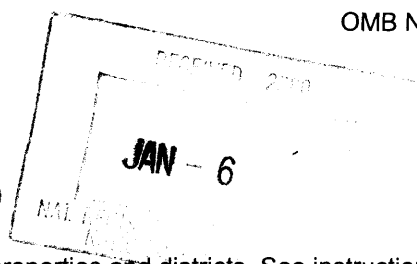


United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Limon Railroad Depot

other names/site number Limon Heritage Museum; 5LN221

2. Location

street & number 897 First Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Limon [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Lincoln code 073 zip code 80828

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Margaret Cortez State Historic Preservation Officer 1/11/91 Date
Signature of certifying official/Title

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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.
- removed from the National Register
- other, explain See continuation sheet.

Elsa H. Ball Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Limon Railroad Depot
Name of Property

Lincoln County, Colorado
County/State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing Noncontributing

1 0 buildings

0 0 sites

0 3 structures

0 0 objects

1 3 Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Rail-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century
American Movements

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Brick; Asbestos

roof Asphalt
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Limon Railroad Depot
Name of Property

Lincoln County, Colorado
County/State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Architecture

Periods of Significance

1910-1952

Significant Dates

1936

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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
- # _____

Limon Railroad Depot
Name of Property

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Colorado Historical Society

Lincoln County, Colorado
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 13 613270 4346260
 Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Vivian Lowe / Lucille Reimer

organization Limon Heritage Society

date August 30, 2002

street & number PO Box 341

telephone 719-775-2373

city or town Limon

state CO

zip code 80828

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name see continuation sheet

street & number _____

telephone _____

city or town _____

state _____

zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPSSection number 7 Page 1 **DESCRIPTION**

The Limon Railroad Depot, built in 1910 and modernized in the late 1930s, is located on its roughly triangular original site between the historic rights-of-way of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad (CRI&P) and the Union Pacific Railroad (UP). The depot is situated immediately south of the commercial center of Limon (Fig.1). The depot's south elevation faces the former CRI&P mainline running west to Colorado Springs and east to Burlington (and on to Kansas City and Chicago). Only a short section of track remains for use as a house track by the Limon Heritage Museum which now occupies the depot. The Rock Island tracks west from this interchange and the Rock Island bridge (No. 5308) which spanned the nearby Big Sandy Creek were sold for scrap and removed in 1994. The Union Pacific tracks from Denver to Hugo remain on the depot's west elevation. The Rock Island/Union Pacific diamond crossing just southwest of the depot has been removed. The north elevation faces the former CRI&P track (now owned by RailAmerica, Inc.) which swings north to join the UP tracks to Denver.

The former gravel surface around the depot is now partially covered in grass. A split-rail fence separates the depot area and parking lot on the north from First Street. The fence continues around the western edge of the property. A fence separates the depot from the Union Pacific office to the south. Foundation plantings include juniper bushes and flower beds. Several deciduous trees occupy spaces in the north depot grounds. Several vintage passenger cars and a caboose sit on the house track. The area to the east of the depot contains an assortment of railroad related signals and crossing markers. A crossing protection gate stands southwest of the depot where it can pivot across both the CRI&P and the UP tracks.

The wood-frame I-plan depot measures approximately 30 feet by 120 feet. The one-story building rises from a concrete foundation with a 44-inch high brick veneer wall and water table. The rowlock coping forms a sill course for the larger depot windows. The upper portion of the building is sheathed in cement-asbestos siding over the original clapboard. The windows and doors are all wood framed and date to the late-1930s modernization of the depot. The hipped roof with flared eaves and decoratively cut rafter ends is covered with green asphalt shingles applied in August 1990 to repair damage resulting from a June 1990 tornado. The roof terminates at each end in slightly elevated pyramidal sections. Two metal flues and a brick chimney pierce the roof. Painted signs indicating the station's name and elevation rise from the west and east elevation eaves.

Rock Island classified the Limon Depot as a "west end" depot, due to the location of its passenger waiting room within the interior plan. The external plan and massing of the depot is symmetrical, however, the irregular fenestration reflects the division and uses of the interior spaces.

The south and east elevations are nearly mirror images of each other. The notable exception is the station agent's bay window which occupies the southwest corner of the building. The five-sided bay is filled with two-over-two single-hung sash. To the east of the bay is a solid wood door with a circular window which opens into the office. From west to east, the remainder of the south elevation contains: a pair of three-light windows; a solid wood waiting room door with circular window and narrow side lights; a four-part waiting room window; a three-light window; a one-light fixed window; a pedestrian door surrounded by wood infill in a former freight door opening; and a final pair of three-light windows. The three-light windows are each divided horizontally. The waiting room windows consist of pairs of horizontally divided four-light windows with flanking two-over-two single-hung sash. When replacing

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

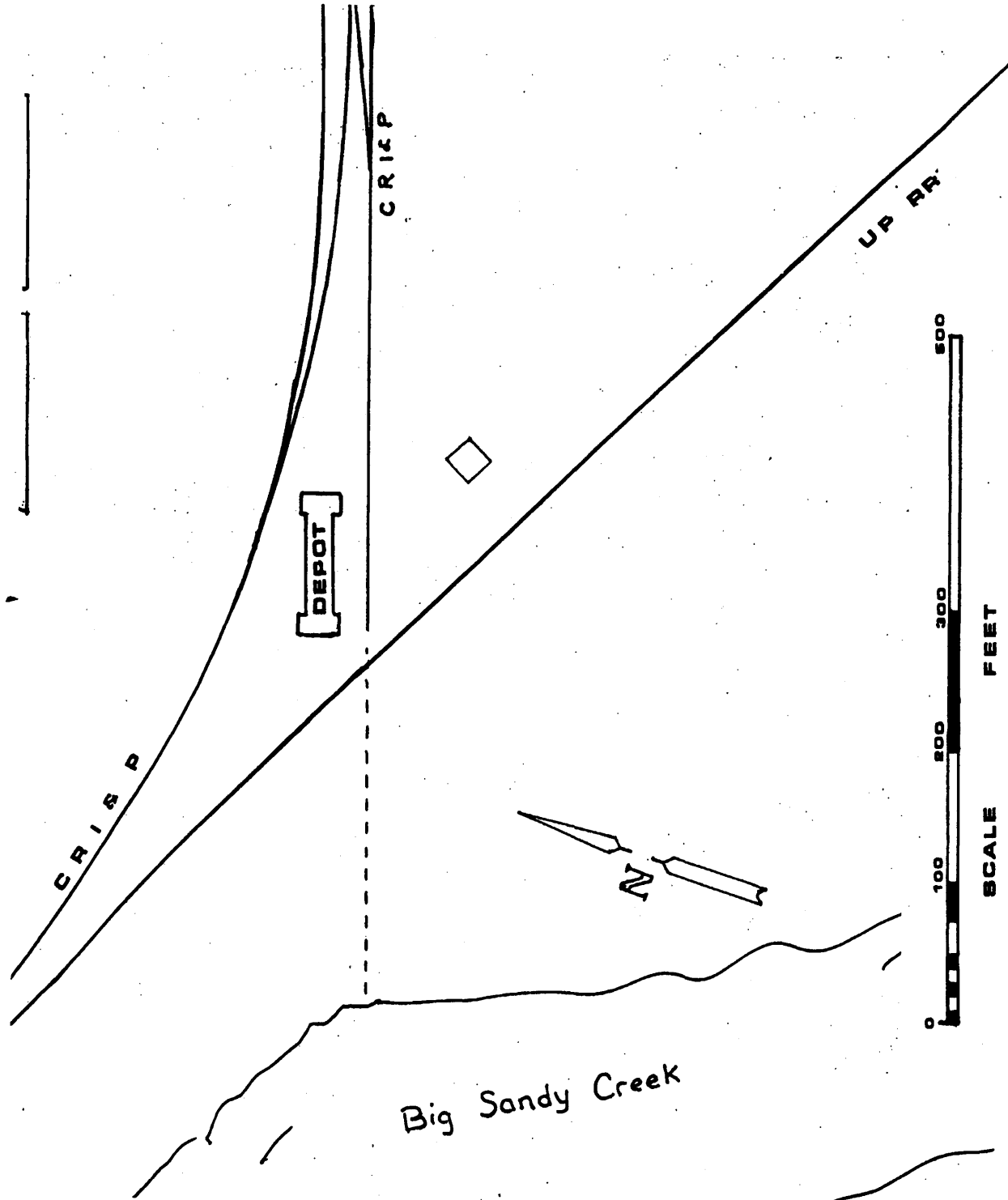
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPS

Section number 7 Page 2

the tornado-damaged window glazing, volunteers were not able to locate corrugated glass to match the original door side lights.

Figure 1 **SITE MAP**



National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPS

Section number 7 Page 3

The east elevation contains a centered vertical plank sliding freight door with a six-light window. Damage to the brick north of the door has resulted in its replacement with cement-asbestos siding.

The north elevation repeats the fenestration of the south, with the exclusion of the corner bay and associated office door. Also, the north elevation contains a single-light window in place of the paired windows next to the former freight door.

The west elevation's fenestration is minimal. In addition the corner bay, the elevation contains a pair of two-over-two single-hung sash.

The Rock Island modernized many of its depots in the late 1930s. Photographic documentation indicates that this is the period during which the Limon Depot received its brick veneer, cement-asbestos siding, and several new doors and windows. Early photographs of the 1910 depot show a building sheathed in horizontal wood siding on the office and waiting room portion of the building. A photograph of the west elevation prior to its 1930's modernization shows a pair of four-over-four sash (Fig. 2). This same space is now filled with two-over-two sash. As variations of these windows with horizontal muntins may be found throughout the depot, it is likely that most of the original windows were replaced in the 1930s. Another historical photograph shows a west elevation door between the paired windows and the corner bay (Fig. 3). This door was most likely removed during the modernization. The bay windows appear to be the same as those currently in the depot. A 1920 photograph of a locomotive stopped in front of the south elevation also indicates the existence of vertical wood siding near the bay window.

Little has been changed to the building exterior since the 1940s. A pair of windows currently on the north elevation, directly west of the freight door, do not appear in a 1943

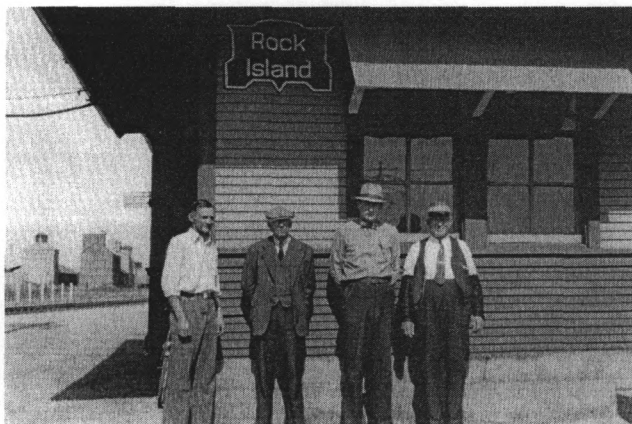


Figure 2 Limon Depot, west elevation,
prior to the 1930's modernization.
Collection of the Limon Heritage Museum



Figure 3 Limon Depot, west elevation,
prior to the 1930's modernization.
Collection of the Limon Heritage Museum

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPSSection number 7 Page 4

photograph. A similarly located single-light window currently on the south elevation does not appear in a 1951 depot photograph (Fig. 4) New roof shingles and window glass were installed to repair damage after the 1990 tornado.

It is believed that the interior originally consisted of seven main rooms: a large office area behind the ticket window (which has now been divided into two rooms); two large restrooms; an order room; a spacious waiting room; a locker room; and a baggage room. In 1990, a small restroom cubicle was removed next to the order room and converted to a storage/supply closet. One of the two larger restrooms was redesigned to create a hall and stairs to the locker room. Other restroom facilities were removed from the locker room and an interior door was added between the locker room and baggage room. A cubicle used by the signal crew was converted to a video room and a model train viewing area was added. These alterations were made without structural changes. All floors in the building are concrete. These were covered with tile in the waiting room, office and order room. The interior walls in the waiting room, office and order room are lath and plaster. The ceilings in these areas are painted tile which was repainted in 1990. There is wood trim around the windows and ceiling. Wood walls in the waiting room were restored and wooden baseboards added to protect the original materials. The interior walls of the locker room were not finished but are painted brick with a painted tile ceiling. The baggage room has never been finished or painted. These rooms are currently utilized for exhibits. No photos have been located of the early waiting room area. The original light fixtures were replaced. Original florescent lights have been retained where practical. A wood stove in the waiting room has replaced an earlier model which has disappeared. A currently non-working coal-burning furnace which heated the entire building remains in the unfinished basement. The furnace has not been used since the early 1970s and is not repairable. The continually damp basement, caused by the high water table in the area, was used for limited storage.



Figure 4 Limon Depot, view to the west, February 18, 1951.

Photographer: Otto Perry

Collection of the Western History/Genealogy Dept., Denver Public Library.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPSSection number 8 Page 5**SIGNIFICANCE**

The 1910 Limon Railroad Depot meets the National Register registration requirements for the depot property type in the multiple property document, *Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948*. The depot is eligible under Criterion A in the area of transportation for its association with eastern Colorado rail transportation. Railroad transportation was a key factor in the establishment of Limon and its growth during the first half of the twentieth century. Rail service allowed Limon to become an important shipping point for agricultural products. The town's location at the intersection of the Union Pacific Railroad and the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad, and its designation as a division point on the latter railroad, made Limon an important regional rail center and a major source of local employment. The depot, though no longer used for rail operations, remains at the center of area rail traffic on the Union Pacific and on RailAmerica, Inc., a short-line rail operator and successor to the Rock Island.

The depot is also eligible under Criterion C for its architectural significance. The Limon Depot is one of only three Rock Island depots in Colorado remaining in their place of operation. The Rock Island used similar designs for its passenger stations, varying each to meet site characteristics and traffic requirements. The Limon Depot is important for its design adaptations which allowed it to effectively serve and manage traffic at a major rail junction. Though modernized in the late 1930s, the depot retains its location, exterior massing and interior design from the 1910 construction. In particular, the corner station agent's office remains intact. This is an especially important character defining element of the depot's original design and operation.

The period of significance begins with the depot's construction in 1910 and extends to the year 1952, a date fifty-years-of-age in keeping with National Register criteria. The year 1936 is a significant date for the modernization of the depot. The depot has survived rail yard accidents, a major tornado, years of neglect, vandalism and theft, and well meaning restoration efforts by volunteers. The building stands with its standard combination depot design and station agent's office intact. In its new setting as a local history museum it retains a high degree of integrity of location, structural design, historical feeling and ongoing railroad association.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE ROCK ISLAND RAILROAD IN COLORADO

In the early 1880s, the managers of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific (CRI&P) considered various plans to extend their rail line westward from Kansas to connect with other railroads in Colorado (see fig. 5). Of particular interest was the proposed Colorado Midland that was to run west out of Colorado Springs to the mountain mining communities. The Rock Island incorporated the wholly-owned subsidiary Chicago, Kansas, and Nebraska Railway (CK&N) in 1885 to construct the expanded route. The CK&N conducted surveys and acquired rights-of-way and other properties to extend a line through northern Kansas and into Colorado. Actual construction began from Horton, Kansas, on July 1, 1886. By early 1888 the rails reached Goodland, Kansas.

The Rock Island planned to have a single track across the eastern plains into Colorado, branching as it approached the mountains--one track going to Denver and the other to Colorado Springs. In the late 1880s the Rock Island chose what was to become Limon's Camp, about 15 miles west of the Union Pacific Railroad division point in Hugo, on Union Pacific (UP) track, for the division point for its tracks going to Denver and Colorado Springs. To speed construction in the spring of 1888, the CK&N put multiple work crews into the field. Grading and track laying crews started west from end-of-track in

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

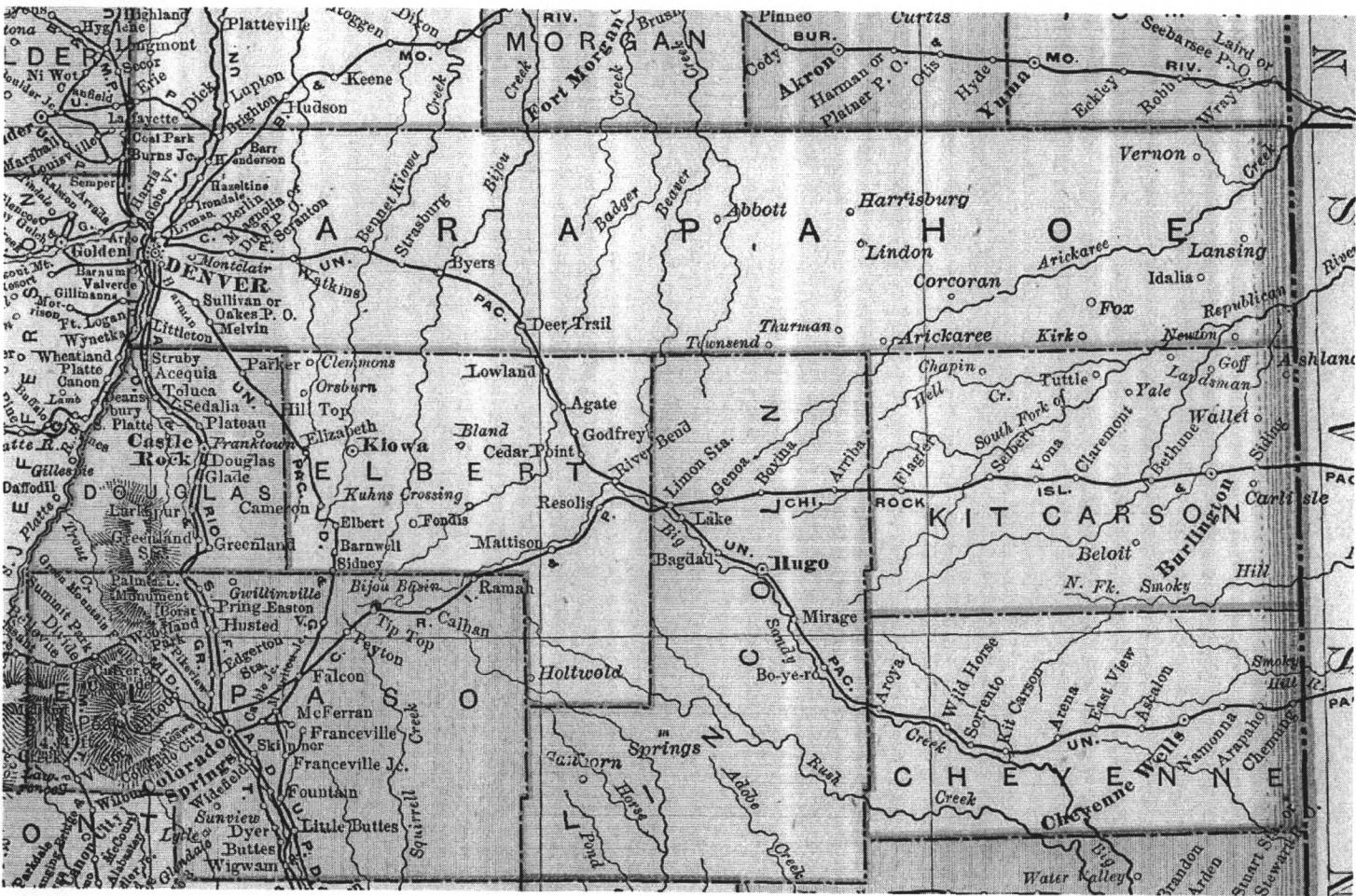
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPS

Section number 8 Page 6

Goodland. Additional grading crews started working both east and west from Limon's Camp. Material and equipment for the Limon operations came either over land or by means of the Union Pacific.

Figure 5 **ROCK ISLAND RAILROAD ROUTES IN COLORADO**
1895 Rand McNally *Railroad Atlas of the United States.*



**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPSSection number 8 Page 7

The first scheduled Rock Island passenger trains between Colorado Springs and Goodland started daily service on November 4, 1888. (After 1888 all scheduling was listed under the Rock Island name and by 1891 the CK&N was formally absorbed by the Rock Island.) Initially, Rock Island passenger trains went from Chicago to Colorado Springs (the "*Rocky Mountain Limited*" offered 24-hour service between the two cities) then on to Denver or Pueblo over the tracks of the Denver & Rio Grande or the Santa Fe Railway. After the Union Pacific granted the Rock Island use of its line from Limon to Denver in April 1889, the Rock Island discontinued its run from Colorado Springs to Denver.

The Rock Island connection with the Colorado Midland proved valuable to both railroads, however, passenger interchange was never up to Rock Island's expectations. The connection at Denver produced much more passenger and freight traffic than did Colorado Springs. This was particularly true after the abandonment of the Midland following World War I. The Rock Island provided transportation to many immigrant families who came into the area lured by cheap land under the Homestead Act and the attractive advertising produced by the railroads. Immigrants to this region of eastern Colorado were often Russians and Slovaks who found the region similar to the steppes of their homeland.

BRIEF HISTORY OF LIMON AND RAIL TRANSPORTATION

With the beginning of rail bed construction in 1888, Limon's Camp became a destination which slowly evolved into the small town of Limon Station. Thus began the long history of Limon's close development with rail transportation.

William S. Pershing, a land agent for the Union Pacific, and later Limon's first mayor, moved north from Hugo and joined other land men in publicizing "the land of sunshine and wealth" for homesteaders and small business operators. In 1900 Limon's population was only 75--but by 1904 many small businesses began to appear and shortly after the Limon State Bank became the community's first bank. Population grew rapidly after 1905 and reached 600 by the end of the decade. The town was incorporated on November 3, 1909. Limon developed north of the Rock Island/Union Pacific crossing and the platting of the town site put the railroad station on First Street and E Avenue at the southern edge of downtown where it would remain during the ups and downs of the railroad. The building served as a union depot for the Rock Island and the Union Pacific, though the majority of passenger trains stopping at Limon were Rock Island. Interestingly, Limon's Baptist Church was organized in 1915 in a railroad chapel car.

As a division point on the CRI&P, the railroad developed a significant yard and shop facilities (see fig. 6). At its zenith, the Rock Island employed 300 people in Limon. In addition to the depot, the railroad constructed a 10-stall roundhouse to service locomotives, a coal tipple and water tower (supplied by its own wells and water treatment facility) and a nine-track rail yard to switch cars traveling between Denver, Colorado Springs, and points east. The yard also provided rail access to numerous grain elevators located along First Avenue. The railroad constructed a Grier House hotel and eating house just southeast of the depot. In the days before dining cars, trains stopped at dining rooms along their routes to allow passengers to eat. Often a single concessionaire provided dining facilities for an entire railroad. The most famous of these were the Harvey Houses along the Santa Fe Railway. The 117 Grier Houses provided similar services throughout the CRI&P system.

Limon grew briskly during the 1920s only to be devastated by a fire in January 1924. Estimated losses were placed at \$150,000 which included many notable businesses. The Rock Island Railroad joined the fire fighting effort by putting its own water supply into action during the blaze.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPS

Section number 8 Page 8

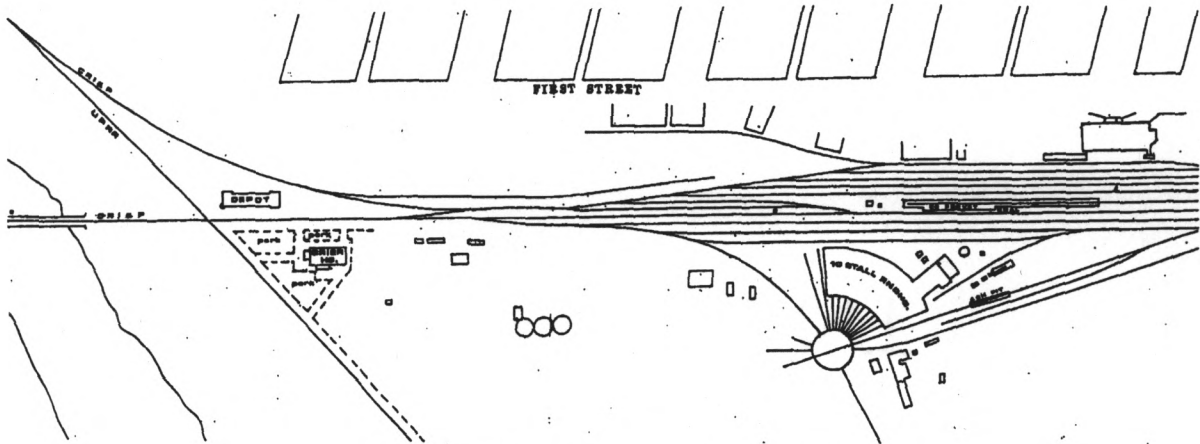


Figure 6 Limon Rail Yard and Shops in 1913

Source: Doty, Michael C. and E.M. McFarland, "Rocketing to the Rockies,"
Colorado Rail Annual No. 17, Golden, CO: Colorado Railroad Museum, 1987.



Figure 7 Aerial view to the southeast showing the Limon Depot and the Rock Island/Union Pacific crossing.
Collection of the Limon Heritage Museum

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPS

Section number 8 Page 9

Limon bounced back after the fire only to be hit hard by the Great Depression. The Rock Island cut back workers to a minimum. One of the casualties of the period was the Grier House. Damaged by a fire in 1930, the building was demolished in 1932. In 1936 the railroad embarked on a modernization program designed to upgrade its facilities and services. This resulted in extra jobs as rail grades, buildings and other structures were repaired or replaced.

One major CRI&P Depression era initiative was the launching of its series of "*Rocket*" passenger trains. These diesel powered streamlined passenger trains were designed to give the railroad a modern image and stimulate both passenger and freight traffic. A good deal of attention was focused on Limon with the introduction of the *Rocky Mountain Rocket* in late 1939. The new train replaced the 1937 tri-weekly Kansas City to Denver *Rocket*. Colorado Springs passengers had connected with the earlier train at Limon, riding on gas-electric powered combination baggage and passenger cars dubbed "*Rocket Juniors*."

The west-bound *Rocky Mountain Rocket* arrived in Limon daily at dawn. Here the train crew split the *Rocket* into two sections. The second diesel locomotive assigned to the train contained a small engineer's cab and a headlight so it could be operated independent of the lead engine (see fig. 8). This second engine, along with a baggage/railway post office car and one or more coaches were switched out of the full train to form the Colorado Springs section. Fifteen couplings and uncouplings were involved to complete the transformation. The schedule allowed the train crew only fifteen minutes to complete the task. The eastbound *Rocket* reversed the procedure in Limon each afternoon as the train headed back to Chicago.



Figure 8 Colorado Springs section of the *Rocky Mountain Rocket* arrives at Limon Depot on July 7, 1940. Photographer: Otto Perry
Collection of the Western History/Genealogy Dept., Denver Public Library.

World War II brought a rebirth of the railroad industry in Limon. It became hard to maintain enough crews for the trains carrying troops and war materials. The Rock Island provided rail service through Limon to Camp Carson (later Fort Carson) and Peterson Field near Colorado Springs. Immediately following the War, the Rock Island suffered another slowdown. Traffic rose during the following postwar economic boom, but only temporarily as increased competition from cars, trucks and planes reduced freight and passenger volume. In 1949 the *Rocket* lost its important revenue generating mail contract between Limon and Colorado Springs. By

the mid-1950s the Rock Island had cut back tremendously in Limon and one by one all the structures associated with the railroad were razed or moved, leaving the Limon Depot as the only survivor of the town's rail heyday. By 1962 only the daily *Rocky Mountain Rocket* provided passenger service to Limon, and in 1966 the Rock Island discontinued its famous *Rocket*. The railroad struggled on in Colorado as a freight-only operation until 1980 when the railroad ceased operations nationwide.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPS

Section number 8 Page 10

From the 1880s into the 1950s, the Union Pacific and the Rock Island railroads continued to be an important source of jobs for the town they had brought into being. Their role declined with the end of passenger trains and the shift to trucks for many freight shipments. When Interstate 70 bypassed the downtown, new growth began to develop at the highway's east and west interchanges. The depot fell into disrepair, was vandalized and then was utilized for a short time (1989-1991) for a tourist train ride, the *Limon Twilight Limited*.

The operation used the former

Rock Island line west to Matheson one summer and east to Arriba for two summers. Limon Heritage Society volunteers began restoration of the dilapidated old structure while "squatting" in the building in 1989 during the tourist train operation. The volunteers sensed the historical significance of the building as well as its importance in the town's memory. They envisioned a small local history museum surrounded by a park on railroad right-of-way. Because of the Heritage Society volunteers' efforts, the Mid-States Port Authority donated the depot to the Town of Limon following the demise of the Cadillac and Lake City Railroad tourist operation. The June 1990 Limon tornado damaged the roof and windows of the structure. These were repaired during a major town rebuilding which brought help from around the state.

Both the Union Pacific Railroad and the RailAmerica have upgraded their trackage on the north and south sides of the Limon Depot in recent years. It seems appropriate that part of the famed Rock Island line has become a house track for three Limon Heritage Museum cars and that a Rock Island snowplow, a gift from the Union Pacific to the Museum, sits a few feet away on RailAmerica track. By special arrangement, the Museum has free storage on the RailAmerica track and RailAmerica has free use of the snowplow in the event one of the historic eastern plains snowstorms should ever strike again!

ARCHITECTURE

The Chicago, Kansas and Nebraska built the first depots as it laid track across Colorado in 1888. In some communities a retired railcar served as the first depot. The temporary facilities allowed the railroad to determine if the new community would take root and grow before it made the financial investment in a permanent depot. The permanent depots constructed by the CK&N tended to be two-story Queen Anne style combination depots. The station agent and his family used the upper level for living quarters. There are no remaining examples of these earliest types of Rock Island depots.



Figure 9 Denver section of the *Rocky Mountain Rocket* heads east toward Limon on July 5, 1942. Photographer: Otto Perry
Collection of the Western History/Genealogy Dept., Denver Public Library.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPSSection number 8 Page 11

The Rock Island built new depots when traffic warranted or to replace depots damaged by fire or train derailments. The first Limon Depot, an untypical one-story combination design, burned on June 28, 1910.¹ The new Limon Depot was one of numerous depots built by the Rock Island in the early twentieth century following similar plans. These depots were of the combination type, combining both passenger and freight operations. Combination depots typically consist of a waiting room at one end of the building with baggage, freight and express relegated to other end. The station agent's office, ticket counter and other building services generally occupied the middle. Like other Rock Island depots in Colorado, the new Limon facility was of wood frame construction with horizontal lap siding on the exterior.

The Limon Depot incorporates a modification specifically designed to accommodate the adjacent crossing of the Rock Island and Union Pacific tracks. The station agent was responsible for managing train movements through the station area. To provide a good view of the tracks, most station agent offices included a projecting bay on the track side of the depot. The first Limon Depot included such a bay on its south elevation. While offering a good view of trains on the CRI&P tracks, as well as north-bound trains on the Union Pacific tracks, the Limon agent could not see south-bound trains on the UP tracks.

The 1910 depot removed the station agent's blind spot by moving the bay window to the southwest corner of the building. This offered the agent an unobstructed view of all arriving and departing trains. The west end office location necessitated a shifting of the passenger waiting room to a central location in the building with the freight operations on the east end.

To further control and protect the dangerous CRI&P/UP crossing, a large metal gate just outside the station agent's window could be swung across either track to warn approaching trains of the crossing's closure. The gate was designed to be remotely operated by the agent in the depot office.

The Limon Depot was unusual in that it serviced trains off all its elevations. Most depots have a definite track side and a town side. With passenger and freight doors on both Rock Island track sides and with the previously mentioned corner agent's window, the Limon Depot easily accommodated its multi-sided train service.

In 1936, Rock Island president J.D. Farrington initiated a modernization program. The program included the upgrading or replacement of all types of rail facilities throughout the company's territory. New depots replaced a few of the older buildings but most were upgraded through the replacement of deteriorated materials. It was during this period that most of the Colorado Rock Island depots received their cement-asbestos siding, new windows and their modernist wood doors with the circular windows. The Limon Depot received its upgrading during this period. In addition to the new siding, doors and windows, the depot also received a partial veneer of smooth blond brick. The changes further emphasized the

¹ Doty, Michael C. and E.M. McFarland, "Rocketing to the Rockies", *Colorado Rail Annual No. 17*, Golden, CO: Colorado Railroad Museum, 1987. Copies of the Limon newspapers for the period have been lost. The *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* from late June and early July contain no mention of the fire.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPSSection number 8/9/10 Page 12

horizontal lines of the depot and along with the "porthole" doors, gave the depot a more streamlined look that complemented the railroad's contemporaneous adoption of streamlined passenger trains and diesel locomotives.

Other than a new roof, paint, and some interior modifications, the depot retains its late 1930s design and materials. As one of only three CRI&P remaining in its original location, and as the only depot designed specifically to accommodate a rail intersection, the Limon Depot is an architecturally significant building associated with the Rock Island Railroad in Colorado.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cooley, Dale and Mary Liz Owen, "A History of Limon", *Where the Wagons Rolled*, Topeka, KS: Lincoln County Historical Society, 1976.

Doty, Michael C. and E.M. McFarland, "Rocketing to the Rockies", *Colorado Rail Annual No. 17*, Golden, CO: Colorado Railroad Museum, 1987.

Fell, James E., *Limon, Colorado-Hub City of the High Plains, 1888-1952*. Boulder, CO: Limon Heritage Society, 1997.

Photograph Collection, Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.

Wagner, John, "Riding the Rockets", *Gazette Telegraph*, Sunday, October 13, 1996, Lifestyle Section.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The nomination boundaries include the footprint of the depot forming a rectangle measuring 30 feet by 120 feet, in the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way, located 205 feet south of First Street and 240 feet west of the RailAmerica right-of-way.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nomination includes the land historically associated with the immediate operation of the Limon Railroad Depot.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPS

Section number ___ Page 13

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-11:

Name of Property: Limon Railroad Depot
 Location: Lincoln County, Colorado
 Photographer: Ed Vermillion
 Date of Photographs: August 2001
 Negatives: Limon Historical Society

Photo No.	Photographic Information
1	North elevation; view to the south.
2	North elevation and north depot yard; view to the east.
3	West elevation; view to the east.
4	Station agent bay window on west elevation and crossing control gate; view to the southeast.
5	Station agent bay window on west elevation, crossing control gate and Union Pacific tracks toward Hugo; view to the southeast.
6	Station agent bay window, depot south elevation, crossing control gate and display rolling stock; view to the east.
7	Station agent bay window, crossing control gate and Union Pacific tracks toward Denver; view to the northwest.
8	Station agent bay window and crossing control gate with Union Pacific tracks in the foreground; view to the north.
9	South depot elevation and display rolling stock; view to the west.
10	East elevation with former CRI&P tracks swinging north toward junction with Union Pacific; view to the west.
11	East elevation with former CRI&P tracks in foreground; view to the west.

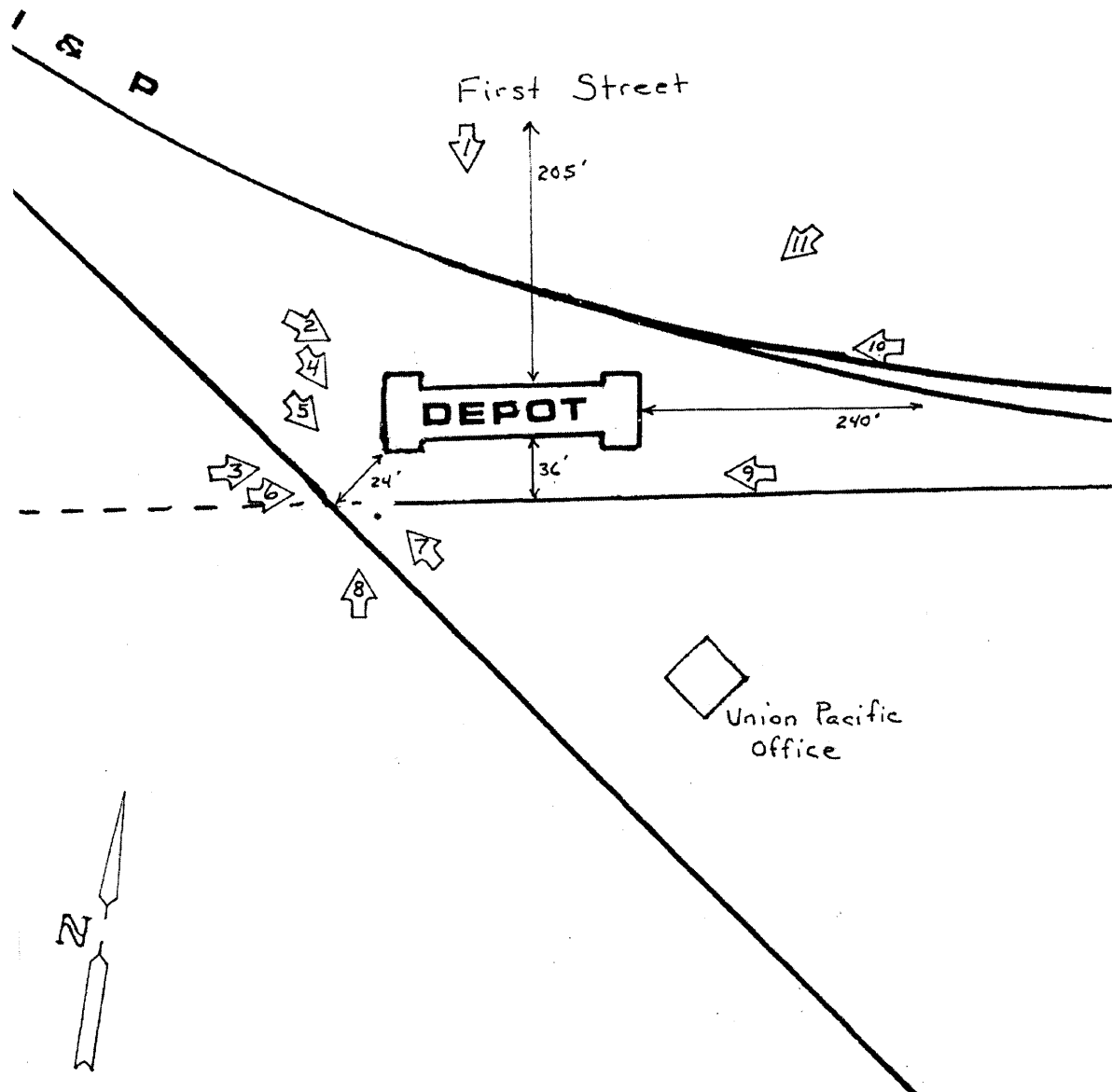
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPS

Section number ___ Page 14

Figure 10 SITE MAP WITH PHOTOGRAPH VIEWS



National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Limon Railroad Depot Lincoln County, Colorado
Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948, MPS

Section number ____ Page 15

USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
Limon Quadrangle, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series, 1970

UTM: Zone 13 / 613270E / 4346260N
PLSS: 6th PM, T9S, R56W, Sec. 17 SE¼ SE¼ SW¼
Elevation: 5,350 feet

