

Southern Pacific Railroad Depot  
(Sacramento Valley Station)  
401 I Street  
Sacramento  
Sacramento County  
California

**HABS No. CA-2340**

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
333 Bush St.  
San Francisco, CA 94104

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD DEPOT

(Sacramento Valley Station)

HABS No. CA-2340

- Location:** 401 I Street (north of I Street between Interstate 5 and 5th Street)  
City of Sacramento, Sacramento County, California 95814
- Present Owner  
And Occupant:** City of Sacramento; National Railroad Passenger Corporation, doing  
business as Amtrak
- Present Use:** Railroad depot
- Significance:** The Southern Pacific Railroad Sacramento Depot (Depot), including the Depot and track amenities, are significant historically and architecturally as the most visible and publicly accessible icons that reflect Sacramento's long history as a railroad town. The Depot, built in 1926, was the public façade for a very large parcel that was owned and intensively used by the Southern Pacific Railroad (and its predecessor corporations) since the 1860s. The Depot, designed by the highly successful San Francisco architectural firm of Bliss & Faville, is the architectural anchor for the railroad yards section of Sacramento and is one of the most handsome public buildings anywhere in the city. The Depot's Beaux Arts proportions contain Spanish and Italian Renaissance revival style elements lending the building proportions and materials reminiscent of Roman classicism.
- Construction of this key Sacramento icon was delayed for many years due to disagreements among the railroad, the city, and state regulators. As a result, the key symbol of the primacy of rail travel was built just as automobile and truck traffic was beginning to erode significantly the railroad's market share of passenger and freight traffic. The long history of the building of this structure is detailed under "Historical Information" below.
- Nonetheless, the building was designed to facilitate the flow of very high volumes of passenger traffic. The functional as well as the aesthetic elements of this building and associated features are detailed under "Architectural Information." Passenger volume declined in the years after World War II but has increased dramatically in recent years, making this one of the busiest depots on the West Coast.
- The Depot includes historic resources listed or determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) individually

and as contributing features of the Sacramento Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) Station District, which was determined eligible by consensus under Criteria A and C: the Depot at 401 "I" Street (listed in 1975 at the local level of significance under criteria A and C), the Railway Express Agency (REA) Building at 431 "I" Street (listed with the Depot in 1975), and the SPRR Platform Amenities (consisting of the tracks, umbrella sheds, passenger subway ramps with iron railings, and the SPRR Tunnel/Pedestrian Subway) at 401 I Street (determined eligible by consensus as contributing to the setting of the Depot). The State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with the eligibility of the Platform Amenities in a letter dated July 26, 1999, and with the eligibility of the Sacramento SPRR Station District in a letter dated February 2, 2009. Both letters are on file at the California Office of Historic Preservation.

The subject properties are adjacent to and historically related to a second historic district, the SPRR Central Shops Historic District, determined eligible for listing in the NRHP under criteria A and C by consensus in 2001 (Zeising, 2001).

The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks, when in their original location immediately north of the Depot, were eligible for the NRHP as a contributing feature of the SPRR Depot District under Criterion A; however, the tracks have since been moved approximately 500 feet to the north of the 1926 alignment.<sup>1</sup>

**Historian(s):** Edward Yarbrough, Senior Architectural Historian, and Michael J. Meloy, PhD, Historian; Stephen Mikesell, Historian. Affiliation: ICF International.

**Project Information:** The impetus for the documentation is the Sacramento Intermodal Transportation Facility (SITF) Project, sponsored by the City of Sacramento (City) and funded through the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and local sources. Roberta Deering, Preservation Director, City of Sacramento, and Hinda Chandler, City of Sacramento architect and planner, provided additional architectural information.

## **Part 1. Historical Information**

### **A. Physical History:**

#### **1. Date of erection: 1926**

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<sup>1</sup> Jones & Stokes. Historic Resources Evaluation Report, 2004. Sacramento, California.

2. **Architect:** Bliss & Faville Architects, San Francisco, California.
3. **Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:**
  - a. **Owners:** Southern Pacific Railroad, 1926 to 1994; Union Pacific Railroad, 1994-2006; City of Sacramento, 2006 to present.
  - b. **Occupants and Uses:** Southern Pacific Railroad, 1926 to 1971; Amtrak, 1971 to present; Uses: Passenger Rail Station, Operations Base, Office Support Services
4. **Builder, contractor, suppliers:** Southern Pacific Railroad
5. **Original plans and construction:** California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento.
6. **Alterations and additions:**

In general, the Depot and its associated structures have experienced very few alterations or additions. The most dramatic change to the setting for the district occurred in the 1960s, with construction of Interstate 5 just west of the district. The construction of the freeway ended the central approach to the façade. Removal of streetcar service, which preceded construction of the freeway, opened the southern landscape, allowing for reuse as a parking lot. Construction of a light rail stop and relocation of the tracks to the north of the depot in recent years, effectively replaces the function but not the orientation of the original streetcar service. These later alterations represent the most adverse alterations to the ability of this historic resource to convey significance when viewed from a distance.

The interior of the Depot has undergone alterations over time to accommodate modern uses, particularly in regard to office spaces on the first and second floors. These spaces are not generally accessible to the public. As discussed under “Architectural Information” below, the internal passages leading from a former restaurant to the Waiting Room have been blocked off and there have been several changes to the spaces used to sell tickets. The Depot also received a new roof in 1999. The second and third floors have been used as offices but all upper floors are now vacant.

## **B. Historical Context:**

Formally opened on February 27, 1926, the Southern Pacific Depot was the fourth building to serve that function for the SPRR in Sacramento.<sup>2</sup> Sacramentans and railroad

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<sup>2</sup> Southern Pacific officials called the building “Sacramento Valley Station.” *The Sacramento Bee*, Feb. 27, 1926, p. D-1: “Dozen Valley Bodies to Be at Station Opening.” The term, Sacramento Valley Station was revived by the City

officials had talked about a new station/depot on and off for nearly twenty years, and on more than one occasion, the California State Railroad Commission had nearly ordered the railroad to build a new one. But Sacramento's leaders always managed to find an excuse not to and the Railroad was perfectly willing to extend the lifespan of the existing depot, a Gothic-style arcade built in 1879 by its predecessor, the Central Pacific Railroad. In 1923 the State Railroad Commission ordered construction, but by then, SPRR needed little persuading, and only a few naysayers in Sacramento were still willing to raise their voices against such a project. Fueled in part by irrigation and electrification in the Sacramento Valley, a building boom was in full swing in Sacramento by the middle of the 1920s. But most important of all factors fueling Sacramento's growth was the rapid adoption of the personal automobile, a mode of transportation quickly eclipsing all other forms.

As early as 1904, SPRR had plans to build a new depot near the site of the 1879 station.<sup>3</sup> Yet the 1879 station, built with massive arcades and the Gothic features popular at its time of construction, was still standing in 1925. The station was probably still adequate in 1898, the year Collis P. Huntington, the last of the Big Four (i.e., Huntington, Stanford, Hopkins, and Crocker), died. Shortly afterward, the railroad came under the control of UPRR chairman William H. Harriman in 1900. But Harriman's death in 1909 and a 1913 Supreme Court decision forced UPRR to divest itself of SPRR. Still in control of Central Pacific, SPRR, under the new leadership of chairman Julius Kruttschnitt and the Irish-born president William Sproule, began to modernize the company.<sup>4</sup>

In 1911 when the Sacramento Electric, Gas, and Railway Company applied for various street car franchises for 3rd and 4th Streets, *The Sacramento Union* reported, "It has been known for some time . . . that the first step in the [new SPRR] depot plan would be to provide street car approaches to the new station." The Sacramento Division of SPRR secured appropriations "of nearly half a million dollars for a new depot at Sacramento and of \$300,000 for the new bridge over the Sacramento river and approaches . . . subject to the approval of the directors of the company." The approval for building the depot

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of Sacramento when it took over the depot in the early 2000s. Over most of its life, however, the Depot was known as the Southern Pacific Depot, a term used in this report.

<sup>3</sup> Myrtle Shaw Lord, *A Sacramento Saga: Fifty Years of Achievement—Chamber of Commerce Leadership* (Sacramento: Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, 1946), 181.

<sup>4</sup> Julius K. Kruttschnitt was born July 30, 1854, in New Orleans, Louisiana, the son of the German consul, and educated at Washington University in St. Louis before joining the Southern Pacific in 1887. Kruttschnitt retired in April 1925, shortly before the new station opened. Don L. Hofsommer, *The Southern Pacific, 1901-1985* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1986), 25-26, 52-53, 115-116; *Time Magazine*, July 28, 1924; *The Chicago Tribune*, April 10, 1925, p. 20, "Climbed Ladder To Rail Fortune, Now On Pension;" *New York Times* April 10, 1925, p. 13, "Espee Head to Retire."

never came, although the bridge (now called the I Street Bridge) was built as planned in 1911.<sup>5</sup>

The matter of constructing a new depot first came before the State Railroad Commission in 1916. The Sacramento Park Board asked that the State Railroad Commission order SPRR to vacate the China Slough property on the north side of I Street, between 3rd and 5th Streets, so that the city could convert the property into a park. The State Railroad Commission refused to take action and postponed further discussion until the next hearing in late 1916, contending that SPRR did not desire to remove the tracks until it had decided whether a new station would be erected.<sup>6</sup>

At the December 1916 hearings, railroad attorney G. D. Squires blamed the City of Sacramento for delays. He told State Railroad Commissioner Alex Gordon that “no depot had been erected because Sacramento had filed suit to oust the Company from most of its waterfront holdings.” City of Sacramento Chief Engineer Richard Sachse<sup>7</sup> declared the “present depot is not only inadequate, but obsolete,” and that the current traffic and the continued growth of the city demanded improvements.

Sachse said,

According to our ways of figuring, and according to insurance company standards, the depot has been seven years dead. The life of such a structure is thirty years. There are fifty-seven passenger trains passing through Sacramento daily. Thirteen of these are through trains and forty-four local. San Francisco has the same number entering and leaving. Oakland forty-six, Los Angeles thirty-six and San Diego not more than eight or ten. Thus, the importance of Sacramento as a railroad point can be readily seen.... 500,000 tickets valued at \$1,000,000 are sold in Sacramento yearly, the city has thousands of people [who?] spend time changing trains, it is an important terminal and transfer point, and sanitary conditions at the depot are deplorable.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *The Sacramento Union*, July 11, 1911, p. 1: “New Depot Plans Revealed In Street Car Franchises: Lines on Third and Fourth From I Street First Move to \$500,000 Station.”

<sup>6</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, March 7, 1917, p. 9: “Park Board Request S.P. Vacate Site.”

<sup>7</sup> In addition to serving as an engineer for the City of Sacramento, from at least 1916 through 1922, Richard Sachse served as the Chief Engineer for the Railroad Commission of California. Sachse, a Sacramentan, served on numerous boards and commissions for the City of Sacramento and the State of California. See, for example, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 12, 1916, p. 10, “W.P. Hearing Before R.R. Commission;” *The Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 29, 1920, p. II8, “Definite City Plan Is Urged;” Jan. 3, 1940, p. 6, “Job Insurance Director Sought.”

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

He added that according to a State Railroad Commission's report the company had spent only \$300 dollars on improvements to the station since 1879.<sup>9</sup>

As the Railroad Commission prepared to make its depot decision, the United States declared war on Germany, thus entering into World War I. The Commission abandoned its inquiry into the station due to "war conditions" and because the federal government had taken control of all the nation's major railroads. When, after the war, conditions returned to "near normal" the Railroad Commission wondered if anyone in Sacramento was still interested in discussing a depot. The newly seated Sacramento City Council was unanimously in favor and instructed City Clerk Mike J. Desmond to tell the Railroad Commission of their decision.<sup>10</sup>

A hearing was set for Sacramento on February 8, 1921. At that hearing, Sacramento's Chamber of Commerce announced that it thought construction of a new station "at this time is not timely." SPRR had warned that if the Railroad Commission compelled it to put "\$500,000 into the building" then its plans for further developing the rail yard shops "will have to cease as the present financial condition of the road will not permit the heavy expenditure along those lines." SPRR had announced its intention to significantly expand operation at the shops, and now seemed to be using that plan as a cudgel to beat back demand for a new depot. Believing that Sacramento had no choice, the Chamber of Commerce said it came down on the side of the increased payroll expansion of the shops would bring to the city. SPRR claimed that their Sacramento payroll at that time was \$8 million a year.<sup>11</sup>

The Sacramento City Council had a sudden change of mind and, in spite of its own Engineer's testimony, sided with the Chamber of Commerce and voted unanimously against requesting a new depot order from the State Railroad Commission. *The Sacramento Bee's* owners were disgusted. "What is the matter with Sacramento?" *The Bee* asked. "The late Charles S. Fee of SPRR declared to a friend that Sacramento should be twice the city she is easily if she took hold of things with the same determination, the same spirit, the untiring labors and the unity and harmony which Los Angeles accomplishes results."<sup>12</sup>

The Depot order finally came during the 1923–24 term of the State Railroad Commission, at which time one member of the commission had close ties to Sacramento.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Dec. 2, 1920, p. 2: "City Wants Station Inquiry Resumed."

<sup>11</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Feb. 9, 1921, p. 6: "Plans to Ask for New Station Are Halted By Chamber: Committee Explains Officials OF SP Said Demand Would Halt Expansion of Shops."

<sup>12</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, February 9, 1921, p. 20: "Must Sacramento Always Do Obeisance When The Southern Pacific Nods?"

Sacramento's new city charter, which was to go into effect on July 1, 1923, called for the appointment of a city manager. Clyde Leroy Seavey, an Illinois native appointed by Hiram Johnson to the State Board of Control, was selected by the City Council as the first to hold that position. Seavey had earned \$5,000 per year on the state board, but would earn \$10,000 as City Manager. Seavey served only 18 months as City Manager before he was appointed by Governor Friend W. Richardson to fill a vacant seat on the State Railroad Commission.<sup>13</sup>

Daniel W. Carmichael, former City of Sacramento mayor and founder of the village of Carmichael east of Sacramento, vowed that he would "speak on behalf of The People" before the Railroad Commission and insist upon a new depot. For its part, SPRR said that its current station was "good enough" and that it had no plans to build a new one. Railroad commissioners challenged City Commission members John Q. Brown and Gus S. Turner for seeming to contradict themselves during their testimony. Both men told the state officials that the old station was inadequate yet the city did not need a new one.<sup>14</sup>

Grove L. Johnson, former state senator, congressman, and the father of then Senator Hiram W. Johnson, said "The finances of the Southern Pacific are good now, and it would no more put a crimp in that railroad to build this depot than for George Peltier to pay \$5 as an initiation fee in some lodge. This talk about the shops is all camouflage, and I have heard it for the past thirty years; it is all done for delay." Progressive era historian George Mowry called Johnson a "regular leader of the standpat machine." In 1907, however, the elder Johnson rebelled against the railroad machine, "perhaps to increase his nuisance value," Mowry said. *San Francisco Bulletin* owner Fremont Older called the 1907 California legislature a "creature of the Southern Pacific and Grove Johnson." Johnson, Older said, "is the whole assembly."<sup>15</sup> At the time of his testimony before the Railroad Commission he was in the twilight of his public career, holding the title of "Receiver of public moneys at the United States land office at Sacramento," a position he held until 1925.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *The San Francisco Chronicle*, May 8, 1921, p. 61, "Sacramento Names Seavy [sic] Manager;" July 22, 1922, p. 7, "Move to Fire City manager is Begun;" *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 30, 1922, p. 11, "Rowell To Quit Post;" *New York Times*, Aug. 7, 1943, p. 11, "C.L. Seavey Dies; FPC Ex-Chairman." Chester Harvey Rowell, a former publisher of the *Fresno Morning Republican*, was a founding member of the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, a close confidant of Hiram W. Johnson, and a frequent state board and commission member. In the 1930s Rowell would serve as editor for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

<sup>14</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Feb. 11, 1921, p. 1 "Carmichael Will Press Demands For New Station;" Feb. 12, 1921, p. 1 "Citizens Will Ask Decision On New Station;" Feb. 14, 1921, p. 1: "Southern Pacific Says Its Station Is Good Enough."

<sup>15</sup> George E. Mowry, *The California Progressives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951; Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1963), 64, 111-112.

<sup>16</sup> Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=J000134>, accessed July 3, 2009.

“Huntington told me before he died he was going to build a \$400,000 depot here,” Johnson said. “It was a blow to California when he died.” Johnson had travelled across the country dozens of times and visited some of the great capitals of Europe. “There may be worse depots than the one at Sacramento,” he said, “but I didn’t see them.” Railroad Commissioners ultimately decided it imprudent “to proceed in the exercise of its powers when [Sacramento] officially states it does not wish a new depot now.”<sup>17</sup>

Later in 1923 Sacramento officials received some tantalizing news. Julius K. Kruttschnitt, chairman of the railroad’s executive committee, told the Interstate Commerce Commission it would build new stations at Sacramento and Reno if it successfully avoided divorce from the Central Pacific. Kruttschnitt said the line had held back improvements awaiting the outcome of that litigation.<sup>18</sup>

The next year, SPRR again said that it was awaiting the outcome of Railroad Commission hearings to be held in Sacramento during October 1923 before deciding whether to build a station or not. Kruttschnitt said the line had three major projects it was working on: double-tracking of all Central Pacific lines throughout California; completion of the Natron cut-off; and the construction of a new station in Sacramento.<sup>19</sup> One of SPRR’s new claims was that it had begun to plan for the new station as early as 1904, but was waiting until “Sacramento had grown sufficiently to warrant new terminal facilities.”<sup>20</sup>

Kruttschnitt and Sproule were well aware of the changes taking place in California transportation, but it is not clear that they could have foreseen their extent. Kruttschnitt blamed low earnings along SPRR’s western lines in part to a drop in passenger revenues due to “highway competition.”<sup>21</sup> Historian Paul Sabin shows that the shift from trains to cars and trucks was occurring nationally but was especially pronounced in California. “As early as the second decade of the century, automobiles were becoming the favored mode of transportation. In part this was accomplished by state, county, and municipal

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<sup>17</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Feb. 15, 1921, p. 1, 16: “Commissioners’ Attitude Likely Cost Station.”

<sup>18</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Nov. 22, 1922, p. 1: “Southern Pacific Plans New Station: Kruttschnitt, On Stand At Unmerger Hearing, Says Better Passenger Terminal Will Be Built Here If Road Keeps Central Pacific.”

<sup>19</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Sept. 18, 1923, p. 14: “Early Start Of New Station Promised: Kruttschnitt, Chairman of Board of Southern Pacific, Here on Inspection Tour, Says Work Will Begin Soon.” Others traveling with Kruttschnitt included William Sproule, president of the Southern Pacific Company; Carl Shoup, v.p.; J.H. Dyer, g.m.; G.W. Boschke, chief engineer; E.D. Mayo, Sacramento divisional engineer; George McCormack, general superintendant of motor power; and W.M. Jackle, asst. engineer of maintenance.

<sup>20</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Oct. 2, 1923, p. 1: “Plans Submitted To Railroad Commission;” Oct. 23, 1923, p. 1: “110 Days Given For Submission of Station Plans.”

<sup>21</sup> *The Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 17, 1925, p. 3, “Espee Planning Improvements.”

support for state and county highways “comparable to that received by the railroads, canals, and turnpikes during the previous century.”<sup>22</sup>

The automobile had changed attitudes about all forms of mass transportation, whether railroads or trolleys. Urban historian Robert M. Fogelson said “a large and growing number of Americans opted to drive downtown after 1920.” They had been dissatisfied with mass transit—crowded, uncomfortable, and unreliable—and that was before World War I led to even more abysmal service as the companies kept old equipment in service, deferred repairs and maintenance, and began to awaken to the impact of the automobile on the industry.<sup>23</sup>

The railroad’s threat was the traveler’s joy. “How can one pursue happiness by any swifter and surer means... than by the use of the automobile?” the *Los Angeles Times* asked in 1926. Sacramento County’s vehicle registrations jumped from 19,267 in 1921 to 44,572 in 1928. With nearly 1.9 million cars in the state by 1930, California led the nation, and the state government was helping to lead the charge.<sup>24</sup>

SPRR ultimately chose to locate its new Sacramento passenger terminal at the site of the recently filled Lake Sutter, popularly known as China Slough, which had bordered several lots on the north side of I Street between 3rd and 5th Streets.<sup>25</sup> Between the late nineteenth century and the Great Depression of the 1930s, widespread concern and action to enhance civic beauty spread to virtually every urban center in the country. The City Beautiful Movement developed in the late nineteenth century as a reaction by engineers, architects, and social reformers to the dismal conditions found in American cities due to industrialization, urbanization, and sheer neglect. Launched by Daniel Burnham’s orderly “Great White City” housing the 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, the City Beautiful Movement would become a hallmark of Progressive Era thinking resulting in such notable landmarks as Civic Center in San Francisco, and the Mall west of the Capitol in Sacramento.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Sabin, *Crude Politics: The California Oil Market, 1900-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 159-161.

<sup>23</sup> Robert M. Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), 250-251.

<sup>24</sup> Walton Bean, *California: An Interpretive History*, Second Ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), 378; W.H. Gorman, *Report on Railroad Situation in the City of Sacramento: Supplementing the City Planning Commission’s Preliminary Transportation Report* (San Francisco, CA: California Railroad Commission, Engineering Department, Transportation Division, 1930), p.8.

<sup>25</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Nov. 2, 1918, p. 2: “Suction Dredge to Fill Land Behind S.P. Shops.”

<sup>26</sup> See Kevin Starr, *Golden Gate: The Life and Times of America’s Greatest Bridge* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 142-143; Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 144-145; Howard P. Chudocoff and Judith E. Smith, *The Evolution of American Urban Society*, Fifth Ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), 199-200; *The Sacramento Union*, Feb. 21, 1926, p.

Sacramento's City Beautiful proponents had their eyes on that fetid body of water east of the Sacramento River levee for a long time. Lake Sutter—"an unpicturesque sea of water and mud"<sup>27</sup>—was exactly the sort of urban landscape that the advocates of urban renewal longed to get their hands on. Known to locals as China Slough, "so named," *The Sacramento Bee* said, "because a number of Chinese in the pioneer days of Sacramento history are known to have sunk into the ooze and drowned at various times."<sup>28</sup> For decades, railroad shop workers used the lake as a dumping ground for everything from old boilers and shop scraps to ties and boxes.<sup>29</sup> SPRR reclaimed portions of the lake as its needs dictated, but civic boosters grew impatient and demanded the railroad relinquish control. Civic boosters sought to fill the eyesore and turn the area into a city park. *The Sacramento Bee* portrayed a bucolic lake lined with shade trees and filled with sail boats.

A history of the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce includes an account of "Some impractical individual [who] suggested planting bamboo along its shore, launching redwood rafts on its surface, onto which could be carried the city street sweepings. When the rafts were full, this theorist suggested they be rented for flower and vegetable gardens." The Chamber director suggested "the less said about the slough, the better." After years of debate, SPRR completely filled the area with sand and rocks dredged from the bottom of the American River in 1919. The first structure the railroad promised to build was a new foundry, just east of the levee on the Sacramento River side of the lot.<sup>30</sup>

Of course, there was also the matter of the Chinese and Japanese. China Slough got its name in part because Chinese residents had built homes along its shore. California's long-standing agitation against the Chinese had subsided at about the same time as the Japanese population in the state had begun to grow. Led by civic boosters such as *The Sacramento Bee*, local politicians such as State Senator James M. Inman, and virtually the entire City Council, Sacramento became the center of California's anti-Japanese activity in the 1910s.<sup>31</sup> In a *Sacramento Star* article accompanying a cartoon showing

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28: "Beautification is Another term For Fighting Ugliness; Its Utilitarian Value in the Building of a Community is Important."

<sup>27</sup> *The Sacramento Star*, July 3, 1906, p. 2, "A Little Mixed About Smells."

<sup>28</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Feb. 27, 1926, p. D-8.

<sup>29</sup> D. L. Joslyn, "Sacramento General Shops: Southern Pacific Company—Pacific Lines," Unpublished typescript, 1948. On file at the California State Railroad Museum Library.

<sup>30</sup> Myrtle Shaw Lord, *A Sacramento Saga: Fifty Years of Achievement—Chamber of Commerce Leadership* (Sacramento: Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, 1946), 176; *Images of Rail: Sacramento's Southern Pacific Shops*, p. 16, 37-42; *The Sacramento Bee*, Nov. 2, 1918, p. 4. "Suction Dredge to Fill Land Behind S.P. Shops."

<sup>31</sup> *The San Francisco Chronicle*, April 23, 1913, p. 12: "All Protests To Be Swept Aside: Editor McClatchy Says That People of California Will Restrict Japanese;" *The Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1919, p. 15: "Administration Forces Divided;" *The Sacramento Bee*, July 7, 1923, p. 1, 4: "Council Takes Up Japanese tenant Building Protest;"

merchants of East Asian heritage milking a cow labeled “Sacramento Resources” that had been fattened by the Sacramento Business Man, lawyer Francis J. Heney said the Japanese represented a “direct peril to our nation as an institution,” and a threat to the “very foundation of the republic.”<sup>32</sup> In 1923 James Flanagan, Traveler’s Hotel manager and spokesman for merchants on the west end I and J Streets, promised city officials that,

“When [property owners get the railroad’s assurance] a great revival of business is sure to follow. The blocks facing the site on I Street will be torn down and modern new business houses erected and maintained by white people instead of the present Chinese and Japanese stores. Likewise, J Street merchants can be expected to improve their property and share in keeping that portion of the business district alive and worthy of the city.”

When the Railroad Commission announced its decision to require the SP to build the new station, *The Sacramento Bee* insisted it meant the “knell of Sacramento’s Chinatown in its present location.... With the depot’s location now definitely settled, immediate action is looked for which will change the present unattractive squat buildings occupied by Chinese shops, produce houses and restaurants, into a modern attractive business section.”<sup>33</sup>

SPRR president William Sproule especially embraced the City Beautiful Movement because the railroad needed to reverse passenger losses. He told the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce that “Sacramento is the home of the Southern Pacific, the cradle from which a baby road has grown to be one of the greatest railroad systems in the world.... Let me admonish you, do not allow the city council, the city administration or anyone else advise you to cut down a single tree on the ground that only a village has trees on its business streets. This city has shown a worthy example and points the way for other cities in this.”<sup>34</sup>

Like most American cities, Sacramento’s leaders operated under the assumption that growth meant success. Their proclamations reflect their belief that, unlike San Francisco or Los Angeles, Sacramento was a wonderful place to live and raise a family. They

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Michael J. Meloy, “The Long Road to Manzanar: Land, Race, and Citizenship in the Anti-Japanese Movement, 1900-1942,” PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> *Sacramento Star*, Dec. 22, 1916, p. 7: “Francis J. Heney tells Nation Why West Opposes Unlimited Japanese Immigration.”

<sup>33</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, July 14, 1923, p. A-7: “Western End of City Interested in Station Plans: Location of New Southern Pacific Buildings Is Held Matter Vital To Growth of Western I and J Streets;” Oct. 2, 1923, p. 1: “New Station To Mean Moving Of Chinatown For New Buildings.”

<sup>34</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Oct. 2, 1923, p. 1: “Sproule Says Railroad Has Faith In City: Southern Pacific Head Pledges Company’s Efforts To Make Sacramento Bigger and Better; Tells Station Plans: SEES BRILLIANT FUTURE FOR VALLEY.”

imagined Sacramento as “Prosperity’s Magnet.”<sup>35</sup> Few places in California, or anywhere else for that matter, could boast of the combination of weather and resources within easy reach. Its location at the confluence of two major rivers, and its hold on most of the major state government offices, left many in the community bewildered that their city remained a backwater compared to the state’s three major coastal cities, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Everybody thought that “someday” Sacramento would become a great metropolis.<sup>36</sup>

For Sacramento to realize its full potential, a dual program of urban and rural growth would be required. Californians had begun to imagine themselves as uniquely configured: in tune with the outdoors and the world of nature, but completely comfortable and at home in civilized and modern urbanity. The first half of this vision required the acquisition of additional lands around the perimeter of the city to house an expected influx of new citizens resulting from the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914. Sacramento’s business and political leaders eyed two large tracts of land located north of the city. Up until the first years of the twentieth century, those lands belonged to a few rich landowners. Two of the larger properties, a huge tract in the Sutter Basin (owned, in part, by *The Sacramento Bee* publisher Valentine S. McClatchy), and James Ben Ali Haggin’s 44,000-acre Rancho del Paso, both sold in 1910. The breakup of those large properties helped open the door to Sacramento’s expansion, but even so, population growth could not keep pace with Southern California. Sacramento slipped from the third- to fourth-largest city in the state, behind San Diego.<sup>37</sup>

As Sacramento entered the second year of the 1920s it was hard to imagine life could get much better in Sacramento—that is if you were using urban growth as a measure. In 1850 Sacramento was a 4.5-square-mile city with 6,850 people. By 1930, nearly 95,000 people lived within the city’s 13.9 square miles, cramming nearly as many people into each square mile as lived in the entire town in 1850. The SPRR shops were “bursting with activity.” Orders for 18 locomotives, seven of which were complete, were destined for the soon-to-be-completed Natron cutoff connecting Grass Lake to Eugene, Oregon. In 1925 the shops averaged 2,700 workers daily with an average monthly payroll of \$318,000 and annual payroll of nearly \$3,000,000.<sup>38</sup> Building permits in the city were at record levels. In 1924 and 1925 the city issued more than 6,400 permits worth nearly \$19 million. As the new SPRR Depot opened, the Turn Verein hall on J Street neared completion; the junior college on Freeport Boulevard, the Lewis Apartments at 11th

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<sup>35</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, April 17, 1915, p. 18: “Prosperity’s Magnet” (image).

<sup>36</sup> *The Sacramento Star* April 18, 1919. *The Star* said, “Sacramento must inevitably become a great city.”

<sup>37</sup> Joseph A. McGowan, *History of the Sacramento Valley*, 2 vols. (New York and West Palm Beach, Florida: Lewis Publishing, Inc., 1961), II: 141.

<sup>38</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Jan. 1, 1926, p. 13: “Indications Point To 1926 As An Unprecedented Year In Southern Pacific Shops Here.”

Street and N Street, Sacramento's Municipal Auditorium, the new East Lawn mausoleum, and the city's first sky scraper, the Elks Temple, were all well underway.<sup>39</sup>

The SPRR Depot was the second depot built in Sacramento in the 1920s. Union Station was the first, completed in the summer of 1925 at the corner of 11th and H Streets, in the heart of the city's hotel and business district. Built to consolidate the Sacramento Gas and Electric Railway and the Sacramento-Woodland tracks, Union Station Railroads, both local and distant, were feeling the pinch of automobile popularity. The Union Station, tiny by comparison to the Southern Pacific Depot, was abandoned in 1941 and torn down in 1972.

By contrast, the SPRR Depot was both impressive in its size and attractive in its architectural presentation. The Depot building, *The Sacramento Bee* said, "presents a massive spectacle of solidity and impressiveness." The new station "standing as a symbol of what has been accomplished, also represents the development that is to come, for the structure is designed not only for the present but for future needs."<sup>40</sup>

Both of the city's major papers, *The Union* and *The Bee*, featured special pull-out sections reporting on the opening festivities. Neither left a stone unturned. *The Bee* included a story (and accompanying photograph) that told the importance of the new Depot from the point of view of several SPRR "Red Caps." "A man who chooses baggage carrying as a life's occupation wants to be a good one. And the prime requisite to be a good baggage carrier is having a first class station to do the carrying in. This is the philosophy of life of five of the 'red cap' crew, who have been carrying grips and making life easier for passengers at the old Sacramento station for five years or more," *The Bee* began. Walter Dunlap, the senior Red Cap at the station with fourteen years of service, estimated his luggage carried would reach to Honolulu and back. All the Red Caps were expecting improved tips befitting the improved environment.<sup>41</sup>

American railroad station designs ranged from the "simplest vernacular and colonial buildings" to a "riot of revivalist and hybrid styles."<sup>42</sup> San Francisco architects Bliss and Faville designed the Sacramento Valley Station in a Mediterranean style with Italianate and Spanish features; very much in keeping with their earlier design for the SPRR

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<sup>39</sup> *Report on Railroad Situation in the City of Sacramento* p. 2; *The Sacramento Bee*, Jan. 1, 1926, p. 21 "New Record Set for Building in City Last Year."

<sup>40</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Feb. 6, 1926, p. A-6 "Building Here is Greatest Known in History;" Feb. 27, 1926, p. D-5.

<sup>41</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Feb. 27, 1926, p. D-6: "'Red Caps' Happy in Fine Building."

<sup>42</sup> Jeffrey Richards and John M. Mackenzie, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 36-37.

headquarters building, opened at 65 Market Street in San Francisco in 1916. They were most famous as designers of the St. Francis Hotel on Union Square.<sup>43</sup>

Born on August 23, 1872 at Lake Tahoe, Walter Danforth Bliss was the second son of Elizabeth Tobey and Duane Leroy (D.L.) Bliss of Carson City, Nevada, a lumber baron who gained additional wealth from selling part of his bank to the Bank of California, organizing the Virginia and Truckee Railroad, and founding the Carson and Tahoe Lumbering and Fluming Company of California and Nevada which clear-cut much of the old growth forest surrounding Lake Tahoe. Walter went east for his education, receiving a degree in 1895 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).<sup>44</sup> After working with the architectural firm, McKim, Mead, and White in New York, he returned to California with his partner, William Baker Faville. Faville had been born in San Andreas, California, but his family moved to Buffalo, New York. Also a graduate of MIT, Faville went to work for McKim, Meade, and White in 1896.<sup>45</sup>

Bliss & Faville became famous for their extraordinary homes that combined East Coast luxury with West Coast sensibilities. They were also some of the most sought after commercial architects in San Francisco. In addition to the St. Francis Hotel, their portfolio includes the Tahoe Tavern in Tahoe City (demolished), the Geary Theater and Annex, the Crocker Building, the Security Pacific Bank, the Chi Phi Fraternity in Berkeley, the University Club, the Masonic Temple, the Metropolitan Club, the Bank of Italy, the Matson Building, and the Women's Athletic Club, all in San Francisco, unless otherwise noted. Faville served as one of the three members of the Executive Architectural Council for the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition.<sup>46</sup>

Railroad industry commentators considered the Sacramento station one of the most modern stations in the West.<sup>47</sup> Mrs. E.M. Tyler of the Chamber of Commerce's women's bureau said the station was a "magnificent symbol of progress" and declared that while

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<sup>43</sup> The Historic Resource Inventory for the depot includes biographical sketches of both Walter Danforth Bliss and William Baker Faville.

<sup>44</sup> Frances Dinkelspiel, *Towers of Gold: How One Jewish Immigrant named Isaias Hellman Created California* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009), 206-207; James Henley, "National Register Nomination-Southern Pacific Depot" (Sacramento, 1974), 8-10.

<sup>45</sup> James Henley, "National Register Nomination-Southern Pacific Depot" (Sacramento, 1974), 8-10.

<sup>46</sup> James Henley, "National Register Nomination-Southern Pacific Depot" (Sacramento, 1974), 8-10.; *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 23, 1901, p. 10, "New fraternity House At Berkeley;" May 1, 1920, p. 6, "The Women's Athletic Club Will Build on Adjoining Lot;"

W.B. Faville, "Phases of Panama Pacific International Exposition Architecture," *The American Architect*, Vol. 107, no. 2037 (Jan. 6, 1915), A1.

<sup>47</sup> "Southern Pacific Builds Station at Sacramento, Cal." in *Railway Age*, August 14, 1926, p. 273.

“man builds of brick and stone, the loving hands of loyal women must dedicate, commemorate and beautify his efforts.”<sup>48</sup> The builder, F. E. Nicolsen of Davison and Nicolsen, a general contractor with offices in the California Fruit Building, said the 100-foot-wide frontage, with trees and fountains, will be one of the “showplaces of Sacramento.” He predicted that there “will be lingering memory of the first impressions of Sacramento by newly arriving persons.”<sup>49</sup>

Sacramento’s officials claimed that passenger traffic was only exceeded by New York, Chicago, Omaha, Kansas City, New Orleans, and San Francisco. Though the Depot was clearly one of the major transportation centers in the West, it is difficult to verify claims that by the mid 1920s “86 trains passed through the facility on a daily basis, including 64 passenger trains and 22 freight trains. A daily average of 4,500 passengers passed through the terminal.” *On Track!*, the newsletter for the California State Railroad Museum, cites a 1926 Sacramento division employee timetable that lists a total of 32 passenger trains daily—including first class, secondary, and “motor express” and mixed passenger and freight runs—as originating, terminating, or stopping in route in Sacramento. These numbers were daily averages: peak periods were higher. But by the next year, the average daily total declined to 28 per day.<sup>50</sup>

After the Depot was completed, workers at the SPRR Sacramento Shops collected funds to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the groundbreaking ceremony for the Transcontinental Railroad. With additional funds contributed by SPRR, they contracted with San Francisco artist John MacQuarrie for a mural to be placed at the east end of the Depot waiting room. That painting, “Breaking Ground at Sacramento, January 8, 1863, For First Transcontinental Railroad,” was executed in San Francisco on a 10’-6” tall canvas installed in the Depot in January 1931. MacQuarrie (1871–1944), best known for his Donner Party monument, also created the memorial for Theodore Judah, currently in Old Sacramento. That memorial was originally part of the park at the south end entrance to the Depot grounds. MacQuarrie ultimately painted murals for numerous SPRR and Central Pacific depots, including Salt Lake City, Utah; Palo Alto, California; San Jose, California; Houston, Texas; and Mesa, Arizona.<sup>51</sup>

Over time, the depot’s meaning to the community changed significantly. When first envisioned, the “park-like” setting in front of the Depot included street car loops to

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<sup>48</sup> *The Sacramento Union*, Feb. 28, 1926, p. 1: “New \$2,500,000 S.P. Station Opened: Old, Young Join In Program For Christening Of Huge Structure.”

<sup>49</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Dec. 9, 1925, p. 1: “Depot Ready By The Beginning of the Year.”

<sup>50</sup> City of Sacramento, *Official Listing of Structures and Preservation Areas With Architectural or Historical Significance* (1998); “River City Depots, Part Two: Legacies of the Roaring Twenties,” *On Track!*, Vol. VII, no. 2 (summer, 1998), 2-3.

<sup>51</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, Jan. 6, 1931, p. 4; James Henley, “National Register Nomination-Southern Pacific Depot” (Sacramento, 1974), 8-10.

connect the depot with Sacramento's suburbs. Later, the front lot was widened to accommodate city buses. More recent configurations accommodate only automobiles. After several decades of economic decline that World War II only halted temporarily, the railroads began to abandon these once illustrious showplaces. Sacramento is fortunate that the builders of Interstate 5 through downtown between 2nd and 3rd Streets spared the building from the wrecking ball. Amtrak assumed responsibility for the depot in 1971. It was the last station in town to serve its original function.<sup>52</sup>

## **Part 2. Architectural Information**

### **A. General Statement:**

- 1. Architectural character:** The Sacramento Southern Pacific Railroad Station District<sup>53</sup> is remarkable for the grandiose Depot and for the Moderne-style canopies sheltering the platforms. The depot property as a whole embodies the pinnacle of rail, as transport for people and goods, prior to the Great Depression and to the rise and eventual dominance of the automobile. Like the great 1939 Union Station in Los Angeles, the 1935 Cahill Station in San Jose, and other California depots from the 1920s and 1930s, the Sacramento SPRR Depot was built as a bold statement of the dominance of rail transport, even at a time when railroad passenger and freight business was being lost to automobile and truck traffic.

The building's essential architectural character is that of a simplified Mediterranean-revival style, containing elements of Spanish as well as Italian Renaissance-revival detail with Beaux Arts proportions. From the south façade, the building appears symmetrical, though in plan it is L-shaped with a large three-story hipped-roof central mass, flanked by two-story wings at either side. The east wing, while the same width as the west wing, is much deeper, creating the ell at the northeast corner of the building.

The building's south façade's symmetry is characterized by the five-bay of evenly spaced arched openings in the central mass, with equal wings at either side. The central mass, as noted, features a tiled hipped roof while the side elements are flat-roofed.

The north (track side) of the building uses simpler details, emphasizing its functional use and character. The east and west side elevations mimic the

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<sup>52</sup> Jeffrey Richards and John M. Mackenzie, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 36-37; "River City Depots, Part Two: Legacies of the Roaring Twenties," *On Track!*, Vol. VII, no. 2 (summer, 1998), 4.

<sup>53</sup> ICF Jones & Stokes. Historical Resources Evaluation Report for the Sacramento Intermodal Transportation Facility, 2008. Sacramento, California.

appearance of the side elements at the south façade, with tall rectangular windows.

The design success of the Depot and its comfortable and spacious waiting room is evidenced by its continuous use, relatively unaltered to the present. The depot marries design and function. Within a growing collection of American railroad station types, the building embodies community pride, importance, and prosperity.

Looking at the SPRR Depot District overall, it is apparent that the central feature is the formal, highly symmetrical Depot, which is meant to be viewed primarily from "I" Street, front and center. Historically this vantage communicated the importance of the depot as a gateway to Sacramento or to places beyond. This classical symmetry is reinforced by evenly spaced, grandiose Romanesque fenestration flanked by wings that match each other in mass and size, and in placement of fenestration. The fact that the building's function has submitted so completely to the formality of symmetry suggests that massing and shape are important aspects of overall visual character and strongly convey a sense of the building's time and place.

The Depot's importance is most apparent when the building's façade is viewed. A train station is approached from both the vehicular and pedestrian entrance and from the tracks. However, operations on the track side of the structure do not lend themselves to great visibility as a whole, compared to the façade as it was originally designed. The architect clearly emphasizes the façade through the design of the building, with grand entries and subjection of function to design concepts such as symmetry. Although all exterior overall visual aspects are significant on the building, the south façade is particularly important to understand the architectural design emphasis of Bliss & Faville.

On the track side of the building, function is allowed to supersede design elements such as symmetry and architectural detail. The riveted I-beam technology used in construction of the passenger platforms is exposed and would, like the newer trains servicing the station, have expressed to passengers the modern and forward-looking nature of the Depot, perhaps to convey the message that rail travel remained a vital and important transportation form in the face of increasing automobile popularity.

- 2. Condition of fabric:** The platform amenities and Depot waiting room and exterior are generally in good condition, with some alterations. Finishes of interior spaces of the Depot that are not open to the general public or leased to

Amtrak are generally in poor condition with little or no maintenance. There were no structural or other significant deficiencies detected.<sup>54</sup>

## B. Description of Exterior:

- 1. Overall dimensions:** The Depot building is approximately 370' long by 128' wide at the east end and 54' wide at the west end with a height of 58' at the tallest elevation and a total area of approximately 54,000 square feet, not including the basement or attic.
- 2. Foundations:** Reinforced concrete girders on massive square-plan concrete piers, creosote-treated timber piles and poured, reinforced concrete perimeter walls support the structure.
- 3. Walls:** The walls are a combination of steel and reinforced concrete frames with unreinforced brick masonry infill/facades. The exterior unreinforced brick masonry façade and side elevation walls are common bond with one course of headers every five or six courses with narrow mortar joints. Brick coloration is a range of light to burnt orange hues. The exterior brick has various non-original lighting fixtures, signs, wiring, hardware, and miscellany affixed to it. The walls are also ornamented with terracotta panels, cornice and datum moldings, and parapet balustrades. Some terracotta includes reinforcing bar and a glaze to approximate travertine marble.
- 4. Structural system, framing:** The structure rests on concrete perimeter walls and two interior rows of concrete piers that support reinforced concrete floor girders. The Depot contains a combination of steel and reinforced-concrete frames with unreinforced brick masonry infill and veneer. Steel trusses support the central mass roof and give shape to the vaulted ceiling above the waiting room.
- 5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:** Two types of canopies adorn the Depot building and serve as the primary shelter for the platforms. The canopies on the south façade are broad, ornately decorative pressed metal-on-steel-frame structures finished in decorative cornices and having recessed panels beneath. These canopies are suspended by decorative, squared rods affixed to the walls. The canopies align with windows and the glazed doors beneath them. A side canopy on the west wing is of a different design, also tin-on-steel-frame. This smaller canopy shelters a side entrance into a space that was used as the kitchen. It has the appearance of a small awning with a course of semicircular drops as a cornice. The north (trackside) elevation features a steel with wood decking canopy roof that extends nearly across the concourse at the eastern ell of this elevation. There is also a butterfly canopy extending across nearly all of the

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<sup>54</sup> Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc., Consulting Engineers, April 30, 2002, "Structural Evaluation of the Southern Pacific Rail Depot Station Building."

central mass at this elevation. The canopies on the platforms have no classical illusions and follow the form of advanced technological design of the time: riveted I-beam construction. These umbrella or butterfly canopies angle slightly up to their eaves, pulling water to centrally placed drains and gutters. The curves are also reminiscent of the Moderne style, a style of ascending popularity in 1926.

**6. Chimneys:** A steel flue affixed to the north elevation wall vents the boiler in the basement.

**7. Openings:**

**a. Doorways and doors:** The exterior doors have bronze frames integral with the window system and they contain a full clear annealed plate glazing. There are distinctive original triple-bar metal pulls and kickplates on the doors. A number of doors and windows are either damaged or have been replaced with dissimilar items. Additional door and window information is provided in the description below for each interior space. On the south façade, doorways are denoted by suspended canopies at the five arched openings in the central mass as well as a double-wide canopy east of the central mass. The rear (trackside) doors are sheltered beneath a loggia and a wide canopy that extends the full width of the central mass.

**b. Windows** The windows at the south (front) elevation are either rectilinear steel-sash frames with 48 lights capped with an arched (semicircular) transom with 20 radiused glass panels, or rectilinear steel-sash frames with 54 lights (46 lights at the exterior doors). The five round-headed arched openings exist at the central pavilion; five jack arch openings exist at each of the flanking wings. Window openings and doorway openings are highlighted by decorative brick surrounds. The flat-arch openings include a keystone feature at the top. The keystone elements on the round-headed arch openings are decorative terra cotta elements in a scroll pattern. The exterior windows at the east and west elevations are rectilinear steel-sash frames with 54 lights (46 lights at the exterior double doors and 37 lights at the sliding doors on the east side), similar to the rectangular openings on the south façade. The lower exterior windows at the north (rear) elevation are rectilinear steel-sash frames of various sizes and light counts, including large windows with 54 lights at the western portion of the building to match the south (front) elevation. There are upper exterior arched (semicircular) windows with 20 radius glass panels at the third floor of the north (rear) elevation that also match the south elevation. The windows in the south (front) elevation and the upper windows at the north (rear) elevation contain amber-colored translucent glazing while all other windows contain clear annealed plate glazing.

Easily removable heating and air-conditioning units have been added in windows at numerous locations.

The north elevation also has a flat-roofed, glazed, L-shaped addition with the purpose of creating a shelter for the ramp leading into the pedestrian tunnel under the tracks with perpendicular ramps to the platforms. This shelter's walls and roof have hundreds of lites set in a fixed steel sash.

## 8. Roof:

- a. **Shape, covering:** The Depot roof is a combinations of flat and “mansard” hipped roof areas. The wing roofs are mostly flat and circumscribed by a parapet wall that continues in common bond brick from the wall below and interspersed symmetrically by glazed terra cotta, elongated balustrades. The central mass has a medium-pitch flat on hipped roof covered in unglazed terra-cotta, Mission-style barrel tiles (straight barrel, not tapered). The original terra cotta tiles were replaced in kind in 2003.<sup>55</sup> The wings of the Depot and the rear extension, located to the north of the central mass hipped roof, have a flat roofs covered by mineral-surfaced cap sheeting. The flat roofs have central gutters. The differing roof types differentiate between the central mass and the wings and help guide visitors to the central doors and the grand waiting room within.

The platform canopies have mineral-surfaced cap roofing over beveled-edge, tongue-in-groove sheathing boards. The roofs of the umbrella canopies slope inward to central gutters, directing water run-off away from eave edges where the canopies parallel trains.

- b. **Cornice, eaves:** The very shallow eaves of the central mass of the Depot are broad, classical with glazed terra cotta components deliberately sized to give the appearance of stone. The glaze approximates pink granite although it is spalling in areas. The perimeter parapet that circumscribes the flat-roofed portions of the building is composed of brick sections interspersed with symmetrically placed glazed, terra cotta balustrade panels.
- c. **Dormers, cupolas, towers:** Not applicable.

- C. **Description of Interior:** With the exception of a warehouse space in the east wing, portions of the original baggage area (also on the east wing), and the basement and fourth floor attic, the interior of the Depot comprises a “finished over” building with decorative treatments that disguise the structural systems. Generally, the interior treatments are more ornate in the first story public spaces and relatively simple in the upper stories. Moderne touches are more evident in the interior than the exterior of the building, as with the Travertine chair rails in the waiting room and other public spaces on the first level, and general lack of moulding in the primary interior spaces.

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<sup>55</sup> HMR Architects, February 2008, “Sacramento Valley Station: Historic Assessment Report” prepared for the City of Sacramento.

The interior of the Depot includes a large waiting room with relocated ticket and information functions and commodious benches. A now partially enclosed low and wide loggia originally led from the waiting room to the north canopy area connecting to the ramp and tunnel that originally connected to the train platforms to the north. Restrooms, storage, and offices are located on the first level in the east wing. The far eastern end of the east wing is used by Amtrak for crew quarters and is a warren of temporary walls. The electrical and boiler rooms are also in the northeastern corner of the building. The west wing contains a meeting room, small offices, restrooms and the original large restaurant space, and the former commercial kitchen with many original features, including refrigeration rooms. Other than the waiting room, halls, and restrooms, much of the first floor, such as the offices and former restaurant space, is not open to the public and vacant.

The centrally-located Waiting Room, with its three-story-high suspended vaulted ceiling, is the most significant historical space in the building and has functioned as a waiting room since the doors opening in 1926. Three large doorways open into the Waiting Room from the sidewalk and driveway in front, while three similar doorways, with two now enclosed, originally furnished access to the room through a loggia from the north, or trackside.

The grand vaulted ceiling of the Waiting Room uses intersecting barrel vaults at the arched openings along each side and is decorated with five-color stencil work that creates various borders and designs. The cornice for this room is an ornamental stepped plaster set at the top of the walls where they intersect the vaulted ceiling.

Apart from generous natural lighting, the room is lit principally by three large highly ornate metal chandeliers, each with 24 evenly spaced lamps. There are also six ornate wall sconces with six lamps each on the side walls.

The flooring is California/Italian marble with travertine inlay design. This flooring is continuous except at the east end of the room, where the original ticket counter had been located. The wood trim is mahogany, imported from the Philippines. There is a 3" wide travertine chair rail set at three feet above the floor, creating the impression of a wainscoting around the room. The oak waiting benches in this room are original to construction of the building and include integral metal heat vents and the Southern Pacific logo.

A one-story high mural exists at the east wall. It was painted by John A. MacQuarrie, installed in 1931 and depicts the ground-breaking of the Central Pacific portion of the Transcontinental Railroad in early 1863.

The west wing of the building originally included a restaurant space, along with a women's "retiring room." The restaurant space, now vacant, includes a double-height volume enclosed by crown molding with a box beam smooth plaster ceiling, evenly-spaced, large multi-light windows along both the north and south walls. A 3" wide

travertine chair rail, similar to those in the Waiting Room, creates the appearance of a wainscoting around the perimeter of the room. A set of double doors within the central bay of the east wall lead from the Lobby to the restaurant space. The flooring is currently asbestos tile, likely installed over scored concrete. The kitchen space adjoins the restaurant to the west and includes two original walk-in icebox/coolers. None of the other kitchen equipment remains.

The most modified space in the depot is a one-story space north of the Waiting Room, which currently serves as a ticketing and baggage area. Concrete block walls of this space intrude into the original north loggia space. The addition blocks two of the original three doorways on the north side of the Waiting Room.

The east-most portion east wing (the east equivalent of the restaurant space) was originally a baggage room on the first floor but is now used chiefly as Amtrak offices. Very little original fabric exists in this space. The east wing also includes modern ADA compliant restrooms (another original set of restrooms exists in the west wing but are not accessible).

The second story spaces, originally used for offices, are now vacant. The office spaces and the corridors that connect them are largely unmodified from their original appearance, except for modern partitions, faux wood paneling and dropped ceilings in most of the office spaces,. The second floor corridor is along the north (trackside) wall and is naturally lighted by the tall arched windows in the central mass Waiting Room area. Transoms, ganged clerestories, and doors leading to the office spaces are original. The corridor includes original “battleship” linoleum. There are also third story office spaces on the east and west portions of the tall central mass on either side of the Waiting Room space. The layout of office spaces is original, although there are a few removable interior partitions. Most office ceilings have suspended acoustical tile roofs, hiding the original plaster.

There are original restroom spaces on the second and third stories. These appear to be largely original, including ceramic tile floors and painted steel partitions with many replaced and now non-functional fixtures. There are also several stairways, leading from the first to second and second to third floors.

**1. Floor plans:** Original floor plans consist of sheets for the foundation and first, second, and third floors. Elevation and cross-section drawings and detail drawings also exist in the set. The plan is built around a three-part horizontal division, with a central Waiting Room space, flanked by largely symmetrical side wings, which were historically used for various purposes. The plan differs dramatically from one story to the next, as discussed below.

- a. Main floor:** The Depot building is approximately 370’ long by 128’ wide at the east end and 54’ wide at the west end. The main floor is divided into three principal spaces: the central Waiting Room, and wings to the east and west.

The west wing was historically a restaurant space while the east wing was used chiefly for baggage handling.

- b. **Second and third floors (east and west wings):** The two wings have office spaces on the second and third floors.
  - c. **Attic:** There is attic space above the third floor, including above the waiting room. The attic is accessible by a staircase from an office space on the third floor, east wing.
  - d. **Gallery:** Not applicable.
2. **Stairways:** The primary stair provides access from the first floor, main grade, to the raised flooring of the original baggage area and also to the second floor, located in the first floor main hallway of the east wing. The stairs rise north to a landing and then turn to the west to a foyer and the second floor's central hallway. The stairs form a quarter-circle on the original baggage room floor. There are simple tubular steel handrails at either side. Another slightly narrower enclosed stairway leads up from the first floor's west wing, north of the former restaurant space. It appears to have been designed for office employees and to be either restricted to the public or to act as a secondary access/egress point. Two open stairways with double glazed doors at the base of each lead from the second floor hallway up to rooms on the third floor. These rooms have some vacant office space and allow access to the flat roofs of the wings. Another stairway leads from the east wing on the third floor to the attic. It is a narrow and steep stairway with wooden post, railing, and balusters on the outside only.
3. **Flooring:** Linoleum flooring covers most of the floors in the Depot except for the waiting room. The waiting room floor and original lobby (the area between the Waiting Room and the original restaurant space) floor consist of 16-0.5" by 16-0.5" "California" marble with an inlaid design and border of imported travertine marble. Some warping of that floor at the northwest corner has occurred and may be a result of minor sagging of the floor structure.<sup>56</sup>
- Scored concrete flooring in the former restaurant space was revealed by maintenance workers for the City of Sacramento in February 2011. Its condition and completeness will not be known until several layers of later flooring are removed.
4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** The interior walls are lathe and plaster. The waiting room has a carefully modeled, suspended vaulted ceiling. The central vault intersects with side vaults that align with the windows. Three decorative metal grates at the top of the main vault, set between the three three-story-high windows

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<sup>56</sup> HMR Architects, 2008.

on the south and north walls, are centered by drop chains from which hang 3 large, original electric pendant metal chandeliers. In the former restaurant space, three two-story-high windows on both the south and west walls align with a three-part classical ceiling. The ceiling is broken into three panels that correspond with the windows. Boxed beams with over-scale entablatures continue into the entablatures of the cornices. Each panel is centered by the remains of wiring and the shadow of the now-missing large light fixtures. This ceiling was revealed within the last five years when the City of Sacramento removed a dropped-ceiling alteration.<sup>57</sup>

## 5. Openings:

- a. **Doorways and doors:** Interior doorways include a pair of two-way, horizontal swinging doors providing an opening to the partitioned storage room at the south end of the interior, in what was originally the restaurant. Additional single-hung wooden doors provide passage through the smaller portioned rooms, including the three offices and kitchen at the southwest corner of the interior. At the northwest corner of the interior, a series of three doorways provide access to a pair of anterooms, within which an additional two doorways lead to a pair of single-stall bathrooms. The doors in the restaurant space are glazed, some with transoms.
- b. **Windows:** There are very few interior windows on the first level, which is lighted by the huge exterior windows. A small group of interior windows exist in the restaurant wing but they have been painted over.. Windows along the interior walls of the second floor office spaces, combined with light coming from the central segment of the three-story windows on the north side of the waiting room, allow natural light to illuminate the second floor hallway. Although now boarded up, transom and clerestory windows were also used to bring light from the hallway to the offices north of it, and vice versa. A multi-pane interior window brings light from an office on the northeast corner of the central mass of the third floor. Glazing on doors on all three floors of the building transfers light into interior spaces.

6. **Decorative features and trim:** In the waiting room, decorative trim is made of marble and wood molding at datums crossing the windows. Elsewhere in the building, decorative trim is wood. The original dark finish of the woodwork still exists on some second floor spaces, most notably the second-floor hallway. The Waiting Room space is the most decorated part of the Depot. The tall mural on the east wall, the decorative sconces, the wooden benches with integral heaters, and other interior elements of this space, described elsewhere, could be considered decorative elements.

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<sup>57</sup> Observation of the author, E. Yarbrough, and confirmed in a conversation with the City of Sacramento's Transportation Dept. Senior Architect, H. Chandler.

7. **Hardware:** Much of the original brass hardware is still extant, most notably on the several exterior doors on the south façade and on doors leading to and from the waiting room and adjacent wings.

## 8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** The heating system is comprised of a steam boiler, steam distribution piping and accessories, steam radiators and a condensate return pump system with piping.<sup>58</sup> Steam heat is provided through bronze grates and carefully spaced oak boards along the doubled sided waiting room benches. The benches include latticed grates at either end and on top, which allow the steam to penetrate to the room and those sitting on the benches. Three large grates at the crown of the vaulted ceiling pull hot air out of the waiting room and into the vented attic.

Natural ventilation was provided via operable windows which, due to the building's fenestration and layout, primarily captured the area's prevailing south to north breezes.

**Lighting:** Lighting in the waiting room includes three large original chandeliers, each with dozens of exposed bulbs and elegant metalwork. The lights hang with three chains each from the center of decorative grates. Large, multiple bulb sconces of elegant torch configurations on the walls of the waiting room provide light lower in the space.

Drop fluorescent lighting fixtures hang in the altered interior spaces, primarily in office spaces. Parts of some original pendant lights survive on the second floor's west wing.

- c. **Plumbing:** Two water heaters are located at the east end of the basement. Galvanized pipes serve the building and show calcium and other mineral deposits.

## D. Site:

1. **Historic landscape design:** Very little survives of the original site design or landscape plantings that originally surrounded the Depot. Changes in the configuration of adjacent streets, as well as adaptations made to meet the parking needs of the public, have transformed the original park-like setting of the building.

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<sup>58</sup> HMR Architects, 2008, pp. 3-1 to 3-3.

“I” Street is the main artery for many of Sacramento’s major civic buildings, which are located to the east of the Depot along “I” Street. As the automobile gained primacy in America for transportation, main arteries like “I” Street often became connectors to the new freeway network developing after World War II. The on-ramp to Interstate 5, which rises from the surface of “I” Street to the elevated freeway directly south and west of the formal Depot façade, greatly changed the character of the Depot in relation to “I” Street. The new freeway onramp diminishes the importance of rail transportation, imposing automobile convenience over civic and other municipal connections to the Depot.

The south approach to the site is now dominated by the main parking lot. The once formal approach leading to the formal, primary façade of the building is now an asphalt parking surface. Construction of the Interstate 5 on-ramp, and the urban renewal area south of “I” Street that closed 4<sup>th</sup> Street, also eliminated the formal entry alignment with 4th Street, which was one of the most important character-defining features on the south side of the site.

The area between the Depot and track features is, and always has been, more utilitarian than the primary façade facing south, reflecting the train-related functions. Baggage is now stored under the original long canopy on the north side of the Depot, the façade of which exhibits a less formal asymmetry overall. The tracks are themselves lines in the landscape expressing the Depot’s purpose of connecting Sacramento with destinations to the east and west to serve passenger and freight transportation needs. The area between the Depot and the Central Shops complex had, over the years, multiple iterations of tracks, buildings, structures and other train-related features. Most recently, the passenger and freight tracks were moved approximately 500 feet north of their original location, and new passenger platforms, tunnel, and walkway, were constructed in 2010.

The original below grade pedestrian tunnel from the original platforms crossing under the tracks to the Depot, which also served baggage carts, is an important part of the site. Although more of an interior, utilitarian feature, its north ramps rise to the tracks and its south ramps, with large glazed shelter, rises to the primary north pedestrian entrance of the Depot and a separate leg to the original baggage area of the Depot.

The area between the Depot and Railway Express Agency building, though altered, provides parking for both buildings and access to the services located in the northeast corner of the Depot. The character of this portion of the site still has features from these uses, including loading docks, facing the adjacent REA building

**2. Outbuildings:** Not applicable.

### **Part 3. Sources of Information**

- A. Architectural Drawings:** Research indicates the earliest drawing plans for the Sacramento Valley Station date to 1925: Bliss & Faville, San Francisco, California.

**B. Early Views:** Historic photos of the Depot and Platform Amenities exist at the California Railroad Museum, Sacramento.

**C. Interviews:** Hinda Chandler, City of Sacramento architect and planner, interviewed by Edward Yarbrough regarding recent alterations to the depot building and the platform amenities, the informal interviews occurred during a series of project meetings from December 2010 through March 2012. **D. Selected Sources:**

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**E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:** Papers of Walter Danforth Bliss, partner in the firm of Bliss & Faville, are housed at the Special Collections of the University of Nevada in Reno but were not inspected in preparing this report.

**F. Supplemental Material:** Not applicable.