

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

2, 26

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 26 1979
DATE ENTERED	MAR 13 1979

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

La Porte City Station, Waterloo, Cedar Falls & Northern Railroad

AND/OR COMMON

La Porte City Public Library and City Hall

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

202 E. Main Street

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

La Porte City

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

Iowa

CODE

COUNTY

Black Hawk

CODE

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of La Porte City

STREET & NUMBER

202 E. Main St.

CITY, TOWN

La Porte City

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa 50661

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Black Hawk County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Waterloo

STATE

Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Preliminary Historical Survey of Black Hawk County, Iowa

DATE

1975

__ FEDERAL STATE __ COUNTY __ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Historic Preservation, Iowa City, Iowa

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR
 DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This building, originally associated with the Waterloo, Cedar Falls and Northern interurban system, is a one-story rectangular building, with dimensions of 54' x 37'. Exterior walls are faced with brick, decorated with concrete trim. The roof is a low hip, with the ridge parallel to the front facade. On the east end, the roof ends in a stepped gable set flush against the wall of the adjoining building. The front is five bays, with entrances in the third and fifth bays. The window and door openings are wide, with round arches. Windows have 6/6 double-hung sash, sidelights, and multi-light transoms. The entrances have paired doors, with tall windows of ten lights each. A concrete beltcourse, decorated with modillion-like projections, runs the length of the front facade at impost level. Beneath the windows are slightly recessed panels of brick laid in a herringbone pattern. It is probable that a shed-roofed porch extended across the front facade, sheltering the entrances and passengers waiting for the interurban. It has since been removed.

The west side of the building adjoins a small, modern brick utilities office. At the rear of the station is a concrete-block city garage, which obscures the rear elevation. Two-thirds of the former interurban station are used for a public library. The eastern third houses the mayor's office.

The station is located at the western end of the central business district.

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 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 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 1912 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Waterloo, Cedar Falls & Northern RR

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A principal theme in the history of electric interurban systems in the U.S. was the industry's gradual reorientation from passenger service to the interchange of freight with established steam railroad lines -- a reorientation which spelled the difference between bankruptcy and profitability. The Waterloo, Cedar Falls and Northern, in Iowa's Cedar River Valley, was "the pioneer interurban in the U.S. in the development of the carload interchange business,"¹ a factor which allowed the line to run long after many interurbans were shut down. In this respect, the short life of the first La Porte City station is illustrative. Built in 1912, its downtown location and architectural style were clearly chosen to accommodate passengers, although the location required a time-consuming detour from the main line. By the time this station was closed in 1928, and a utilitarian freight depot erected by the main line, the WCF&N had made a successful transition to emphasis on freight interchange, resulting in rising profits even as income from passenger service declined -- at a time when many of Iowa's (and the nation's) interurbans were near total collapse.²

The WCF&N station at La Porte City thus represents, architecturally and historically, the original commitment of the WCF&N (like other interurban systems) to passenger service. Of principal significance was its location off the main line. Furthermore, the building was quite "people oriented", being a small but attractive structure in the Georgian Revival style, with large, arched windows -- reminiscent of a post office or other public building. In contrast, the second La Porte City facility, erected on the main line in 1928 (at which time the first station was closed) was a functional example of freight depot construction, its location and form illustrating the reorientation of the WCF&N interurban system toward freight handling.

Like most interurban rail lines, the WCF&N grew out of late 19th century urban transit systems. The Waterloo Street Railway Co. began service in 1885, with a fleet of horse-cars. In 1896, Louis S. Cass put together the Waterloo, Cedar Falls Rapid Transit Co., which then acquired the horsecar lines, replaced narrow-gauge with standard track, and electrified the entire system. Service was extended to Cedar Falls, in 1897, to Denver (Iowa) in 1901, and to Waverly in 1906. In 1912, the WCF&N began construction of a line south to Cedar Rapids. By December of that year, the line was open to La Porte City. It was completed through to Cedar Rapids in September, 1914.

The years following World War I saw the beginning of the decline in interurban

see continuation sheet

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Carlson, Norman (ed.) Iowa Trolleys. Chicago: Central Electric Railfans' Association, 1975, pp. 187-196.

Hartman, John C. History of Black Hawk County, Iowa. Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1915, pp. 367-68.

Hilton, Groege W. and John F. Due. The Electric Interurban Railways in America. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960, pp. 3-44, 143, 208-9, 236-51, 360-62.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

QUADRANGLE NAME _____ QUADRANGLE SCALE _____

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>15</u>	<u>566560</u>	<u>4684890</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot One, Lot Two, and all of Lot 3 except the East 75/100 feet, of Elwell's and Starrell's Subdivision of La Porte City.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

M.H. Bowers, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

February 1979

STREET & NUMBER

26 East Market Street

TELEPHONE

319/353-6949

CITY OR TOWN

Iowa City

STATE

Iowa 52240

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

Adrian A. Anderson

TITLE

Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

2/23/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Charles W. Adams

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

2-13-79

ATTEST: William H. Bradham
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

3-12-79

DATE

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La Porte City Station, La Porte City, BlackHawk County, Iowa

CONTINUATION SHEET

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profits generally, a decline which became quite steep by the late 1920's.³ Even before the war, however, the WCF&N moved actively to develop freight interchange systems, aided in a major way by the cooperative attitudes of area railroads. Nonetheless, interurbans, however profitable for a time, were in the long run doomed to obsolescence. The Depression brought a decline, both in passenger use and freight, enough to warrant a cutback in scheduled services. Business increased on the WCF&N during World War II, due to restrictions on auto use and the activity of a wartime industrial economy. After the war, however, the growing preference for auto travel meant a steady decline in inter-urban service. The last run of the WCF&N took place in 1955, after which the line was acquired by the Rock Island and Illinois Central Railroads, and operated as the Waterloo Railroad until 1970.

Following the closing of the in-town interurban station, the property was taken over by the city and used for local government offices. A public library was established in La Porte City in 1945, which has since then been housed in the building. This continuing use of the building indicates a certain creativity in adaptive reuse, but the fact that the building has been a city hall and library facility is not in itself of historical significance.

¹ Hilton and Due, p. 360.

² Ibid., p. 143.

³ Ibid.