

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JAN 7 1976  
DATE ENTERED MAY 4 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

\* \* Northern Pacific Office Building  
AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Northeast corner of 7th Street  
and Pacific Avenue

CITY, TOWN Tacoma VICINITY OF #6 - Honorable Floyd V. Hicks  
STATE Washington CODE 53 COUNTY Pierce CODE 053

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Abandoned

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Western Finance Company  
STREET & NUMBER 5444 South Tacoma Way  
CITY, TOWN Tacoma VICINITY OF STATE Washington

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. County-City Building, Pierce County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER 930 Tacoma Avenue South  
CITY, TOWN Tacoma STATE Washington

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Washington State Inventory of Historic Places  
DATE 1974  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission  
CITY, TOWN Olympia STATE Washington

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Northern Pacific Office Building in Tacoma is a basically three-story brick, stucco, stone and cast iron structure built in 1888 as the headquarters of the Northern Pacific railroad. It stands on a high bluff overlooking the Commencement Bay harbor and extensive railroad switching yards that fan out across the tide flats below at the mouth of the Puyallup River where it flows into Puget Sound. The flats are densely developed with heavy industry that has grown up around the railroad facilities and the Port of Tacoma. The site was originally a choice location across from the Tacoma City Hall (extant and listed in the National Register) and at the north end of Pacific Avenue, the main street through the city's central business district.

As a work of architecture, the building has a somewhat unusual style said to be derived from Italian Renaissance. It is more or less triangular in plan due to the skew orientation of the street and the edge of the bluff, although in fact the plan is highly irregular. Beginning with a four-story cylindrical tower at the north end, it gradually widens with a series of curves and re-entrant angles to a more conventional four-story rectangular plan section at the opposite end (now demolished). The irregular intermediate portion is only three stories in height, with its bold, bracketed entablature continued around the tower -- visually separating the three lower stories from the top floor and the lantern above.

The foundation is ashlar stonework to the level of the first floor -- increasingly exposed as the sloping topography drops away toward the north and the bluff behind the building. Above a substantial water table, the brick wall surfaces are stuccoed. At the height of the second and third floors, there is a narrow sub-cornice or belt course resting on the capitals of strip pilasters that together divide the wall area into a series of panels. On the tower portion, two such panels (separated by 90 degrees) are pedimented and project slightly forming a tabernacle frame at the second floor.

On the four-story rectangular plan portion which once stood at the opposite end of the building the frieze from the three-story intermediate section was carried across, less the cornice, like an elaborate belt course between the third and fourth floors. Crowning the strip pilasters that divided this section on the street front facade there was a single broad pediment offset toward the center of the building.

Above the cornice around all but the top of the tower there is a high parapet that conceals the slight pitch of a gable roof running the length of the three-story part of the structure. The four-story, rectangular plan portion had, apparently, a flat roof, while the tower is crowned by a low conical roof with a lantern and finial.

Double hung windows are used throughout, closely spaced at regular intervals with a few variations confined to the tower. There are two entrances facing the street, one formal sheltered under a suspended canopy with double doors and a transom arch on pilasters, and another narrower doorway further down the facade.

The building once contained 53 offices and storerooms and 19 fire-proof vaults. On the first and second floors were the offices of the Assistant General Manager,

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Assistant Superintendent of Transportation, Northern Pacific Coal Company, Tacoma Land Company, the Legal Department, Road Master, Superintendent of Bridges, Northern Pacific Express Company and the city ticket and freight offices. The third floor was occupied by the engineering department and a telegraph room -- with a private office for the Telegraphic Superintendent. On the fourth or top floor of the tower there was an employees' cafeteria. Also, there was a blueprint room where the paper -- on rollers -- could be brought onto the roof and exposed to sunlight.

In the early 1920's, the four-story section at the south end of the building was demolished and rebuilt for security reasons. It was wrecked again in 1974 so that Pacific Avenue could be widened, leaving a blank brick and concrete wall and some of the roof structure exposed. The interior is being gutted to prepare for an as yet undefined adaptive use, and a recently constructed concrete highway ramp runs behind the building along the bluff, crossing over Pacific Avenue as it bends 90 degrees to the north of the site.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1891

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Proposals for the construction of a transcontinental railroad were debated before the United States Congress for nearly three decades without decisive action, but finally in 1853 funds were appropriated to survey and map five prospective routes to the west. The northernmost route, the one later used by the Northern Pacific, was explored under the command of Isaac I. Stevens, who was then also serving as Washington Territory's first governor. Although the northern survey was considered superior by some supporters, a sectional dispute developed between the north and south over selection of the route and Congress in 1862 compromised choosing a path through the center. But the advocates of the northern route did not relent and in fact intensified their efforts -- first approaching the Massachusetts legislature and later the Maine legislature for a charter to build such a railroad. They then used this charter in a successful attempt to persuade Congress to back their proposal with a land grant provision.

On July 2, 1864 Congress passed a bill which created the Northern Pacific Railroad Company. Due to financial difficulties the actual construction of the railroad was postponed until 1870 when Jay Cooke and Company put up capital to finance the operation. Throughout construction of the railroad there were constant financial problems as well as labor shortages. At one point during construction there was such an acute labor deficiency that 15,000 of the required 25,000 workers were Chinese immigrants. When financial and labor difficulties were finally resolved, for the time being at least, the rails towards the Pacific were laid at a rate of 250 miles per year across the open plains. But along the path toward Puget Sound stood two high mountain ranges, the Rockies in Montana and the Cascades in Washington. The Rockies were breached with a 3,600 foot tunnel but to overcome the Cascades was more difficult. The actual crossing of the Cascade range was a major engineering feat. The tracks were built in switchbacks with a ruling grade of 5.6 percent. There were three switchbacks on each side of the summit as well as a double horseshoe. Stampede Pass had presented the fewest difficulties of all the passes under consideration and yet it required nearly three miles of tunneling including a tunnel under the summit approximately 1 8/10 miles in length, completed in 1883. In all the road through these mountains to the Western territories cost \$8,000,000. The first regular Westbound passenger train over the switchback arrived in Tacoma at 7:15 p.m., July 3, 1887.

Soon after a charter was issued by Congress for construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad the search for a western terminus began. It was widely believed by the public and the railroad management as well that no matter which location was chosen

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cheever, Bruce. Development of Railroads in the State of Washington 1860-1946, Thesis 1949.

Denny, C. E. The Northern Pacific First of the Northern Transcontinental, Newcomer Society of North America, 1949.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1,0	54,2	5,2,0	5,2	3,3	7,2,0
ZONE	EASTING				NORTHING

B 

ZONE	EASTING				NORTHING

C 

ZONE	EASTING				NORTHING

D 

ZONE	EASTING				NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kathleen J. Norris and Jacob Thomas

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

P. O. Box 1128

(206) 753-4116

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Olympia

Washington

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Arthur M. Sholnik*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

December 19, 1975

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

Acting *W. J. ...*

DATE

5/4/76

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

5.3.76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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it was destined to become the most important city in the Pacific Northwest. This knowledge led to frantic speculation as to which city would be selected so that shrewd investors might profit from strategic real estate holdings. One such speculator was Job Carr. In 1864 he arrived on Puget Sound, selected a small sheltered cove, and there he built a cabin and platted a townsite. Job confidently boasted that on that exact spot the railroad would build its terminus, although many other Puget Sound settlements had similar hopes. In the mill town which began to grow up around him there were few residents who did not believe that this "city of destiny" would soon become the terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and as such would be the center of commercial activity in the northwest. Job Carr did live long enough to see the railroad choose Tacoma as its terminus -- not at his cove, but at a site two miles away. A new city developed around the actual terminus site, and so there were two cities platted at Tacoma in roughly the same location. They continued as separate municipalities until united under a single government in 1884.

Tacoma was chosen as the terminus not only because it had a good harbor and level ground for terminal facilities, but more importantly it offered its land to the railroad at a lower price. Tacoma as the terminus city grew rapidly, which is apparent in population statistics; before it was so designated there were 200 people living in Tacoma, by 1884 there were 6,000 inhabitants and one year later there was a population of 8,000.

In September 1888 "to proclaim to the world the confidence the officers of the Northern Pacific have in the future of the great city springing up at its western terminus", the Northern Pacific built a lavish four-story building to use as its offices. That structure soon became one of the most elegant and impressive in Tacoma and considering that it was occupied by the railroad management it was among the most important.

As other railroad companies began to increase their operations in Washington, the Northern Pacific's monopoly was broken and Tacoma began to decline in prominence. The Northern Pacific had tried for many years to prevent any railroad from reaching Seattle, for it was considered imperative by the board members, who owned thousands of acres of land in Tacoma, to halt the growth of any competing port in the vicinity of their terminus. Tacoma did successfully prevent construction of a railroad to Seattle until James J. Hill firmly established his organizational and financial influence and ultimately became despised by the citizens of Tacoma. In 1895 Hill, president of the Great Northern Railroad and by then majority stockholder in the Northern Pacific, completed work on a line that provided Seattle with its first major rail connection. The "city of destiny" soon realized that the promise of becoming the greatest metropolis in the Pacific Northwest could never be met. In fact, business did so considerably

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shift to Seattle, that the Northern Pacific in 1921 found it more profitable to move their Tacoma offices to Seattle.

The significance of the Northern Pacific Office Building should be assessed in relation to the following quotation from the September 8, 1888 edition of the Tacoma Daily.

Look at Tacoma! This city is the creation of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and its great strides in development means nothing more than the carrying out of a programme conceived and drafted in the year 1873 by the directors of that company. In a sense the prosperity of Tacoma has been and will be coincident with the growth and importance of the Northern Pacific . . ."

More than a grand gesture, the building was a demonstration of the railroad's commitment to Tacoma. The development of lavish offices in Tacoma promptly after the railroad arrived there served as a signal to other investors which would attract additional conservative capital and insure the long term success of their own investment in that city. The construction of the Northern Pacific Office Building was a major project which continues to represent the powerful influence of the railroad in the history of Tacoma.

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Mason, Allen C. Tacoma and Vicinity, Nuhn and Wheeler Publishers, Tacoma, 1889.

Smalley, Eugene V. History of the Northern Pacific Railroad, New York, 1883.

Villard, Henry. The Early History of Transportation in Oregon, edited by  
O. G. Villard, 1944.

Tacoma Chamber of Commerce, Tacoma Illustrated, Chicago, 1889.

Jay Cooke and Company, The Northern Pacific Railroad Its Route, Resources,  
Progress and Business. Publishing date uncertain, 1863-1873.

Tacoma Daily Ledger, September 5-8, 1889.