

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Wheaton Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Depot

other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number northeast corner of Main and Barnett streets [n/a] not for publication

city or town Wheaton [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Barry code 009 zip code 64874

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO

10 January 2000
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

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

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
See continuation sheet [].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	0
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	0	0
		0	0
		0	0
		1	0

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

Transportation/Railway Depot

Current Functions

Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Other/standardized railroad depot

Materials

foundation concrete
 walls wood weatherboard
 roof asphalt
 other wood

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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.

Areas of Significance

Transportation _____

Periods of Significance

1908-1949 _____

Significant Dates

1908 _____

Significant Person(s)

N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation

N/A _____

Architect/Builder

Unknown _____

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic 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

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	405900	4068920			
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Pam Lauderdale and Betty Bridges

organization Friends of Wheaton Depot date May 30, 1999

street & number 117 N Allman telephone (417)652-3512

city or town Wheaton state MO zip code 64874

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 Steve and Vicki Roberts

street & number Rt. 1 telephone (417)435-2626

city or town Exeter state MO zip code 65647

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Wheaton Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Depot
Barry County, MO

Summary:

The Wheaton Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Depot, a one-story rectangular frame building with a hipped roof, is located on its original site at the northeast corner of Main and Barnett Streets in central Wheaton in Barry County, Missouri. Erected in 1908 by the Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad, the austere building--a typical design for a combination depot in a small town--is supported by short tapering concrete piers. A three-sided bay window on the east elevation marks the location of the ticket office, which is flanked on the inside by passenger waiting and freight rooms. Window openings are boarded and the glass is missing. Sheathing is in two forms, divided by a molded beltcourse. Currently the depot is a weathered orange color, a departure from its original combination of dark brown and beige. Despite deterioration and the loss of some elements as described below, the form of the Wheaton Depot is relatively unaltered. This building, an example of a once common but now dwindling resource, has had no major alterations or additions and it retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Elaboration:

The Wheaton Depot measures 18 feet by 58 feet and is situated on its original site within the 200-foot-wide railroad right-of-way, which runs through the town diagonally from northwest to southeast. With the exception of Allman Avenue which runs parallel to the track, the other streets of Wheaton, population 637, are arranged in a grid pattern. Main Street, which originally stopped short of the railroad right-of-way, runs from east to west directly south of the depot. South of Main Street is the Wheaton City Park, donated by the Missouri & North Arkansas. The depot is privately owned.

The 1914 Wheaton city plat depicts the depot, with a platform that is no longer extant, adjacent to the southwest side of the through track which was centered in the right-of-way. A siding ran along the northeast edge of the right-of-way, serving businesses on the tier of lots fronting on Allman Avenue between Goosetree and Hurlbut Streets. The rails along this portion of the route were removed decades ago.

The depot plan appears to have been adapted from a ubiquitous design for a small town railroad station. Various railroads constructed generally similar small and medium-sized depots which were based on a standardized plan. Typically, these elongated buildings were immediately recognizable as railroad depots even from a distance. The Wheaton Depot resembles an architect's drawing for a 20 foot by 40 foot depot, a type apparently also used by the St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad (Frisco Railroad). The M. & N.A. and Frisco lines intersected at Seligman, Missouri.¹

From left to right, the primary northeast elevation has a double-hung, 2/2 window, a transomed single-leaf entrance with a five-paneled door into the former waiting room, a three-sided cutaway bay window in the approximate center of the facade, and a large freight and baggage door with a concrete ramp. A wide, molded trim board wraps around the building below the eaves. Window openings throughout the building have been covered with thin pieces of overlapping wood, and very little glass remains. A sufficient amount

¹The Wheaton Depot resembles "Frisco STD Station #1," an architect's drawing in the collection of Tim Kubat, of Republic, MO.

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of muntins are present to indicate glazing patterns. Formerly, arrival and departure schedules were posted near the passenger entrance.

Drop (cove) siding covers the lower third of the facade and narrow weatherboarding covers the upper portion on all four elevations, with a molded beltcourse in between. The beltcourse encircles the building, accenting its horizontality. Originally, the drop siding was painted dark brown and the weatherboard was painted dark beige--railroad depot colors, apparently not unlike the brown and mustard tones associated with Missouri Pacific depots. (M. & N.A. passenger cars were painted dark red.) Today the depot's orange paint is badly weathered. Three double-hung, 2/2 windows (covered with wood) occupy the angles of a bay window which is centered in the front wall. This projection, where the station agent's office was located, provided good visibility for oncoming trains and yard activity. A sliding freight and baggage door completes the front elevation.

The southwest elevation, facing Main Street, has a freight entrance--an oversize, paneled sliding door with a six-light transom. Three tall, narrow window openings are in the south half of the facade, covered with wood. A black and gold "Railway Express Agency" sign originally attached to the building near the freight door has been removed.

The southeast elevation has two covered openings for double-hung windows with 2/2 lights. The northwest elevation contains a narrow four-light window which is centered in the facade and positioned horizontally near the eaves. Historically, the roof above each end of the depot displayed a sign with WHEATON painted in black letters against a white background.

Originally, the depot interior contained two partitions which created three rooms: a passenger waiting room, the station agent's office, and a freight and baggage area. This three-part configuration characterizes the combination depot. The interior partitions have been removed to provide space for lumber storage. Some wainscoting remains but plaster is missing and studs are exposed. Flooring consists of wide planks. Light filters through various slits. The depot never had plumbing but is wired for electricity.

In rebuilding the roof at some point, the original slightly flared eaves--depicted in a circa 1910 photograph of the depot at the east end of Main Street--were straightened except for a portion above the agent's bay. The present roof does not appear to extend outward quite as far as when the eaves were flared. While some standardized M. & N.A. depots had slightly flared eaves, others did not. A brick chimney has been removed from the center of the building. Wood shingles covering the original roof have been replaced with asphalt. Galvanized iron guttering also has been removed. Otherwise, the exterior building is relatively unaltered except for the covered windows and perhaps incorrect paint. The station's loading platform has been removed, but it was not an integral part of the building in any case.

Although the tracks which once ran near the building have been removed, the depot's original relationship to its site remains clear. Despite covered window openings and the absence of flared eaves, the building is unmistakable as a former railroad depot. While the roofline is not quite the same as originally, the present roofline is acceptable because slightly flared eaves were not a significant identifying feature of the building.

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Wheaton Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Depot
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Significance:

The Wheaton Depot is significant under Criterion A in the area of Transportation, and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Platted in 1907, Wheaton owes its existence to the Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad, and the depot, which served both the railroad and the community during its period of significance, represents an important part of the town's history. Constructed in 1908, it is one of Missouri's few surviving links to the long defunct, financially challenged railroad whose trains once snaked their way through the Ozark Mountains and raced across the cotton and rice fields of eastern Arkansas on the route between Joplin, Missouri, and Helena, Arkansas, on the Mississippi River. The Wheaton Depot—the only extant M. & N.A. depot in Missouri—is an intact example of an early 20th century small town combination-type railroad depot, and remains little changed from the time it was built. The 1908-1947 period of significance begins with the year of construction and ends when the last train departed from the Wheaton Depot on September 6, 1947.

Elaboration: Railroad History

Throughout the period of significance, the Wheaton Depot signified that the town was "plugged into" the nation's established and continually expanding railroad network. The approximately 365-mile Missouri & North Arkansas railroad line was completed in 1909, one year after the depot opened. Built to accommodate both freight and passenger needs, and based on a standardized plan, the Wheaton Depot is significant as an intact example of a once common building form that is rapidly vanishing from the landscape. Of five Missouri towns platted by the MONARK Townsite Co., Wheaton is the only one with an extant railroad depot. The other platted towns were Monark Springs (which no longer appears on the state highway map), Stark City, Fairview and Ridgley. Many additional railroad towns were platted or otherwise sprang up along the much longer portion of the route across Arkansas.²

Railroad construction in Missouri began in St. Louis prior to the Civil War, with the goal of eventually linking St. Louis with San Francisco. The first transcontinental plan was drafted in 1849, when railroad conventions were held in St. Louis and Memphis to determine the "proposed road from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean."³ Two years later, aided by a \$2 million loan from the State of Missouri, the Pacific Railroad Company began laying track. In 1852, the Pacific brought the first locomotive west of the Mississippi River.⁴ By 1856, along a route that generally followed the south bank of the Missouri River, the rails had been installed to Jefferson City. The track halted at Sedalia at the outbreak of the Civil War, then continued on to Kansas City in 1865. Heavily subsidized by taxpayers, other companies laid track across various parts of the state, linking the railroad towns with cords of commerce. Many fledgling railroads ran

²Elmore J. Pitts, "The Monark Towns," *Oak Leaves* (Winter 1995), pp. 9-13; Tim Kubat, "Missouri and North Arkansas Railway Stations," *Oak Leaves* (Fall 1982), pp. 8-11.

³Edward J. White, "A Century of Transportation in Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review*. Vol. 15 (1921), No. 1, p. 145.

⁴White, *op cit.*, p. 147.

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out of money despite government support. Even the Pacific became insolvent in 1868, although it was almost immediately reborn as the Missouri Pacific. Gradually a network of main lines was established, interconnected at various points by smaller lines.⁵

Like a great many American railroads, the M. & N.A. did not spring full-blown but rather evolved. Smaller railroads that preceded it over portions of the route ultimately were reorganized and expanded into what became the M. & N.A. The M. & N.A. itself was reorganized before resurfacing under another name before completing its downward slide into railroad oblivion.

The earliest direct predecessor of the M. & N.A. was the Missouri & Arkansas Railroad Co., which in 1882 laid about a dozen miles of track from Seligman, Missouri, aimed at Eureka Springs, Arkansas. The M. & A. was actually funded by the St. Louis & San Francisco (Frisco) Railroad, which already served Seligman and sought to make the newly popular mountain health resort that came to be known as "America's Little Switzerland" more accessible to its passengers. But for financial reasons, before the line was completed to Eureka Springs, the M. & A. was consolidated with another company as the Eureka Springs Railway Co., which completed the project. This line began operating between Seligman and Eureka Springs in 1883. In 1899, the Eureka Springs Railway was purchased by the newly-organized St. Louis & North Arkansas Railroad Co., which completed an extension to Harrison in 1901, not only to serve the burgeoning city but to improve accessibility to lead and zinc fields in the area. In 1906, the St. Louis & North Arkansas was sold to a new company which, with additional expansion in mind, reorganized as the Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Co. In 1907-08, track was extended northward from Seligman to Neosho, with a connection to Joplin.

Upon the completion of a southward extension to Helena in 1909, the M. & N.A. served an area of approximately 5,400 square miles with a population estimated at 145,000. But in 1935, after years of receivership, the M. & N.A. was sold at public auction and reorganized as the Missouri & Arkansas Railway Co. This line, an incarnation of the railroad involving its complete system but no new extensions, continued the struggle until September 1946. While much of the line was subsequently dismantled and the rolling stock sold for scrap after this date, a new company called the Arkansas & Ozarks Railway was chartered in 1949 to resume operation of the sections between Seligman and Harrison and between Freeman and Berryville. The A. & O. lasted until 1960.⁶

At its peak the railroad served dozens of appreciative towns in Missouri and Arkansas. The need for a railroad through the region seemed self-evident to towns along the route like Wheaton, and even critical to

⁵R. E. Riegel, "The Missouri Pacific Railroad to 1879," Missouri Historical Review. Vol. 18 (1924), No. 1, p. 15.

⁶James A. Fair, The North Arkansas Line (San Diego: Howell-North Books, 1969), pp. 1-26, 60-61, 187-188, 243, 250-253, 263; Donald Kennedy Campbell, II, "A Study of Some Factors Contributing To the Petition for Abandonment by the Missouri and Arkansas Railroad in September, 1946," The Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. VIII (Winter 1949), No. 4, pp. 268-285; Clifton E. Hull, Shortline Railroads of Arkansas (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), pp. 44-112.

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towns such as Leslie, Arkansas, which was dependent on the timber products industry and consequently needed a high-volume mover. Despite relatively low pay and with the exception of labor problems in the 1920s, worker loyalty was generally strong. However, the business provided by the timber industry at Leslie notwithstanding, there was no essential, economically driven traffic of the type that a railroad could depend on for long-term solvency.

In 1921, when the M. & N.A. faced but temporarily avoided bankruptcy, William Z. Ripley, a consultant for the Interstate Commerce Commission, minced no words: "It is evident from the map that the road neither begins nor ends anywhere, and it is difficult to see how it could perform any useful function except to serve the towns locally along the line. Whether they can afford sufficient business to keep it alive is open to question." In addition, Ripley noted, lines of the prosperous Missouri Pacific ran parallel to those of the M. & N.A., on either side, a redundancy that would negatively affect the M. & N.A. Temporarily shut down, the M. & N.A. recovered under a four-part plan which included a loan of \$3.5 million from the ICC. In the process, the railroad was completely reorganized into a new company with a slightly different name, the Missouri & North Arkansas Railway [instead of Railroad] Co.⁷

Railroad historian James R. Fair, Jr., commenting on problems that led to the downfall of the M. & N.A., suggested that the railroad was probably "doomed almost as soon as it was completed." After all, its (probably inevitable) epithet was "May Never Arrive." Among other things, the rugged geography of the Ozark Mountains portion of its route made right-of-way expensive to maintain as well as to construct, and several stretches required the doubling of locomotives in order to ascend steep grades. The excursion travel market to Eureka Springs eventually tapered off; the timber and mining industries which had been counted on for income were never adequately developed; and agricultural shipments never amounted to much because the mountain topsoil was too thin to support a significant level of commercial crop production. The 1905 decision to commit expansion funds to an extension of the line from Leslie to Helena, Arkansas, instead of to Little Rock, was simply bad judgment. According to Fair, other problems leading to the railroad's demise included absentee ownership and "plain hard luck" in the form of fires in the shops, floods and, on August 5, 1914, one particularly catastrophic and expensive train wreck at a siding and signpost station called Tipton Ford south of Joplin.⁸

As historian Donald Kennedy Campbell II pointed out, the M. & N.A. also operated through some of the most sparsely populated areas of Arkansas. And overall, the population of its service area decreased even more after the railroad was built. But population growth in itself was no guarantee of success. Even as Eureka Springs prospered, for example, with a population that reached 8,500 by the mid-1880s, so many factors were stacked against the Eureka Springs Railway Co. that it began losing money. Instead of shutting down and taking the loss, new investors were found and plans were made to expand the system into the mountainous interior of Arkansas. Campbell also noted the substantial role of improved highways

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-145.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 269-272.

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and the development of motor transportation in the railroad's gradual demise.⁹

Prominent individuals in the controversial railroad's history included Clayton Powell, a former Arkansas governor and U.S. Senator who was a primary promoter of the Eureka Springs Railway; Richard Kerens, first president and largest stockholder of the Eureka Springs Railway; St. Louis businessman David R. Francis, an ex-governor of Missouri who was an influential manager in circa 1910-20; John Scullin, noted for constructing railroads including much of the Katy between 1869-74, and who constructed a major portion of the M. & N.A. between Eureka Springs and Harrison; and Frank Kell, who temporarily made the M. & N.A. profitable after purchasing it at public auction in 1935.

Although a railroad through the Ozarks was apparently desired by most residents of the thinly-populated region, the M. & N.A.'s financial records were written with far more red ink than black. In retrospect, the line clearly should never have been built; the expansions amounted only to throwing good money after bad. But the railroad was undeniably colorful, and a ride on the M. & N.A. could be a pleasant experience: "The coaches were neatly painted and were fitted with Pintsch gas lamps, Baker stoves, and mahogany interior trim.....When the sleepers were running, the first-class passengers could enjoy electric lights and fans as well as a full meal in the buffet section."¹⁰ Or the ride could be thrilling: 20 miles south of Leslie, the line passed through a scenic canyon of the Little Red River "where heights of 500 feet above the roadbed were only a half mile apart." The 61-mile section between Leslie and Heber Springs involved 160 curves accounting for half of the total mileage.¹¹

Elaboration: Wheaton and Its Depot

Wheaton clearly owes its existence to the M. & N.A., and the Wheaton Depot is the town's most tangible link to its railroad heritage. Like many small towns located along early railroad lines, Wheaton—said to be the newest city in Barry County—was specifically founded because the railroad was coming through. In 1907, the town was platted and lots were sold by the MONARK Townsite Co., a real estate firm operated by Truman Elmore in association with the M. & N.A. The town's original plat included plans for a depot to be built as a "Standard No. 1 Frame Structure" designated as Station #41 (it was 41.29 rail miles from the northern terminus at Joplin). Green Beaty was hired as Wheaton's first station agent and trains began running in August 1908. Ninety-two stations were located along the route from Joplin to Helena and as of 1982, fewer than 10 were standing.¹²

⁹Campbell, *op cit.*, pp. 290-291; 311-323.

¹⁰Fair, p. 95.

¹¹Fair, pp. 67-69.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 272; Pitts, *Ibid.*; Kubat, *Ibid.*; Betty Bridges, "I Remember Wheaton" (unpublished manuscript, October 1998); and "Wheaton: Former Whistle Stop Survives Railway's Exit," *The Joplin Globe*, August 31, 1995.

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Wheaton's location on the railroad route was between Ridgley and Fairview, two other railroad towns created only a few miles apart along the northern extension from Seligman to Neosho, Missouri. A station on the railroad provided area farmers with convenient shipping facilities and served as a point of contact with the rest of the world, producing a concentration of traffic and a commercial hub. In Wheaton's case, the town grew to have the usual features of a full-service community including schools, churches, hotels, movie theaters, department stores and other businesses. Today Wheaton has video rental stores instead of movie theaters and there have been other losses, but it remains a viable farming center and the population has actually grown significantly in recent decades. In addition to its continued existence as a farming center, Wheaton has become a bedroom community for people employed by poultry processing firms.¹³

Standardized plans for small and intermediate depots were produced by the M. & N.A.'s engineering department, or perhaps were simply appropriated from the plan book of another railroad and modified to meet local needs. Apparently, the Wheaton Depot was adapted (enlarged) from a design also used by the Frisco Railroad. Relatively inexpensive and quickly constructed, stations like the Wheaton Depot used standardized architectural details, plans, and paint schemes which were intended to create a corporate symbol that would be easily recognizable to the traveling public. Size and construction complexity varied according to the relative importance of the town served, not necessarily according to the population. In general, the larger the town, the bigger and more luxurious the depot; towns with railroad junctions also had larger, more substantial depots.¹⁴ M. & N.A. depots at Eureka Springs and Leslie were made of stone. A M. & N.A. depot at Cotton Plant had an integral pavilion (an overhanging portion of the main roof supported by bracketed square columns). The M. & N.A. depot at Harrison had decorative stickwork. At the railroad's eastern terminus at Helena on the Mississippi River, a two-story brick building with a tile roof was erected at a cost of \$75,000.¹⁵ Some larger depots had integral restrooms but the Wheaton Depot was not one of them. It was, however, a combination station—a type of three-part depot containing an office area for the agent, a passenger waiting room and a freight and baggage room. Comparable stations were built throughout the Midwest, by a host of railroads.

In a perceptive account of how the railroad industry reshaped the American environment, John R. Stilgoe noted that:

"Small-town depot architecture makes clear the role of the agent and helps define not only the metropolitan corridor [Stilgoe's metaphor for railroads and the environment that evolved along the tracks] but the public perception of it. The corridor edge lay at the street side of the station; within the doors a casual stroller encountered a structure designed for efficiency. The typical depot, a long, narrow rectangle parallel with the track, pivoted on the bay window in which the agent sat to operate signals and telegraph.

¹³The Joplin Globe. *Ibid.*

¹⁴John A. Droege, Passenger Terminals and Trains (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1916), p. 262.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 120, 127, 214, 230, 273, 276.

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On one or both sides of the operator's room were the waiting rooms, and beyond, at one end of the station, a freight room.....In smaller stations, one man could sell tickets, check baggage, and give schedule information, all the while monitoring the telegraph key clicking in the bay; between passenger trains he could attend to the paperwork on his desk opposite the ticket-baggage window, or else walk to the freight room through a connecting door."

Because of the central role the railroad played in community life, depots such as the one at Wheaton took on an importance belied by their often modest size. George Douglas, writing on the social history of the railroad in American life, describes the typical depot as "a hub of activity, a focal point of energy and daily human contact. When trains were due, there was a noticeable flurry of directed motion as wagons, people expecting express packages, village loafers, and small boys were drawn to the depot square as if by a magnet. The train track was the artery of small-town life, the station its heart, if never quite its soul. On the train, when it came in, was everything needed to keep life going, or at least, it seemed, everything that would provide life with some color or variety."¹⁶

For most communities, the railroad depot "was the town's most prominent entrance..."¹⁷ The standardized station, or "class-depot" was the best known of all American depots and was utilized for country or small town stations by most rail lines.¹⁸ According to John Stover, "the railroad station was the connecting link for commerce, communication, and travel with the outside world. Every passenger train dropped off and picked up mail, and the telegraph service of the Western Union was so important that stations of any size were often kept open continuously through the use of several shifts of telegraphers. Probably no single community agency or facility in urban America today provides the variety of important services associated with the railroad depot of yesterday."¹⁹

As for the Wheaton Depot, "It was our center of commerce, communication and physical connection to the outside world," said Wheaton historian Betty Bridges. "The train was the means that the necessities and luxuries came to our area. It was also the way that our products were sold and shipped to other areas. Grains, strawberries, apples, peaches, blackberries, walnuts and canned tomatoes were shipped out. Lumber, furniture, feed, groceries, hardware, and other merchandise came in by train. Oranges and other fresh produce were available by train during the winter. One could even have fresh oysters shipped in for Christmas by train. The mail came and went by train. A letter could be sent to almost anywhere and one

¹⁶George Douglas, All Aboard!: The Railroad in American Life (New York: Paragon House, 1992), p. 271.

¹⁷David P. Handlin, The American Home: Architecture and Society, 1815-1915 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), p. 101.

¹⁸Walter Berg, Buildings and Structures of American Railroads: A Reference Book for Railroad Managers, Superintendents, Master Mechanics, Engineers, Architects, and Students (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1893), p. 285.

¹⁹John F. Stover, The Life and Decline of the American Railroad (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 198.

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Barry County, MO

could depend on it arriving in three to four days. The newspapers also came by train daily. A resident of Wheaton could expect to get the "almost local" daily papers from Joplin and Springfield. He could also receive the Kansas City Star, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and the Chicago Tribune. And the depot was the place to go for the hottest news. As a telegrapher, the station agent was usually the first person in town to hear about breaking news in other places.²⁰ Green Beaty was the first station agent, but a long-time agent during the depot's later years was W. W. Hoyt.²¹

Particularly in small towns like Wheaton, the railroad was the conduit which developed and sustained the community and the railroad depot itself became an important social and economic center. While the Wheaton Depot appears to be a somewhat ubiquitous type, the fact that it is the only extant depot in Missouri constructed and used by the defunct, rather fascinating Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad greatly adds to its significance.²² Members of a local supportive organization, Friends of the Wheaton Depot, believe that recognition of the historic value of this property through inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places will encourage its preservation and restoration.

²⁰Bridges, ibid.

²¹Bridges, ibid.

²²Constructed in 1911, the Joplin Union Depot with its many connections was the northern terminus of the M. & N.A., but it was not an M. & N.A. depot per se. This architect-designed building (listed in the National Register 3/14/73) was a joint venture of the Santa Fe, Kansas City Southern and Katy Railroads, along with the M. & N.A. The M. & N.A. had trackage agreements with the Kansas City Southern and the Frisco for access to Joplin, and used a roundhouse and other facilities at the Joplin Union Depot. See Fair, pp. 78, 80, 277, and Hull, p. 54.

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Section 8 Page 11

Wheaton Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Depot
Barry County, MO

Plat map of Wheaton, 1914.



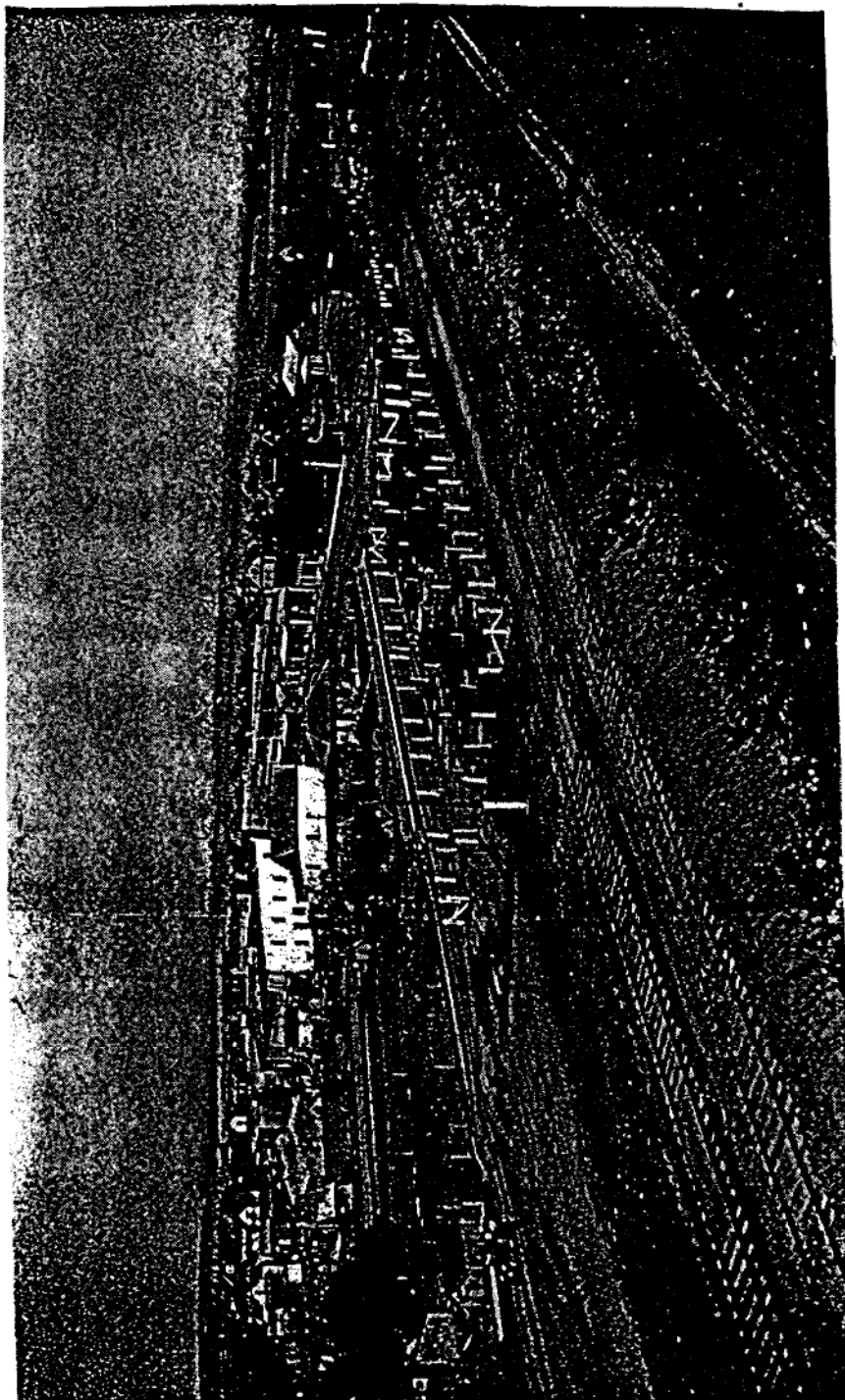
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 12

**Wheaton Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Depot
Barry County, MO**

Wheaton, circa 1910; depot is at right
Source: Fair, p. 74.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section 9 Page 13

**Wheaton Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Depot
Barry County, MO**

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Ruth Higgs, daughter of Wheaton-to-Joplin commuter Sanford Granger, interviewed by Betty Bridges on April 28, 1998.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section 10, Photographs Page 14

Wheaton Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Depot
Barry County, MO

Verbal Boundry Description

Beginning at the northeast corner of the intersection of Barnett Street and Main Street Extended, proceed north along the east right-of-way of Barnett Street 131 feet; then proceed east, perpendicular to Barnett Street, 64.20 feet; then proceed south, parallel to Barnett Street and perpendicular to Main Street Extended, to the north right-of-way of Main Street Extended; then proceed west along the north right-of-way of Main Street Extended to the point of beginning.

Verbal Boundry Justification

The depot is located within the Prewitt Addition to the City of Wheaton, an irregular tract which includes a portion of the original M&NA Railroad right-of-way. The boundary has been drawn to include the depot and a sufficient amount of surrounding land to indicate the building's original relationship to its site, including a portion of the railroad right-of-way to the east of the depot. Much of the surrounding area has been developed since the abandonment of the railroad and no longer retains integrity.

Photographs

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Wheaton Depot, Barry County, Missouri

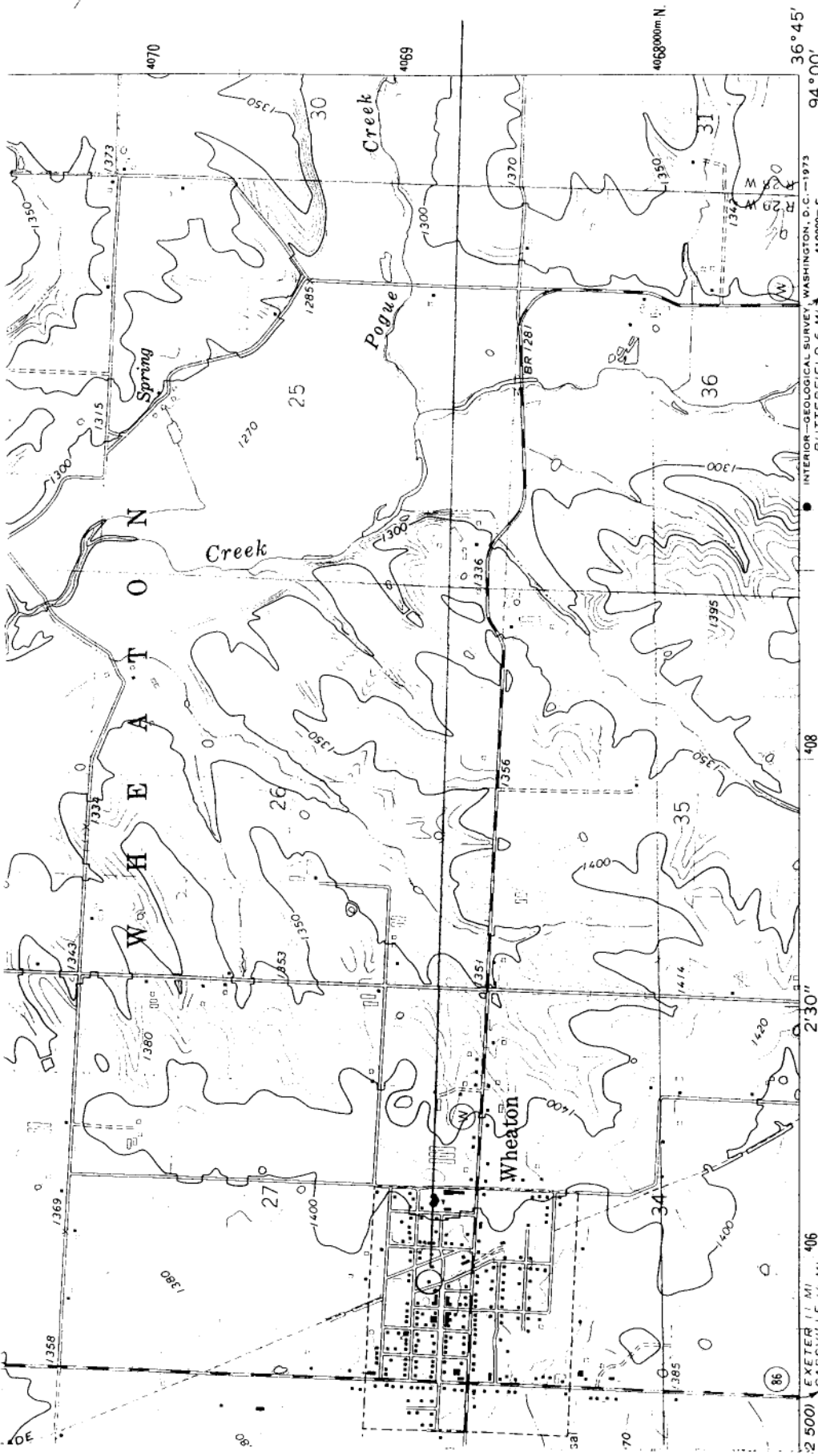
Photographer: Pam Lauderdale

Date of Photographs: December 1999

Location of Negatives: Missouri Cultural Resources Inventory, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City

1. Southeast and northeast elevations, facing northwest.
2. Northwest and southwest elevations, facing southeast.
3. Northeast elevation, facing southwest.
4. Detail of agent's bay, facing southwest.
5. Interior, facing southeast.
6. Interior, facing northwest.
7. Agent's bay, facing northeast.

WHEATON MISSOURI & NORTH ARKANSAS RAILROAD DEPOT, BARRY COUNTY, MO 15/405900 4068920

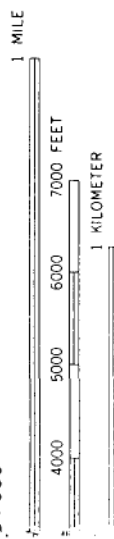


CASSVILLE 1:62 5001
7257 III

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C.—1973
BUTTERFIELD 6 MI. 41000m.E.

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Unimproved road
- Interstate Route
- U. S. Route
- State Route



WHEATON, MO.

SE/4 RITCHEY 15' QUADRANGLE
N3645—W9400/7.5

1972

AMS 7157 I SE—SERIES V879

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
SURVEY, ROLLA, MISSOURI 65401
AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



















