six vertical slats, three on each side. A belt course circles the building between the first and second floors. On the wings and additions, the fenestration placement is similar on the second and third floors of the north and south elevations.

First story. The south facade extends about 338 feet. Beginning at the southeast corner, the addition has four windows, a door, then a 6/6 wooden sash window. The east wing has a window, blank wall, three evenly spaced windows, then a door. The triple bay main entrance has a central door framed by decorative concrete reeding, flanked by 4/4 wood frame sash windows. It is recessed within two quarter round, fluted, concrete columns, and topped by a one foot wide frieze with approximately four inch square dentils beneath the transom. The entrance is stepped out about two feet from the rest of the building and has a roofline about three feet higher. The west wing has three evenly spaced bays of windows. The window closest to the entrance is 6/6 topped by a vent, the others are 6/9. West of the windows is an aluminum and glass double door topped by a hood, another three windows, and an unhooded aluminum and glass door. Beginning at the first window, a 10 by 60 foot wood patio runs west, parallel to the building. The addition at the west end is recessed about one foot. This section begins with a single door accessed from the street by a steel frame set of stairs at the end of the patio. Another single door, then three unevenly spaced windows complete the facade.

The west elevation has two 6/6 windows, an aluminum glass paned door framed by glass, and another 6/6 window.

The north elevation of the addition has two windows and a metal door. A metal stairway approximately 30 feet long, in two 15 foot stages connected by a platform, runs parallel to the building and leads to a door on the second story. In the main part of the building (on this elevation the entrance and wings are on the same plane) is a two foot square metal vent from the roof to the ground, a window, a metal door and three more windows. Left of this is a blocked metal door, eight evenly spaced windows, an unhooded door, and four windows. The addition has a window, metal door, and four unevenly spaced windows. West of the door is a metal staircase similar to the one at the other end of the building. The area between the building and the rails is paved.

The east elevation has four windows and a fire escape slightly off-center to the north.

Second story. On the south elevation, the east addition and wing have sixteen unevenly spaced windows. The main entrance has three evenly spaced, recessed 8/8 wooden sash windows with mullions between the first and second and third and fourth rows of panes. To the west (left), the addition and wing have seventeen evenly spaced windows.

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The west and east elevations each have five evenly spaced windows and a centrally placed fire escape.

The north elevation has eight windows, a metal door atop the fire escape, twenty two evenly spaced windows, a metal door, and several more unevenly spaced windows.

Third story. On the south elevation, the wings each have eight evenly spaced windows and one irregular window. The main entrance has three windows similar to those on the second floor, but with the middle one slightly more recessed. The windows on both the second and third floors are flanked by concrete fluting. Above the windows in the entrance section, molded into the concrete, are the words THE ALASKA RAILROAD. Centered on the roof is a flagpole. The west end of the roof has a chimney between the wing and the addition.

The third story on the north elevation is similar to the pattern for the wings and entrance on the second floor.

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

The Alaska Railroad constructed a new depot in Anchorage in 1942. It signifies the railroad's transition from wooden buildings and outmoded equipment to concrete facilities and modern equipment, and from survival to a policy of growth. The depot mirrors and contributes to understanding the changes in Anchorage from a modest town to a modern city marked by architecture using concrete and steel instead of wood. The Anchorage Depot provided passenger and freight services and housed the railroad administration. Opened on September 15, 1942, the depot made possible the swift transshipment of goods for building the military bases near Anchorage and further north during World War II and the Cold War. Reflecting the continued increased activity of the railroad, the depot was expanded with the addition of two wings for offices in 1948. Otherwise, it has not been changed since its construction. The period of significance ends in 1949, fifty years ago.

Historic background

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the thousands of people who had come to find gold in Alaska were calling for a railroad to link the Yukon River with a year-round open port. They wanted an All-American route and lower transportation costs. Such a route became a reality in 1923 when the federal government completed construction of the Alaska Railroad that linked Seward on the North Pacific Ocean, and Fairbanks, the largest city in interior Alaska, 470 miles north. The railroad established its administrative headquarters at Anchorage in 1917.

The 1920s and early 1930s were slow times for the Alaskan economy and for the railroad which required federal subsidies. The population of Anchorage cheered the news in 1936 that the federal government would partly fund a new City Hall, and that a new federal building was planned in 1938. These projects replaced wood frame buildings with reinforced concrete buildings. An additional sign of progress was when the just paved Fourth Avenue, the main commercial artery, got streetlights and stoplights in 1939. The infusion of money for federal projects made one local newspaper enthuse that "Uncle Sam Was Here to Stay."

Another important new concrete building in Anchorage was the Alaska Railroad depot. The railroad contracted with the J.B. Warrack Company of Seattle for a new depot and office building on August 8, 1941. The \$261,000 project was completed on September 15, 1942, and replaced a wood shiplap building used for over twenty years.

World War II boosted the economies of Anchorage and the railroad. The Army Air Force built Elmendorf Field in 1940 and available jobs brought many people to the area. The town's population grew from four thousand in 1940 to an estimated six thousand in 1942. The railroad increased its net income from \$341,663 in 1940, when it hauled 194,467 tons of freight, to \$5,242,942 in 1944, when it hauled 627,847 tons.

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While the volume of business dropped after the war, the military recognized Alaska's strategic location with the onset of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. In 1947 and 1948 the railroad hauled over two and a half million tons of freight, much of which was used to build Cold War military bases and facilities. The federal contribution to the railroad due to the Cold War totaled \$100 million. This money ensured prosperity in Anchorage immediately after World War II, and by 1950 it was the largest city in Alaska with eleven thousand people.

During the 1940s the Alaska Railroad continued to be the most reliable and economical way to move people and goods from a southern tidewater port to southcentral and interior Alaska. The Anchorage Depot was the focal point for both activities. Goods and people going from the ports at Seward and Whittier went through Anchorage where the railroad had its major facilities for transshipment and its primary facilities for equipment maintenance.

In late 1948, two events marked the progress of the railroad. The railroad's first "streamliner" was introduced. Aluminum, diesel powered, and done up in the company colors of blue and gold the AuRoRa conveyed its first complement of tourists from Anchorage to Fairbanks by way of Mount McKinley on October 18. Efforts to attract the tourist trade prior to the war met with only marginal success, but this expansion of service would prove much more successful. And, on November 28, two-story wings were completed on each end of the depot to provide needed space for offices to handle the increased administrative needs of a growing railroad in an expanding community.

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**Additional Documentation**  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Maps**

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

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

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

=====  
**Property Owner**  
=====

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

**name** Alaska Railroad Corporation

**street & number** P.O. Box 107500

**telephone** 907-265-2680

**city or town** Anchorage **state** AK **zip code** 99510-7500

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**NPS Form 10-900-a**  
**(8-86)**

**OMB No. 1024-0018**

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Section photograph identification**

- =====  
1. Anchorage Depot  
Anchorage, Alaska  
Rogan C. Faith  
April 14, 1999  
Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, 3601 C St., Suite 1278,  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5921  
Looking north at façade
2. Anchorage Depot  
Anchorage, Alaska  
Rogan C. Faith  
April 14, 1999  
Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, 3601 C St., Suite 1278,  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5921  
Looking northeast at rear and west elevations
3. Anchorage Depot  
Anchorage, Alaska  
Rogan C. Faith  
April 14, 1999  
Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, 3601 C St., Suite 1278,  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5921  
Looking northwest at façade and east elevation
4. Anchorage Depot  
Anchorage, Alaska  
unknown  
between 1942 and 1947  
Anchorage Museum of History and Art, 121 West 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., Anchorage, AK  
99501  
Looking northwest at south and east elevations of the Anchorage Depot  
shortly after construction (written information on back of photograph  
is incorrect)