

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section: G and H

Page 278

Minnesota Railroads, 1862-1956

Name of Property

Minnesota, Statewide

County and State

Section G. Geographical Data

The State of Minnesota

Section H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The MPDF *Railroads in Minnesota, 1862-1956* was developed in order to analyze railroad resources within the context of entire railroad corridors and to analyze railroad corridors within statewide contexts. Previous cultural resources management studies of railroad resources often were focused on the immediate project area, and the resources were evaluated for National Register eligibility within relatively short segments of larger corridors or as individual properties. Other published railroad histories tend to focus on the corporate history or economic influence of railroads.

Railroads in Minnesota, 1862-1956 was intended to be a study, not a survey, of railroad resources. The focus of this study was on synthesis of secondary source materials. State and local databases were searched for railroad-related information in Minneapolis and St. Paul. In particular, research was completed at the following repositories: Minnesota Department of Transportation project files; Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office; Minnesota Historical Society library and archives; Wilson, Walter, and Architecture libraries at the University of Minnesota; and Minneapolis and St. Paul public libraries. This research revealed an extensive existing literature regarding railroads. The main sources consulted include: previous railroad studies (books, articles, CRM reports); railroad engineering and architectural manuals from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; other completed National Register nomination forms; railroad company annual reports; and historic period maps, particularly the *Railroad Commissioner's Map of Minnesota* (1930).

The historic contexts are derived from the historical research. The contexts are divided into six statewide thematic contexts and 14 railroad company-related contexts. The 14 companies selected represent the railroad corporations operating railroads in Minnesota as of 1960, which is near the end of the period of significance of the MPDF, as listed in Richard Prosser's *Rails to the North Star* (1966). An exception is the Illinois Central railroad, which operated a small amount of right of way in Minnesota but had a much larger presence in other states. These 14 companies represent combinations of railroad companies that may have been originally independent, and subheadings for predecessor companies are provided within the contexts. Railroad corridor associated with railroad companies other than these 14 can be evaluated and nominated within this MPDF, but additional contextual information will be required. Because

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transportation was the function of railroads, the thematic contexts are focused on the interplay of railroad transportation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with other aspects of Minnesota's economy, such as industry, commerce, urban development, and procurement of commodities.

The significant property types identified in this MPDF are based on function. Because all railroad buildings and structures functioned in combination with other railroad buildings and structures, individual resources were grouped into a limited number of district property types: railroad corridor historic district, railroad station district, and railroad yard district. It became apparent, however, that some railroad resources may be eligible individually: railroad depots, railroad bridges, and engine houses. Those resources were also assigned property types.

The significance of railroads lies in the important transportation connections they made between resource procurement areas, railroad transfers, and railroad terminals. The registration requirements for significance under Criterion A reflect that significance and are primarily concerned with establishing the connections made by railroad corridors.

Limited field survey was completed during the course of this study of the buildings and structures within four selected railroad corridors. No archaeological surveys were completed during this study. For more information regarding field surveys and case study evaluations of National Register eligibility completed during this study, see Schmidt, et al. 2007.