

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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** Freight House

historic Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Offices and Freight Warehouse (and "99" Burlington Northern Business Car)

and/or common Freight House (preferred)

**2. Location**

street & number 107-109 Vine Street not for publication

city, town La Crosse vicinity of congressional district Third

state Wisconsin code 55 county La Crosse code 063

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of La Crosse, Patrick T. Zielke, Mayor

street & number City Hall

city, town La Crosse vicinity of state Wisconsin 54601

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds

street & number La Crosse County Courthouse

city, town La Crosse state Wisconsin 54601

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places  
title of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1976  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town 816 State St., Madison state Wisconsin 53706

# 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 _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

Located along the Mississippi riverfront in the old manufacturing and warehousing district of La Crosse, The Freight House is the two-story former office building of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company with an adjacent one-story, one-hundred-foot-long warehouse. Both buildings are constructed of Milwaukee cream brick and have simple gable roofs. Fenestration on the former freight office is regular while that of the warehouse is irregular. All openings have stone sills and semi-circular brick window caps. The overall simplicity of window design is supplemented by a "trierarchy" window in the peak of the office building's south gable, and an oculus in the peak of the northernmost building. Two interior chimneys pierce the gable roof at mid-slope. Exterior alterations include the replacement of the slate roof with asphalt shingles thirty years ago, and the more recent construction of a cupola atop the warehouse to provide natural lighting for the present restaurant. The loading platform on the west side of the complex was extended laterally and a deck added in 1979, along with a wrought iron railing for the convenience of restaurant patrons.

The interior of the warehouse is dominated by the original heavy timber trusses and arches, which, combined with the plain brick walls and exposed oak floors provide a "rustic" setting for the restaurant. The northern portion of the warehouse is occupied by a winery while the southern portion houses the dining area and restrooms of the restaurant. The kitchens are located on the first floor of the former office building. In addition to housing the kitchens, the irregularly-planned first floor is used for storage space with the original vaults, manufactured by the Hall Safe & Lock Co. in 1880, now serving as wine cellars. The upper floor is basically unchanged and is used for storage purposes by both the restaurant and the winery.

Located on the railroad siding on the west side of the warehouse and included in the nomination, is the private business car of the vice-president of the Burlington Northern Railroad, built in 1904.<sup>1</sup> Of steel construction, car "99" is outfitted with an observation room, bathroom, two state rooms, a dining room, secretary's office, porter's quarters, and kitchen. The car is completely self-contained and includes air-conditioning and oil steam heat systems. The interior is plush in the manner of the period with velvet chairs and carpets, fine, hand-crafted woodwork, pastel wallpaper, and assorted light fixtures. Today, the car is used for display and to accommodate summer dining.

<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, Daniel Willard Rides the Line,...

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OWNER OF PROPERTY

Burlington Car 99

Robert L. Lawlor

4201 1st Avenue, S.E.

Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402

# 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 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 1880,<sup>1</sup> 1904 (RR car)<sup>2</sup> Builder/Architect unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Although La Crosse had long been a hub of trading activity, the coming of the railroad was largely responsible for transforming the community into a bustling manufacturing and commercial center. The Freight House, located on the riverfront of this Mississippi rivertown's industrial center, stands as one of the few remnants of the great age of the railroads in La Crosse, at one time a major rail crossroads in the upper Midwest. In addition to its importance in the transportation history of the city, the building is an architectural asset of La Crosse. The two-story cream brick design is handsome in its simplicity, and serves as an instructive contrast with later, more typical stylistically explicit railroad stations in La Crosse and elsewhere in the state.

### Transportation

The Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway (popularly known as the Milwaukee Road) was the first railroad to extend its line into the La Crosse area. Arriving in 1858, the railroad brought a jump in land values, an influx of capital improvements, and a rapid increase in population.<sup>3</sup> In 1874, the Milwaukee Road completed its line into the city of La Crosse at the request of the citizens of that community who bonded themselves to the sum of \$15,000 for rail improvements, including help in the construction of depots.<sup>4</sup> Tremendous expansion followed in the ensuing years, highlighted by the construction of the permanent bridge over the Mississippi River in 1876 at a cost of more than \$300,000. In 1880, the Milwaukee Road absorbed three railways that served the La Crosse region: The Southern Minnesota; the Chicago, Dubuque and Minnesota; and the Wisconsin Valley. Due to these mergers there arose a need to consolidate the railroad offices for convenience and economy, as well as for additional warehouse space. Later that year it was decided to remove the old depot and replace it with the present structure.<sup>5</sup>

The new depot contained the freight offices of the Milwaukee Road and the newly absorbed lines with the exception of the Wisconsin Valley Railroad. The office/depot handled only incoming freight and would serve the Milwaukee Road in La Crosse until 1955. During this period the Milwaukee Road employed 500 men annually and had seventeen trains moving in and out of La Crosse daily. Outbound receipts for an average year totaled \$500,000 while incoming receipts were in the neighborhood of \$1.5 million.<sup>6</sup> Following the closing of the depot, the building was used by private businesses for storage until the present owners leased the property for use as a winery. In 1978, part of the structure was leased to the Freight House, Inc., which began to preserve the building through the conversion of a portion of the old depot into a restaurant.

Included in the nomination is the railroad business car of Daniel Willard, vice-president of the Burlington-Northern under James T. Hill from 1903-1910, and later president of the Baltimore and Ohio. Willard used the car, nicknamed the "99" for his extensive inspection trips of the Burlington Northern network that occupied most of his time. William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, along with numerous Indian chiefs, and many other dignitaries were entertained here by Willard during his tenure with the Burlington Northern. Following his departure for the Baltimore and Ohio, the "99" was used by various officials of the Burlington Northern until it eventually was sold to the Algoma Railroad, Algoma, Wisconsin.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name La Crescent, Minn.-Wis.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

### UMT References

A 

1	5	6	4	0	4	9	0	4	8	5	2	6	5	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

D 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

E 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The easterly 80 feet (measured parallel to Vine Street) of Block one (1) of River Addition to La Crosse and the easterly 80 feet of the Southerly 1/2 of vacated Pine Street contiguous to said Block one (1).

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

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Diane H. Filipowicz, Architectural Historian  
Michael R. Matucheski, Preservation Assistant, Historic Preservation Division

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date September 24, 1980

street & number 816 State Street telephone 608/262-2970

city or town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

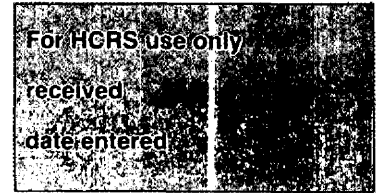
State Historic Preservation Officer signature Richard M. Mearns

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 9/8/80

For HCERS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>Donna M. Brown</u>	date <u>3/2/82</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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In 1977, the car was purchased by Robert Lawlor who moved it to La Crosse where it was restored. In its present setting on the siding adjacent to the Freight House (former Milwaukee Road depot), the character and significance of both the car and depot are further enhanced. As one of the approximately one hundred railroad business cars that remain intact in the United States, the old "99" is a remnant of one facet of American railroad history.

Architecture

The architectural distinction of The Freight House is derived largely from its age and dignity of appearance, the latter resulting from the combination of breadth of facade and the generalized nineteenth century flavor of its simple decorative details. On the front facade, the regularly spaced flat, segmental brick window caps, with the "trptych" window in the gable end, confer an Italianate feeling on the otherwise vernacular design. Compared with other railroad buildings in the city, The Freight House is more formal in design than the more utilitarian and even Neoclassical later designs? The La Crosse example also predates the era of standardized frame and latter Victorian red brick buildings in the state which have been previously nominated to the National Register.

- <sup>1</sup> Report of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company (1880), Milwaukee, 1881, p. 24.
- <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, Daniel Willard Rides the Line
- <sup>3</sup> See, La Crosse Historical Sketches, no. 2, p. 10 and pp. 26-29 for a further discussion of the importance of the railroad in La Crosse's development. Also, History of La Crosse County, Wisconsin, Chicago; Western Historical Company, 1881, p. 585.
- <sup>4</sup> La Crosse Tribune, January 30, 1927, p. 1.
- <sup>5</sup> Report of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company (1880), Milwaukee, 1881, pp. 10-12 and p. 24.
- <sup>6</sup> La Crosse Tribune, January 30, 1927, p. 1

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bryant, Benjamin F., ed. Memoirs of La Crosse County. Madison: Western Historical Association, 1907.

History of La Crosse County, Wisconsin. Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1881.

La Crosse Historical Sketches, no. 2. La Crosse: Liesenfeld Press, 1931.

La Crosse Tribune, January 30, 1927 and March 17, 1971.

Reports of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company, 1875-1880. Milwaukee, 1876-1881.

Sanborn-Perris Maps of La Crosse, Wisconsin for 1879 and 1884.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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