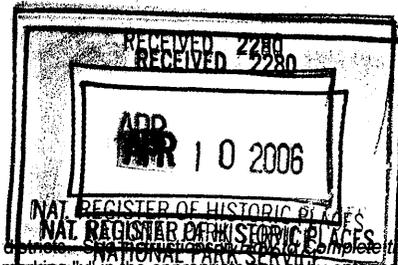


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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

1. Name of Property

historic name Little Falls and Dakota Depot
other names/site number Northern Pacific Depot

2. Location

street & number Depot Lane not for publication N.A.
city or town Starbuck vicinity N.A.
state Minnesota code MN county Pope code 121 zip code 56381

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Britta L. Bloomberg 4/4/06
Signature of certifying official Date
Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper
Edson H. Beall 5-24-06
Date of Action

Little Falls and Dakota Depot
Name of Property

Pope County, MN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
		sites
	1	structure
		objects
1	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: Rail-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation WOOD, CONCRETE

walls WOOD

roof WOOD

other

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheets.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1882-1955

Significant Dates

1882

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

DeGraff and Company, contractors

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Pope County Historical Society

Minnesota Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.83 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="5"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="0"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Starbuck, Minn 1968,
photo inspected 1977

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Carmen Tschofen</u>	date	<u>May, 2005</u>
organization	<u></u>	telephone	<u>763-522-5709</u>
street and number	<u>2667 Parkview Boulevard</u>	city or town	<u>Robbinsdale</u>
city or town	<u>Robbinsdale</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>55422</u>

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name	<u>Starbuck Depot Society</u>		
street & number	<u>Depot Lane</u>	telephone	<u></u>
city or town	<u>Starbuck</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>56381</u>

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

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Little Falls and Dakota Depot

Name of property

Pope County, Minnesota

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

The Little Falls and Dakota Depot in Starbuck, Minnesota, is sited in the middle of Block 60 of the town's original plat. It is located to the south of and behind the main business street, 5th Street, which forms the northern border of Block 60. The western end of the block is formed by Main Street, which also serves as State Highway 29, a major thoroughfare. Bingham and 4th Streets define the block's eastern and southern sides. The lots around the depot have been largely stripped of the agricultural and industrial facilities that once surrounded the depot, making the depot one of very few structures that provide evidence of the railroad's importance to the town's establishment and growth.

The depot building

The depot itself is a one-story wood frame structure twenty-two feet wide and seventy-five feet long. The gable roof is covered with sawn cedar shingles, with the narrower overhang on the gable ends supported by decorative triangular brackets (one in the gable peak, and one on each corner) with diagonal braces. Wooden brackets with cross braces support the long, lower roof overhang on the north and south sides.

The depot is clad in cedar lap siding, and windows throughout are two-over-two, double-hung sashes. Wood trim forms modest Italianate window hoods.

Fenestration and door placement reflect the basic functions of this combination depot. Along the north side, a window and door to the east provide light and access to the passenger waiting room. Immediately west, a three-sided protruding bay indicates the station agent's office. A few steps west, a single window provides light to the freight room. A horizontal divided light (five sections) is set high in the wall between the next brackets to the west.¹ A broad rectangular freight door (hung on a horizontal interior track) is set next to a final expanse of wall that stretches to the western corner of the building. A wooden walkway constructed slightly above street grade stretches the length of the building front.

The western gable end of the building has no windows, and is covered by a large billboard depicting the town's 1983 creation of the "World's Largest Lefse." A simple black-on-white "STARBUCK" station sign is mounted above the billboard. The wooden walkway continues from the front around this end of the building, and wraps to the southern façade, where it terminates in a broad, low loading dock. This dock provides access to the south side freight door, directly opposite that on the north side. This door has cross braces and is topped by a divided, eight-light transom. Three equally spaced windows on the eastern end of this south façade provide light to the agent's office and the waiting room.

Two additional waiting room windows are found on the eastern side of the depot.

¹ The very similar Villard depot, located along the Little Falls and Dakota line about 15 miles northeast of Starbuck, has a door in this location. Seams in interior paneling in the Starbuck depot suggest that a door may have been in this location as well, but the paneling itself obscures any further evidence.

United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Little Falls and Dakota Depot

Name of property

Pope County, Minnesota

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

Interior spaces, while historically simple, do retain original features. The waiting room features medium-width, horizontal tongue-and-groove paneling above a chair rail, and vertical tongue-and-groove wainscoting below. A small ticket window is located in the center of the waiting room's west wall, with a protruding counter supported by two decorative brackets. A Dutch (or half) door provides access to the agent's office, where a (reconstructed) countertop-style desk fills the bay space. A door on the west side of the agent's office, aligned with the Dutch door from the waiting room, opens onto the freight room.

The northeastern corner of the freight room is also covered with tongue-and-groove paneling, and includes a chest-style bench parallel to the interior wall by the window. Local accounts report that this paneled area served as a heated storage space for produce; a stovepipe opening in the upper interior wall leading from the agent's office is visible above the door. The interior walls separating this portion of the freight room from the larger portion of the room have been removed. The room is otherwise uninsulated, with the roof decking visible above exposed rafters. The floorboards in this area, likely original to the building, are notably wide.

Depot surroundings

Starbuck was platted with a typical grid pattern of blocks and lots, although the blocks formed a top-heavy "T" rather than a symmetrical square. The town's overall plat in relation to the railroad and depot does not match any one particular railroad plat typology, although geographer Thomas Harvey's description of a "combination plan" comes close.² The rails formed a "T" with Main Street, and the central business street (5th Street) was located parallel to the tracks one block north of the depot. The depot was located centrally on an east-west line within the narrower part of the original plat, with about two-thirds of the original lots laid out to the north. (See illustrations on continuation sheets, as well as additional discussion of the town's platting in Section 8.)

The railroad tracks sliced blocks along the right-of-way into wedge-shaped sections, and the depot itself was located in the middle of one of these blocks. This positioning meant that the depot had virtually no public streetfront exposure, especially when considering that it was surrounded historically by elevators of various eras and shapes, as well as a lumber yard to the south and a cement works to the east. Early photographs show the building only from its windowless western end, where it was not blocked by other structures.

This mid-block position did, however, allow tracks to run on both sides of the building. With tracks removed upon abandonment of the rail line (1983), the main right-of-way on the northern side of the depot now serves as a broad asphalt alley between the rear facades of the 5th Street businesses and the depot. Some of the exposed rear facades have subsequently been treated in the manner of primary

² Harvey, Thomas. *The Making of Railroad Towns in Minnesota's Red River Valley*. Master's thesis, Pennsylvania State University, August 1982.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Little Falls and Dakota Depot

Name of property

Pope County, Minnesota

County and State

Section 7 Page 3

storefronts, with displays and signage. A wooden walkway has been restored along the north façade of the depot, continuing west along the alleyway to the end of the block.

To the south and immediately behind the depot, a short section of sidetrack has been preserved. To the west, a 1910 Soo Line caboos (non-contributing structure) punctuates the track remnant and a recently built small shed housing a handcar covers the eastern terminus. Embedded in the ground to the west of the depot is a cement circle representing and commemorating the aforementioned lefse,³ with additional signage at the west end of the block pointing to this location. A small asphalt parking lot abuts the eastern end of the depot, and an outhouse (non-contributing building) relocated from the Cyrus depot is found to the east as well.

The former industrial areas adjacent to the depot parcel in Block 60 have been converted to an open, grassy, park-like landscape. The Starbuck Chamber of Commerce building (a former lumberyard office), is located across a grassy expanse on the southwestern corner of Block 60, and a small memorial to Harold Knutson, a Starbuck Depot Society member, is embedded in the ground near an additional parking lot on the southeast corner of the block.

Depot alterations

The greatest number of documented building alterations appears to have occurred in two time periods. The first alterations were made in 1954, after the termination of passenger service. In May, the newspaper reported:

Work has started on replacing decayed sills under the depot. A block foundation will be added for support. The track between the two crossings will be raised so they will be flush with a new tarvia platform. Last week they junked the 50-year old gasoline engine in the pumphouse. The new electric pump installed has the capacity of pumping 120 gallons of water a minute. They also cleaned out the site of the flowing well. The crew of eight men and foreman live in the coach and cars on the sidetrack, while on the job. They spend the weekends at their homes in Little Falls and Swanville.⁴

As work continued into July of 1954, the local newspaper expressed the town's surprise:

Although passenger service has been taken off this branch of the Northern Pacific railway, sizable repairs and lasting improvements are now in progress at the Starbuck depot and even extensions of the yard facilities are being given consideration. With freight trains of 20 cars common place occurrences through here with no harvest rush or any other stimulus... the N.P. is just the opposite of closed up in this town.... The depot itself is being repaired to such an extent that approaches rebuilding. The old wooden platform over which so many passengers had

³ The 70-pound, Scandinavian specialty, measured at nine feet, eight inches in diameter, was cooked on a flat piece of steel supported by track rails, with coals laid underneath.

⁴ "N.P. Depot Undergoing Repairs." *Starbuck Times*, May 20, 1954.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Little Falls and Dakota Depot

Name of property

Pope County, Minnesota

County and State

Section 7 Page 4

walked to the depot waiting room is now being replaced with a hard surface platform, over which no people, as passengers, are expected to walk. ...[the platform space was] excavated to a depth of two feet... The floor in the freight room of the depot has been raised six inches...⁵

While the newspaper used the term "rebuilding," none of the changes made at this time substantially altered the integrity of the building, and many were, in fact, long-overdue maintenance. Records and anecdotal evidence suggest that the depot then was subject to another long period of neglect, one relatively unchecked until the building came under the care of the Starbuck Depot Society in 1986. The absence of the various historic and modern elevator structures, which towered above their surroundings along the tracks (including directly north across the tracks from the depot), also results in a current appearance significantly different than that found prior to 1980.

The efforts of the Depot Society since 1986 have focused on preservation and restoration. Work included the restoration of the south roof overhang, which had been removed to accommodate large boxcars, and reconstruction of the roof brackets to match those on the north side in 1987. The cedar shingle roof was installed at this time, based on local accounts of early roofing material. The boardwalk was reconstructed in 1988. Interior work in 1988 included the removal of the 1950's era restrooms, which had been located in the walled-off southeast corner of the waiting room. Woodwork and flooring matching the original were procured for the restoration of this corner. Floors in the agent's office were reconstructed using maple flooring from a local school. The ticket counter was restored to its original condition, and the agent's desk reconstructed based on an early interior photograph.

The Depot Society has also purchased and rehabilitated buildings and grounds around the depot, an area now named Depot Square. Across the track right-of-way in a building that once housed fertilizer, the Society has created storage facilities and a display area for railroad memorabilia and other items related to the community's heritage. They also own and are responsible for the renovation of the Chamber of Commerce building.

The painstaking restoration and reconstruction efforts of the Starbuck Depot Society have substantially contributed to maintaining the historical and architectural integrity of the Little Falls and Dakota Depot.

⁵ Big Improvement Made and Studied For Railroad Here." *Starbuck Times*, July 1, 1954.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Little Falls and Dakota Depot

Name of property

Pope County, Minnesota

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

The Little Falls and Dakota Depot in Starbuck, Minnesota, is locally significant under National Register Criteria A in the categories of Transportation, Commerce and Exploration/Settlement for its role in the development of Starbuck and Pope County. It is one of only two wooden depots on the line that have retained historical integrity. It also represents the westward expansion of both rail lines and European settlement in Minnesota and the Dakotas.

The depot was the hub of commerce and transportation for the town of Starbuck and the surrounding agricultural "hinterlands," facilitating the shipping of large quantities of agricultural products from this region. The Little Falls and Dakota line connected the town of Morris (a gateway to the agricultural lands of the Red River Valley) and other agricultural towns along the line to major shipping ports and markets in Duluth and St. Paul. During the depot's period of significance, 1882 to 1955, the line provided the primary method of transporting consumer goods to the town and further facilitated the region's growth by carrying tourists into this scenic area of glacial lakes. The depot's history corresponds to Minnesota's statewide historic contexts, Railroads and Agricultural Development (1870-1940) and Tourism and Recreation in the Lake Regions (1870-1945).

The idea of the railroad

Located in the approximate center of Pope County, the town of Starbuck marks the fortuitous intersection of two natural environments. The town sits on the western end of Lake Minnewaska (formerly Lake Whipple), a glacial lake noted as the thirteenth largest lake in Minnesota. To the north and east, the advance and retreat of glacial lobes left sediment deposits that resulted in the lakes, rolling hills and wooded terrain characteristic of this area of Minnesota. To the west and southwest, the land flattens and stretches into fertile prairie and Red River Valley plains.

The first documented roads through the area were those reflecting two facets of Minnesota's early European settlement history. One was a thread of the Middle or Plains Trail (actually a web of trails) traversed by oxcarts that carried goods between the Red River Valley and St. Paul. This trail laced its way through the future northeastern corner of Pope County, north of the present town of Glenwood.

Intersecting with the oxcart trail was the "pioneer," "settler" or "stagecoach" road known as the Wadsworth Trail, leading from St. Cloud to Fort Wadsworth (later Fort Sisseton), North Dakota. Research suggests that this trail split to follow both the northern and southern shores of Lake Minnewaska, and, as historian Rhoda Gilman notes, the selection of routes through the area, whether stagecoach or oxcart, was likely interchangeable, determined by variables such as water levels in boggy areas. The "fine prairie ridge" at Lake Minnewaska offered a high, dry spot for all travelers.¹

¹ Gilman, Rhoda et al. *The Red River Trails. Oxcart Routes Between St. Paul and the Selkirk Settlement 1820-1870*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Little Falls and Dakota Depot

Name of property

Pope County, Minnesota

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

Explorers and surveyors also used the trails, taking note of the area's resources. By 1862, the lines of Pope County had been drawn, and the county was officially formed in 1866. Surveyors to the area in 1866 found random settlement and much potential. They noted: "The northeast third of the [White Bear Lake] township is equal to the best in the State— soil first rate, plenty of water from small ponds and lakes, and many fine detached meadows producing excellent hay; together with sufficient timber for the whole township."²

The traffic on the Wadsworth Trail encouraged the construction of small waystation settlements to house travelers and provide supplies along the route. One of these waystations was located three miles northeast of present-day Starbuck, and is considered locally as a precursor to the town of Starbuck. The settlement was formed by eight members of the Wollan family, part of a wagon train of Norwegian settlers traveling from Iowa to Otter Tail County in 1867. Somewhat short of their original goal, they stopped along the trail and created the Wollan Settlement, also known as White Bear Center.

Growth in the new county was subject to many obstacles, including transportation through the boggy, rocky, heavily wooded portions of the state to the east, and the deadly winter in 1871-72. The grasshopper plagues of 1877 and 1878 "destroyed crops everywhere except on the southwest sides of the lakes, which they missed in drifting across the bodies of water..."³ The financial panic of 1873, triggered in part by the failure of the Jay Cooke and Co. bank, financiers of the Northern Pacific Railroad, also inevitably slowed the creation of the transportation routes necessary for area development.

Yet even before the panic, railroading was well established in Minnesota, with fifteen railroad companies and about 2000 miles of track by 1872.⁴ East-west lines were important. The Northern Pacific constructed a line from Duluth through Brainerd to Moorhead by 1871, and reached Bismarck, North Dakota by 1873.⁵ By 1871, the St. Paul and Pacific (acquired by the Northern Pacific in 1870) ran from St. Paul to Willmar, running just south of Pope County to reach Morris by 1874.

Railroads simultaneously built numerous feeder lines to increase traffic and profits, and, edging closer to the future site of Starbuck, the Northern Pacific had connected Brainerd and Little Falls by 1877.

But the railroads missed Pope County, which had a population of just 2,691 in 1870. Much of the county's 693 square miles remained unsettled.

² As quoted in Armstrong, Hart, ed. *A Hundred Years of Greatness: Pope County, Minnesota, Centennial Memorial Book, 1866-1966*. Pope County Historical Society, 1966.

³ Armstrong, unpaginated.

⁴ Blegen, Theodore C. *Minnesota. A History of the State*. University of Minnesota, 1963. p. 295.

⁵ Risjord, Norman K. *A Popular History of Minnesota*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005. p. 133. The St. Paul and Pacific was purchased by the Great Northern in 1878, and under James J. Hill's direction became a major and profitable north-south line in the Red River Valley.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Little Falls and Dakota Depot

Name of property

Pope County, Minnesota

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

Pioneer farmers were not attracted to Minnesota's prairie area. Perhaps they believed that it, like the rest of the Great Plains, was the Great American Desert. Because there were other treeless places with [sufficient access to] wood and water, they saw no need to challenge a treeless land that lacked navigable streams. Not until the advent of railroads, liberal land laws, and enticing wheat market in the 1870s and 1880s were farmers led out of the wooded areas onto the prairie.⁶

Local businessmen and railroad companies eyed the region for its railroad potential for quite some time. An 1874 railway map shows a proposed line from Little Falls to the state's westernmost "bump" between Big Stone Lake and Lake Traverse at the head of the Red River.⁷ Great Northern Railway Records at the Minnesota Historical Society suggest that this line may first have been planned as part of the Lake Traverse and St. Cloud line, later affiliated with the Great Northern.

Additionally, in 1876, Pope County sought the state legislature's permission to issue bonds to entice the Duluth and Dakota Railway Company to construct a line through the county. The proposed line was to extend northward from the main line of the St. Paul and Pacific Railway from a point in or between Benson and/or Hancock (southeast of Morris), past the west end of Lake Minnewaska, north along the lakeshore to Glenwood, and continuing to Brainerd or Wadena. The contract specified the construction of depots in Glenwood, which was also to become the line's "business headquarters," and a depot on the then nameless "west end Lake Whipple" – the site of present-day Starbuck. However, for reasons not clear (but likely to do with the complex financing of railroad ownership and construction), the line never materialized, and in 1879, the county cancelled all contracts. Undaunted, local businessmen began anew, forming the Little Falls and Dakota Railroad Company with organizers from numerous sites along the proposed line, including Morris, White Bear Center, Glenwood, Westport, Sauk Centre, and Little Falls.

As originally proposed, the Little Falls and Dakota line would leave Little Falls and tie this lumbering and milling community to the woodless but agriculturally rich Red River Valley. In addition to the advantages of local freight transport, the idea of a connection between the central Minnesota woods and the prairie of west central Minnesota undoubtedly brought a gleam to the eyes of railroad speculators. Furthermore, the line would, through Little Falls and its connection to Brainerd, provide a link with Northern Pacific's route to Duluth, a shipping center.

Although the Little Falls and Dakota line was incorporated in February 1879, building did not begin for another two years. One local researcher suggested that this was due to the local leaders' inability to generate enough financing (each bought only one or two shares in the line) and overall impetus to get

⁶ Lass, William. *Minnesota. A History*. New York: American Association of State and Local History, 1977. p.31.

⁷ Reed, J.L. *Township and railroad map of Minnesota*. Published for the Legislative Manual, St. Paul, 1874. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Little Falls and Dakota Depot

Name of property

Pope County, Minnesota

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

the job done.⁸ The problem was solved, however, when the Northern Pacific became interested in the line – at what seems to be the same time the Lake Traverse and St. Cloud line was laying track from the west.

Each of these lines was ultimately absorbed into a larger company as a subsidiary, and rivalry between them was ultimately an expression of the national contest for dominance between the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific.⁹ Record summaries indicate that the Lake Traverse and St. Cloud, incorporated in 1880, built a line between Morris and “rural Starbuck.” Apparently outmaneuvered by the Little Falls and Dakota (read: Northern Pacific) in securing the cooperation of the counties through which it would pass, the Lake Traverse and St. Cloud sold the line east of Morris to the Little Falls and Dakota during the construction of this line. Local accounts also suggest that the speed of the construction of the Little Falls and Dakota line, which reached Starbuck first, allowed the Little Falls and Dakota to secure the mail franchise for the town, making retention of this portion of the Lake Traverse line by its originators a pointless investment.¹⁰

A second portion of the Lake Traverse and St. Cloud line, from Morris to Brown’s Valley, was retained and eventually became part of the Great Northern. But the public assumption that the stretch from Morris to the state line would fall under the control of the Little Falls and Dakota continued through 1884, when the A.T. Andreas Historical Atlas of Dakota reported: “The Little Falls and Dakota Railway reaches a point very near the eastern boundary of [Roberts] county at Brown’s Valley, about two miles east of Travare, the county seat, which it is expected will be carried through the county toward the west.”¹¹ But the Great Northern maintained a grip on the Morris-to-border stretch and the line did not expand in the direction of Travare. In late 1884, the Roberts county seat, lacking a rail connection, was relocated to Wilmot, South Dakota.

⁸ Rollins, Douglas. *A Rose Cut Before Blooming: The Little Falls and Dakota Railroad Company*. Unpublished manuscript, May, 1987. Pope County Historical Society files. In this student paper, Rollins provides a detailed account of the financial history of the Little Falls and Dakota Railroad Company,

⁹ The competing line was the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway Company, later incorporated with the Great Northern.

¹⁰ In 1838, the United States government designated all railroads as postal service routes. “In 1930, more than 10,000 trains were used to move the mail into every city, town, and village in the United States. Following passage of the Transportation Act of 1958, mail-carrying passenger trains declined rapidly. By 1965, only 190 trains carried mail; by 1970, the railroads carried virtually no First-Class Mail.” “History of the U.S. Postal Service, 1775-1993. The Postal Role in U.S. Development: Railway Mail Service.” U.S. Postal Service. Online at <http://www.usps.com/history/his2.htm>. Accessed March 3, 2005.

¹¹ Andreas, A.T. *Historical Atlas of Dakota*. Chicago, 1884. Online at <ftp://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/sd/andreas/roberts.txt>

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(The further ambitions of the Little Falls and Dakota line is expressed in a wishful but unfulfilled 1880 amendment to the original papers of incorporation, which stated that the Little Falls and Dakota line would also construct "...a branch line of railroad extending from Little Falls aforesaid, to the eastern boundary of the State, in the direction of Lake Superior..."¹²)

Although organized as an independent, local company, and although remaining so in the eyes of local citizens (as suggested by later lawsuits to retain individual interests), the Little Falls and Dakota was, for all intents and purposes, a Northern Pacific Railway line almost from its inception. Calvin L. Brown, once Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court, noted in a 1922 publication:

It was a move by the Northern Pacific Company, but that fact was not generally known at the time. The company organized under the name [Little Falls and Dakota] and the connection with the other road was not disclosed.¹³

The construction of the line was a logical move for the Northern Pacific. As settlement demands increased and railroads sought more profits, they began constructing an increasingly dense network of feeder lines between spokes of the trunk lines that radiated from Minneapolis and Duluth.

And while the roots of the Little Falls and Dakota line may not have been well known in some circles, company documents clearly show the ties between the larger and smaller company. Herman Haupt, general manager of the Northern Pacific in 1882, signed contracts as president (one of many in the coming years) of the Little Falls and Dakota. Survey reports were produced by Northern Pacific surveyors, and addressed not to the directors of the Little Falls and Dakota, but to "A. Anderson, Engineer in Chief, N.P.R.R."

The line was immediately leased by the Northern Pacific upon completion, followed by outright purchase in 1900. (This was not untypical. By the 1880s, many other "pioneer" lines were in the process of consolidation, ultimately resulting in the "half dozen major roads" that served the state in the coming decades.¹⁴)

There were also clues to connections with the Northern Pacific in the ingratiating town names along the new line. Villard, east of Starbuck, was named after Henry Villard, president of the Northern Pacific Railroad from 1881 to 1883. (A national hero of his day, Villard oversaw the Northern Pacific during the completion of its transcontinental line.) While the name of the town of Starbuck has various attributions, Northern Pacific records associate the name with William Starbuck, who provided

¹² *Records of the Little Falls and Dakota Railroad Company*, Book 379, Amended Articles of Incorporation, June 1880. Minnesota Historical Society files.

¹³ Brown, Calvin L. *Historical Contributions. Concerning the Settlement and Development of West Central Minnesota, Stevens County and the City of Morris*. Reprinted from the *Morris Tribune*, Morris, Minnesota, 1922-23. p. 10.

¹⁴ Blegen p. 296

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financing for Northern Pacific ventures from his home in New York, and note that Sidney Starbuck served as president of the Little Falls and Dakota line (after Haupt).¹⁵

Building the line

The original construction contract for the Little Falls and Dakota line specified a line from Little Falls through Morris and continuing west to the state line by January 1883, for a total of 120 miles. As evidence of the importance of the railroad, an 1882 survey report indicates that residents in Todd County asked the railroad to consider relocating the proposed line through the towns of Coldrum (near present-day Swanville) in Morrison County and Burnhamsville (now Pillsbury) in Todd County. The surveyor reported that rerouting the proposed line would require crossing the Swan River twice, and that a relocated line would still not offer competition with the Sauk Centre and Northern Railroad in Long Prairie. The surveyor did not hesitate to note: "The people interested in the change of location are... inhabitants of Burnhamsville [and] the change would seem to benefit them more than any other parties."¹⁶

Surveying for the line took place simultaneously in several locations, with a report made by John B. Fish, the chief engineer of the Little Falls and Dakota, noting that crews worked from Little Falls, Sauk Centre and Morris beginning in 1881. DeGraff and Company, a partnership venture of Charles A. DeGraff and William Crooks, won the contract for construction.¹⁷

After delays due to winter weather, heavy rains, and "scarcity of labor", crews began laying track through the summer of 1882. Fish's report, which was made directly to the Chief Engineer of the Northern Pacific in Brainerd, also noted the obstacles posed by the Mississippi at Little Falls, the "conformation of the surface" around Lake Whipple, and the careful negotiations with the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad Company (soon to become the Great Northern) regarding station grounds at Morris.

DeGraff and Company assumed responsibility for every last detail of the line's construction, with contract specifications down to the last tie. Based on the language of the contract, it must be assumed that they were responsible for all early depots along the line:

¹⁵ Upham, Warren. *Minnesota Place Names. A Geographic Encyclopedia*. Online edition, May, 2005. <http://mnplaces.mnhs.org/upham/index.cfm>. See also: *Northern Pacific Place Names*, Vol. 3, P-Z, n.d., manuscript notebook, Minnesota Historical Society.

¹⁶ Hastings, D.S. Letter to A. Anderson, Engineer in Chief, NPRR, Jan. 17, 1882. NP file 21-13.

¹⁷ Colonel William Crooks was involved in numerous railroad ventures throughout his life, serving in 1879 as chief engineer of the St. Paul and Pacific, the first railroad in Minnesota. The line later became part of the Northern Pacific's rival, the Great Northern Railway. DeGraff and Company was associated with the Oregon and Transcontinental Company, a holding company that was formed by Henry Villard and that is listed as constructing the line in later documents.

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...[T]hey will furnish all materials for and construct station-houses for said road, the same to be such number as the company shall direct, and to be of an aggregate cost of not more than twenty one thousand six hundred dollars (\$21,600)... They will furnish all materials for and construct water tanks to be of such number as the said company may direct and to be of an aggregate cost of not more than twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000)... and telegraph lines running the full length of said road... and erect good and sufficient fences on each side of the said line of road, for the full length thereof.

The construction of depots (and the towns themselves) depended on the progress of the track laying, as Fish noted: "The station buildings are being put up as fast as the contractor can move his materials to each station."¹⁸

Plans for the original depots along the Little Falls and Dakota line are rare, and none were located for the smaller towns along the line. Standard plans in Northern Pacific engineering files from the era do not match the dimensions and appearance of the depot in Starbuck, although the basic layout was that used by the Northern Pacific through the 1890s for one-story combination depots. Photographs of depots at Villard, Westport, Cyrus, and Starbuck suggest that some type of standard plan – if only DeGraff's – was available, although variations in roof brackets and window hoods may reflect the use of immediately local millwork.

A certification of completion for the line between Morris and Little Falls, a total of 87.85 miles, was issued on November 27, 1882.

Town-building

Essential to the railroad's development and survival, multiple towns were platted along the Little Falls and Dakota line, providing, at the least, water stops for steam engines, and even more, a source of income for the line through land sales and as focal points for passenger and freight traffic. Although European settlers had been in Pope County for close to two decades, the Little Falls and Dakota was on the cutting edge of formal western settlement in Minnesota.

The high point of rail building on virgin land came in the 1880s, as railroads virtually plotted the course of empire. They no longer threaded their way through previously settled territory, but, instead, now essentially dictated where both farmland and towns would be located, because lands close to the railroads were simply worth much more than those farther away.¹⁹

¹⁸ Fish, John. B. *Annual Report, Little Falls and Dakota Railroad*. July 31, 1882. Northern Pacific files, document 47-3, Minnesota Historical Society.

¹⁹ Francaviglia, Richard V. "The Importance of Railroads," in: *The North Star State*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2002. p. 182. Originally published in *Minnesota History*, Summer, 1972.

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The towns located along the Little Falls and Dakota line had varied origins. Morris, Glenwood, Sauk Centre and Little Falls were relatively well established. In other cases, area settlements relocated to the newly platted railroad sites in order to become part of a trackside town, sometimes changing names, but often clinging to their early identity in local historical accounts. Towns along the Little Falls and Dakota line from west to east, depicted on a 1897 railway map, were Morris, in Stevens County; Cyrus (originally called Scandiaville), Starbuck, Glenwood, Villard and Westport (originally called Belcher) in Pope County; Sauk Centre in Stearns County; Birch Lake, Grey Eagle and Burstrum (also noted as Bystrum) in Todd County; and Swanville (historically associated with a post office settlement called Culdrum), Flensburg, and Little Falls in Morrison County.²⁰

The transactions involved in railroad town building were varied. Often the U.S. government provided land grants for rights-of-way and towns to a railroad company to encourage construction and settlement. The railroad company in turn sold these lands to settlers at varying prices depending on the level of incentive needed to get people to settle along or in useful proximity to the tracks. The Little Falls and Dakota received such land grants, in addition to a reported \$65,000 "bonus" supplied by Pope County itself, with additional bonuses from other counties on the line.²¹

In the case of Starbuck, settlers had already claimed parcels desired by the railroad, so the Little Falls and Dakota purchased townsite land from settlers Andrew Hogenson and James D. Poler and his wife, Wealthy. In September 1881, the Polers sold to the company a 100-foot wide strip across their quarter quarter section, recorded with the notation "to be used for right of way." In May 1882, they sold the surrounding land (an undivided half of their quarter quarter section, minus the "right of way and Depot") to Alexander Moore, one of the original the railroad company organizers from Sauk Centre. This purchase included the recorded notation "plating [sic] and surveying a Townsite." Each of these sales was made for \$1.00 on a contract for deed, suggesting that the Polers had a vested interest in the outcome of the townsite.

²⁰ Galbraith, Frank H. *Galbraith's railway mail service maps, Minnesota*. Chicago, 1897. An 1889 report notes 14 stations along the line; this list of towns leaves one station unaccounted for. This is most likely New Prairie (in Pope County), which failed rapidly as the railroad declined. (Report of the Little Falls and Dakota Railroad Company to the Board of Railroad and Warehouse Commissioners, for the year Ending June 30, 1889.)

²¹ Alden, Ogle and Company. *Illustrated Album of Biography of Pope and Stevens counties, Minnesota*. 1888. p. 153. In 1890, the line also had received land grants in Hubbard, Cass, Beltrami, Becker, and Itasca counties. Documents indicate that the State of Minnesota sued the Little Falls and Dakota in 1898, claiming that the line received too much land under this provision. The railroad company's counterclaim was that it had received too little. (Letter to C.S. Mellen, Esq., from Northern Pacific Railway Company General Counsel C. W. Burns, St. Paul, Dec. 12, 1898.) This matter appears to have been settled in the course of the Little Falls and Dakota's purchase by the Northern Pacific two years later.

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It is likely that the Polers and Hogenson envisioned themselves as town proprietors, and ambitious ones at that. An 1888 history of Pope County notes: "The village was laid out by James. D. Poler and Andrew Hogenson, in the spring of 1882, the site being surveyed by John Abercrombie."²²

The non-standard plat, with its deviations from railroad town types identified by geographers such as Thomas Harvey, points to a probable interplay between the town's surveyor, John Abercrombie (an employee of the Little Falls and Dakota and the Northern Pacific), and interested parties such as the Polers. Roles were not entirely clear-cut in such arrangements. Geographer Tom Schmiedeler, focusing on county seats in Minnesota, explained:

In Minnesota...[o]riginal town plats identify proprietors and surveyors, but neither the plats nor local historians typically reveal who designed the town... Regardless of who platted them, only about 60 percent of the railroad towns that became county sets developed according to their plans... The result was a medley of railroad town forms...unparallel in its regional diversity.²³

Both Harvey and Schmiedeler point to private proprietors as influencing plat forms. Harvey reinforces the idea of numerous non-standard plats, noting that in the nearby Red River Valley, "towns along the Northern Pacific show the least consistency in original plan or in present form."²⁴ Indeed, although approximating the "combination plan" identified by Harvey (see Section 7), Starbuck was essentially a lopsided amalgamation, with about 65 % of the blocks laid out to the north and 35% to the south of the tracks as part of the original town plat.

And with a total of almost 730 acres, the townsite plat was unusually large.²⁵ Harvey's research showed that privately platted towns in the Red River Valley ranged from two to eight blocks in size. Corporate towns such as Moorehead and Hawley had forty and sixty-seven blocks, respectively. Starbuck's original plat had eighty-five numbered blocks, suggesting great ambitions by the proprietors or the railroad.

The evolution of differences between plan, plat and reality can be teased out of Starbuck's history. Local accounts suggest that at the time of the 1882 survey and plat, Broadway, a street parallel to and three blocks north of the current business district on 5th Street, was assumed to be the main business street. Sited on the top of a rise paralleling Lake Minnewaska with a panoramic view of the lake, this may well have been a reasonable assumption for both aesthetic and practical reasons, with the elevation

²² *Illustrated Album*, 1888, p. 152. The nearby town of Cyrus has a similar recorded history: "The town of Scandiaville, as it was [then] called by the Norwegian settlers, was laid out in 1881 by O.H. Dahle and Charles Olson, on land they owned, assisted by railroad officials named Fish and Livingstone, of the Northern Pacific Railway. The next year the name of the town was changed to Cyrus." Armstrong, 1966.

²³ Schmiedeler, Tom. "Civic Geometry. Frontier Forms of Minnesota's County Seats." In *Minnesota History*, Fall, 2001. p. 331- 339.

²⁴ Harvey, *Red River Valley*, p. 92.

²⁵ Starbuck Study Club. *Starbuck 1883-1983*. Starbuck, 1983. p. 5.

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guaranteeing that the swampier land surrounding the lake would not be a problem for tracks or businesses. (Most homes built prior to 1920 appear to have been constructed in this area of town.) However, the subsequent 1882 construction of the depot in the middle of Block 60, between 4th and 5th Streets, led to the relocation of the nascent business district to both sides of 5th Street. Tracks first ran behind the buildings on the south side of 5th, and ultimately on both sides of the depot building.

Local history accounts suggest that the first building in the new “town” was a “boarding house to care for the railroad construction crew,” which had, under the direction of local settler Ole Knudson, set up camp on what is now 5th Street.²⁶ As a symbol of the shift of transportation and population centers, in 1883, a building that served as a general store and post office was relocated from White Bear Center on the Wadsworth Trail to the new town.²⁷

Along with the development of the commercial district, elevators and industrial buildings were soon erected around the depot. By the turn of the century, the depot itself was relatively invisible to the storefronts of the business district, although the noise and smells associated with the elevators, stockyards, and manufacturers that surrounded it certainly left no doubt as to the location of the tracks.

The people

The town of Starbuck retains a strong connection to its Scandinavian roots in White Bear Center, with more than 65% of its current population claiming Scandinavian heritage.²⁸ The strong Scandinavian presence in Starbuck is no surprise, as historian Theodore Blegen noted: “The Scandinavians were active in the Minnesota railroad story because their flooding of the region coincided with the extension of the iron horse.”²⁹

Of all the lines, the Northern Pacific in particular was known for its colonization efforts, particularly under the direction of Henry Villard beginning in 1881 with one hundred and twenty-four Northern Pacific immigration agents scattered throughout northern Europe at this time.³⁰ Without a close examination of individual immigration data, the degree to which these recruitment efforts directly contributed to the growth of towns along the Little Falls and Dakota line is not entirely clear. In many cases, local historical accounts indicate that immigrants who moved to Starbuck and other towns along the line had already crossed the ocean in the immigration waves of the 1870s and were relocating to Pope County and the surrounding area from other areas within the state and country. On the other hand,

²⁶ Ibid., p. 11. See also: “History of Starbuck- Origin of the Town by Mrs. Constance Erickson.” *Starbuck Times*, June 20, 1935.

²⁷ *Starbuck 1883-1983*, pp. 11-12.

²⁸ Starbuck, Minnesota. City Data. <http://www.city-data.com/city/Starbuck-Minnesota.html>

²⁹ Blegen, p. 302.

³⁰ Hedges, James B. “The Colonization Work of the Northern Pacific Railroad,” in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13:3 (December, 1926), 313.

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the Little Falls and Dakota's relationship to the Northern Pacific, and the simultaneous efforts of the line's construction and immigration recruitment may have contributed to an immigration synergy for the Little Falls and Dakota towns.

In either case, the railroad was responsible for bringing new residents to Starbuck. Hannah Nygaard reminisced how her father and older siblings moved by train from Revere, Minnesota in 1916.

He rented two cars, one for the livestock and the other for the machinery and household goods. The family traveled by coach. They had to go by way of Mankato. Then they were switched to another track and onto South St. Paul. They again had to switch tracks to Little Falls and finally switch onto tracks to Starbuck.³¹

The train also played a key role in social occasions in Starbuck. For a 4th of July celebration in 1899: Starbuck was decked in her holiday attire, bunting hung everywhere... At 7:00 o'clock the special train of seven coaches from Morris steamed in, bearing Co. I-3rd Regiment, M.N.G., the Morris band and baseball team and hundreds of Morris visitors... By 10:00 o'clock all was arranged only waiting the arrival of the train from the east bearing Sauk Centre Band and visitors and the Villard baseball team...³²

1899 was also a key year because the Starbuck Hospital (National Register of Historic Places, 1982) opened that year. Passengers from the small towns of western Minnesota were able to travel to Starbuck via rail for treatment by the hospitals' founder, Dr. C.R. Christiansen, and doctors from area towns such as Glenwood and Cyrus utilized the facilities (located two blocks from the depot) as well.

The hospital was one of several rail-supported ventures that diversified Starbuck as agricultural fortunes waxed and waned. The Starbuck Cement Company was founded in 1916, and a sidetrack spur for the newly renamed venture, Northwest Tile Company, was added to the line in Starbuck. The company manufactured cement blocks and drainage tiles for over 60 years, as well as Stave brand silos. In addition, a 1919 trade tour brochure for Minneapolis businessmen, who traveled by train around the state, reported that the recent development of a tallow factory for rendering animals "has made Starbuck an 'industrial' town."

Additionally, Starbuck benefited from its association with the larger area's tourism industry. Glenwood promoted itself and its resorts heavily from the turn of the 20th century onward, and a launch ran on Lake Minnewaska to ferry passengers between the two towns. Resort cottages were available near Starbuck, as well as a free "tourist park" with a campground about six blocks from the Starbuck depot. A tourism brochure (ca. 1930s) by the Starbuck Community Club promoted the area as "...the home of the summer seeker, the land of the canoe, where visions of boyhood days – the days of real sport– are again before you... Come to Starbuck and gain more faith in the world." The brochure noted that the

³¹ *Starbuck 1883-1983*, p. 19.

³² *Starbuck Times*, July 7, 1899 as cited in *Starbuck, 1883-1983*.

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town was “served by the Little Falls and Dakota Branch of the Northern Pacific Railroad,” as well as daily bus service from Alexandria and Willmar, and “two splendid motor routes from Minneapolis to Starbuck.”³³ The Northwestern Cement company (another version of the silo company’s name) engaged in real estate, offering 53 “fine lakeshore lots” for sale, and anecdotal evidence and a windshield survey of homes in the area suggest that the third of Starbuck located south of the tracks – and closer to the lake– was developed to a much greater extent in this era.

The agricultural factor

While the Starbuck depot was a key site for multiple ventures in the town, it was agriculture that made the line and the depot truly necessary, and agriculture that determined the fortunes of the depot and the town.

The prototypical small town earlier in the twentieth century was the agricultural trade center where townspeople’s livelihoods were dependent, directly or indirectly, on supporting farm trade territories and selling goods to farmers...³⁴

Starbuck’s economy was primarily dependent on agriculture-related structures and businesses (although there were other typical settlement ventures). These included three grain elevators by 1896, with one directly across the tracks from the depot.³⁵ Within a few years, Starbuck fit into the midwestern agricultural economic system described by geographer Thomas Harvey:

Few ‘inland’ towns – off the tracks- ever existed, and as many as half the towns in the region were controlled directly by the railroads or their subsidiary townsite agents... Rail dominance and cash-crop agriculture on a large scale led to scores of small elevator towns and farm trade centers, a few major processing centers, and several transportation-dominated rail-division points.³⁶

Sited on the edge of the state’s western prairies, by 1882, Pope County was clearly poised to become at least a modest agricultural center. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, Minnesota’s major crop was wheat, which grew well in freshly turned prairie soils and for which there was a cash market. “By 1878, 70 %

³³ Starbuck Community Club. “Starbuck, Minnesota. Welcome to tourists.” Promotional brochure, Pope County Historical Society files, no date. In another promotional brochure, Glenwood boosters quoted the *St. Cloud Times*: “The passenger who alights from the train at the N.P. depot when the brakeman shouts Glenwood and the train stops is greeted by one of the most magnificent views to be found in Minnesota...” (“Glenwood Minnesota. Famous for its Lake and Drives.” Pope County pamphlet file, Minnesota Historical Society.)

³⁴ Harvey, Thomas. “Small-Town Minnesota,” in: *Minnesota in a Century of Change*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989. p. 114.

³⁵ *Starbuck 1883-1983*, p. 13.

³⁶ Harvey, p. 106.

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of all the state's tilled land was planted with wheat."³⁷ Combined with better harvesting technologies, the presence of the railroad was the key to marketing this immensely productive crop. At the same time, soils in areas of southern Minnesota had become exhausted even as early as 1880, and settlers moved west into the Red River Valley in search of more fertile growing conditions. While grasshopper plagues and the growing realization of the need for crop rotation altered farming in many parts of the state, western Minnesota continued to profitably produce wheat even after 1880.³⁸

In 1896, the *Glenwood Herald* reported on Starbuck's agricultural success:

Built in the midst of very fertile farming country, [Starbuck] is one of the best trading centers in Pope County. For the crop year, July 1895 and July 1896, five hundred boxcars of wheat were shipped from Starbuck; also forty cars of flax, ten thousand bushels of oats and forty-five cattle cars of stock.... Trainmen in commenting on Starbuck say they have more freight here than at any other station along the line.³⁹

(Measuring grain not in pounds or other scales, the railroad was so important to agriculture that the boxcar itself became a standard unit of measure.)

In addition to wheat and other grains, by 1900, following a pattern established in southeastern Minnesota, dairying had become an important industry in the "hilly, wooded, less fertile pastureland" in the state, including portions of Stearns and Pope Counties accessed by the line, as well as nearby Douglas County.⁴⁰

While railroads had encouraged settlement by offering their lands to settlers (future farmers) at good prices, they also incurred the farmers' displeasure by serving as a transportation monopoly, driving up shipping prices for agricultural and other products and delaying service. In 1906 the *Starbuck Times* reported:

A.G. Englund went to St. Paul Tuesday to interview the officials of the Northern Pacific in regard to the car famine at this point. Grain has been coming in very rapidly, and the three elevators are full to the top, with no cars in which to make shipment...[G]rain has been piled up in bags in the driveway and great inconvenience has resulted from the scarcity of cars, not the least of which is the threatened fuel famine, the supply of coal being very limited, and there is no wood to be had in town. It is expected that the railroad company will relieve the situation in the same way they did last year, by sending a special train with a sufficient number of cars...⁴¹

³⁷ Lass, William. p.155.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 166.

³⁹ *Glenwood Herald*, January 1, 1897, as quoted in *Starbuck 1883-1983*, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Tweton, Jerome D. "The Business of Agriculture" in: *Minnesota in a Century of Change*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989, p. 270.

⁴¹ *Starbuck Times*, November 23, 1906.

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To combat these practices and problems, farmers formed a variety of cooperatives. These cooperatives allowed farmers to purchase from and sell jointly to selected markets, rather than depend on the whims and varying prices of individual dealers. It also provided them with greater negotiating power over freight costs, services and trackside facilities, which railroads tried to control to their own benefit. The cooperative movement in Minnesota was hugely successful, and an essential element in the growth of rail-based communities. In 1919, Minnesota was home to more cooperatives (more than 2,600) and a larger percentage (forty-four percent) of farm products marketed through cooperatives than any other state.⁴²

The cooperatives were more than economic entities. Historian Steven J. Keillor points out that such cooperatives filled and reflected social roles as well. Successful cooperatives, such as those in Starbuck, were ethnically homogeneous and served a small geographic area, supported by people who served local, communal interests that extended beyond the economic benefits of the association.⁴³ The community of Starbuck was proud of its homogeneity, with a newspaper boasting in 1896: "There are two churches in Starbuck, both of the Lutheran denomination... The business men... assure continued prosperity to Starbuck by voting the Republican ticket almost without exception."⁴⁴

Ethnically homogeneous Scandinavian communities were especially successful in establishing cooperatives. The movement began in Starbuck with the Fremad Association Store, constructed in 1881 on a hill above town and moved soon after to join the buildings behind the new depot.⁴⁵

Starbuck continued to be a prime example of the cooperative movement, with a cooperative creamery, established in 1891, handling eight thousand pounds of milk per day five years later. In 1922, a new creamery building (extant) was constructed on the north side of the tracks, to the east of the depot, with a dock along the tracks to facilitate shipping by train.⁴⁶ Grain farmers also established a cooperative farmer's elevator, and by 1911 a spur had been added to the rail lines in Starbuck to accommodate the Pope County Farmers Cooperative Mercantile Company. In addition, farmers founded the Starbuck Farmers Cooperative Shipping Association in 1914 to collectively manage the livestock shipping and marketing operations out of Starbuck.

Livestock shipping seemed to be the dominant cooperative association in Starbuck following agricultural diversification. The Starbuck Farmer's Cooperative Shipping Association's first shipment

⁴² Keillor, Steven J. *Cooperative Commonwealth: Co-ops in Rural Minnesota, 1859-1939*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press. 2000. The state's first cooperative livestock shipping association was founded in Litchfield in 1908.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *Glenwood Herald*, Jan 1, 1897 as quoted in *Starbuck, 1883-1983*, p. 14.

⁴⁵ While details of this store are vague, a Fremad Association (originally a Norwegian reading society) general store in Glenwood was created a few years earlier and operated for seventy years. Keillor, p. 49.

⁴⁶ *Starbuck, 1882-1971*. The Committee.

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consisted of eighty hogs, six cattle and one calf, netting \$1,877 in February, 1914.⁴⁷ In subsequent years, the Starbuck Shipping Association annual reports were front-page news in the local paper. Ten years after the first shipments, the paper reported that 119 cars had been shipped in 1924 (6748 hogs, 2006 cattle, and 82 sheep), with total gross receipts of over \$165,000.⁴⁸

The *Starbuck Depot News* provided an overview of the stock shipping operations:

Every Tuesday was livestock shipping day from the Starbuck Depot. The livestock would be brought to the Starbuck stockyards located about two blocks east of the depot on the south side of the track. The loaded livestock cars would leave for South St. Paul about 3 p.m.. They would arrive in time for the market about 9 a.m. the next morning. Before livestock trucks came into general use in the 1930s, farmers would drive their cattle to the depot stockyard either on foot or by horseback. Posts might be tethered around the necks of several lead cows to slow the herd down. Smaller livestock, such as hogs, sheep and calves might be hauled in a farm grain wagon or bob sled, pulled by a team of horses. Some farmers were known to have removed the back seat of their cars, and therein hauled calves and pigs... [Former] Shipping Association manager, James Erickson, recalls the largest rail shipment from Starbuck included three carloads of cattle and two of hogs.⁴⁹

The transition from railroad to truck service was slow in Starbuck. When passenger service to Starbuck ended in 1954, freight service was continued on a "tri-weekly" basis.⁵⁰ This spurred debate in the Shipper's Association, with votes taken at subsequent annual meetings, always in favor of continuing shipment by rail rather than truck.

While not shipping livestock, a 1961 petition from the Railway Express Agency to the Minnesota Railroad and Warehouse Commission was a harbinger, seeking permission to create a truck route for cities along the line and noting "The tri-weekly service on a freight train does not meet the requirement of expeditious handling which is characteristic of express service."⁵¹ However, the *Starbuck Times* reported from the Association's annual meeting: "Shipping Association Decides to Stay With the Railroad."

In 1962, the line discontinued service for all but three months in summer to accommodate the shipping of potatoes to Glenwood.⁵² When the transition to overland trucking became inevitable in 1964, the

⁴⁷ *Starbuck 1883-1983*, p. 54. Northern Pacific Engineering files also show that a new water station was constructed for Starbuck in 1914.

⁴⁸ "Annual Report of the Starbuck Farmers Cooperative Shipping Association." *Starbuck Times*, February 6, 1925.

⁴⁹ Pedersen, Arnie. *Starbuck Depot News*, August 22, 1993.

⁵⁰ "Wintertime Doodle-Bug Bee." *Starbuck Times*, March 11, 1954.

⁵¹ "Railway Express Seeks Area Route." *Pope County Tribune*, June 8, 1961.

⁵² "NP Depot to close all But Three Months." *Pope County Tribune*, Dec. 27, 1962.

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paper reported: "Starbuck Shipping Association is one of the oldest associations in the state, having operated for 50 years, and is also one of the last to discontinue rail shipping."⁵³

Phasing out

As throughout the United States, the Little Falls and Dakota line and the Starbuck depot became obsolete with the development of automobiles and roads.

In 1929, trackage in Minnesota peaked at nearly 9,400 miles. Railroads were still essential in the towns they served, but abandonment became commonplace... The transportation specialization that arose during the railroad era declined statewide with reductions in train service, routes, and employment. Still, some towns retained importance as division points where crews changed and repair shops were located. Brainerd, Staples, Breckenridge, and Glenwood served these functions on transcontinental lines.⁵⁴

In 1954, the Northern Pacific lost the government contract for hauling mail (as did most other lines in the coming years). Shortly thereafter, the final run of the "Doodlebug," or "Gallopig Goose," the small train which had delivered cream, mail and passengers (including, for a short period, a local student who rode the train to attend school in Starbuck) along the Little Falls and Dakota line, made its way through Starbuck, and service ended in March of that year. Low ridership and income were the obvious deciding factors, with a news account about the Little Falls and Dakota providing a classic summary of the factors that led to the elimination of rail service throughout the country:

...[The Minnesota and Railroad and Warehouse Commission] noted that for the 12-month period ending last Sept. 30, the westbound train 29 averaged 6.16 passengers and Train No. 30, 4.93 passengers daily.... While it recognized the convenience of passenger train service, the commission decided that there is no public necessity for such continuance in view of the system of improved highways in the area, the increasing usages of the automobile, truck and bus service, and the other rail and bus service to the principal centers along the route.⁵⁵

The idea of train travel had already been recognized as a subject of nostalgia, and one of the final runs was an outing of the Minnesota Railfans Association, with sixty-five members traveling from Minneapolis to journey in an extra car along the former Little Falls and Dakota line the weekend before the final passenger run. The sixty-five Railfans were treated to a free lunch and bus tour in Morris as part of the excursion.

The elimination of service also caused tension among railroad employees, with a conflict arising over the placement of a depot agent in the Starbuck depot. After a brief stay of less than ten days, the depot agent position held by Jerald Aulich was given to Richard Dall of Wadena, a military veteran with five

⁵³ "Walter Amundson New Shipping Mgr." *Starbuck Times*, July 30, 1964.

⁵⁴ Harvey, p. 109, 115

⁵⁵ "Proposed 'Star Route' Service Announced." *Starbuck Times*, January 28, 1954.

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months seniority. The local newspaper reported that Dall was in the process of purchasing furniture in Starbuck, and that "Aulich... will attempt to get his former position back. His household goods have been in storage at the local depot."⁵⁶

Oddly, the ending of passenger service in March of 1954 was followed in May with a renovation of the Starbuck depot (see Section 7).

Extensive discussion of a railyard expansion also followed, ultimately coming to limited fruition. In 1960, the Northern Pacific merger with the Burlington Railroad meant that an even larger corporation would serve Starbuck, and even less local attention to small towns was anticipated. In an effort to save money, Burlington Northern began running heavier cars on rails that were old and received little maintenance. The lighter steel of the nineteenth-century rails flowed, fissured and cracked under the pressure of heavy, twenty-car freights, "causing numerous derailments and unreliable service."⁵⁷

Northern Pacific files show that partial abandonment of the Little Falls and Dakota line (between Little Falls and Sauk Centre) was considered as early as 1967, with hopes for permission to abandon the complete line in the near future. A railroad official reported on the Little Falls and Dakota branch to the St. Paul Division:

The first ten miles is 90# rail and the remainder is mostly 56# rail which is in very poor condition. To retain the branch line in service would require an expense of around \$1,500,000 for rail and ballast and this is not justified by the amount of traffic...⁵⁸

The official noted that the Flensburg Co-op Creamery Association had received one car the entire previous year, and had forwarded none. A total of 26 cars had been received in Swanville at two businesses, but no cars had been forwarded. The two trackside industries in Grey Eagle had no rail business at all.⁵⁹ The depot agent's position at Starbuck and Cyrus was combined, with one agent shuttling between the depots three times a day.⁶⁰ Delays due to heavy snows and underpowered plows, a chronic complaint, were also reported in papers with particular emphasis during the winter of 1967.

By 1972, only about five percent of Minnesota's branch lines remained.

Those [are the] spur-type operations which link main-line points to smaller towns in the agricultural... hinterland. The branch-line figure, once much larger, reflects the waning future of the marginal line which was once a county's or town's vital line with the outside world.⁶¹

⁵⁶ "New Depot Agent to Arrive Friday." *Starbuck Times*, January 28, 1954.

⁵⁷ Pederson, Arnie. See also: Rollins.

⁵⁸ Steinbright, F.L. Letter to L.W. Menk, St. Paul, November 24, 1967, Chief Engineer files, Northern Pacific files, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ "Announce New Agent Hours at NP Depot." *Starbuck Times*, March 23, 1967.

⁶¹ Francaviglia, p. 186.

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Despite earlier plans, not until 1982 did Burlington Northern execute its decision to abandon the Little Falls and Dakota branch line entirely. By this time, "about the only service during the first six months of 1982 was a few grain cars, and several cars of fertilizer."⁶²

In 1986, local residents formed the Starbuck Depot Society to explore options for restoring and reusing the building. The Little Falls and Dakota Depot now serves Starbuck as a museum and as the home for multiple community events. The railroad, the depot and its surrounding facilities were critical elements in the town's agriculture-based economy for nearly a century. The depot remains as one of the area's few symbols reflecting the importance of the railroad during an era of westward expansion in the state. It is also a physical reminder of the cooperative and agricultural endeavors that were essential to the development of Starbuck and its surroundings.

⁶² *Starbuck 1883-1983*, p. 19.

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Verbal Boundary Description

That part of the Burlington Northern Railroad right-of-way, now discontinued, situated in the NW 1/4, Section 25, Township 125 North, Range 39 West described as follows: Commencing at the iron monument in said NW1/4 at the southeast corner of Block 60, ORIGINAL TOWNSITE of Starbuck, Minnesota, according to the recorded plat thereof Pope County, Minnesota; thence North 00 degrees 03 minutes 56 seconds East 88.42 feet along the east line of said Block 60 and its extension to the southerly right-of-way line of said Burlington Northern Railroad, the point of beginning of the tract to be described; thence continuing North 00 degrees 03 minutes 56 seconds East 120.43 feet to the northerly right-of-way line of said Burlington Northern Railroad; thence South 85 degrees 12 minutes 21 seconds West 301.01 feet along said northerly right-of-way line to the extension of the west line of said Block 60; thence South 00 degrees 03 minutes 56 seconds West 120.43 feet along said west line to the southerly right-of-way line of said Burlington Northern Railroad; thence North 85 degrees 12 minutes 21 seconds East 301.01 feet along said southerly right-of-way line to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes that parcel that has historically been associated with the property.

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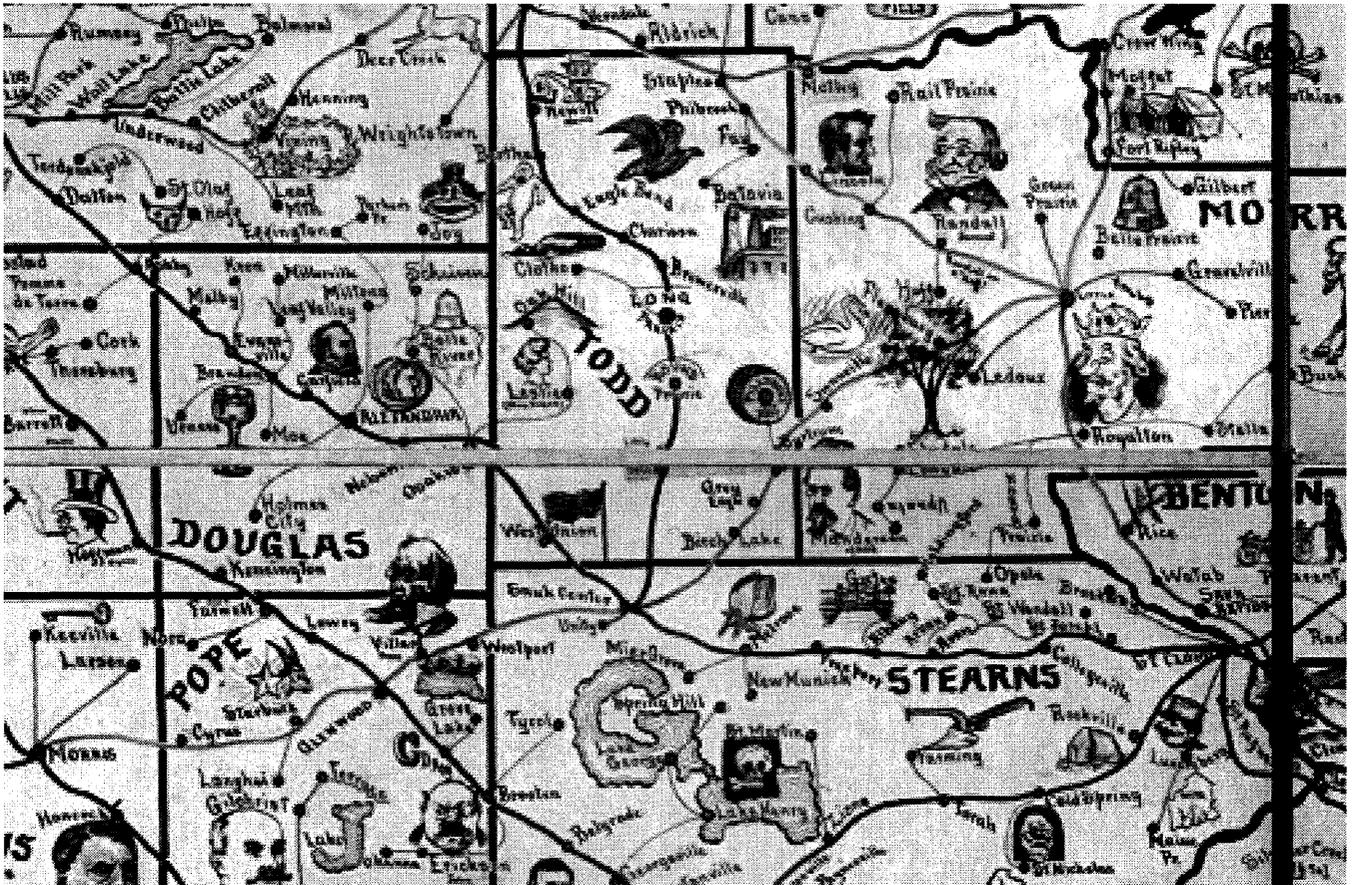


Figure 1. Sectional view of *Galbraith's Railway Mail Service Map, Minnesota*, showing the Little Falls and Dakota line from Morris (lower left) to Little Falls. (Chicago, 1897, 1898. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.)

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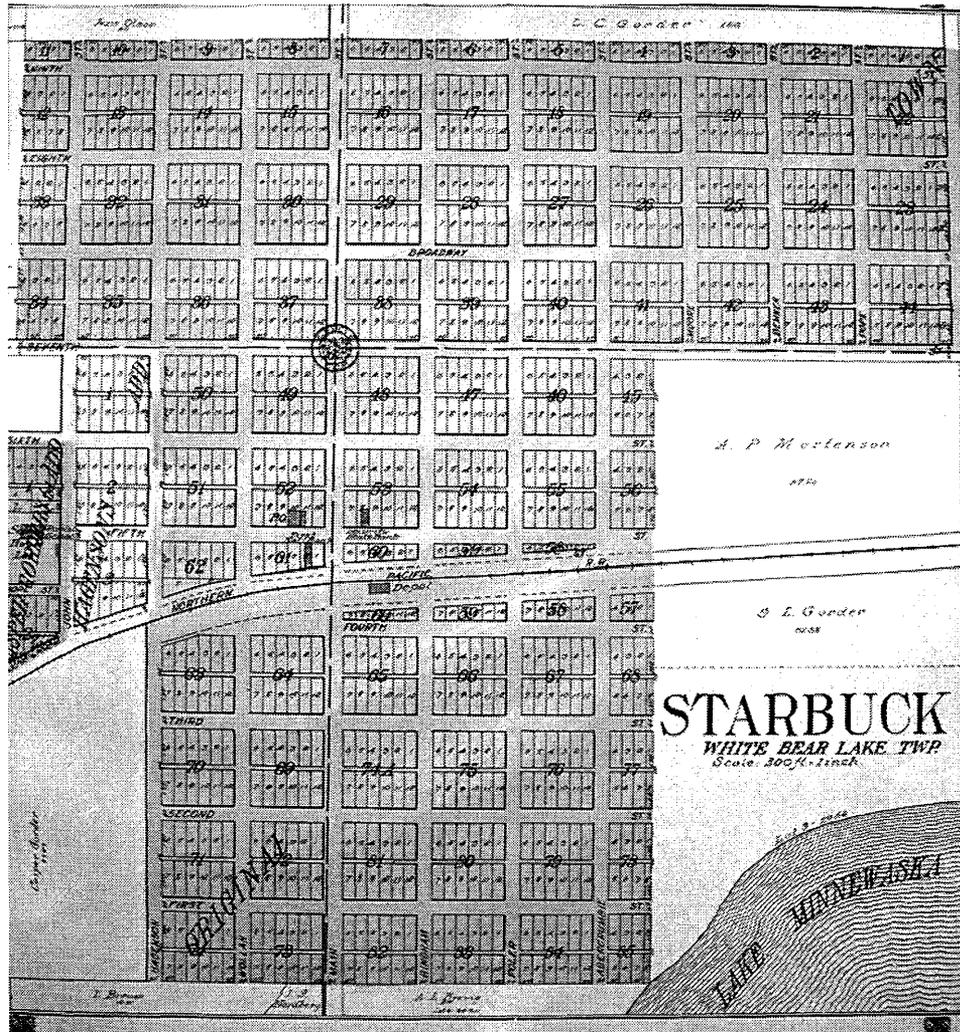


Figure 2. Original plat and west side additions to Starbuck. *Standard Atlas of Pope County, Minnesota*. George A. Ogle and Company: Chicago, 1910.

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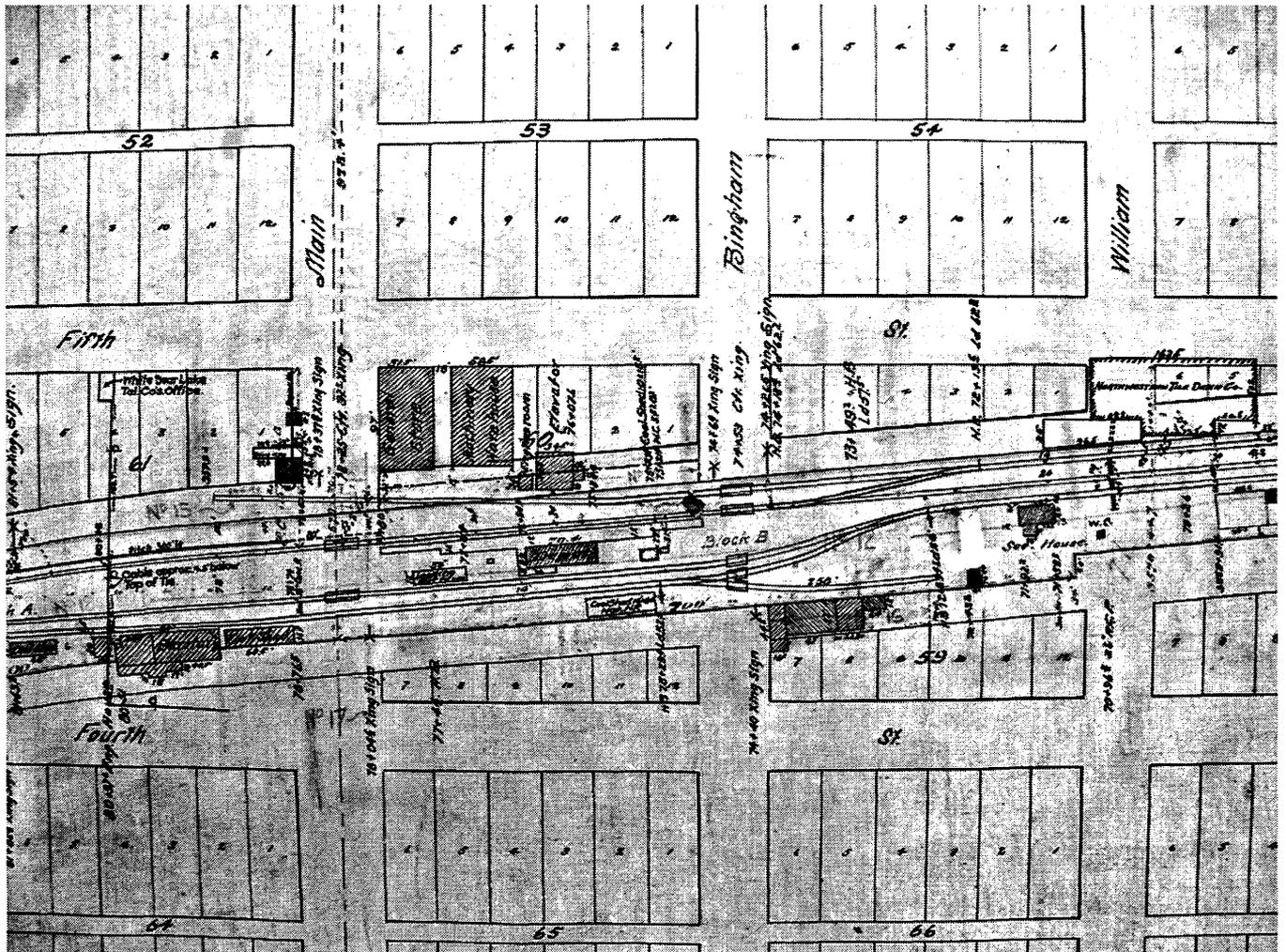


Figure 3. Sectional view of rail facilities in Starbuck, Minnesota, showing depot, rail yard and main business area on 5th Street. Created 1891, corrected 1893, revised 1923. Homes and businesses not related to rail activity are not depicted. (Northern Pacific Railroad files, Minnesota Historical Society.)

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Figure 4. Starbuck, ca. 1890. View to southeast. Elevator marks site of tracks and depot. Note that development is largely on north side of rail line. Pope County Historical Society files.

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Figure 5. Little Falls and Dakota depot with loading dock; elevator to right. Facing east. Undated photo, ca. 1910. Pope County Historical Society files.

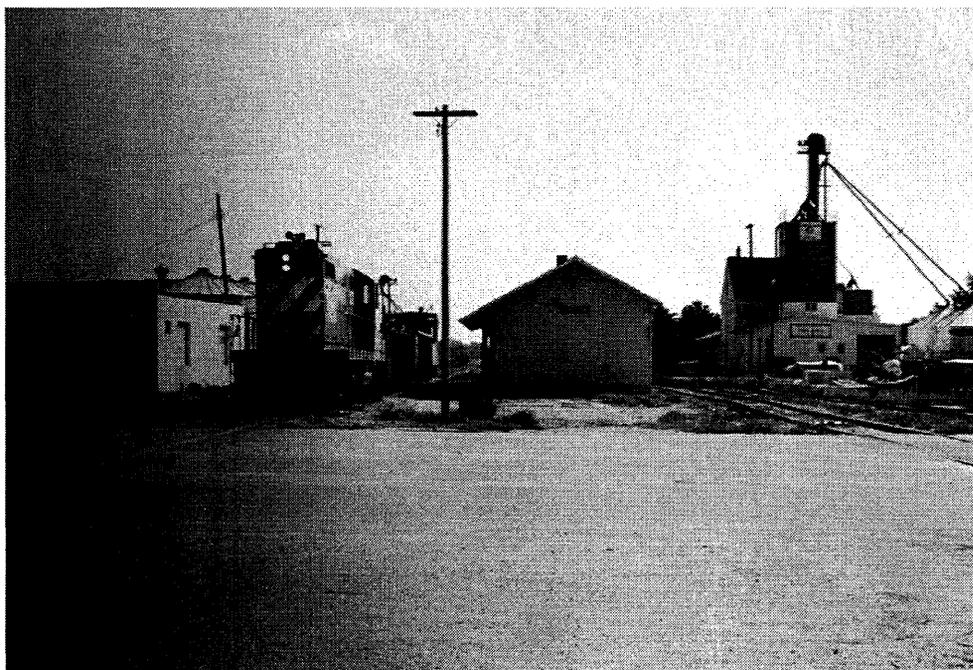


Figure 6. Little Falls and Dakota depot, facing east, ca. 1980. Photo by Larry Larson. Pope County Historical Society files.

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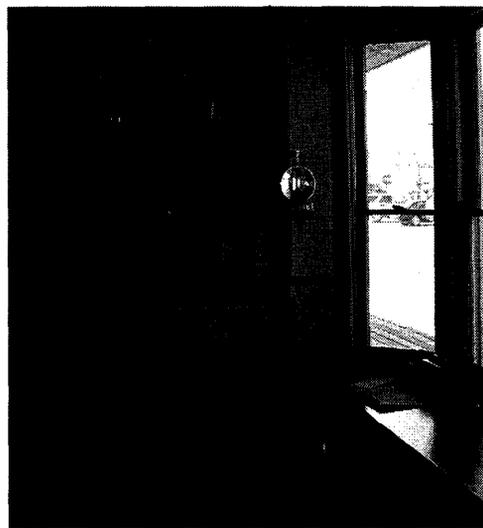
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Figure 7. Little Falls and Dakota depot, ca. 1980. Facing west. Creamery loading dock in right foreground (extant). Photo by Larry Larson. Pope County Historical Society files.



Figures 8 and 9. Agent's office, depot interior. Left: 1909. Right: 2005. Historic photo courtesy of the Starbuck Depot Society.

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Figure 10. Aerial view of Starbuck and depot area, ca. 1980. Leland Loland, photographer. Pope County Historical Society files.