

**Historic Property** Northern Pacific Depot (Information Only)  
**Inventory Report for** 721 SW Columbia, Olympia, WA 98501

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**LOCATION SECTION**

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**Historic Name:** Northern Pacific Depot (Information Only) **Field Site No.:** 3543  
**Common Name:** Burlington Northern Depot **OAHP No.:**  
**Property Address:** 721 SW Columbia, Olympia, WA 98501  
**Comments:**

**County** **Township/Range/EW** **Section** **1/4 Sec** **1/4 1/4 Sec** **Quadrangle**  
**[REDACTED]** T18R02W 14 TUMWATER

**UTM Reference**  
**Zone:** 10 **Spatial Type:** Point **Acquisition Code:** TopoZone.com  
**Sequence:** 10 **Easting:** 507342 **Northing:** 5209673

**Tax No./Parcel No.** **Plat/Block/Lot**  
78507800100 Sylvesters Ptn Block 77 & 78 Des as parcel 2 1679/726

**Supplemental Map(s)** **Acreage**  
1.08

**IDENTIFICATION SECTION**

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**Field Recorder:** ss **Date Recorded:** 4/15/2006 **Survey Name:** OLYMPIA-MODERN

**Owner's Name:** Washington-General Administration **Owner Address:** PO Box 41011 **City/State/Zip:** Olympia, WA 98504-1011

**Classification:** Building **Resource Status** **Comments**  
Survey/Inventory

**Within a District?** No

**Contributing?**

**National Register Nomination:**  
**Local District:**  
**National Register District/Thematic Nomination Name:**

**DESCRIPTION SECTION**

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**Historic Use:** Transportation - Rail-Related  
**Current Use:** Vacant/Not in Use

**Plan:** T-Shape **No. of Stories:** 1

**Structural System:** Balloon Frame

**Changes to plan:** Intact **Changes to interior:** Unknown  
**Changes to original cladding:** Intact **Changes to other:**  
**Changes to windows:** **Other (specify):**

**Cladding** Wood - Clapboard **Foundation** Concrete - Poured  
**Style** Colonial - Transitional Colonial **Form/Type** Utilitarian  
**Roof Material** Asphalt / Composition **Roof Type** Gable - Cross Gable

**NARRATIVE SECTION**

Study Unit

Other

Date Of Construction: 1968

Transportation

Architect: Cayou, A. C.

Builder:

Engineer:

Property appears to meet criteria for the National Register of Historic Places:

No

Property is located in a historic district (National and/or local):

No

Property potentially contributes to a historic district (National and/or local):

**Statement of Significance**

Bypassed in 1873 by the Northern Pacific as western terminus, Olympia built their own narrow gauge spur to Tenino, some 15 miles distant and the nearest connection with the mainline in 1878. In 1890 however after the declaration of Olympia as the capital of the new state of Washington, offers from railroads abounded. The Union Pacific offered to build a line from Portland to Seattle via Olympia; the Port Townsend Southern, operators of the narrow gauge line proposed to extend its line from Port Townsend to Portland via Olympia and the Olympia, Tacoma and Grays Harbor Railroad offered a line from Tacoma to Grays Harbor via Olympia. All of the offers were contingent upon offers of cash and concessions from Olympia. Olympia did give \$50,000 but they refused to allow the Olympia, Tacoma and Grays Harbor Railroad (associated with the Northern Pacific) to run the railway in front of 7th St. homes and gave land to build railroad yards on what was tideflats. The Northern Pacific had to build a tunnel and fill land to create a railroad yard. According to the Olympia history, "Rogues Buffoons and Statesmen", "In July (1891), the first passenger train from Tacoma dashed through the 7th street tunnel for the first time and pulled up at the new depot building at the rear of the Hotel Olympia." In August, 1891 the Northern Pacific began re-routing the mainline through Olympia.

The rail line became important not only as a passenger route but also in the 1930s and 1940s when according to one longtime railroad worker, as many as 39 trains per day were routed along the line carrying lumber products and canned goods from industries on the port fill. The line was later taken over by Burlington Northern.

The depot was located along what is now Capitol Lake and was a long wooden building. There was a coaling shed, freight platform and water tank in the complex.

The 1891 era depot was razed in January, 1966 and the current depot was completed in 1968. The depot was designed for the Northern Pacific Engineering Department, Tacoma Division by A. C. Cayou, who was a staff architect with the Northern Pacific in Minnesota. There is some information that it was a pre-fabricated structure brought by rail and installed here. However there are plans and a building permit on file with the city of Olympia which give construction specifications.

The significance of the building lies relationship to the ongoing railroad history in Olympia. No other depots are extant in their original form. (The Union Pacific Depot has been renovated as Olympic Outfitters at 407 4th Avenue E.) Olympia's railroad history has been integral to its role as capital city as it struggled to gain railroad service in the 19th century and forced the NP to build on tideflats and build a tunnel to gain service in the 1890s.

The current building is retains most of its architectural character. It is sited on approximately the same location as the 1890s structure which it replaced. It served as a combined freight and passenger depot. According to available records, it was purchased by Glacier Properties in 1989 and by the State of Washington in 1991.

**Description of Physical Appearance**

The building is a one story, T-shaped structure with colonial revival detailing including a pedimented front door with side lights. The building has wide clapboard cladding and a gabled roof with a fanlight in the front gable. The building has multipane windows with shutters. The original freight bay on the west side has been changed to windows and a door on the north end. The south side retains the freight bay. The side door on the north facade also has a pediment reflecting the colonial revival character.

**Major Bibliographic References**

City of Olympia Building Department Records.  
"Taps for the NP Depot," Sunday Olympian, January 16, 1966, pg. .  
Newell, Gordon, "Rogues, Buffoons and Statesmen," Seattle: Hangman Press, 1975.

**PHOTOS**



**View of** South Façade

**taken** 4/19/2020

**Photography Neg. No. (Roll No./Frame No.):**

**Comments:**