### COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES NOMINATION FORM

SECTION I			
Name of Property			
Historic Name Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Antor	nito Depot		
Other Names			
Address of Property		address not for publication	
Street Address Front Street			
City Antonito County	ty Conejos	Zip <u>81120</u>	
Present Owner of Property (for multiple ownership, list the names and addresses of		,	
Name Town of Antonito			
Address PO Box 86	Phone <u>719</u>	-376-2355	
City Antonito State CO	)	Zip <u>81120</u>	
Owner Consent for Nomination (attach signed consent from each owner of property	/ - see attached forr	m)	
Preparer of Nomination			
Name OAHP staff with Ann Marie Velasquez	nez Date <u>May 22, 2006</u>		
Organization Office of Archaeology and Historic Pre	reservation, Colorac	do Historical Society	
Address _225 E. 16 <sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 950	Phone <u>303</u>	;-866-3392	
City Denver State CO	)	Zip <u>80203-1606</u>	
TOR OFFICIAL LIGE.	C% Number	50N 400	
FOR OFFICIAL USE:	Site Number		
Nomination Received	Senate #		
_8/11/2006 Review Board RecommendationX_ApprovalDenial	8/31/2006	CHS Board State Register ListingX_ApprovedDenied	
Certification of Listing: President, Colorado Historical Society		 Date	

#### **COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

Property Name Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Antonito Depot
SECTION II
Local Historic Designation
Has the property received local historic designation?
⊠ no
yes individually designated designated as part of a historic district
Date designated
Designated by (Name of municipality or county)
Use of Property
Historic Railroad Depot
Current Not in use
Original Owner Denver & Rio Grande Railroad
Source of Information Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad, "Official Roster No. 11 of the Denver
Rio Grande Western Railroad System and the Rio Grande Southern Railroad Company, 1923."
Year of Construction 1880
Source of Information <u>Denver &amp; Rio Grande Western Railroad, "Official Roster No. 11 of the Denver</u>
Rio Grande Western Railroad System and the Rio Grande Southern Railroad Company, 1923."
Architect, Builder, Engineer, Artist or Designer Denver & Rio Grande Railroad
Source of Information Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad, "Official Roster No. 11 of the Denver
Rio Grande Western Railroad System and the Rio Grande Southern Railroad Company, 1923."
Locational Status
Structure(s) moved to current location
Date of move
SECTION III

### **Description and Alterations**

(describe the current and original appearance of the property and any alterations on one or more continuation sheets)

### **COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

Property Name Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Antonito Depot		
Significance of Brancety		
Significance of Property		
Nomination Criteria		
A - property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to history		
☐ <b>B</b> - property is connected with persons significant in history		
C - property has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or artisan		
□ D - property is of geographic importance		
■ E - property contains the possibility of important discoveries related to prehistory or history		
Arona of Circuitinana		
Areas of Significance		
☐ Agriculture       ☐ Economics       ☐ Landscape         ☐ Architecture       ☐ Education       ☐ Architecture         ☐ Archaeology – prehistoric       ☐ Entertainment/       ☐ Literature         ☐ Archaeology – historic       ☐ Ethnic Heritage       ☐ Performing Arts         ☐ Art       ☐ Exploration/       ☐ Politics/         ☐ Commerce       Settlement       Government         ☐ Community       Community Identity       ☐ Science         ☐ Planning and       ☐ Health/Medicine       ☐ Social History         ☐ Development       ☐ Industry       ☐ Transportation		
Significance Statement  (explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)		
Bibliography (cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)		
SECTION V		
Locational Information		
Lot(s) Block Addition		
USGS Topographic Quad Map <u>Antonito, Colorado</u>		

Verbal Boundary Description of Nominated Property (describe the boundaries of the nominated property on a continuation sheet)

#### COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Property Name <u>Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Antonito Depot</u>

#### **SECTION VI**

#### Photograph Log for Black and White Photographs

(prepare a photograph log on one or more continuation sheets)

#### **SECTION VII**

#### ADDITIONAL MATERIALS TO ACCOMPANY NOMINATION

**Owner Consent Form** 

**Black and White Photographs** 

**Color Prints or Digital Images** 

Sketch Map(s)

**Photocopy of USGS Map Section** 

**Optional Materials** 

#### **Use of Nomination Materials**

Upon submission to the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, all nomination forms and supporting materials become public records pursuant to CRS Title 24, and may be accessed, copied, and used for personal or commercial purposes in accordance with state law unless otherwise specifically exempted. The Colorado Historical Society may reproduce, publish, display, perform, prepare derivative works or otherwise use the nomination materials for Society and/or State Register purposes.

For Office Use Only		
Property Type: [X] building(s) [ ] district [ ] site [ ] structure [ ] object [ ] area		
Architectural Style/Engineering Type: Combination Railroad Depot		
Period of Significance: <u>1880-1950</u>		
Level of Significance: [X] Local [ ] State [ ] National		
Acreage <u>less than one</u>		
P.M. NM Township 33N Range 9E Section 29 Quarter Sections SW NE SW NE		
UTM Reference: Zone 13 Easting 410478 Northing 4103319 NAD27		
Site Elevation: 7,887 feet		

#### **DESCRIPTION and ALTERATIONS**

The 1880 Denver & Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) Depot at Antonito is a one-story, rectangular plan building with a hipped roof. The walls were constructed primarily of rock-faced rhyolite stone laid in coursed ashlar. The hip roof is sheathed with asphalt shingles and long wood brackets with pendants support the extended eaves. The depot is situated in the southeastern quadrant of Antonito adjacent to the tracks of the San Luis and Rio Grande Railroad. The tracks diverge just north of the depot and pass by the building's east and west sides. On the east side, the tracks continue south for a short distance to a loading area. The tracks on the west curve to the southwest where they end short of the beginning of the narrow gauge trackage of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad that operates as a tourist railroad over the former D&RG tracks from Antonito, Colorado, to Chama, New Mexico.



Figure 1. This circa 1880 view looking south in Antonito shows the depot with an expansive wood platform between the tracks. Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.

The north end of the depot faces the track division point. The corners are cut to form a large halfoctagon bay for the passenger waiting room. The center bay contains a pair of one-over-one double-hung windows and each corner contains a similar window. All the windows are covered by wood panels.

The west elevation contains a one-over-one window next to a two-panel half-light waiting room door with a transom. The projecting station agent's bay contains three tall track-facing windows

The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad went through several name changes in its history before eventually becoming the Denver & Rio Grande Western in the 1920s. For purposes of simplicity and consistency, the name Denver & Rio Grande (D&RG) is used throughout the nomination.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>†</sup> Some modern documents cite Trinidad as the source of the rhyolite. A quarry near Monte Vista, also serviced by the D&RG, is another possible source.

with a single window on the south elevation. Wood panels cover these openings. A glazed panel door with transom accesses the bay on the north. A glazed two-panel door with transom and side light accesses the central room. The southern portion of the depot contains the baggage area. The area between the stone office wall and the corner rhyolite pier consists of a large four-panel sliding door flanked by walls of horizontal wood drop siding on the bottom and stucco above. The door panels are formed by diagonal bead-board. The stucco wall sections each contain a high rectangular window opening covered by a wood panel. The entire length of the depot is skirted by a concrete platform extending out toward the west-side track.



Figure 2. A west-bound freight train passes the west side of the Antonito Depot on January 29, 1958. The three sets of tracks contain three rails each to accommodate both narrow gauge and standard gauge cars. Photographer: Robert W. Richardson. Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.

The south elevation consists of corner rhyolite piers bracketing a wall of horizontal wood drop siding.

The east elevation is generally a mirror image of the west elevation. Wood drop siding sheaths the lower third of the projecting bay. The upper portion is covered with stucco. The only windows in the bay consist of two rectangular openings high on the wall now covered by wood panels.

The interior consists of the north-end passenger waiting room, the station agent's office, restrooms, and the baggage and freight section at the south end. The interior remains unchanged since the building's closure in 1971.



Figure 3. This view of a west-bound train in about 1940 shows the depot's west and south elevations. Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.

#### **Alterations**

Photographic evidence indicates that all the major changes to the depot occurred prior to 1940. As originally constructed in 1880, the depot was shorter with all exterior walls composed of stone. (See *Fig. 4*) At an unknown time but most likely early in its operation, the Rio Grande expanded the depot to the south. This created additional office and baggage/freight space. The middle portion of the southern stone wall was removed to provide access to the new baggage area. The removed stone was recycled to form the corner piers in the addition. Rather than obtain additional stone to enclose the new space, the builders framed in the three exterior walls, as well as the open space in the old southern stone wall. Sliding freight doors flanked by high windows were placed in the middle of the west and east baggage room walls. The original baggage door openings were converted to pedestrian entries by recycling some original stone to partially infill the base of each opening and by installing a large side light above to flank the new wood panel door. The former transoms were removed and infilled with wood framing covered in stucco. A new chimney unlike the original in design rose through the extended hipped roof. Only the northern-most chimney now remains. Original wood brackets appear to have been reused around the extended roof.

The original depot construction did not include a station agent's office bay win-dow, a nearly univer-sal depot design ele-ment. The existing west-side bay most likely was added at the same time as the baggage room exten-sion. The stone wall was removed around the window immediately south of the waiting room door. As in the baggage room extension, recycled stone formed the corner piers of the bay with wood framing and stucco infilling the areas around the new windows.

The history of the east side bay is unclear. The extension currently contains toilet facilities. As constructed in 1880, the depot may not have included a toilet. Staff and passengers probably used a nearby privy. The wood frame and stucco construction suggests that the extension was not part of the original design. A 1941 photograph (*Fig. 8*) shows a roof vent that identifies the space as a water closet.

Over time, the depot employed a variety of semaphore signal devices to control train movements. None of these systems survives. A raised wood platform originally surrounded the depot. (See *Fig. 1*.) This was later replaced with a concrete platform. (See *Figs. 2* and 7.)

In total, the depot retains a high degree of integrity considering its age and heavy use. The pre-1940 extensions changed some of the original design, materials and workmanship, though original stone and wood brackets were reused. The current depot retains much of the original 1880 design and materials and is clearly recognizable. Little additional change occurred after 1940. Other than the gradual deterioration since the depot's closure, all the physical changes occurred during the building's period of significance. The depot remains in its historic place of operation and its setting continues to evoke a feeling of period railroad operations. The depot possesses sufficient integrity to convey its architectural and historical significance.



Figure 4. The photographic view looking east shows the depot in its original size shortly after construction in 1880. Source: Colorado Historical Society.

#### SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The 1880 Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Antonito Depot is eligible for the State Register under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an important and distinctive masonry example of a combination-type depot. The building meets the registration requirements for such a property type as established in the multiple property documentation form, *Railroads in Colorado*, 1858-1948.

The depot is also eligible under Criterion A in the area of *transportation* for the important place it played in the operations of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) in the San Luis Valley. The depot served for over sixty years as the junction point for the branch line to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the D&RG's San Juan Extension from Alamosa to Durango and Silverton. In addition to providing passenger and express package service, and housing the local office of the Western Union telegraph, the depot also served as the office for railroad freight operations originating or terminating in the Antonito area. These shipments included agricultural crops, such as peas, wheat, and potatoes, as well as cattle and sheep. The depot also was the western-most station on the San Juan Extension that accommodated both standard and narrow gauge trains.

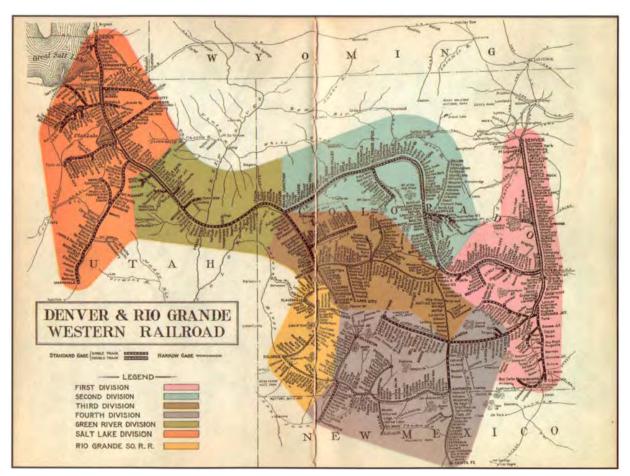


Figure 5. By 1923, the Denver & Rio Grande system stretched over much of Colorado, across northern New Mexico, and deep into Utah. Source: Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad, "Official Roster No. 11 of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad System and the Rio Grande Southern Railroad Company, 1923.

William Jackson Palmer founded the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad with a vision to link Denver with points south, eventually reaching into Mexico. Conflict and compromise with the growing Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway turned the Rio Grande's interests to the west and the state's mineral mining industry. The rail line from Walsenburg over La Veta Pass provided access to the rich agricultural area of the San Luis Valley. The narrow gauge rails reached Alamosa in

1878 and the lumber operations at South Fork in 1881.

Gold and silver strikes in the San Juan Mountains spurred the D&RG to construct its San Juan Extension. Beginning at Alamosa in 1880, the railroad built south from Alamosa to the newly established town of Antonito. Here the line turned west and wound its way west over Cumbres Pass, down into northern New Mexico, and back into Colorado to arrive at Durango the same year. From there the railroad built north to tap the mineral wealth supply much and needed transportation services to the Silverton mining district.

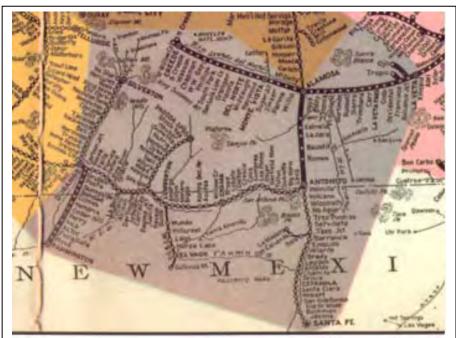


Figure 6. Antonito served as the junction between the D&RG's San Juan Extension and the branch line to Santa Fe. Source: Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad, "Official Roster No. 11 of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad System and the Rio Grande Southern Railroad Company, 1923.

The D&RG bypassed the long

existing town of Conejos and established the new town of Antonito to the southeast. Although the D&RG lost its bid to build into New Mexico over Raton Pass, the railroad's managers seized on the new opportunity to build south from Antonito toward Santa Fe. The Raton Pass agreement with the AT&SF also limited how far south the D&RG could build along any route, a point short of Santa Fe. The railroad built to its legal limit at Espanola, New Mexico, in December 1880, 28 miles from Santa Fe. That same month, Santa Fe merchants organized the Texas, Santa Fe and Northern Railroad to build north and connect with the stalled D&RG tracks. Political and financial troubles followed and it was not until January 1887 that a continuous rail route opened between Antonito and Santa Fe. This 126-mile branch line to Santa Fe became known as the "Chili Line."

The D&RG usually first built wood frame depots along its tracks. Many of these were of standard design matched to the level of traffic the railroad anticipated for each stop. These first generation depots provided passenger and baggage service and often coordinated area freight shipments. The depot might also function as a Western Union telegraph office. If traffic and revenues warranted, a first generation depot might be replaced with a larger wood frame depot or a more

substantial masonry building.

The depot building the D&RG planned for Antonito needed to be able to coordinate rail traffic at the junction of two routes. The railroad placed the depot inside the wye formed by the diverging tracks. This allowed the station agent to see trains coming from all three directions. That the depot is constructed of stone is unusual for a depot in such a small community. However, the anticipated traffic and the nearby stone quarry may have convinced the railroad's managers of the appropriateness and value in erecting a stone depot.

Architecturally, the Antonito depot is of the combination-type, a facility which handles passenger, express, and freight shipping. Such depots contain a passenger waiting room, a ticket and station agent's office, and space to receive and ship express packages. The exact design reflects the adaptation of the form to the specific traffic needs and rail configuration. Placing the depot inside the wye of the diverging tracks improved its operations and provided the architect an opportunity to design a distinctive six-sided passenger waiting area. In addition to local rail operations, the Antonito depot provided Western Union telegraph service during the day.

The Antonito station agent used the depot as his business office to coordinate all local rail activities. In 1923, near the peak of its size, Antonito station included a 30-ton coaling structure, a water tank, a wye on which to turn engines and trains, a stockyard and loading ramp for cattle and sheep (complete with a sheep dipping vat), a car scale, a freight house, bunkhouse, section house, and a two-stall narrow gauge engine house. Most all of these facilities and structures have been demolished or converted to other uses. The depot is the remaining building most intact and most closely associated with the D&RG's operations in Antonito.

Among the most important of these activities was the operation of passenger trains. Trains to and from Durango/Silverton, Santa Fe, and Alamosa passed through Antonito, stopping for

passengers, express packages and water as needed. The trains to and from the west were always longer and more numerous than those on the Santa Fe Branch.

Figure 7. The parlor-buffet car "Durango" brings up the rear of a west-bound passenger train stopped at the Antonito Depot in 1940. Photgrapher: Otto Perry. Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>‡</sup> A railroad station is a service point along a rail line which may include a variety of buildings and structures to support the operation and maintenance of trains and tracks, as well as the loading and unloading of passengers and freight. The depot is only one of the buildings that can be part of a station.

The Santa Fe Branch added little to D&RG revenues. Increasing com-petition from automobiles, buses and airlines led to a steady decree in rail pass-enger ridership. The con-tract to carry the U.S. mail brought in as much if not more cash than did the passenger service. Freight shipments also declined over time. D&RG manage-ment received permission to discontinue service and abandon the line. The last train on the Santa Fe Branch paused briefly at Antonito on September 1, 1941.

Operations on the line to Durango faired better. As mining and logging declined. boom an oil Farmington, New Mexico, brought temporary new life. By the end of World War II, steam-powered rail service had disappeared from all but the narrow gauge portion of the D&RG system. Passenger service through Antonito lasted until 1950. Freight service finally ended west of Antonito in 1969. The D&RG continued to operate standard gauge freight trains south from Alamosa to Antonito.

Beginning in 1881, the D&RG slowly converted portions of its three-foot wide narrow gauge tracks to the standard 4' 81/2" gauge used by most U.S. railroads. The narrower gauge pro-vided an engineering ad-vantage in the construction and operation of railroads in Colorado's mountains. How-ever, whenever railroads using narrow gauge met standard gauge lines, the direct interchange of rail cars was not possible. Passengers and freight had to be unloaded from cars of one gauge to those of another before travel could continue. This slowed shipments and

This slowed shipments and increased costs.



Figure 8. The last revenue train to run on the Santa Fe Branch, a mix train of freight and passenger cars, pauses at the Antonito Depot on September 1, 1941. Photographer: Otto Perry. Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.



Figure 9. The end of the three-rail track comes just west of Antonito, marking the end of standard gauge operation on the San Juan Extension. Photographer: Otto Perry, June 21, 1943. Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.

The D&RG usually began the conversion of a particular route by replacing narrow gauge ties with longer standard gauge type and then adding an outside third rail to the existing narrow gauge track to allow the operation of both gauges over the same railbed. Once a route was fully converted to standard gauge, the inner rail allowing narrow gauge operation was removed. In the San Luis

## COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES CONTINUATION SHEET

Page 9 Section IV

San Luis Valley, the narrow gauge tracks over La Veta Pass were converted to standard gauge in 1899. Conversion moved steadily westward until reaching Creede in 1902. A third rail was also installed south from Alamosa to Antonito in 1901. By 1923, the D&RG operated just under 3,000 miles of main line track–2,062 miles of standard gauge track, 105 miles of three-rail track, and 830 miles of narrow gauge. Trains of both gauges could operate as far west as Antonito on the San Juan Extension. Trains headed farther west, now as in the past, have always been narrow gauge.

Though freight trains continue to travel south from Alamosa to Antonito, the railroad closed the depot in 1971. The states of Colorado and New Mexico purchased the narrow gauge track from Antonito to Chama, New Mexico, in 1970 to save the railroad as an operating tourist attraction. The Antonito depot was not included in the sale. The Union Pacific Railroad (successor to the D&RG by merger) donated the building and underlying land to the Town of Antonito in 2002. The building remains unused.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Beebe, Lucius and Charles Clegg. *Rio Grande: Mainline of the Rockies*. Berkeley: Howell-North, 1962.
- Burggraaf, Robert A. Draft National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Antonito Depot. April 1, 1975. Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society.
- Chappell, Gordon. "To Santa Fe by Narrow Gauge: the D&RG's 'Chili Line'," *Colorado Rail Annual 1969*. Golden, CO: Colorado Railroad Museum, 1969.
- Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad, "Official Roster No. 11 of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad System and the Rio Grande Southern Railroad Company, 1923." Reprint of original with new introduction. Golden, CO: Colorado Railroad Museum, 1998.
- Fraser, Clayton and Jennifer H. Strand. *Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948.* National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. August 31, 1997.
- Photograph collection, Stephen Hart Library, Colorado Historical Society.
- Photograph collection, Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.

#### **GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

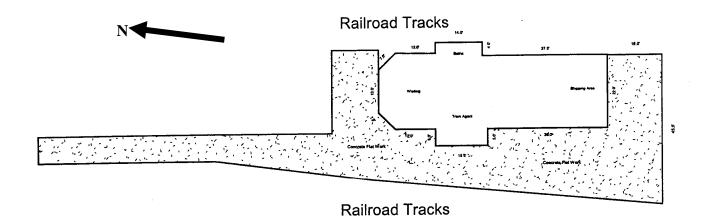
#### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The land included in this nomination consists of a parcel in the Town of Antonito, Conejos County, Colorado, and lying the exterior boundary of the Antonito Depot Tract, located in the NE ¼ of Section 29, Township 33 North, Range 9 East, of the New Mexico Principal Meridian, Conejos County, Colorado, being more particularly described as follows:

Beginning at a point on the North right of way line of Second Avenue of said Town of Antonito from which the East ¼ Corner of said Section 29 (monumented with a No.6 re-bar with a 2 ½ inch aluminum cap set by Colorado PLS No. 14840) bears South 76° 06' 02" East a distance of 1837.68 feet; thence North 90° 00' 00" West along said North right of way line a distance of 120.25 feet; thence North 03° 39' 35" West a distance of 209.16 feet; thence Northeasterly along the arc of a non-tangent curve to the left a distance of 244.72 feet (curve data: Radius = 147.14 feet, Delta = O9° 31' 52", Chord length = 244.44 feet Chord Bearing = North 17° 26' 02" East); thence North 86° 30' 23" East a distance of 32.03 feel; thence South 03° 39' 35" East a distance of 444.80 feet to the Point of Beginning.

Containing 0.97 Acres more or less.

#### **BUILDING AND PLATFORM SITE PLAN**



## COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES CONTINUATION SHEET

Page 11 Section VI

#### PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-20:

Name of Property: Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Antonito Depot

Location: Antonito, Conejos County, Colorado

Photographer: Steve Sumner Date of Photographs: April 2004

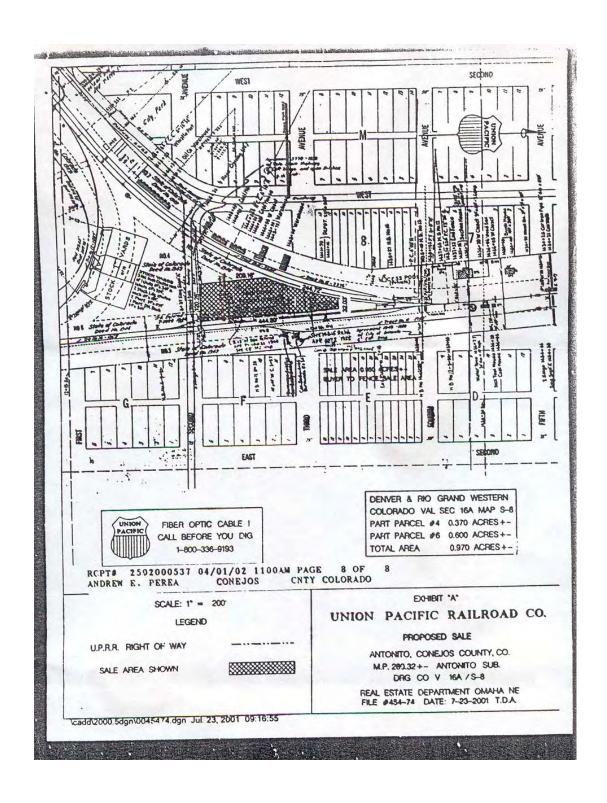
Negatives: Possession of the photographer

#### Photo No. Photographic Information

- 1 North end; view to the south.
- 2 North and west sides; view to the southeast.
- 3 North and west sides; view to the southeast.
- 4 West side; view to the northeast.
- 5 West side freight door; view to the east.
- 6 West and south sides; view to the northeast.
- 7 South side; view to the north.
- 8 South and east sides; view to the northwest.
- 9 North and east sides; view to the southwest.
- 10 Roof bracket detail, west side; view to the northeast.
- 11 Chimney; view to the northeast.
- 12 Waiting room; view to the north.
- 13 Waiting room; view to the south.
- 14 Waiting room; view to the southwest.
- 15 Center room; view to the west.
- 16 Ceiling damage, original lighting fixtures; view to the southeast.
- 17 Freight room; view to the east.
- 18 Freight room; view to the north.
- 19 Freight room roof trusses; view to the east.
- 20 Freight room; view to the southeast.

#### SITE MAP

From March 27, 2002 Deed



#### **USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**

Antonito Quadrangle, Colorado, 1967 7.5 Minute Series (enlarged)

