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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JUN 17 1987

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

OFFICE OF
NEW JERSEY HERITAGE

received APR 28 1987

date entered DEC 23 1987

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

1. Name

historic Erie Railroad Signal Tower, Waldwick Yard

and or common

2. Location

Northeast end of Bohnert Place,
street & number West Side of Railroad tracks N/A not for publication

city, town Waldwick _____ vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Bergen code 003

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name New Jersey Transit

street & number 1160 Raymond Boulevard

city, town Newark _____ vicinity of state New Jersey 07101

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Deeds and Records

street & number Bergen County Administrative Building

city, town Hackensack _____ state New Jersey 07601

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory
title Bergen County Survey has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date 1983 ___ federal ___ state county ___ local

depository for survey records Office of New Jersey Heritage, CN 404

city, town Trenton _____ state New Jersey 08625

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

The Waldwick Signal Tower is a freestanding structure built into the sloping trackbed on the western side of the Erie Railroad tracks. Situated only 20 feet away from the tracks, the building contains two stories, with a single room comprising each floor. The tower is of the Queen Anne style and features decorative gablets with applied stickwork and varied wall covering materials typical of the style. Patterned shingles form friezes as well as adorning a shallow pent roof at the mid-section of the structure. The building's sides measure approximately 12 feet with east and west sides slightly wider. They are 25-30 feet in height. Exterior materials are concrete, clapboards, boards and shingles.

The tower is located along the north-south railroad track access, which is comprised of four tracks, one of which is no longer in operation. The Waldwick railroad station is located about 1,000 feet to the southeast of the tower, on the east side of the tracks. Nearby are commercial, industrial, and residential buildings. The tower faces an industrial complex across the tracks to the east. One-story industrial buildings, the east end of Bohnert Place and a residential section are to the west. Immediately surrounding the tower are over-grown shrubbery and decayed tracks, providing a kind of barrier which gives the building a sense of isolation.

The foundation of the tower is concrete and visible on all four sides. There is a small basement window in the center of the west side. The west side shows more exposed concrete than the other sides and is the tallest, because the tower is situated on a slope. A door, underneath an exterior wooden staircase, leads into the basement on the north side. The basement is used for storage and houses the gas heating system. There are no plumbing facilities.

The lower area of the first story is about 2 feet in height and appears to have lost its original surfacing materials. Sections of it are covered with concrete and some sections have diagonal boards while others have vertical board-and-batten. There are corner boards extending from the beginning of the clapboards to the cornice between the first and second stories, and stickwork boards extending across the sides at window sill and lintel levels. Most of the wall is covered with narrow clapboards. These begin at the window sill level. The south side has a center door allowing the only access to the first floor. Three wooden stairs lead up to this simple wooden door (probably a replacement). The east side, facing the tracks, contains two 1/1 sash windows, evenly spaced with plain trim. The north and west sides have no openings. There is an open exterior wooden stairway, though, that angles up the north wall, from ground level to an entrance at the second story.

The shingled midsection is the most distinctive feature of the tower. A band of patterned shingles with alternate rows laid with three-sided staggered butts runs around the upper first story in a frieze-like manner. A shallow pent roof with more of the patterned shingles and a concave profile projects over a molded boxed cornice with small brackets. It is located above the frieze. A

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

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



Erie Railroad Signal Tower, Waldwick Boro,
Bergen County, NJ

Item number

7 Page 2

projecting band extends around the building above the pent roof at the window sill level of the second story.

The second story features rows of tall observation windows. These are 1/1 sash windows with plain trim. The south wall contains four evenly spaced windows, as does the north. The east wall displays five tall windows, again evenly spaced. The west wall has no windows and is covered with clapboards. There is an enclosed entrance from the stairway at the western corner. A frieze of patterned shingles extends around the top of this second story. It is approximately one half of the first story frieze.

The tower is capped by a gabled hip roof with an overhanging boxed cornice supported by simple brackets. The eaves project about a foot. The approximately 6 inch high fascia of the cornice is recessed and evenly divided into sections by projecting vertical elements. The north and south gablets have latticework panels and eaves moldings. A metal smokestack protrudes from the west roof. Many wire cables are attached to the structure. The thickest set is attached to the building at the southwest corner. Another set of cables are attached at the northwest corner. A few wires run from a telephone pole to the roof at the northwest. The pole also serves as a support for the second story stairway entrance.

The interior of the structure is a one room space on both stories. The first story has a concrete floor and is used for storage. The second story provides an office for New Jersey Transit track officials and contains a variety of railroad signal equipment. Its floor is also concrete.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates ca. 1886-1895 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Erie Railroad Signal Tower of Waldwick, located along the railroad tracks at the northeast end of Bohnert Place, and the Waldwick Railroad Depot to its southeast, are the only remaining structures of Waldwick's late 19th to early 20th century railyard. The tower is both architecturally and historically significant in Waldwick as well as Bergen County, due to its attractive late 19th century exterior details and its place in transportation history. Even though the structure is in need of paint and repair, it retains the architectural character of its ca. 1886-1895 construction date, as it became an integral part of the Waldwick Railroad system. The signal tower is one of only a handful of its building type remaining in Bergen County; the others are located in Hackensack and Rutherford. Another was recently demolished in Ramsey which had similar features. The Waldwick tower is the most architecturally outstanding of the group.

The Paterson and Ramapo Railroad opened its line through today's Borough of Waldwick in 1848. It was Bergen County's second rail line and was part of the line from Jersey City to Port Jervis, New York. In 1852, the New York and Lake Erie Railroad acquired control of the line and re-named it the Erie Railroad. This railroad line through Bergen County served as a major local transportation system and is still in use. A train stop in Waldwick was established in the late 1880's, following completion of the existing Waldwick Railroad Station (listed on the National Register of Historic Places).

From the late 19th century through the early 20th century, the Waldwick Railroad yard provided service facilities for the Erie Railroad's intermediate distance commuter runs. The Waldwick yard was equipped with a large triangular turnaround, reflected in the Y-shape of the east bend of Hewson Avenue, still seen today. The ^{yard} ~~year~~ also contained a turntable for steam engines. A four-stall engine house stood just north of the turntable and of the turnaround to the east. The engine house, turntable and turnaround were located across the tracks and to the east of the signal tower. Once the third and fourth tracks were installed in 1902 and 1903, the turnaround and engine repair facilities were eventually discontinued in the yard. Soon, the signal tower was the only auxiliary structure that remained in the yard.

Therefore, the importance of the signal tower is not only seen as the last extant structure of the yard besides the depot, but also as an important part of the transportation system of Waldwick's past. The railroad yard provided a great catalyst for growth in the community, resulting in the relocation of railworkers and their families in the area. The influence of the Erie yard

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than 1/8 acre

Quadrangle name Park Ridge

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	5	7	3	6	0	0	4	5	4	0	6	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification Part of Block 117, Waldwick Borough. Consolidated Railway Corporation right-of-way located between northeast end of Bohnert Place and west side of Erie Railroad tracks. (See attached site map.)

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Melissa J. Haines, Bergen County Assistant Historic Preservation Officer

Bergen County Office of

organization Cultural and Historic Affairs

date September 3, 1986

street & number 327 Ridgewood Avenue

telephone (201) 599-6181

city or town Paramus

state New Jersey

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.

Deputy

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Assistant Commissioner for Natural Resources

date 4/16/87

For NPS use only

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

Entered in ~~the~~

National Register

date 12-23-87

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet Erie Railroad Signal Tower, Waldwick Boro,
Bergen County, NJ **Item number**

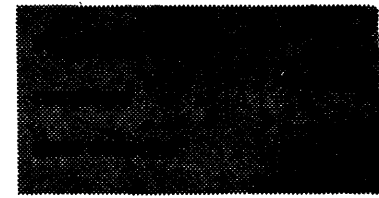
8 **Page** 2

contributed significantly to the growth of the borough, as well as to the borough's commerce.

The signal tower, still used for its original function, is an important part of the Waldwick community. The tower will no longer be needed by New Jersey Transit once they complete the switch to computerization of the signals in the near future. As a result of this computerization, New Jersey Transit plans to demolish the tower. The Waldwick Historical Society would like to prevent the demolition of the tower and to see it preserved as an important Waldwick community landmark.

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

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



Erie Railroad Signal Tower, Waldwick Boro,
Continuation sheet Bergen County, NJ

Item number

8 Page 3

TECHNOLOGICAL INFORMATION ON THE SIGNIFICANCE AND USE OF SIGNAL TOWERS

The history of the origins and development of signal towers is an aspect of railroad technology and architecture that has received little attention. It is clear that signal towers were primarily functional structures whose development was closely related to the increased sophistication of railroad operation and the requirements of safety, facilitation of traffic movement, and maximization of track capacity with the increase of passenger volume and demand.

The first railways did not make use of signal towers to control the movement of trains. Instead, signalmen employed the practice of signaling by flags known as semaphore. Lantern signals were also used. In England, as early as 1839, a "lighthouse" for exhibition of signals was constructed, and in 1844, an elementary kind of structure was built housing signal rods and levers, and a simple, but not too effective interlocking device to prevent inflicting movements being signalled. Although we can not date construction of the first American signal towers, they probably follow the English towers by about 25 years.

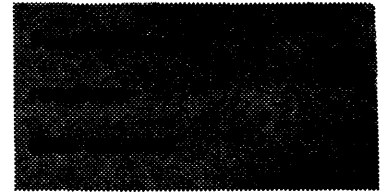
Introduction of the electric telegraph into signalling technology occurred between the 1850's and the 1890's. In 1863, the first manual block signal system was installed in America. This comprised a series of consecutive block sections governed by block signals operated manually upon information by telegraph or telephone. The primary function of the manual block system is to reduce the collision hazard by providing a space between trains.

Signal levers and block instruments were at first concentrated in cabins located at ground level. Soon these were elevated and the cabins were furnished with glass windows usually located on all sides, allowing signal operators to observe trains and signals under their control. Elevation of the cabin also allowed the signalmen or the signals (when they were manual) to be easily seen from trains, vehicles or other signal stations. The Waldwick Signal Tower resembles the style of towers, built during the same period, illustrated in Walter G. Berg's, Buildings and Structures of American Railroads.

As computerized signallization has replaced earlier systems, signal towers have become functionally obsolete and this specialized railroad building type is now disappearing as a landscape feature in the vicinity of railroads. The difficulty is preserving these structures in place is increased by their highly specific functional nature and location. Although adaptive reuse is a

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

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



Erie Railroad Signal Tower, Waldwick Boro,
Continuation sheet Bergen County, NJ

Item number

8 Page 4

desireable tool for preservation, it is difficult to find an application for this means of preserving signal tower structures.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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



Erie Railroad Signal Tower, Waldwick Boro,
Continuation sheet Bergen County, NJ

Item number

9 Page 1

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Robbins, Michael. Points and Signals. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.), 1967.

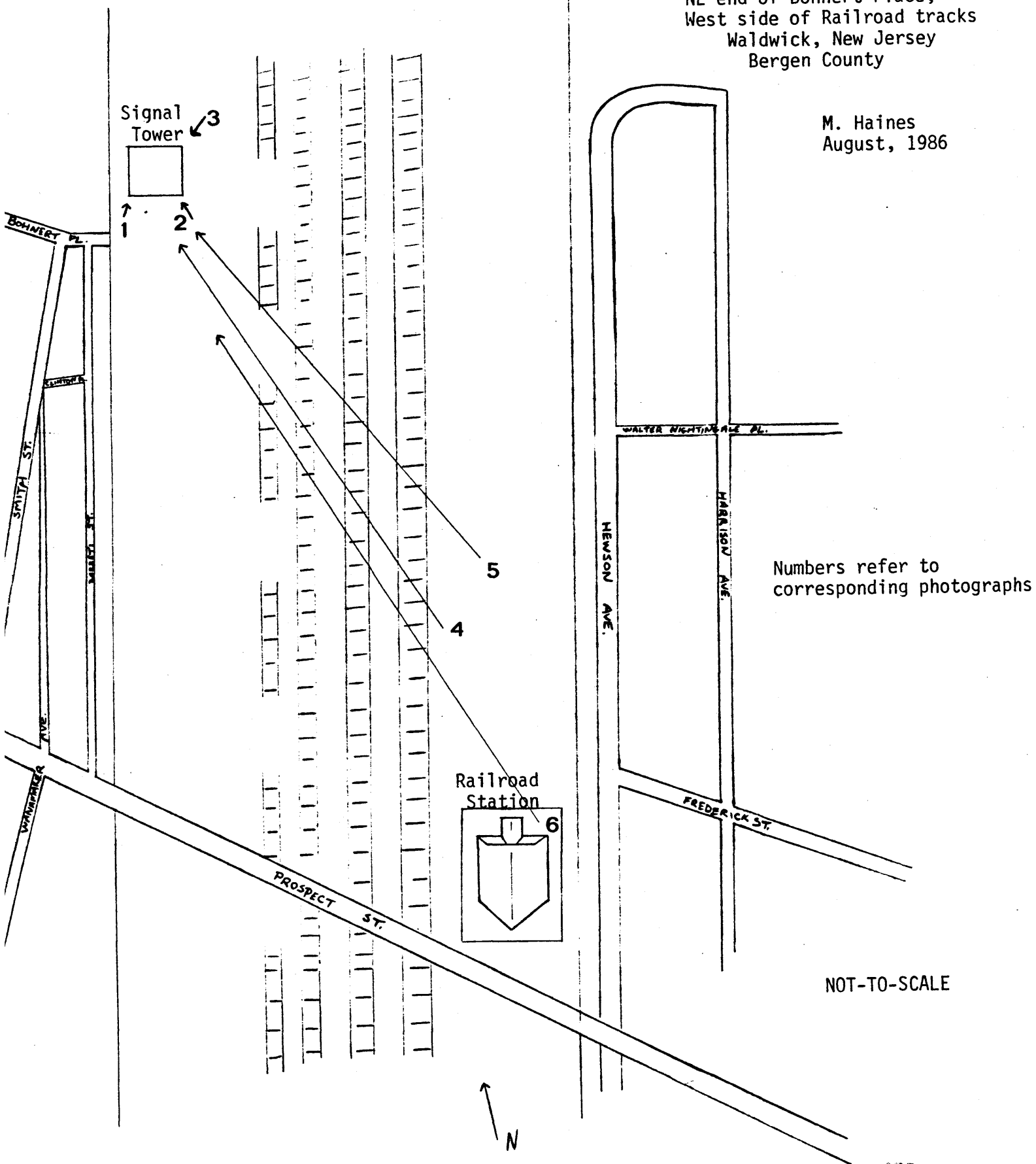
Waldwick Depot National Register Nomination Form, 1977.

The Catalogue of the Centenary Exhibition of the B&O Railroad, 1827-1927. (Baltimore), 1927.

SITE PLAN

Erie Railroad Signal Tower,
Waldwick Yard
NE end of Bohnert Place,
West side of Railroad tracks
Waldwick, New Jersey
Bergen County

M. Haines
August, 1986



Numbers refer to
corresponding photographs

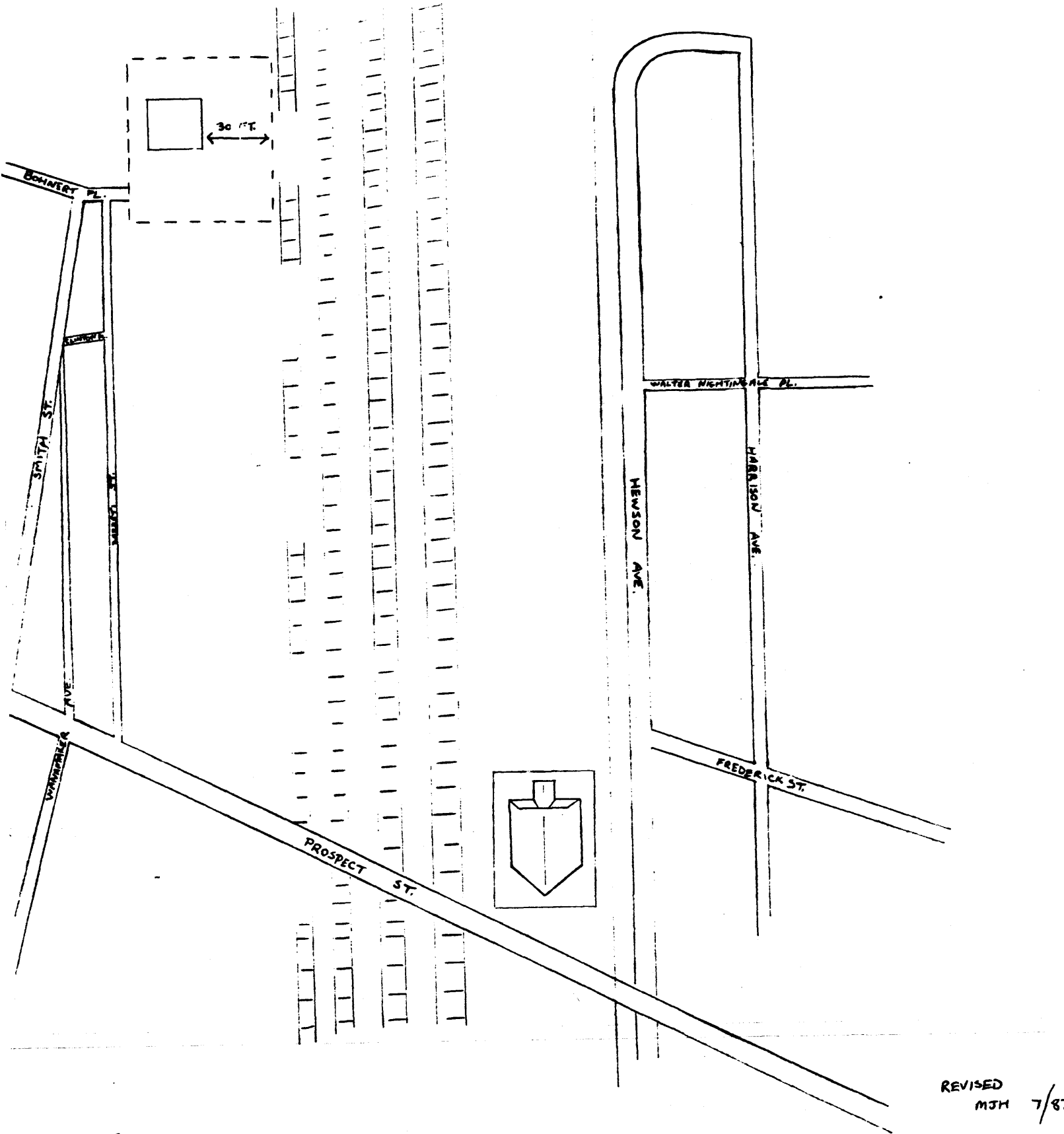
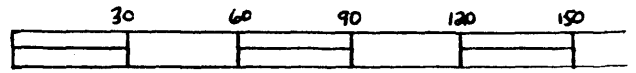
NOT-TO-SCALE

APR 28 1987

BLOCK 117
LOT 2

Erie Railroad Signal Tower, Waldwick Yard
Waldwick Borough, Bergen County, NJ

SCALE IN FEET (APPROX.)



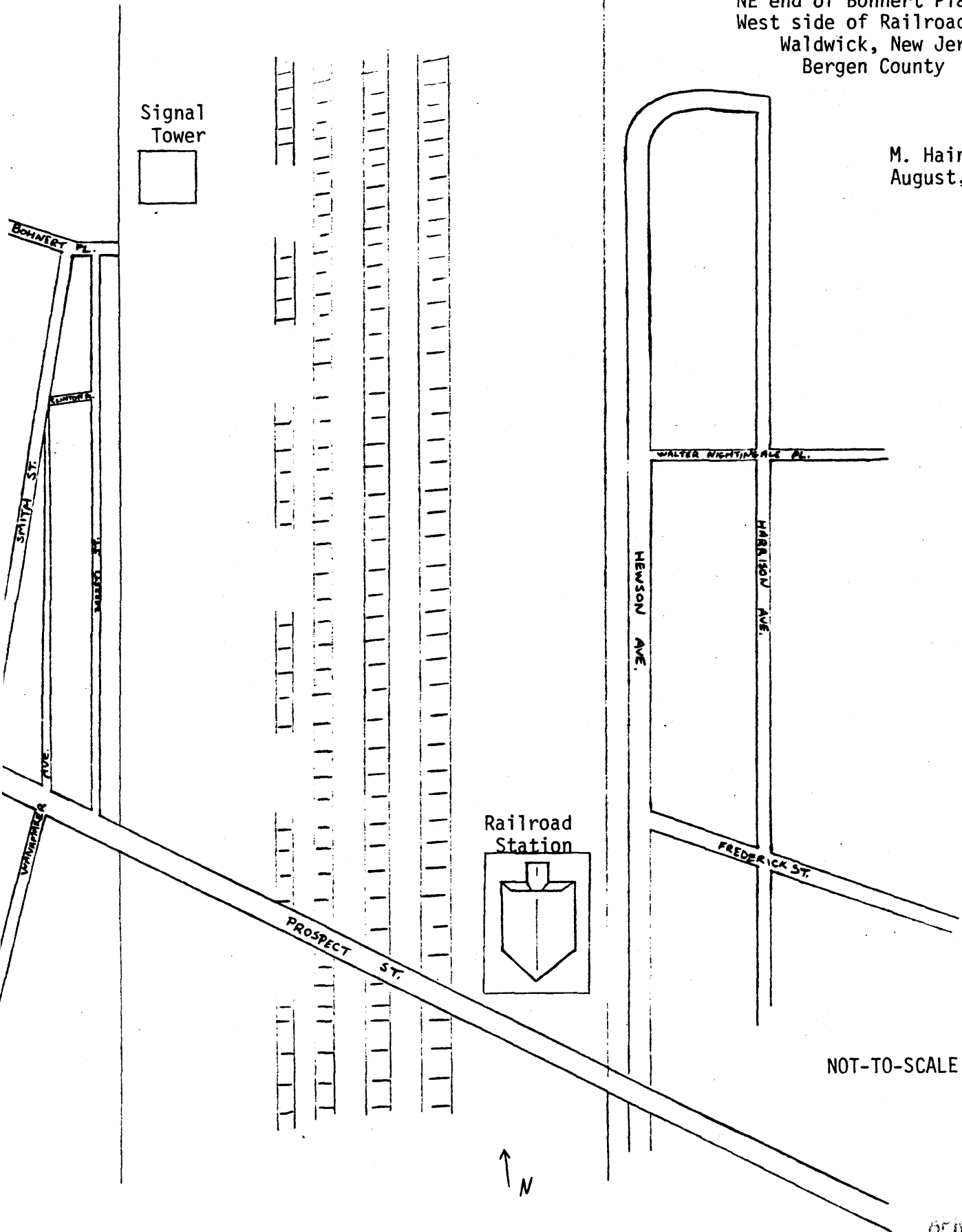
REVISED
MJH 7/87

2/22/87

SITE PLAN

Erie Railroad Signal Tower,
Waldwick Yard
NE end of Bohnert Place,
West side of Railroad tracks
Waldwick, New Jersey
Bergen County

M. Haines
August, 1986



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APR 28 1987