

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: 94000741 Date Listed: 8/3/94

Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad Passenger Depot
Property Name

Converse WY
County State

N/A
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.

Autumn Lee
Signature of the Keeper

August 3, 1994
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Statement of Significance: The period of significance is amended to read 1886-1944.

This information was confirmed with Sheila Bricker-Wade of the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

RECEIVED 413

JUN 21 1994

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

OMB No. 10024-0018

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 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 Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad Passenger Depot

other names/site number Chicago & Northwestern Railroad Passenger Depot

2. Location

street & number 100 Walnut Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Douglas ☐ vicinity

state Wyoming code WY county Converse code 009 zip code 82663

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.)

John J. Keck
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/10/94
Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

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

John J. Keck
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/10/94
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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): _____

for Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Barbara J. Keck

August 3, 1994

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.)

X Contributing Noncontributing
 One _____ buildings
 _____ sites
 _____ structures
 _____ objects
 One building _____ 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)

Commerce/Business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian

Other/railroad standardized plans

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Railroad ties

walls Horizontal wood siding

roof Shingle

other Brackets: wood; Chimney: brick

Narrative Description

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

Continuation sheets attached.

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 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): N/A

- ☐ 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)

Criterion A: Transportation

Period of Significance

Criterion A: 1886-1960

Significant Dates

1886 Opening of transportation system

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Chicago & Northwestern standardized plans

Primary location of additional data: N/A

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

Name of repository:

FE&M VRR Passenger Depot
Name of Property

Converse, WY
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1,633.8 sq. ft. (0.04 A.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 3	4 6 7 3 0 0	4 7 3 3 9 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

☐ 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 John D. McDermott, Historian
organization Consultant, McDermott Associates date June 20, 1993
street & number 6 South Tschirgi, #4 telephone (307) 672-0036
city or town Sheridan state WY zip code 82801

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Douglas
street & number 101 N. 4th Street telephone (307) 358-3462
city or town Douglas state WY zip code 82663

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

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Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad Passenger Depot
Converse County, WY

Narrative Description

The FE&MV passenger depot is a one-story wood structure, measuring 64' 2" by 26' 2", topped by a shingled, gable roof that is supported by 6 ornamental brackets on each side. Of balloon frame wood construction with horizontal wood siding, the depot sits on a foundation made from railroad ties. The structure features two brick chimneys and a 4-window bay that dominates the west facade. The depot stands alone in the rail yards, which bound the western end of the principal business section of Douglas. The design of the passenger depot was a standardized plan developed by the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad, of which the FE&MV was a part. To the east across the tracks are the back sides of commercial structures. To the west are the Wyoming State Fairgrounds and a few industrial structures.

The west or main facade of the depot has a roof eave continuous over its length with a small extension at the protruding window bay. The main facade is symmetrical in a sense, having an identical door and a window on either side of the bay window. Altering the symmetry at the south end is a third larger door, which opens into an additional space apparently created for freight storage to supplement the capacity of the original freight depot, which stands about 100 yards to the north.

The east facade lacks the bay protrusion of the west facade but is otherwise similarly constructed with wood siding going from base plate to the under side of the roof deck. The south gabled end is clad in horizontal wood siding, which goes from the bottom plate of the wall up to the underside of the roof, at which juncture the siding ends are covered with a 5-inch wide trim molding. The gabled end on the north is similarly configured except that the windows, instead of being 3'0" wide, are approximately 3'6".

Throughout the building, the windows are double-hung, with each operable sash being divided into two narrow, vertically oriented panes. Exceptions to the predominant windows are the small double-hung, single-pane windows in the bathrooms and the narrow double-hung units in the north and south walls of the bay. Above the doors in the exterior walls are single-pane, fixed transom units that bring the door trim height up to match the top of the window trim.

It is quite evident that the Douglas passenger depot was a modification of common plans used by the FE&MV and the C&NW during this period. Common plans permitted companies to order required materials in bulk and have them erected by previously experienced railroad workmen. Sometimes smaller depots were assembled in a company's shop and transported on flatcars to the new site, although this does not seem to have been the case with the Douglas passenger depot. While generally plain and utilitarian in design, these C&NW and FE&MV depots usually featured a gable roof and

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Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad Passenger Depot
Converse County, WY

a gabled dormer over the rectangular bay. Internal evidence indicates that the customary dormer was not added in this case.

Interior

Most end-of-the-line depots had three sections: a waiting room, an office, and a freight house. The office stood in the center and had an attached bay window. If necessary, space in the back could be used for living quarters, and most companies included this feature because of the lack of adequate housing in these little boom towns. The interior of the F&MV depot reflects this plan.

The interior of the Douglas passenger depot is divided into five spaces (see floor plan): the passenger waiting room, the office, the bathrooms, the freight handling area, and the room for freight storage. Interior walls consist of vertically applied car siding, approximately 4" nominal width with a kerfed central bead. The ceiling is also covered with this same car siding. In keeping with the functional design, interior trim is at a minimum. There is no wood base, rather only a wood quarter-round at the bottom of the wall; a narrow chair rail at approximately 30" and a duplicate quarter-round at the wall-ceiling juncture. Window and door casings are flat and unadorned, with butt-jointed corners. The window sill does extend out approximately 5/8" beyond the face of the casing.

Alteration

An analysis of pre-1907 photographs reveals no changes in the exterior from the original design. A door has been removed from the south end of the east facade and imperfectly patched with replacement siding. If this door were restored, it would recreate the symmetrical placement of openings about the center line between the two small bathroom windows. The facade shows evidence of a low platform that had originally extended along the side of the building, but which now remains only as a few wood elements at the remaining door. The two windows at the south gabled end have been boarded up. On the inside, the ticket window opening on the north side of the office has been moved to the south side. A partition/wall to the east of the bathrooms has been added.

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Converse County, WYNarrative Description (continued)

It should be noted that the measurements given for the depot in the newspapers in 1886 and 1887, namely 30' x 24' do not agree; however, there is no physical or photographic evidence that the present depot ever differed from its original 1886 configuration. The discrepancy between the published reports and the existing structure may have occurred in the diminution of the slab-on-grade, concrete-floored, heavy freight area, which at 11 feet of internal width might have originally been planned to be much larger.

Present Condition

The wood foundation has deteriorated and caused some deterioration of the associated floor framing systems. Damage has also extended to the first two or three pieces of the horizontal siding at the base of the building. This is moisture borne damage, but there is no evidence of termite infestation. The rest of the siding can be preserved and retained. Due to the deterioration of the east side foundation wall the building has settled slightly, resulting in the separation of roof truss elements along the roof ridge. This is not a grave situation or one that is difficult to remedy. In fact, the limited nature of the damage is a testimonial to the building's fundamental structural integrity. Two of the three doors are original but survive in poor condition. The third door is not the original. Restoration plans call for replicated doors. Windows are all in good condition and can be repaired and retained. Shingles have deteriorated and must be removed and replaced.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

In the summer of 1886, Douglas owed its existence to the coming of the railroad, and the city's continued life and economic stability depended on this transportation network. When the end-of-the-line moved west to Casper in 1888, the little community nearly folded, but it continued to grow steadily as the area's resources found markets in the East, first cattle, then sheep, then coal, then oil, then electric power, each made marketable by the railroad and its ability to bring in and take out the materials and services necessary for economic success. Even Douglas's major yearly event, the Wyoming State Fair, owes its origins to the C&NW, which donated the land for the fairgrounds in 1905. As the little-changed, physical representation of the most powerful force in the history of Converse County during the period 1886-1960, the FE&MV/C&NW Depot is a significant representation of the locality's history.

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Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad Passenger Depot
Converse County, WY

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Narrative

Topography dictates that the site now occupied by Douglas, Wyoming, is the crossroads for traffic between north and south, east and west. First Indian nomads, then trappers, traders and covered wagon emigrants followed the North Platte River through rough foothills of the Laramie Mountains. Following the end of Indian hostilities in the late 1870s and the removal of the Northern Plains tribes to reservations in Montana, South Dakota, and western Wyoming, the grasslands of what is now Converse County became home to hundreds of thousands of Texas longhorns, and in the early 1880s the open-range cattle industry flourished, promising great profits to raisers and buyers--if herds could be marketed in the East. The keys were the railroads, which had been laying track at an increasingly rapid rate following the conclusion of the Civil War.

Among those railroads that would affect the history of central Wyoming was the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley (FE&MV), organized on January 20, 1869. By 1883, the line had reached Valentine, Nebraska.¹ The following year, the Chicago and Northwestern obtained effective control of the FE&MV as a part of its grand strategy to exploit the natureal resources of the West.² The C&NW had been incorporated in June, 1859, and when it had reached Council Bluffs in 1867, it was the first railroad from the East to hook into the transcontinental railway system.³ In November, 1887, the C&NW established general offices for the line in Omaha. The Black Hills Division, with headquarters at Chadron, Nebraska, had responsibility for the Wyoming spur.⁴

On January 20, 1885, the United States Congress granted the FE&MV the right to cross the Fort Robinson Military Reservation in northeastern Nebraska. Under territorial law, in order for a corporation to own or build a railroad in Wyoming, it had to be organized there. As a result, when it reached the Nebraska-Wyoming border, near the present town of Van Tassell, the FE&MV created a subsidiary, which took the name of the Wyoming Central Railway Company. The incorporation date was October 19, 1885.⁵ The names of the three entities involved in the control of the Wyoming line--the C&NW, the FE&MV, and the Wyoming Central--appear interchangeably in early literature, creating some confusion for today's reader. The long-range plan of the FE&MV was to connect with the Central Pacific Railroad in Utah, while short-range objectives were to transport army supplies to Fort Robinson and to access the mining and cattle-rich areas of Wyoming.⁶

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Converse County, WYNarrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Chief Engineer James Answorth conducted the survey of the route, and track laying began at the junction of the Black Hills line in April, 1886.⁷ On July 13, the rails reached Lusk, while settlers and speculators gathered near the little community of Fetterman, 50 miles west. After the Army had abandoned Fort Fetterman in 1882, the civilian population moved in, and there were about 200 people living in its old buildings when word of the railroad's coming spread west. By the spring of 1886, the population of the little community had grown to 500, and by July 1, 1886, it had numbered about 1,000 residents and hangers-on. The site chosen for the new town was eight miles south, but the railroad refused permission for anyone to build within its limits until the line had reached the site.⁸

The railroad reached what was to be known as the town of Douglas on Saturday, August 22, 1888. On Monday, August 24, the rails were laid to a point west of the stockyards, 76.79 miles from the Wyoming State line, which was the terminus for about a year. The first passenger train arrived in August 29, carrying about 150 people, and the following day another 100 arrived. The sale of lots by auction began on August 30 at 2 p.m. under the supervision of Mr. P. Whitney, the representative and agent of the Western Townsite company, who was assisted by a corps of clerks. In four days, the company sold 242 lots for a total of \$70,405.00.⁹

The first week saw train load after train load of lumber arrive at the new site, and any man who could drive a nail earned \$5 a day. The King storeroom, at the corner of Center and Third Streets, was the first building on which work began. In a short time there were twenty saloons, two dancehalls, a bank, and a post office. Houses sprang up like magic, and the town "boomed." Joining the gamblers, courtesans, speculators, railroad graders, bull-team freighters, and mule skinner that swelled the scene were some of the notorious characters of the west, including "Limber Jim," "Dance Hall" Tucker, "Rattlesnake Dick," Holdout Johnson, Doc Middleton, Mid Nichols and "Calamity Jane."¹⁰

The Douglas Budget of September 9 graphically reported the metamorphosis.

Despite the fact that the townsite, on Tuesday last, presented an unbroken surface of sagebrush, it today has all the appearance of a large and thriving town. And such a town! One "can hardly hear himself think" for the din of saw, hammer and plane! Buildings in every stage of construction; a hundred wagons loaded with lumber on roads passing and repassing; bustle, stir and activity

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Converse County, WYNarrative Statement of Significance (continued)

on every side. We counted, last evening, fifty-eight buildings underway, most of them business houses, and there are dozens of business men who had not begun to build yet.¹¹

Thus, the town of Douglas owed its life to the FE&MV, and its destiny was conjoined with the western railroad. The impact of the new transportation system was immediate. The Douglas Advertiser reported on January 1, 1887, that in four months 1,000 cars of freight had been received for Fetterman and Buffalo and that 400 cars loaded with cattle and the 25 cars filled with coal had left for eastern markets. As the Advertiser proclaimed, it was "Not a bad showing for a section that was a howling wilderness six months ago."¹²

So successful was the FE&MV in the cattle market, Union Pacific officials and the business community of Cheyenne became concerned. It had been customary to trail beef herds for many days from northern and central Wyoming to Union Pacific railheads in the south, but now Douglas offered a quick and easier destination. To recoup some of the lost business, entrepreneurs planned a line north from Cheyenne to Orin Junction, which was completed on December 17, 1890.¹³ The cattle industry remained the most important business in Converse County until 1909, when the sheep industry exceeded it in value.¹⁴

Just as the railroad led to establishment of the city of Douglas, it led to the formation of Converse County. On January 16, 1886, the Cheyenne Daily Leader carried an article in which it reported that the Wyoming Central Railroad wanted three new counties organized in the eastern part of the state. The semi-lawless state of the rough frontier towns along the new line and the need for quick and efficient county services unavailable from distant Cheyenne were reasons for action.¹⁵ On May 15, the legislature responded by creating a new county in central Wyoming. Formed from parts of Albany and Laramie Counties, it honored Amasa R. Converse, an early stockman of the region. Douglas became the new county seat, defeating its competitor, Lusk, by a plurality of 1,014 votes.¹⁶

One of the first tasks of the FE&MV was to construct passenger and freight depots and other operating facilities. An early photograph shows the use of a boxcar for business, but workmen were soon busily erecting permanent structures. The Douglas Budget of August 25 reported on proposed improvements:

Over four miles of track will be laid in the yards. A depot building, to be situated at the foot of Center street, will be erected to be 22 x 80 feet, with a 300 foot platform. The freight depot, located fifty yards

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Converse County, WYNarrative Statement of Significance (continued)

north, will be 22 x 112 feet. Large coal shutes, 22 x 174 feet, and an ice house 22 x 50 are among the various structures to be erected--with a roundhouse of seven stalls, so planned as to permit of its enlargement to twenty eight when necessary; stock yards, the largest on the line of the road, and a cattle and wagon bridge across the Platte opposite the town, for the free use of the public, etc., etc.¹⁷

Having a long history of construction of this kind, railroad workmen took little time in raising the structures. The Douglas Advertiser of January 1, 1887, described the completed work, while commenting on the conviviality of the FE&MV staff:

Proceeding down Center street...we come to the property owned, occupied and equipped by the railway company the great Northwest--and the gentlemen (for this concerns us more nearly) who are its agents, servants and officers. Corporations may not have souls, but men have. A brief introduction to the men will be of mutual benefit. Passing through the station to the south, the passenger station, a building 30 by 80 feet in size, is finished in an elegant manner. The freight depot is a frame building 24 x 100 feet. The north end being used for freight, express and telegraph offices. The agent, Mr. L.M. Tyler, is a very pleasant and genial gentleman, and much credit is due him for the business-like manner in which everything is done. His assistants are Messrs. C.O. Larned, telegraph operator, C.C. Pardee, cashier, E.C. Muncy, express clerk, H.M. Bowen, bill clerk, and David Crane, check clerk. Taken altogether they are a jovial set and have made many friends.¹⁸

The Douglas Budget of December 12, 1888, contains another early description of the railroad's facilities, noting that the "buildings embrace a fine passenger depot, freight depot, roundhouse, coal shed, repair shop, etc."¹⁹

It is quite evident that the Douglas passenger depot was a modification of common plans used by the FE&MV and the C&NW during this period. As in the Douglas

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Converse County, WYNarrative Statement of Significance (continued)

case, railroads often preceded or created settlement. Not knowing whether a front-line community would prosper or perish, companies understandably did not wish to sink a great deal of money into stations and other facilities in the first stage of a town's existence. Consequently, the practice was to build inexpensive wooden depots based on standardized plans.²⁰ Common plans permitted companies to order required materials in bulk and have them erected by previously experienced railroad workmen. Sometimes smaller depots were assembled in a company's shop and transported on flatcars to the new site, although this does not seem to have been the case with the Douglas passenger depot.²¹

Most end-of-the-line depots had three sections: a waiting room, an office, and a freight house. The office stood in the center and had an attached bay window. If necessary, space in the back could be used for living quarters, and most companies included this feature because of the lack of adequate housing in these little boom towns. While generally plain and utilitarian in design, these C&NW and FE&MV depots usually featured a gable roof and a gabled dormer over the rectangular bay. Internal evidence indicates that the customary dormer was not added in this case.²²

As it turned out, the FE&MV was wise to begin with a modest investment at Douglas, because the town's hopes for greatness receded at year's end as typhoid fever appeared, the worst blizzard in Wyoming's recent history ravaged the plains, and word came that the FE&MV would build on to Casper, depriving Douglas of its important economic position as the first possible market from central Wyoming to the East.²³ As one historian has pointed out, most businesses were simply overdone, and the terrible winter of 1886-1887 made bad matters worse.²⁴

In the spring of 1887, the FE&MV began construction of a line to Glenrock, which it completed on November 21. Workmen also laid spur lines from INez and Glenrock to area coal mines. The following year, the line pushed 25 miles west to Casper, and many of the more aggressive young business and professional men promptly left Douglas for the end-of-the-line. In 1888, the population of Douglas dropped to 900 from the 1,600 of two years before. Again the railroad demonstrated its ability to impact this cowtown community.²⁵

On Christmas Day, 1889, the Douglas Budget announced the coming of the first "straight" passenger train, scheduled to run daily between Chadron and Casper and return. The train consisted of a baggage, express, and mail car, one first-class and one second-class coach; and one Pullman. The newspaper noted that the train averaged 28 miles an hour with stops, and that East-bound passengers could take a sleeper at Douglass and proceed through to Chicago without change of cars.²⁶

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Converse County, WYNarrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The railroad brought many landseekers to the Douglas area in 1889, so many in fact that the Government opened a land office in the town on November 19.²⁷ On November 17, officials of the Cheyenne & Northern Railroad rode into Douglas. The railroad had been completed to the crossing of the Laramie, some 60 miles south of Douglas in 1887, then extended in late 1891 to Orin Junction, where it connected with the Northwestern. The C&N made an arrangement to use the facilities of the Wyoming Central, so the Douglas depot had the passengers of two railroads to serve.²⁸

Early in 1891, Douglas boosters had not given up. Appearing in the local newspaper was the following ad entitled, "Are You Looking for an Investment?"

Douglas is the best and largest town in central Wyoming, and is the only town in the state, outside of Cheyenne that has TWO RAILROADS, the Wyoming Central and Cheyenne & Northern....Central Wyoming is destined to make rapid strides during 1891, and Douglas is the center of all contemplated improvements. Douglas "is the natural distributing center for a vast scope of country to the north, south east, and west, being 176 miles north of Cheyenne, 210 miles east of Lander, 145 miles south of Buffalo and 136 miles west of Chadron."²⁹

Contrasted with this, however, was the letter written to his mother by Novelist Owen Wister from the Valley House on June 11, 1891:

The town, though laid out at right angles with wide streets, is a hasty litter of flat board houses standing at all angles, with the untreal look of stage scenery, always that same artificial soon-to-be-changed-for-something-else look....The Town reminds you of a card town, so aimless and unsubstantial it seems. Douglas is a type. It was once the terminus of the railroad. That fact turned a few acres of desert into a booming hilarious drunken town in a few hours. There were corner lots, and there were brick buildings. Then the terminus went fifty miles west; and this little sordid hustle of artificial property went as it came, passing like some small blizzard into lands unseen.³⁰

Wister noted that the population had dwindled to about 350.

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Converse County, WY

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Douglas continued to grow slowly in the years ahead. By 1900 the population had climbed back to 734, and by the end of the decade, the numbers had reached 2,246.³¹ There were several signs of new life in the early years of the 20th century. During the summer of 1905, Douglas hosted the first State Fair, which became an annual event. Here, too, the railroad had a significant role: the C&NW donated the land for the permanent fairgrounds.³²

A few months later, in November, 1905, Erastus Straup brought in the first producing well for the Wyoming Oil and Development Company about 15 miles west of Douglas. Soon there were eight wells, and Douglas had another source of income to bolster its losses in other areas. Cattle raising, for example, was becoming less of a factor in the region's economy, being replaced in 1909 by the sheep industry as the leading revenue producer. The assessor's rolls in 1909 showed 503,182 sheep valued at \$2,406,020.³³

The C&NW consolidated with FE&MV the spring of 1903, and the name C&NW came into popular usage in Douglas. On May 2, 1905, the company line extended from Casper to Lander.³⁴ The Douglas Budget in 1907 proudly described its railroad service:

Douglas is a station on the main line of the Chicago & Northwestern railway westward from Chicago to Lander, the present terminus--which must eventually be extended to a Pacific coast connection. The railroad improvements here comprise a commodious passenger depot, freight depot and warehouse, roundhouse, coal shutes, ice house, water tank and extensive yards. It is estimated that about \$90,000 a year is received by the company for tonnage delivered at the Douglas station, and that the passenger receipts will average \$2,000 a month....Mr. D.W. King is the local agent whose force of assistants comprise M.U. Lewin, Western Union operator, Harry Johnson, baggage man. Train service consists of one passenger train and one freight each way every day, including Sundays.³⁵

Coming south from Billings and west from Kirby, the Burlington Railroad reached Casper on October 20 and Orin Junction on November 18, 1914. This railroad was part of James J. Hill's plan to connect the Pacific Northeast and Texas Gulf with a direct, heavy duty railway and open the vast Big Horn Basin to development.

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Converse County, WY

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The Burlington and C&NW paralleled each other from Orin Junction to the eastern boundary of the Wind River Reservation.³⁶

After 1915 oil became the most important regional industry, and while Casper became its main distributing point, Douglas benefited as well. During the oil boom years around the time of World War I, the Burlington hauled long runs of tank cars to eastern refineries and markets. Cattle prices increased during the WWI era, causing a growth in the number of animals raised from 21,887 in 1913 to 62,195 in 1919. However, oil was king in central Wyoming and in 1919 the valuation of the oil industry in Converse County exceeded in value that of both cattle and sheep combined.³⁷ During World War II, long oil trains moved in the reverse direction, traveling from Texas to the Northwest, stocking supplies in fear of an attack on the West Coast by Japanese forces.

Although far from the lines of battle, Douglas had personal contact with enemy troops during World War II. On August 23, 1943, the first group of 412 Italian prisoners of war arrived by train and went into the government internment camp across the river, which eventually consisted of 180 temporary buildings built by Peter Kiewit Sons of Omaha at a cost of \$1.1 million. Assigned to agricultural jobs in the Douglas area, many of the German prisoners who arrived in August, 1944, came directly from transport ships, sent by rail still clad in their battlefield uniforms. The camp was abandoned in 1946.³⁸

In the late 1950s, Douglas experienced another boom as the Pacific Power and Light Company opened a strip mine and began construction of the Dave Johnson Power Plant, both activities dependent upon rail transportation and supply. As this new phase of development began, the C&NW closed the doors of its first passenger depot and began construction of one more commodious and suited for new times. Although closed for two decades, the building has remained in good condition. Acquired by the City of Douglas from the Chicago & Northwestern Transportation Company on January 11, 1990, it retains its original character and structural integrity.

Early Douglas was a true railroad town, with lots auctioned off the day after the arrival of the first passenger train. When the end-of-the-line moved west to Casper in 1888, it nearly folded but continued to grow gradually as the area's resources found markets in the East. Douglas was lucky to have such a variety of saleable products, each one appearing on the scene when the last seemed exhausted and ready to seal the fate of the "Gateway City." First were cattle, then sheep, then coal, then oil, then electric power, each made marketable by the railroad and its ability

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Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad Passenger Depot
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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

to bring in and take out the materials and service necessary for economic success.
In 1930, John Waller summarized the importance of the railroads to Converse County:

It would be very difficult to overestimate the contributions these railroads have made to the economic development of the County. Cattle and sheep can be shipped to packing centers very quickly; food stuffs that are to be bought or sold can be secured or marketed much more quickly and economically than ever before.³⁹

Even Douglas's yearly major event, the Wyoming state Fair, owes its origins to the C&NW, who donated the land for the site in 1905.

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Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad Passenger Depot
Converse County, WY

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Notes

1. David Seidel, Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley R.R. Co. (Columbus, Nebraska: Harbor Mist Publications), p. 60; Art Randall, Casper "Old Town" and Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad (Casper, Wyoming, Art Randall, 1991), p. 4.
2. W. Stennet, Yesterday and Today, History of the Chicago & Northwestern Railway System. (Chicago: n.p., 1910), pp. 44-45, 168.
3. R. L. Williams, The Chicago and North Western Railway, 1848-1948 (New York: The Newcomen Society of England, 1948), p. 8; Over Half A Century of Progress, 1848-1902. (Chicago: Chicago & North-Western Railway, 1902), p. 9.
4. Seidel, Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley R.R., p. 60.
5. John LeeRoy Waller, "Economic History and Settlement of Converse County, Wyoming," Annals of Wyoming 6 (April, 1930), p. 302.
6. Seidel, Fremont, pp. 34, 71; Randall, Casper "Old Town" and Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad, p. 45.
7. "Douglas Watershed Study Excerpts." MS, n.d., Converse County Vertical File, Converse County Library, p. 45.
8. Nelson, "Wyoming Railroads," MS, WPA Subject File #1370, Cheyenne, Wyoming, p. 20; Douglas Budget Anniversary Edition of 1907 (Douglas, 1907), p. 2; "Douglas Watershed Study excerpts," p. 47.
9. Douglas Budget, September 1, 1886, p. 5. See also Governor Warren's report of the occasion quoted in Nelson, "Wyoming Railroads," p. 19, and Virginia Trenholm, "Converse County," unidentified article in Converse County Vertical File, Converse County Library, Douglas, pp. 122-24.
10. Waller, "Economic History, p. 303; Douglas Budget Anniversary Edition of 1907 (Douglas, 1907), p. 2.
11. Douglas Budget, September 9, 1886, p. 5.
12. Douglas Budget, January 1, 1887. p. 2.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

13. Douglas Budget, December 17, 1890.
14. Waller, "Economic History," p. 292.
15. Cheyenne Daily Leader, January 16, 1886; Nelson, "Wyoming Railroads," p. 6.
16. Waller, "Economic History," p. 310; "Douglas Watershed Study," p. 51; Vea Hageman, "Converse Count," MS (1981), Converse County Vertical File, Converse County Library, Douglas, p. 10.
17. Douglas Budget, August 25, 1886, p. 1.
18. Douglas Advertiser, January 1, 1887, p. 2.
19. Douglas Budget, December 12, 1888, p. 1.
20. H. Roger Grant, "Country Railroad Station in the West," Journal of the West 17 (October, 1978), pp. 29, 32; Carroll Louis Vanderslive Meeks, The Railroad Station: An Architectural History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 100; Eileen F. Starr, Architecture in the Cowboy State, 1849-1940: A Guide (Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 1992), p. 110.
21. Charles W. Bohi, and H. Roger Grant, "Country Railroad Stations of the Milwaukee Road and the Chicago & North Western in South Dakota," South Dakota History 9 (Winter, 1978), pp. 3-4; Grant, "Country Railroad Station in the West," pp. 29, 33.
22. Bohi, "Country Railroad Stations," p. 22; Grant, "Country Railroad Station," p. 33.
23. Peg Leonard, West of Yesteryear (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Publishing Company, 1976), p. 170; Douglas Budget Anniversary Edition of 1907, p. 4.
24. Waller, "Economic History," p. 2.
25. Seidel, Fremont, p. 35; Randall, Casper "Old Town" and Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad, P. 4; Kimball, "Ye Good Old Days," Casper Tribune, April 23, 1945.
26. Douglas Budget, December 25, 1889, p. 5.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

27. Waller, "Economic History," p. 311.
28. Douglas Budget, December 17, 1890; Waller, "Economic History," p. 306; E.O. Fuller, Cheyenne Looking North (Lusk, Wyoming, The Herald, 1951), pp. 28-29.
29. Douglas Budget, January 28, 1891.
30. Fanny Kemble Wister, Owen Wister Out West (Chicago: Univeristy of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 100-101.
31. "Douglas Watershed Study Excerpts." MS, n.d. Converse County Vertical File, Converse County Library, ff. 68.
32. Vea Hageman, "Converse Count," MS (1981), Converse County Vertical File, Converse County Library, Douglas, p. 12; Ralph E. McWhinnie, Rambling Recollections of Early Day State Fairs, 1905-1917 (Douglas: Wyoming Pioneer Association, 1968)
33. Douglas Budget Anniversary Edition of 1907 (Douglas, 1907), p. 7; Waller, "Economic History," pp. 292, 297.
34. David Seidel, Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley R.R. Co. (Columbus, Nebraska: Harbor Mist Publications), pp. 61-62; Randall, Casper "Old Town" and Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad, pp. 13-14.
35. Douglas Budget Anniversary Edition of 1907, p. 5.
36. 50th Anniversary: The Arrival of the Burlington Railroad at Casper (n.p., 1963), pp. 1-2; Waller, "Economic History," p. 304; E.O. Fuller, Cheyenne Looking North (Lusk, Wyoming, The Herald, 1951), p. 32.
37. "Douglas Watershed Study," p. 55; Waller, "Economic History," p. 292-93.
38. Leonard, West of Yesteryear, p. 195; Peg Leonard, F. R. Hollenback, and Virginia Layton, "When Douglas Hosted Unusual Company," MS, Typed, February 1, 1971. Pioneer Museum.
39. Waller, "Economic History," p. 304.

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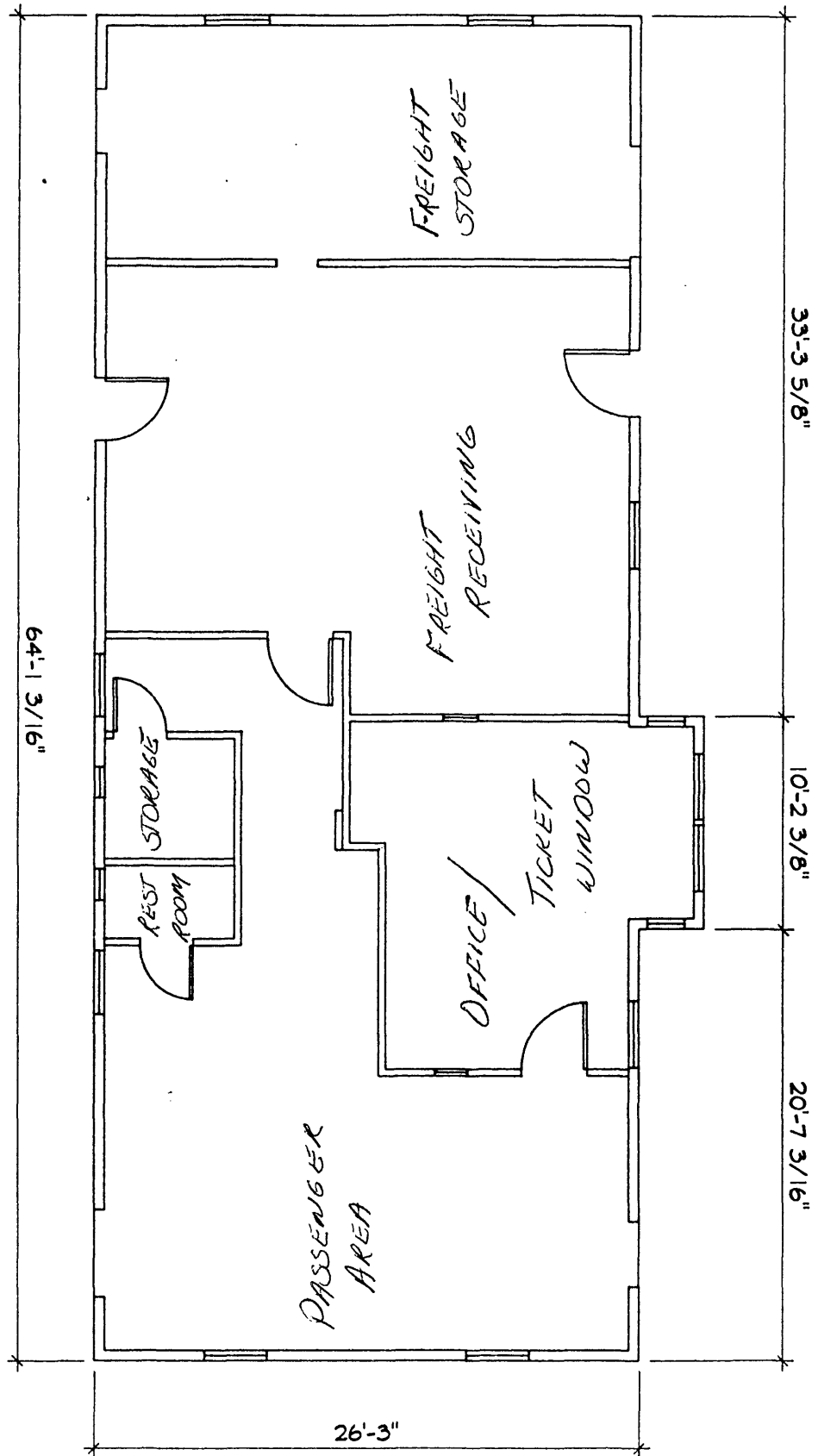
Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundaries are limited to the on-the-ground dimensions of the structure itself. The building is located on Lot 3, Elkhorn Subdivision, an addition to the City of Douglas, Wyoming. A Subdivision of portions of the East Half of the Southeast Quarter of Section 8 and the West Half of the Southwest Quarter of Section 9, all in Township 32 North, Range 71 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian in Converse County.

Boundary Justification

The depot is in its original location but the setting has changed because of highway and other uses surrounding the area. Its use as an outdoor train park complete with parking and landscaping is the best setting that can be provided under the circumstances. The city will work to complement the historic integrity of the depot with development but cannot avoid existing changes which have impacted the historic setting.



DOUGLAS RAILROAD DEPOT EXISTING FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"

NORTH
↓