The Standardized Railroad Station in Saskatchewan: The Case of the Canadian National System

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IN the saga of Canadian railroad station architecture, the Saskatchewan depots of the Canadian National (CN) and its two predecessor companies, the Canadian Northern (CNoR) and Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP), stand out as marvelous examples of standardized design. This pictorial essay is therefore an attempt to explore basic architectural patterns in the heartland of the Canadian standardized station.[1]

Rapid expansion of the Saskatchewan economy following the financial doldrums of the 1890s produced a burst of local railroad construction. First the CNoR and then the GTP formed to exploit the "Last Best West." With widespread financial backing from both the private and public sectors, these predominantly grain-gathering railroads soon laced the province with hundreds of miles of main and branchline trackage.[2] By the third decade of the twentieth century Saskatchewan could boast of more than 9000 miles of railways, thus giving it the second largest mileage of any Canadian province.[3]

Of the two Canadian National predecessor lines, the CNoR initially built relatively inexpensive trackage in Saskatchewan. Commonly known as the West's railroad ("A PRODUCT OF WESTERN CANADA," proclaimed one company publication),[4] the firm designed its new lines to produce revenue before upgrading them to first-class condition. As one historian noted about the prairie lines of the CNoR: "[Its] construction policies called for low initial investment, low operation costs, but high development potential."[5] Understandably, the Canadian Northern utilized the most economical means of providing shelter for travelers and freight alike at its numerous station sites.

Unlike the CNoR, the Grand Trunk Pacific was designed from the start as a transcontinental system and was therefore constructed to trunk-line specifications. So well was the Grand Trunk Pacific laid out that today almost all the Canadian National mainline across Saskatchewan uses the original GTP trackage. While economy considerations were important, GTP depots tended to be more carefully engineered than those of the CNoR. And, too, the road probably used fewer of the flimsy portable stations.

The Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific built hundreds of depots in Saskatchewan. The financial collapse of the CNoR in 1918 and the GTP several years later brought depots of mixed architectural heritage into the newly formed Canadian National system. New construction by the CN, of course, added additional depot styles.

I

Over two hundred Canadian National depots in Saskatchewan still stood in the early 1970s. Most of these structures were originally designed to service transportation needs of small agricultural communities. They were also intended to be objects of civic pride and to provide housing for the agent and his family. Above all, costs were to be kept as low as possible.

Depots in Saskatchewan served two main purposes. First and foremost, the building was the site for conducting business in the community. By having a station every few miles, the company made it possible for customers, dependent on horse-drawn transportation, to have a place to obtain railroad services. A second less obvious, but important function of the depot and its agents was to assist in train control. By reporting train movements past his station the agent helped the dispatcher know train locations and thus assisted him in the selection of meeting and passing points. The heavier the traffic, the more stations were needed. Thus, even in areas where there were few customers, depot agents were vital to a railroad's safe operation.

Unquestionably one function of the small prairie railroad station was to be a source of local civic pride. By the time extensive railway construction started in Saskatchewan, "the realization of the importance of the railway station as an element of civic pride"[6] was a widely accepted principle of most North American railway builders. This was especially true in an area like Saskatchewan where the railroad often came before the settlers. Railways literally started many towns; main streets often began at the depot's backdoor. It is little wonder that in this setting railroads built stations that were more than mere shacks. While not ornate (often the case in East Canada), a depot of attractive, but functional design could go far in establishing the importance of the rail company in the minds of the local or prospective citizenry.

When the railroad boom was in full swing at the turn of the century, suitable accommodations for an agent and his family were often impossible to find in the undeveloped towns and villages of Saskatchewan. Consequently, almost all depots in the province provided space for living quarters. Usually this was done by adding a second floor and a small addition to the rear of the depot. This made it possible to keep family members away from daily railroad operations; moreover, it became easier to add additions to either end of the building for railway purposes, if justified by traffic growth. Companies considered the extra investment in living quarters worthwhile since they viewed married agents to be stable and responsible employees.[7]

The desirability of creating an object of civic pride and space for the "live-in" agent were not allowed to raise construction costs excessively. Depots were built to standard plans, though these blueprints were sufficiently flexible to permit variations to meet local needs. Wood was almost always used in the initial construction. Later, generally in the 1920s and 1930s, the Canadian National added stucco, a more expensive material and one thought to be more substantial and attractive.[8] Platforms were built of wood or in some instances cinders. Expensive brick or poured concrete platforms were seldom, if ever, installed. Indoor plumbing was a luxury that had to wait for later remodelling, if indeed it ever came to most stations.

The earliest depots seldom had basements. Without a place for a central heating plant, most buildings required more than a single coal stove. Of course, multiple stoves occasionally proved a fire hazard.

II

The largest and most important predecessor of the Canadian National in Saskatchewan, the Canadian Northern Railway, designed and built most of the future CN depots in the province. As earlier noted, the CNoR liked to construct lines as quickly and as cheaply as possible. Upgrading would come later, if business warranted the investment. The first stations, therefore, were often pre-fabricated, easy to install portable buildings that might be readily moved on and off a flatcar. These short, narrow standardized structures could be rapidly set up so that the company might have an agent at work soon after the line opened; in fact, in some cases while the line was still under construction.

The Bjorkdale depot, located on the line from Reserve to Crooked River, is one of the few portable depots left in Saskatchewan. While the CN built this particular station, it is typical of portable depots in general. In this small, narrow structure are the three distinct sections of the standardized depot: waiting room, center agent's office, and freight-baggage-express area.

If traffic outstripped the capacity of the small portable depot, a permanent station of standard design would be built. The Canadian Northern designed some highly distinctive standard stations, and today they are often the only means of identifying former CNoR lines in Saskatchewan. Before the Canadian Northern adopted one design as its "standard" depot model, it used several different plans.

Some of the earliest Canadian Northern depots in Saskatchewan were constructed by the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railroad and Steamboat Company (QLL&S). This pioneer road ran 249 miles from Regina to Prince Albert. Built as an independent line in 1890, its early years were ones of struggle: service was irregular, development of its trading region was sparse, and profits were non-existent. In 1896 the Canadian Pacific agreed to lease and operate the line at cost, this arrangement continued on a year-to-year basis. The turn of the century, however, brought a new day for the QLL&S. Settlers poured in and traffic greatly increased. The original owners of the railroad decided that the time was ripe to unload the company; they wanted to devote themselves to selling the land-grant that came with the railroad's charter. The owners duly informed the Canadian Pacific (CP) that their lease would not be renewed beyond the fall of 1906.

Sir William Mackenzie and Sir Donald Mann, who helped build the QLL&S as subcontractors, recognized the line's value to their own rapidly expanding Canadian Northern. The Great Northern Railway, led by the indefatigable James J. Hill, also expressed interest in the property. The CP, angered by the ingratitude of the QLL&S owners for not selling them the line cheaply, refused to bid. Thus, after a brief bidding contest between Mackenzie-Mann and Hill, the CNoR acquired the QLL&S in March 1906.[9]

With the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan came depots of a variety of designs. These stations were clearly influenced by depot plans of the Canadian Pacific. Of these types, the only one to be repeated elsewhere on the CNoR is represented by the Dundurn station. This structure shares certain characteristics with other CNoR depots along early Mackenzie-Mann lines in Manitoba. The long-gable roof[10] over the first storey identifies the building. The second storey is covered by a hipped-gable roof that gives the depot a somewhat rounded appearance. A shingled awning, — a common feature of CNoR stations — supported by prominent brackets, is located above the bay window. This rectangular bay contains three windows that face the platform. In the dormer above the bay, two windows provide light and ventilation to the second storey. The Dundurn station is not typical of CNoR depots; less than ten were found on the Canadian National in the 1970s and only two, both along the old QLL&S, were located in Saskatchewan.[11]

The Dundurn depot, constructed in 1892 by the QLL&S, is a fine example of one of the earlier CN depots built in Saskatchewan. The only other depot like it in the province is located at Craik on the same line.

MacDowall is north of Saskatoon on the QLL&S. This station built in 1891 appears to be a smaller version of the Dundurn depot. The hipped-gable roof over the second storey, the gable roof over the freight house, and the shingled awning along the front of the waiting room and office are features found on the larger Dundurn station. Railroads in Western Canada did not hesitate to borrow from one depot design to apply to another. Only five depots like the MacDowall structure were found in Saskatchewan in the 1970s, all along the QLL&S.

Another station design built at scattered locations on the Canadian Pacific is represented by the depot at Rosthern, Saskatchewan, on the old QLL&S. The Rosthern depot has a mansard roof, broken on the front by two shed dormers with three windows. The ever-present shingled awning, with its prominent brackets, extends beyond the waiting-room end. Under the awning is a rectangular bay with three windows that face the platform. Rosthern's station is the only depot of this type found on the Canadian National in the 1970s.

The Rosthern depot, built in 1902, is north of Saskatoon on the QLL&S. It has the distinctive hip-gambrel roof which sets it apart from other CN depots in Saskatchewan. The white brackets supporting the shingled awning can be readily seen between the bay window and waiting room.

Of all depots on the QLL&S the only one to be repeated extensively is typified by the Hague, Saskatchewan station. This depot is characterized by a second storey covered by a low-pyramid roof broken by a hip dormer with two windows. The remainder of the depot is topped by a medium-hip roof that flows down to the front of the station to become part of a bracket-supported shingled awning. The awning extends beyond the ends of the building while a rectangular bay has two windows facing the platform. Two more windows are located on the waiting-room end. While depots like Hague's survived on the Canadian Pacific until the seventies, only four were found on CN lines in Saskatchewan, three on the former QLL&S.

The Hague station is located north of Saskatoon on the line to Prince Albert.

Although no other line on the Canadian Northern contained the variety of depots found on the QLL&S, most of the CNoR lines in Saskatchewan had depots of standard designs that were frequently repeated. By 1905 the CNoR selected several depot styles that it used up to the time of nationalization. (There is even evidence that the CN utilized some of the CNoR station plans after 1918.)[12] So standard were CNoR depots that the company developed a simple system of station classifications.

In larger communities a design designated by the Canadian Northern as a "Second-Class" depot was used. This station was built at division points and other large communities where a bigger depot was desired, but traffic was not heavy enough to design a station specifically for that town. The most important feature of the Second-Class depot is the roofline. In the center a high-pyramid roof, broken by prominent gabled dormers, dominates the structure. From the center section medium-hip roofs, broken by hip-gable dormers, run to each end of the building. In addition to the roofline, a Second-Class depot has other identifying features. A shingled awning, supported by brackets, goes completely around the station. A rounded three-sided bay window is tucked away under the awning, although later versions of the Second-Class depot have gabled rather than hip dormers. This change altered the appearance significantly, making these stations look much larger and less rounded than the earlier ones.

The design of the Second-Class depot was flexible enough to meet local needs. Consequently, dimensions and interior floor plans of individual depots varied greatly. [13] Only two Second-Class depots survived in Saskatchewan in the 1970s; it is likely that there was at least one other built.

The Kipling depot, southeast of Regina on the line from Regina to Winnipeg, is an example of an early Second-Class station design. The hip dormers on the ends and sides make this building much less massive in appearance than the later Radville depot. Kipling is a division point that still has a small yard; it once had a roundhouse.

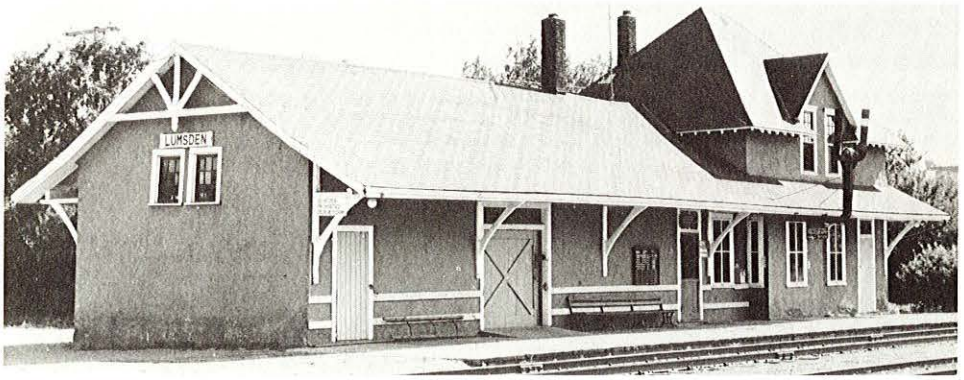
The Radville station is southeast of Weyburn. This depot was constructed in 1912 and is typical of Second-Class stations located on lines built after 1910. While later depots retain the pyramid roof on the center section, awning, and bay-window design of earlier ones, the gable dormers on the ends and sides make the Kipling and Radville buildings appear different. The wood strips that run parallel to the ground on the lower portion of the station are designed to protect the stucco from chipping by baggage wagons and other vehicles. Radville is the junction for several lines and once had a roundhouse. Another station similar to Radville's may have been located at Kindersley.

The Canadian Northern designated its most common standard depot design as "Third-Class." This station borrowed features from the earlier standard stations; the most important is its roofline. The high-hip roof over the office and living quarters is broken front and back by gabled dormers, similar to the center section of the Second-Class depot. This distinctive roofline is even more imposing on the smaller Third-Class structure, and can often be seen from as far as a mile away towering above nearby village stores and houses. Over the baggage room is a bellcast-gabled roof that flows down to the front to form part of the common bracket-supported shingled awning. Windows are found only on the dormers of the second storey, identical to other Canadian Northern two-storey depots in Saskatchewan. The waiting room itself is lit by windows on the front, rear, and at one end of the station. A rectangular bay with a single window facing the platform blends well under the awning and is much less conspicuous than bay windows on most stations.

All these characteristics create an amazingly symmetrical and clean looking depot, uncluttered by useless ornamentation. This structure looks attractive from any angle. The roofline makes the Third-Class depot imposing and contributes to an impressive, almost massive appearance. This design proved so satisfactory that the company used it in over 100 locations in Saskatchewan; making it by far the most common of all Saskatchewan depots of any railroad.

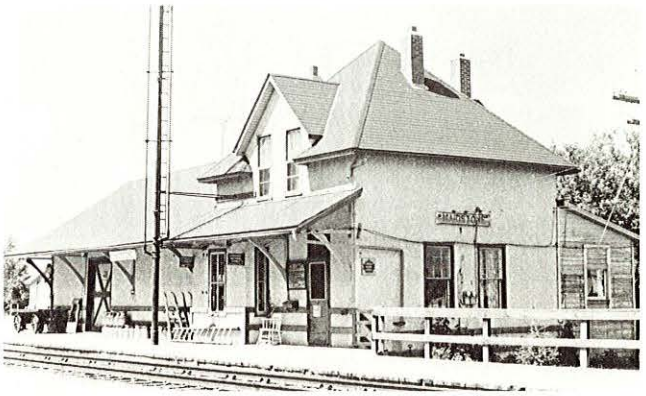
Kelvington is located in east-central Saskatchewan. This building is typical of the CNoR Third-Class depots. The high-hip roof, the gable dormers, and the bracket-supported shingle awning are all easily recognized. The bay window is nearly hidden by the awning. The small lean-to-like addition on the end was used as a coal bin; some stations lack this feature.

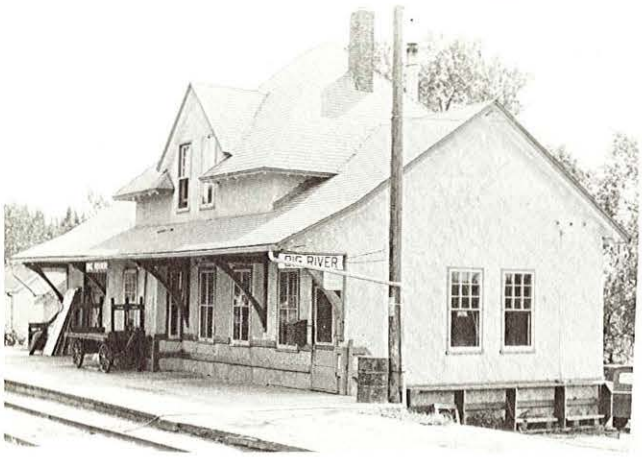
Located in east-central Saskatchewan, the Rhein station is another example of a standard CNoR Third-Class structure; however, this one had stucco applied. The painted station name on the depot is an unusual feature on the CN. The children in the photograph live in the depot. Stations in Saskatchewan were more than simply places to conduct railroad business; they were also homes for families. Hundreds of children must have grown up in province depots.



The stucco station at Lumsden, on the Regina to Prince Albert line, is a "Third-Class" depot with an extended baggageroom. The CNoR building designs were meant to be sufficiently flexible to allow variations to meet local needs.

The Maidstone depot, situated on the old CNoR mainline west of North Battleford, is another variation of the Third-Class station. This particular depot has a pyramid rather than hip roof. It also has an extended baggageroom.

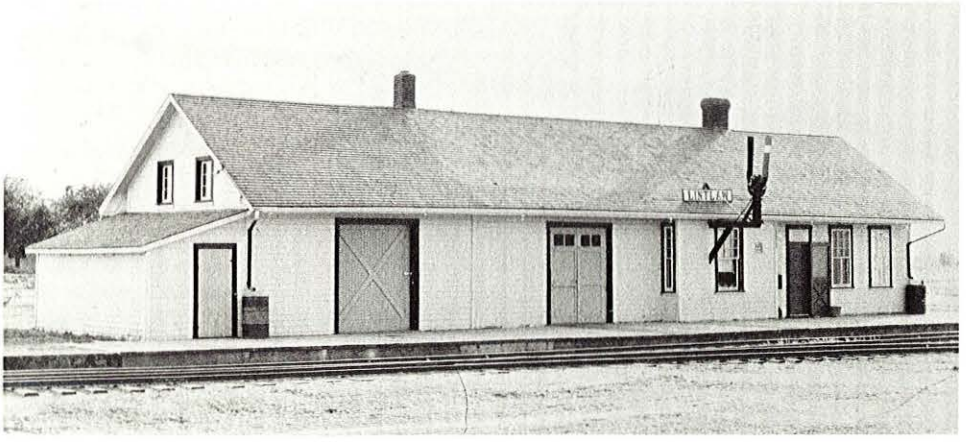




The Hudson Bay, Hafford, and Big River depots all contain features found on the Third-Class station. The Hudson Bay building has been extended at both ends. The Hafford structure features an addition on the waiting-room end that is found on only one other depot in Saskatchewan. The Big River depot has an addition on the waiting-room end that dramatically alters the station's appearance. The Third-Class depot, no matter what changes occurred in the original plan, always keeps its symmetrical and functional good looks.

To serve smaller communities the Canadian Northern designed the "Fourth-Class" depot. This station differs from other CNoR depots. First of all, it does not have a second storey; moreover, it is covered by a rather plain low-gable roof that is unbroken by dormers. It lacks the shingled awning. As a result the bay window, with its single window facing the platform, is more prominent. Like other CNoR depots, two windows are located on the waiting-room end. These characteristics create a rather nondescript depot that might have been more at home among the Spartan stations of the Great Plains of the United States.[14] This depot, like most in Saskatchewan, also includes living quarters. While not as frequently built as Third-Class designs, at least fifteen CNoR Fourth-Class depots survived until the 1970s.

The Hardy station, built in 1920 and located in southwestern Saskatchewan near Willowbunch, is a marvelous example of the CNoR Fourth-Class depot. The wooden platform, used almost exclusively in Saskatchewan, is evident in this photograph.



The Lintlaw depot, west of Preeceville, is a variation of the standard CNoR Fourth-Class station. This is one of the few Fourth-Class depots that lacked stucco. As on the Kelvington station, the lean-to addition to the freight house serves as a coal bin.

III

The Grand Trunk Pacific, unlike the Canadian Northern, was from the start built to mainline standards. Careful advance planning occurred in nearly every phase of the railroad's construction. This subsidiary of the Grand Trunk of Eastern Canada also believed in standardization with a capital "S." Even the new towns established in the unsettled territory the railway crossed were laid out to a standard plan. For example, the main streets of these new communities began at the depot's backdoor. To insure that substantial buildings would be erected along these thoroughfares near the depot, the GTP placed the appropriate restrictions in the land deeds.[15] Names for these towns were often selected alphabetically as the line moved west.

This concern for detailed planning also applied to depot design and construction. Along the Grand Trunk Pacific mainline, virtually all stations were placed north of the tracks with waiting-room ends pointing east. The company built nearly identical depots every five to ten miles along the line and the number of variations in standard designs was much less than those of the CNoR. The determination with which the GTP stuck to its standard station plans tended to produce a depressing and monotonous sameness to its stations.

By far the most common depot built by the Grand Trunk Pacific is typified by the building at Gray, Saskatchewan. The unique bellcast hip-roof design readily identifies this station. The hexagonal bay-window construction continues through the roof to become a dormer. The building has the single window on each end.

While dimensions might vary from depot to depot, plans for stations like Gray's called for a 51′6″ × 16′ structure. This was rather narrow in comparison with other depots in Saskatchewan. However, six-foot roof overhangs and the design of the baywindow and dormer serves to make the station seem larger than it is. The location of the bay toward the waiting-room section creates a building that appears more symmetrical when viewed from that end.

The second storey of the Gray depot is not as large or as imposing as some on other prairie stations. While there are two rather large bedrooms, lighting and ventilation must have posed a problem. Some of the stations have second-storey windows only on the front dormer. Other versions of the depot added dormers to either end and the back. The number of variations in dormer placement was probably an attempt to provide better lighting and ventilation. Over twenty of these depots stood in Saskatchewan in the 1970s.

The Gray station is southeast of Regina on the line to Northgate. The small addition attached on the rear of the depot, visible in this photograph, is the kitchen. By confining the agent's living quarters as much as possible to the rear section and second floor, depot additions could be made without having to relocate the living quarters.

Situated in west-central Saskatchewan on the line from Biggar, the Loverna depot is another example of how a standard depot could be altered to meet local needs. For an unknown reason the company decided that Loverna needed a longer waiting room. The standard plan the GTP used for stations like Gray easily accommodated this need.

The station at Duperow represents a second type of Grand Trunk Pacific depot. This station shares features with the Gray building. Both have a single window on each end of the first floor. The bay window on each extends through the roof to form a hip dormer. By using wide roof overhangs both depots seem larger than they are. On both structures the exterior dimensions and the interior first-floor plans are virtually identical.

In spite of common characteristics, the Duperow depot differs significantly from the Gray station. An important difference is that on the Duperow structure, the medium-hip roof has set-in hip dormers on the ends. By breaking the eave line, these dormers create prominent indentations. The additional dormers likely made the second storey more pleasant. Another distinction is that the Duperow depot has a rectangular, rather than a rounded, bay window and dormer on the front. Inside, the second storey of the Duperow building is much larger and provides a much more useful arrangement for the agent and his family.

Built more than a decade after most stations like Gray, the Duperow depot seems to have been designed to improve agent's living quarters. By the time depots of this type began to appear in the late teens, the Grand Trunk Pacific faced serious financial troubles. A variety of proposed line extensions, which might have had more depots of this style, were cancelled. Thus, it is unlikely the firm built many of these depots. Only six like Duperow's were found in Saskatchewan in the 1970s.

The station at Duperow, southwest of Biggar, is a GTP station style duplicated at least seven times in Saskatchewan.

To serve larger communities, the Grand Trunk Pacific constructed depots like the one at Kelliher, Saskatchewan. This station is much wider than the more common GTP structures. To accommodate the increased width, without using a high-roof peak, the GTP placed a well-hidden eight-foot-wide nearly flat deck across the middle of the roof over the waiting room and office. Hip dormers on the waiting-room and above the bay window break this "truncated-hip" roof. Significantly larger than the stations at Gray and Duperow, this depot has much more space for railroad business; little additional space, however, is provided for the agent and his family. These large stations seem to have been built about the time the Gray-style depots appeared. At least six survived in Saskatchewan into the 1970s.

Kelliher is located in south-central Saskatchewan on the CN mainline. This station is wider than the other GTP depots already discussed; it contains an extra window on the waiting-room end. The flat deck over the office and waiting room is so well hidden that one must look closely to find it; the TV antenna is mounted on the deck. This deck extends from just behind the end dormer to the freight house.

A fourth Grand Trunk Pacific standard depot design differed widely from its other stations. The depot at Domremy represents this style. The Domremy structure is essentially a two-storey building with a rectangular bay window. Attached to this two-storey center section are a large addition for a waiting room and a second one for a freight house. A low-gabled roof, that runs at right angles to low-gabled roofs over the waiting room and freight house, covers the center.

The over-all effect of the Domremy design seems less pleasing, in the authors' opinion, than those of other GTP depots. The roof lines, unbroken by dormers, the lack of wide overhangs, the single window on each end, the long and conspicuous bay window, all serve to create an impression of starkness that is lacking in other GTP buildings. However, the agent probably enjoyed the large space available for living quarters. The upstairs has three bedrooms, a sewing room and several roomy closets. On the ground floor, plans call for an agent's room and large kitchen. In addition, Domremy-like depots are the only GTP stations with basements specified in the blueprints.

The Domremy-style station probably was built later than other GTP depots. Only five were found in Saskatchewan in the seventies: three are on the line from Young to Prince Albert; the other two are likely replacement depots.

The Domremy station is on the GTP branch from Young to Prince Albert.

While Grand Trunk Pacific officials adhered more carefully to standard plans than did their counterparts at the Canadian Northern, a few atypical GTP depots exist in Saskatchewan. However, even these were largely copied at other points along the GTP system, hence they are standard structures.

Biggar is a division point on the CN mainline west of Saskatoon. To accommodate the needs of a division point, a larger standard depot was built. The station at Watrous, also a division point, is a similar structure.

Like Biggar's depot, the GTP designed the Melville station to meet the needs of an even more important terminal and division point. Upstairs offices could accommodate dispatchers, a superintendent and his staff, and other white-collar employees. No other station like Melville's exists in Saskatchewan, although a nearly identical one is located at Sioux Lookout, Ontario.

IV

When the government nationalized the Canadian Northern and the Grand Trunk Pacific, both lines had unfinished rail-construction programs. The newly formed Canadian National continued some of these projects and added its own additonal lines. To provide needed depot facilities, both along new lines and at other locations, the CN designed two standard stations.

The Canadian National designated the more common of these new depots, "Third Class." This CN Third-Class station shares characteristics with the earlier CNoR Third-Class structure. Both have bracket-supported shingled awnings along the front. Each has a rectangular bay, though the CN depot contains two windows that face the platform. Both have rather inconspicuous bay windows, somewhat hidden by the awning. Neither depot has windows on the ends of the second storey.

For all its similarities, the Canadian National Third-Class depot varies in appearance from the Canadian Northern Third-Class station. One important difference is the roof line. A low-hip roof, broken by dormers, is found over the office and living quarters on the CN station, while the roof over the freight house is a bellcast, medium-hip roof, not a bellcast-gable one. Another difference is the high concrete foundation which made it unnecessary to use wood stripping to protect the lower portion of stucco versions of the CN station from chipping by errant vehicles. The CN station also has four windows on the front side of the second storey. The over-all effect of these characteristics is to create a massive, squarish appearance, certainly different from the effect of the Canadian Northern Third-Class structure.

The inside of the Canadian National Third-Class building contains ample space for railroad business and living quarters. In some instances the kitchen is attached to the depot at the waiting-room end rather than in the middle of the structure. This creates a feeling of great width when looking at the station from the waiting-room end.

The Canadian National utilized its Third-Class station in two ways. First, and perhaps more often, it was used along new lines. On some branches, for example the line from Shellbrook to Medstead, the station design was used almost exclusively. Secondly, the company employed the Third-Class depot on lines that had been built by either the CNoR or GTP. Apparently, in such situations, the Third-Class depot either replaced stations that had been removed or destroyed, or provided new facilities at locations where permanent structures had not been justified before nationalization. Over twenty depots of this type survived in the province until the 1970s.

The Hyas depot in east-central Saskatchewan is typical of Third-Class depots designed by the Canadian National. The lower pitch of the roof, the four windows on the front of the second storey, the hip roof over the freight house and the high concrete foundation give the CN Third-Class station a much different look than the earlier CNoR Third-Class building. Even this station, built later than most in Saskatchewan, has a wooden platform.

A smaller structure built by the Canadian National may have been designated a "Fourth-Class" station. Like the Canadian Northern Fourth-Class depot, the CN building has only a single storey. Other than that, these two structures share few common characteristics. The CN one-storey depot is identified by its medium-hip roof, broken by a gable dormer on each end. A hip dormer attached on the waiting-room end covers part of the agent's living quarters. On the front a gable dormer tops a rectangular bay with two windows facing the platform. The depot's wide appearance, when viewed from the waiting-room end, is caused by the living-quarters section, highly reminiscent of CN Third-Class buildings.

At least eight of these CN one-storey structures still remain: they are on lines that originally had been built by the CNoR or GTP and branches (e.g. the line from Sturgis to Hudson Bay) constructed by the Canadian National.

Dodsland is southwest of Biggar on the line to Loverna. This depot built by the CN was probably classified as a Fourth-Class station.

V

Since World War II a number of changes in railroad operations have made depots and their agents less necessary. The most important has been the introduction of Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) by the Canadian National on its mainline across Saskatchewan. CTC makes it possible for a dispatcher to identify exact train locations, to control switches and signals, and to plan meeting and passing points — all without agent assistance.

The development of the all-weather road system in Saskatchewan is perhaps a more important reason why the number of depots is declining. The needs of customers, who depended on horse-drawn vehicles to get from their farms to the railroad station, necessitated the spacing of depots every few miles along a line. Roads and the development of competing forms of transportation after the twenties logically decreased the necessity for frequently spaced depots. Moreover, introduction of the "Servocentre," a central agency system, allows a single agent to serve several communities rather than just one. Therefore, many stations in Saskatchewan have already closed. In some cases these depots have been converted to other uses; more often, they have been razed or left vacant. This trend toward fewer depots is likely to continue. If, as some have argued, Saskatchewan had too many rail lines, it likewise had too many depots. Almost from the beginning, the building of certain depots was difficult to justify economically.

While it is possible to understand why stations will be removed for economic reasons, it must be remembered that these buildings were once an important part of the communities they served. The role of the railways and their depots in the life of early prairie villages had an importance that cannot be overstated. Not only have depots for generations been a vital aspect of the everyday affairs of Saskatchewan residents, those that remain are an integral part of the province's architectural heritage.

NOTES

*The authors wish to thank the Faculty Research Committee of The University of Akron and Mr. E. F. Donohoe, Assistant Public Relations Manager of the Prairie Region of the Canadian National, for aid in preparation of this article.

[1]Little has been written about the standardized railroad station. The authors, however, have completed two article-length studies on the topic. See H. Roger Grant, "Iowa's Railroad Stations: A Pictorial Essay," *The Palimpsest,* Volume LIV, No. 4, pp. 16-25; and Frank E. Vyzralek, H. Roger Grant and Charles W. Bohi, "North Dakota's Railroad Depots: Standardization on the Soo Line." *North Dakota History,* Volume XLII, No. 1, pp. 4-25. Mr. Bohi is presently at work on a book-length study of depots in Western Canada.

[2]For accounts of the historical development of the Canadian Northern, Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian National, see G. R. Stevens, *Canadian National Railways: Towards the Inevitable, 1896-1922,* Vol. II (Toronto, 1962); G. P. de T. Glazebrook, *A History of Transportation in Canada* (Toronto, 1938); F. A. M. Talbot, *The Making of a Great Canadian Railway* (London, 1912); N. Thompson and J. H. Edgar, *Canadian Railway Development* (Toronto, 1933); and T. D. Regehr, "Serving the Canadian West: The Canadian Northern Railway," *The Western Historical Quarterly,* Vol. III, No. 3, pp. 283-298.

[3]J. F. C. Wright, *Saskatchewan: The History of a Province* (Toronto, 1955), p. 162; Operating timetables of the Canadian Pacific, Canadian Northern, Grand Trunk Pacific railroads, 1900-1925.

[4]"Last Best West," (brochure and public timetable), CNoR, 1916.

[5]Regehr, "Serving the Canadian West," p. 291.

[6]John A. Droege, *Passenger Terminals and Trains* (Milwaukee, 1969), p. 260.

[7]Vyzralek, et. al., "North Dakota's Railroad Depots: Standardization on the Soo Line," p. 8.

[8]Droege, *Passenger Terminals and Trains,* p. 264.

[9]Stevens, *Canadian National Railways,* Vol. II, pp. 52-54.

[10]When descriptive terms are used in reference to architectural features, they are ones the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings includes on sheets given its survey personnel.

[11]Between 1969 and 1973 Mr. Bohi photographed more than 400 stations in Saskatchewan and 700 in Western Canada. This photographic collection serves as the basis for the number of depots of a particular design that survived until the 1970s. It is possible that more depots of a certain style existed, and it is likely that more of each type were built. The number mentioned is simply to give the reader an idea of how widespread was the use of a particular standard plan.

[12]There is no evidence that the CNoR had a "First Class" standard station plan. Likely the road considered the large, individually designed depots to be its First-Class ones.

[13]Any discussion about dimensions and floor plans is based on blueprints of standard stations supplied by Mr. E. F. Donohoe of the Canadian National.

[14]In fact, the Fourth-Class depot may well have evolved from a station plan of the Northern Pacific. Some evidence indicates that before 1918 the CNoR had several small stations that were virtually identical to some NP depots in North Dakota.

[15]Talbot, *The Making of a Great Canadian Railway,* pp. 153-157.