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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 determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Walla Walla Valley Traction Company Car Barn
other names/site number Walla Walla Valley Traction Company Engine House

2. Location

street & number 1102 West Cherry not for publication
city, town Walla Walla vicinity
state Washington code WA county Walla Walla code 071 zip code 99362

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Carol L. Moore Signature of certifying official 10/26/89 Date
Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Mark Z. Baker Entered in the National Register 7 December 1989
 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): _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: Rail-related

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Work in progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Utilitarian

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concretewalls brick

roof other: composition sheetingother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Walla Walla Valley Traction Company Car Barn and Engine House is a utilitarian brick structure located at the intersection of 13th Avenue and Cherry Street near the downtown Walla Walla business district. The structure was built in 1905 to serve as the garage and maintenance facility for the new streetcar and interurban system that began operations in 1906, and continued to serve in that capacity until the 1980s. Today, the structure retains most of its original exterior integrity and the present owners are rehabilitating the interior for conversion to commercial use.

The car barn is a rectangular, one-story structure, measuring approximately 60 feet across the south entry facade along Cherry Street and nearly 150 feet along the east and west side walls. The building rises to a shallow hip roof, which is covered in composition sheeting. The open eaves of the roof project beyond the walls and are decorated with exposed, carved rafter tails. Four brick chimneys rise from the eastern slope of the roof.

The walls of the car barn are built of tan brick, laid in a common bond, and rest on a concrete foundation. The long eastern and western walls of the building are divided into seven bays by engaged brick piers which rise to a corbelled brick stringcourse just below the eaves. Set within each bay are tall and narrow segmental arched openings, with one-over-one double-hung wood sash windows. The windows remain mostly intact, with the original sash and glazing, although they have been boarded during rehabilitation and damaged units are being replaced. There are twelve windows in the west facade, evenly spaced among the six rear bays. Twelve similar windows punctuate the east side, and two single leaf doors and a set of large double doors, set within arched openings, penetrate the east wall.

The facade of the building faces south and is dominated by double doors which allowed entry to the rolling stock. The doors are panelled on the lower half and glazed above, mounted on iron hinges, and rise the full height of the structure. The double doors are placed within a frame portion of the south wall, sided with clapboards. The eastern half of the south wall is brick, and is pierced by two segmentally arched windows and a single-leaf segmentally arched door. The tracks, which once ran through the building, entering at this facade, have since been removed.

The interior of the structure is a large open space with wood truss. Exterior rehabilitation will include replicating broken or missing wood sash and replacement of the missing elements of the exposed rafters. While work is progressing, some of the windows and doors remained boarded.

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Period of Significance

1905-1939

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Not known

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Walla Walla Valley Traction Company Car Barn and Engine House is historically significant for its association with the electric streetcar and interurban railroad network in the Walla Walla valley. Built in 1906, the utilitarian structure served as the main repair shop, car barn and engine house for an extensive transportation system that operated in the valley from 1905 through the 1980s. That system spurred development of residential districts in the city, and provided an important short-haul freight service that helped transform the region's fruit and truck farms into a major local industry. Although the building is being rehabilitated, it continues to retain good exterior integrity, reflecting its role as the functional center of a system that had a lasting impact on the economy of the Walla Walla valley.

Historical Background: The beginnings of electrical interurban transportation in the region can be traced to 1886, when the Walla Walla Power and Light Company established the city's first electric plant on Mill Creek. Three years later, the company laid the tracks for an electric street railway, with a line leading from the O.R. & N. Railroad depot to Second Street, where it divided into two branches--one going to Whitman College and the other to the cemetery.

The line, however, was not a success, and ridership declined precipitously during the Depression of 1893. In the following years, the line was transferred from the electric company to a local firm, but the new company also found insufficient patronage to the make the venture profitable. Thus, in 1898, the line was abandoned and the roadbed taken up. Part of the problem, according to sources at the time, was the ready availability of horses in the agricultural town, giving "people...the habit of both riding and driving (horses and carriages) to such an extent as not to take naturally to streetcars." The city also boasted well-stocked liverys, inexpensive hacks, and a plethora of bicycles.

It was not until late in 1906 that the town once again had a new street car line. Chartered in 1905, the Walla Walla Valley Traction Company was formed by the Northwestern Gas and Electric Company, which held the town's electricity franchise. The system was intended to use surplus power generated by the company's new dam and 2,500 horsepower-capacity power plant on the South Fork of the Walla Walla River.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Up to the Times Magazine (Walla Walla) February, 1909; March, 1910.
Walla Walla Union Statement, March 20, 1910.
Lyman, W.D., History of Walla Walla County, (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1901) pp. 263-264.
Rader, C.M., "Electric Power at Walla Walla" Coast Magazine, March 1908, pp. 179-182.
Langdon, J.W., "Real Estate Values" Coast Magazine, March 1908, pp. 183-185.
Bennett, Robert, Walla Walla: A Town Built to be a City, 1908-1919 (Walla Walla, 1982).

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acree of property less than one

UTM References

A

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5	1	0	2	2	7	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 26 of Bowners Addition excluding west 75', City of Walla Walla.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the traction company car barn.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Leonard Garfield based on information from Ray Pringle
organization Office of Archaeology & Historic Pres. date August 1989
street & number 111 W. 21st Ave., KL-11 telephone (206) 753-4011
city or town Olympia state Washington zip code 98504

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

This time, the growing city welcomed the new trolleys. The local newspaper enthusiastically reported that "there is nothing that gives a city more prestige and adds so much to the comfort and convenience of its citizens that up-to-date street railway transportation." The system included three city lines--a city loop, an East Walla Walla line, and a Prospect Heights line, which reached new neighborhoods as well as such recreational destinations as Meandro Park on the Walla Walla River and the county fair grounds. Fare was five cents per trip, with service initially provided by a fleet of three 36-foot and one 28-foot Brill motor cars, seating up to 36 passengers and powered with two 40-horsepower motors. Equipment and cars were upgraded several times in the ensuing years.

In addition to the city lines, the traction company built an interurban line between Walla Walla and Milton, Oregon, which began operation in April, 1907. Hourly passenger service, with stops at major crossroads, was provided for a fare of forty cents for a round trip. The service appears to have been an immediate success: for the fiscal year of July, 1908 to June, 1909, the interurban carried a total of 925,923 passengers.

By 1909, the traction company was big business, employing 107 men with a monthly payroll of over \$7,000, and carrying nearly a million passengers a year. But the line's impact was felt most keenly in the valley's agricultural district. The interurban freight service offered by the company provided one-day pick-up and delivery between the commission and packing houses of Walla Walla and Milton, and the rich fruit and truck farms in-between.

The line made markets and major rail lines easily accessible to the farmers of the valley, and allowed them to ship their produce and fruit daily and with a minimum of damage. In addition, the line helped raise the value of the district's farmland. In 1907, when the line was completed between Walla Walla and Milton, land values for orchard and truck farm tracts along the 17-mile route increased from an average of \$25-\$30 an acre to \$300-\$750 an acre. So significant was the freight business to the company that even after streetcars were disbanded in 1926, and interurban passenger service discontinued in October, 1931, the line's freight service continued. The freight line remained electrified until 1949 (with the generator in Milton) when it was converted to diesel. From then until the early 1980s, the line (eventually purchased by Burlington Northern) remained an important short-haul railroad, and one of the last of its kind in the state.

From its construction in 1906, the car barn remained the functional heart of the system, the location of all repair, maintenance, and storage activities. In addition, it served as an engine house and office for the short-haul railroad that continued to operate after the line ceased to be electrified. Other extant structures associated with the system include the original passenger terminal facility which was a part of the Northwestern Gas and Electric Company's headquarters built in 1909 at 328-330 West Main Street. The building served as a terminal until the cessation of streetcar service in 1926. The car barn, by contrast, remained in active use as a functional part of the system until the early 1980s. In 1985, the car barn was determined eligible for listing in the National Register by the Keeper.