

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **JUL 18 1985**
date entered **AUG 15 1985**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Great Northern Passenger Depot

and/or common Alexandria Great Northern Passenger Depot

2. Location

street & number N. Broadway and Agnes Blvd. N/A not for publication

city, town Alexandria N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota code 22 county Douglas code 041

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Robert A. Seykora

street & number 2125 Linn Drive

city, town Owatonna N/A vicinity of state Minnesota 55060

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Douglas County Courthouse

street & number 320 7th Ave. W.

city, town Alexandria state Minnesota 56308

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Minnesota Statewide Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983-84 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55111

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 N/A
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Alexandria Great Northern Passenger Depot, completed in 1907, is located at the north end of Broadway Avenue, Alexandria's main commercial street, on the south shore of Lake Agnes. The depot stands adjacent to a small park created by the railroad, and a building which houses the local Chamber of Commerce and the Douglas County Historical Society, located to the south. Most of the trackage that originally served the depot has been removed.

Alexandria's Great Northern Passenger Depot was constructed at an estimated cost of \$25,000 by contractors Evenson, Earle, and T. R. Aiton of Osakis and Alexandria. The depot was designed by the staff of the Great Northern Engineering Office, and was probably custom designed, rather than being constructed from a standardized depot plan (a common practice used by the line for smaller depots). The depot measures 120' long by 32' wide and is faced with red pressed brick with stone sills, lintels, and coping. It originally had a slate roof, 1/1 sash, and a 400' by 10' red brick platform. The gable roof of the building is broken by curvilinear gable ends forming projecting rectangular bays on the north (trackside) and south facades, and a curvilinear gable at the east end. The depot, originally designed to house passenger services only, contained separate 30' by 40' men's and women's waiting rooms at the east end separated by an office for ticket agent and conductor, and express and baggage rooms and an additional storage area at the west end. The interior was furnished with mosaic tile floors (with the exception of the baggage and express area which had hardwood floors), enamelled brick wainscoting, grained birch woodwork, and ornate hardwood furniture. The building and platform were originally lit by seventy-two electric lamps and the grounds were landscaped to create a park complete with flower gardens, birdhouses, etc. When it was completed, the depot was said to be one of the most costly and comfortable on the Great Northern line. It served Alexandria until it was closed in 1976.

The Great Northern Depot is in good condition. Both the interior and exterior were altered during a 1957 remodeling project which included painting the exterior and replacing the windows, doors, and roof. The building has recently been purchased by new owners who plan to restore the depot and adaptively reuse it. During the summer of 1984, the depot was sandblasted, removing the paint and exposing the original red pressed brick.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1907 **Builder/Architect** Great Northern Railroad, architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Evenson, Earle, and Aiton, builder

The Great Northern Passenger Depot in Alexandria, completed in 1907, is historically and architecturally significant as a building which was once one of the largest and most ornate depots on the Great Northern line in Minnesota, as the most intact depot standing on its original site in Douglas County, and as the building which best represents the significance of railroad service to the community of Alexandria and railroads' contribution to the development of an important tourism industry in the area.

Rail service to Alexandria was established in 1878 when the first St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba train reached the town. The St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba, which was a predecessor of James J. Hill's Great Northern line, built its first depot circa 1878 on the south shore of Lake Agnes near the site of the present depot. Now linked to St. Paul and Minneapolis via the railroad, Alexandria grew rapidly to become one of the largest communities in west central Minnesota. The railroad soon expanded its facilities with a freight depot addition, constructed circa 1890.

The presence of rail service to Alexandria in the late 1870's allowed the community to capitalize on the abundance of lakes and wooded areas in Douglas County which proved ideal for fishing, hunting, and vacationing. Two years after the railroad reached the town, Alexandria's first tourist hotel was established by James H. Letson, an early Lake Minnetonka resort owner and a friend of St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba general manager James J. Hill. Three years later, in 1883, Letson built an exclusive resort hotel on the south shore of Lake Geneva at which St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba trains would stop on request. Letson's Geveva Beach Hotel became one of the most famous of a number of expensive hotels and more modest resorts built in the Alexandria area around the turn of the century. With train service which could bring tourists from as far away as Omaha, St. Louis, Chicago, and the Twin Cities, the Alexandria area soon developed into one of the state's three most important early resorting centers, rivalling Lake Minnetonka (west of Minneapolis) and White Bear Lake (north of St. Paul). In addition to providing transportation to the region, the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba (which was renamed the Great Northern in 1890) actively promoted tourism in Douglas County through brochures and specially priced fares to the area. During the summer months hundreds of tourists arrived at the Alexandria Depot where they boarded wagons, coaches, and horsedrawn taxis to be taken to resorts and hotels on the area's lakes. By the time the Soo Line Railroad reached Alexandria in 1903, both railroad passenger business and the resort industry were flourishing.

In 1906 the Great Northern responded to the pressures of increasing traffic and local citizens' requests for a new depot by making plans to replace the woodframe depot with a spacious new 120' by 32' brick passenger depot. The new depot, which opened around July 1, 1907, was constructed at an estimated cost of \$25,000 by contractors Evenson, Earle, and Aiton of Osakis and Alexandria. It featured separate men's and women's waiting rooms, an office with separate ticket and conductor's windows, baggage and express rooms, rest rooms, and a storage area. Perhaps with its wealthy tourist clientele in mind, the railroad embellished the depot with mosaic tile floors, birch woodwork, enamelled brick wainscoting, comfortable furnishings, and seventy-two electric lights illuminating the building and platform. At its completion, the depot was hailed as one of the finest stations in Minnesota, and as the most handsome station on the Great Northern line between Minneapolis and Fargo.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Alexandria Citizen, June 27, 1907.
Alexandria Post News, June 20, 1907 and June 27, 1907.
Bradley, Harold A. "The Great Northern Depot--A Memory of the Past." Short unpublished manuscript, Douglas County Historical Society, ca. 1980.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Alexandria West Quad.

Quadrangle scale 7.5

UTM References

A

1	5	3	1	5	4	6	0	5	0	8	4	5	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Section 18-128-37, Non-operating Railroad Lot 1, Block A., Except Easterly 23 acres, Johnson's Island Addition, Alexandria, Minnesota.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger, Field Assistant

State Historic Preservation Office

organization Minnesota Historical Society

date Septmeber 1984

street & number Fort Snelling History Center

telephone (612) 726-1171

city or town St. Paul

state Minnesota 55111

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Russell W. Fridley
State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6/26/85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 8-15-85

Keeper of the National Register

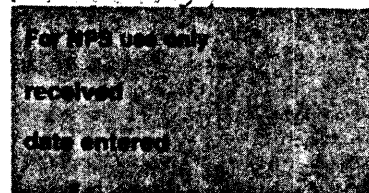
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Alexandria Great Northern
Passenger Depot

Item number 8

Page 1

Item #8 (Significance) continued:

The official publication of the Great Northern, called the "Goat", acclaimed the depot as the most beautiful station on the line. The Great Northern also purchased additional land north and south of the depot which was landscaped for use as a park. The former passenger depot was moved to a nearby site and remodelled as a freight station. By July 1907, eleven Great Northern trains stopped at the depot each day.

Railroad passenger service continued to be vital to the development of Alexandria and its tourism industry until after World War II. The Great Northern Passenger Depot served the area through sixty years of passenger service until 1967, when passenger service was discontinued. The railroad continued to use the building as a freight depot until 1976 when the Burlington Northern Railroad (which absorbed the Great Northern circa 1976) eliminated nearly all train service to the area. The Soo Line, which was the Great Northern's competitor in Alexandria, also effectively stopped passenger and freight service in the 1960's and 1970's, and Alexandria's Soo Line depot was demolished circa 1980. The Great Northern Passenger Depot is the only depot standing in Alexandria and the only basically intact turn of the century depot standing on its original site in Douglas County. It has recently been purchased by new owners, and restoration and reuse of the building is being planned.