

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 31 1975
DATE ENTERED	MAY 30 1975

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Great Northern Passenger Station [preferred]

AND/OR COMMON

Burlington Northern Passenger Station

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

5<sup>ent</sup>  
Foot of "D" Street

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bellingham

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Washington

CODE

53

#2 - Hon. Lloyd Meeds

COUNTY

Whatcom

CODE

073

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Burlington Northern Railroad

STREET & NUMBER

176 East 5th Avenue

CITY, TOWN

St. Paul

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Minnesota

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Whatcom County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Bellingham

STATE

Washington

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

—FEDERAL —STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> _EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> _DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> _UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> _RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> _MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> _UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Burlington Northern Passenger Station in Bellingham, Washington, is a single story slab-on-grade structure with brick bearing walls and a Spanish tile roof. Built in 1927, it has a plan basically similar in organization to several other combined freight and passenger depots constructed in brick after the turn of the century for various medium sized Washington cities.

The dominant central building mass is an elegant, spacious waiting room measuring 40 x 45 feet with high beamed ceilings. This one room is an articulated section of the building a few yards taller and deeper from front to back than the adjoining wings on either end. The roof over this portion is a truncated medium hip of no overhang other than the cornice and guttering.

At the northwest end of the waiting room is a small wing offset toward the tracks and flush along that facade. This contains the men's and women's restrooms and the women's lounge. The roof here is an attached three-quarter truncated hip partially overlapping the main waiting room roof and interrupting its cornice.

At the southeast end of the waiting room is another wing also offset toward the tracks. It is basically the same width as the restroom portion although about triple its length. The third of this wing closest to the waiting room is the depot agent's office. On the side facing the tracks, the office projects out as a rectangular bay window or minimal wing with a gable roof and a full view of the tracks in both directions. A working semaphore stands on the loading apron in front. On the opposite side, the agent's office is treated as the compositional equivalent of the restroom wing. The roof is a three-quarter truncated hip of the same size attached at the same height. The remaining two thirds of the wing are separate baggage and freight handling areas. On the side toward the tracks, the wing continues beneath a truncated hip roof flush with the waiting room facade. On the opposite side, the wall is set back about one foot from the agent's office. This introduces a hip and valley in the roof at a dimension corresponding to the restroom wing giving the impression of balance as mentioned above. There is a chimney with a corbelled cap centered in the roof above this point.

The main entrance to the waiting room is recessed behind an arcade of three semi-circular arches. These arches from intrados to extrados are faced in glazed terra cotta units decorated with moldings and a band of raised tendril ornament. The intermediate columns are square in cross section. Each is jacketed in glazed tiles completed at the bottom and top by a cast base and corinthian capital, also glazed. The outer columns are pilasters projecting inward along the colonade with a base and capital and facing tile on the shaft in a staggered pattern like quoins. Directly behind this arcade is a second series of three arches of the same height. There are two doorways flanking a large multipane window. The semi-circular top portion of this window and the transom windows over the doors have radial and circumferential steel muntins. On this facade there are two additional windows in the style and size of the one described above. They are centered in the remaining wall sections on either side of the arcade in front. On the facade facing the tracks there are also five arched openings in corresponding locations,

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although they are all in plane with the wall. Here there are three doors positioned in a reversed sequence so that a door occurs where each window would on the front facade. Centered in the adjacent wall areas on the wings flanking the waiting room are sets of three rectangular multipane windows separated by brick mullions. There are large wooden doors, two in front and two in back, for the baggage and freight rooms.

The waiting room interior has a terrazo floor in two shades of gray and set with brass strips in a diagonal pattern. The recessed portico forms interior alcoves on both ends of the entrance that are used for public telephones. These are entered through arched openings of a size equal to the windows. Centered on the wall next to the agent's office is an arch of similar size containing a handsome ironwork ticket window. On the opposite wall there is a shallow arched recess containing a water fountain. The enframing around the ticket cage is glazed tile with raised tendril decoration; casing tiles on all other arches are plain except for edge molding. Across the ceiling are four large wooden boxed girders stained dark supported on decorative corbels. These are painted along the lower edges in a geometric Indian motif used by the Great Northern Railroad. Spanning in between are numerous smaller beams, also stained dark. There are four wrought iron chandeliers hanging from the outside girders. Six of the original oak benches remain.

The women's lounge has been converted to an office that includes two freestanding eight foot partitions bolted to the floor in the adjoining waiting room. Also, a small flat roof office addition has been built on to the freight room in a roughly matching brick; the original doors to the waiting room have been replaced, and the long trackside canopy shelter has been removed. With these exceptions the building is unaltered.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1927

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

F. Stanley Piper

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bellingham Great Northern Passenger Station was built in 1927 by the George Moon Construction Company following plans drawn by F. Stanley Piper, architect. Both contractor and architect were local Bellingham firms. This is the last depot to be built in that city, and it is the most elaborate of the railroad buildings remaining there.

Bellingham was among the many Puget Sound communities caught up in early speculation over the various possible terminus points for the Northern Pacific Railroad. In 1869, Jay Cooke of the Northern Pacific Railroad, negotiated a \$50 million loan on a German Bank with apparently firm intentions of constructing a line that would ultimately reach Bellingham. The French and German War forced the bank to dissolve the agreement, and with further complications the company was forced to decide upon a less ambitious route. Real estate values in Bellingham fell drastically, ruining many speculators.

In the late 1870's, hopes for a rail connection revived based upon the likelihood of a line joining the Northern Pacific with the Canadian Pacific in British Columbia. Local financiers incorporated the Bellingham Bay and British Columbia Railroad in 1883 with capital stock of \$10 million. Other companies announced plans that would variously connect Bellingham with Vancouver, Seattle, and Salt Lake City. At this point the local population was optimistic enough that George Cantrell could write in the Bellingham Bay newspaper "Reveille":

. . . in ten years time there will be little difference between the two cities [Bellingham and New York], that New York lacks coal, timber and gold, which Bellingham has and that New York's advantage is only that of age, which Bellingham Bay will rapidly overcome.

In 1888 it was rumored that J. J. Hill wanted Bellingham as the terminus for his Great Northern Railroad. Hill, in fact, purchased 1,700 acres of real estate in the bay area. In the same year, the unfinished Bellingham Bay and British Columbia Railroad acquired two locomotives. It was said that their chief use for some time was to run back and forth on two or three miles of track whistling and blowing off steam to impress the visitors whenever a boat came in with prospective settlers or investors.



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Finally, the 23 mile B.B. & B.C. line was completed connecting with the transcontinental Canadian Pacific in Sumas. A grand celebration was held on June 22, 1891, for the arrival of the first train. During this, participating rival fire fighters started a water fight. The long awaited train blundered in between, and the force of water from the firehoses smashed in windows, drenching the dignitaries. Later in the celebration the British flag was accidentally trampled, which further offended the visiting Canadians.

In 1893 the Great Northern Railway was completed connecting Bellingham with Seattle and St. Paul, Minnesota (the track to Seattle had been finished two years earlier). The Northern Pacific finally arrived in 1902 with the acquisition of the Seattle, Lakeshore and Eastern link.

This was a period of rapid expansion when numerous branch lines were built and industrial activity vastly increased in Whatcom County. Real estate values and development continued to be dramatically affected by the changing plans of railroads, both actual and rumored. An important reduction in transportation costs was brought about by competition among the companies, further stimulating economic growth.

The Burlington Northern Passenger Station, built in 1927, is presently in active use on the main line from Portland, Oregon to Vancouver, B.C. and points beyond. It is significant as a representative of the architecture and construction methods in the last phase of capital investment by the railroads in high quality passenger facilities. It is also the best remaining evidence in Bellingham of the historical influence of the rail transportation era.

Although the station is presently only 48 years old, it is apparently the most recent railroad depot in the state of Washington of the type built to be impressive landmark structures. As such, it completes a significant series of historic buildings representing the evolution of the depot in Washington from the territorial period to the "modern age" -- a time period itself spanning little more than 50 years.