

Old Fernandina Depot
100 Atlantic Avenue
Fernandina Beach
Nassau County
Florida

HABS No. FL-280

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FLA.
45-FERB,
1-

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7123

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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OLD FERNANDINA DEPOT

HABS No. FL-280

Location: 100 Atlantic Avenue (NE corner of Atlantic Avenue and Front Street)
Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida

Present Owner: City of Fernandina Beach

Present Occupant: Fernandina Beach Chamber of Commerce

Present Use: Offices and visitor reception

Statement of Significance: Completed in 1899 by the Fernandina Terminal Company of New York, the depot was constructed to replace a prior station which was destroyed in an 1898 storm. This brick structure is a typical example of a small, late nineteenth century railroad passenger depot in Florida.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: In 1898 Fernandina's passenger station was located on the Center Street Wharf which was west of the present railroad tracks and just north of Center Street (now Atlantic Avenue). (Sanborn map of Fernandina, Florida, June 1897) On October 2, 1898, a storm completely destroyed the wharf and depot. (The Florida Mirror, October 5, 1898)

Apparently the decision was then made to construct another depot east of the tracks on the present site because the Old Fernandina Depot was opened May 29, 1899, when the first train arrived at the station. (Florida Times Union, May 28, 1899) Since H. R. Duval took formal possession of the property for the Fernandina Terminal Company in 1897, this was most likely the company which sponsored the construction of the depot.

2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners:

The Old Fernandina Depot was built on lots 1 through 5 in Block 268 of the official plat of the City of Fernandina which was lithographed and issued by the Florida Railroad in 1857 and enlarged, revised, and reissued by the Florida Town Improvement Company in 1887 and 1901. The chain of title is drawn from the Deed Books of Nassau County, Florida:

1890 Deed, December 10, 1890, recorded April 11, 1891, in Book Z, page 149. Lots 1 through 18 and 22 through 28 of Block 268 were sold by

Florida Town Improvement Company

to

Fernandina Development Company.

1894 Mortgage Deed, March 29, 1894, recorded in Book Z, page 370. A \$4,500 mortgage was taken out on lots 1 through 4 of Block 268 by

Fernandina Development Company

to

H. Reinman Duval.

1897 Satisfaction of Mortgage, December 1, 1897, recorded in Book 1-2, page 246. This clears the above mortgage for \$4,500.

1897 Agreement to Sell, December 4, 1897, recorded in Book A-4, page 29. This agreement was for a total price of \$18,150 with \$10,351 paid at the time with three remaining promissory notes of \$2,598.79; \$2,600; and \$2,600. Lots 1 through 18 and 22 through 28 of Block 268 and water lots 2, 22, 23, 24, and 130' of 7 were immediately conveyed with tax responsibility from

Fernandina Development Company

to

H. Reinman Duval, Trustee for Fernandina Terminal Company of New York.

1900 Deed, March 9, 1900, recorded August 15, 1900 in Book A-5, page 568. Lots 1 through 18 and 22 through 28 of Block 268 and water lots 2, 22, 23, 24, and 130' of 7 were sold for \$18,150 by

Fernandina Development Company

to

H. Reinman Duval, Trustee for Fernandina Terminal Company of New York.

1900 Deed, May 3, 1900, recorded August 15, 1900 in
Book A-5, page 569. This deed was to correct the deed
of March 9, 1900 (above) to transfer the property from

Fernandina Development Company

to

H. Reinman Duval, Trustee for Florida Central and
Peninsular Railroad Company

1905 Deed, June 30, 1905, recorded June 3, 1905 in
Book B-2, page 496. Lots 1 through 18 and 22
through 28 of Block 268 were sold by

Florida Central and Peninsular Railroad Company

to

Seaboard Air Line Railroad Company

1965 Deed, October 4, 1965, recorded in Book OR-59,
page 185. Lots 1 through 5 of Block 268 transferred
free of charge for public use by

Seaboard Air Line Railroad Company

to

City of Fernandina Beach

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: An article in the Florida Times Union, May 28, 1899, described the depot as "one of the nicest structures in the South, it is fitted with all modern conveniences such as settees, etc. and the grounds and approaches are all neat and conveniently arranged."

The Sanborn map of Fernandina, Florida, April 1903 shows the depot as a rectangle, approximately 20' x 50', with a bay on the west side of the structure. A dotted line indicates a 6' eave around the building. The map also shows that the depot had a shingle roof and was constructed of brick.

An evaluation of the building by the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1919 provides a more accurate description of the structure. The dimensions of the depot were listed as 23.0' x 51.5' x 22.0' with 13" brick walls. The gable roof was noted as having wood shingle roofing with a 6' 6" overhang. The interior was plastered with a 5' tongue-and-groove wainscot.

It had a beamed ceiling and all of the woodwork was painted with three coats of paint (color was unspecified). The foundation was described as a "Type 'J.'" There were electric lights with 5 drops and two toilet rooms with high tank vitreous water closets. This valuation report indicated that the building had three rooms. Local tradition has it that a partition ran east and west across the center of the interior of the depot, dividing it into separate waiting rooms for blacks and whites. This partition is now gone but evidence of it remains in the building. There seems to be no indication of a third room in the building.

A large structure, probably a loading platform, is shown adjacent to and west of the passenger station on the Sanborn map of Fernandina, Florida, April 1903. The open, frame building measured approximately 25' x 210' and was drawn as having a shingle roof. At the extreme southern end of the platform were the baggage office and telegraph office. This platform is also pictured in an old photograph in possession of the Fernandina Beach Chamber of Commerce. This view shows the roof of the platform converging on the eave of the depot.

5. Additions and alterations: The Sanborn map of Fernandina, Florida, February 1926 shows basically the same building and platform except for a change in the roofing material to composition. In 1965, shortly after the City of Fernandina obtained the depot, Henry S. Lannon made several alterations to the building. The brick mantle and facing on the fireplace were added at this time. The doors which were located on either side of the west bay were bricked in and moved to the center of the arched window opening on the north facade. Lannon also had the wooden floor replaced with concrete and a tile surface.
(Interview with Lannon)

B. Historical events and persons associated with the structure:

The Old Fernandina Depot served as a passenger depot for the Florida Central and Peninsular Railroad and later for the Seaboard Air Line Railroad. Although it is difficult to determine the exact closing date of the depot, it is known that Fernandina had passenger service in 1933 and that by 1938 there was no more train service. There was only a bus which connected with the passenger station at Yulee.
(Official Railroad Guide, 1933, 1938)

C. Sources of information:

1. Plans:

Seaboard Air Line Railroad. Office of the Engineer of Buildings.
"Proposed Freight Depot, Fernandina, Florida, Layout Plan."
Drawing 5345, M-325. Norfolk, Virginia, April 27, 1917.
In possession of the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad Company,
500 Water Street, Jacksonville, Florida. A copy is
provided with this report.

2. Old views: Photograph of the depot (n.d.) showing the north
facade and a portion of the loading platform to the west. It is
in the possession of the Fernandina Beach Chamber of Commerce.

3. Primary and unpublished sources:

Fernandina Development Company. Account Book "F".

In Fernandina Dock and Reality Papers, 1887-
Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida P. K. Yonge
Library of Florida History.

Florida Abstract and Title Insurance Company

"Tract Book." Fernandina Beach, Florida.

Lannon, Henry J. Fernandina Beach, Florida.

Interview, June 17, 1974

Nassau County. Deed Books. Nassau County Courthouse,
Fernandina Beach, Florida.

U. S. Interstate Commerce Commission. Bureau of Valuation.
B. V. Form No. 68-R. Evaluation of Seaboard Air Line
Railroad. January 18, 1919. In possession of Seaboard
Coast Line Railroad Company, 500 Water Street,
Jacksonville, Florida.

4. Secondary sources:

Fernandina, The Florida Mirror, October 5, 1898.

Jacksonville, Florida Times Union, May 28, 1899.

Johnson, Dudley S. "The Railroads of Florida, 1865-1900."
Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1935.

Official Railroad Guide. n.p., July 1, 1933.

In possession of the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad Company,
500 Water Street, Jacksonville, Florida.

Official Railroad Guide. n.p., November 22, 1938.

In possession of Seaboard Coast Line Railroad,
500 Water Street, Jacksonville, Florida.

Sanborn Map and Publishing Company. Fernandina, Florida,
June 1897. New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Company,
1897. In Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida,
Library East, Map Room.

Sanborn Map and Publishing Company. Fernandina, Florida,
April 1903. New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Company,
1903. In Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida,
Library East, Map Room.

Sanborn Map and Publishing Company. Fernandina, Florida,
February 1926. New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing
Company, 1926. In Gainesville, Florida: University of
Florida, Library East, Map Room.

Prepared by: Phillip A. Werndli
Historian, HABS
Fernandina Beach, Florida
July 11, 1974

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Old Fernandina Depot is a typical example of railway depots built in Florida during the late nineteenth century.
2. Condition of fabric: This structure which is now utilized as office space is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 22'-8" (single bay front) x 51'-5-1/2" (two bay sides) rectangular with a three sided bay window in west elevation.

2. Foundations: Foundation walls are of masonry extending to a depth of four feet below grade.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: Walls are of brick bonded with a beaded mortar joint.
4. Structural system, framing: The load bearing masonry walls carry king post trusses with principal rafters and purlins extended to support an extended eave.
5. Chimneys: There is a central chimney with two fireplaces on the north and south sides, dividing the interior into two waiting rooms.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doors and doorways: The single modern entrance is centered within an existing arched masonry opening flanked on either side and above with windows. Evidence of recent construction (1965) indicates the location of two former doors in the west facade on either side of the bay window.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Windows are wooden double hung within arched masonry openings.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The gable roof is covered with hexagonal asbestos shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Brackets extending from the main rafters of the roof trusses support an extended eave on four sides.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plan:
 - a. First floor: The entrance is in the north wall and opens into one of the two former waiting rooms which are separated by a central chimney. Evidence exists that partitions formerly divided the waiting rooms on either side of the chimney.
2. Flooring: Original wooden flooring was replaced with the present concrete slab and covered with vinyl tile.

3. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are painted plaster above a 4'-7" tongue-and-groove pine wainscot. The ceiling is also tongue-and-groove with a beaded edge forming panels painted to match the walls. Beam and joist members are painted a dark brown.
 4. Doors and doorways: Original doors have been removed and openings converted to windows. A modern door is centered within an existing arched masonry opening.
 5. Trim: The interior of the depot is ornamented at the ceiling with false beam and joist work which reflect the truss construction above. The crossing of these members is articulated with simple circular patera mouldings. Cornice mouldings frame the tongue-and-groove paneling.
 6. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: The two fireplaces are equipped with gas outlets.
 - b. Lighting: Two modern chandeliers are centered within the two bays on either side of the chimney as well as wall mounted electric fixtures comprise the lighting.
 - c. Plumbing: A modern sink and watercloset were installed in 1965.
- D. Site:
1. General setting: The depot is oriented north-northeast at the intersection of Atlantic and Front streets. The existing railroad tracks are adjacent on the western side of the property.

Prepared by: Charles Edwin Chase
Field Supervisor, HABS
Fernandina Beach, Florida
July 11, 1974

Project Information

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Bicentennial Commission of Florida. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, this project was completed during the summer of 1974 at the HABS field office, Fernandina Beach, Florida, by Charles Edwin Chase (University of Florida), project supervisor; Phillip Wernkli (University of Florida), project historian; Janice Fahey (Rhode Island School of Design) and Frederick Wiedenmann (University of Florida), architects; Grady J. Reigh, Jr. (University of Texas) and Roger Swazye (University of Oregon), student architects.

ADDENDUM TO:
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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1849 C Street NW
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COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

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