

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section _____ Page _____

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 10000132 Date Listed: 4/1/2010

**Northern Pacific Railway Depot Custer MT
Property Name County State**

**N/A
Multiple Name**

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

h  _____ 4/1/2010
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Significance:

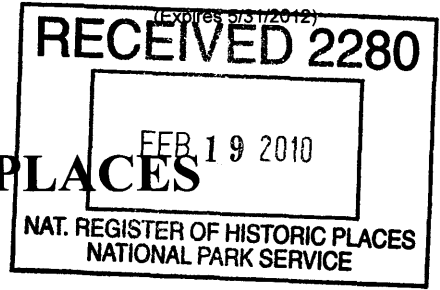
The Period of Significance is revised to read: 1924--1959.
[The revised period ends at the fifty-year mark, which generally corresponds with the post-war decline of rail activity in the region and the ascendancy of auto transportation. By the 1950s the economic and community development impact and prominence of the local railroads, which served as the basis for this nomination, was long past. The limited continued use of the depot up to the 1970s is not sufficiently justified at this time to merit inclusion beyond the 50-year mark.]

These clarifications were confirmed with the MT SHPO office.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
other name/site number: 24CR0920

2. Location

street & number: 500 Pacific Avenue not for publication: n/a
city/town: Miles City vicinity: n/a
state: Montana code: MT county: Custer code: 017 zip code: 59301

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally.

Mark F. Sumner / SHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

2/11/2010
Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or bureau

(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
 see continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register
 see continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register
 see continuation sheet

removed from the National Register
 see continuation sheet

other (explain): _____

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

4/1/2010

Northern Pacific Railway Depot
Name of Property

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private
Category of Property: Building
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a
Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

Number of Resources within Property	
Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:
 TRANSPORTATION/rail-related

Current Functions:
 VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification:
 Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals/Second Renaissance Revival

Materials:
 foundation: CONCRETE
 roof: ASPHALT/shingle
 walls: BRICK
 other: BRICK; CONCRETE; WOOD

Narrative Description

The Northern Pacific Railway Depot is a Second Renaissance Revival style railroad depot located three blocks southeast of the Miles City Main Street Historic District (24CR0701). Constructed in 1923-1924, the stately red-brick building faces the Northern Pacific Railroad tracks between Fifth and Sixth Streets along Pacific Avenue, and follows the southwest-northeast orientation of the right-of-way. For the purposes of this nomination description, the southwest elevation is described as the west, the northeast as the east, the northwest as the north, and the southeast as the south. A wide grassy lawn and semi-circular driveway invite patrons to the building from Pacific Avenue. The building consists of a rectangular, one-and-one-half story, central bay flanked by single, centered, one-story bays at the west and east ends. It measures approximately 40 feet by 145 feet. The flanking bays measure approximately three feet narrower than the central bay. Only a few inches of the concrete foundation walls rise above grade, topped by a soldier course of red bricks. A low-slung hipped roofline extends past the plane of the exterior walls, providing shelter to visitors. The single soldiered belt courses of tan Hebron brick that ring the building just below the window openings at the first story and just below the rooflines of each bay further emphasize the horizontality of the design. Simple wood L-brackets support the roof overhangs at the central bay, while the flanking bays display wide wooden boxed cornices. A tall, brick corbelled chimney rises from the intersection of the east and central bay, on the north side of the building. The chimney is visible on the upper story of the central bay's east elevation, and rises high above the roof slope.

Original wood-frame window sashes are largely intact, but currently covered by plywood sheets at the first story. The exception to this is the single, six-over-one-light window centered on the east elevation. Here, the window frame and sashes are visible through an applied metal grate. The half-story above the central bay features three evenly-spaced arched windows at both the north and south (front) elevations. These windows each contain a centered six-light window flanked by five-light windows, and top large openings that house tripled windows at the first story. A deep, wood-framed, shingled pent roof separates the arches from the first story. Double-coursed tan bricks surround the central bay window openings, and single courses surround circular, smooth concrete medallions placed between the arches, offering a decorative element to the relatively unadorned structure. Before most of the paint fell away, each medallion featured a red and black monad, the trademark symbol of the Northern Pacific Railway. Slightly recessed, wooden single pedestrian doors with one-light transoms provide entry to the first story directly below each medallion on the north and south elevations.

(see continuation sheet)

Northern Pacific Railway Depot
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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Significant Person(s): n/a

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Areas of Significance: TRANSPORTATION;
 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT;
 ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1924-1971

Significant Dates: 1924, 1971

Architect/Builder: Architect unknown/ Winston-Grant
 Construction (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary Statement of Significance

The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in Miles City in November 1881 cemented the future of the community as an important transportation hub in southeast Montana. Previously established as a military post and thriving cattle town, the railroad introduced to Miles City a reliable and convenient connection to the East for the shipment of freight as well as population. These attributes caused the city to grow considerably through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and literally placed a new geometry on the city grid. As Main Street developed as a result of the prosperity associated with the railroad, its orientation shifted to parallel the Northern Pacific tracks to its southeast. Entrepreneurs erected hotels, restaurants, mercantiles, and other businesses to cater to the burgeoning population, most of whom arrived through the small, wood-framed 1882 depot on Pacific Avenue after passenger service was established in 1883. The Northern Pacific designed and built a more substantial, red brick depot at the turn of the century. Demand on railroad facilities continued to increase through the homestead boom of the 1910s, even with the arrival of the Milwaukee Road in 1908. Despite economic downturn and drought after 1917, the Northern Pacific remained hopeful that Miles City would continue to grow and thrive. As a result, the company commissioned a new depot design in 1922, and moved forward with construction in the summer of 1923. The new depot, located adjacent to the original, opened in January 1924. Unfortunately, Miles City's development had already reached its zenith.

Still, the depot was much heralded upon its completion, and served the community and the region for more than fifty years. Transportation, both for passengers and freight, still centered on the Northern Pacific and its depot, and helped stabilize the town's economy through the Great Depression and Post World-War II era. Even as automobiles and trucking rose to prominence during the 1950s, the railroad continued to be a major employer, business generator and transportation leader, and its operation focused on the stately brick depot. The Northern Pacific used the depot as a passenger depot until 1971, when AMTRAK took over passenger operations. Its prominence in the community fell again when passenger services ceased along the line in 1979. For these reasons, the depot is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its associations with transportation history and community development in Miles City during the mid-twentieth century.

The depot gains additional significance and is eligible under Criterion C as an important local representation of Second Renaissance Revival architecture. Its wide hipped rooflines, the arcaded appearance of the central windows, even fenestration, and strong horizontal lines emphasized by distinct belt courses, are all hallmarks of this style, popular in substantial civic buildings through the first decades of the twentieth century.

(see continuation sheet)

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9. Major Bibliographic References

(see continuation sheet)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
 Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: approximately 1.4 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	13	Point A= 434737E	513896058 (NAD 27)
		Point B= 434800E	5139034N
		Point C= 434839E	5138992N
		Point D= 434778E	5138916N

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): NW¼ SE¼ of Section 33, T8N, R47E, Montana Prime Meridian

Verbal Boundary Description The boundary is defined by a quadrangle that fronts the south side of Pacific Avenue between Fifth and Sixth Streets, beginning at the southwest corner of the semi-circular driveway (Boundary Point A), running 370 feet to the northwest corner of the driveway (Boundary Point B), then turning southeast and running 194 feet to the railroad track right of way (Boundary Point C). The boundary line then turns southwest and follows the south side of the depot's disembarking area 264 feet (Boundary Point D), where it turns northwest 195 feet to the point of the beginning. See attached boundary map.

Boundary Justification The boundary is drawn to include the building, graveled disembarking area, landscaped lot and driveway associated with the building during the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kate Hampton
organization: Montana Preservation Alliance **date:** August 2009
street & number: 120 Reeder's Alley **telephone:** (406) 457-2822
city or town: Helena **state:** MT **zip code:** 59601

name/title: Amorette Allison
organization: Miles City Historic Preservation Officer **date:** August 2009
street & number: 907 B Main Street **telephone:** (406) 234-3090
city or town: Miles City **state:** MT **zip code:** 59301

Property Owner

name/title: Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company
street & number: 2650 Lou Menk Drive **telephone:** 1-800-795-2673
city or town: Fort Worth **state:** TX **zip code:** 76131-2830

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Description of Resources

South Elevation

The building faces southeast to the Northern Pacific right-of-way, where train passengers disembarked to a wide graveled area. The central bay of the south (front) elevation contains three arched windows at the upper half-story, above tripled window openings at the first story. The centered first-story window opening is located within a small rectangular protrusion that served as a ticket booth. Single, tall window openings are located on the west and east walls of the ticket booth, and feature tan brick sills. Single, slightly recessed, wood pedestrian doors, now covered with plywood, provided entry to the depot from either side of the ticket window. Each door features a one-light transom above, and is centered below the monad medallions of the upper story.

The west bay's south elevation contains two pair of wood-framed windows evenly spaced just off-center to the east, each covered with plywood. Like the openings on the sides of the ticket booth, the openings feature tan brick sills. The east bay's south elevation contains a plywood-covered opening that features a wood pedestrian door with single-light transom above. This opening is set at the west side of the bay's elevation. Two larger openings to the east side of the elevation each contain an overhead door suitable for loading and unloading freight and baggage. The central-most door displays six beadboard panels, while the eastern-most door originally featured twenty-five plain wood panels, twenty of which are intact. Plywood covers the center row of panels, obscuring them from view. Painted metal brackets reinforce the overhead door openings.

North Elevation

The north elevation's fenestration patterns for the most part mirror those on the east elevation. The arched and tripled windows of the central bay are evenly spaced, with the centered window opening flush with the exterior wall, as no ticket booth is present. The north elevation features the monad motifs represented on the track-side of the building. Transomed pedestrian doors flank the central opening, exhibiting the design and location as those on the south elevation. Two pair of single window openings are set off-center to the east on the west bay's north elevation. There is a single window opening on the west side of east bay's north elevation. The east bay also contains a twenty-five-panel wood overhead door off center to the east, and single, transomed, pedestrian door at the east end of the elevation. Plywood and a small shed-roofed, plywood-sided extension fills the easternmost door opening. The extension apparently contained crude window openings on each side, which plywood now covers.

West elevation

Fenestration on the west elevation of the depot is limited to three, evenly-spaced, single window openings across the west bay. Plywood covers these openings, revealing only their tan brick sills. The building's upper belt course serves as the lintel for each window. Circular, tan brick-bounded medallions with the Northern Pacific's monad motif are present on the south and north sides of the visible portion of the central bay's upper story.

East Elevation

A single, centered window graces the east elevation of the east bay. The wood-framed, six-over-one double-hung window is visible through an applied metal grate, and features a tan brick sill, and the upper belt course functions as the lintel. Single monad medallions decorate the south and north ends of the upper story.

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Interior:

The depot's first floor interior consists of a large, open, room within the central bay, and the west and east wings, each of which are divided into five smaller rooms and hallways. Flights of stairs in the east bay lead to the full basement below and to the office spaces of the second story. Original finishes throughout the building are intact and in excellent condition. The walls in the depot building are finished with tile, granite, marble and plaster, depending on the room and/or use of the area. Tile covers the floors. Dark-stained oak woodwork serves as baseboard and surrounds the interior door and window frames. The building also features built-in cabinets, original iron radiators, and vintage bathroom fixtures. Fluorescent light fixtures are present throughout the building.

Integrity

The Northern Pacific Railway Depot stands at its original location, and retains the original design offered by the Northern Pacific Railway Company upon its inception. The dark red and tan bricks, wood-frame windows and doors, and fenestration pattern remain intact. Though asphalt shingles replaced the original wood shingle roof in previous decades, the overall high integrity of materials, design, and workmanship is apparent. The building stands vacant but is instantly recognizable as a depot, and its association with the history of transportation, community development, and architecture continues to be clear. Though neglected landscaping and the construction of modern sheds and buildings along the tracks to the west and east have altered the setting a small degree, the building still dominates the block, and its proximity to active tracks emphasizes its former use.

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History of the Northern Pacific in Montana (contributed by Patrick Rennie)¹

In 1834, Dr. Samuel Barlow of Massachusetts lobbied the federal government to construct a railroad connecting New York City with the mouth of the Columbia River. Barlow's efforts met little support in Congress, but fourteen years later a merchant named Asa Whitney drafted a bill for the construction of a northern railroad route from Lake Michigan to the Puget Sound. The bill also encouraged the federal grant of land for the construction of the railroad. Whitney's bill failed in Congress, but the seed had been planted and the idea would not die. A major supporter of Whitney's bill had been Edwin Johnson, a highly respected railroad engineer. Johnson's efforts caught the attention of former Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis. Jefferson Davis determined that it was in the best interest of the Nation to pursue the northern route for a transcontinental railroad. As such, Davis included a provision in the Army Bill of 1853 to "... ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean..."² As a result, Isaac Stevens led a series of expeditions to explore the Upper Missouri and Columbia River regions and to make route recommendations. Stevens identified both the Yellowstone and Missouri River valleys as potential paths, and he, like John Mullan after him, recommended the Missouri River route. With this approach, the railroad would follow the Missouri River Valley to the headwaters area, travel up the Jefferson River, cross over the Highland Mountains to the Deer Lodge Valley and follow the Clark Fork generally westerly to the Pacific Ocean.³

In 1862, gold was discovered in what is today southwest Montana, and in 1864 Congress established the Montana Territory. Later that year, Congress approved a bill for a land grant to aid the construction of a northern route transcontinental railroad. The bill also laid the foundation for the development of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company. To aid in the construction efforts of the Northern Pacific, the federal government granted twenty alternating sections of land per mile of track in the established states, and forty alternating sections per mile of track in the territories. In theory, the railroad company would be able to sell the granted land as needed to cover construction costs of the railway. In return for the land grants, the Northern Pacific provided free transportation (or at least transportation at a greatly reduced rate) for troops, military equipment, and other government freight whenever requested. Despite these promises, the Northern Pacific faced major hindrances to the economic prosperity because it never received all the land promised, and it provided more free freight service to the government than it received in land sales. Another major hindrance was timing. During the early 1860's the United States was in turmoil as a result of the Civil War. Financing for the development of the Northern Pacific thus proved difficult at this time.⁴

In the late 1860's, Jay Cooke agreed to become financial agent for the Northern Pacific. Following the advice of W. Milnor Roberts and a series of subsequent surveys, the chosen route followed up the Yellowstone River Valley, over Bozeman's Pass to the Jefferson River then over the Continental Divide near present day Butte to the Deer Lodge Valley, then down the Clarks Fork River. A major impetus for choosing the Yellowstone River route was to open up markets for the rich deposits of precious metals recently discovered throughout southwestern Montana. By 1872, the Northern Pacific railroad had been constructed as far west as Bismarck, North Dakota, but the "Panic of 1873" instigated in large part by

¹ Patrick Rennie provided the History of the Northern Pacific in Montana, as written in his Historic and Architectural Property Record Form for the Rosebud County portion of the Northern Pacific Railway, 24RB2234, March 2007.

² E.V. Smalley, *History of the Northern Pacific Railroad*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1883.

³ Louis Tuck Renz, *The History of the Northern Pacific Railroad*, (Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1980); Robert Edmund Riegel, *The Story of the Western Railroads from 1852 through the Reign of Giants*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1926); Donald B. Robertson, *Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History. Volume II: The Mountain States*. (Dallas, Texas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1991).

⁴ Ibid.

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Jay Cooke & Company's bankruptcy, halted construction for six years.⁵ Following bankruptcy, the Northern Pacific reorganized in 1875 and in 1879 Frederick Billings took over as company president. Distinct divisions carried out construction of the line, with each division responsible for construction of a particular segment. However, progress remained slow as construction crews faced engineering problems associated with the erosive nature of the Yellowstone River, unstable geological formations, and major tunnel construction at the Big Horn River and at Bozeman Pass. In retrospect, the Northern Pacific seemed doomed from the start. In addition to repeated financial failings, the railroad was poorly built through difficult terrain, it exhibited steep grades, and it was faced with high interest charges, and high property taxes.⁶

By 1881 the president of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company, Henry Villard, replaced Billings as president of the Northern Pacific. Villard oversaw the connection of the eastward and westward expansions of the mainline. He commemorated the completion of the mainline by driving a gold spike at an extravagant celebration at Gold Creek, Montana on September 8, 1883. Villard resigned as president in 1884, and the following decade witnessed overexpansion through extensive branchline construction, and eventual bankruptcy and receivership in 1893. By 1896, Great Northern Railroad magnates James J. Hill and J.P. Morgan purchased controlling shares of stock in the Northern Pacific and formed the Northern Securities Company. Control of the foremost of the northern transcontinental lines allowed Hill to dominate railroad affairs in Montana through the early and mid-twentieth century. Although by 1905 the Northern Securities was ordered by the Supreme Court to be dissolved, the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads became regionally known as the Hill Lines by many people living in the West.⁷

Prior to Hill's involvement, the Northern Pacific, and other land grant railroads, offered a rate of one cent per mile as a promotional effort to encourage prospective settlers to see the west. Additionally, the Northern Pacific was the first railroad to make extensive use of public speakers as promotional tools to encourage land settlement and freight transportation. Hill followed, but improved upon many of the promotional strategies used by the earlier railroad companies. Hill encouraged settlement along his lines by allowing immigrants to travel halfway across the country on his trains for \$10 per person. He also rented freight cars, known as "immigrant cars," to homesteaders for only a few dollars more for convenient shipment of their household goods, farm implements, cows, horses, mules, swine, and chickens with enough feed for all of the livestock. Two people were allowed to ride in each immigrant car (and carry enough food for themselves) in order to feed and care for their livestock. These strategies provided a business boom for the Great Northern and Northern Pacific lines. Hill kept prices low and sold products just above cost. A unique facet of those railroads involved in the promotion of land settlement in the West. They operated one of the biggest and most successful propaganda campaigns of the twentieth century. The railroad companies developed misleading exhibits, scenic posters, and pamphlets based on half-truths to draw settlers to the semi-arid western lands.⁸

During the early part of the twentieth century, railroads had a positive economic effect on the towns they served. As promoters of land settlement in the west, each train could bring as many as one hundred settlers and prospective investors to

⁵ The Panic of 1873 was the start of the Long Depression, a severe nationwide economic depression in the United States that lasted until 1879. It was Jay Cooke & Company's bankruptcy on September 18, 1873 that precipitated the crisis. Cooke's over speculation and failure to sell Northern Pacific Railway bonds led to its downfall. For more information about the Panic of 1873 and Jay Cooke's role in the financial collapse, see: http://www.publicbookshelf.com/public_html/The_Great_Republic_By_the_Master_Historians_Vol_III/panicof1_hd.html

⁶ Renz; Riegel; Robertson.

⁷ Renz; Riegel; Robertson.

⁸ Renz; Riegel; Robertson; Roy History Committee, *Homestead Shacks over Buffalo Tracks: History of Northeastern Fergus County*. (Bozeman, Montana: Color World Printers, 1990).

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an area. The railroads also supplied the railroad towns with freight and shipped local goods as well. In Montana, it was common for local products such as cans of milk and cream, cases of eggs, crates of poultry, carloads of cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses, grain, and potatoes to be shipped with regularity from railroad towns. Further, the railroads provide the major tax base for most of the counties that they passed through. By the middle of the twentieth century, heavy competition and declining passenger service was slowly spelling an end to railroad service. Improved roads made travel by auto more convenient than travel by rail. The large horse herds, which numbered in the thousands before World War II, no longer existed and thus were no longer being shipped by rail. Farmers and ranchers began to find it more convenient and cost effective to load their livestock and crops on trucks at their farms and ranches and ship those goods directly to market. By the late 1960's the Great Northern and Northern Pacific lines were largely out of the passenger business and operated only two such trains each. The best known of the Northern Pacific's passenger trains was the North Coast Limited. By 1971, the U.S. government controlled all passenger rail service in Montana, and most of the United States, with the federally owned AMTRAK. In 1970, the Northern Pacific, Great Northern, and Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railways merged to become the Burlington Northern Railway Company. Burlington Northern continued to use and operate the Northern Pacific mainline trackage and abandoned most branchlines.⁹

The History of Miles City and its ties to the Northern Pacific

Colonel Nelson M. Miles came to the Miles City area and established Fort Keogh in 1876 as a strategic military post for the U.S. Army. The army ordered Miles to the area to subjugate the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho and compel them to return to their reservations. Settlers associated with the military camp created "Milestown," and erected the first commercial buildings two miles east of the cantonment. The "new" Fort Keogh was completed in 1878 west of the Tongue River, and Colonel Miles donated the ferry landing on the east bank of the river to Milestown. Merchants and settlers quickly moved to the new site to take advantage of the security offered by the nearby fort. The town's main street originally served as a military supply route from the ferry landing and pioneers erected the first residential shacks in the area (near 10th and Pleasant streets) in 1877. The original city grid, also oriented to the ferry landing, was platted in 1878 in a northeast-southwest orientation. Until 1881, when the Northern Pacific arrived, the fledgling town residents were dependent on the Yellowstone River steamboats for transportation and shipment of goods.

Miles City "oldtimer" Samuel Gordon recalled the Northern Pacific's inauspicious arrival in his *Recollections of Old Milestown*:

Naturally Milestown set out to celebrate the occasion with befitting ceremony We knew they were laying about a mile of track a day and when they reached Dixon's bluff we had our reception committee organized and at work. The reception was a failure. The only time, up to that date, that Milestown had failed to pull off a public function with due éclat. The committee had done its work well. There were washtubs full of sandwiches, kegs of beer on tap, pails of dill pickles and many other snicks and snacks that we supposed the track crew would relish and appreciate and certain eminent citizens were even loaded with "remarks" on "the potentiality of this significant occasion," but they never got a chance to uncork. From the time the track-crew came in sight at the Main street crossing -- which was about noon -- they did much better than a mile a day and were over the Tongue River bridge before dark of a November day. They didn't pass us by wholly unnoticed; the men all got a bite and a sup, but the boss of the crew

⁹ Renz; Riegel; Robertson Department of Commerce, "Rail Plan for the Burlington Northern: Montana," Report on file at the Montana State Library, Helena, 1985.

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was crowding his men for a record; at least that was what he said, but the truth probably was that he didn't want them to get "jagged" on him and so our big occasion petered out and we had to turn to and eat our own sandwiches and drink our own beer, which wasn't as hard on the populace as the choking off of those torrents of eloquence was on the expectant speakers. The one thing to be pleasantly remembered about this occasion was the big black horse that drew the iron car who knew his business as well as any of the humans he worked with and there were some skilled trackmen on that job. That was in November 1881.¹⁰

With the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railway, Miles City connected with "the States" and could receive freight more dependably and more quickly. Livestock could be shipped directly from Miles City to stockyards in the midwest, increasing the financial viability of the town. Regular passenger service began in 1883 and soon became the major method of reaching Miles City, although stage lines remained in operation for many years, especially for local trips off the rail line.

The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railway had other influences. Miles City was laid out on a grid of numbered streets parallel to the Fort Keogh ferry landing along the Tongue River, today Riverside Park and Scanlan Lake. Usually, the Northern Pacific laid out a town to match its rail line but, in the case of Miles City, the town already existed. This did not stop the railroad from laying out several blocks in a grid to match the alignment of its tracks, which cut through the existing town at an angle. Miles City today has several street grids that intersect at odd angles. Those on the south side of the old Northern Pacific, now Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company tracks, are aligned with the railroad tracks, not the earlier streets.

The Northern Pacific constructed the first Miles City depot near the site of the current building in 1882. A small, wooden framed structure, it was surrounded by appurtenant structures such as freight storage buildings and ice houses. A more substantial red brick building soon replaced the frame depot.

After the arrival of the Northern Pacific, the town's population doubled in a year, from 600 to 1,200. After fires in 1883 and 1885, the growing business district mandated the construction of brick buildings, some of which remain standing today, a sign of the prosperity and belief in the future held by the citizenry in the 1880's.

Miles City's population continued to grow until the disastrous winter of 1886-1887. This unusually cold, long and snowy winter ruined many livestock men. Some ranchers suffered losses in excess of 90% of their herds. The town reflected this calamity when its population dropped from a high of 2,500 in 1887 to 1,400 in 1892. The population began a slow rebound but it was not until the arrival of a second railroad that the town again "boomed." Construction downtown focused on Main Street and Fifth, which led to the Northern Pacific depot. In 1908, businessmen dedicated the Olive Hotel on the corner of Main and Fifth, and at its grand opening Northern Pacific representatives began talking about building a new brick depot in Miles City.

The Milwaukee, Chicago & St. Paul, later the Milwaukee, Chicago and Puget Sound Railroad (the Milwaukee), arrived in Miles City in 1907 and built its new passenger depot in 1909 on the opposite side of town. Miles City also became a division point on the Milwaukee, with railroad yards built on the north side of town. The population increased dramatically in a very short period of time, doubling in only a decade, leading to acute housing shortages and the growth of new subdivisions in every direction from the city center.

¹⁰ Samuel Gordon, *Recollections of Old Milestown* (Miles City: 1918) "Part III: The Vigilante Days," www.milescity.com/history/books/room/part3.asp

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The Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 also brought a new influx of settlers to the area. This act allowed settlers to claim plots of land double the size of the original homestead, which was a more practical size in the wide open, more arid spaces of the west. Railroads made special "deals" for homesteaders, providing them with a box car for their belongings at a low price to encourage them to populate the areas served by those railroads. While the Milwaukee created dozens of new "towns" along their line, the Northern Pacific continued to serve growing existing communities.

During the first half of the twentieth century, both railroads were running multiple passenger trains each day, in addition to numerous freight trains. With multiple trains running in both directions every day, it was possible to make a "day trip" to Billings or Glendive, leaving in the morning and returning in the evening, by rail.

As part of an extensive campaign to promote new settlement in the West, the Northern Pacific released a brochure in 1917 entitled "What Montana Has to Offer" promoting the farms, irrigation and land availability:

A marked change is sweeping over this part of the State. The big stock ranges and ranges that often included whole townships within their borders have practically passed away. They have been, or are being, cut up into farms and the men from Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Missouri and other parts of the Middle West are going in on the rich virgin soil.

Montana is developing into one of the great wheat regions of the country. Grain elevators are going up at the stations along the railroad. . . Root crops give big returns and especially in the irrigated areas grow to great size and of splendid flavor. The raising of sugar beets is becoming an industry of pronounced proportions. . . The wheat lands are most extensive and with wheat at a dollar a bushel, the farmers are making money too fast to give much attention just now to oats and barley, which also pay well on this land.¹¹

By 1918, the Miles City population stood at 9,000. Though most welcomed the expansion of the community, some missed the wild days of Old Milestown. In that year, Gordon wrote his *Recollections* to provide the "newcomers" with an understanding of the city's origins, and in recognition of "the desirability of collecting and reducing to some form of permanent record, the fast fading scenes and incidents of the early days of this community."¹² Gordon speaks to the changes in the community experienced over its first forty years:

...But they have lived to see a Milestown far beyond their expectations. Those who have lived here during that period have had to change their predictions on the future of the city more than once since the days when we won incorporation with a somewhat questionable population of fifteen hundred...we passed the five thousand mark without knowing it and have more than doubled that aggregate since then with every material prospect bright for the future. What we may achieve in the time to come is anybody's guess, but there is one thing that we old-timers know -- and that is that we are no longer the happy-go-lucky, care-free "kamerads" of the early days...¹³

¹¹ Northern Pacific Railway Company, Yellowstone Park Line, "What Montana Has to Offer: Along the Scenic Highway through the Land of Fortune," (St. Paul, MN, 1917), pp 3-4. Available online at <http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/4565373>.

¹² Samuel Gordon, *Recollections of Old Milestown* (Miles City: 1918) "Foreword"
<http://www.milescity.com/history/ebooks/room/foreword.asp>.

¹³ Gordon, *Recollections*, "A Post Mortem," <http://www.milescity.com/history/ebooks/room/postmortem.asp>.

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Although the Milwaukee was better known for its passenger lines, the Northern Pacific passenger depot was a busy spot and, as rail travel reached its peak in early 1920s, a new depot, discussed since the turn of the century, was needed. In the November 3, 1922 edition of the *Miles City Independent*, an article noted that the Northern Pacific had drawn plans for a new depot to be constructed in the spring. The Winston-Grant Construction Company of St. Paul would have charge of the building.¹⁴ On March 25, 1923, the *Miles City Daily Star* reported “plans for the new \$50,000 depot, which will be built at Miles City this year by the Northern Pacific, have been completed, and a copy should be received in this city shortly, according to information available here on Saturday.”¹⁵ By May of that year, reports confirmed the depot construction was to start immediately, and “from fifty to sixty thousand dollars will be expended in the new improvement, which will be built along the lines of the latest idea in architecture in Northern Pacific buildings.”¹⁶ Regular updates continued to appear in the newspaper as construction continued throughout the summer until the completion and dedication of the building on January 18, 1924.

The depot dedication received rare front page coverage. At that time, local news almost never appeared on the front page. The article exclaimed “the splendid edifice” that was the new depot:

Presenting an appearance so beautiful and complete as to surprise and gladden the hearts of those old-time Miles City boosters who have been striving for thirty-odd years to encourage the Northern Pacific to construct a passenger station in keeping with the size and future expectations of this city, the new depot, on the occasion of the dedication of that splendid edifice on Friday, was the subject of a great deal of favorable comment.¹⁷

Vice-Chairman of the Northern Pacific Board of Directors, J. M. Hanaford, spoke at the dedication, underlining its importance, and mentioned the long history the Northern Pacific Railway had with Miles City.

Building such an expensive structure, with completely new fixtures, from the telegraph equipment to the benches, seemed a statement from the railroad that they were looking forward to a prosperous future, unaware of what really was coming. In addition to providing a passenger depot, with large waiting room and accompanying restrooms, the building also held the telegraph office for the railroad and its local land office.

By 1923, the mass migration of settlers in Miles City and the rest of Montana was over. The rain that fell so heavily in the teens was no longer falling. The economic boom of the early and mid-1910s ended abruptly when years of severe drought descended on Montana, the Dakotas, and Wyoming beginning in 1917. In 1919, eastern Montana homesteaders faced humidity that averaged four percent, massive grasshopper infestations, and prairie fires. The effect was devastating. Homesteaders enticed by boosterism about the fertile lands of eastern Montana saw their investments literally blown away by the dry wind. The dry years of the 1920s led to the dust bowl and Great Depression of the 1930s. Like other larger Montana towns, Miles City did not experience much population restriction or growth during the 1920s and 1930s, remaining at just over 7,000. Still, what commerce and transportation continued was dependent upon the railroads, and the depot served as the center of activity in the city for decades.

Above average rainfall from 1940 through the early 1950s, together with a national economic upswing and World War II resulted in higher commodity and livestock prices. Historian K. Ross Toole explains:

¹⁴ *Miles City Daily Star*, November 13, 1922.

¹⁵ *Miles City Daily Star*, March 25, 1923.

¹⁶ *Miles City Daily Star*, May 17, 1923.

¹⁷ *Miles City Daily Star*, January 18, 1924.

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A new wet cycle coincided with a tremendous boom caused by World War II. In this cyclical picture, if bad seems to compound the bad, then good seems to combine with the good. It is a business of extremes. Continued rain and good prices after World War II led to continued prosperity. Wheat farmers and cattle ranchers enjoyed rather spectacular success from 1941 until 1954 when a leveling off occurred.¹⁸

Despite the good news for farmers and ranchers, the Northern Pacific and other railroads in Montana experienced a decrease in passenger service after World War II. Reliance on personal automobiles increased, and improved roads throughout the West shifted customers away from rail travel. The U.S. Army also reduced military personnel travel by rail by the mid-1950s. At the beginning of the decade, passenger service on the Northern Pacific decreased nearly 15%, with only \$6,229,980 in passenger revenues, which was only one-third the passenger revenues of the Milwaukee. By 1954, the company worked to entice travel customers by improving the amenities on the once-popular North Coast Limited line, by purchasing new "Vista Dome" coaches and sleeping cars. Despite these efforts, ridership fell another 4% that year.¹⁹

In addition to a "leveling off" of the agricultural market another economic setback affected Miles City in 1954. The Milwaukee Road, whose arrival helped spark the growth of the city during the 1910s, ended its steam operations.

They tore down the 24 stall roundhouse...They also tore down the large brick store department that had employed as many as 36 employees, and every other building they could get rid of...In December 1959, the Division Headquarters was closed...More powerful diesel locomotives pulling heavier trains steadily reduced the number of engine and train crews. There had been two passenger trains a day each way until 1955, and by February 1964, the last passenger train was discontinued...All operations west of Miles City were discontinued April 1, 1980...When the Milwaukee shut down at Miles City April 1, 1982, there were only a total of 35 employees left.²⁰

Through the late 1950s, the Northern Pacific offered passengers discount fares, faster schedules, the introduction of "nurse-stewardesses," and coach enhancements, and by 1962 enjoyed the highest passenger revenues since 1929.²¹ Railroad Historian Robert Klein described the North Coast Limited's amenities:

In 1948, the heavyweight train that originally began in 1900 was replaced with lightweight cars that ran with daily service. Cars built for this streamlined train were primarily owned by Northern Pacific, but a fraction were owned by CB&Q and SP&S in proportion to their route miles. Beginning in 1952, the North Coast Limited was painted in the classic two-tone green paint scheme created by industrial designer Raymond Loewy. In 1954, dome coaches and dome sleepers were added to the train. ... 1955 saw the completion of the streamlined makeover when the "Traveler's Rest" buffet lounge cars were added. ... Diners were replaced in 1958. A budget slumbercoach was added in 1959.²²

¹⁸ K. Ross Toole, *Montana: An Uncommon Land* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 14th printing, p. 241.

¹⁹ John A Phillips, III, "Terrific! It's the Northern Pacific!: Nifty Fifty," 2004, www.netcom.com/~whstlpnk/niftyfifty.html. Though passenger service decreased, the freight market fared well through the 1950s.

²⁰ Wilkerson, "The Milwaukee Road in Miles City." Transisco Rail Services, Inc. has taken over what was the Milwaukee's very extensive shop facilities and yard for a rail car repair operation, including the Milwaukee depot.

²¹ Phillips, "Terrific! It's the Northern Pacific!": First of the Northern Transcontinentals: Chronology, <http://pw2.netcom.com/~whstlpnk/first.html>.

²² Fred Klein, "The North Coast Limited: 1954-1967," 2005, <http://www.trainweb.org/fredatsf/np54.htm>.

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When the Milwaukee discontinued its passenger service in 1964, the Northern Pacific picked up those passengers who had not yet migrated to air travel or preferred not to drive long distances across Montana. Despite these influences on the Northern Pacific's passenger lines, ridership fell and the lines were rarely profitable. The 1960s also witnessed merger negotiations between many of the nation's railroads. About 1967, the decline in passenger traffic required that the North Coast Limited be combined with Great Northern's Empire Builder.²³ In the spring of 1970, the Northern Pacific merged with the Chicago Burlington & Quincy, Great Northern, and the Spokane Portland and Seattle railroads.²⁴

Functioning now as the Burlington Northern, the freight and passenger lines through Miles City continued for only a short time. After the commercial railroads ceased passenger service and AMTRAK was created in 1971, the Northern Pacific Railway depot served as an AMTRAK passenger depot until the southern route through Montana was discontinued in 1979.

The loss of passenger service had a chilling effect on community to community trips. It was no longer possible to make quick, inexpensive trips to neighboring towns. AMTRAK, in the west, became a long distance travel service, with a single train, at most, each day. With so little traffic around the depot, businesses no longer found it a convenient location. The hotels, lumberyards, and grocery stores that were once within walking distance of the depot disappeared, with the exception of the Olive Hotel, four blocks away, on Main Street. The depot itself began to suffer from neglect, and the park was no longer maintained.

At the time passenger service ended, the railroad had no use for the depot and sold it to an out-of-state investor who soon abandoned the property after making no improvements. The railroad retained ownership of the land under the depot and its surrounding park area. The current owner, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company, acquired the property through mergers. The previous "sale" prevented several later attempts to acquire the property by local owners for redevelopment due to title questions. The building has been vacant and mostly unmaintained since 1990.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Phillips, "Terrific! It's the Northern Pacific!: First of the Northern Transcontinentals: Chronology," <http://pw2.netcom.com/~whstlpnk/first.html>.

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Architectural Significance

The Northern Pacific Railway Depot is significant architecturally as a very fine local example of twentieth century depot architecture with Second Renaissance Revival style elements. It reflects the sense of permanence and importance given to railroad and other civic buildings during a prosperous period for the United States. By the turn of the twentieth century, railroad depot architecture had evolved to represent the Golden Age of the industry, with opulent, sturdy constructions that symbolized the importance of the railroad to a community. High-style depots also were a hallmark of the community's status along the line. Whereas the original depot had been small, dark and cramped, the 1924 Northern Pacific Railway Depot at Miles City offered a spacious, urbane, and clean venue, focused on individual comforts and service that signaled the city's rising prominence through the first decades of the twentieth century.

Inspired by the architecture of sixteenth century Italy and France, the Renaissance Revival style that emerged in the United States was combined with additional elements from Ancient Greek and Roman architecture. While Renaissance Revival architecture was first popular in the United States from 1840 to 1915, it did not reach the western states until the turn of the twentieth century. Used primarily in public buildings, classic features of the Renaissance Revival style include a symmetrical façades, low-pitched hip roofs, prominent cornices, and horizontal stone banding between floors.²⁵ As a local example of the style, the Northern Pacific Railway Depot exhibits each of these elements, including the hipped roof, prominent, bracketed overhangs and cornices, horizontal banding, and symmetrical fenestration. Distinctions between floors and mezzanine floors are also hallmarks of the style, and the half-story of the depot's central bay features arched windows that give the illusion of an arcaded mezzanine. Though many Second Renaissance Revival buildings are highly ornate and often multi-storied, the depot is an excellent example of a more simplified approach to its implementation, using materials and design guidelines generated by the Northern Pacific Railway's architectural team.²⁶

²⁵ Minneapolis Heritage Commission, "Architectural Styles: Renaissance Revival," http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/hpc/landmarks/Renaissance_Revival.asp.

²⁶ Though newspaper articles indicate that the depot was designed by the Northern Pacific out of their St. Paul offices, no reference to the architect or the plans has been located. The Minnesota Historical Society located a depot drawing for Miles city, but only for the original red brick depot, not the one constructed in 1923-24 and nominated here.

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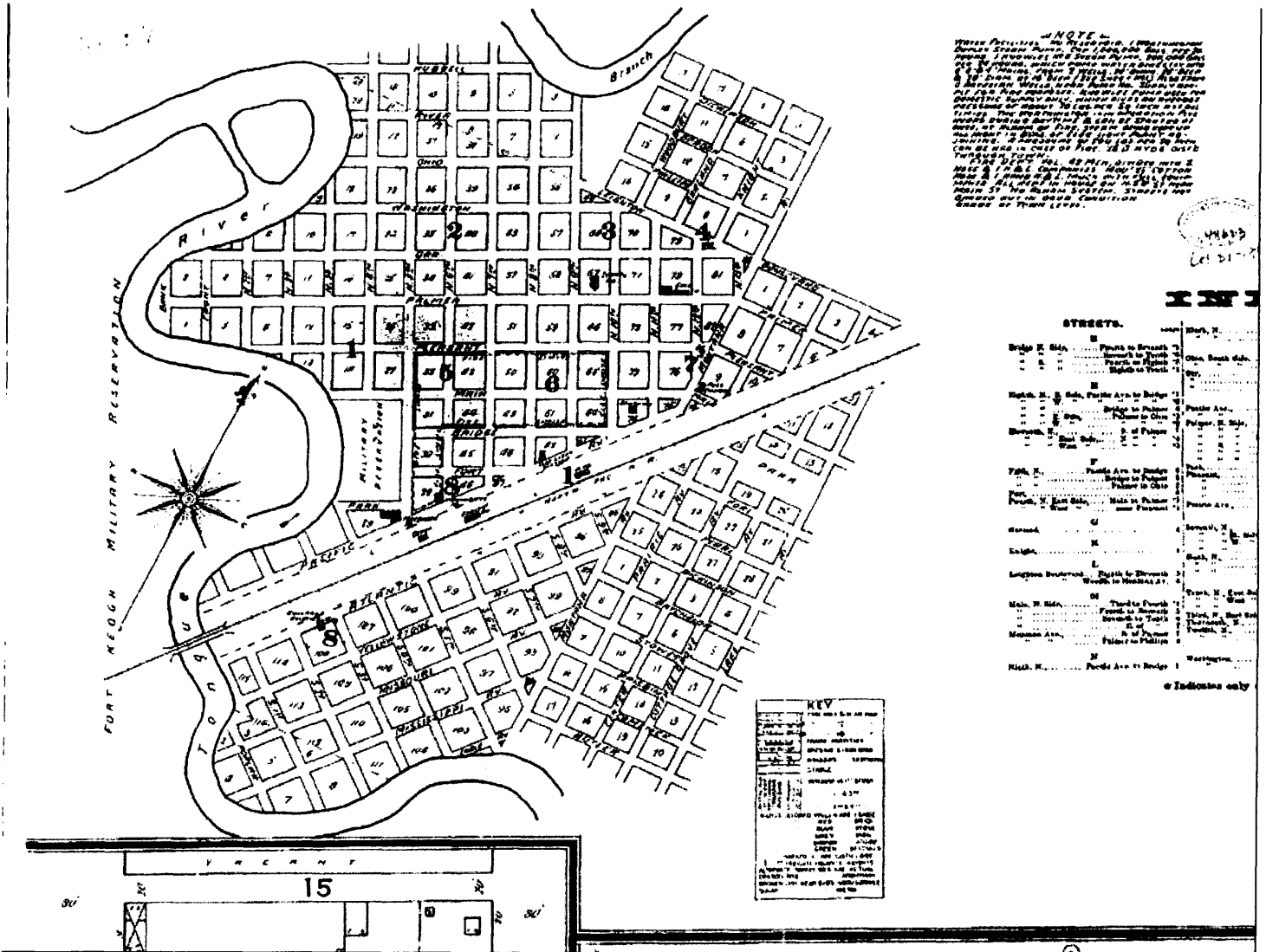
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Detail of 1893 Sanborn Map showing re-orientation of streets to the railroad track on the south side of the city.

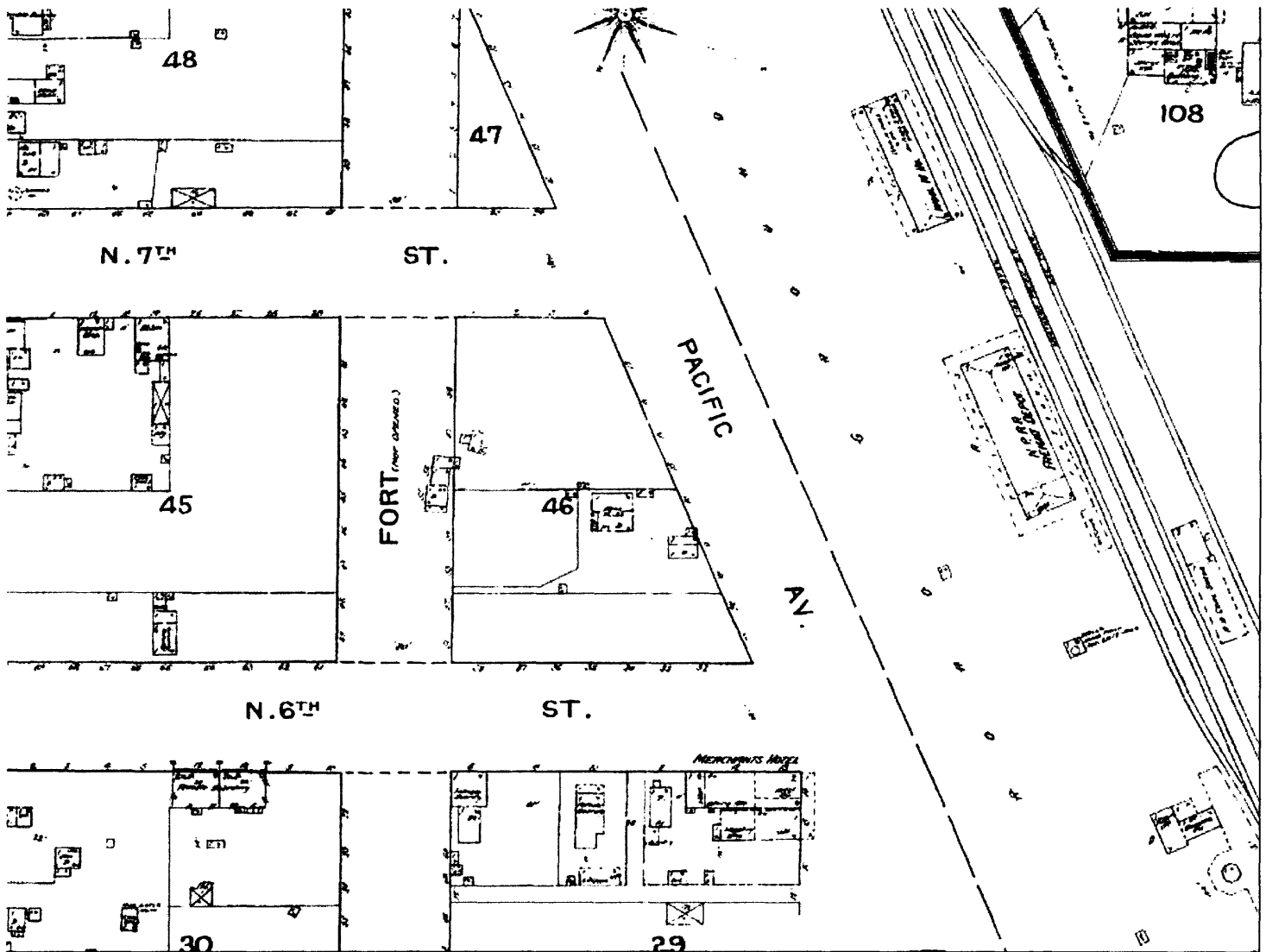
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Detail of 1893 Sanborn map showing location of original depot northwest of location of 1923 depot.

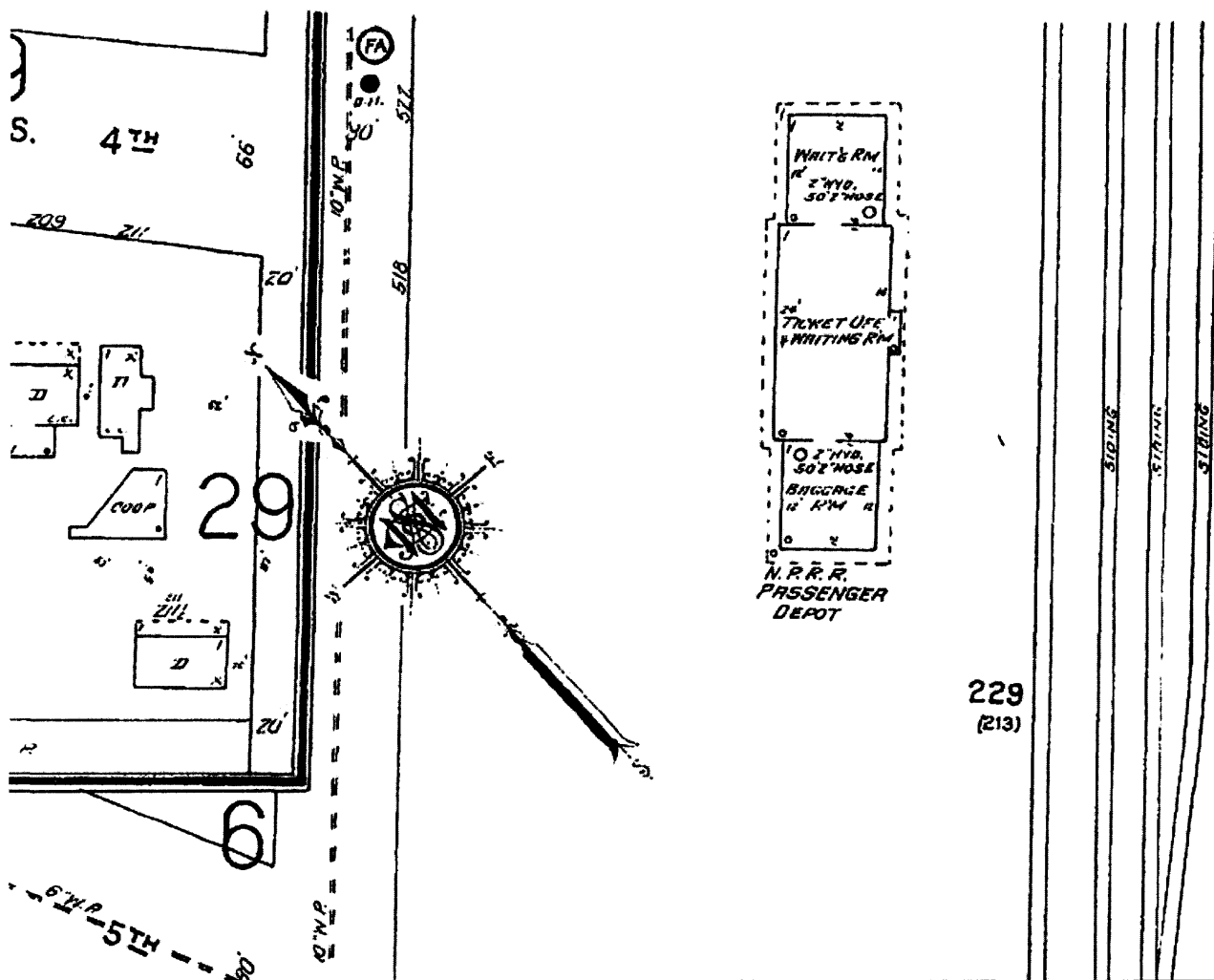
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Sanborn Map detail, showing 1923 depot, 1928.

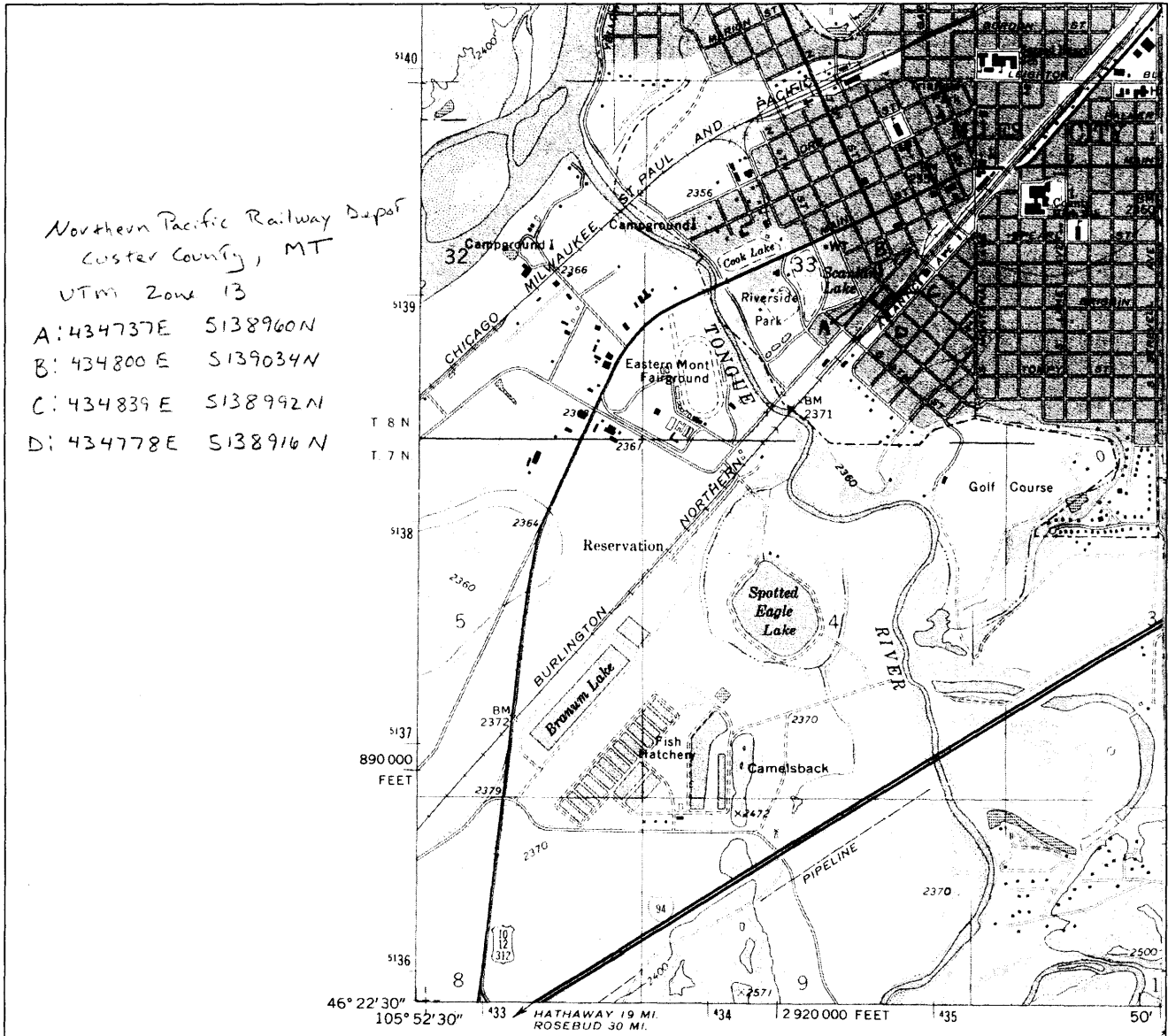
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Topographic Showing Northern Pacific Railway Depot, From Miles City, MT 7.5' quadrangle map, 1968 (Photorevised 1980)

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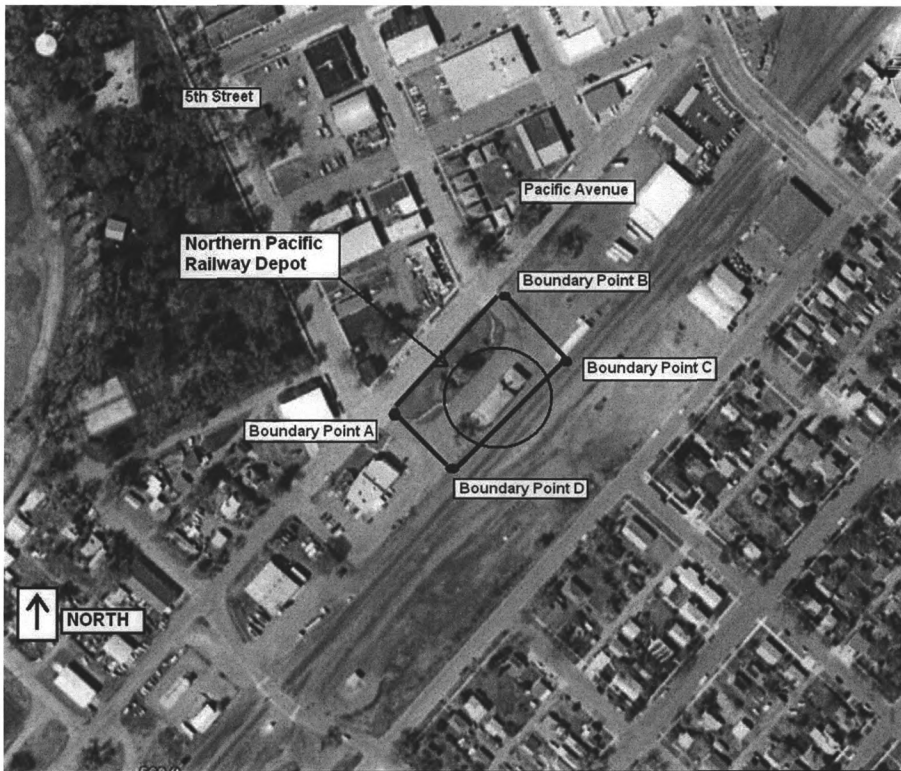
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Boundary Map



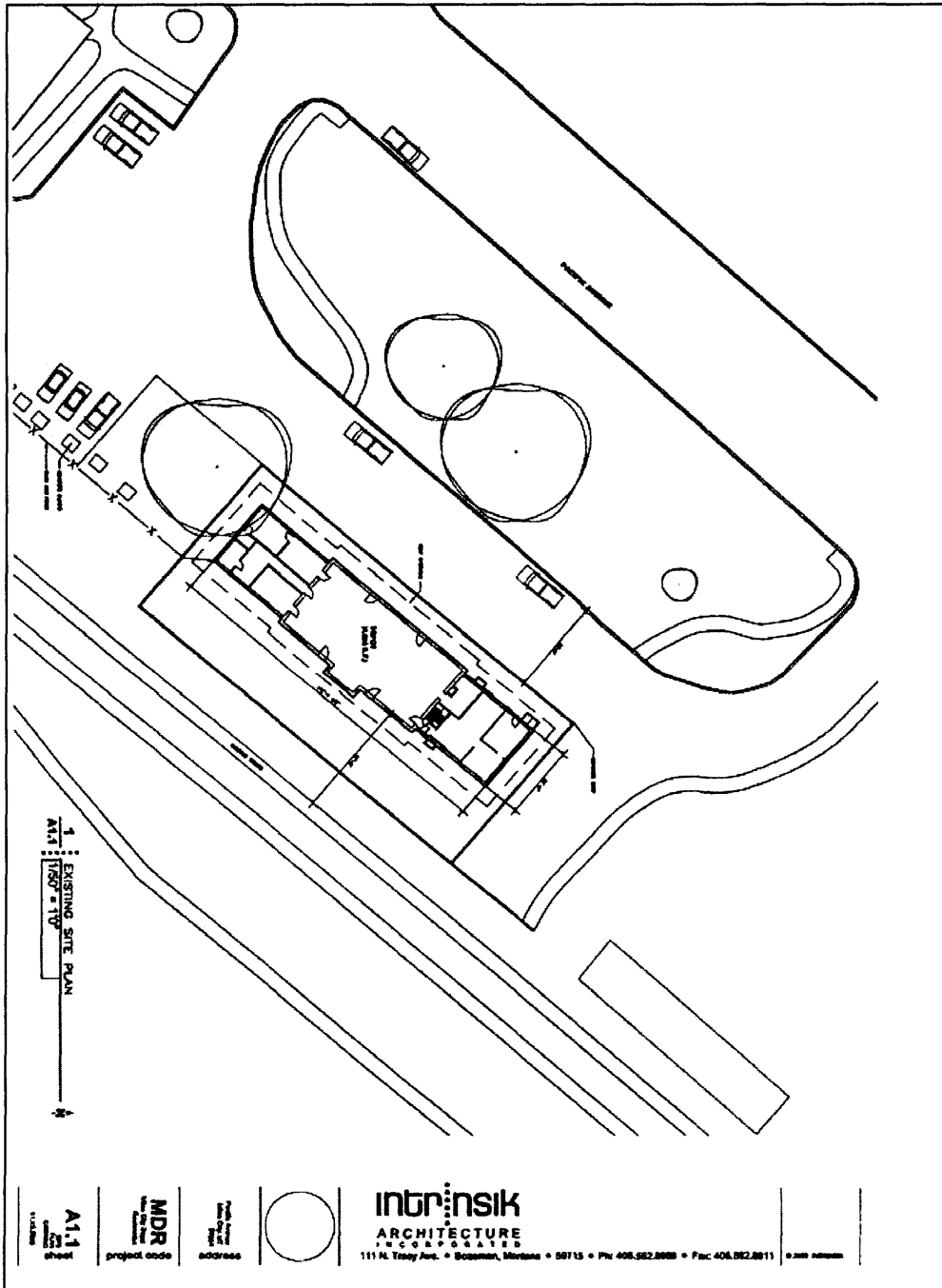
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Northern Pacific Railway Depot site plan drawing. Intrinsik Architecture, Inc., November 2009.

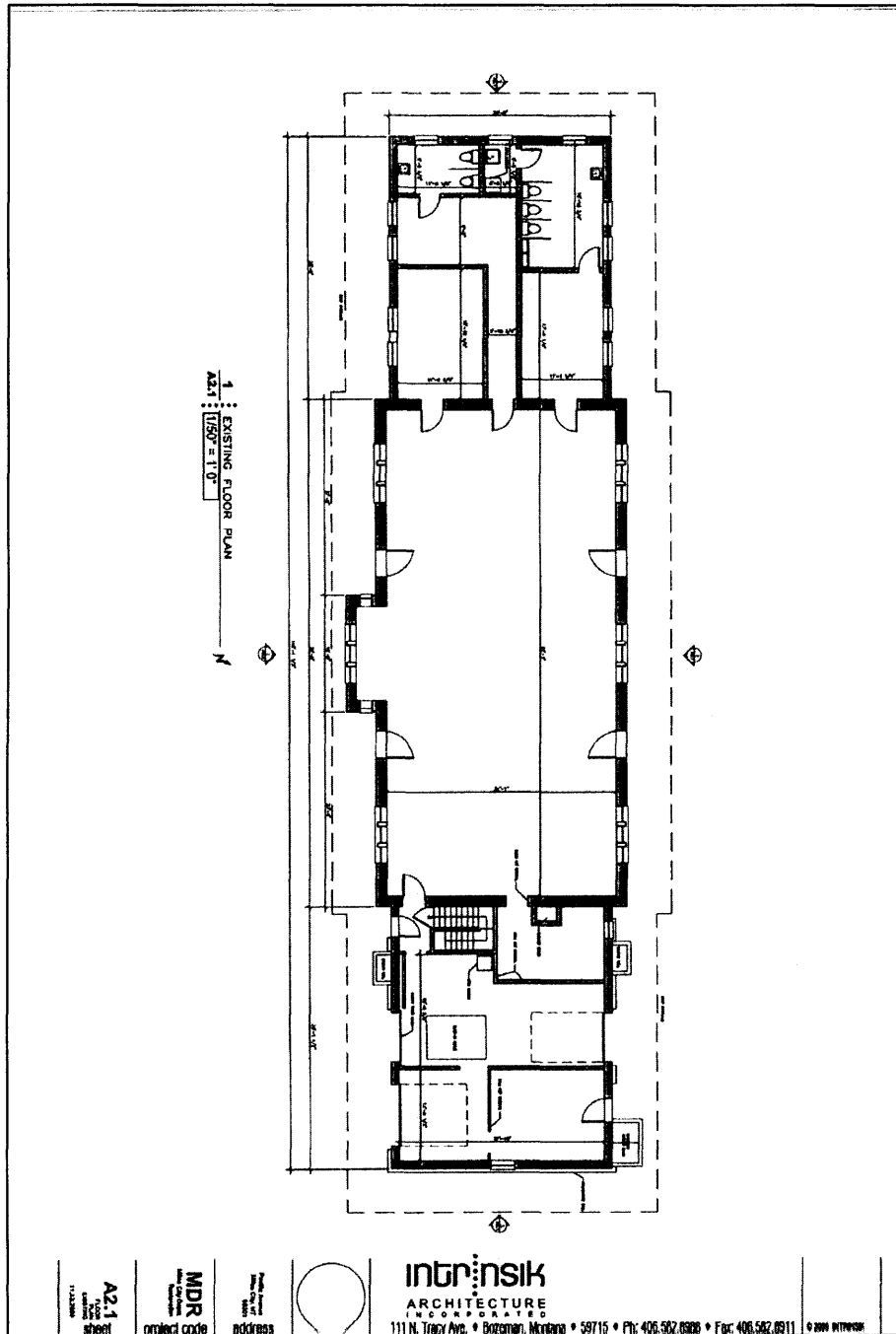
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Existing First Floor Plan. Intrinsic Architecture, Inc., November 2009.

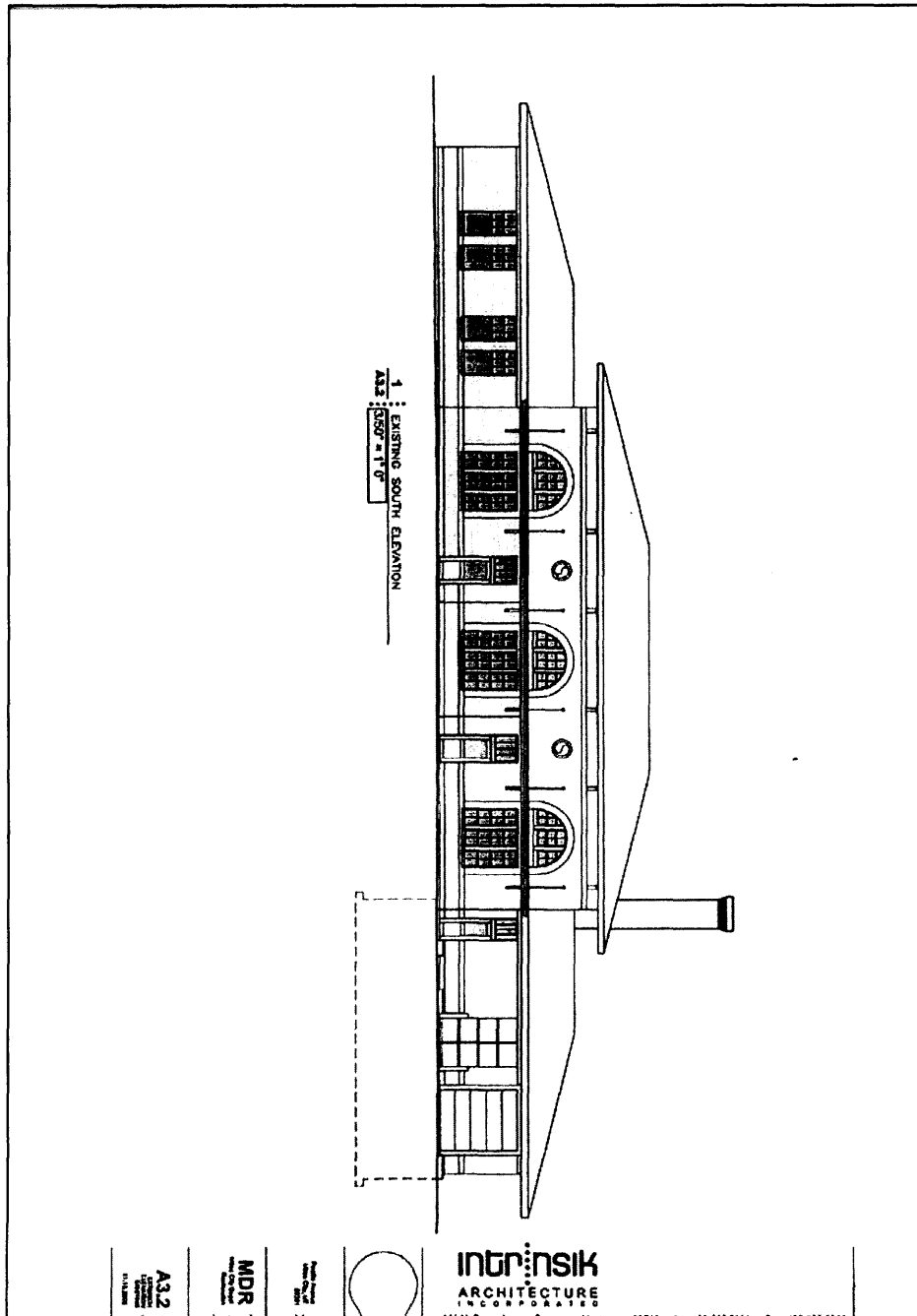
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South elevation drawing. Intrinsik Architecture, Inc., November 2009.

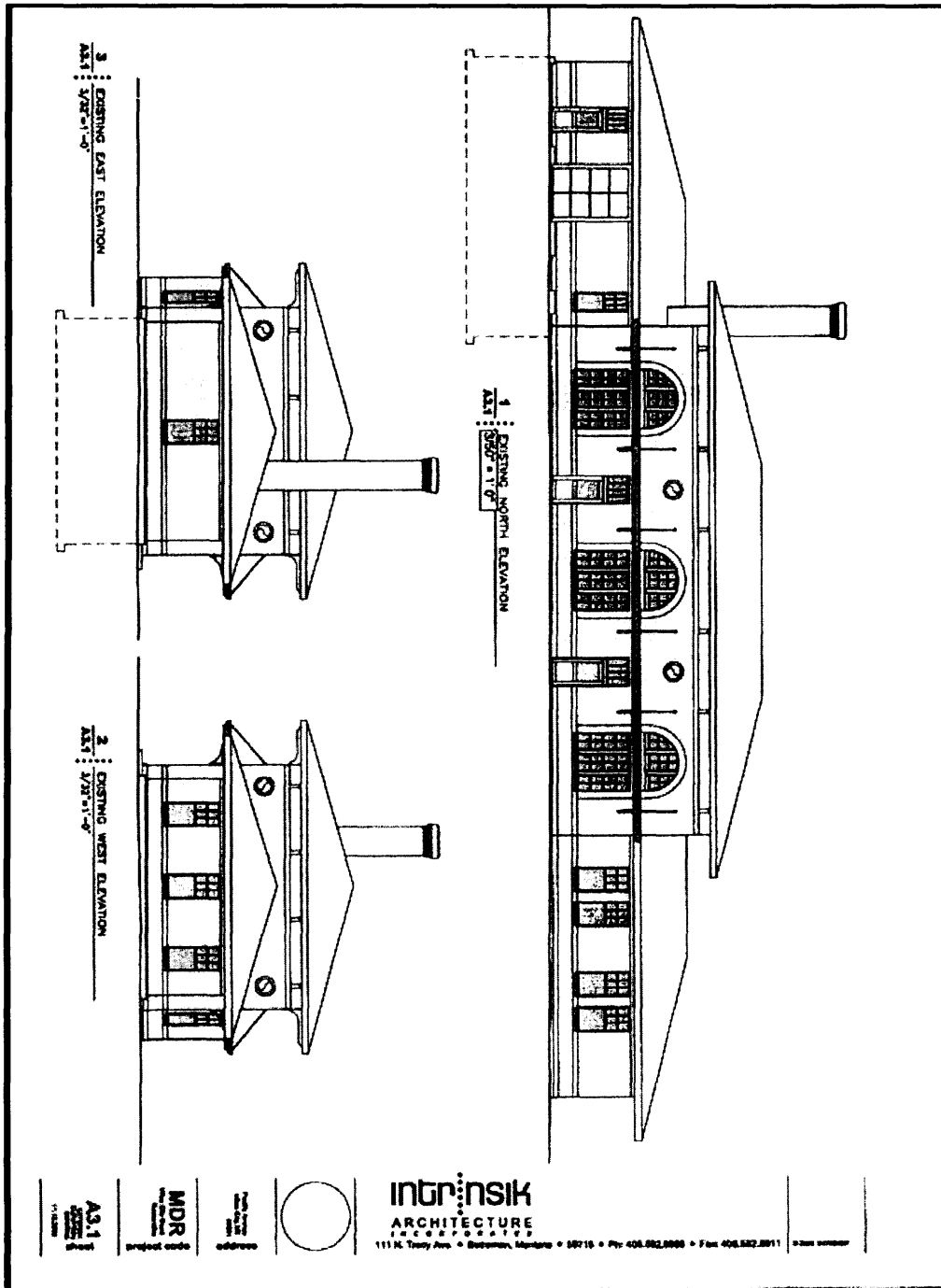
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North, east and west elevation drawings. Intrinsic Architecture, Inc., November 2009.

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Historic Photographs



Historic postcard showing c. 1883 depot, view to north-northeast.

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Undated postcard showing east elevation (track side) of the Miles City Depot.

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Interior Photographs



Interior of central bay, view to the east. The majority of the building consists of a large lobby with high ceilings, tiled floors, tiled walls with granite edging, and beautiful wood floorboards and trim around doors, windows, and the former ticket counter. Photo by Steve Craddock, November 2009.

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West bay interior, view to the south. Note the intact woodwork, tile, and fixtures. The Depot's woodwork, tile, granite and porcelain and marble fixtures (in the bathrooms) are all in remarkably good condition despite prolonged neglect and various temporary users of the building over the years. Photo by Steve Craddock, November 2009.

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The walls in the Depot building are finished with tile, granite, marble and plaster, depending on the room and/or use of the area. The condition of each of these materials is excellent throughout the building. Photo by Steve Craddock, November 2009.

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National Register Photographs

In accordance with the March 2005 Photo Policy expansion, the photos that accompany this nomination are printed on HP Premium Plus Photo Paper, using a Hewlett Packard 100 gray photo cartridge. This combination of paper and inks is included on the NR's list of "Acceptable Ink and Paper combinations for Digital Images." The images are also recorded on an archival CD-R with a resolution at least 1200x1800 pixels, 300 dpi in "true color" 24-bit format.

Photolog

Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Kate Hampton
Date of Photograph: June 2009
Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT
Description and view of camera: View to south, showing north and east elevations
Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0001

Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Kate Hampton
Date of Photograph: June 2009
Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT
Description and view of camera: North and east elevations of the depot, view to south.
Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0002

Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Kate Hampton
Date of Photograph: June 2009
Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT
Description and view of camera: East and south elevations, view to east.
Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0003

Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Kate Hampton
Date of Photograph: June 2009
Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT
Description and view of camera: North elevation, view to south.
Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0004

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Northern Pacific Railway Depot
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Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Kate Hampton
Date of Photograph: June 2009
Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT
Description and view of camera: Window detail, north elevation.
Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0005

Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Kate Hampton
Date of Photograph: June 2009
Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT
Description and view of camera: South elevation, view to southwest.
Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0006

Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Jim Jenks
Date of Photograph: September 2009
Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT
Description and view of camera: South elevation, view to northeast.
Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0007

Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana
Photographer: Jim Jenks
Date of Photograph: September 2009
Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT
Description and view of camera: North side landscaping, view to northwest.
Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0008

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Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana

Photographer: Kate Hampton

Date of Photograph: June 2009

Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT

Description and view of camera: View to south, showing north and east elevations

Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0001

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Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana

Photographer: Kate Hampton

Date of Photograph: June 2009

Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT

Description and view of camera: North and east elevations of the depot, view to south.

Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0002

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Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana

Photographer: Kate Hampton

Date of Photograph: June 2009

Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT

Description and view of camera: East and south elevations, view to east.

Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0003

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Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana

Photographer: Kate Hampton

Date of Photograph: June 2009

Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT

Description and view of camera: North elevation, view to south.

Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0004

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Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana

Photographer: Kate Hampton

Date of Photograph: June 2009

Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT

Description and view of camera: Window detail, north elevation.

Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0005

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Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana

Photographer: Kate Hampton
Date of Photograph: June 2009

Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT
Description and view of camera: South elevation, view to southwest.

Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0006

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Northern Pacific Railway Depot
Custer County, MT

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Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana

Photographer: Jim Jenks

Date of Photograph: September 2009

Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT

Description and view of camera: South elevation, view to northeast.

Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0007

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Name: Northern Pacific Railway Depot
County and State: Custer County, Montana

Photographer: Jim Jenks

Date of Photograph: September 2009

Location of original negative: Montana Preservation Alliance, Helena, MT

Description and view of camera: North side landscaping, view to northwest.

Photograph Number: MT_Custer County_NorthernPacificRailwayDepot_0008