

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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NATIONAL REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Iowa Falls Union Depot  
other names/site number Iowa Falls Depot, Illinois Central Passenger Depot--Iowa Falls

2. Location

street & number East Rocksylvania Avenue and Depot Street  not for publication  
city, town Iowa Falls  vicinity  
state IOWA code 19 county Hardin code 083 zip code 50126

3. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing: The Advent & Development of Railroads in Iowa 1855-1940  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of certifying official [Signature] Date 7/18/90  
Bureau of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 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:) \_\_\_\_\_  
Entered in the National Register 9/6/90  
[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/Rail-Related

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century RevivalsItalian Renaissance Influences

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concretewalls Brick

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roof Asphaltother LimestoneConcrete

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

(See Continuation Sheet, attached.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Transportation

Period of Significance

1902-1903

1902-1908

Significant Dates

1902

1902

Cultural Affiliation

None.

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Illinois Central Railroad

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

(See Continuation Sheet, attached.)

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See Continuation Sheet, attached.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

See continuation sheet

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

**Specify repository:**

Iowa Site Inventory

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property Less than one acre.

**UTM References**

A 

1	5
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4	7	8	9	6	0
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4	7	0	7	4	7	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The precise verbal boundary of the union depot is a rectangle, running 88' northeast to southwest and 40'5" northwest to southeast, centered on the depot. This area allows for a ten-foot extension on each side of the building.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

This nomination includes only the subject depot, and the portion of the platform that falls within the boundary, named above. It excludes the garage, all adjacent trackage, and any other structures.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Tracy Ann Cunning, with Nicholas L. Pitsch, James Beranek, and Rebecca Conard  
organization PHR Associates date 1 December 1989  
street & number 725 Garden Street telephone 805-965-2357  
city or town Santa Barbara state California zip code 93101

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CFN-259-1116

The Iowa Falls union passenger depot is a modest but graceful example of the brick passenger stations that the Illinois Central began building in the early 20th century. Designed by the railroad and built in 1902, it is stylistically eclectic with Italian Renaissance Revival influences. It was designed as a union station to be used jointly by the Illinois Central and the Des Moines, Iowa Falls & Northern Railroad companies. The depot is situated in the Illinois Central yard in the eastern part of Iowa Falls. The surrounding neighborhood is mixed: industrial buildings to the south and east, a recycling center and a hydroelectric plant to the west, and a hotel and residences to the north.

Although the depot is at the corner of E. Rocksylvania and Depot Streets, it sits back from the street, and is obscured by trees and buildings on the west. Because of the building's location in the railroad yard, the area to the immediate south and east is open. The depot is aligned with the railroad's main line tracks, which run roughly east-west through this part of Iowa Falls. The depot actually faces south-southeast, but for practical purposes its elevations will be described as "north," "south," etc., throughout this narrative.

The Iowa Falls depot is a one-story, four by one-bay, rectangular building, with a pavilion-with-ells plan. Small bay windows mirroring each other project from its north and south sides. The depot foundation is concrete with a partial basement for the boiler under the east end. The walls are brick veneer but 13" thick, which suggests masonry construction underneath the veneer. The roof is hipped with the central "pavilion" higher than the eastern and western "ells." Diamond-shaped asphalt shingles and cast concrete copings cover the roof, which also has two interior brick chimneys with stone caps.

On the trackside or south elevation, the westernmost bay consists of a central entry flanked by two windows. The next bay is a bay window which has three windows. The two eastern bays hold one freight door each. The trackside bay window also has a narrow door on its west side and a window on its east side. On the driveway or rear elevation, the westernmost bay has triple windows; the bay window next east has two bathroom windows. The bay next east holds a large replacement freight door, and the easternmost bay contains a semi-round, tripartite window. Both east and west ends have two, single windows.

Most fenestration is 1/1 double-hung sash. The two doors are five-panel wood. The south side freight doors have vertical wood siding; the northern one has a modern overhead sliding door. Door and window lintels are segmentally arched and of gauged brick. One of the southern freight doors has a concrete lintel; the others have no lintels. A stone beltcourse, flush with the walls, wraps around the building, and all

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window sills, except the bathroom window sills, are incorporated into it. A watertable around the base of the depot is also stone.

Elements of the Italian Renaissance Revival style found on this building include the pavillion-with-ells plan and projecting bays, the hipped roof with copings and rounded galvanized iron finials, and the round- and segmentally-arched windows. The presence of wide, overhanging eaves is probably more attributable to the fact that this is a railroad station than to the influence of the Italian Renaissance Revival style.

The Iowa Falls depot exhibits several other interesting features. Perhaps most unusual is that the building has no main entry on the north or driveway side. An entry at the northwest corner of the station has obviously been bricked in, but the entry is not shown on the station floor plan. This entrance would have been the main public entry, but after it was removed public entry would have been through the door on the west end of the trackside elevation. (The narrow door on the west side of the trackside bay window was the trainmen's entrance to the depot's office.) Second, the building's downspouts descend into cast iron shoes or guards at window sill level, and the spouts themselves are anchored to the walls of the depot by iron clasps decorated with a modified fleur-de-lis motif. Third, the eaves are closed, but instead of a flat soffit as on most other depots with such eaves, this depot has a concave soffit.

The interior of the depot is divided according to a traditional station plan, with the addition of an extra baggage room. The ticket office in the trackside bay window is flanked by a general waiting room on the west and the baggage room on the east. Men's and women's toilet rooms are located in the driveway bay, and the second baggage room is in the eastern most end. Stairs to the boiler room are in the latter room. The IC baggage room was probably adjacent to the ticket office, since this was primarily its depot; the DMIF&N probably used the east end baggage room. A small booth where trainmen conversed with the ticket clerk is located in the southwestern corner of the trackside bay window. Since Mills Tower controlled the traffic through the yard there was no dispatcher or train order signal here, and the office section of the depot is quite small, more a formality than a necessity. Ceilings are nearly twelve feet high and floors are hardwood, except in the restrooms where there are concrete floors. The walls seem to be plastered. Generally, the interior is simple and unornamented.

Two other IC buildings are located near the Iowa Falls depot, but neither is included in this nomination. One is a c. 1930 one-story, one-bay garage to the west of the depot. The garage faces northeast, and has a concrete foundation, clapboard siding, and a hipped roof with asphalt shingles. The hipped roof and clapboard siding indicate that it may be an older IC building, but it appears to have been moved to this location after

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1952, as it is not shown on any of the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. The garage is now used for storage.

The second building is east of the depot, at East Rocksylvania and Hamilton Streets, and is the Illinois Central freight house. The freight house is a long, one-story structure with concrete foundation, drop siding and a gabled roof with asphalt shingles. This structure was the original two-story depot with a one-story freight room. It was built in 1866 by the IC's corporate affiliate the Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad, and was originally located between the tracks just south of the present IC depot. When the new depot was erected in 1902 the old depot was moved to this location, serving as a freight house only, a common practice among railroads in the state. In 1946, in the midst of the IC's third architectural generation, the structure was resided with drop siding and the second floor removed. This freight house is one of three remaining original IC depots in the state; two others are in Ticonic and Cherokee. All have been moved and altered; of the three, this one is the oldest, preceding Cherokee by three years. Due to its extensive modifications, the Iowa Falls freight house has been determined non-contributing at this time, but should be re-evaluated in a few years.

Relatively few changes have been made to the Iowa Falls depot, and all of those by the railroad company. The first change may have been the replacement of the boiler and radiators in 1937. Asphalt shingles replaced the original "'Jackson Bangor' unfading black slate" shingles c. 1950. In 1948, the segmentally-arched triple windows on the north side of the central baggage room (identical to those in the waiting room) were replaced with a large six-foot mail platform and freight door. In response to declining passenger traffic, the railroad apparently decided to move mail through the depot baggage room. In 1954, the company planned to add a one-story REA Express Office addition to the easternmost baggage room, but for unknown reasons, did not. Further alterations of the same period consisted of the replacement of the original one-light over three-panel doors with five-panel wood doors.

The date for the removal and infill of the northwest entrance is unknown, but an attempt was made to match the brick and beltcourse which may indicate an earlier alteration than the others. The "Depot Park" adjacent to the east end of the station jutted out into Rocksylvania Avenue, and appears on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps as late as 1952. Evidence of the park's existence is impossible to discern on the site; the hard-packed dirt and gravel area around the depot now corresponds to the surface in the rest of the railroad yard. The concrete platform on the east, south and west sides of the building replaced the original gravel platform c. 1915, and is now deteriorating on the east and west ends.

Despite these modifications, the overall integrity of the station is high. The structure is in its original location, and the character of the surrounding neighborhood is basically

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**the same. The effect of the freight door addition on the north side is slight because it is balanced by the segmental- and round-arched windows flanking it, and because depots typically have a freight door on both track and streetside elevations. Changes to the roof have been sympathetic to the depot's historic appearance, and the feeling of historic place and period is retained.**

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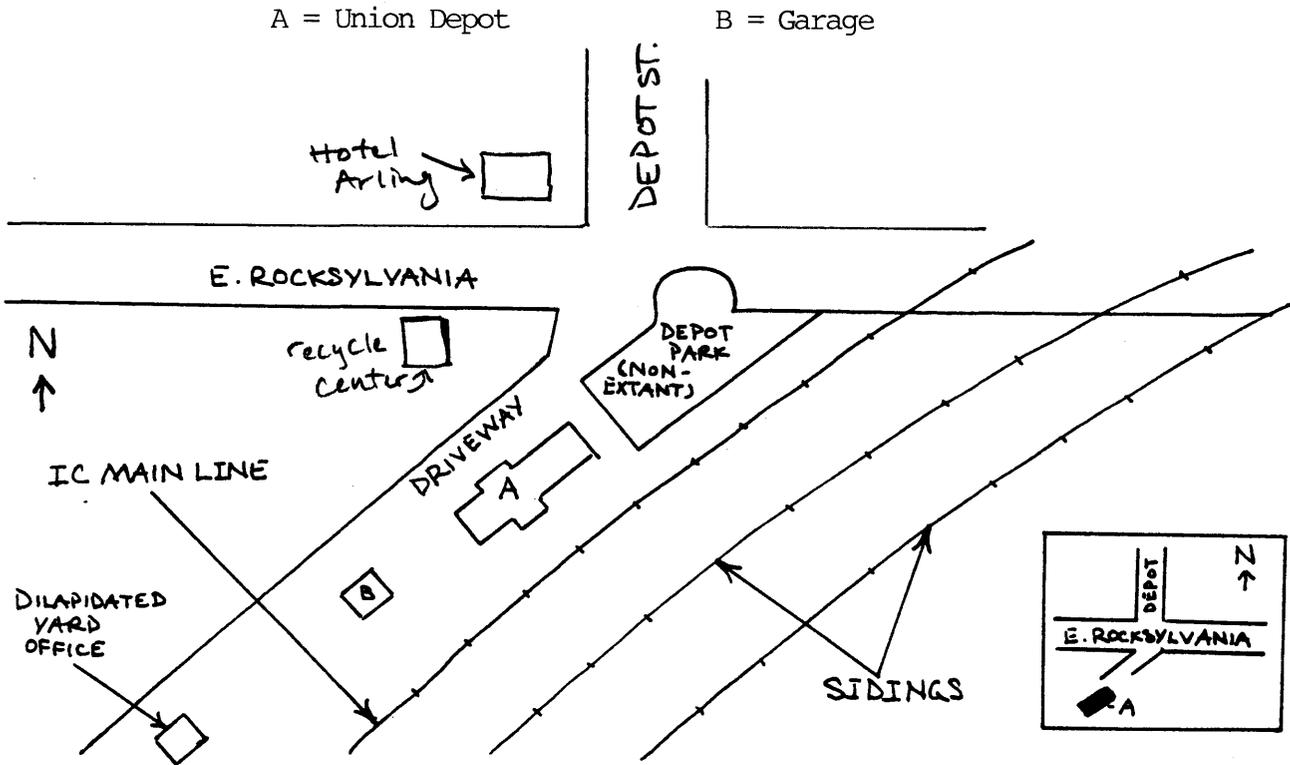
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Iowa Falls Union Depot  
E. Rocksylvania and Depot Streets  
Iowa Falls, Iowa

From the 1952 Updated Sanborn Fire Insurance Map  
Scale 100 feet per 1 inch



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Iowa Falls Union Depot  
E. Rocksylvania and Depot Streets  
Iowa Falls, Iowa



• TRACK • SIDE • ELEVATION •

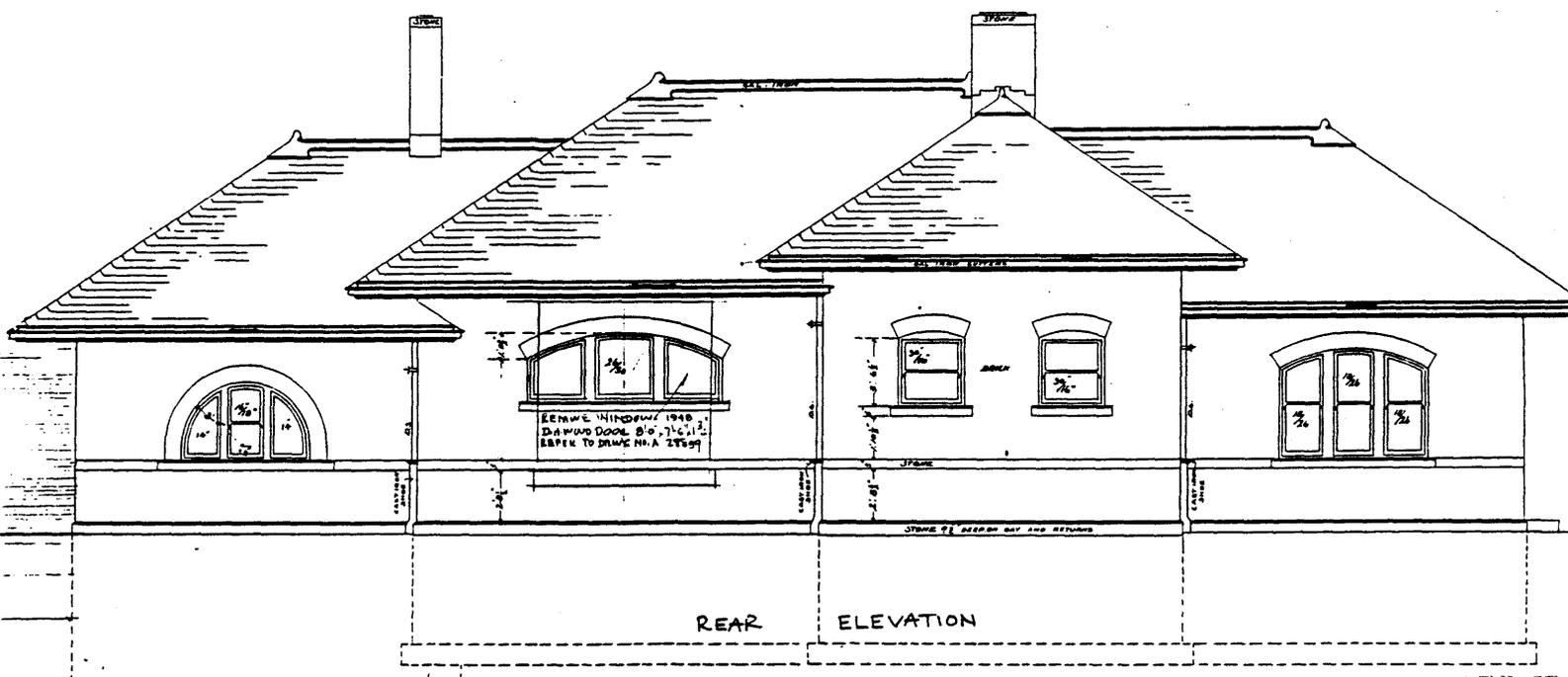
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Iowa Falls Union Depot  
E. Rocksylvania and Depot Streets  
Iowa Falls, Iowa



Streetside Elevation

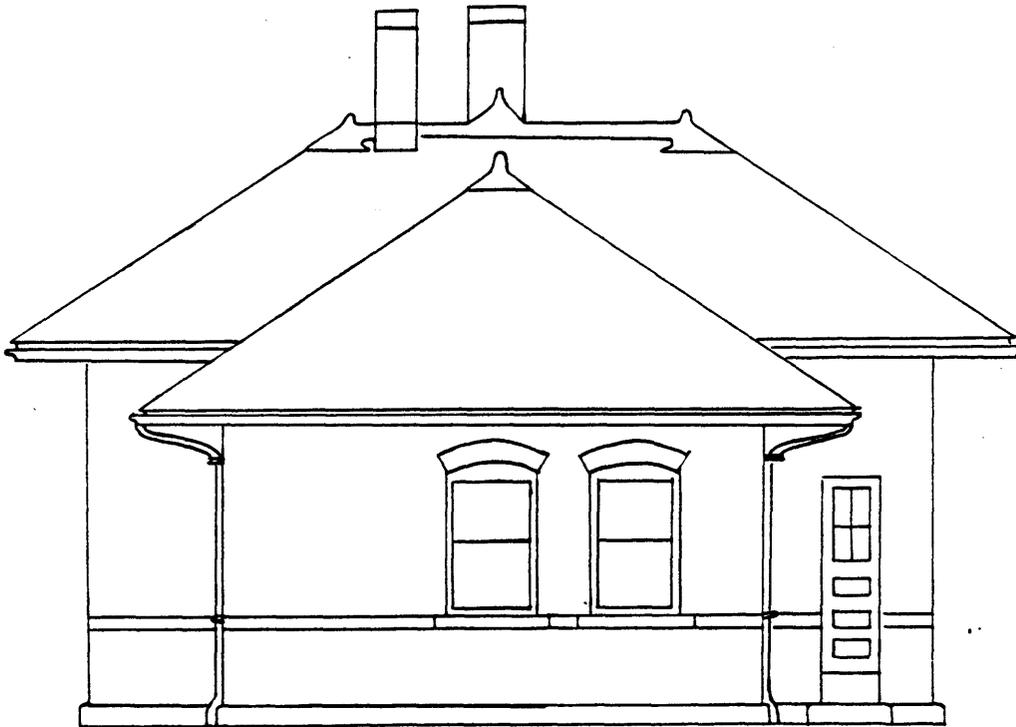
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Iowa Falls Union Depot  
E. Rocksylvania and Depot Streets  
Iowa Falls, Iowa



WAITING ROOM ELEVATION

Drawing No. A-10262, File No. 1580-  
Sheet 4 of 5

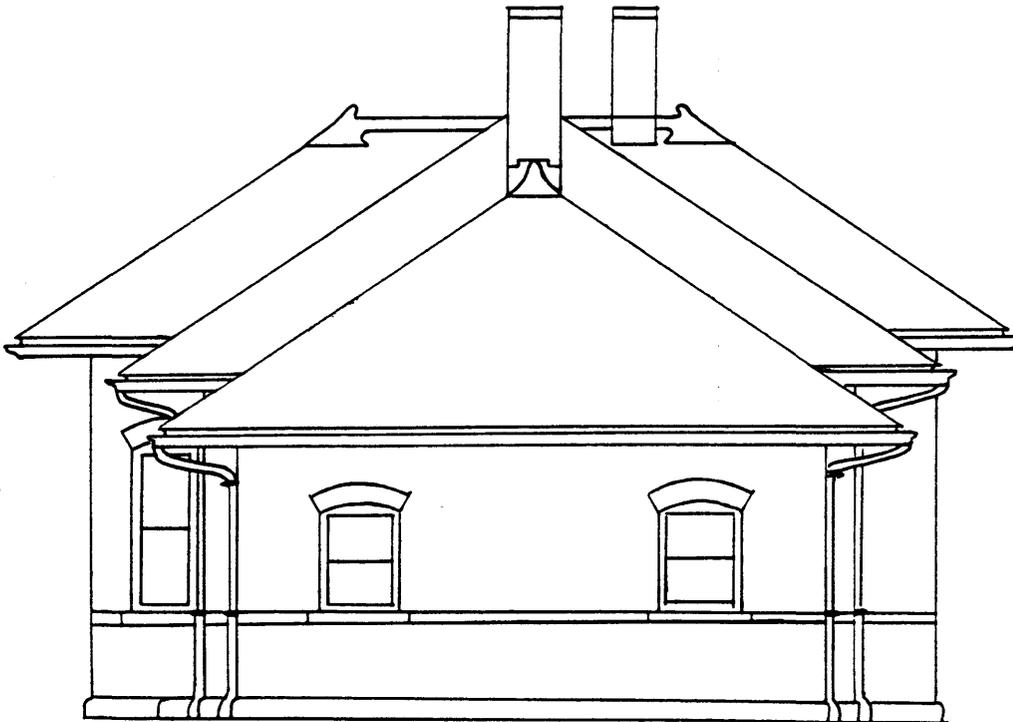
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Iowa Falls Union Depot  
E. Rocksylvania and Depot Streets  
Iowa Falls, Iowa



BAGGAGE ROOM ELEVATION

Drawing No. A-10262, File No. 1580-C  
Sheet 4 of 5

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Iowa Falls Union Passenger Depot is a variation of the second generation depots that the Illinois Central Railroad erected in larger towns from the 1890s to the 1920s (The Advent and Development of Railroads in Iowa, "The Golden Age of Steam Railroading: c. 1890-c. 1920" and "The Illinois Central, A Line Study: 1855-1940s"). This period coincides with the heyday of railroading in Iowa, during which the Illinois Central replaced its original wooden two-story depots with more permanent brick structures. While the depot designs were limited by their functions, as reflected in nearly identical floor plans, they were at the same time tailored to each town's particular needs. This, combined with the usual variation in depot ornamentation, produced a line of stations that were at first glance completely unique. In this light, the depot is significant under Criterion C.

The significance of this particular station is magnified because it was one of the few union stations along the IC's Iowa Division. The depot represents the direct association between the Illinois Central and Des Moines, Iowa Falls & Northern railroads, and as such is locally significant under Criterion A. The DMIFN was organized by E. S. Ellsworth and other prominent Iowa Falls citizens. During the years that the railroad operated as an independent company (1902-1908) it shared depot facilities with the Illinois Central, and the period of significance corresponds with these years. The depot's floor plan reveals its origin as a union station, a rare depot type in Iowa. In addition to representing the IC's shift toward brick replacement depots in Iowa during the early 1900s, the Iowa Falls depot illustrates the individual history of railroads in Iowa Falls.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Dubuque & Sioux City Railroad, a subsidiary of the Illinois Central, steamed into Iowa Falls in 1866. The company built a standard plan two-story wood depot with a one-story freight house on the eastern edge of Iowa Falls, in the newly-created Railroad Addition that the town set aside in anticipation of the railroad's arrival. For one year Iowa Falls was the western terminus of the DSC, during which time the town established itself as a local grain and stock shipping center.

Iowa Falls residents hoped to take advantage of a location on one of the state's east-west rail routes, but in 1866 it looked as if the DSC would never reach the Missouri River. Some of the company's officers felt such an extension of the road was imprudent. Platt Smith, of Dubuque, felt otherwise and organized another Illinois Central affiliate, the Iowa Falls & Sioux City to continue to the latter city. He appointed "human dynamo" John Insley Blair to head the company and between 1867 and 1870 work crews

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completed the line to Sioux City. Iowa Falls grew into a major coal stop on the line, and benefitted from the westward flow of settlers the railroad bore through the town.

The Illinois Central dominated the railroad scene in Iowa Falls until 1880, when the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern arrived here, pausing on its journey to Estherville. That railroad erected another frame two-story depot three blocks northeast of the IC depot. It was a "decided contrast to the 'old shanty' occupied by the IC which is a good sample of their buildings throughout the entire line" (from J. C. Brocksmit BCRN Scrapbooks, State Historical Society of Iowa, courtesy of James Beranek). Despite its plain depot, the IC enjoyed a good reputation among Iowa Falls citizens for its service. In "the early days the passenger trains were run so perfectly to the minute that people set their watches and clocks by Illinois Central trains" (Nichols, 1956, p. 25).

By the late 1890s, however, a few businessmen recognized the need for access to a north-south rail route. With the IC and the BCRN, Iowa Falls was well-situated on east-west lines, but the town was isolated from growing north-south trade routes. E. S. Ellsworth, prominent businessman and founder of Ellsworth College, organized the Des Moines, Iowa Falls & Northern to link the town to the state capitol in 1899. Other Iowa Falls businesspeople joined him, and with financial support from Boston bankers George P. Fernald & Co., the company let construction contracts in the spring of 1900. By August 1903, the Iowa Falls "Short Line" was open to Des Moines for regular traffic.

In early 1902 the problem of an Iowa Falls station for the new railroad remained to be solved. Unable to afford its own bridge the little road obtained running rights over the Illinois Central yard tracks and Iowa River bridge. After negotiations with the IC, the DMIFN announced that it had reached "an agreement with the Illinois Central for terminal facilities at Iowa Falls" (Railroad Gazette, 1902, p. 209). Construction of a union depot benefitted both roads since they shared construction and maintenance expenses. The Short Line retained access to the Iowa River bridge and did not have to buy land and build its own depot, thus keeping its expenses down. The IC gained both a modern depot, undoubtedly pleasing Iowa Falls residents, and greater interchange business generated by the Short Line's route to Des Moines. (The Illinois Central was one of the few major roads that did not enter Des Moines.)

In the late 1880s and '90s the Illinois Central reinforced its position in northern and western Iowa by building four branch lines through untapped agricultural areas. These branches also gave the company access to the growing commercial centers of Sioux Falls, Council Bluffs and Cedar Rapids, which increased traffic along its main Iowa line. The IC obviously thought that the volume of business through Iowa Falls warranted improved facilities, for in September 1902 the company released news of not only a new union depot, but increased yard trackage, a new cinder pit and a new coal

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chute with a 3,000-ton capacity. The total expenditure amounted to \$32,000, of which \$10,000 alone was for depot construction (Fort Dodge Messenger, 1903).

Progress on the new depot moved quickly. Ground was broken as early as October 1902, and the facility finished by the first week of January 1903. The Fort Dodge Messenger reported that the new depot "is a handsome brick structure...surrounded by a wide park" (Messenger, 1903). Unlike the older depot which stood in the midst of the yard, the joint IC-DMIFN station was built on the north side of the tracks next to East Rocksylvania Street. Passengers and residents alike had a long-standing complaint about the original IC depot's location (in addition to its plainness!). East Rocksylvania was the closest street to the depot, but getting to it from that street required crossing busy railroad tracks. The wooden two-story depot was relocated to the north side of the tracks, at Hamilton Street, and converted into the IC freight house. Now both the union depot and the freight house were readily accessible from the main thoroughfare to downtown Iowa Falls.

The union depot is typical of the second generation of Illinois Central depots in Iowa. It has brick walls, hipped roof, simple interior finishings, and a standard floor plan. Its segmentally-arched windows are reminiscent of the Illinois Central freight house built in Fort Dodge the previous year. The depot design diverges from the standard after that, however, because of the circumstances that brought about its construction. The depot was designed as a union station, so a second baggage room was drawn in for the DMIFN. The tower at Iowa Falls Junction (and later Mills Tower) to the east controlled all the IC rail traffic, so this depot has a minimal office area and trackside bay, and no train order signal at all. The conversion of the old combination depot into a freight house meant that this station needed no freight room or platform. The end result was a depot that on the surface resembles other brick depots along the IC main line, yet remains distinctly different.

The DMIFN shared this depot with the IC from 1902 until 1908, when the former was purchased by the St. Paul & Des Moines, a Rock Island subsidiary. The SPDM commenced construction toward the Minnesota border in 1908 and until it built its own facilities, the company probably still occupied part of the union depot. As rival railroads the Illinois Central probably found it difficult to share facilities with the St. Paul & Des Moines. Besides, the RI planned to create a direct route between Kansas City and St. Paul and although the Short Line was a key segment of this route, the Rock Island wanted its own facilities. In 1909 the company built its own bridge across the Iowa River just south of the Illinois Central bridge (Nichols, 1956, p. 26), and around that time, the SPDM erected a wooden depot southeast of the union depot, on the other side of the grain elevator. In 1911 the line was open for traffic to Des Moines, and the Rock

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Island formally acquired the SPDM. The DMIFN's association with the IC lasted a short time, but it was long enough to influence the construction of the present depot.

Between 1911 and the 1940s, both the Illinois Central yard and the neighborhood around the Iowa Falls Union Depot changed significantly. A water treatment plant was built near the Iowa River, across the tracks from the hydroelectric plant. Large stockyards appeared between the IC and RI line to the southwest of the depot. After 1917 the IC built a mammoth coal chute directly across from the depot. By 1930 the IC pumphouse occupied a site just upstream from the hydroelectric plant and was operated for the railroad by the Central States Electric Company. A small yard office and section house were erected west of the depot, and a bunkhouse placed near the water treatment plant.

During the same period a lumber yard (now the recycling center) and a restaurant were built immediately northwest of the depot. The Hotel Arling replaced an old rooming house on the northwest corner of Depot and East Rocksylvania Streets between 1911 and 1917. The c. 1880 grain elevator on the opposite corner was replaced by a filling station, and several other industries replaced older ones in the neighborhood north and east of the depot. By 1952 the freight house had had a face lift, and the coal chute, grain elevator to the southeast, and stockyards were gone (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps). Of the neighborhood and railroad yard that immediately surrounded the union depot and its predecessor, only the lumberyard, hotel, freight house, and two industrial buildings remain.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The Iowa Falls Union Depot is an interesting example of the Illinois Central's adaptation of its general depot replacement program to the specific needs of a local community. The plan and design of this station are both standard and peculiar to Iowa Falls. Indeed, the depot and the currently ineligible freight house tell two railroad stories. The freight house illustrates the arrival of the Illinois Central in Iowa Falls and its expansive early years, and should be reconsidered for National Register eligibility in five years.

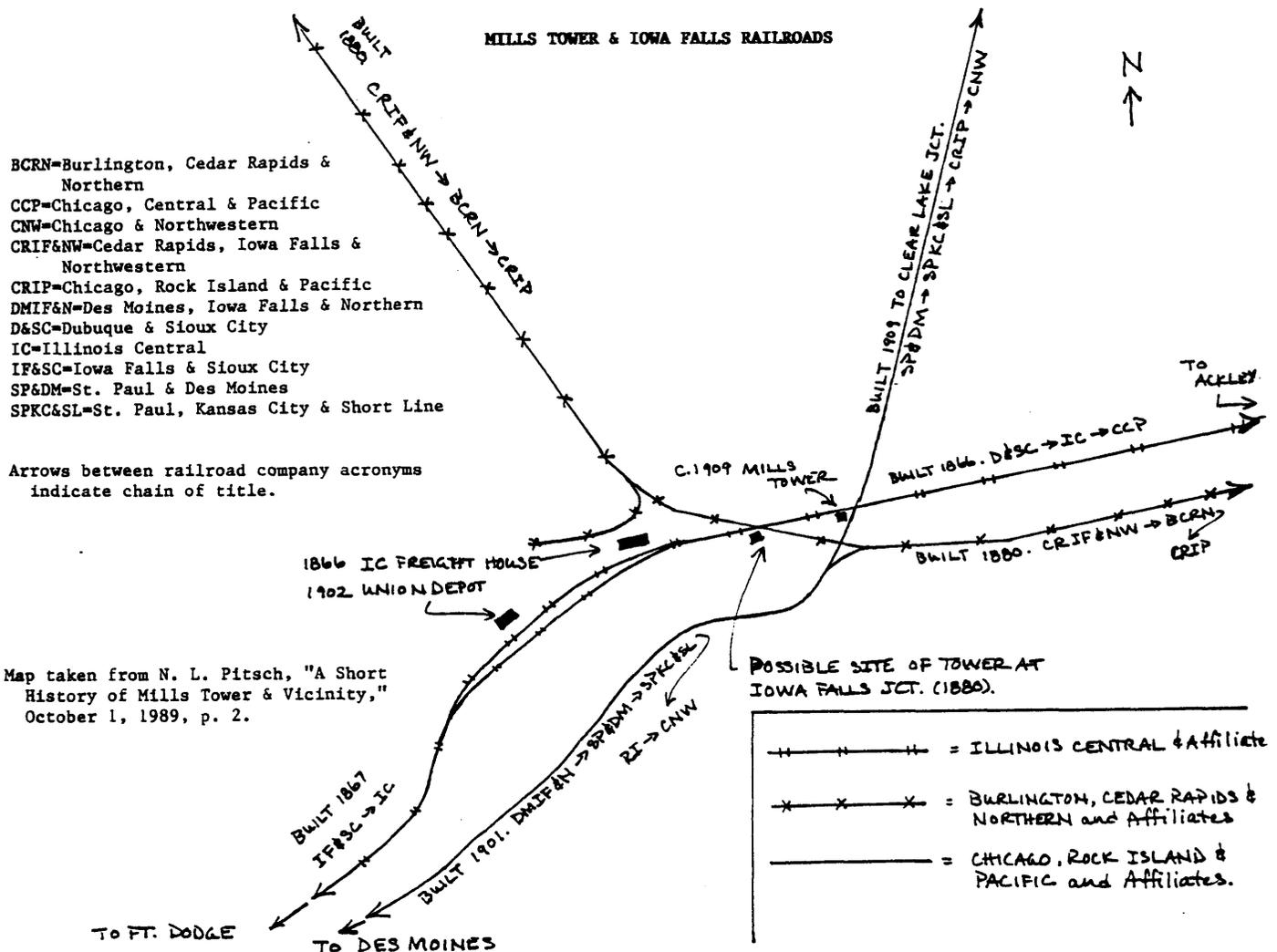
The union depot illustrates the second story in that it represents the IC's stabilization in Iowa and its profitable golden period, as well as the company's association with the homegrown Des Moines, Iowa Falls & Northern. Alterations to both the union depot and freight house also reflect the Illinois Central's corporate attitude toward its physical plant, because during periods of retrenchment aesthetic considerations succumbed to functional requirements dictated by the efficiency and financial health of the railroad. The Iowa Falls Union Passenger Depot today continues to embody the evolution of the Illinois Central Railroad in Iowa.

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Brocksmitt, J. C. Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Scrapbooks. Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa. Courtesy of James Beranek, Mount Vernon, Iowa.

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Corliss, Carlton J. Main Line of Mid-America. The Story of the Illinois Central. New York: Creative Age Press, 1950.

[Des Moines, Iowa Falls & Northern.] Railroad Gazette, Volume 33, March 22, 1901, p. 209.

Hardin County Historical Society. History of Hardin County. Eldora: Hardin County Historical Society, 1981.

History of Hardin County, Iowa. Springfield, Illinois: Union Publishing Co., 1883, pp. 505-514.

Illinois Central Railroad Building Plans, Iowa Falls Passenger Station. Drawings A-10259 through A-10262, File Nos. 1580-A through 1580-C, October 1902.

[Iowa Falls Depot.] Fort Dodge Messenger, January 9, 1903.

Moir, Hon. William J., ed. Past and Present of Hardin County, Iowa. Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen and Co., 1911, pp. 169-173.

Nichols, I. A. History of Iowa Falls, 1900-1950. Iowa Falls: Hecht Printing Co., 1956, pp. 24-30.

Nichols, I. A. Pioneer Days in Iowa Falls, Iowa. Fort Dodge: Messenger Printing Co., 1944, pp. 70-82.

Pitsch, Nicholas L. "A Short History of Mills Tower and Vicinity." Unpublished, October 1, 1989, p. 1-2.

Pitsch, Nicholas L. Personal interview, Iowa Falls, Iowa, June 28, 1989.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Iowa Falls, Iowa, 1883-1952.