

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

For NPS use only

received **AUG 5 1985**  
date entered **SEP 5 1985**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Northern Pacific Railway Depot

and/or common N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 200 1st Street Northwest N/A not for publication

city, town Little Falls vicinity of N/A

state Minnesota code 22 county Morrison code 097

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Burlington Northern, Inc.

street & number 1111 3rd Avenue

city, town Seattle N/A vicinity of state Washington 98101

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Morrison County Courthouse

street & number 2nd Street SE at Broadway

city, town Little Falls state Minnesota 56345

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Minnesota Statewide Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Minnesota Historical Society  
Ft. Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____ N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Northern Pacific Railway Depot in Little Falls is sited adjacent to the main line of what is now the Burlington Northern Railroad, on the west bank of the Mississippi River. The area surrounding the depot is transitional from commercial to residential. The building is located on a narrow park between the tracks and 1st Street Northwest which extends from the depot approximately 200 feet to Broadway on the south and to a one story brick freighthouse to the north.

The overall integrity of the depot is good. No substantial modifications have been made to the structure, and relatively recent alterations which have concealed many of the building's decorative features are reversible. The original appearance of the depot is well documented in a variety of sources contained in the Northern Pacific Railway collection and the Cass Gilbert papers at the Minnesota Historical Society.

The depot is a single story building that is generally rectangular in plan. The main waiting room is located at the north end of the building. The women's waiting room and toilets are in the central portion. At the south end are offices, and baggage and express rooms. A furnace and coal room are placed in a small partial basement beneath the central portion of the building.

Materials used in the construction of the depot include Kettle River Sandstone, brick, and wood. The exterior walls have a water table course of stone, above hard-burnt brick foundation walls. Wall surrounding the public rooms at the depot's north end are of red second quality hard-pressed brick and have stone quoins at the corners. Walls adjoining the south portion of the building have a red-pressed brick base, and ornamental vertical board-and-batten wood siding above. The ends of the gable above the main waiting room are half timbered, with Washington Red fir timbers and plaster-on-lath infill panels.

Open porticos are attached to the north and south sides of the building. Rusticated stone piers support a braced beam trusswork of rough red fir.

The roof is the primary exterior feature. It is hipped, and has a gabled section above the main waiting room, and gabled open porticos at the north and south ends. Originally covered with unstained Oregon Cedar Shingles, the roof has now been covered by hexagonal asbestos shingles. Four small shingled dormers have also been removed, as have the decorative iron finials displaying the Northern Pacific logo which stood on the gable ends. The roof extends six feet over the east side of the building, and is braced by hammer beams at regular intervals. All eaves have exposed rafter boards.

All windows in the depot have sash which are divided into numerous rectangular lights by mullions. Segmental-arched openings on the east and west sides of the waiting room have a central doorway surrounded by beveled glass panels.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1899–1900      **Builder/Architect** Cass Gilbert, Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The design of the Northern Pacific Depot in Little Falls is the work of Minnesota's most famous resident architect, Cass Gilbert. Begun in 1899 and completed in 1900, the depot is executed in the Shingle Style. It is one of Gilbert's last Minnesota works, completed before he moved permanently to New York, where he achieved national prominence. As a rail facility, the depot is the best preserved structure in the area associated with the Northern Pacific Railway, which was vitally important to the region's settlement, agricultural and industrial development, and the transportation of products, mail, and passengers.

Without efficient means of transportation, there were limits on the amount of industrial activity that could feasibly occur in the Little Falls area. Although the first settlement had occurred at Little Falls in 1848, when James Green built a dam and sawmill on the Mississippi River, it was not until the coming of the railroad that any substantial industrial development could take place. In October, 1877 the Western Railway of Minnesota completed its line from Sauk Rapids to Brainerd, establishing the first station in Little Falls. Several flour mills, a sash, door and blind factory, and a carriage manufacturing plant were established (Little Falls Daily Transcript, September 11, 1880). In 1888, the Little Falls Water Company was established. This firm constructed a substantial dam, and marketed mill and industrial sites. The Little Falls Lumber Company was purchased in 1891 by Frederick Weyerhaeuser, Peter Musser, and others. Under the name Pine Tree Lumber Company, they enlarged the existing sawmill and constructed additional facilities making Little Falls one of the largest lumber processing centers in the state.

By 1899, Little Falls had developed to become a major point along the Northern Pacific line. Among Minnesota stations it ranked behind only the Twin Cities and Duluth in the amount of freight shipped. Ten years earlier the railway had shortened the length of its main line by constructing a line from Little Falls to Staples. This new segment branched from the old line one and a half miles south of the city and passed through Little Falls along the west bank of the Mississippi. New facilities were needed for passenger, baggage, express, and freight operations along this new line. Following its established policy of commissioning special designs for important stations rather than using its own architectural staff, the railway selected Cass Gilbert to design an appropriate station to cost not more than 7000 dollars. Gilbert had done previous work for the Northern Pacific at Anoka (1891), Fargo (1897–98), North Yakima, Seattle, and Winnepeg.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Little Falls East, Minn.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 15 393900 5092330  
Zone Easting Northing

B                    
Zone Easting Northing

C                  

D                  

E                  

F                  

G                  

H                  

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 11, 12, and 13; Thayer's Addition to the City of Little Falls.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Thomas L. Jenkinson and Norene Roberts

organization Historical Research, Inc. date March 20, 1985

street & number 5535 Richmond Curve telephone (612) 929-2921

city or town Minneapolis state Minnesota 55410

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Russell W. Fridley*

title Russell W. Fridley  
State Historic Preservation Officer

date 7/11/85

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 9/5/85

*J. Melvyn Byer*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

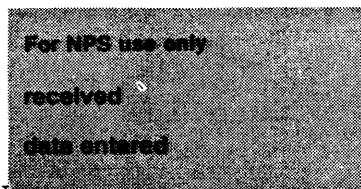
Northern Pacific Railway Depot, Little Falls, Morrison County, MN

Continuation sheet

Description, cont'd.

Item number 7

Page 1



The main waiting room is elaborately finished, having decorative brickwork, exposed beams, and a 24 foot high ceiling. The walls have a pressed brick wainscot with a border consisting of a double row of alternating red and white brick laid in black mortar. Above this border the walls are of red common brick laid in white mortar. The upper walls on the interior of the east and west gable ends are half-timbered, reflecting the exterior. The ceiling has exposed 10 by 16 inch beams and 6 by 8 inch purlins. White pine boards are located in the panels between. Hammer beams provide bracing at the bottom of the beams. A suspended acoustical tile ceiling currently conceals the original ceiling.

A ticket office, located originally in the southeast corner of the main waiting room, was moved in 1928 to a location along the north wall. An adjoining Roadmaster's office was also installed; together these rooms occupy the north 10 feet of the waiting room. At the same time, the bay window that was in the trackside wall at the original location of the ticket office was moved to its present position at the north end of the east side of the building. These changes were designed by O.G. Rognen, a staff architect for the railway, in 1928. Special care was taken in these changes to preserve the integrity of the waiting room.

The women's waiting room is reached through a round-arched opening in the south wall of the main waiting room. This opening contains a door that is flanked by patterned glass and wood panels. The women's waiting room is simply finished, having walls and ceiling that are plastered, an oak floor, and a 10 foot high ceiling. A door provides access from this room to the platform outside.

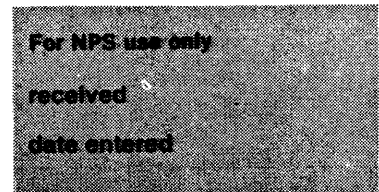
The baggage and office areas of the building are also simply finished. Floors are maple, and walls and ceiling are plastered. The telegraph office, at the southeast corner of the building, has a bay window overlooking the tracks, and oak wainscotting. This office, and the other divisions in the baggage and express area were the result of a 1905 remodeling of what had been a larger, undivided area. Like the 1928 changes, these alterations complement the original design of the building and cannot be detected without prior reference to original photographs or drawings.

A brick platform originally surrounded the depot and extended for several hundred feet along the track. In 1962 this surface was covered by a thin layer of asphalt. More recently the brick pavers which abutted the track was removed to provide greater clear space for passing trains.

Several reversible changes were made to the building in 1962. In addition to the suspended tile ceiling in the main waiting room, the hardwood floors were

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Northern Pacific Railway Depot, Little Falls, Morrison County, MN

Continuation sheet

Description, cont'd.

Item number 7

Page 2

covered by plywood and vinyl tile. The half-timbered gable ends above the main waiting room were covered with plywood panels.

Minor changes also resulted from a consolidation of freight and passenger operations in the depot building about 1970. The women's waiting room was converted into an agent's office, and the original arched doorway at its main waiting room entrance was modified to contain a single wooden door. A counter was moved from the freight house into the agent's office. At an unknown time, the original stone-quoined brick chimney was replaced by a simpler all brick chimney.

The original colors for painting the depot building were specified by the architect. This original color scheme was much more polychromatic than what currently exists. Woodwork was either oiled or stained dark, almost black. Soffits and the sheathing of the portico ceilings were red. The ornamental wood siding was painted brown, with green on the battens. Window and door frames were also highlighted in green. Window sash and the metalwork on the roof were Victorian Red. On the interior, the beams were stained dark, and the sheathing boards oiled, but left a natural shade. Bolt heads on the tie rods were accentuated with Victorian Red.

Following the suspension of passenger operations at Little Falls in the late 1970s, the building continued to be used for freight operations and for storage. A small fire in September, 1979 resulted in minor damage to the floor, floor joists, ceiling, and rafters of the women's waiting room, but no structural damage occurred. Since this time, the building has been vacant.

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Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Northern Pacific Railway Depot, Little Falls, Morrison County, MN

Continuation sheet    Significance, cont'd.    Item number 8    Page 3

By September, 1899 Gilbert's design was complete. George S. Deeks and Company, of St. Paul, was awarded the contract for the construction of the building, having submitted the low bid of 8200 dollars, which did not include the brick platform or the mechanical system. Deeks had previously worked on the Gilbert-designed depot in Fargo, North Dakota.

Cass Gilbert (1859-1934) was raised in St. Paul, and gained his first architectural experience working in several area offices. In 1878, he entered the architecture program at M.I.T. After a year's study, a brief period of work for the U.S. Coastal Survey, and a nine month European study tour, he entered the New York office of McKim, Mead and White. In 1883, after three years with the firm, he returned to St. Paul to supervise several railway projects in the midwest that had been given to the firm by Henry Villard, then the president of the railway. Shortly thereafter he left the firm and went into partnership with James Knox Taylor (1857-1929). This partnership lasted until 1892, when Taylor went to the east coast. Taylor eventually became superintendent of architects for the U.S. Treasury.

Gilbert, well connected socially, was able to generate commissions to design numerous houses, churches, and commercial buildings. Beginning in the 1890s, he began to solicit commissions for larger buildings, including many on the east coast, and frequently entered design competitions. In 1895 he won the competition to design the Minnesota State Capitol, and gained national attention.

Gilbert opened a New York office in 1898, and gradually transferred much of his work from St. Paul to that office. In 1910, following his selection to design the Woolworth Building, he closed the St. Paul office. Major projects undertaken by Gilbert include the U.S. Customs House in New York (1899), the West Virginia and Arkansas state capitols, the Detroit Public Library (1921), the New York Life Insurance Building in New York (1928), the George Washington Bridge (1931), and the U.S. Supreme Court Building, begun in 1929 and completed in 1935, one year following Gilbert's death.

The Little Falls depot was one of the last public buildings executed by Gilbert while in Minnesota and also one of his last projects to adopt the romantic Shingle Style. Letters written to Clarence Johnston, a St. Paul architect and M.I.T. classmate, indicate that Gilbert was strongly influenced in his studies and early career by the work of Richard Norman Shaw (1821-1912) and H.H. Richardson (1831-1886). The dominant steeply pitched roof, rough stonework, and the ornamental siding of the depot building reflect the work of these architects and other Arts and Crafts movement influences.

Other railway depots designed by Gilbert in Minnesota have either been destroyed (Willmar), or radically altered (Anoka). The Little Falls depot has never

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Northern Pacific Railway Depot, Little Falls, Morrison County, MN  
**Continuation sheet** Significance, cont'd **Item number** 8

**Page** 4

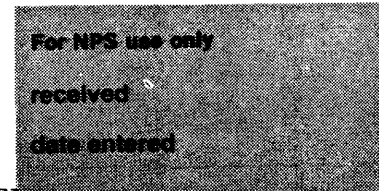
been significantly altered. Sources documenting the original or early 20th century condition of the depot, including plans, elevation drawings, specifications, and such items as the original paint color schemes have survived, and are contained in the Northern Pacific Railway collection and the Cass Gilbert papers at the Minnesota Historical Society.

The depot is currently vacant. Public acquisition had been considered following a generous offer by the Burlington Northern to donate the building to the city of Little Falls, but was not successfully accomplished at the time. Current development plans by the Burlington Northern are uncertain.



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Northern Pacific Railway Depot, Little Falls, Morrison County, MN

Continuation sheet

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Item number 9

Page 5

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