

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD WAREHOUSE  
1711-1735 Nineteenth Street  
Denver  
Denver County  
Colorado

HABS No. CO-128  
See also HAER No. CO-51

HABS  
COLO  
16-DENV,  
62-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Service  
Department of the Interior  
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD WAREHOUSE

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: 1711-1735 Nineteenth Street, Denver, Colorado.

Quad: Commerce City, Colo.

UTM: 13/500370/4400450

Date of Construction: 1922-1923

Present Owner: Union Pacific Railroad, P.O. Box 2500, Broomfield, Colorado.

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Union Pacific Railroad warehouse represents the height of the railroad involvement in the bustling freight business in Denver and the positive impact of that business on the growth of Denver. The building is architecturally significant: there is unusual attention to style and detailing for a structure used for such purpose.

Historian: Kathleen Hoeft, Long Hoeft Architects, May 1991

## II. HISTORY

Denver was founded on the dreams of gold discovery, but Denver's early settlers realized that the establishment of railroad traffic was the key to a stable prosperity for the city. When the Union Pacific Railroad chose to bypass Denver and go through Cheyenne, Wyoming, on its transcontinental route, Denver businessmen organized and raised funds to bring the Kansas Pacific into Denver. At the same time, John Evans, Colorado's second territorial governor, convinced Congress to agree to a 900,000 acre land grant for the Union Pacific on the condition that it would connect the Kansas Pacific and the Union Pacific. Thus, the first Union Pacific train arrived from Cheyenne in June 1870, and the first Kansas Pacific train arrived from Kansas two months later.<sup>1</sup>

By 1890, 4,176 miles of track were in use in Colorado. Denver was the focus of rail activity in the region. As the rail lines converged in Denver, so did the wholesalers, warehousemen and merchants. Goods were shipped in, primarily from the east, and shipped out to all parts of Colorado. Smelters moved from mining towns to Denver. "Labor was more plentiful, ores could be brought in by rail from several mining communities, fuel could be hauled there more cheaply, and the refined gold, silver, and copper could be shipped out efficiently."<sup>2</sup>

In 1896, the Union Pacific opened new shops at Pullman, north of Denver. Pullman, later to become a part of Denver, was no more than shops and a station, the station located at Fortieth Avenue and York Street. Repair and service facilities were consolidated there, resulting in an expansion of its freight yards in the city's commercial district.<sup>3</sup>

The Union Pacific increased its freight traffic by developing industries and adding lines to serve those and other industries. Beginning in 1908, the company developed coal mines north

of Denver and, in 1910, added lines to the wheat fields of northeast Colorado.<sup>4</sup>

Also in 1910 the Union Pacific strengthened its terminal facilities in Denver by purchasing, for \$40,000, a parcel of land between Wazee and Wewatta and Twentieth and Twenty-first Streets.<sup>5</sup> This is a portion of the land upon which the Union Pacific Railroad Warehouse would later be built.

Eight different railroad lines were located in Denver in 1914, including the Santa Fe, the Burlington, the Rock Island and the Union Pacific, by which time Colorado had 5,739 miles of track. Much of this trackage was due to expanded agricultural activity in the state.<sup>6</sup>

In late 1922, construction was begun on a new Union Pacific Railroad Warehouse on 19th Street in Denver.<sup>7</sup> A 1926 newspaper article stated: "In going after the business in Denver the Union Pacific has, from the beginning . . . been vigorous, and has spent money with a lavish hand. New freight facilities for Denver have been provided at an expense of more than \$600,000. This includes brick pavement for its inbound and outbound freight houses, and all of its other team tracks completely paved, giving about a mile and a half of paved alleys for freight purposes."<sup>8</sup>

One of a series of photographs which chronicles the construction of the warehouse includes a construction sign with the following information: P.J. Sullivan, General Contractor; Architectural terra cotta, Denver Terra Cotta Company; M. & H. Electric Company; and Millwork, McFee and McGinty. No architect is listed for the work.<sup>9</sup> Generally, the engineering division of the Union Pacific in Omaha, Nebraska, did its own architectural work.<sup>10</sup>

### III. DESCRIPTION

The Union Pacific Railroad Warehouse was designed in the classical revival style and constructed of hard red brick, decorated with white terra cotta. The building is divided by function into a two story office portion, seventy-nine feet wide by ninety feet deep fronting on Nineteenth Street, and a one story warehouse, fifty feet wide by five hundred and twenty feet long, which extends from the back of the office. Trains pulled up to the building on the southeast side. Trucks operated from the northwest side.

Like Denver's central business district, the building is oriented at about forty-five degrees to north-south. It is a block northwest of Denver Union Station and sits at the edge of the Denver railyards. Except for two small patches of evergreen shrubbery on either side of the front entry sidewalk, the building sits on land covered by brick paving, some of which has an asphalt topping.

Entry to the offices is centered on the Nineteenth Street front elevation in a bay that projects four feet forward of the rest of the facade. It is defined by two two-story high white terra cotta Roman Doric columns at either side of the doorway. The columns support a terra cotta frieze on which "Union Pacific Railroad" is inscribed. A terra cotta cornice with a wave motif tops the frieze and extends around the office building. Above the frieze is an articulated brick parapet with a terra cotta coping. Above the entry, the Union Pacific symbol is cast in terra cotta and built into the parapet.

The front door and sidelights are detailed with terra cotta trim which continues up and around an arched three part window above the entrance. The original front entrance has been replaced with an aluminum door, sidelights, and transom. The transom has been filled with pink metal

panels. Original first floor windows, three on either side of the front entry, have also been replaced with fixed aluminum sash with pink transom panels. Second floor windows are original, wood double-hung.

The brickwork of the base, up to the window sills, is articulated to resemble wide stone coursing and the corners of the building and entry projection to form quoins. The sides of the office building are defined by projecting bays at each end of these facades. Each of the end bays has two windows on each of the first and second floors. On the southeast side, rear bay, one of those second floor windows has been replaced by a door which leads to a steel fire escape. Between the two bays, either side, except as noted below, are seven regularly spaced windows on each floor.

On the northwest side, centered under the two second floor windows adjacent to the rear bay is a rear entry with a projecting metal canopy. The canopy, with a hipped standing seam metal roof, has a metal fascia with a wave motif and a low parapet of acanthus leaves. It is supported by decorative heavy metal strap brackets. The door is a medium stile wood and glass door with sidelights and transom.

The one story warehouse accommodated rail traffic on the southeast side and truck traffic on the northwest side. It was divided into twenty-four bays, each bay defined by a brick pilaster extending from the loading platform to a foot and a half above the parapet coping. The coping and the arched tops of the pilasters are white terra cotta.

Each of the long sides of the warehouse is protected by a continuous canopy, fourteen feet wide for trains on the southeast side and ten feet wide for trucks on the opposite side. The canopy is suspended by angle iron straps extending from the parapet. Above the canopies,

directly above the loading doors, are large panels of glass, subdivided into small panes.

The rear facade is divided into two bays, each bay containing large windows of small panes.

The building has a steel structure and exterior brick bearing walls. It has a built up roof which has become the location for much of the building's mechanical equipment.

The warehouse was constructed after, and extends under, the Twentieth Street Viaduct. (HAER No. CO-51) To accommodate this, the parapet on each side of the building has been cut away for three bays under the bridge.

#### IV. ENDNOTES

1. Lyle W. Dorsett, *The Queen City: A History of Denver* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1977), 21-23.
2. Ibid., 60.
3. R.A. LeMassena, *Union Pacific in Colorado: 1867-1967* (n.p., booklet printed by Hotchkiss and Nelson, U.S.A.), 27.
4. Ibid., 29-30.
5. *The Denver Times*, March 15, 1910 (Clippings file: Western History Department, Denver Public Library)
6. Dorsett, 128-129.
7. Mile High Photo of Denver, Photographs of construction, 1922-23, Union Pacific Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.
8. *Rocky Mountain News*, 1 August 1926, (Clippings file: Western History Department, Denver Public Library).
9. Mile High Photo of Denver.
10. Don Snoddy, Union Pacific Museum Curator, telephone interview by Kathleen Hoeft, 21 May 1991.

# TWENTIETH STREET VIADUCT

DENVER IS DIVIDED EAST AND WEST BY THE PLATTE RIVER VALLEY. THE VALLEY WAS DEVELOPED AS AN INDUSTRIAL AREA AND AS THE MAIN NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR OF THE RAILWAYS. IT WAS SUBJECT TO SEVERE FLOODING. AS A CONSEQUENCE OF BOTH FACTORS IT BECAME A PRIORITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY TO CONSTRUCT VIADUCTS THAT CROSSED OVER NOT ONLY THE RIVER BUT THE ENTIRE PLATTE VALLEY.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TWENTIETH STREET VIADUCT BEGAN IN 1890. WAS SPECIFICALLY UNDERTAKEN BECAUSE OF ACCIDENTS INVOLVING TRAINS IN THE VALLEY. THE COST WAS PRIMARILY BORNE BY THE FOUR MAJOR RAILROADS WHOSE TRACKS IT CROSSED. WITH A SMALL AMOUNT BEING COVERED BY THE CITY.

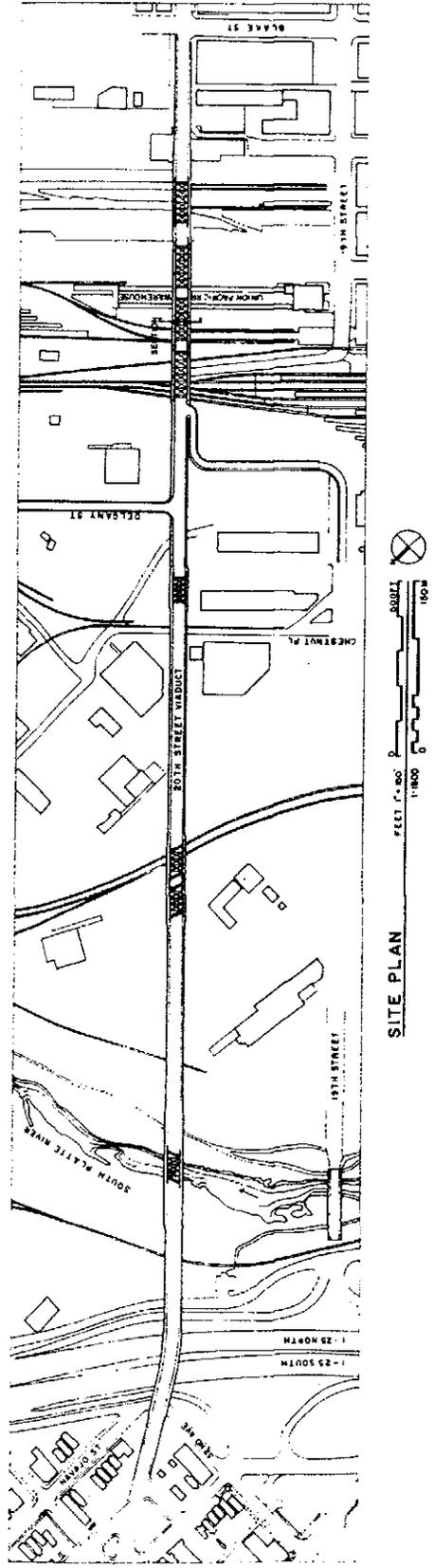
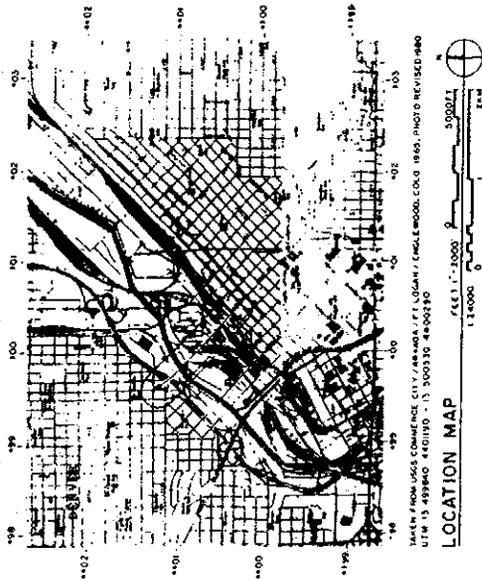
THE VIADUCT IS THE LONGEST OF DENVER'S HISTORIC VIADUCTS AT 4,294 FEET LONG. ITS 86 SPANS OF VARYING LENGTHS ARE SUPPORTED BY STEEL COLUMNS AND CONCRETE PIERS. SHORTER SPANS ARE CARRIED BY PLATE GIRDERS AT EITHER SIDE OF THE ROADWAY. LONGER SPANS, BRIDGING THE RIVER AND THE TRACKS, ARE CARRIED BY WARREN TRUSSES. ALSO AT EITHER SIDE OF THE ROADWAY.

THESE LONGITUDINAL GIRDERS AND TRUSSES SUPPORT TRANSVERSE PLATE GIRDERS, WHICH IN TURN SUPPORT STRINGERS WHICH CARRY THE ROADWAY. THE ENGINEERING IS A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE OF AN ASSEMBLAGE OF SMALL ELEMENTS RIVETED TOGETHER TO CREATE AN EFFICIENT LARGE STRUCTURE.

THE VIADUCT IS IN AN ADVANCED STAGE OF DETERIORATION AND IS SCHEDULED TO BE DEMOLISHED IN 1992.

THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD WAREHOUSE IS LOCATED ON NINETEENTH STREET, JUST ONE BLOCK FROM DENVER UNION TERMINAL. THE LINEAR BUILDING, 610 FEET LONG, SERVED RAIL CARS ON ITS SOUTHEAST SIDE AND TRUCKS ON ITS NORTHWEST SIDE. THE WAREHOUSE EXTENDS UNDER THE TWENTIETH STREET VIADUCT, INTEGRATING TWO OF THE VIADUCT'S PIERS INTO ITS OWN STRUCTURE.

THE WAREHOUSE REPRESENTS THE HEIGHT OF THE RAILROAD INVOLVEMENT IN THE BUSTLING FREIGHT BUSINESS IN DENVER AND THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF THAT BUSINESS ON THE GROWTH OF DENVER. THE BUILDING IS ARCHITECTURALLY SIGNIFICANT; THERE IS UNUSUAL ATTENTION TO STYLE AND DETAIL FOR A STRUCTURE USED FOR SUCH PURPOSE.



TWENTIETH STREET VIADUCT  
 PLATTE RIVER VALLEY, 1500 WEST HOWARD ST DENVER, DENVER COUNTY, COLORADO  
 ARCHITECTURAL RECORD  
 HAER CO-51

