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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Designed and constructed by the Western Pacific railroad, the ca.1927 Terminous culling chute is of wood-frame construction, three stories in height with mezzanine between the second and third stories. Structural framework is open on the first story, partially open and partially sheathed with horizontal wood siding on the second story and mezzanine, and fully sheathed with vertical metal paneling on the third story. The chute rests on a concrete foundation. First story footings are exposed, each clamped to two parallel concrete retaining walls at the base of the structure. A concrete drive exists under the chute between these retaining walls. Sloughside, stepped below the structure's foundation, exists a second concrete retaining wall unit, separated from the structure by a trapezoidal infill of sand. A third concrete retaining wall unit forms a cross member between the two retaining walls closest to the slough, thus forming an end wall for the sand infill. Concrete steps lead from the roadway on the southeastern side of the chute up to the trapezoidal sand infill. [Concrete loading dock abutting the end wall is not part of the chute, but rather part of the adjacent shed.] On the northwestern side of the chute a conveyor belt extends from the base of the third story into the Little Potato Slough. Originally the belt turned at right angles at the water's surface, meeting its horizontal component that extended through the adjacent sheds. Conveyor belt is supported by wooden pilings in the slough itself. Only fragments of pilings remain for the horizontal component of the belt. The culling chute is extremely narrow in its proportions (approximately 40 feet in length by 8 feet in width), with roof slanted at approximately a 30 degree angle. Sheathed in corrugated metal paneling, the roof extends with clipped eaves and exposed wooden rafters on the southeastern facade and is flush with the structure's exterior sloughside. The third story, exterior, is comprised of three bays with single window in each on the southeastern facade, and of four bays with three windows and conveyor belt, northeast to southwest, on the northwestern facade. The second and first stories are comprised of eight bays with eight wooden slanted chutes sheathed in corrugated metal paneling and eight wooden trap doors. Chutes retain their painted numerical identification. The integrity of the Terminous culling chute is intact, with only minor deterioration of the conveyor belt affecting its historic appearance.

Numerous structural details distinguish the chute. The first story is essentially piling for the superstructure, comprised of concrete retaining walls and wooden posts. Presumably if the slough flooded over the levee and retaining walls, then the water would wash beneath the structure up to the height of the second story. On the northwestern side of the structure (facing the Little Potato Slough) single six by six inch posts form the footings. Each are attached to the concrete retaining wall with metal clamps at approximately five foot intervals, delineating eight bays. On the southeastern side of the structure (facing the roadway through Tower Park) footings are comprised of three six by six inch posts clamped together as units and then clamped to the second parallel concrete retaining wall; these are also approximately at five foot intervals, with eight On both southeastern and northwestern facades, these posts provide the vertical bays. component of the basic structural frame, extending from footings to roofline. Diagonal cross-braces, corner braces and beams further stabilize the structure. All retaining walls clearly show the markings of their form boards; river rock appears to have been used as rubble fill for the concrete.

The second story is characterized primarily by its truss system and the eight trap door On the southeastern facade pulley mechanisms (still in place) operated each chutes. door from the story above; each door is marked by a large, exterior wooden X brace. Eight small panels complete the second story facade above the chutes, each with lightweight interlocking X brace and two ties between delineating posts. Ties are actually part of a partial balloon-frame system extending from the upper second story through the third story on the southeastern facade. The panels are sheathed by horizontal

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boards to the interior. A wooden catwalk extends out from the southeastern facade above these panels. The remainder of the second story truss system is partially open on both the northeastern and southwestern ends and fully open on the northwestern facade (sloughside). End trusses are comprised of two tiers of interlocking X braces with beam between and reinforced with multiple ties. As on the southeastern facade, these trusses are light-weight, with ties again part of a partial balloon-frame system, here extending from the base of the second story through the third story. The eight chutes extend diagonally as a single unit through the second story. Of course, the diagonal plane formed by the chutes thus functions as an additional cross brace. End facades are sheathed to the interior with horizontal boards above the chutes and open below. On the northwestern facade of the second story the truss system is comprised entirely of heavy wooden members. Four panels characterize: the system. Each panel is distinguised by two tiers of X braces, with single post mid-panel and beam separating the tiers. Each X brace is comprised of one strut passing in front of the mid-panel post and one strut behind. Metal clamps are used throughout.

A mezzanine and third story complete the structure. Northeastern and southwestern ends of the mezzamine employ a truss system identical to that of the same facades of the second story, with interior board sheathing. Northwestern and southeastern facades, however, utilize a scheme of eight panels separated by heavy posts and each comprised of an interlocking X brace with two ties as reinforcement, identical to the single tier of panels on the second story, southeastern facade. The truss system is closed to the interior with wooden board sheathing. The third story is the only section of the structure that does not expose its framework. Housing the engine for the conveyor belt and the pulley system, the third story is sheathed to the interior in metal paneling delineated by vertical ribbing. Throughout, the framework gives the appearance of a modified Long truss used in conjunction with a balloon-frame. Given the structure's extremely narrow proportions, in width to length to height, the application of simple bridge engineering principles to the standardized balloon-frame is here a logical solution for the builder, the Western Pacific.

The Terminous culling chute sits directly adjacent to the Little Potato Slough, the final structure in a group of packing sheds aligned along the waterway from its juncture with the Mokelumne River. The Western Pacific constructed the first of the original sheds in March 1927. Terminous, like other packing stations along the waterways and rails in the San Joaquin Delta, suffered from fire damage over time. At Terminous the sheds have witnessed both reconstruction and additions. Today they do, however, provide an appropriate complement for the culling chute, itself presumed to date ca.1927. Terminous was one of three large packing stations in the rural Delta of this period. The other two were at Holt Station and Middle River, along the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe trackage. Terminous packed primarily celery, potatoes, onions and asparagus. Conveyor belts carried the cullings from these crops through the sheds to the chute where they were loaded onto diary trucks and taken to area farms. The culling chute dominates the surrounding low-lying land, figuring prominently in the vista along Highway 12 approaching the Little Potato Slough.

Essentially a vernacular structure, the Terminous culling chute belongs to a larger typology of structures of the 1920s that captured the imagination of many of the Modernists.

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In style, materials, proportions, setting and use, it paralleled other industrial-agricultural structures of this decade glorified through architectural rhetoric. The Bauhaus, the Futurists and the Constructivists all wrote about such structures, citing their link to modern transportation networks (especially rail and water), their exposed skeletal framework and the necessity of mechanical working parts. Those designs most often discussed in the annals of architectural history were of course much more grandiose (and unbuilt)--but structures such as the culling chute at Terminous were the reality.

8. Significance



Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Terminous culling chute, ca.1927, is representative of a significant phase in the development of agribusiness in the San Joaquin Delta of central California. In addition, the chute is a rare example of a vernacular agricultural-industrial structure of the 1920s. Illustrating both architectural and engineering principles and aesthetics of the period, it remains today with its integrity intact. The Terminous culling chute is associated "with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history" [Criteria A] and, furthermore, embodies "the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction" [Criteria C].

At the turn of the 20th century John Dougherty established the community of Terminous just east of the juncture of the Mokelumne River and the Little Potato Slough. Named due to is location at the end of a road into the Delta and becoming permanently misspelled due to an error in its Post Office application, Terminous was surrounded by swampy peat land broken into multiple islands. Reclamation and farming began early, with Chinese predominant in the immediate area, 1900-10. Farmers experimented with asparagus, potato and celery crops. An asparagus cannery had been established on Bouldin Island, just west of the Little Potato Slough, as early as 1892. In nearby Contra Costa County on Jersey Island, the California Vegetable Union introduced celery in ca.1906, marketing it under the trade name "Jersey Island Celery." In 1913 reclamation efforts advanced, with the formation of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Drainage District. Asian labor completed most of the actual dredging operations by 1925, at an estimated cost of \$58,000,000. The extensive new acreage was extremely rich. Predictably the individual farming operations gave way to corporate interests as the Delta became more and more profitable. The peat soil was especially suitable for the lucrative asparagus and celery crops. Potatoes, onions, beans, sugar beets and carrots were also cultivated nearby. Initially, barges transported the harvests to packing and shipping centers. (For celery, centers were Antioch, Walnut Grove, Stockton and Sacramento in 1923.) Growers became particularly interested in the highest-profit-per-acre crops of asparagus and celery when rail trnsportation with reliable refrigerated service further opened up the Delta. Although both crops were hand-labor intensive, local labor was no problem during the early years due to the inexpensive pool provided by the Chinese. (Other minority labor forces followed in the years to come.) California agribusiness was also coming into its own in the years following World War I. During the 1921-24 period. the California Warehouse Act, the Pure Seed Act, the Federal Intermediate Credit Act (with 12 Intermediate Credit) Banks established regionally throughout the nation-one at Berkeley, California), and the California Fruit, Nut and Vegetable Standardization Act all helped to shape California farming. Moves towards standardization, product quality, market development and national lobbying made packing stations like Terminous possible. The early 1920s also saw the founding of the California Farm Bureau Federation.

The Western Pacific announced its intention to build an extension from Kingdon, on its main north-south California line, west to Terminous in March 1927. Proposed at a cost of \$500,000, the branch would "provide spur tracks, warehouses, fruit and vegetable packing houses, wharves and docks." Terminous was to serve the surrounding 55,000 acres, including those of the Terminous Tract, Bouldin Island, Staten Island, Canal

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet 6.

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Ranch, Venice Island, Brack Tract, Empire Tract, King Island and Bishop Tract.¹ Apparently the Western Pacific provided the basic industrial-agricultural facilities and improvements in order to encourage use of its rail services. The railroad then leased facilities to growers, who in their turn also leased large adjacent acreages and rented these out to local farmers (underwriting their operations, then deducting these costs from the final crop returns along with a rental varying from 25 to 50% of the crop). Individuals were also hired to manage the packing process each season.² The California Vegetable Union shipped the first carload of celery out of Terminous on the Western Pacific on October 25, 1927, with an expectation of 2500 to 3000 carloads of celery projected for the season.

Terminous became a celery packing center during the late 1920s and 1930s. In 1925, the Western Canner and Packer ranked the California celery crop as the sixth most valuable vegetable crop by dollar amount for that state. (Lettuce, canteloupe, asparagus, tomatoes and cauliflower ranked higher.) Yet even such a positive analysis undercut the vegetable's true value. Celery was a highly concentrated crop, generating extremely high dollar return per acre. Twice as much acreage was necessary for the same return with a similar high-profit crop, asparagus. And for the other "valuable" vegetable crops acreage was often four times as high. In 1930, celery remained sixth in value for California vegetable crops, but tenth in acreage. From 1927 to 1934, acreage in the San Joaquin Delta planted in celery varied from 7500 to 10,500, which was approximately 90% of the California total for the crop. California's celery production was about 40% of the United States total. During the latter 1920s, California was the first rank producer in the U.S., with Florida, Michigan and New York following. Florida and California jockeyed for the first rank during the early 1930s. The Delta celery crop was valued at \$2,500,000 to \$3,500,000 for the 1927-34 period. Its winter crop, harvested from October through February, held a virtual monopoly on the East Coast markets. Almost all of the San Joaquin Delta celery crop passed through Terminous.

The leading grower-shipper of Terminous area celery was John C. Maurer and Sons, a firm that had established itself in New York, Florida, Michigan and the Bermuda Islands before undertaking the California operation. Their brand name, "Red Lion Celery," was advertised heavily as offering Stockton an entry into national marketing. In 1925, Maurer and Sons sent Bert F. Maurer to the San Joaquin Delta to explore the possibility of a large celery center. During the initial year the Maurers secured only 150 acres

¹Byron <u>Times</u>, March 25, 1927, p.1, c.2 and p.2, c.3-5. The branch is variously cited as seven to eight miles in length. Kingdon is also cited as Terminous Junction; Terminous and Terminous Junction were distinct places. Actual improvement costs are later cited as \$521,000; see, "Western Pacific Railroad Rebuilding Plans," Byron <u>Times</u>, Development Edition, 1928-29, p.181.

²The provision of industrial-agricultural facilities is cited as standard by Western Pacific in <u>Tideways Magazine</u>, July 1959. Shipper-grower-management lease and rental agreements are discussed in W.R. Stay and F.C. Cadwallader, Supervising Inspectors, California Federal-State Inspection Service, "Handling California's Celery Crop," <u>California Department of Agriculture Monthly Bulletin</u>, 20, 5, May 1931, p.331-44. See also, "Shipments of Celery," Antioch Ledger, October 18, 1928, p.1, c.7.

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for experimentation. By the 1929-30 season, the Maurers controlled (through direct ownership and lease) 7500 acres in celery production. The Maurers, John C. and sons Bert F., Cyril J., Armand, and John Jr., located major offices in Stockton and "supervised every phase of operations...from the extensive fields, through the several warehouses and packing plants and on to numerous marketing points in this and many foreign countries."³ Maurer and Sons was keenly interested in efficient transportation for their product: they were among the earliest growers to ship via refrigerated cargo-ship out of San Francisco through the Panama Canal. Bert F. Maurer was also outspoken concerning the need for a deep water channel at Stockton for shipping. Stockton achieved its port status in 1933. It is likely that Maurer and Sons had been equally influential in convincing the Western Pacific to build a branch line in to Terminous in 1927. Bert F. Maurer headed the Stockton office, while John C. Maurer ran the New York office.

The Terminous facilities, like California agribusiness and United States rail transportation in general, saw elements of standardization in their late 1920s erection. Packing sheds and warehouses for fruits and vegetables were generally 40 feet in width by 600 feet in length, a standardized plan achieved by doubling an earlier plan of 40 by 300 feet. At Terminous, "the wharf warehouse, 726 feet long, accommodates 52 cars for loading at one time. Direct telephone and telegraph facilities are provided, as well as team and platform scales, offices for shippers and other modern conveniences. A potato and onion loading platform provides direct loading from barges, and has a track capacity of fourteen cars."4 It is assumed that the culling chute, an accepted but little discussed feature, was one of the other conveniences. A conveyor belt ran through the packing shed(s) to the culling chute. Inside the sheds, the packing operation stressed efficiency. Celery was loaded onto the belt in a single layer, from which it was washed, sorted and cooled before packing and shipping. Inferior cull stock then continued to the chute where it was reloaded and hauled away. As the Western Canner and Packer again noted (in 1931), belting systems were important: "A total absence of manual operations which include movements from place to place is the goal desired. Conveyors, chutes, elevators, do much of the work, even when the bulk product,-fruit, vegetables or fish, -- is delivered at the plant and starts on its long process toward packaging."⁵ During harvest, workers delivered celery from field to shed twice daily, where it was processed into awaiting refrigerator cars and quickly moved East. Celery was a perishable crop, with little canned (celery hearts) or placed in cold Speed in packing was a necessity. storage.

³"John C. Maurer and Sons, Pre-eminent Celery Factors," Byron <u>Times</u>, Development Edition, 1930-31, p.186-88.

4"Western Pacific," Byron <u>Times</u>, Development Edition, 1928-29, p.181.

⁵Stay and Cadwallader, "Handling California's Celery," <u>Agriculture Monthly Bulletin</u>, p.337; John C. Maurer and Sons Dominant in Celery," Byron <u>Times</u>, Development Edition, 1934-35, p.95; "Celery Washing Machine at Lodi," Byron <u>Times</u>, November 23, 1928, p.1, c.7; "The Cull Problem," <u>California Department of Agriculture Monthly Bulletin</u>, 1924, p.119-20; "Belting Systems Important," <u>Western Canner and Packer</u>, 22, 8, December 1930, p.16-18.

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Finally, the Terminous culling chute is evocative of Modernist concerns during the 1920s. The period witnessed pronounced parallels between agribusiness reality and architectural design rhetoric. Transportation innovations were key to both, as was the conceptual framework of standardization. It was not just that American agricultural and industrial structures appealed to individuals such as Walter Gropius, but rather that the designs of the Bauhaus, the Futurists and the Constructivists developed out of the same post-war world as did an entity such as California agribusiness. Comparison of the vernacular reality of 1920s agribusiness with well-known unbuilt designs of the period leads to the further comparison of agricultural debate and law with architectural manifesto. Gropius, who greatly admired American grain elevators and who published discussions of them in Northern European architectural circles, stated: [there is] a kind of working partnership between manual and mechanical production we call standardization which is already having direct repercussions on building." Futurist Sant' Elia stated in the teens what would become influential in the twenties: 'We must invent and rebuild the Futurist city along lines similar to those of a boundless shipyard, active, crowded, bustling, dynamic, in which the individual edifice fits like some huge piece of machinery." Russian Constructivists, too, cited the American building technology, stressing the need to reveal a structure's engineering and to emphasize wherever possible moving parts and exposed skeletal frame.⁶ Culling chutes and conveyor belt structures were common to 1920s-1930s California agribusiness--a by-product of that industry's own emphasis on standardization. The Terminous culling chute appears to be a singular remnant of that period of San Joaquin Delta agricultural and architectural/engineering history remaining today.

By the end of the 1930s, rail transportation saw competition with the trucking industry and such centers as Terminous began to decline in importance. Serious labor problems began in the 1950s for those crops demanding intensive hand-labor at cheap rates. Potato growers moved much of their operation south to Bakersfield; celery and asparagus growers cut back. During the 1940s a boxcar city occupied Terminous at the packing sheds; by the 1950s it was gone. The Western Pacific discontinued service in 1961-64 at Terminous. Throughout the remainder of the decade the site functioned as a rural dump. Asparagus growers encountered further intense labor problems in the mid-1960s, followed by new competition with imported asparagus in the early 1970s. Essentially the packing operation at Terminous functioned well from 1927 through the 1930s. It is this era that the culling chute represents; after this period new technology, as well as new transportation and labor economies, place it distinctly in the historic past.

⁶Walter Gropius, <u>The New Architecture and the Bauhaus</u>, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1974 [Fifth Printing], p.33; Rosa Trillo Clough, <u>Futurism</u>, New York, 1961, p.118; Stephen Bann (ed.), <u>The Tradition of Constructivism</u>, New York, 1974.

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Correspondence

Correspondence between B.B. Combs, General Director, Public Relations and Advertising, Union Pacific Railroad, Omaha Nebraska, and K.J. Weitze. Letters of August 3, 1983, and September 2, 1983. Research Specialist for Union Pacific, Ken Longe. Concerning Western Pacific historic files. Union Pacific-Western Pacific merger, early 1983. All Western Pacific records now filed in Omaha. [File search still open.]

Interviews

- Mrs. Fiesel, Terminous Market, Terminous, California. September 9, 1983. [Resident since 1935.]
- Neut Robinson, Roberts Island, California. September 9, 1983. Telephone. [Senior farmer, 80*. Direct dealings with Terminous packing shed operations during production years.]

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is located within Parcel 055-030-13 of San Joaquin County, California. Approximately .033 acres, it directly abuts the southeastern levee of the Little Potato Slough, south of the juncture with the Mokelumme River, south of Highway 12. The property is delineated by trapezoidal boundaries given as follows: beginning two feet south of the southwestern edge of the Terminous culling chute, proceed north along the Little Potato Slough to and including the concrete retaining wall on the northeast, abutting the loading dock, to the northwestern edge of Tower Park roadway, to a line two feet beyond the culling chute on the southwest, and back to the starting point at Little Potato Slough. The retaining walls within these boundaries are considered part of the property as are the remaining fragments of the conveyor belt and its pilings in the Little Potato Slough up to the edge of the adjacent shed. Only components of the Terminous culling chute and its directly related foundations and retaining walls are considered to define the property.

