

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC **Thomasville Railroad Passenger Depot**

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
West Main Street

CITY, TOWN
Thomasville

STATE
North Carolina

— VICINITY OF
037

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Fifth

COUNTY
Davidson

CODE
057

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER meeting place

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME **City of Thomasville**

STREET & NUMBER
West Main Street

CITY, TOWN
Thomasville

— VICINITY OF

STATE
North Carolina 27360

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Davidson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Lexington

STATE
North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

Determined eligible: **No**

TITLE
N/A

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE 1912
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED (restored)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE 1978
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

One of the oldest frame railroad depots in the state, the Thomasville Railroad Passenger Depot (c. 1871) exhibits a picturesque combination of utilitarian railroad design with fashionable Victorian sawnwork detailing. Displaying a simple one-room plan with a ticket bay once oriented towards the tracks, this gable-roof depot is an early example of a basic form commonly used in railroad depot construction throughout North Carolina until the early twentieth century. Originally situated on the south side of the railroad tracks, the recently renovated depot was relocated directly across the tracks to the north thereby maintaining its close association with Thomasville's railroad lines which typically bisect the city's central business district.

The simple three-bay single-story depot is principally sheathed with German siding; however, narrow vertical boards comprise a dado which is outlined by a simple chair rail and baseboard. The gable roof sheathed with standing-seam tin is distinguished by extended eaves which are supported by enlarged A-shaped ornamental brackets with chamfered edges. Also accenting the cornice area is a lacy sawnwork frieze band which features an attenuated stencil-like lozenge motif.

The original track-side five-bay facade is punctuated by a door to each side of the projecting ticket-window bay which contains an enlarged 8/8 double-sash window. This bay projection has an attenuated 2/2 sash window at each side and the bay itself interrupts the frieze band. Plain corner boards accent each corner and the fenestration of each gable end is distinguished by a pair of windows. The remaining elevation has three bays with a central door.

All three principal entrances are highlighted by a two pane transom and each door has four slightly raised panels framed by robust mouldings. Both the exterior door and window surrounds are plain with mitred corners. The standard double sash windows contain 6/6 lights.

Featuring a one-room plan, the interior contains several distinctive elements typical of late nineteenth century building practices. The walls and ceiling are sheathed with narrow beaded boards and in this instance the bead band is composed of four parallel rows which separate each plain narrow board. A deeply moulded chair rail bisects the walls which also boast a handsome moulded cornice and baseboard. The baseboard's simple moulding profile of a plain board divided by four bead rows mirrors the pattern created by the wall sheathing. This same pattern of four bead rows is also featured in both the door and window surrounds and the cornerblocks. Two stove pipe openings pierce the ceiling marking the location of each stove. During the building's renovation, the badly deteriorated pine floors were replaced with old pine and a conjectural railing was installed defining the ticket bay area.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1870-1871

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

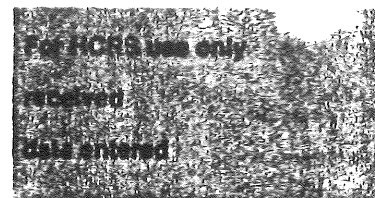
The Thomasville Railroad Passenger Depot, built around 1870-1871, is one of the oldest surviving frame depots in the state. Serving as a passenger station until 1912 and as a freight agent's office for many years after that date, the depot has been an integral part of the transportation and railroad history of Davidson County. It is also representative of the railroad structures which appeared in a number of the state's industrialized "New South" towns after the Civil War. Recently restored, the small-scale simple board-and-batten building combines surprisingly lavish decorative detail to create a structure of picturesque charm.

Criteria assessment:

- A. Representative of the new prosperity and economic growth of the early 1870s, characterized as the birth of the "New South" in North Carolina -- a period of transition from farming to industry. The North Carolina Railroad played an integral role in the transformation of small Piedmont towns such as Thomasville.
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a small railroad passenger depot featuring board-and-batten construction with lavish sawnwork detail. Stands as one of the oldest surviving frame depots in North Carolina.

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In 1855 the North Carolina Railroad completed a line to Thomasville in Davidson County. In years to come the presence of the railroad would have a significant impact on the economic growth of the town.¹ By 1860 the North Carolina Railroad connected Thomasville directly with Charlotte, Salisbury, Raleigh, and Goldsboro. It also tied into other railway lines such as the Atlantic and North Carolina, Wilmington and Weldon, and the Western North Carolina railroads--thus giving the Davidson County town connections with other trade centers throughout North Carolina and even into Virginia.²

The county leader most responsible for obtaining railroad service for Thomasville was John Warwick Thomas of Fair Grove. He was elected state senator in 1848 and fought for the Railroad Bill of 1849 in hopes of bringing a line through Davidson County. He canvassed that section of the state in order to sell stock to match the state appropriation for the rail service. He built a store in Thomasville after the arrival of train service, and he had other financial enterprises there as well.³ In anticipation of the coming of the North Carolina Railroad the citizens of Davidson County settled the community of Thomasville in 1852 and named it for Senator Thomas, the driving force in its establishment. In 1857 the town was incorporated.⁴

When the railroad first began service to Thomasville the first passenger depot was operated out of a hotel owned by Lewis L. Thomas, son of the town's founder. The younger Thomas, the first railway agent in the village, had a ticket office in one of his hotel rooms, and he also provided meals to passengers.⁵

The early years before the Civil War were ones of relative quiet in Thomasville. Trains which traversed its borders did the small business in passengers and freight that was typical of a small, primarily agricultural economy.

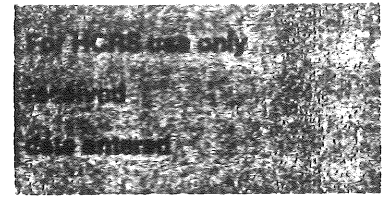
Apparently the town's depot remained located in the hotel during the Civil War. The railroad and Thomasville were threatened in 1865 when Union General George Stoneman made a raid into the western part of the state and severed the North Carolina Railroad at a number of towns. Confederate cavalry, however, drove the Federal raiders away from Thomasville and saved the railway from destruction and the town from the torch.⁶

After the war a new prosperity and economic growth came to the quiet Davidson County village. Reconstruction was marked by hard times throughout the state, but by 1870 conditions had improved and there was a resurgence in an economy which had undergone some alterations since the antebellum period. As historians Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome have written, "The decade of the 1870s was marked by transition, expansion, and the real beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in North Carolina." Although by no means complete in a state which remained primarily agricultural for generations to come, this "revolution" nevertheless launched a new way of life for many North Carolinians who lived in the new small industrial centers like Thomasville. This transition from farming to industry is commonly called the birth of the "New South," and the railroad was an integral part of the transformation.⁷

In Thomasville this economic metamorphosis was characterized in the 1870s by the appearance of shoe manufacturing; buggy, hat, tobacco, and barrel factories; a plant to

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make rifle stocks; and a small mining operation. The industry which had the most economic influence on the town was furniture manufacturing which began as the "obscure little cottage industry" of making split bottom chairs in the 1870s. Furniture manufacturing eventually led to the growth of support industries like those of machinery and mirror makers. From the outset the railroad was a boon to the shipment of the products of these industries as well as to the transportation of the men and materials associated with industrial commodities. After this industrial beginning in the 1870s Thomasville went on to become one of the state's largest furniture producing centers, and its name is now associated throughout the country with the making of wood products.⁸

Coincidental with the manufacturing birth of Thomasville and the accompanying surge in railway travel that demanded new transportation facilities, the North Carolina Railroad and the town built a new passenger depot around 1870-1871. In the latter year the North Carolina Railroad was leased for 30 years by the Richmond and Danville Railroad Company which was later to be reorganized into the Southern Railway Company.⁹ The builders of the new station constructed it on two acres of land given to them in the settlement of the estate of John W. Thomas who had recently died.¹⁰ The building went up on the south side of the tracks near what is now the intersection of Fisher and Ferry streets. At around that time the hotel which had served as a passenger station was converted into a residence. The new depot embodied many of the constructional features of similar buildings of the day which were built to accommodate and survive the constant trample of the travelers bound to and from the manufacturing meccas of the "New South."¹¹

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries business and industry continued to flourish and expand in Thomasville. In 1903 a newspaper proclaimed that in the past six years the community had grown from 600 inhabitants and two factories to 2,400 residents, with 12 chair and furniture factories, a wagon factory, roller mill, 3 livery stables, 2 hotels, a public hall, telephone exchange, weekly newspaper, over 20 stores, and a grade school. Textiles soon added to the economy. Amazon Mills (later a part of Cannon Mills) was incorporated in 1909 and hosiery making appeared shortly. In the midst of such growth and activity the passenger depot was a bustling center of railway travelers. In 1895 the bankrupt Richmond and Danville Railroad had been absorbed by the Southern Railway which then leased the North Carolina Railroad for 99 years.¹³

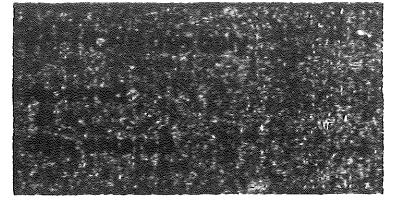
The station continued to serve the town until after the turn of the century, but the steadily-increasing numbers of train passengers, created by the demands of growing manufacturing and business, soon rendered the building obsolete. Around 1904 manufacturers and businessmen beginning complaining about the depot's limited facilities, and Davidson County newspapers agitated for the construction of a new building.¹⁴

In response to such pressure the town and railroad completed and opened a new brick passenger station in 1912. The older frame structure was then moved to the north side of the tracks where it was joined to a railway freight warehouse. There the depot served as the freight agent's office. (The 1912 building has since been razed.)

Although the warehouse portion of the freight building was later demolished, the passenger station continued to stand. The Southern Railway Company eventually gave the

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Continuation sheet

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

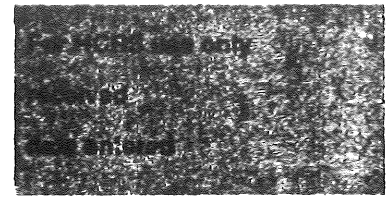
Item number 8

Page 3

structure to the town. The Thomasville Historical Society, which was organized in 1969, raised \$5,000 for its restoration. With the aid of the town, the society has recently turned the station around to face Main Street and authentically restored one of North Carolina's oldest surviving frame train passenger depots.¹⁵

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FOOTNOTES

- ¹M. Jewell Sink and Mary Green Matthews, Pathfinders Past and Present: A History of Davidson County, North Carolina (High Point: Hall Printing Company, 1972), 209.
- ²Cecil Kenneth Brown, A State Movement in Railroad Development (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1928), 138-139.
- ³Sink and Matthews, Pathfinders Past and Present, 230-231.
- ⁴William S. Powell, The North Carolina Gazetteer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 491.
- ⁵Sink and Matthews, Pathfinders Past and Present, 231.
- ⁶John G. Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 355n.
- ⁷Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, North Carolina: The History of a Southern State (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 503-519; C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), IX, X.
- ⁸Bill Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina (Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company, 4 volumes, 1965), IV, 1795-1797.
- ⁹Inventory of N. C. Railroad Company property made in 1871 when the Railroad was leased to the Richmond a Danville Railroad Company; First Annual Report, Oct. 12, 1872, to the President and Board of N. C. Railroad, Descriptive Lists and Annual Reports, N. C. Rail Road Company Records, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina, Vol. 95, p. 53; Vol. 96, p. 68.
- ¹⁰Davidson County Estate Records, John W. Thomas, 1871, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.
- ¹¹M. Jewell Sink to Marshall Bullock, July 26, 1978, a letter in Thomasville Depot file, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina, hereinafter cited as Sink to Bullock, July 26, 1978.
- ¹²Sharpe, New Geography of North Carolina, IV, 1795-1797.
- ¹³Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 516.
- ¹⁴The Dispatch (Lexington) as cited in Marshall Bullock, "Thomasville's First Passenger Station," an unpublished manuscript in Thomasville Depot file, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N. C.
- ¹⁵Sink to Bullock, July 26, 1978.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	17	582700	397110810	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Thomasville Railroad Passenger Depot property is located in the Southern Railroad right-of-way and is bounded on the south by the railroad tracks and on the north by West Main Street as shown in red on the attached map.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Drucilla G. Haley, Survey Specialist
Joe Mobley, Researcher

ORGANIZATION Survey and Planning Branch DATE April 9, 1981
Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section

STREET & NUMBER North Carolina Division of Archives and History TELEPHONE (919) 733-6545
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN _____ STATE _____

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____ STATE _____ LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE William S. Pica, Jr.

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE May 27, 1981

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

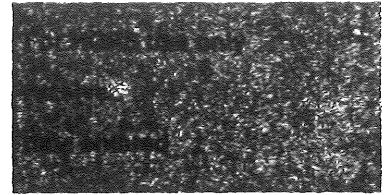
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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Continuation sheet

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Item number 9

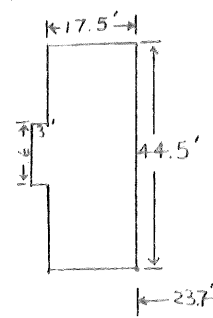
Page 1

- Barrett, John G. The Civil War in North Carolina. Chapel Hill: The University of Carolina Press, 1963.
- Brown, Cecil Kenneth. A State Movement in Railroad Development. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1928.
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- Davidson County Records. Archives, Division of Archives and History. Raleigh, North Carolina. Subgroup: Estates.
- Lefler, Hugh Talmage and Newsome, Albert Ray. North Carolina: The History of a Southern State. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973.
- North Carolina Railroad Company Records. Archives, Division of Archives and History. Raleigh, North Carolina.
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- Woodward, C. Vann. The Origins of the New South, 1877-1913. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951.

85

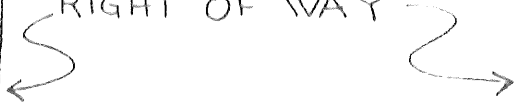
TRADE ST.

THOMASVILLE
DEPOT LOCATION



← 34' →

SOUTHERN RR
RIGHT OF WAY



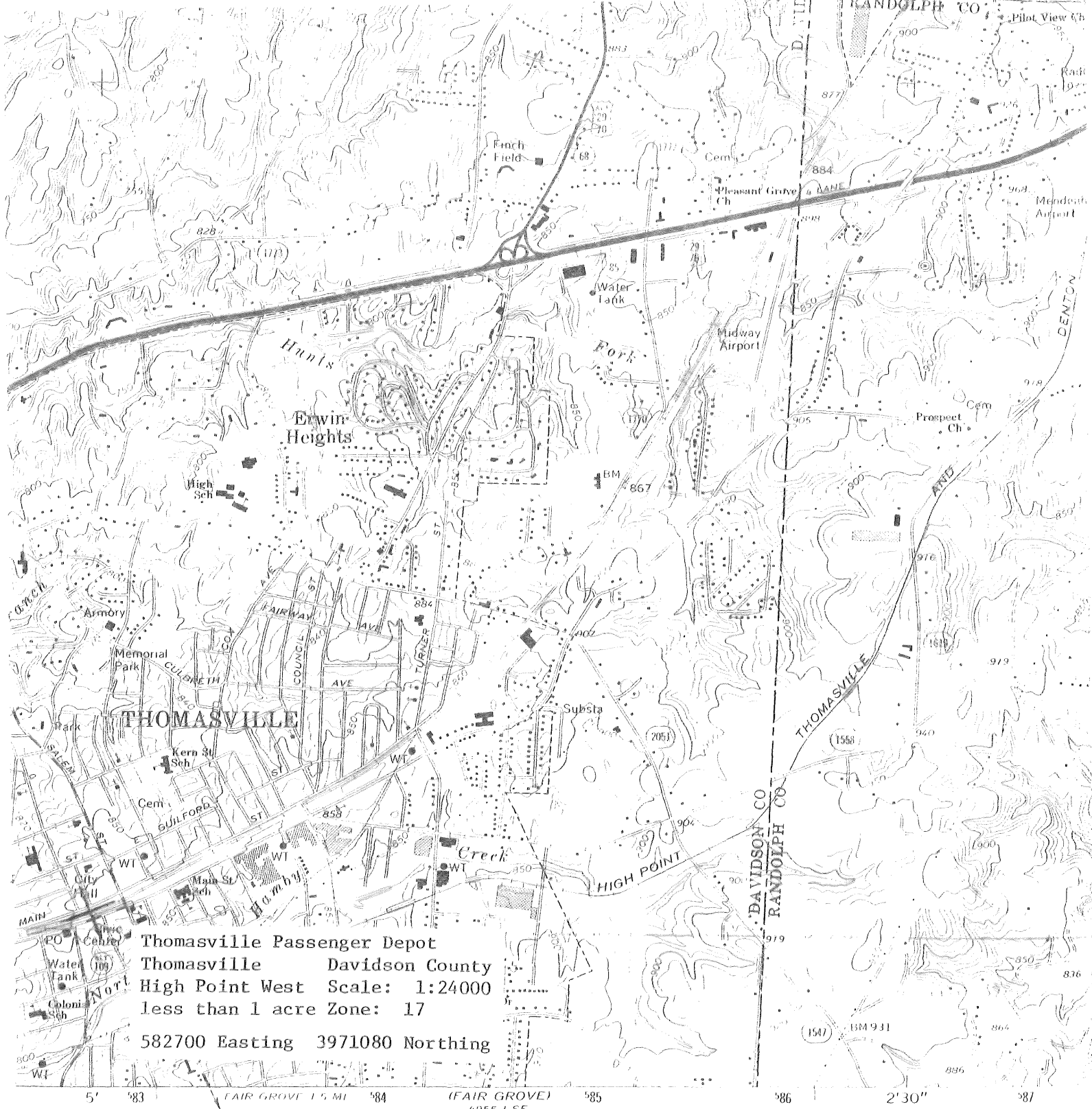
W. MAIN ST.

113

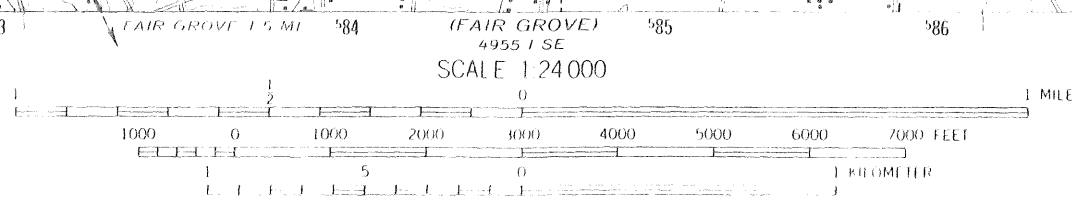
RAILWAY

48

(4)



Thomasville Passenger Depot
 Thomasville Davidson County
 High Point West Scale: 1:24000
 less than 1 acre Zone: 17
 582700 Easting 3971080 Northing



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
 DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

NORTH
 SHEET

N C
 QUADRANGLE LOCATION

THIS MAP COMPLES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

