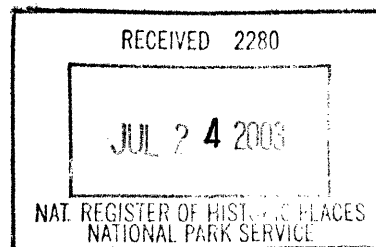


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

870



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. 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 Midland Continental Railroad Depot
other names/site number 32BA156

2. Location

street & number 401 Railway Street N/A not for publication
city or town Wimbledon vicinity
state North Dakota code ND county Barnes code 003 zip code 58492

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title *Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr.* 7-21-03
Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr. Date
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ 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

Date of Action

Linda McClelland 9/03/03

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 03000870

Property Name: Midland Continental Railroad Depot

County: Barnes State: North Dakota

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Ronda McClelland

September 3, 2003

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8: Significance

The Period of Significance is hereby revised as "1913 to 1953" to correspond with the period of operation discussed as significant in the narrative.

The North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

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	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Pattern Depot

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

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):

Primary location of additional data:

- 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 # _____

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

Name of repository:
Ohio Historical Society

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1913-1920

Significant Dates

1913-1920

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Midland Continental Railroad
Hurning, Harry H., Chief Engineer

Midland Continental Railroad Depot
Name of Property

Barnes County, ND
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	14	0540986	5224055	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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 F. Stewart Mitchell

organization Great Plains Railroad History Project date July 3, 2003

street & number 649 Shining Waters telephone 630-665-3481

city or town Carol Stream state IL zip code 60188-9141

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 Les Koll, President, Wimbledon Community Museum, Inc.

street & number 1306 97th Avenue SE telephone 701-435-2239

city or town Wimbledon state ND zip code 58492

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

Section number 7 Page 1

Midland Continental Railroad Depot Barnes County, ND

Description

The Midland Continental Railroad depot at Wimbledon, North Dakota is a 24' x 54' two-story, wooden frame combination freight station and passenger station with living rooms. The depot is sited on a concrete foundation and subsumes a hip-roofed form. The rectangular building fronts on a railroad stub track and is dominated by a single-story bay window on the south elevation. The exterior is finished with painted drop siding and lapped-joint corners, while the roof is shiplap covered with asphalt shingles. The roof projection soffit is finished with beaded ceiling and takes the place of a separate awning to protect station patrons from the weather. A single flue interior chimney of common brick is centered on the building length and on the roof ridge board. The clarity of design, uniformity of window treatment and simple symmetry are an excellent example of early 20th century railroad station vernacular architecture.

The east elevation is characterized by double-hung, two-light over two-light windows horizontally centered in pairs on the building width on the lower elevation and the upper elevation. A mullion separates each set of double-hung windows. A railroad station name sign identifying the town of Wimbledon is centered vertically on the lower elevation over the double hung window on the drop siding.

The west elevation upper story fenestration consists of a pair of double-hung, two-light over two-light windows separated by a mullion and centered on the building width. The lower story fenestration consists of three, single-light, double-hung windows, equally spaced horizontally across the width of the building with the remaining space distributed equally on each end. A railroad station name sign identifying the town of Wimbledon is centered vertically on the drop siding over the center window on the lower elevation.

The north elevation fenestration continues the use of double-hung, two-light over two-light windows with a mullion separating each set of double-hung windows. Three pairs of windows are equally spaced on the upper story and are centered horizontally with the remaining space distributed equally on each end. A single pair of double-hung, two-light over two-light windows on the lower story is centered below a single pair of windows on the upper story. A two-light over two-light double-hung window and a smaller single light, double-hung window with transom completes the north elevation fenestration. Two sliding doors of built-up construction afford entrance to the freight house end of the building on the lower story.

The south elevation facade is dominated by a bay window. Double-hung, two-light over two-light windows with a mullion separating each set of double-hung windows is centered on the horizontal width of the bay window. Single light, single hung windows are set in the east elevation and west elevation of the bay window. As with the north elevation, three pairs of windows are equally spaced on the upper story and are centered horizontally with the remaining space distributed equally on each end. Two sliding doors of built-up construction afford entrance to the freight house end of the building. A steel-cladded, consumer-market replacement door enters into the passenger waiting room.

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

Section number 7 Page 2

Midland Continental Railroad Depot Barnes County, ND

Description (continued)

In common with most combination freight and passenger railroad stations, the lower story of the passenger portion consists of a common passenger waiting room, a women's retiring room, a telegraph office and a record storage room. The passenger waiting room and the women's retiring room are finished with lath and plaster on stud walls with 57-inch high yellow pine wainscoting, although the wainscoting has been covered over with fiberboard and then painted. A records storage room connects the common waiting room with the freight end of the building. The telegraph office is entered through the record storage room and provides office workspace for the agent, telegraph operator and other members of the station work force. Additional storage is provided by the dead space under the stairs leading to the second story of the building.

The freight end of the building consists of an unfinished and non-insulated freight room with inclines for sliding heavy or bulky freight items on or off freight cars or dray wagons. A scuttle hole provides access to an attic over the freight house end. The waiting room, women's retiring room, record storage room and telegraph room are ceiled with lath and plaster. The freight house ceiling is commercial plasterboard.

In common with larger North Dakota railroads which built combination freight and passenger stations with living rooms for the use of the agent and his family when local housing was not readily available, the living quarters occupy the entire second floor of the building. The second floor of the Wimbledon depot is connected to the first floor by two flights of stairs separated by a landing. The ascending stairs open into another landing and into a corridor connecting a large living room at the east end of the structure with two bedrooms and a kitchen located at the west end of the building. All interior rooms are finished with lath and plaster on stud walls. All of the rooms on the upper floor are ceiled with plasterboard. The walls in both bedrooms are covered with wallpaper. A scuttle hole provides access to an attic over the second story of the building.

The standard paint scheme for all Midland Continental depot buildings was a yellow-orange with green sash and window frame trim. Corporate records indicate that the Wimbledon depot was last painted the standard yellow orange by the railroad in 1955. Fire ladders were added to all Midland Continental depots in 1931 following the 1930 loss to fire of the Midland Continental Railroad depot at Nortonville, North Dakota. Other improvements to the Midland Continental depot at Wimbledon include a concrete sidewalk built in 1923, a cistern added in 1925 and a furnace installed in 1926. To comply with local ordinances and local building codes, indoor plumbing and city water replaced a 6'x8' outhouse and locally dug wells in 1920. The building was wired for electricity when it was built in 1913, and it was re-wired in 1949 for electrical appliances. A propane gas hot water heater was installed in 1955.

The Midland Continental Railroad provided scheduled passenger service and freight service on the Jamestown-Wimbledon section of the railroad until 1937, and on the Jamestown-Edgeley section until 1950. Both passenger and freight service were then offered on an irregular basis until the road ceased its operations on October 31, 1970, although as a practical matter, the road carried its last passenger in 1965.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7, 8 Page 3

**Midland Continental Railroad Depot
Barnes County, ND**

Description (continued)

The depot was the home of at least four Midland Continental agents at Wimbledon from 1913 until 1969, when flood-related damage to the roadbed forced the closure of the railroad and its abandonment on October 31, 1970. The tracks leading to the depot were removed in the fall of 1969. On December 30, 1971 title to the property passed to the Wimbledon Community Museum, Inc.

The Midland Continental Railroad depot is located in downtown Wimbledon, North Dakota at the intersection of Railway Street and Second Street. Gravel roads, footpaths and open pasture lead to the building.

Integrity

The interior of the Midland Continental Railroad depot has been responsibly maintained in a state of preservation since abandonment by the railroad more than 30 years ago. The building has not been occupied or heated since 1969. Although most of the original interior furnishings have been removed, enough of the contents remain to give the building a flavor reminiscent of its days as the hub of Midland Continental Railroad operations at Wimbledon. The common waiting room has been completely restored and contains several display cases of Midland Continental Railroad memorabilia. The telegraph office contains a display of railroad hand tools. The freight house portion stores items used by the Wimbledon Community Museum in its preservation and interpretive operations. One bedroom and the kitchen located on the second story are presently being renovated to depict early 20th century life in the depot building.

The original cedar shake roof was replaced by asphalt shingles in 1999. At the same time, a concrete apron was added to the south elevation freight door approach, and to the waiting room door approach. Major deterioration affects all the drop siding, soffit and all wooden window parts. The foundation has fractured and subsided in several places, causing the floor in the common waiting room and the telegraph office to sag. From 1998 to 2000, the Wimbledon Community Museum undertook to completely paint the building.

Statement of Significance

The Midland Continental Railroad depot at Wimbledon, North Dakota meets Criteria A for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places because from 1913 to 1970, the depot was the hub of commercial activity and was the commercial gateway to business activity at Wimbledon. The development of railroads led directly to the establishment and settlement of Wimbledon, and since the depot was the corporate icon of the Midland Continental Railroad at Wimbledon, the depot symbolized the railroad's contribution to the growth and prosperity of the city.

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

Section number 8 Page 4

Midland Continental Railroad Depot
Barnes County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

The Wimbledon depot also meets Criteria Consideration B for moved buildings. Its construction in 1913, and its 1920 removal to another site, signaled a transformation of the Midland Continental Railroad and marked a turning point in the development of commerce in the Wimbledon, and Frazier, North Dakota trade area.

The Wimbledon depot building qualifies for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria C because its type and method of construction exemplifies late 19th and early 20th century railroad station construction practices. Since all other Midland Continental Railroad frame depot buildings were razed between 1954 and 1963, the Wimbledon depot is the sole surviving example of frame railroad station construction as it was practiced on the Midland Continental Railroad.

Historical Significance

There was no real economic necessity for building the Midland Continental Railroad. By the time construction of the line began in 1909, central North Dakota was already over-supplied with railroads. Today, most historians concede that efforts to settle North Dakota from 1870 to 1920 were economic development schemes carried out by the railroad industry that ultimately resulted in the creation of an infrastructure with the capacity to serve the needs of millions of people. Unfortunately, the population of North Dakota reached its peak in 1930 at 681,000.

The Midland Continental Railroad was a land speculation and railroad stock promotion stunt that never grew into fruition because of the contravention of the First World War. From 1916 to 1966, a rubber industry executive in Akron, Ohio owned all the stock and all the bonds issued by the company. During its 50-year existence, the Midland Continental Railroad functioned as a 77-mile short line railroad that provided convenient service to the farm towns of Edgeley, Jamestown and Wimbledon, North Dakota, rather than as the 1800-mile transcontinental railroad from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada to Galveston, Texas that its original promoters envisioned.¹

The Midland Continental Railroad depot at Wimbledon meets Criteria A for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places because from 1913 to 1970, the depot was the commercial gateway to business activity at Wimbledon

¹ Although now seriously dated, the most thorough explanation of the early years of the railroad is James D. Johnson, *A History of the Midland Continental Railroad, 1906-1950*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, Grand Forks: University of North Dakota, 1952. A more detailed study of the financing of the railroad and the Midland Construction Company is F. Stewart Mitchell, *Two Forms of Entrepreneurship: Herbert S. Duncombe, Frank A. Seiberling and the Midland Continental Railroad, 1906-1966*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1981.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 5

**Midland Continental Railroad Depot
Barnes County, ND**

Statement of Significance (continued)

Before the appearance of publicly supported roads and highways, Wimbledon, North Dakota, was only accessible via the railroad. Wimbledon was established by the Soo Line Railroad, but the presence of the Midland Continental made a vast contribution to Wimbledon's growth. All incoming and outgoing freight, and all passengers, from traveling salesmen to the governor of the state, all arrived and departed from the Wimbledon depot. With its telephone line, the depot also linked Wimbledon with the other seven stations on the Midland Continental. Through its U.S. mail service connection to Jamestown and Edgeley, the depot was the stepping stone from Wimbledon to other cities and towns in North Dakota, and the nation. The existence of the Midland Continental Railroad line from Jamestown to Wimbledon had a substantial impact on settlement geography and on the economic growth of Wimbledon as a trade center town. The Midland Continental constructed a loading platform at the Wimbledon depot, and built team tracks where local draymen loaded and unloaded freight cars. The Midland Continental Railroad, and its land subsidiaries Midland Townsite Company and Dakota Land and Mortgage Company, established Frazier, Durupt, Clementsville, Johnson and Durkee, North Dakota on the Midland Continental Railroad Wimbledon Extension.²

After completing a line from a connection with the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway at Edgeley, North Dakota, northward to Jamestown in November, 1912, the Midland Continental continued northward from a point near Jamestown, to a crossing of the Soo Line Railroad at Wimbledon, located in far northwestern Barnes County. As soon as the 27.46 mile extension from Jamestown was completed to Wimbledon, it was obvious that the Midland Continental's point-to-point connection from Wimbledon had opened Jamestown to the Soo Line Railroad, and it joined the Northern Pacific and the Midland Continental in making Jamestown a three-railroad town. The growth of Jamestown as a regional trade center in Stutsman County was substantially increased by the existence of the Midland Continental Railroad. Beginning in September, 1914, the Midland Continental Railroad effected reciprocal agreements with the Soo Line Railroad that gave grain shippers, agricultural support operators and commercial shippers and receivers the same advantages of shipping over the Midland Continental Railroad and Soo Line via Wimbledon from the Twin Cities to Jamestown, as would have obtained had they shipped over the rival Northern Pacific Railway directly to Jamestown. By the eve of World War II, the grain elevators at Wimbledon and nearby Frazier, North Dakota had grown in such capacity and importance that they accounted for 70 per cent of the durum, flax and barley shipped on the Midland Continental, the most of any Midland Continental-served elevator. From the early 1950s until 1970, freight received and forwarded through the Midland Continental station of Wimbledon provided over half of the railroad's revenues³

² H. Roger Grant, "Frank A. Seiberling and the Formative Years of the Midland Continental Railroad, 1906-1920", *North Dakota History*, Volume 43, No.4 (Fall, 1976), 28-36.

³ Jamestown *Weekly Alert*, August 28, 1914; Carl W. Cockrell to Frank A. Seiberling, August 14, 1937, folder "Midland Continental Railroad", Box 75, *The Papers of Frank A. Seiberling*, Collection 347, The Ohio Historical Society, Ohio Historical Center, Columbus, Ohio, hereafter referred to as FAS papers.

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National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Midland Continental Railroad Depot
Barnes County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

The Midland Continental Railroad depot at Wimbledon meets Criteria Consideration B for a Moved Building. By September, 1913, the Midland Continental Railroad had surveyed its line, and crossed the Soo Line Railroad at the far eastern edge of Wimbledon. Anticipating that large amounts of freight would be transferred to and from the nearby Soo Line depot, in October, 1913, chief engineer Harry H. Hurning directed assistant engineer Lee C. Baker to modify the railroad's standard 20'x48' combination freight and passenger depot to include an expanded freight house end, and also to widen the proposed Wimbledon depot by four feet.⁴

Hurning expected that the Midland Continental would be built the 95-miles from Wimbledon to Grand Forks during the 1914 construction season on its way to a connection with the Canadian Northern Railway at Pembina, North Dakota. Because he never planned that Wimbledon would become the railroad's northern-most terminal, and fully expected Wimbledon to grow in the direction of where the depot was built, Harry Hurning ordered the Wimbledon depot to be located some 1900 feet north of the Soo Line crossing and on the side of the track that the town was located, but almost one-half mile from Wimbledon's main street and business district.⁵

In early November, 1913, the Midland Continental built a connecting track to the Soo Line depot. The Midland Continental then used the Soo Line depot as its depot for several weeks until an unused box car that doubled as a Midland Continental depot was placed near the Midland Continental main line track. The Midland Continental main line to Jamestown was opened to traffic on October 29, 1913, and regular train service began the following day.

Hurning was anxious that the Midland Continental's depot at Wimbledon be finished at once. The Midland Continental was receiving a great deal of freight at Wimbledon that had to be loaded on horse-drawn wagons at the Soo Line depot, driven more than one-half mile to the Midland Continental's tracks, and either stored outside or loaded into the box car that served as the Midland Continental depot. Not only was the freight handled twice and sometimes three times, but Midland Continental officials were anxious that driving the freight that distance and handling it several times would be perceived as

⁴ Harry H. Hurning to L.C. Baker n.p circa October 13, 1913., Box 28, *Records of the Midland Continental Railroad*, Collection 10201, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Heritage Center, Bismarck, North Dakota, hereafter referred to as RMC.

⁵ A location survey was made in 1910 between Wimbledon and Grand Forks. The Wimbledon-Grand Forks Division of the Midland Continental was to connect with the Great Northern Railway west of Hannaford, North Dakota near Revere, and include the stations of Skaar, Cooperstown and Romness. The projected line would then have crossed the Sheyenne river watershed west of Sharon, North Dakota, and then passed through Goose River, Northwood, McRae and Brenna, entering Grand Forks from the southwest. Folder "Estimates of Extensions", Box 27, RMC. The Great Northern connection would have been Jamestown's fourth railroad.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Midland Continental Railroad Depot Barnes County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

inefficient and become detrimental to the railroad's business interests at the newly opened station at Wimbledon.⁶

As soon as the Midland Continental depot at Clementsville, North Dakota, was completed in late October, 1913, Hurning contracted with H. C. Murphy Lumber Company to furnish all materials for the Wimbledon depot. Even though the Wimbledon area had already experienced several nights of upper 20 degree temperatures in late October, 1913, the concrete foundation for the Wimbledon depot was staked out and poured beginning October 27, 1913. Baker complained to Hurning several times that the concrete foundation froze before it had time to set.⁷

By the first week of November, 1913, carpenters had erected the depot framing and the stud walls for the downstairs partitions. Working continuously in often freezing weather, the crew had the depot completed on November 19, 1913. Anticipating that construction on the Midland Continental line to Grand Forks would begin as soon as the ground had thawed in the spring, 1914, Hurning moved the Midland Continental Railroad engineering department to the second floor of the new Wimbledon depot from their former headquarters at Edgeley, North Dakota. Just before Christmas, 1913, Arthur E. Butcher assumed the duties of freight and passenger agent for the Midland Continental Railroad in the new depot at Wimbledon.⁸

While the railroad's engineering department was winding up its 1913 construction season, the Midland Continental board of directors was scouring the world's capital markets for someone to take some \$1,980,000 of the railroad's bonds. By late 1913, the board had exhausted its possibilities for floating the highly speculative Midland Continental bonds with American bond brokers and was looking beyond New York and Boston to the banking houses and brokerages in London and Liverpool, England.

As a heavy investor in the railroad's stock, Frank A. Seiberling, president of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, in early 1912 had suggested tapping the English bond market. Hoping to interest several English brokers in the Midland Continental's bonds, Seiberling had booked passage on the White Star Line steamship *R.M.S. Titanic* for its return voyage to England in April, 1912, but the loss of the vessel on its maiden voyage forced him to alter his plans. Seiberling eventually made the voyage to England, but was unable to interest his English contacts in the Midland Continental bonds.⁹

⁶ Hurning to James M. Hall, October 7, 1913, Box 28, RMC; *Wimbledon News*, October 31, 1913.

⁷ Baker to Hurning, October 25, 1913, Box 28, RMC; *Wimbledon News*, November 7, 1913.

Folder "Wimbledon depot", Box 24, RMC.

⁸ *Wimbledon News*, December 26, 1913.

⁹ Herbert S. Duncombe to Frank A. Seiberling, April 19, 1912, Box 12, FAS papers.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

**Midland Continental Railroad Depot
Barnes County, ND**

Statement of Significance (continued)

In the summer of 1914, Frank K. Bull, president of the J.I. Case Threshing Machine Company, and two other Midland Continental Railroad officials who were also heavy investors in railroad stock, landed in Liverpool with the hopes of interesting certain English shareholders in taking the entire \$1,980,000 of Midland Continental Railroad bonds. Among the potential purchasers of the bonds was J. Bruce Ismay, president of the White Star Line. Ismay had been ostracized on both sides of the Atlantic, in public and in private, for not having gone down with the *Titanic* when it sank two years earlier. When approached by Bull during the summer of 1914, Ismay was in virtual exile and living in Ireland separated from his social peers at Costelloe Lodge in Casla, County Galway. At the time, Ismay held \$600,000 par value stock in his wife's name.

Apparently convinced that the Midland Continental Railroad was a worthwhile investment, Ismay told Bull that if the railroad would accept his note for the bonds, Ismay would take the entire bond issue. Ismay set the date for signing the note as Monday, August 3, 1914. On Saturday, August 1, 1914, however, Germany declared war on Russia and mobilized its army, and the same day, France mobilized its army. Reacting to the war scare, Ismay withdrew his interest in the Midland Continental bonds, ending the railroad's last chance for building from Wimbledon to Grand Forks.¹⁰

Chaos soon reigned in world capital markets. With the Midland Continental Railroad only running some 78-miles between Edgeley, Jamestown and Wimbledon, North Dakota, revenues were insufficient to meet the principal and interest payments on the \$400,000 short-term loan made to build the line from Jamestown to Wimbledon. By early 1916, the loan had been foreclosed and Frank A. Seiberling had sought prior claim to the railroad's stock and bonds. On January 16, 1916, Seiberling purchased the securities and became the owner and principal creditor of the Midland Continental Railroad.

To make the Midland Continental more attractive to potential buyers, Seiberling authorized the building of about one-half mile of track north from the Soo Line connection at Wimbledon, past the Midland Continental depot and up to the Clendenning Elevator at the Non-Partisan League town of Frazier, North Dakota.

As the railroad's new owner, Seiberling was more interested in operating the Midland Continental for a profit and recouping what he had put into on the railroad, rather than extending the line north to Grand Forks, North Dakota or south to the Gulf of Mexico. By 1920, Seiberling had given up any thought of extending the Midland Continental to Grand Forks and the depot's 1914 location became the last remaining vestige of the Midland Continental's transcontinental ambitions. Since the depot was located

¹⁰ C. Furness Hatley to James M. Hall, August 2, 1914, Box 28 RMC; North Dakota *Capital*, September 4, 1914; Jamestown *Weekly Alert*, September 3, 1914, August 13, 1914.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

the main line almost one-half mile from downtown Wimbledon, it was obvious that if the depot was to be a factor in the city's commerce and business, it was located in the wrong place.¹¹

To make the Midland Continental depot more accessible to the Soo Line depot at Wimbledon, as well as the town's commercial center, Seiberling seconded his general manager's suggestion that the Midland Continental depot be moved to a more convenient location. It was also noticed that the concrete foundation had fractured in several places, the result of its hasty construction during freezing weather seven years earlier.

During the second week of May, 1920, the building was moved on rollers from Lot 27 in Finner's Addition to Wimbledon to its present location on Lots 7, 8 and 9 of Block 1 of the Original Townsite, opposite the Glide Hotel. The passenger platform was moved along with the depot. A new freight loading platform and two team tracks were built at the same time.¹²

Before the depot was relocated in May, 1920, Wimbledon was a Midland Continental terminal in name only. After the depot was moved, and after the construction of the two team tracks and the completion of a wye track for turning locomotives, Midland Continental trains operated directly up to the Wimbledon depot. Freight could then be conveniently transferred to and from dray wagons. Passengers embarked with ease, and did not have to walk half a mile into Wimbledon to find food or lodging or transfer to Soo Line trains. Passengers from the Soo Line simply walked across the street to board Midland Continental trains for Jamestown or Edgeley. Midland Continental passengers did the reverse to board Soo Line trains for Minneapolis or Canada.

The depot was only sited on its original location for seven years, from October, 1913 to May, 1920. Since that time, the depot has been sited on its present location. After May, 1920, the Midland Continental main line track that saw as many as six trains per day before the depot was relocated was relegated to being a half-mile long spur track leading to the Frazier Farmers Union elevator. It was used about twice a week from 1920 to 1970.

From 1934 to 1937 The Midland Continental Railroad depot at Wimbledon, North Dakota was the home of the internationally renowned philanthropist, actress, vocalist and composer Norma Deloris Egstrom (May 27, 1920-January 21, 2002) known to music fans worldwide as Peggy Lee.

Norma was the sixth child of Marvin Olaf Egstrom (November 23, 1874-April 27, 1950) and Selma Anderson Egstrom (February 13, 1885-August 7, 1924). Egstrom was employed by the Midland Continental Railroad as the company agent at the Midland Continental Railroad stations of Jamestown, North Dakota (1916-1928), Nortonville (1928-1934), Wimbledon (1934-1939) and Millarton (1939-

¹¹ Grant, *ibid.*, 33-36

¹² Wimbledon News, May 20, 1920.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

1944). Egstrom had come to the Midland Continental in July, 1916 from the South Dakota Central Railway where he had been employed as agent at Sinai, South Dakota, and as superintendent of transportation at the railroad's headquarters in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.¹³

Egstrom's alcoholism and financial irresponsibility led to his demotion to station agent from superintendent of transportation on the South Dakota Central in late 1915 or early 1916. When the general manager of the South Dakota Central left that road in June, 1916 to take the same position on the Midland Continental Railroad at Jamestown, he took several former South Dakota Central employees along with him, including Egstrom. Egstrom was appointed Midland Continental agent at Jamestown in April, 1916.¹⁴

By 1922, and two years after Norma's birth, Egstrom was again in financial straits and fell in with several unsavory men of questionable business ability and ethics who were employed by the railroad as auditors. When the general manager of the railroad uncovered a scheme to distort the railroad's earnings through larceny and fraud in the railroad's bookkeeping, Egstrom was implicated in the wrongdoing. Egstrom was removed from the highly visible position of agent at the railroad's headquarters at Jamestown and sent to the inconspicuous station of Nortonville, North Dakota. With his demotion, Egstrom's salary sank from \$175 per month to \$100 per month.¹⁵

The Egstrom family also suffered the tragedy of losing all their family goods and possessions to fire when the Midland Continental depot at Nortonville burned to the ground on January 5, 1930, the second time in ten years that flames had driven the family from their home. After struggling in railroad company-provided housing for almost three years, the Egstrom family removed from Nortonville to the Wimbledon depot and took up residence in the vacant second floor living rooms, formerly occupied by the railroad's engineering department.¹⁶

Norma's mother died on August 7, 1924 and the following year, her father remarried to Minnie Schaumburg Weise, a Jamestown woman who had tended to Norma's mother during her last illness.

¹³ Miss Peggy Lee to David P. Morgan, editor of *Trains* magazine, April 27, 1973. Midland Continental Railroad research correspondence, *The Papers of F. Stewart Mitchell*, Collection 10555, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Heritage Center, Bismarck, North Dakota.; "List of officers and executives, June 1, 1915" Folder 210, *Records of the South Dakota Central Railway*, in the Great Northern Railway Company records, Minnesota Historical Society, Minnesota Historical Center, St. Paul, Minnesota, hereafter referred to as SDC.

¹⁴ M.I. Lockwood to Henry S. Stebbins, May 26, 1915, SDC.

¹⁵ George W. Thorp to Frank A. Seiberling, August 26, 1922, Box 50, FAS Papers; Roll Call, July, 1929, Box 65, FAS Papers.

¹⁶ For a description of the Nortonville depot fire, see the *Edgeley Mail*, January 9, 1930. See also Peggy Lee, *Miss Peggy Lee: An Autobiography*. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1989, 25-55.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

Before she was hired by the Midland Continental, Minnie had been widowed with an infant child in late 1916 following the death of her first husband in a freak accident.¹⁷

Miss Lee recounted and publicly acknowledged many episodes of abuse by her stepmother during the years following Minnie's marriage to her father. For reasons that are unclear, when Marvin Egstrom and most of the family removed to the Wimbledon depot, Minnie was appointed agent at the Midland Continental Railroad station at Millarton, North Dakota, some 47 miles away from Wimbledon. Perhaps Egstrom requested that his wife Minnie be assigned to the station of Millarton to protect Norma and his other children from Minnie's relentless abuse.

It may be that Midland Continental Railroad assistant vice-president Edward J. Gurski sought to separate the Egstroms to avoid the public spectacle of Minnie verbally threatening and physically abusing her stepchildren and her husband, something that would obviously not enhance the reputation and public image of the railroad. Minnie may have witnessed Egstrom's larceny, and was blackmailing him. Whatever the reason, Minnie remained agent at Millarton until the agency was discontinued in June, 1958, and the depot sold to a private party thereafter. Minnie died on January 14, 1971, actually outliving the railroad by two months.¹⁸

It was at the Wimbledon depot that Norma learned the basics of railroad station operation. Norma often stood in for her father as Midland Continental agent at Wimbledon when drunkenness prevented him from carrying out his appointed duties. In her 1989 autobiography, Norma recounts making up the daily car movement reports, putting seals on freight cars, making out waybills and performing other tasks required of the agent. Norma also mentions transmitting messages on the railroad's telephone line to trains between Wimbledon and headquarters at Jamestown, duties only the most trusted and experienced employees were allowed to perform. Clearly, had it not been for Norma's intervention during her father's absences, train schedules on the railroad would have been disrupted and the railroad would have lost business and goodwill from Wimbledon and Jamestown businessmen.

From this exposure to the day-to-day operation of the 77-mile railroad, Norma acquired more than a lay person's knowledge of railroad operations and appreciation of the Midland Continental's contribution to the economic well-being of Midland Continental towns in central North Dakota. This railroad knowledge and self-confessed sense of justice would lead to Miss Lee becoming the most famous, and often the most vocal and ardent booster of the Midland Continental Railroad, including defending the railroad's reputation in the local press. In April, 1937, spring snows forced a group of Valley City (N.D.) State

¹⁷ Minnie's first husband had been decapitated by an exploding gasoline drum while attempting to thaw the faucet using an oil-soaked rag. See the *Jamestown Daily Alert*, December 16, 1916.

¹⁸ Lee, *ibid.*, 34; Engineering Report Upon the Midland Continental Railroad, June 30, 1917, Box 36, RMC. Property Records of the Midland Continental Railroad, Box 45, RMC. See obituary of Mrs. M.O. Egstrom, *Jamestown Sun*, January 20, 1971.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

College students to accept carriage back to school in a Midland Continental freight train caboose. When one of the passengers compared his ride in the caboose with a trip in a plush parlor car on the Northern Pacific, and then sarcastically complained to the *VCSC Budget* that his trip was his "most amusing experience in many years", an almost 17-year old Norma Egstrom upbraided the college student with a stinging rebuke, reminding the student that "the Midland carried sick people to the hospital from snow bound farms, and more than once the railroad had supplied food to the little towns that were cut off from the source of supply." Norma blistered the writer of the complaining letter with a final rejoinder to the editor, "I trust courtesy will permit you to print this defense of a little railroad which you perhaps unthinkingly did quite a harm in printing (his) amusing little piece."¹⁹

Norma graduated from Wimbledon High School with the class of 1937, and left Wimbledon soon after and removed to Hollywood, California and then to Fargo, North Dakota, where Norma was given the stage name Peggy Lee by WDAY radio personality Ken Kennedy. Norma eventually landed in Chicago where she began a career as a vocalist and composer. Marvin Olaf Egstrom removed from Wimbledon to Millarton in 1939. The effects of his alcoholism forced his retirement from the Midland Continental Railroad on March 1, 1944. Norma's father died at Millarton, North Dakota on April 27, 1950.²⁰

In her long run as a vocalist and composer, Miss Lee recorded more than 600 songs and composed dozens more in a spectacular career that eventually brought her a Grammy. As an actress, Miss Lee was nominated for an Oscar in her role in "Pete Kelly's Blues." She was awarded the Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award by the governor of North Dakota on May 23, 1975.²¹

Although it is not recorded if Norma ever returned to Wimbledon or the Midland Continental Railroad depot after leaving Wimbledon in 1938, she maintained friendships with her classmates and spoke fondly of the people of Wimbledon and her experiences at the Wimbledon depot in her autobiography and in personal interviews. Upon reading "of the demise of that dear old railroad" in April, 1973, Miss Lee wrote, "I'm truly sorry to see the Midland go, I loved it, as my father did."²²

¹⁹ Norma Egstrom to Editor, *The Budget*, State Teachers College, Valley City, North Dakota, April 6, 1937, folder "Midland Continental Railroad", Box 75, FAS Papers.

²⁰ Kathleen Blinsky, *Wimbledon History 1893-1968*. Wimbledon, North Dakota, published by the Wimbledon Silver Anniversary Committee, 1968. Payroll Records, 1933-1958, Box 33, RMC; Personnel files, Box 33, RMC. Valley City (N.D.) *Times Record*, May 1, 2000. See obituary of M.O.Egstrom, *Jamestown Sun*, April 27, 1950.

²¹ Established in 1961 during the Dakota Territory Centennial, the honorary rank of colonel in the North Dakota Theodore Roosevelt Rough Riders recognizes present or former North Dakotans who have been influenced by the state in achieving national recognition in their field of endeavor, and thus reflect credit and honor upon North Dakota and its citizens. Miss Lee was the 13th recipient of this award.

²² Miss Peggy Lee to David P. Morgan, editor of *Trains* magazine, April 27, 1973. Midland Continental Railroad research correspondence, *The Papers of F. Stewart Mitchell*, Collection 10555, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Heritage Center, Bismarck, North Dakota.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

The Wimbledon depot building qualifies for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria C because its type and method of construction exemplifies late 19th and early 20th century railroad station construction practices. Moreover, since all other Midland Continental Railroad frame depot buildings were razed or removed from the property between 1954 and 1963, the Wimbledon depot is the sole surviving example of frame railroad station construction as it was practiced on the Midland Continental Railroad.

Railroad depots in antebellum America served the sole purpose of providing a waiting place for passenger trains. Freight depots and passenger depots existed as separate structures. Antebellum stations in the East were primarily single function, individual stations. The hostile climate of the Great Plains, its vastly different regional geography and the resulting changed nature of the railroads' business and operations dictated a completely different adaptation of the builder's art to the new environment.

As a corporate policy, each railroad strove to achieve a uniform architectural image that signified the company's commitment to consistency, and served as testament that the railroad had broken free of unpredictability in its service and capriciousness in its attitude towards the public. By avoiding design variations among and between its own depots, railroad's magnified their company's visual impact and helped win the public trust by creating an architectural symbol readily identifiable with each railroad in each town served by each railroad's system.

While the practice of building look-alike railroad station structures using balloon framing led many observers to complain that the new towns of the West were the quintessence of monotony, the principle of balloon framing, nevertheless, allowed each railroad in the West to build hundreds of structures, from depots to privys, in a short period of time. Cost was not so much an objective in choosing this building system, as was the necessity of taking full advantage of the relatively short work season in the Great Plains region.²³

Railroad depots during this period also reflect the technological changes that were also revolutionizing domestic housing. The methods and procedures of domestic housing taken from pattern books became the building construction convention railroad engineers adopted when building all railroad station structures in the West. One important aspect of the builders' art characterized during this period, and one that ultimately became its imprimatur for the next 100 years, was the appearance and permeation of look-alike domestic housing taken from pattern books, and its direct descendent, the look-alike railroad station.²³

²³ Brian W. Blouet and Frederick C. Luebke, "The Standardized Railroad Station in South Dakota, 1870- 1920", *The Great Plains: Environment and Culture*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.

²⁴ Daniel D. Reiff, *Houses from Books, Treatises, Pattern Books and Catalogs in American Architecture, 1738-1950: A History and Guide*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

By combining the function of the passenger station and the freight station, Midland Continental engineers acted to ease the shortage of men needed to operate the new stations in the West. Combination freight and passenger stations reduced the cost of operating these stations by half, since one man could operate a combination freight and passenger station. Moreover, since towns on the Midland's new lines were spaced at much greater distances and were relatively isolated compared to stations in the more populous East, providing shelter for employees at newly settled locations was a foremost concern. Finally, the need to reconstruct destroyed railroads during the Civil War years had forced railroad chief engineers to look favorably upon the influence of military engineering and its urge towards uniformity, measurement, procedure and objective. These principles provided the technical underpinnings for railroad depot construction in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.²⁴

Midland Continental Railroad engineers recognized that at Wimbledon they had to adhere to the same construction policies that they had at other Midland Continental depots, if they were to realize the same economies of construction. At the same time, they had to build a Midland Continental depot that patrons would immediately recognize as being different from the neighboring Soo Line depot, without compromising the form and design that made Midland Continental depots economical to construct and inexpensive to own and maintain.

Chief Engineer Harry Hurning adopted the policy of achieving a uniform architectural image through the use of balloon framing to underscore that stability, permanence and predictability were known quantities describing the Midland Continental Railroad. The Wimbledon depot enunciated these qualities as it served the dual purpose of community gateway and stepping stone to the world beyond the frontier community.

²⁵ H. Roger Grant and Charles W. Boki, *The Country Railroad Station in America*. Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Co., 1978, *passim*.

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Verbal boundary description

Lots 7, 8 and 9 of Block 1 of the Original Townsite of Wimbledon, North Dakota, comprising 10,500 square feet (.241 acres) more or less, as the same are situated in the Southeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section 30, Township 143 North Range 61 West of the 5th Principal Meridian, all located in Pierce Township, Barnes County, North Dakota, latitude N 47 deg 10 minutes 06 seconds, longitude W 98 deg 27 minutes 32 seconds.

Verbal boundary justification

Boundary Justification:

As shown on Midland Continental Railroad Station Map V2-7 dated October 12, 1914 and corrected to August 30, 1934, the station grounds on which the building was moved in May, 1920 are known as Custodian's Parcel Number 56. This parcel was purchased by the Midland Continental Railroad before the depot was moved, along with Parcel 55 and Parcel 54. These parcels were held by the Midland Continental Railroad until the Soo Line Railroad Company, as successor in interest, conveyed the depot building and the land to the Wimbledon Community Museum, Inc. on December 5, 1971.

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