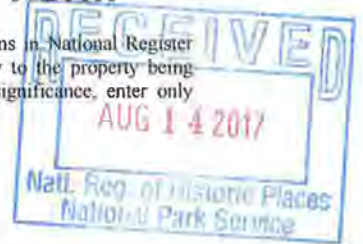


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

N/A

### 2. Location

Street & number: 90 First Street

City or town: Benicia State: California County: Solano

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A \_\_\_ B x C \_\_\_ D

	Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer	8/9/17
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>California Office of Historic Preservation</u>		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

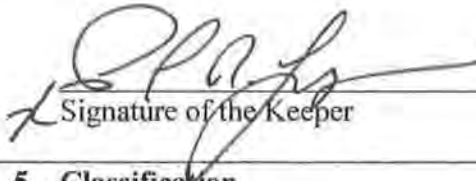
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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

  
Signature of the Keeper

9/28/2017  
Date of Action

**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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION: rail-related  
COMMERCE/TRADE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: civic

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Stick

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### **Summary Paragraph**

The Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot in Benicia, California is a two-story Western Stick style building located at the southern extent of First Street along the shore of the Carquinez Strait. Originally constructed in 1897 in Banta, California according to Southern Pacific standard depot plan Number 18, the building was insufficiently used and eventually dismantled and moved to Benicia in 1902. From 1902 until 1930 the depot served as Benicia's main passenger and freight station and train-ferry staging center. The lower story served station business purposes and consists of a passenger waiting room, station agent office, baggage room, and freight house. Most of this lower level has been restored and now serves as the gift/visitor center, office, and storage space for the Benicia Main Street Program. The upper story historically served as the station agent's living area and consists of a kitchen, dining room, sitting/living room, bathroom, and bedroom. This second story is largely unrestored and is currently vacant, but retains many of its original architectural elements and features. After the closing of the station in 1930 due to the construction of a train bridge, the depot served as the residence for the family of the station's last agent until 1958. The building was purchased by the city of Benicia in 1975 but remained empty until 2001. Restored in 1999 according to a "Historic Property Survey Report" and "Finding of No Adverse Effect" and in accordance with 36 CFR 800.9(a), the depot stands as the only material trace of the once thriving commercial and industrial southern waterfront. The building retains its characteristic Western Stick features of exposed structural elements and external geometric board designs. Overall, the location and architectural features of the Benicia depot represent an important regional style that emerged out of a particular historic and economic context and they serve to link the station to a larger system of train lines and depots throughout the state and country. The restoration efforts to date have served to maintain the historical integrity of the building by retaining and highlighting the depot's distinguishing architectural features and strategic waterfront location.

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## Narrative Description

Originally built in 1897 in Banta, California, the depot was dismantled and reassembled in Benicia, California in 1902 by the Southern Pacific Railroad Company. The passenger depot at Benicia is one of twelve existing Southern Pacific depots that were built according to the Number 18 standard plan. This plan is designed in a Western Stick style and is comprised of two stories, the bottom story consisting of an agent's office, waiting room, baggage room, and freight room, and the top story (limited to the western portion) being the living quarters for the depot agent, comprised of a single bedroom/bathroom, dining room, sitting/living room and kitchen.

### *Setting:*

The Benicia depot sits on open waterfront parkland at the southern extend of the city of Benicia at the corner of First and A Streets, approximately 200' north and 75' west from the northern shore of the Carquinez Strait. While the depot site encompasses .38 acres, the larger First Street Green Park surrounds it to the north, west, and south. This parkland is comprised of managed grass, seasonal wetlands, and restored coastal marshes. Immediately surrounding the depot to the north are a number of tall historic palms that complement those lining the west side of First Street. The remnants of the now abandoned A Street right of way divide the depot grounds from the wetland aspects of the park. Access to the depot from First Street is provided by a slightly elevated walkway.

The location of the depot offers expansive views in all directions. To the south are dramatic views of Port Costa, which served as the corresponding port in the train-ferry system, and the rolling hills of northern Contra Costa County and the southern Carquinez headlands. To the east are more views of the Carquinez Strait, the city of Martinez, Mount Diablo, the remains of the historic Benicia-Martinez ferry docks, the Benicia-Martinez vehicle bridges, and the railway bridge that facilitated the closure of the Benicia railway and ferry system. To the west lie the cities of Vallejo and Crockett, the Carquinez Bridge, and San Pablo Bay. The open nature of the space surrounding the depot also provides dramatic views of the city of Benicia to the north. Once located at the community's commercial core, the depot is now one of the few remnants of that industrial activity and the only surviving link to the transcontinental railway and ferry system that once defined the waterfront area. While the depot was raised approximately 2.75 feet in 2000 as part of a rehabilitation project and to protect the structure from future flooding, the orientation and location of the depot reflects its original placement and the historical events with which it is associated. The original spatial relationship to First Street, the Carquinez Strait, and the former ferry slip are retained and create important and lasting historical connections.

The depot now serves as the headquarters and store for the Benicia Main Street Program, a non-profit organization aimed to promote interest and access to the downtown area through history and heritage preservation and the promotion of local commerce.<sup>1</sup> Being situated at the terminus

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<sup>1</sup> Benicia Main Street Program, *Mission Statement*.

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of First Street, the city's historic and current commercial center, the depot continues to visually and symbolically anchor the Benicia Downtown Historic District and serve as the emblem for both Benicia's influential past and vibrant present.<sup>2</sup>

*Exterior:*

The Benicia depot is a rectangular, wooden, Western Stick style structure built according to Southern Pacific standard depot plan Number 18.<sup>3</sup> The bottom floor of the depot is roughly rectangular, measuring 25.5' by 90' with two small architectural protrusions: the ticket box window, which extends 3 feet from the southern exterior wall, and the stairwell landing, which extends 2.5' from the northern exterior wall. The second story is rectangular, measuring 25.5' by 28' with a shallow shed dormer extension to the east measuring 12' by 13'.

The exterior of the first floor is comprised of horizontal timber cladding, interrupted by exposed structural elements. The cladding is painted two-toned in a neutral yellow-tan and light brown. Structural elements are distinguished by a darker reddish-brown color. A wooden platform measuring between 8' and 11' wide surrounds all three sides of the western portion of the building. The eastern portion of the building exhibits an elevated 11' x 40' platform along the southern elevation and a smaller 8' by 24' platform along the northern elevation. Both of these eastern platforms are elevated to a height of the train doors and loading docks to ease freight loading.

Following Western Stick style conventions, the exterior siding on the second story is faux-timber geometric design, while the bottom story is sided with horizontal clapboard. The roof is comprised of multiple gables and hangs wide over the structure walls and surrounding platform and is supported by knee-brace brackets. The gable end of the second story is trimmed with plain fascia, while the roof trim of the single story portion has a decorative rail. A single brick chimney is located in the western portion.<sup>4</sup> The exterior paint is in the traditional Stick style earth tones with the siding being largely a horizontal two-tone dark tan (bottom) and light yellowish tan (top), trim being a reddish brown, and the roof being a dark forest green that mirrors historic specifications.

Windows on the first floor of the waiting room and station office are wood sash, twelve over four, double hung and vertically emphasized. The only windows on the freight house occur on the eastern elevation and are comprised of two colonial grid style windows placed next to each other in the center of the elevation within the gable. Along the northern and southern aspects of the freight house there is a double-hung sliding door. Access to the freight doors is provided through raised wood platforms. The main passenger access door is located on the west side of the square ticket booth extension. The door is a heavily glazed, wood, Queen Anne style divided

<sup>2</sup> *Benicia General Plan: From 1847 into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Adopted June 15, 1999), 99.

<sup>3</sup> Roland, Donald B., *Building, Structure, and Object Record* (Sacramento, CA: Roland-Nawi Associates, 2004), 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

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light. A second door on the north side is four-panel wood with four light transom windows above.<sup>5</sup> Second floor fenestration consists of wood sash, eight over two, double hung windows. The western elevation has two windows separated by siding. The northern and southern elevations have four windows arranged in a line covered by a separate roof overhang supported by corner brackets

Overall, the architectural features of the Benicia depot represent an excellent example of both Western Stick style architecture and the Number 18 standard depot plan employed by Southern Pacific in Northern California. Almost entirely original (see integrity section) these architectural features make the depot easily recognizable and link it to the rich railroad and industrial history of the city.

*Interior:*

The interior of the depot exhibits a mix of restored features, partially restored/stabilized elements, and unrestored elements. The western portion of the first floor is comprised of a waiting room, measuring 17' by 25.5'. The waiting room now serves as the gift shop and information center for the Benicia Main Street Program. Functional elements such as doorjambes and lintels and interior fenestration elements are largely original or have been restored to reflect original construction style and technique. Floor and roof timbers have been largely replaced and modern track lighting has been installed.

The eastern portion of the first floor is comprised largely of the freight house measuring 35' by 25.5'. The freight area is entirely original (aside from freight door sliding elements). Two original in-floor freight scales occupy the west-central aspect of the freight room and the two original sliding freight doors are in place on the northern and southern walls. There is no interior paneling and structural elements are exposed, although it appears that this is an original design characteristic and the overall integrity of the elements is very good.

West of the freight house is the historic baggage room. Originally comprised of an open floor plan, a modern bathroom facility was added to this room with the 1999-2001 restoration. The baggage room retains three original sliding doors. Access to the stairs and second story is now through the bathroom facility.

Between the baggage and the waiting room is the station agent's office, the southern-most portion serving as the ticket window and jutting 3' from the building wall. An interior ticket window is also located along the interior western wall of the office, providing access to the waiting room. This area now serves as the office area for the Benicia Main Street Program. The office area measures 19' by 25.5', with an additional 7.5' by 2.5' extension to the north. Walls are painted in a two-tone style of light yellow and white. A small partial wall has been added but all structural and decorative post features are original. Additionally, many of the original

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid; Fleming, Randall, *Historic Property Survey Report and Finding of No Adverse Effect* (Caltrans District 4, 1996).



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hardware elements such as door hinges and window locks have been retained. Flooring in this area is original but was removed and restored during the rehabilitation process. During rehabilitation it was observed that thick rope had been used to fill gaps between floorboards and this characteristic has been retained.

The second story living quarters are largely original and unrestored. The current layout is modified slightly from original Number 18 plans. Rather than having all the rooms connected via a central hallway leading from the stair access, the southern passageway wall was either removed or never installed. The result is a more open layout with individual rooms and stairs being accessed through an open "L" shaped sitting/living room. The large "L" shaped sitting room measuring approximately 10.5' by 28' by 14.5'. The majority of timber floor, roof, and wall elements of this room are original and in place. The few that are dislodged have been retained. The interior paint of this room is original light yellow with framing elements being white, but it is fairly degraded. Large windows along the southern and western walls provide ample light and spectacular views of the waterfront and the area historically occupied by the rail yard and train-ferry system.

A kitchen measuring 10.5' by 13' plus a small open pantry occupies the northeast portion of the second story. Original sink features, work surfaces, and cupboards are in place but fairly degraded. The paint is original, with the walls being white and cupboards, floorboards, and jambs being a bright yellow. Large windows to the north provide substantial views of the southern downtown Benicia area and waterfront.

A dining room measuring approximately 10.5' by 15' feet with a built-in closet occupies the northwest portion of the second story. One large window faces north toward the city of Benicia. The walls have original white paint while the window jambs, door, and doorjambs are a light yellow.

A bedroom/bathroom measuring 12' by 13' feet extends to the east from the main sitting room. The roof in this room is substantially lower than the other second story rooms. Timber floor, roof, and wall elements are original and painted white in the sleeping area and light pink in the bathroom. Bathroom features such as a wooden shelf, metal towel racks, and a porcelain sink and claw-foot tub are retained but in fair-to-poor condition.

*Integrity:*

The original Benicia train depot was built in 1879 and located on the ferry wharf. Just after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the rail yard was reorganized and upgraded to accommodate and further promote increased rail traffic through Benicia. As part of these improvements the old depot was removed. The new depot installed by Southern Pacific as part of the Benicia rail yard upgrade was originally built in 1897 for the town of Banta, California. The Banta railroad stop was severely underused, however, as it was quickly overshadowed by the increasingly important nearby rail towns of Tracy and Lathrop. As a result, the Banta stop was removed from the line and in 1902 the depot was dismantled, moved to Benicia, and installed (unaltered from its original plan) at its current location at the terminus of First Street, on the east side south of A

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Street. The depot remained in active use as Benicia's primary freight and passenger station until 1930 when the completion of the Benicia-Martinez (Suisun Bay) Bridge, the largest double-track railroad bridge west of the Mississippi River at the time, made the stop and ferry crossing at Benicia obsolete.<sup>6</sup> The depot's final agent, Leslie Bobbit, lived in the upstairs residence until 1958, at which point the station was closed and all official activity ceased.<sup>7</sup> The depot remained unused and unmaintained, being purchased by the city in 1975 and boarded up in 1984.<sup>8</sup>

By 1996, the city of Benicia, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration and the Transportation Enhancements activities program, had proposed a rehabilitation project for the depot. Coinciding with the proposed rehabilitation a Historic Property Survey Report (HPSR) was completed to identify potential archaeological and historic cultural resources. A finding of No Adverse Effect (FNAE) was undertaken in accordance with CEQA Section 106, 36 CFR 800.9(a) to ensure, under the request of the State Historic Preservation Office, that the rehabilitation would not adversely affect the historical integrity of the building. The explicit goal of the rehabilitation project was to stop further deterioration, preserve the building and its historical features, and through its rehabilitation, make the building available for future use.<sup>9</sup> Reviews of proposed rehabilitation plans coupled with the lack of archaeological resources identified at the site led to the determination that the rehabilitation project would have no adverse effects on the historical integrity of the site.<sup>10</sup>

Rehabilitation of the depot began in 1999 and was completed in 2001. Rehabilitation included structural upgrading per the State Historic Building Code and the removal of non-historic materials that had been added during the final years of use and the post-abandonment period, including asphalt shingles, metal gutters, and plywood boards covering windows and doors. At the time of the rehabilitation proposal the depot sat significantly below the level of adjacent First Street and water had infiltrated its foundation. Storm drain systems connected to the Strait would back up at high tide, flooding the foundation and exacerbating the deterioration of the wood foundation.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, the rehabilitation plan also included raising the building roughly 2.75 feet to the modern street level by installing a new foundation on leveled fill.<sup>12</sup> In addition, a new roof was added and exterior windows, doors, and finish were refurbished. The exterior rehabilitation preserved "the historical and architectural value of the property in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings" and the building was repainted in its original Western Stick

<sup>6</sup> Solomon, Brian, *Southern Pacific Railroad*, (Osceola, MBI Publishing)54; Peterson, Geraldine, *Determination of Eligibility Report: Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot* (Point Richmond, CA: Interactive Resources, Inc., 1986), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Flemming, Randall, *Building, Structure and Object Record* (Benicia, Department of Parks and Recreation, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Peterson, *Determination of Eligibility Report: Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Peterson, *Determination of Eligibility Report: Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Fleming, *Historic Property Survey Report and Finding of No Adverse Effect*, 2.

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style colors.<sup>13</sup> The interior waiting room floor and other select elements were replaced and minor plumbing and electrical modifications were made to the office room to make it a usable space. During the rehabilitation process, however, replaced elements were matched to existing ones or crafted in a way that retained historical integrity. In addition, efforts were taken to use original elements whenever possible, exhibited by the retention of original decorative posts, sliding doors, swinging doors, window frames, and a substantial amount of door and window hardware. The freight room and upstairs living quarters are almost entirely unrestored and are in an overall fair condition. These areas retain original plumbing and electrical elements that were added at an unknown date during the depot's period of original occupation and active use. Overall, the rehabilitation efforts served to protect the property and make it more accessible for public use and enjoyment while retaining the architectural integrity, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and historical associations.

Although the depot was moved during its overall period of historical significance (1897-1930), the property retains its architectural value and meets the necessary Criteria Considerations for Moved Properties (B). Originally built in Banta in 1897 from a stock Number 18 depot plan, the building was quickly and relatively easily reconstructed in Benicia in 1902 in the exact form and using the same material in which it had originally been built. The depot, therefore, retains its original architectural value (Criterion C) and integrity of design, materials, and feeling.

Additionally, while the building was not originally constructed at its current location in Benicia, it holds virtually no historical significance with its previous location because the community of Banta did not develop substantially until after the depot was moved. As a result, the depot cannot be tied to any significant historical events or people while in use at Banta. In contrast, the depot was directly associated with historically significant events, trends, and local developments in Benicia after its relocation there in 1902. The relocation of the property, therefore, took place prior to the period of significance under Criterion A (1902-1930).

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 6.

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## 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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1897-1930

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1897- Depot constructed in Banta, Ca

1902- Depot relocated to Benicia, Ca

1914- Second ferry added to train-ferry system

1930- Train bridge constructed, train ferry stopped

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Southern Pacific Railroad Company

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot, constructed in Banta, California in 1897 and moved to Benicia, California in 1902, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level in the area of transportation. From 1902 until 1930 the depot served as the primary passenger and freight station in Benicia, servicing a rail operation that shaped the southern waterfront and proved instrumental in facilitating local economic production. The Benicia connection was a critical link in the transcontinental railroad, navigating the Carquinez Strait using a complex train-ferry system to connect the ports of the San Francisco Bay Area to other regions of California and the United States. At the local level, the railroad operation and the connections it provided allowed Benicia to capitalize economically on its strategic geographic advantages. The rail yard reorganization and expansion, along with the installation of the new depot in 1902 cemented the railroad as a major employer and fundamental feature of the manufacturing, processing, and shipping industries located at Benicia's waterfront during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The depot also qualifies for Criterion C in the area of architecture at the local level as an excellent example of the Western Stick style. Additionally, the Benicia depot is an example of the Number 18 standard depot plan used throughout California by the Southern Pacific Railroad Company in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This standard style was thought to reflect a particular set of corporate values, allowed for the rapid establishment of new depots, and gave the sprawling rail enterprise a coherent regional image. The property meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration B as a moved property because it was moved to this location more than 50 years ago, establishing significance in its own right, and the more recent vertical move did not alter its orientation and brought the building up to what is now the new height of the land surrounding the property.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

*Criterion A:*

The Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot in Benicia, California qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level in the area of transportation. During its period of operation in Benicia from 1902 until 1930, the depot served as the major center for freight and passenger traffic in the city. Serving as a critical link through the Carquinez Strait in the transcontinental railroad line, the Benicia connection became a hub of commercial and transportation activity, contributing significantly to the economic importance of Benicia as a major manufacturing, processing, and shipping center in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today the depot stands as the only surviving property with direct ties to the rich history of the railroad in Benicia. It now serves practically as the headquarters for the Benicia Main Street Program and symbolically as the anchor of the Downtown Historic District.

Following the extension of the transcontinental railroad from Sacramento to its ultimate terminus in Oakland/San Francisco in 1873, Benicia was originally bypassed as a stop in favor of nearby Vallejo.<sup>14</sup> It wasn't until 1879, in an effort to avoid difficult terrain and cut the distance from Sacramento to San Francisco that the Northern Railway Company (operated by the Central Pacific Railroad Company) constructed a new route through Benicia that incorporated the community into the First Transcontinental Railroad, connecting it to places as far away as Omaha and New York.<sup>15</sup> The "short-cut" through Benicia resulted in a distance of 89.79 miles between Sacramento and San Francisco, substantially shorter than the previous lines through Niles, Livermore, and Tracy (140 miles) and Martinez and Tracy (151 miles).<sup>16</sup>

To take advantage of the shorter route through Benicia the railroad would need to cross the deep and fast moving Carquinez Strait. As a solution, the Central Pacific Railroad constructed a ferry slip and entire trains were loaded onto a massive ferryboat in Benicia and shuttled across the Strait to Port Costa where they would continue their journey to stations further west.<sup>17</sup> The switching procedure was complicated and involved uncoupling a train into sections, loading the sections onto four parallel tracks on the ferry, and depositing the trains on the other side of the Strait where they were reassembled (with the procedure being reversed for east-bound trains).<sup>18</sup> The first ferry constructed was the "Solano," built in Oakland in 1879. The largest train ferry in the world at the time, the Solano's hull was built using truss bridge principles and measured

<sup>14</sup> Dillon, Richard, *Great Expectations: The Story of Benicia, California* (Benicia, CA: Benicia Heritage Books, Inc., 1980), 148.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid; Wilcutt, J.L., 'Memorandum of Dates of Railroad Construction,' (Stanford, CA: Timothy Hopkins Collection, 1913).

<sup>16</sup> Robertson, Donald, *Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History, Vol. IV California* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 1998), 109.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 55-56. Solomon, *Southern Pacific Railroad*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Peterson, *Determination of Eligibility Report: Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot*, 6.

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420.5 feet in length, 116 feet in breadth, 18.3 feet in depth and weighed 3,549 tons.<sup>19</sup> Two vertical beam engines with an output of 1,500 horsepower each propelling two paddle wheels allowed the Solano to transport a maximum of two locomotives with 24 passenger cars, or two locomotives and 35 freight cars across the 1.08 mile wide strait.<sup>20</sup> When the Southern Pacific Railroad Company took over operations in 1885 it continued to use the Solano. In 1914, to accommodate increased traffic, Southern Pacific added a second ferry to the operation.<sup>21</sup> This new ferry, the "Contra Costa," was even larger than the Solano, measuring 433 feet long, 67.2 feet wide, having a depth of 18.5 feet and weighing 4,483 tons.<sup>22</sup> The expansion of the train-ferry system and the increase in rail traffic illustrates the growing importance of western industry and ports during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also highlights the critical role of the Benicia rail operation in facilitating this growth through the transportation of large numbers of goods and people across a major geographic obstacle. Neither the Solano nor the Contra Costa, nor the associated ferry slips and rail lines exist today. The passenger depot, therefore, stands as the only material link to the complex historic activity surrounding the transportation of trains across the Carquinez Strait and the linking of the transcontinental line to Northern California ports.

The original Benicia depot that serviced this line, built in 1879, was dismantled around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The depot material was then shipped and reassembled for use in Minturn, California, south of Merced.<sup>23</sup> The present Benicia depot was originally built in Banta, California in 1897, but Southern Pacific moved the depot to Benicia in 1902. The installation of the new depot in Benicia corresponded with the improvement, reorganization, and expansion of the Benicia rail yard and ferry wharf. While this overhaul of the rail operation in Benicia was designed to facilitate the growing demand of rail transportation throughout California, the efficiencies and access it provided would also help fuel local economic growth.<sup>24</sup> This was a pattern seen throughout California and the American West during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as railroads and local communities were seen to exist in a mutually beneficial relationship. Towns provided essential goods and services necessary for rail operations, and the railroad companies in turn provided commodity and transportation access to growing communities. The presence of the railroad in a community, therefore, was seen as a potential economic booster, and historically much lobbying and back-room dealing was undertaken by vested parties to ensure a rail stop was located in their city.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Rich, Neel S., *Benicia Old Time Group's Second Annual Depot Art and Craft Show*, 1973.

<sup>21</sup> Peterson, *Determination of Eligibility Report: Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Rich, *Benicia Old Time Group's Second Annual Depot Art and Craft Show*.

<sup>23</sup> Schulz, Henry W. *Negative Archaeological Survey Report*, (Department of Transportation, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Solomon, *Southern Pacific Railroad*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Kim, Monte, George, *The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Making of Place and Community in California* (Santa Barbara, CA: University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005), 130. Robbins, William, G., *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas Press, 1994); Ambrose, Stephen E., *Nothing Like It in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).



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Prior to the railroad, the California economy of the Spanish, Mexican, and early American periods focused largely on the raising of cattle on large rancheros.<sup>26</sup> While there was an extensive network of roads, steamboat lines, and short discontinuous rail lines, for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century California was a “sparsely populated hinterland of isolated communities and wayside towns.”<sup>27</sup> With the advent of the railroad in California, however, more remote areas could be connected to urban centers and markets throughout the country. This economic connectivity and reliability spurred corporate capital investment into more rural places and led to long-term economic growth in new areas of the state.<sup>28</sup> This influx of investment and associated economic growth transformed “California’s rural topography from a pre-industrial desert landscape” to a network of commercial farms, processing centers, industrial manufacturers, and central markets.<sup>29</sup>

The historical development of Benicia closely follows this regional pattern. Early commercial activities in Benicia focused largely on ranching, agriculture, and ferry transportation across the Carquinez Strait.<sup>30</sup> In 1850 the Pacific Mail and Steamship Company located its new base of operations on Benicia’s southeastern waterfront, recognizing the city’s strategic geographic position on a protected deep water channel near the confluence of the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers and roughly equidistance from the cities of San Francisco and Sacramento. This event highlighted Benicia as a critical transportation waypoint and refueling center, servicing the boats that, by 1856, transported an estimated 400 passengers per day between San Francisco and Sacramento.<sup>31</sup> The 1860s and 1870s in Benicia saw an increase in population and the introduction of additional industries including a flourmill, brewery, vineyards, a cement company, and a number of tanneries.<sup>32</sup> Overall, however, economic growth stagnated and the city was failing to meet the expectations of its founders and early residents as a major industrial and transportation center. This stagnation was epitomized in the Pacific Mail and Steamship Company’s decision to move their headquarters from Benicia to San Francisco in 1869.<sup>33</sup>

This early period proved critical for highlighting Benicia as a geographically well-positioned city for transportation, manufacturing, processing, and shipping, but it wasn’t until the arrival of the railroad that its full advantages were realized. The introduction of the railroad in Benicia in 1879 marks the beginning of the city’s industrial boom, cementing it as a key transportation nexus and fueling local economic growth and commercial activity throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Kim, *The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Making of Place and Community in California*, 117-118;

<sup>27</sup> Kim, *The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Making of Place and Community in California*, 9.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Dillon, Richard, *Great Expectations: The Story of Benicia, California* (Benicia, CA: Benicia Heritage Books, Inc., 1980).

<sup>31</sup> Cohen, Andrew Neal, *Gateway to the Inland Coast: The Story of the Carquinez Strait* (Sacramento: California State Lands Commission, 1996), 53.

<sup>32</sup> Dillon, Richard, *Great Expectations: The Story of Benicia, California* (Benicia, CA: Benicia Heritage Books, Inc., 1980), 30.

<sup>33</sup> *Historic Context Statement, City of Benicia* (San Francisco: Page and Turnbull, 2010), 45.

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centuries.<sup>34</sup> In particular, with the railroad linking the rural hinterlands to more metropolitan areas, Benicia's intermediate geographic position led it to become an important processing, storing, and shipping center for the agricultural resources of the Central Valley and for the marine resources of the Delta, Carquinez Strait, San Francisco Bay, and Pacific Coast.<sup>35</sup>

The wheat industry in Benicia serves as one example of the local importance of the railroad. Throughout the 1850s and 1860s wheat production in California had grown incrementally, but large-scale development was limited due to issues of transportation and market access. The introduction of the railroad in the state, however, allowed commercial wheat farmers to overcome these logistical issues. By the early 1870s wheat acreage in California had doubled to 15 million bushels, and by the 1880s it had doubled again to roughly 35 million bushels.<sup>36</sup> The rail and steamship lines that connected these wheat production sites throughout the Central Valley to the central market in San Francisco converged in a transportation bottleneck at the Carquinez Strait and the community of Benicia. Benicia's rail access, along with its deep water channel located close to shore, intermediate position between points of production and sale, and lower landing costs than other ports, all helped to attract businesses and led to the city becoming a regionally important grain storage center. By 1884, roughly 20% of all the grain ships heading to the San Francisco market were loaded at Benicia.<sup>37</sup> In response to the advantages the railroad provided, in 1880 the Balfour, Guthrie and Company constructed a 3,000 ton capacity grain storage warehouse on a wharf directly adjacent to the ferry slips to facilitate the transfer of wheat between rail cars and ships. The Benicia Flouring Mill also boomed, with a visitor to the city in 1883 claiming "no town in California affords better facilities for the manufacture of flour than Benicia, which is fast becoming the great wheat mart of the Pacific Coast."<sup>38</sup> As the wheat industry illustrates, the railroad fueled local economic growth by allowing industrious Benicians to capitalize commercially on the transportation advantages provided by the city's geographic location and natural features.

The tanning industry in Benicia followed a similar historical trajectory. By the 1870s a number of hide-processing operations were established in the city to take advantage of its location along prominent shipping routes.<sup>39</sup> Following the introduction of the railroad in 1879, the number of tanneries in Benicia increased and production flourished. By 1883 the largest producers, the McKay and Chisolm tannery and Kuhlmann Salz and Company tannery each employed around 50 men and produced about 50,000 sides of leather per year.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>35</sup> Kim, *The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Making of Place and Community in California*; Dillon, *Great Expectations: The Story of Benicia, California*, 80.

<sup>36</sup> Cohen, Andrew Neal, *Gateway to the Inland Coast: The Story of the Carquinez Strait* (Sacramento: California State Lands Commission, 1996), 66-68. *Historic Context Statement, City of Benicia* (San Francisco: Page and Turnbull, 2010), 68.

<sup>37</sup> *Benicia: Its Resources and Advantages for Manufacture* (Oakland: Oakland Tribune Printing, 1883), 3; *Historic Context Statement, City of Benicia* (San Francisco: Page and Turnbull, 2010), 68.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 6. *Historic Context Statement: City of Benicia, Final Report* (San Francisco: Page and Turnbull, 2010), 69.

<sup>39</sup> *Benicia: Its Resources and Advantages for Manufacture* (Oakland: Oakland Tribune Printing, 1883), 5.

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The reorganization and elaboration of the rail yard and ferry wharves, along with the installation of the present depot in 1902 created a more efficient system that allowed for increased rail traffic, further establishing Benicia as a critical transportation center and buttressing the local manufacturing, processing, and shipping operations.<sup>40</sup> The reorganization project itself created at least 175 jobs, but more importantly it increased the number of incoming rail lines and created new linkages, transfers, and access points along the waterfront.<sup>41</sup> This reorganization and expansion led to increased rail activity and Southern Pacific became the second largest employer in Benicia until 1922.<sup>42</sup> In 1914, responding to increased passenger and freight traffic at the Benicia connection, Southern Pacific added a second, even larger ferry (the Contra Costa) to their train-ferry operation. At peak activity, the two vessels made 30 trips across the Carquinez Strait every day, and by 1927 the boats combined to carry a total of 148,130 freight cars and 98,262 passenger cars.<sup>43</sup>

Changes to the railroad operation in Benicia also insured that local industries maintained their competitive advantages through immediate and efficient transportation access. Advantages provided by the expansion were seen in myriad industries clustered around the depot and ferry wharves along the city's southern waterfront. By 1903, the Kuhlmann Salz and Company tannery employed 200 men and produced roughly 800 processed hides per day, up from about 800 per week in 1883, and the tanning industry as a whole in Benicia was responsible for producing roughly one third of all the leather manufactured in California.<sup>44</sup> By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Carquinez Packing Company was producing half a million pounds of salmon and 35,000 cases of packed fruits and vegetables every year.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, the Western Creameries Company was the largest facility west of the Rockies, processing roughly 3,000 pounds of milk, cream, and butter per day.<sup>46</sup>

The presence of the railroad also proved critical for military operations in Benicia. While the Benicia Arsenal had been established earlier in 1851, the addition of the railroad proved critical

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<sup>40</sup> *Benicia General Plan: From 1847 into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Adopted June 15, 1999), 115.

<sup>41</sup> Kim, *The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Making of Place and Community in California*, 4; Dillon, *Great Expectations: The Story of Benicia, California*, 213; *Historic Context Statement: City of Benicia, Final Report* (San Francisco: Page and Turnbull, 2010), 84. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, 1899. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, 1913.

<sup>42</sup> *Benicia General Plan: From 1847 into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Adopted June 15, 1999), 115.

<sup>43</sup> Peterson, *Determination of Eligibility Report: Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Historic Context Statement: City of Benicia, Final Report* (San Francisco: Page and Turnbull, 2010), 79. Dillon, *Great Expectations: The Story of Benicia, California*, 146. Wells, A.J., "Benicia: California's Future Manchester" (San Francisco: Passenger Department, Southern Pacific Company, 1903), 45-46. *Benicia: Its Resources and Advantages for Manufacture* (Oakland: Oakland Tribune Printing, 1883), 5.

<sup>45</sup> Wells, A.J., "Benicia: California's Future Manchester" (San Francisco: Passenger Department, Southern Pacific Company, 1903), 45-46.

<sup>46</sup> *Historic Context Statement: City of Benicia, Final Report* (San Francisco: Page and Turnbull, 2010), 81.

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during 20<sup>th</sup> century military conflicts. During the World Wars freight and passenger traffic increased dramatically, and the strategic location of the Southern Pacific lines along the West Coast made it the primary carrier of military personnel and goods.<sup>47</sup> As a critical link in one of the Southern Pacific lines, the Benicia connection was an important feature in the military supply network of the West Coast during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and during the First World War.

While the depot and ferry wharves served as the commercial and transportation center of the city, it was also the symbolic social center around which much of the city's identity was built. The constant activity, bustle, and congregation of people at the waterfront and ferry wharves helped to support a lively commercial district north of the operations, including a number of restaurants, saloons, and lodging.<sup>48</sup> It also meant that the railroad depot "soon became a hub of town activity. Certainly it was a prime destination for loafers, people-watchers, and Sunday strollers. Townsfolk gawked there at the loading and unloading cars upon the advent of train ferries."<sup>49</sup>

The importance of Benicia as a transportation and industrial center at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is presented in a 1903 *Sunset* magazine article titled "Benicia: California's Future Manchester."<sup>50</sup> While potentially a product of promotional exaggeration, the article nonetheless presents a window into the local sentiment and optimism of the economic potentials provided by the railroad in Benicia and the extensive industries operating along the southern waterfront in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. That Benicia did not inevitably become the Manchester of the American West Coast also serves to highlight the importance of the railroad, as the removal of the rail line in Benicia coincided directly with the decline of its wider industrial and commercial relevance.

The construction of a railroad bridge over the Carquinez Strait in 1930 made the train-ferry system obsolete and allowed Southern Pacific to bypass the Benicia stop altogether. From one perspective, the installation of a bridge from Benicia to Martinez highlights the importance of Benicia as an access point between the inland and coastal regions of Northern California. The immediate result, however, was local economic collapse, as the closing of the depot and train-ferry system erased Benicia's transportation advantages and many businesses relocated elsewhere. It wouldn't be until the building of a vehicle bridge in 1962 that Benicia became recognized as a viable San Francisco suburb and industry began to return, but these businesses tended to cluster in the city's new industrial park in the east, leaving the historic industrial waterfront surrounding the depot largely deserted.

As warehouses and facilities were abandoned and slowly dismantled, the depot remained, purchased by the city in 1975 to serve as one of the few material traces of the once bustling industrial and commercial area and the railroad activity that supported it all. Over the last three decades the waterfront area has been transformed into a waterfront park and protected wetland,

<sup>47</sup> Solomon, *Southern Pacific Railroad*, 37.

<sup>48</sup> *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, 1899. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, 1913.

<sup>49</sup> Dillon, *Great Expectations: The Story of Benicia, California*, 149.

<sup>50</sup> Wells, A.J., "Benicia: California's Future Manchester" (San Francisco: Passenger Department, Southern Pacific Company, 1903), 45.

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but the rehabilitated depot remains as an important physical reminder of the once prominent rail operation and adjacent industries that left an indelible mark on the history of Benicia.<sup>51</sup>

*Criterion C:*

The Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot qualifies for Criterion C in the area of architecture at the local level as an excellent example of the Western Stick style and Number 18 standard depot plan used throughout California by the Southern Pacific Railroad Company in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The architectural qualities of the depot also serve as an emblem of its historical association to a particular time, place, and social context.

Western Stick architecture was popular in the western United States from 1890 to 1920, representing a transitional style between Gothic Revival and later Queen Anne architecture.<sup>52</sup> Scully (1973) argues that prior to the Stick style, timber architecture in America followed English traditions, plans, and aesthetics, and that the Stick style was the first example of a “uniquely American expression of timber form and domestic program.”<sup>53</sup> Reflecting the notion that a building should embody the reality of its material and intended function, the Stick style is defined by its display of “skeletal” elements, with the “expression of the inner structure of the house through the exterior ornament.”<sup>54</sup> While largely aesthetic rather than practical, the designation of “stick” stems from the angular, vertical, and asymmetric nature of the building; the use of exposed roof rafters and purlins; exterior ornamentation composed of intersecting boards forming horizontal, diagonal, or vertical patterns raised from the surface of the wall (stickwork); and the use of earth tones for exterior stain and paint colors.<sup>55</sup> Other defining features include gently pitched gabled roofs that spread wide beyond walls and porches with diagonal or curved braces.<sup>56</sup>

The Benicia depot not only exhibits all of these identifying aspects of the Western Stick style, it is also a local example of the Number 18 standard depot plan used by the Southern Pacific Railroad Company in Northern California during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>57</sup> While the Benicia depot is the only building in the city associated with the railroad and ferry system, it is one of twelve surviving Number 18 depots, the closest residing in the communities

<sup>51</sup> Peterson, *Determination of Eligibility Report: Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot*, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Harmon, Robert B., “The Stick Style in American Architecture: A Brief Guide” (Monticello, IL: Vance Bibliographies, 1983), 6. McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 256.

<sup>53</sup> Scully, Vincent J., Jr., *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Downing to the Origins of Wright* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 1.

<sup>54</sup> Harmon, “The Stick Style in American Architecture: A Brief Guide,” 6; Rifkind, Carole, *A Field Guide to American Architecture* (New York: New American Library, 1980), 64.

<sup>55</sup> Blumenson, John J.G., *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms 1600-1945* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. 1981), 57; McAlester and McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 255; Harmon, “The Stick Style in American Architecture: A Brief Guide,” 6; Rifkind, *A Field Guide to American Architecture*, 64.

<sup>56</sup> Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms 1600-1945*, 57.

<sup>57</sup> Roland, *Building, Structure, and Object Record*, 1.

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of Danville, Walnut Creek, St. Helena, and Yountville.<sup>58</sup> Significantly, the Benicia depot is the only Number 18 plan in Solano County and it may have been the most renowned example, as Number 18 depots have been referred to as “Benicia style” depots.<sup>59</sup>

Conceptually, the Stick style was a product of the sentiment that a building’s aesthetic and form should reflect its function. In the words of contemporary architects, a Stick style structure should exhibit a “truthfulness” and “reality.”<sup>60</sup> In other words, a building should reflect an “expression of purpose” and a train depot, therefore, should look like a train depot, with all its functional aspects in place and celebrated through architectural form.<sup>61</sup> It is relevant, then, that when the Southern Pacific Railroad Company chose a standard design plan, they chose the Western Stick style. The standard design of depots in a particular area sheds light on industry design aesthetics which strove to create a coherent corporate identity that was rooted in place (Northern California) and facilitated company recognition through a shared style and plan that indexed the function of the building and the larger national narrative of manifest destiny and economic expansion that the railways embodied at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In typifying the Western Stick style, the Benicia depot stands as an important local example of this influential architectural style and prominent Southern Pacific depot plan, while also serving as a physical link to the historical and industrial particularities that this design reflects.

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<sup>58</sup> Grant, Roger H., *Living at the Depot: The Two-Story Railroad Station* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 34.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 31; Bender, Henry E., Jr., *Southern Pacific Lines Standard-Design Depots* (Sacramento, CA: Signature Press 2013).

<sup>60</sup> Scully, *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Downing to the Origins of Wright*, xxxii, 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

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**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 # HABS No. CA-2085
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 0.38

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger  
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(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.044561 | Longitude: -122.161963 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The site boundary is defined by Assessors parcel 80-20-7. This parcel contains the building, associated grove of palm trees, and the open area south of the structure to the shoreline.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Boundary is based on Assessors parcel 80-20-7.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: David G. Hyde

Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger  
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Solano County, California

Name of Property

County and State

organization: Benicia Historical Society

street & number: P.O. Box 2393

city or town: Benicia state: CA zip code: 94510

e-mail david.hyde@berkeley.edu

telephone: 707-567-5392

date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)



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**Supplementary Map (USGS)**



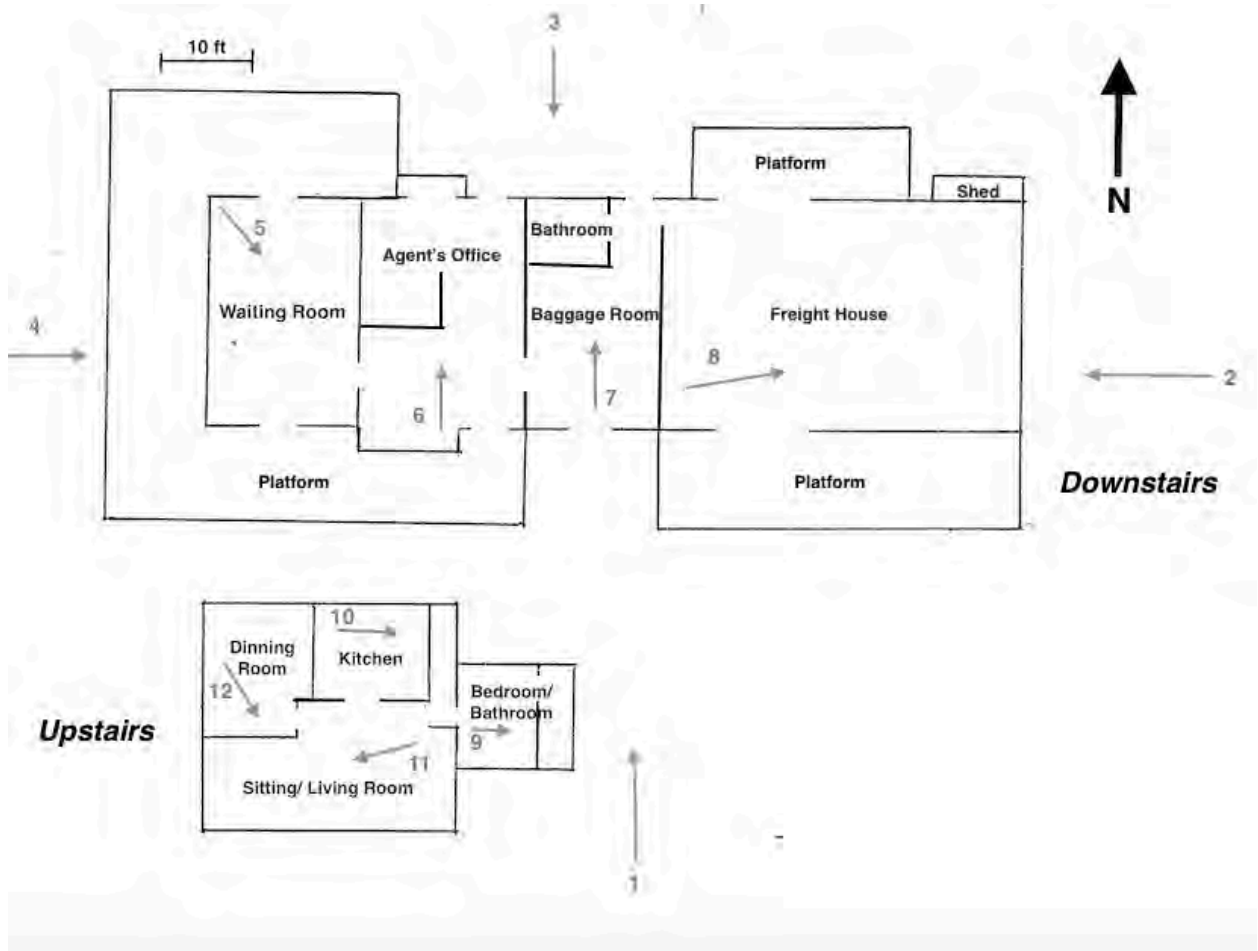
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**Sketch Map/ Photo Key**



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### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot

City or Vicinity: Benicia

County: Solano

State: California

Photographer: David Hyde

Date Photographed: September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0001  
View north of southern façade.

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0002  
View west of eastern façade.

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0003  
View south of northern façade.

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0004  
View east of western façade.

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0005  
View south within first floor historic waiting room. Rehabilitated and now gift store and visitor center for Benicia Main Street Program.

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0006  
View north within first floor historic station agent's office. Rehabilitated and now office for Benicia Main Street Program.



Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger  
Depot

Name of Property

Solano County, California

County and State

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0007

View south within first floor historic baggage room. Rehabilitated and now storage for Benicia Main Street Program.

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0008

View east within first floor historic freight house. Now storage for Benicia Main Street Program.

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0009

View east within upstairs bedroom/bathroom.

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0010

View east within upstairs kitchen.

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0011

View southwest from within upstairs sitting/living room.

CA\_Solano County\_Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot\_0012

View south within upstairs dining room.

Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger  
Depot  
Name of Property

Solano County, California  
County and State

**Figure 1.** View northeast of the Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot and neighboring Lido's saloon (no longer in its original place). Photo courtesy of Benicia Historical Museum.



**Figure 2.** View east of the depot from the ferry transfer tracks. Photo courtesy of Benicia Historical Museum.



Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger  
Depot  
Name of Property

Solano County, California  
County and State

**Figure 3.** View northeast of dept, tracks, water tower and neighboring Lido's saloon. Photo circa 1904. Photo courtesy of Benicia Historical Museum.



**Figure 4.** View west of ferry transfer tracks/system. Photo taken from roughly in front of depot. Photo courtesy of Benicia Historical Museum.



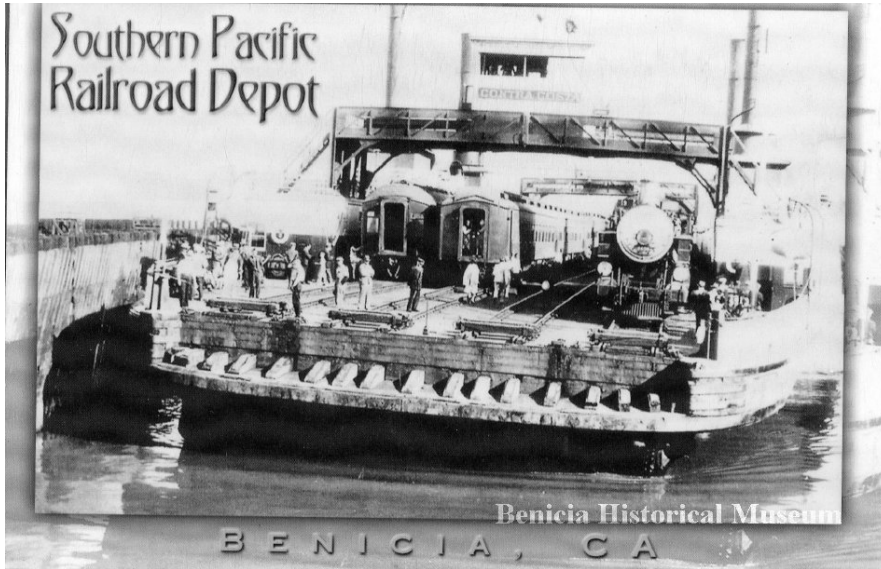
Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger  
Depot

Name of Property

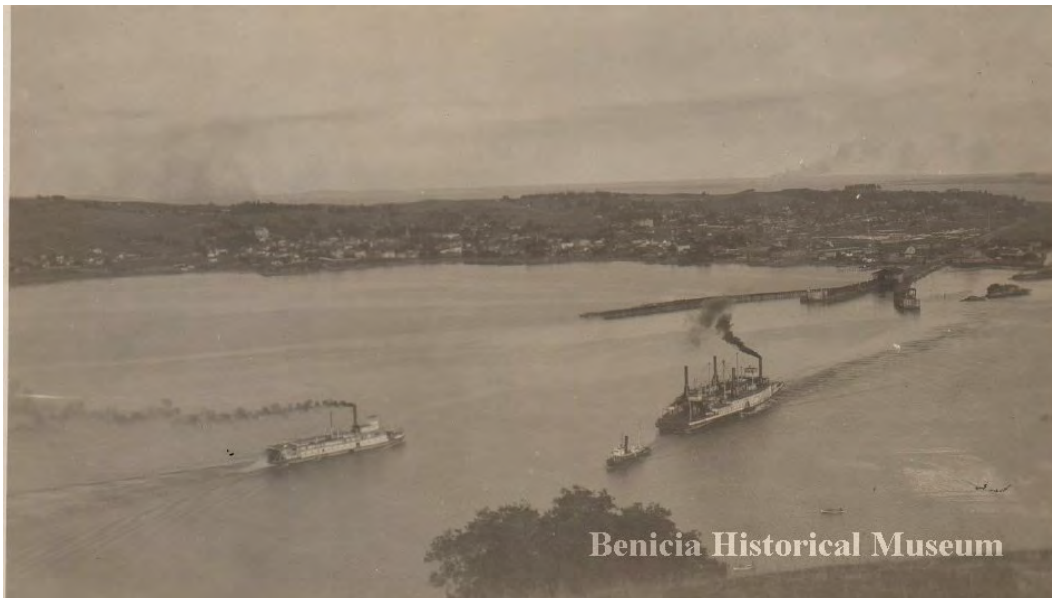
Solano County, California

County and State

**Figure 5.** Southern Pacific Railroad postcard illustrating the train ferry system of Benicia. Photo courtesy of Benicia Historical Museum.



**Figure 6.** Aerial view north east of train ferry crossing the Carquinez Strait.



Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger  
Depot

Solano County, California

Name of Property

County and State

**Figure 7.** View southeast of depot, circa 1976 (pre-restoration). Photo courtesy of Benicia Historical Museum.



**Figure 8.** 1928 aerial view north of Benicia, waterfront rail yard, train-ferry system, and industry surrounding the depot. Photo courtesy of Benicia Historical Museum.



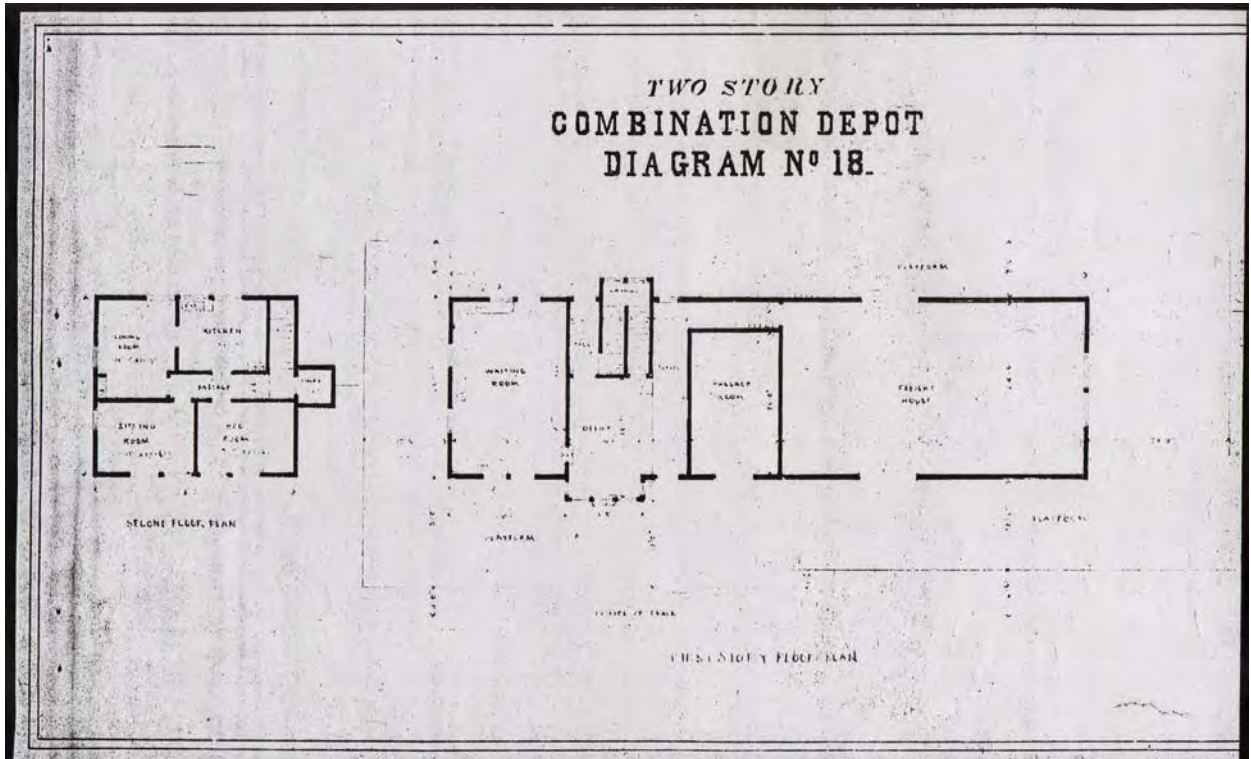
Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger  
Depot

Name of Property

Solano County, California

County and State

**Figure 9.** Southern Pacific floor plan for #18 Standard Depot.



**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.





BENICIA







CITY OF BENICIA  
CALIFORNIA  
1  
TRANS-CONTINENTAL RAILROAD DEPOT  
DOWNTOWN HISTORICAL DISTRICT

BENICIA

BENICIA  
MAIN STREET  
PROGRAM

VISITORS INFORMATION  
SEASIDES  
BENICIA GIFTS

Benicia Main Street Presents  
*Wine Walk*  
Downtown Benicia  
SAT., SEP. 26  
1pm - 5pm  
FOR INFO & TICKETS:  
Benicia Main Street  
90 FIRST STREET  
707-745-9791  
BeniciaMainStreet.org



EXIT

I  
Kauai

I  
Kauai









NO ALCOHOLIC  
BEVERAGES  
PAST THIS POINT

\*Subjecto a la normativa  
por Bateria Municipal 1-800-368-6144











SSS SEA HAWK

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot

Multiple Name: \_\_\_\_\_

State & County: CALIFORNIA, Solano

Date Received:  
8/14/2017

Date of Pending List:  
9/19/2017

Date of 16th Day:  
10/4/2017

Date of 45th Day:  
9/28/2017

Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100001664

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      9/28/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot is locally significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Transportation and Architecture. Originally built in 1897, the imposing, wood-frame, Stick-style depot has served the community of Benicia since it was dismantled and relocated to the city in 1902. Constructed based on standardized Southern Pacific designs, the well-preserved building is an excellent (and relatively rare) example of a Type 18, Stick-style depot and served as Benicia's main passenger and freight station and ferry staging station from 1902 to 1930. Few extant resources better illustrate the once prosperous southern commercial and industrial waterfront area of the city than this depot.

Recommendation/ Criteria Accept NR Criteria A and C

Reviewer Paul Lusignan

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229

Date 09/28/2017

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

**Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot  
Benicia, Solano County, California  
National Register of Historic Places**

The Southern Pacific Railroad passenger depot in Benicia, California, is a two-story Western Stick style building located at the southern end of First Street along the Carquinez Strait. Originally constructed in 1897 in Banta, California, according to Southern Pacific standard depot plan No. 18, the building was dismantled and relocated to Benicia in 1902. From 1902 to 1930, the depot was Benicia's main passenger and freight station, and train-ferry staging center. The ground floor of the depot was designed for passenger service, freight storage, and office functions, while the second story was intended as a residence for the station agent and their family. After the closure of the depot for passenger service in 1930, it served as the residence of the station agent's family until 1958.

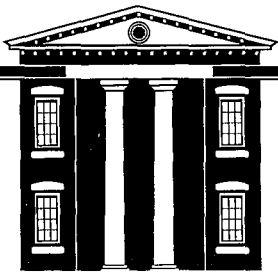
The depot is a wooden frame Stick style building, built to a standardized plan. The lower floor is rectangular, 25.5' by 90', with a ticket booth extending from the southern wall and a stairwell landing on the northern wall. The second story, on the western end of the building, resembles a small tower, 22.5 by 28 feet, with a shallow shed dormer to the east. Exterior cladding is horizontal timber, interrupted by exposed structural elements and decorative wood intended to highlight the building's internal structure, a characteristic of Stick style architecture. The exterior siding on the second story is timber of geometric design. Wooden platforms were located on the western, northern and eastern sides of the depot. All platforms were located at the height of railroad passenger and freight doors to facilitate passenger boarding and freight loading. The roof consists of multiple gables, hanging wide over the building walls and surrounding platform, supported by knee-brace brackets. The gable end of the second story is trimmed with plain fascia, while the roof trim of the single story portion has a decorative rail. Windows are wood sash, double hung and vertically emphasized. The property retains a high degree of historic integrity in most aspects; the building was raised 2.75 feet in 2001, because the building now sat several feet below the level of the adjacent street, and water was infiltrating the foundation. The property has also lost some integrity of setting as the railroad tracks, once adjacent to the property, have been removed.

The property is eligible under Criteria A and C, for its role in railroad transportation in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Benicia, and as a significant local example of Stick architecture, as a rare surviving example of a Southern Pacific Type 18 passenger depot. The property meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration B, moved properties, because it was relocated geographically more than 50 years ago, establishing significance in its own right, and for its 2.75 foot vertical move that preserved the depot's spatial orientation.

The property is nominated on behalf of the property owner, the City of Benicia. The City of Benicia has provided a letter of support for the nomination.

Staff supports the nomination as written and recommends that the State Historical Resources Commission determine the Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot eligible under Criteria A and C at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1897-1930. Staff recommends the State Historic Preservation Officer approve the nomination for forwarding to the National Park Service for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

William Burg  
State Historian II  
June 29, 2017



THE CITY OF  
**BENICIA**  
CALIFORNIA

CITY HALL • 250 EAST L STREET • BENICIA, CA 94510 • (707) 746-4200 • FAX (707) 747-8120

June 23, 2017

California State Parks  
Office of Historic Preservation  
Julianne Polanco, State Historic Preservation Officer  
1725 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 100  
Sacramento, CA 95186

Re: Nomination of the Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot to the National Register of Historic Places

Dear Ms. Polanco:

The City of Benicia Historic Preservation Review Commission enthusiastically supports the nomination of the Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot to the National Register of Historic Places. Nomination of this important structure has been a longstanding goal, and was achieved with significant community effort led by the Benicia Historical Society.

The Depot was originally built in Banta, California in 1897 then moved to its current location on the Benicia waterfront in 1902. From 1902 to 1930, the Depot served as Benicia's main passenger and freight station and train ferry staging center. After subsequent decades of limited or no public use, the Depot was purchased by the City of Benicia in 1975. Following several failed attempts to organize and fund rehabilitation of the Depot, work was begun in 1999 and completed in 2001 to bring the Depot to its current state. While the building was raised in response to repeated flooding, it still retains its original orientation and location. Listing of the Depot on the National Register will mark another significant milestone in preserving this iconic structure that has occupied a central position in Benicia's identity for 115 years.

It is our Commission's opinion that the Benicia Southern Pacific Passenger Depot meets all criteria for nomination as a landmark on the National Register of Historic Places and we are pleased to offer our recommendation of support to the State Historical Resources Commission.

Sincerely,

Toni Haughey, Acting Chair  
Benicia Historic Preservation Review Commission

ELIZABETH PATTERSON, *Mayor*  
Members of the City Council  
STEVE YOUNG, *Vice Mayor* . TOM CAMPBELL . MARK C. HUGHES . ALAN M. SCHWARTZMAN

LORIE TINFOW, *City Manager*  
KENNETH C. PAULK, *City Treasurer*  
LISA WOLFE, *City Clerk*

**RESOLUTION NO. 16- 1**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BENICIA  
SUPPORTING THE NOMINATION OF THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC DEPOT TO  
THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**WHEREAS**, the Benicia Historical Society, in collaboration with the Parks & Community Services Department, drafted a nomination of the Benicia Southern Pacific Depot to the National Register of Historic Places; and

**WHEREAS**, General Plan Goal 3.1 is to "Maintain and enhance Benicia's historic character" and the nomination of the Benicia Southern Pacific Depot to the National Register of Historic Places is consistent with this Goal; and

**WHEREAS**, on October 22, 2015 the Historic Preservation Review Commission held a public meeting, received public testimony, and passed a resolution recommending that City Council support the nomination of the Benicia Southern Pacific Depot to the National Register of Historic Places; and

**WHEREAS**, on November 18, 2015 the Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Commission held a public meeting, received public testimony, and voted to recommend that City Council support the nomination of the Benicia Southern Pacific Depot to the National Register of Historic Places.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the City Council of the City of Benicia hereby expresses its support for the nomination of the Benicia Southern Pacific Depot to the National Register of Historic Places.

\*\*\*\*\*

On motion of Council Member **Campbell**, seconded by Council Member **Schwartzman**, the above Resolution was introduced and passed by the City Council of the City of Benicia at a regular meeting of said Council held on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2016, and adopted by the following vote.

Ayes: **Council Members Campbell, Hughes, Schwartzman, Strawbridge, and Mayor Patterson**

Noes: **None**

Absent: **None**



Elizabeth Patterson, Mayor

Attest:



Lisa Wolfe, City Clerk

1-11-16  
Date



**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

1725 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 100  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816-7100  
(916) 445-7000 Fax: (916) 445-7053  
calshpo@parks.ca.gov  
www.ohp.parks.ca.gov



August 9, 2017

J. Paul Loether  
Deputy Keeper and Chief, National Register and National Historic Landmark Program  
National Register of Historic Places  
Mail Stop 7228  
1849 C St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Subject: **Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot  
San Francisco, San Francisco County, California  
National Register of Historic Places**

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of nomination for the Benicia Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot to the National Register of Historic Places. This property is located in Benicia, Solano County, California. On July 28, 2017, the State Historical Resources Commission unanimously found the property eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1897-1930.

The property is nominated on behalf of the property owner, The City of Benicia, who also submitted a letter of support with accompanying city resolution.

If you have any questions regarding this nomination, please contact William Burg of my staff at 916-445-7004.

Sincerely,

Julianne Polanco  
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures