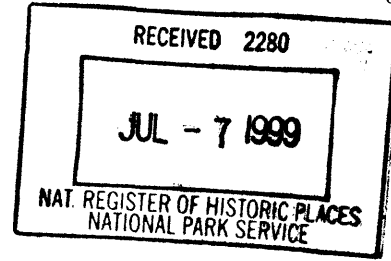


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



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

### 1. Name of Property

historic name OREGON SHORT LINE RAILROAD DEPOT

other names/site number Union Pacific Railroad Depot

### 2. Location

street & number 300 DEPOT LANE N/A  not for publication

city or town ONTARIO N/A vicinity

state Oregon code OR county MALHEUR code 045 zip code 97914

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

*James Hamrick*

Deputy SHPO

June 25, 1999

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Edson H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

8/5/99

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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OREGON SHORT LINE RAILROAD DEPOT , ONTARIO, MALHEUR County, Oregon

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### **OREGON SHORT LINE RAILROAD DEPOT (1906-07)**

300 Depot Lane  
Ontario, Malheur County, Oregon

#### **COMMENTS OF THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE:**

The Oregon Short Line Railroad Depot (completed in 1907) in Ontario is significant historically and architecturally. It is significant for its association with the railroad and development of Ontario. Ontario was founded as a railroad town in 1883. The Oregon Short Line (OSL) Railroad linked the transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad to the Pacific Northwest. The construction of the OSL began in Wyoming in 1881 and joined in Huntington, Oregon in 1884. William Moffit and James Virtue, a native of Ontario, Canada for which the newly established townsite was named, were instrumental in getting the location of the depot to be on their land claims. With the site of the depot attained, a tent city was quickly created. Streets were laid out parallel to the tracks and avenues perpendicular to the track. Ranching and other agricultural activities had been in the area since the 1860s, and with the coming of the railroad, Ontario became an important shipping site for livestock.

The Union Pacific experienced the depression of the 1890s and its operations suffered losses, crashing in 1893. Jacob Schiff and Edward Harriman reorganized the OSL in 1897. Harriman envisioned a revival of the OSL with increased freighting of lumber, mining and agricultural products. With this were constructed grander depots to replace the original wood frame structures.

The railroad brought visitors to town and the depot was the gateway to the community. The buildings and landscaping were important to provide a good impression and served as a source of pride for the community. Depots were also a source for communication. Western Union telegraph service was located in the Ontario depot. Mail trains brought the mail to the community. The depot was also a public gathering place for special events, and passing dignitaries made speeches from the trains cars. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Richard Nixon and Robert Kennedy made whistle stop speeches in Ontario.

The first depot in Ontario was constructed in 1884-85 just south of the current site. The present depot was constructed during 1906-07 from plans developed by the Union Pacific Railroad. These plans were used as several sites, including Caldwell, Payette, and Weisner. Each depot was of the same design with various use of materials. The structures in Caldwell and Weisner are brick with concrete block trim and remain in use by each community for civic purposes. The depot in Payette was demolished in 1983.

The plan and massing of the Oregon Short Line Railroad Depot is reminiscent of train stations designed by H.H. Richardson throughout New England during the 1880s. Richardson was a prominent American

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 3 Page 2

OREGON SHORT LINE RAILROAD DEPOT , ONTARIO, MALHEUR County, Oregon

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architect who utilized asymmetrical massing, stone construction, hipped roofs, and towers as character-defining features for railroad depots.

The use of cast concrete instead of cut stone in the regional depots was based on the development of the materials throughout the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Harmon Palmer is credited with the first commercial process in the U.S. in the late 1890s. Development of the Portland cement industry also contributed to the ready availability of the materials. The use of Portland cement and sand and the ability to produce the masonry units on or near the construction site eliminated the high costs of shipping. Costs for competing materials and freight charges made the locally manufactured concrete blocks a desired building product.

The Ontario depot is constructed of concrete block cast to imitate stone, trimmed with red brick around the windows and at the corners, providing the building with a unique textured effect. The massive quality of the building, combined with the use of materials and arched entry way are characteristic of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The flared roof, decorative brackets, and roof finials provide decorative qualities that display the Craftsman influence of the period. This building is primarily one-and-one-half stories in height, with a two story section that incorporates the entrance lobby and rear bay. The rear (east) bay incorporates a segmented, half-conical roof. Flared, hipped roof dormers are located on each elevation--one on each narrow end (facing north and south), two on the east side and three on the west. The dormers are clad with wood shingles and incorporate one-over-one double hung windows. Other windows used throughout the building include larger double hung wood windows and some smaller fixed windows in the uppermost dormer and on either side of the entrance door which incorporates a round arched transom. The building has new architectural grade asphalt shingles and gutter system (replacing an internal system that apparently did not work well with the freeze-thaw cycle in this colder climate.)

The horizontal emphasis of the roofline parallels the movement of the train with the taller cross axis housing the area for purchasing tickets and bisecting the men's and ladies' waiting areas. The interior of the depot is arranged into four bays with approximately 2,900 square feet. The double entry doors open into a foyer that includes restrooms. The area east of the foyer originally housed the ticket and telegraph office and is now open. A few walls have been added into the original Ladies' Waiting and Baggage Rooms. The Men's Waiting Room remains open. The ceiling height on the first floor is fourteen feet. Interior finishes include lath and plaster walls (some replaced with gypsum wall board) with tongue-and-groove wainscot six feet in height. The original fir floors and panel doors and transoms that connect the spaces remain. The unfinished second level is accessed through a hatch in the baggage room.

The decline of passenger trains occurred with the increase of automobile and later the success of airlines. The interstate highway system in the 1960s further impacted UP ridership which ended in 1970. The

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## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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OREGON SHORT LINE RAILROAD DEPOT , ONTARIO, MALHEUR County, Oregon

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governmental establishment of Amtrack passenger service in 1971 relieved the burden of maintaining depots by the UP. Many depots were replaced with trackside waiting stations. The City of Ontario now leases the Ontario depot. The Depot Restoration Committee is restoring the facility and is creating a visitor's center, historical museum, and office space.

OREGON SHORT LINE RAILROAD DEPOT  
Name of Property

ONTARIO, MALHEUR County, Oregon  
City, County, and State

### 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>		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**

N/A

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: rail-related  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: museum & community meeting place  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Richardsonian Romanesque;  
Queen Anne  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
walls CONCRETE BLOCK; BRICK  
roof ASPHALT  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Narrative Description

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

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section number** 7 **Page** 1 **Name of Property** Oregon Short Line Railroad Depot  
**County and State** Malheur, OR

**SUMMARY**

The Oregon Short Line Depot located in Ontario, Oregon, built in 1906 – 07, was constructed of standardized plans used by the Union Pacific Railroad Company. The depot is reminiscent of the style designed by H. H. Richardson in train stations in New England in the 1880s. The depot also incorporates the use of concrete block, a relatively new building material that became a commercial success in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The depot is a significant structure in that it represents the gateway to the community, welcoming immigrants and travelers alike. It also reflected the town's prestige and success as a regional commercial center to the outside world.

**SITE**

The Oregon Short Line Depot, located in Ontario, Oregon, is sited at the intersection of Depot Lane and Southeast Third Avenue in downtown Ontario. It is positioned on a north-south axis with the railroad tracks located directly east of the building. Parking lots are adjacent to the building on the south and west. A park area is situated north of the depot.

**EXTERIOR**

The two-story building measures 98' – 6" from north to south and 36' - 0" from east to west at its widest bay. It is rectangular in shape with a two-story pentagonal bay projecting towards the tracks at the east façade. The bay also projects westward beyond the plane of the façade. The pedestrian entrance is embraced within a semi-circular arch. The massing and form reflect the influence of the Richardsonian Romanesque style and the flavor of the Queen Anne period is captured in the use of materials, colors, and detailing.

The foundation is formed of concrete cast in sections 5' – 4" in length. The beveled edge of the smooth concrete foundation is exposed one foot above grade. The walls are constructed of concrete blocks cast to imitate rough-cut stone. Door and window jambs and quoins are detailed in smooth brick laid in a running bond. The use of the two types of masonry create a "quilted" effect with the larger rough-faced masonry unit edged in smooth standard-size brick.

The bell-cast roof extends into wide eaves at the first floor level supported by large brackets each springing from corbel bricks. The eaves at the two-story west entry bay and trackside east bay are not bracketed. These junctures are detailed with a corbeled cornice. The roof is punctuated with seven shingled dormers; one at each end, two facing east and three facing west. Each dormer has a flared roof in keeping with the design of the main roof forms. An ornately detailed interior brick chimney punctuates the roof at the north end.

Window openings are defined with cast concrete sills and lintels. Two large bay windows flanking the entrance bay at the west have cast concrete brackets for support. Windows are predominantly one-over-one double hung sash. Two pair of smaller, higher fixed windows light

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**Section number** 7 **Page** 2 **Name of Property** Oregon Short Line Railroad Depot  
**County and State** Malheur, OR

the restrooms at each side of the entrance. The freight storage area at the south end is illuminated with fixed windows set within large window openings; the lower portion of the opening has been infilled with the cast concrete block, but retains the same sill level as the larger double hung windows.

Passage doors are multi-panel with transom lights. The main entry door is detailed with a semi-circular brick arch springing from the brick jambs. The flat jambs evolve into a raised edge at the arch. A large brick keystone, flanked by two smaller keystones, enhance the entrance arch. A semi-circular fan light above the double doors illuminates the entry foyer. A large freight door is located at the south end.

**BASEMENT**

A basement is located beneath the main two-story entry bay. A winding, exterior concrete staircase located to the north of the main entry doors accesses the basement. This area is used for utility purposes.

**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**

The plan of the depot is arranged into four bays encompassing approximately 2,900 S.F. The double entry doors open onto a foyer off which the men's and ladies' restrooms are located. The area immediately east of the foyer originally functioned as the ticket and telegraph office. This area has been altered and the ticket counter is no longer extant. The bay north of the ticket area was divided into the ladies waiting room at the northwest corner and the boarding area at the northeast corner. The bay south of the ticket area was the men's waiting room. At the south end of the building, two steps down from the main waiting room, is the freight storage bay with a small freight office. A loading dock at the south wall is accessed by a half flight of stairs. A floor scale is located immediately in front of the sliding door at the west wall.

**INTERIOR FINISHES**

The interior walls and ceilings are finished with lath and plaster. Ceiling height measures approximately fourteen feet. A wainscot of tongue and groove fir six feet in height finishes the public spaces. Floors are of tongue and groove fir. Panel doors and transoms connect the spaces.

**SECOND FLOOR PLAN**

Access to the second floor is through a hatch at the freight storage room. The upper level is divided into three bays. Brick bearing walls defining the two-story entry bay are the only divisions within the unfinished second level. The rafters of the various roof levels and dormers define interesting spaces that could be easily made functional.

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**Section number**   7   **Page**   3   **Name of Property** Oregon Short Line Railroad Depot  
**County and State** Malheur, OR

**ALTERATIONS**

The exterior has retained much of its original fabric. One window on the east side remains boarded over. In 1998 the double entry doors were replaced with replicas and the fan window was restored. Re-roofing has occurred with architectural style asphalt shingles which are in keeping with the original wood shingles. A new gutter and downspout system were also installed. Repairs to the sagging soffit and exterior painting of all wood members and details have greatly improved the appearance of the building.

An early photograph indicates a heavier eave profile. A wide wood molding that appears to have had an internal gutter positioned about six inches back from the roof edge. The downspouts then traveled through the roof to the soffit and were secured at the walls. This internal system probably proved to be a design flaw that did not survive the snow and ice of the harsh winter weather. (See historic photos).

At the interior, the north bay that was originally the ladies waiting room has been divided into two separate office spaces. An additional restroom has also been installed. The ticketing area has been renovated; the space is open without any definition of the original counter arrangement. The main waiting room and freight area are relatively unchanged. The restrooms were originally accessed from both waiting areas as well as the foyer. These doorways have been infilled. A larger doorway originally accessed the freight area from the waiting room, but has been partially infilled with a smaller door installed. All the woodwork and flooring has been painted. Only a few areas of wainscot reveal the fine straight grain fir that lies beneath numerous layers of paint. (See historic plan).

Original lath and plaster ceilings in the ticketing and men's waiting room have been removed and gypsum wall board installed. Other areas are scheduled for improvements as well; the partitions and dropped ceiling will be removed to restore the ladies waiting room and boarding area in the north bay.

OREGON SHORT LINE RAILROAD DEPOT  
Name of Property

ONTARIO, MALHEUR County, Oregon  
City, County, and State

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" on one or more lines 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" on all 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 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.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

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

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

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

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION

ARCHITECTURE

#### Period of Significance

1907-1949

#### Significant Dates

1907

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Union Pacific Railroad

Name of repository:  
\_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

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Name of Property Oregon Short Line Railroad Depot  
County and State Malheur, OR

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Ontario's Oregon Short Line Depot, constructed in 1907, is historically significant under Criterion A, in the area of transportation, for its association with railroad development in eastern Oregon. The extension of the Oregon Short Line Railroad – a subsidiary of the Union Pacific Railroad – through southern Idaho and into eastern Oregon during 1881 – 84 played an important role in the settlement and growth of Ontario.

The depot is also significant under Criterion C, in the area of architecture. It is an excellent example of a Richardsonian Romanesque style train depot. It also embodies an early use of cast concrete block construction that developed in the early 1900s and became a replacement material for cut stone.

**DEVELOPMENT OF ONTARIO**

The Oregon Short Line (OSL) Railroad linked the transcontinental Union Pacific (UP) Railroad to the Pacific Northwest. Construction of the OSL began in Granger, Wyoming in 1881 and in November 1884 joined in Huntington, Oregon, the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company tracks, which were extending eastward along the Columbia and through the Blue Mountains. <sup>1</sup>

In its 600-mile extension through the desert environment, the OSL advertised the rich river bottom acres and encouraged immigrants to settle in the newly established townsites. The railroad "traversed country still barren of local traffic. It was a stake in the future, not a source of immediate returns to cover the large costs of construction." <sup>2</sup>

By the fall of 1883 the OSL tracks had passed through southern Idaho and reached the Snake River, the geographical division of western Idaho and eastern Oregon. Located in the new townsite of Caldwell, Idaho Territory, twenty-five miles east of the Snake, was the office of the Idaho and Oregon Land Improvement Company. Robert Strahorn, vice president of the company, promoted the newly accessed land that the railroad was opening and assisted with establishing townsites along the route.

The company, agreed to lay out townsites, reserve land for stations, and promote towns, half interest in which was

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<sup>1</sup> For information on the development of the Oregon Short Line Railroad, see Robert Athearn, Union Pacific Country ( Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1971), 314 – 316; Maury Klein, Union Pacific – The Birth of a Railroad 1862 – 1893 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1987), 437 – 438 and 559 – 560; and Malheur Country, Vol. I (Published by the Malheur County Historical Society, Malheur County, Oregon, 1988), 21 – 22.

<sup>2</sup> Maury Klein, Union Pacific – The Birth of a Railroad 1862 – 1893 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1987), 560.

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Name of Property Oregon Short Line Railroad Depot  
County and State Malheur, OR

conveyed to the railroad.<sup>3</sup>

Strahorn's presence in nearby Caldwell proved to be influential in the founding of Ontario, Oregon.

**Ontario Townsite**

The extension of the OSL westward created incentive for farsighted entrepreneurs to vie for one of the train stations in their community. If so established, this would link the town to the outside world, in this case, the mid-west and the Pacific coast. In June of 1883, four individuals, William Morfitt of Malheur City, Oregon and James W. Virtue, Daniel Smith, and Mary Richardson of Baker City, Oregon, decided they would gamble on the location of one of the coveted depots. The surveyed route of the OSL brought the tracks across the Snake into Oregon for a mere fifteen miles before crossing the river again back into Idaho Territory. They each secured desert land claims adjoining one another at a site just south of the confluence of the Malheur and Snake Rivers along the proposed route of the OSL. Morfitt, a civil engineer, then traveled to Caldwell to meet with Robert Strahorn and promote the idea of a depot at the location of their land claims. A deal was made for the depot to be positioned within the claim of James Virtue. As a native of Ontario, Canada, for which the newly established townsite was named, Mr. Virtue was a prominent figure in the development of the community. He owned mining claims and became a principal banker in the Eastern Oregon region.

With the site of the depot attained, a tent city was quickly created. Streets were laid out parallel to the tracks and avenues perpendicular to the tracks that bear northeast through Ontario. This provided for the establishment of more permanent businesses.<sup>4</sup>

**Livestock and Agricultural Center**

During the 1860s, gold rushes to the Boise Basin, located in the mountains 100 miles east of the Snake River, and Silver City, located in the Owyhee Mountains in southwest Idaho Territory, brought settlers to the desert country of eastern Oregon and northern Nevada. These rugged individuals established ranches and other agricultural endeavors. The location of Ontario on the route of the OSL became the vital link connecting these ranching communities to the mid-west and the coastal cities. The young town became a shipping capitol for livestock that was driven hundreds of miles eastward from Harney, Crook, Grant and Malheur Counties in Oregon and from Winnemucca in northern Nevada.

The opening of the depot and livestock corrals brought trade

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Athearn, Union Pacific Country ( Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1971), 316.

<sup>4</sup> Deborah Holden, "From a Tiny Railstop to Eastern Oregon's Capitol", Argus Observer, Ontario Centennial Edition 1883 – 1983, 12 c – 14c.

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Name of Property Oregon Short Line Railroad Depot  
County and State Malheur, OR

and great herds of livestock from the interior to this market outlet. Because of its favorable position on the rails, Ontario grew in size and prestige, to become the largest settlement in Malheur County.<sup>5</sup>

Rail shipments of livestock increased dramatically in the first fifteen years. In 1899, during a six-week period, \$1,500,000 worth of cattle were shipped through Ontario. This precipitated the OSL to purchase eighty acres adjoining the town of Ontario the following year and build the most extensive stockyards in eastern Oregon. In addition to livestock, Ontario became a prime wool shipping point. Within a few short years of its founding, Ontario became a prominent rail center and remained so until 1913 when the Oregon East Branch Line extended westward to the town of Juntura and some of the shipping activity shifted. <sup>6</sup>

Not only was the livestock industry a major component of the freighting operation of the railroad, but also agricultural products, as achieved through irrigation endeavors. Malheur County farmers had increased their farmland by creating small dams and ditches and by 1903 the Owyhee Ditch, the major component of the system, had produced 12,000 irrigated acres.

In 1894 the Federal Government had established the Carey Act which provided for the organization of large-scale irrigation projects throughout the West. In 1902 the Bureau of Reclamation was created to promote and regulate these dam projects. Southern Idaho led the movement by building dams and establishing towns throughout the Snake River plain within the first decade of the century. Major reclamation projects in Eastern Oregon were slower to occur. By 1919, the Warm Springs Dam on the Malheur River, located 40 miles west of Vale, Oregon, was completed through private funding.

In the mid-1920s geological assessment and feasibility studies were completed for the Owyhee Dam reclamation project in the Owyhee River about 40 miles south of Ontario. This project would dam the Owyhee River canyon creating a 12,742-acre reservoir and provide 1,120,000 acre-feet of water to the valley farmlands. Feasibility studies predicted 115,000 acres of agricultural lands would be in production. Subsequently, the marketing aspect for the railroad serving these irrigated farmlands brightened; with increased productivity came greater shipping prospects to populous local markets in southwest Idaho as well as to the West Coast. <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Malheur Country, Vol. I (Published by the Malheur County Historical Society, Malheur County, Oregon, 1988), 22.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 39 – 40.

<sup>7</sup> HAER Report, Owyhee Dam. HAER No. OR-17 Vol. II (Butte, MT: RTI, 1991), 1-26.

(Rev. 10/90) **United States Department of the Interior**  
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County and State Malheur, OR

Additionally, the railroad served another transportation need; that of bringing into the area the workers that built the Owyhee Dam, as well as their families. Construction of the dam began in 1928. The project, however, suffered through the early years of the Depression and was not completed until 1932. This reclamation project enhanced the agricultural outlook of the region, promoted settlement, and the railroad depot at Ontario became a lively center of activity during these years.

**1907 Passenger Depot**

As a corporation, the UP experienced the fluctuations of the nation's economy that affected the finances and financiers of the company. Despite the impressive economic developments of the railroad center in Ontario, the entire UP operations suffered losses and crashed in 1893. NPS Financial leadership and reorganization was required to regain its position as a transcontinental railroad system.

In February of 1897, Jacob A. Schiff and Edward H. Harriman reorganized the OSL and Harriman became president. Harriman envisioned a revival of the OSL with increased freighting of lumber, mining, and agricultural products. To this effort he devoted his talents to reorganize operation policies. With this effort, communities along the lines were paid special attention, resulting in grander and more impressive depots to replace the original wood frame structures.<sup>8</sup>

The first OSL depot in Ontario was constructed in 1884 - 1885 just south of the present depot. This one and one-half story, wood frame structure served the community for twenty years. It is said to have been moved to the lot to the north of the present depot where it served as a freight house. However, the 1911 and 1949 Sanborn maps do not show it either to the north or to the south of the present depot. (See Sanborn maps).

In 1906 -1907 the present depot was constructed from plans developed by the UP. The design was used repeatedly in several other locations in nearby communities. (See Drawings). Depots were sited at Caldwell, Payette, and Weiser across the Snake River in Idaho Territory. Each was of the same design with variations in siting and in the use of masonry materials. The structures at Caldwell and Weiser have the use of brick and concrete block reversed. These depots remain in use by each community for civic purposes. The depot in Payette was demolished in 1983.

**Design and Construction**

The depots in these four communities were designed as combination stations providing shelter for passengers with a freight storage area at one end. The plan of these stations reflects the movement of passengers from the train into the community and from the community to the train.<sup>9</sup> The horizontality of the heavy roofline parallels the movement of the train along the tracks from one station to the next. The cross axis of the two-story mass and the bulge of the

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<sup>8</sup> Merrill D. Beal, Intermountain Railroads, Standard and Narrow Gauge. (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1962), 214 -15.

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entry/ticket area denotes the active space within the depot which divides the two waiting areas into passive spaces with the freight storage anchoring one end.

This plan and massing is reminiscent of train stations designed by H. H. Richardson throughout New England in the 1880s. Richardson, a prominent American architect, designed these buildings as commuter shelters. The form of the heavy bell-cast roof of the Old Colony Depot at North Easton, Massachusetts (1881) creates deep overhangs as if the roof were hovering over the walls providing shelter both inside and outside the building.<sup>10</sup> Richardson's use of asymmetrical massing, stone construction, hipped roofs, offset entry bays, and towers created a vocabulary for depot design that was used well into the next century. The Ontario depot with the heavy roof form and the use of masonry –two types of geometrical masonry units – reflects the style of these earlier stations designed by Richardson.

This use of masonry instead of cut stone in the design of the four UP depots demonstrates the early use of a relatively new masonry product that had undergone development throughout the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Patents for various concrete blocks and methods of production had occurred in England and America. Harmon S. Palmer is credited with the first commercial process in the United States in the late 1890s. Development of the Portland cement industry also contributed to the readily available components of the product. The use of Portland cement and sand and the ability to produce the masonry unit on or near the construction site eliminated the high costs of shipping. Block machines with collapsible mold sides facilitated the manufacture of the product on the construction site or even in one's own backyard. "Farmers, clerks, men from all walks of life rushed into the business, all expecting to become rich over night."<sup>11</sup> Costs for competing materials and freight charges made the locally manufactured concrete blocks a desired building product. "...lumber prices in 1906 were 64 percent – and common brick 59 per cent – above 1898 prices. It was only natural that builders should look

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<sup>9</sup> H. Roger Grant and Charles W. Bohi, The Country Railroad Station in America. (Souix Falls, S.D.: Center for Western Studies, 1988), 17.

<sup>10</sup> James O' Gorman, H. H. Richardson – Architectural Forms for an American Society, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 118.

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around for some substitute materials."<sup>12</sup> In 1905, the United States had adopted the use of concrete block for governmental projects. Rigorous testing had approved its use for hospitals, warehouses, and barracks.

The introduction of this product subsequently brought the demise of quarried stone as a building material. The concrete block manufacturers were quick to replace this labor intensive and costly production of stone with a good imitation. "Rock-faced" concrete blocks were a *must* during the transitional period of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and stone quarries suffered their losses to the developing industry.

Some early manufacturers of concrete block machinery were led astray by the ease with which the face of the block could be cast to imitate anything. Face plates were supplied to imitate pitch-faced stone, cobble stone, bush-hammered stone, tooled stone and all sorts of panels and borders.<sup>13</sup>

One early entrepreneur was Nels J. Peterson an employee of UP in Omaha, Nebraska. He took the opportunity during a leave of absence from UP to develop his own block manufacturing business. Peterson's revelation was "why should one hew quarry stone into shape when one could make them in a mold?" His investment evolved into the Ideal Cement Stone Company which produced concrete block for the next half century. Peterson's influence within the ranks of UP is not known, but it is obvious that the railroad company was looking for a way to provide more elegant facilities in smaller communities for a smaller price. The influence of the product is certainly evident in the four depots in western Idaho and eastern Oregon.<sup>14</sup>

**DEPOT AS COMMUNITY HUB**

The railroad brought visitors to town and the depot was seen as the gateway to the community; therefore a good impression must be made. Depots served as an object of pride. Landscaping and maintenance of the property was paramount. Depot parks were common features during the heyday of passenger trains.<sup>15</sup> And indeed this was so in Ontario. Sanborn maps indicate

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<sup>11</sup> Joseph Bell and Contributors, From the Carriage Age...to the Space Age...The Birth and Growth of the Concrete Masonry Industry. (Published by National Concrete Masonry Association, 1969), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>13</sup> Hool and Johnson, Concrete Engineers' Handbook, (NYC: 1918), 162: sec. 2-87.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the history of concrete block manufacturing see Joseph Bell and Contributors, From the Carriage Age...to the Space Age...The Birth and Growth of the Concrete Masonry Industry. (Published by National Concrete Masonry Association, 1969), 1 -9.

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that two full blocks to the west of the depot were planted with trees to create a pleasant oasis and celebrate the importance of this community-gathering place. One small historic photo focusing on the south elevation of the depot captures some of the trees of this park area, but unfortunately, the beauty of these blocks was not preserved and they have since been made into parking lots.

Depots and their surroundings served many functions. During pre-radio and telephone days, depots were points of communication. Western Union telegraph service was located at the Ontario depot. Mail trains brought the mail to the community. Train depots served as public gathering places for important and everyday events. Passing dignitaries made speeches from train cars during brief stops at the depot. For the community of Ontario, this included Franklin Delano Roosevelt on the occasion of the dedication of the Owyhee Dam. Harry S. Truman and Richard Nixon made whistle stop speeches, and just four days before his death, Robert Kennedy's campaign tour passed through the town. Train watching captured the interest of the young and old to break the monotony of small town life. A captive audience was assured when the seasonal arrival of Santa by rail occurred. And sweethearts parted and were reunited via military trains that traveled through town.<sup>16</sup>

**DEMISE OF TRAIN TRAFFIC**

The decline of use of passenger trains occurred first with the increase of automobiles and later through the success of airlines. With the completion of the Interstate highway system in the 1960s, passenger train usage declined and UP ridership ended in 1970. The governmental establishment of Amtrak passenger service in 1971 relieved the burden of maintaining depots by UP. The elegant depots that once welcomed travelers to town were replaced with smaller, efficient trackside waiting stations for Amtrak passengers. Also the United States Postal Service decided to take mail off passenger trains in favor of trucks, which forced UP to drop many of the local passenger trains.

**ONTARIO DEPOT**

In 1996 the City of Ontario finalized negotiations to acquire the depot from UP. The City of Ontario now leases the property beneath the structure and has full ownership of the building. The Depot Restoration Committee has plans for restoring the facility and creating a visitor's center, historical museum, and office space.

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<sup>15</sup> Grant, 3-10.

<sup>16</sup> Carlos A. Schwantes, Railroad Signatures Across the Pacific Northwest, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 229.

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**Books**

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***Newspaper Articles***

The vertical files at the Ontario City Library contain numerous articles about Ontario and its development.

The scrapbook of Joe and Kay Mollahan provided a collection of valuable information about the depot and its future development.

***Maps***

Sanborn Fire Insurance maps: 1900, 1911, and 1949.

OREGON SHORT LINE RAILROAD DEPOT

Name of Property

ONTARIO, MALHEUR County, Oregon

City, County, and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 0.15 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A 1/1 5/0/3/0/8/0 4/8/7/4/3/0/0  
Zone Easting Northing

B / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

C / / / / / / / / / /

D / / / / / / / / / /

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the Oregon Short Line Railroad Depot is shown as the shaded area on the accompany map entitled "Exhibit B", a part of the lease agreement between the Union Pacific Railroad Company and the City of Ontario.

     See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries are those that have been historically and continue to be associated with the building.

     See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title DONNA HARTMANS

organization ARROW ROCK ARCHITECTS date FEBRUARY 1999

street & number 2406 WEST IDAHO telephone 208-344-7186

city or town BOISE state ID zip code 83702

**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/or 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**

name UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD CO.

street & number 1416 DODGE STREET telephone 402-271-3753

city or town OMAHA state NE zip code 68179

**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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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=====  
**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary shall include the Ontario Short line Depot building and the ground upon which it is situated.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary is defined by the legal agreement between the City of Ontario and the Union Pacific Railroad. The City of Ontario owns the building (as of 1996) and leases the property upon which it is situated from the Union Pacific Railroad. All surrounding property is also owned by Union Pacific Railroad.

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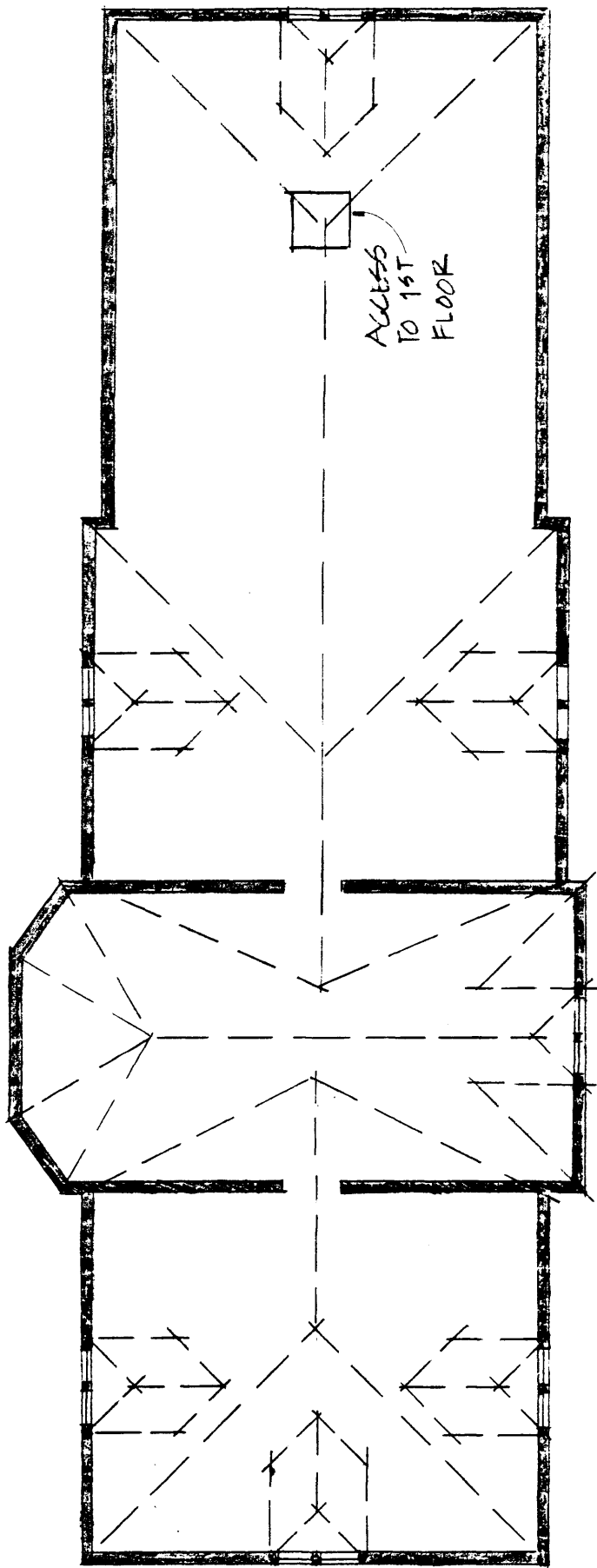
**Section number** Additional Page 1 **Name of Property** Oregon Short Line Railroad Depot  
**County and State** Malheur, OR

PHOTO LOG

All photographs taken by Donna Hartmans in January and February 1999. Negatives located at Arrow Rock Architects, 2406 W. Idaho, Boise, ID, 83702. The three historic photos are from the collection of Joe and Kay Mollahan of Ontario, OR. The copy negatives are located at City Hall, 444 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Ontario, OR 97914.

<u>Photo #</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Direction of View</u>
1.	West elevation	E
2.	South and east elevations	NW
3.	North elevation	S
4.	Entry at west	E
5.	Detail of masonry at west elevation	E
6.	Entry looking towards ticket area	E
7.	Ticket area, looking towards entry	W
8.	Men's waiting room, looking towards ticket area	NE
9.	Office, formerly the Boarding Area	NE
10.	Freight room with ladder to second level	SE
11.	Historic photo - Construction of depot (1906-07)	SE
12.	Historic photo - Completed depot, no date (1907?)	NE
13.	Historic photo - West elevation, c. 1923 (date on license plate)	E



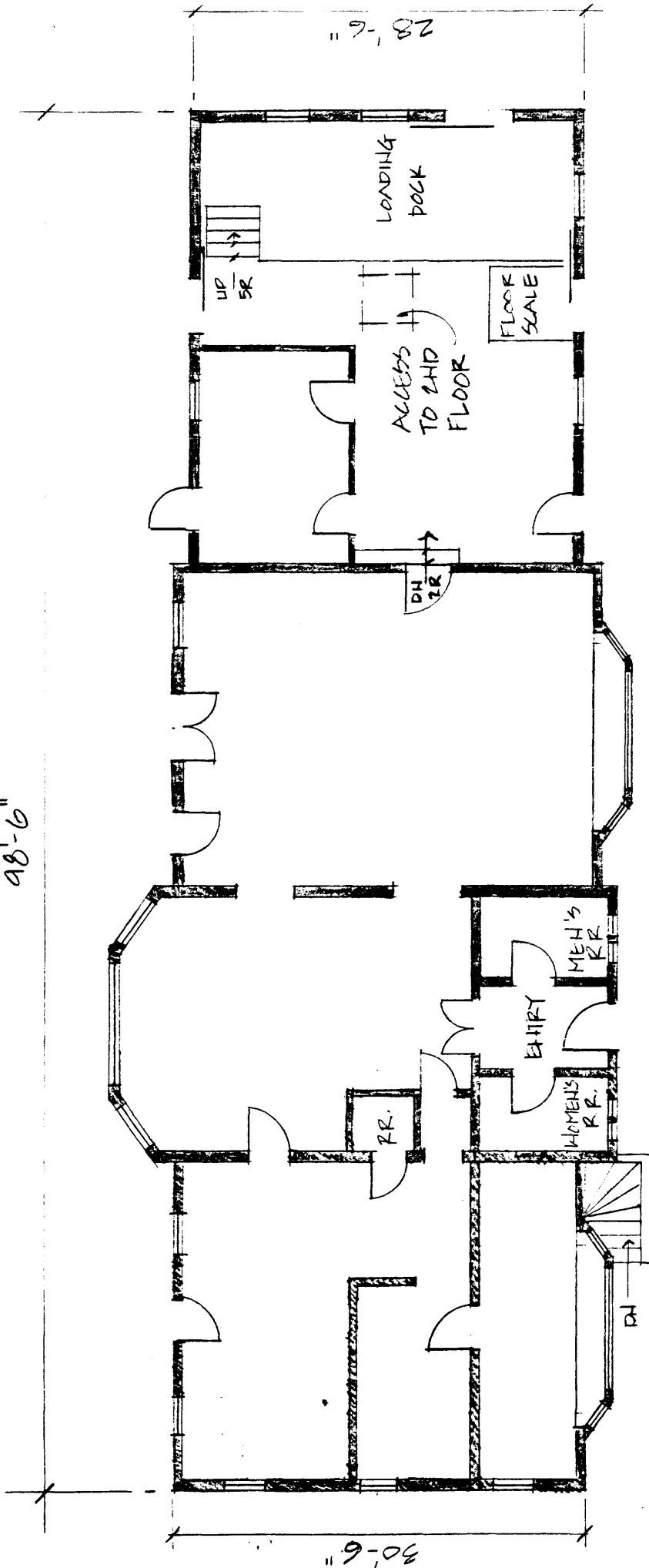


SECOND FLOOR PLAN 1999

$3/32" = 1'-0"$

CHERON ENGINEERING & ARCHITECTURE  
 CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE COUNTY, ILL.

48'-6"



28'-6"

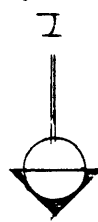
30'-6"

FIRST FLOOR PLAN 1999

ONTARIO RAILROAD STATION

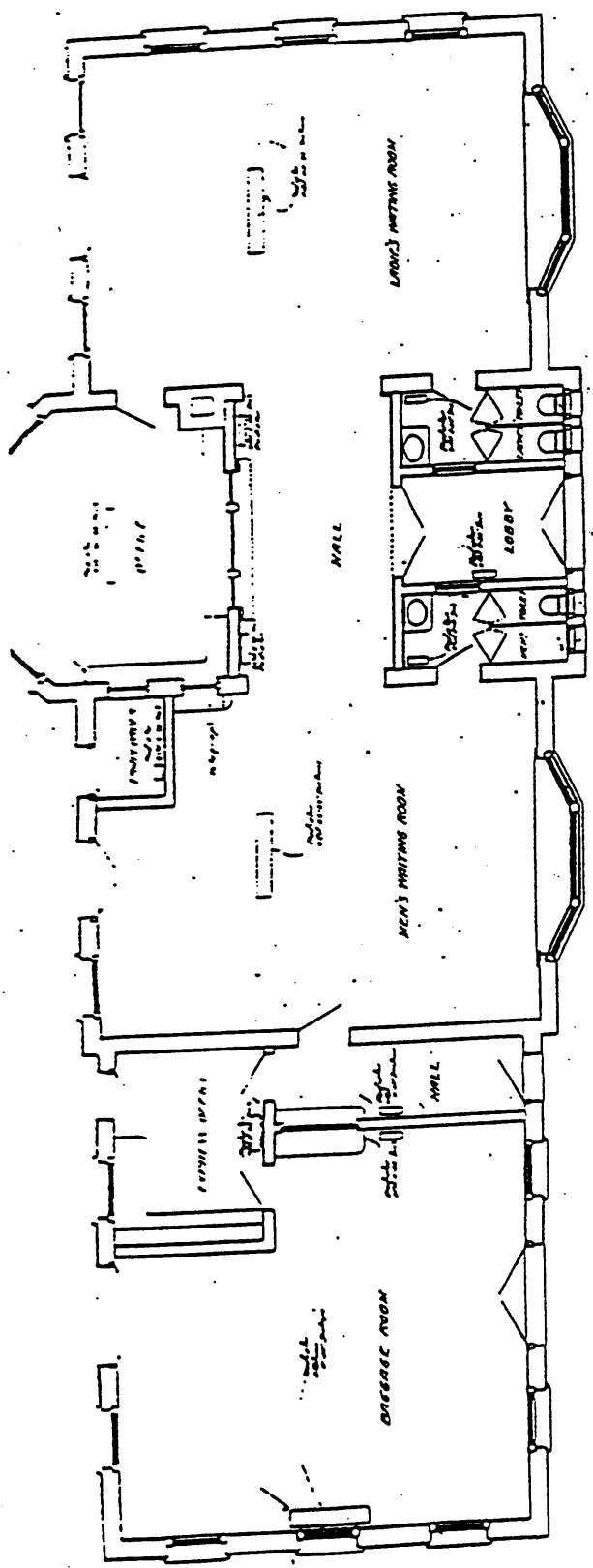
3/32" = 1'-0"

ARROW ROCK ARCHITECTS, BOISE, ID

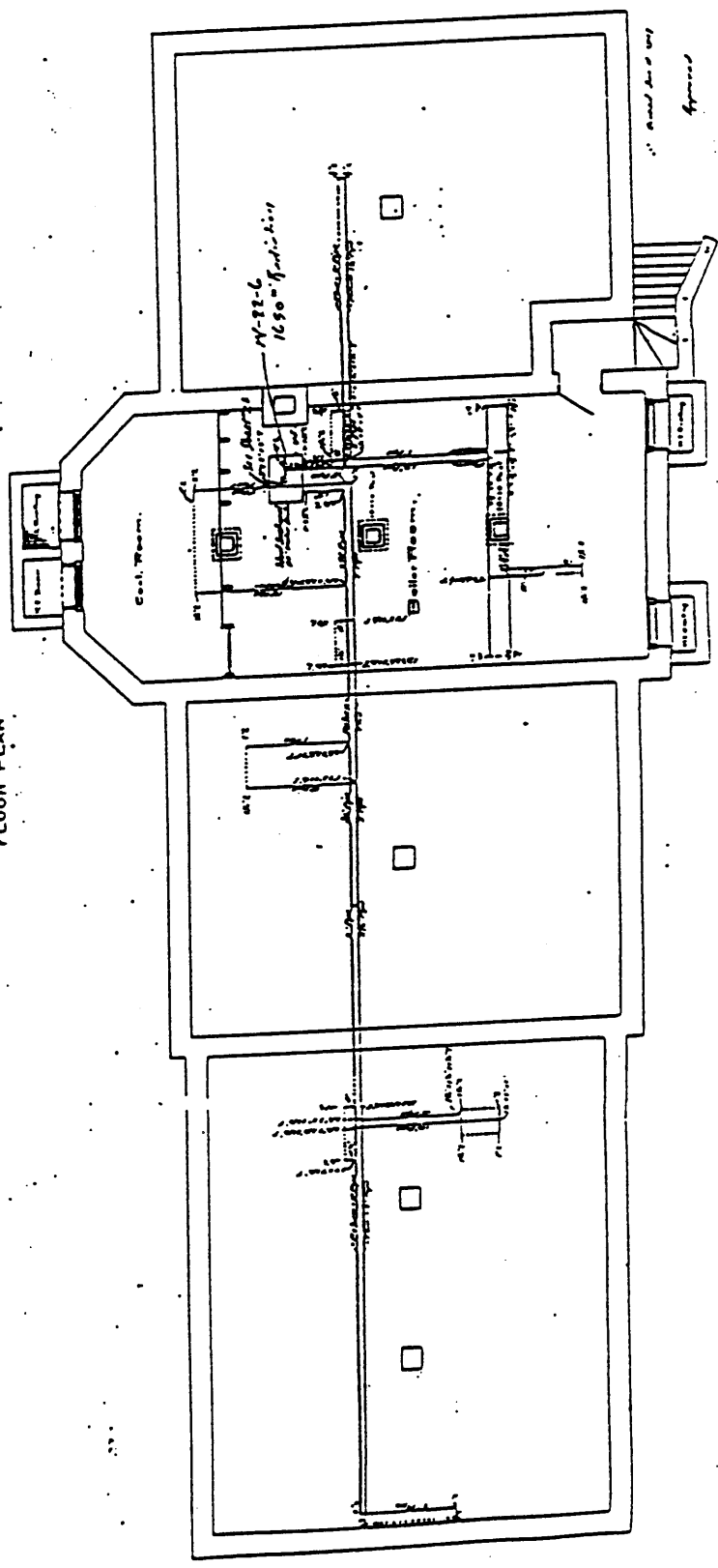


PREPARED BY ARCHITECTS  
 1000 W. GARDEN ST.  
 BOISE, ID 83725

OREGON SHORT LINE  
 HEATING PLAN F  
 SPECIAL CONCRETE STORE &  
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"  
 BUILT AT

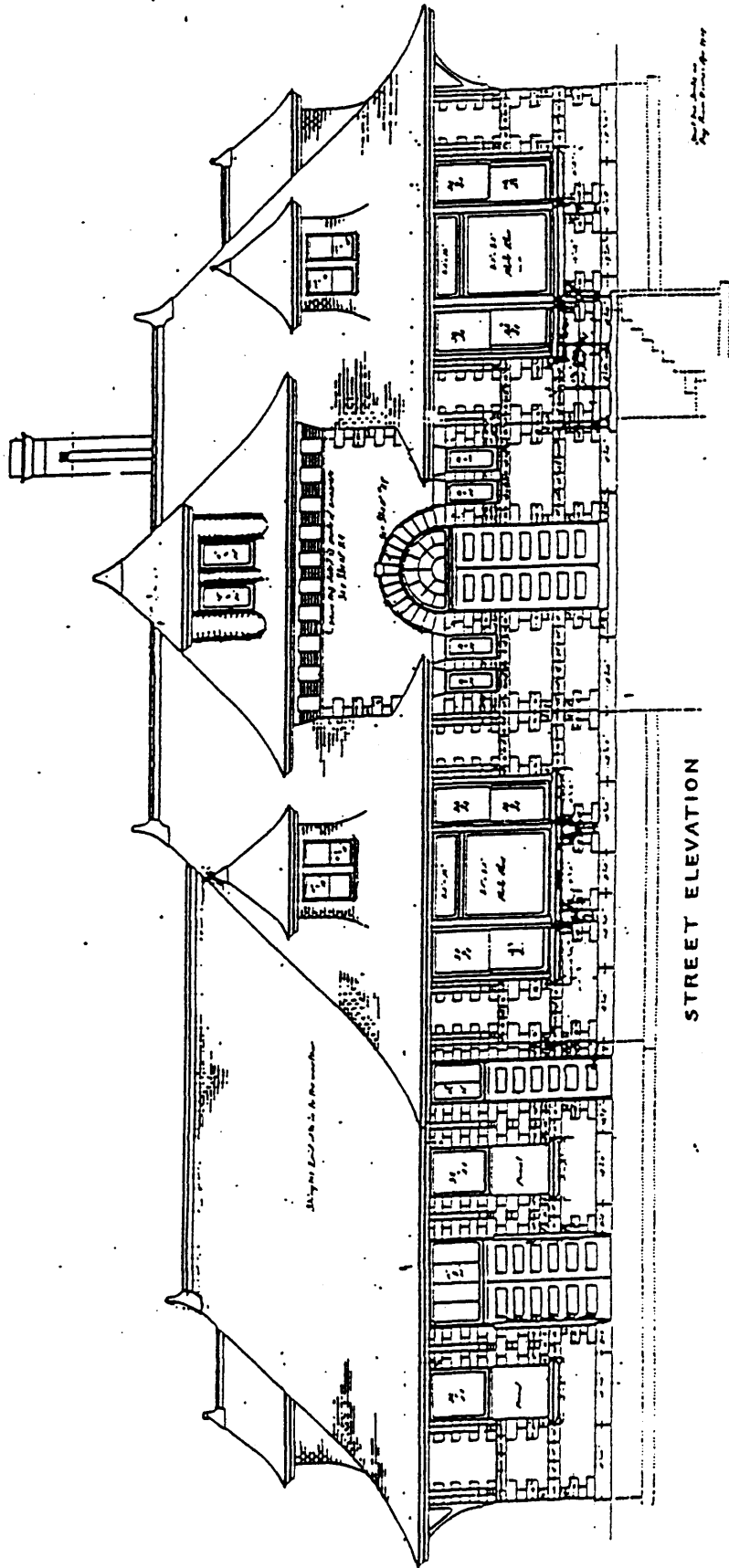


FLOOR PLAN



CELLAR PLAN

Approved



STREET ELEVATION

ORRISON BHOOT LINE R. R.  
PLANS OF  
SPECIAL CONCRETE STONE & BRICK DEPOT  
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"  
DRAWN BY: [illegible]  
CHECKED BY: [illegible]

















SUMMER=1907  
NEAR COMPLETION of  
DEPOT  
RECEIVED 8/26-93



NEW O.S.L. DEPOT,

Ontario, Ore.





NO. 32. U. S. POST OFFICE, ONTARIO, OREGON.

WA