

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 200 S. Tenth Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Atchison [ ] vicinity

state Kansas code KS county Atchison code 005 zip code 66002

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Richard D. Rankin D-SHPO 8-14-01  
Signature of certifying official Date

KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/rail-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

COMMERCE/TRADE/organizational

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: railroad freight house

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone, CONCRETE

walls Limestone

roof OTHER

other Limestone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 been requested).
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Transportation \_\_\_\_\_
- Architecture \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1880-1951 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1880 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a \_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railroad Company

Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot  
Name of Property

Atchison County, Kansas  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 2.37 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15S 0317310E</u>	<u>4380865N</u>
2	_____	_____

Zone	Easting	Northing
3	_____	_____
4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Deon Wolfenbarger/Preservation Consultant  
organization Three Gables Preservation date December 27, 2000  
street & number 320 Pine Glade Road telephone 303/258-3136  
city or town Nederland state Colorado zip code 80466

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Atchison  
street & number 515 Kansas Avenue telephone 913-367-5506  
city or town Atchison state KS zip code 66002

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot  
Atchison County, Kansas  
Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas

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**SUMMARY**

The Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot, built in 1880, is at 200 South 10th Street in Atchison, Kansas. It is on a 2.37 acre lot located adjacent to the railroad tracks on the south side of the city's industrial district. The stone building is a "freight house" subtype of the "*Railroad support structures*" property type, defined in the Multiple Property Submission "Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas" (hereafter "MPS 'Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas.'") Clearly functional in its design, it nonetheless features quality masonry craftsmanship with its random range ashlar with contrasting corner quoins and fenestration surrounds. The building has two main sections -- a two-story office portion on the west end, and a one-story freight section on the east. Both portions have a simple gable roof with overhang, and regularly spaced windows and doors. The exterior retains a high degree of integrity in all areas of consideration, especially in the areas of design, materials, setting, location, association, and feeling. The office section of the building has been altered for office use, but the freight section retains its open floor plan complete with a wood framing hut located in the northwest corner.

**ELABORATION**

**Site:** The Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot is located immediately south of the railroad tracks in downtown Atchison, and northeast of the intersection of Highway 59 and 10th Street. Industrial-type buildings and structures remain in this area, including several large grain elevators. There is a paved parking lot on the south side of the building. The Atchison Rail Museum is located adjacent to the building on the south and east. This open-air museum includes an outdoor collection of locomotives and cars, such as the "811," a Baldwin locomotive built in 1902, a post office / baggage car, several cabooses and a snow plow built in Atchison in the 1920s. There is also a working miniature train, the *Atchison & Western Miniature Railroad* (12" gauge), offering rides to children and adults on weekends during the summer. Utilitarian metal buildings are directly east of the Freight Depot.

**Depot:** The Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot is a *railroad support structure: freight house* (as defined in the MPS) with no architectural ornamentation save for its masonry work. The 235x40' stone building uses a saddle and beam construction providing a large open interior without support columns. It sits on a stone and concrete foundation with a contrasting dress-faced stone sill course, and is built with two main sections -- a two-story office section on the west, and the one-story freight section on the east. The original building was 150 feet long; the eighty-five foot freight addition on the east (which added three freight doors on both the north

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and south elevations) is virtually indistinguishable from the original building. The walls are constructed in a random range ashlar of quarry-faced stone. The corners of the building are accented with lighter colored, squared rock-faced stones with well-defined drafts. The arched window and door surrounds are similarly accentuated, although the west and east end doors have dress-faced stones with keystones set within the arched lintels. The mortar here is raised and beaded. There is additionally a brick chimney on the north elevation.

The freight depot has a composition gable roof over both sections of the building; the roof on the office end has a moderate overhang, while the eaves on the freight end are wider, providing more protection for dock workers and the freight. The two-story office section of the building has a basic square plan, and is three bays wide on the north, west, and south elevations. Windows here have flat stone sills and are tall, double-hung; most have arched lintels, although a few have flat lintels. There is a large, arched door opening centered on the first floor on all sides of this section (including the interior wall). The doors here are not original. There are seven freight doors on both the north and south elevations of the freight section of the building, and one on the east end. All freight door openings are accented with quoins, and have round-arched lintels and transoms above the doors. The two westernmost doors on the south elevation have rectangular panes in the upper portion of the door; the remaining freight doors are constructed of solid vertical boards. The sills of the freight doors are massive wood ties, and are reached by concrete steps on the south. There is a dock with metal rails on the north elevation (probably not original). Handicap access to the building is provided by a ramp to the large entry on the west end of the office section. Except for the removal of loading docks on the south elevation and replacement windows and doors, the exterior is virtually unaltered from its historic period of significance.

The interior of the building has been rehabilitated for use as a Visitors Center and offices for the Chamber of Commerce in the two-story section of the building. New restrooms were installed during the 1987-'88 rehabilitation, and there are new interior partitions. The original stone wall separates the offices from the former freight end of the building on the east, which are reached through the interior arched doorway. The east section of the building is presently used for displays of the Atchison County Historical Society Museum. The interior stone walls and wood floors have not been covered, and the vaulted timber beams with metal cross bars remain visible (although the interior of the roof has been lined). In the northwest corner of the freight portion of the building is a rectangular warming hut. This small structure, built inside the depot, is covered with narrow wood clapboards and features double-hung, four-over-four windows and an entry

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door. The hut is presently used as a gift shop and offices for museum workers. Except for the office section of the building, the interior retains integrity of design as indicated by the open floor plan in the freight section. The interior also retains a high degree of integrity in materials, workmanship, and feeling in this portion of the building. Overall, the Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot retains the key features outlined in the registration requirements in the MPS for *Railroad support structures: freight houses* subtype: its scale, floor plan, roof shape, and construction materials. Fenestration patterns are also important, as they are key to the function of the building -- the loading of rail freight.

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**SUMMARY**

The Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot in Atchison, Kansas, is significant under Criterion A in the area of *Transportation* and under Criterion C in the area of *Architecture*. In the area of transportation, the depot building is directly associated with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Company. It is a physical reminder of a critical period of Kansas' and Atchison's history -- a time when the railroads played a significant role in the economy and vitality of the state and the community -- as well as the last building associated with the operations of the AT&SF in the City of Atchison. In the area of architecture, the Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot is significant as an excellent example of a "Freight house" subtype, as defined in the "Railroad support structures" property type listed in the Multiple Property Submission "Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas. Unlike many passenger depot buildings, it is a non-standard building which was constructed to meet the needs of the company in Atchison. It is a rare example of a stone freight house, with historic additions revealing the continued need for use throughout several decades. Its basic form clearly reveals its utilitarian transportation function. The period of significance extends from its construction date, through 1951, the National Register's arbitrary fifty-year cutoff date.

**ELABORATION**

*Transportation:* The Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot is significant for its association with the historic context "Kansas Railroad Companies -- Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe: 1859-1951." As the last remaining historic railroad building in Atchison associated with the AT&SF, it serves as a physical reminder of the importance of the railroad to the community, as well as of the "intense competition that characterized the building of railroads in Kansas."<sup>1</sup> More so than other Midwestern or east coast states, the settlement and development of Kansas was a product of railroad-building. The central location of the state, "the almost complete absence of navigable streams, and the considerable distance from east to west required some form of mechanically powered, land-based transportation."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George L. Anderson, "A North-South Link: Missouri Pacific's Proposal: Union-Pacific's Achievement, 1889-1910," Four Essays on Railroads in Kansas and Colorado (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1971) p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



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The history of railroads in Atchison, although key to the town's survival, was clearly different from the communities in the central and western portions of the state. Additionally, although forever linked as the first word in one of the nation's premier railroad companies lines, the City of Atchison nonetheless had a somewhat checkered past history with the Santa Fe company and railroads in general. Unlike a majority of other towns in Kansas, Atchison's founding and settlement was not dependent upon the railroads. The site, as the westernmost point of the deep bend in the Missouri River, was selected because it was almost twelve miles farther west than any other river community in the Territory of Kansas. The fact that it was several miles nearer Denver than any other river towns, coupled with the best steamboat landing on the Missouri River and the best wagon road in the country leading west, gave Atchison and early advantage in the steamboating and outfitting trade. From Atchison, trade goods were dispersed overland along trails to mining camps, army posts, and Indian reservations. During the liveliest period of overland trade (from 1859 to 1866), an estimated "floating" population of 250,000 went west from Atchison, and the city's actual population was up to approximately 4,000 in 1859. Understandably, in 1860, residents believed they had a future St. Louis or Cincinnati on their hands.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, the early settlement and economy of Atchison was not dependent upon rail transportation. However, Atchison citizens realized that there was a new method of transporting goods on the horizon, and a railroad was necessary if Atchison was to reap full benefit of its eastern connections. Unlike most Kansas communities, however, Atchison did not envision one line just to secure their town's survival, but hoped to eventually become a rail center in order to continue their dominance as a shipping point. Thus when the Hannibal & St. Joseph completed a branch to Winthrop, just across the river from Atchison in 1860, citizens asserted that their city was the only one in Kansas that could be reached by rail.<sup>4</sup>

Even with the knowledge that Atchison could no longer continue to function primarily as a Missouri River town, residents still had not given up hope in their town. The flurry of early activity in securing rail lines for Atchison did much to encourage them. In 1867 John A. Martin, editor of the *Champion*, felt that natural law would destine Atchison to outdistance Leavenworth,

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<sup>3</sup>Deon Wolfenbarger, "Atchison Historic Resources Survey Analysis: Summary Report" 25 September 1998, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Anderson, p. 8.

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St. Joseph, and Kansas City to become the "Great Railroad Center of Kansas. . . . We have [the] opportunity. The gods are favorable. . . . If Atchison is not without a rival on the Kansas frontier within the next ten years, it will be from a wanton and stupid disregard of the conditions which are requisite to the growth of cities."<sup>5</sup> Similar feelings were expressed in a letter from attorney Bailus Waggener to A. Halderman in 1868, who had property in Atchison that he wanted to sell, "Mr. Otis says don't be too anxious to sell your property here for in a few years you may . . . [regret it] as Atchison is destined to be the metropolis and Rail Road terminus of the West."<sup>6</sup>

Their enthusiasm for Atchison's prospects had its beginnings back to March 1858, when an election was called to authorize the issuing of \$100,000 in bonds to purchase stock in the proposed Atchison & St. Joseph Railroad. The issue passed and private citizens subscribed an additional \$100,000, allowing construction to begin in May 1858. As noted, the Atchison & St. Joseph Railroad was completed from the western terminus of the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad at St. Joseph to Winthrop, Missouri in 1860, a settlement directly across the river from Atchison. A ferry at this point crossed the Missouri to deliver passengers and freight from the east to the wagon companies to be transported to the west. Ground was broken for the construction of the Atchison & Pikes Peak Railroad in June 1860. This road's completion was delayed until 1868 because of the Civil War, and was then renamed the Central Branch Union Pacific.

The railroad most associated with Atchison, however, is the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Company. It was originally incorporated as the Atchison & Topeka Railway by an act of the Kansas Territorial Legislature on February 11, 1859. Cyrus K. Holliday, founder of Topeka, had dreamed of a railroad stretching across Kansas to the trading town of Santa Fe, taking the place of the Santa Fe trail. Luther Challiss, an Atchison legislator, was also interested in developing the first railroad across the new territories. Holliday, recognizing that to achieve his goal he would need the help of some of the most powerful and richest men in Kansas, turned to the town of Atchison. Its residents had political power like Challiss, as well as connections back East and the ability to raise money. \$150,000 was raised in Atchison as the financial basis for the company.

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<sup>5</sup>Anderson, pp. 12-13.

<sup>6</sup>B.P. Waggener, "Letter to J.A. Halderman," 15 February 1868, Halderman Collection, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

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After four years, it became the "Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe" to reflect the intended direction of the line. However, it was not until 1868 that the company began laying tracks, and then it was with its eastern terminus as Topeka rather than Atchison. Anxious to capture the cattle trade, the line continued to move south and southwest in 1870.<sup>7</sup> Atchison citizens, angered that their city was being ignored, complained that it was time for the line to reach their city. For allies, the citizens relied on the directors of the railroad in Boston with whom they had contacts. These directors recognized that the "Santa Fe" (or the "Atchison," as it was known back East), required more connections with the eastern railroads. Atchison offered four competing lines for freight heads to Chicago whereas Topeka offered only one. With these persuasive arguments, the fifty-one mile track from Topeka to Atchison was finally completed in 1872.

Although forever associated with the City of Atchison, the AT&SF railway actually had less effect on the economy of this portion of northeast Kansas than in many other sections of the state. By the mid-1870s, the Santa Fe recognized that Atchison's future as a railroad terminus was declining. As Kansas City began to rival St. Louis as the "gateway to the west," the company decided to plan for major development in that city.<sup>8</sup> Atchison would never again play a major role in the AT&SF except as the first word in the company's name. This name, however, was immortalized to millions of Americans when the song "On the Atchison Topeka and the Santa Fe" was released. It was written by Johnny Mercer and Harry Warren and sung by Judy Garland in the 1946 MGM musical "The Harvey Girls," a movie about waitresses working for Fred Harvey's restaurant chain.

The AT&SF was not the only railroad company which operated out of Atchison. Beginning in the early 1870s, several lines passed through the city. In 1870, nine passenger trains by four different railroads stopped through daily. Railroad service between Atchison and Leavenworth (originally known as the Leavenworth, Atchison and Northwestern Railroad Co.) had been inaugurated in October 1869. In 1882, this line became part of the Missouri Pacific, and was extended northwest to Omaha. The Atchison & Nebraska Railroad, completed in 1872, ran north along the west bank of the Missouri River and connected with the main line of the Union Pacific at Columbus, Nebraska. This line later became part of Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Line.

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<sup>7</sup>Keith L. Bryant, Jr., History of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1974), p. 22.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

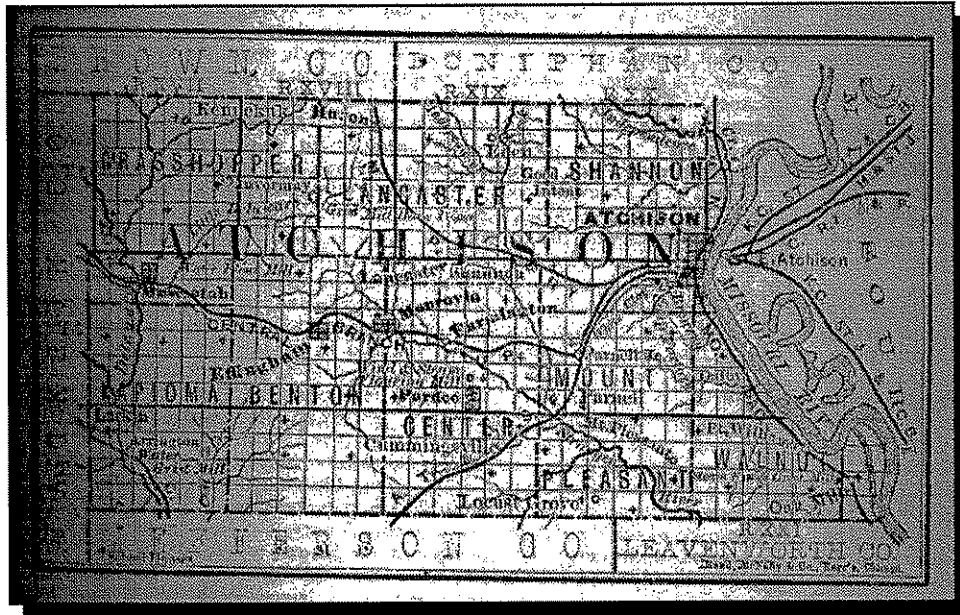
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Most of the railroads that would serve Atchison were completed by 1872, however. The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad completed in that year was one of the last, with service between Atchison and Leavenworth. By this date eight different railroad lines terminated within Atchison, and four connected on the Missouri side.<sup>9</sup>



From William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas*,  
(Chicago, IL: A. T. Andreas, 1883).

As previously noted, by the mid- to late 1870s Atchison had already begun its decline as a major railroad terminus. One of the factors contributing to its decline was its river location, the reason for the town's early settlement and prominence. Expansion was possible in basically only one direction -- westward -- and connection to the east via a railroad bridge was imperative. Thus the town that was first with such a facility would gain an important lead over its rivals. Kansas City was first, dedicating its bridge in July 1869. St. Joseph followed, but Leavenworth and Atchison lagged behind. Leavenworth built its bridge three years before Atchison, and even this short period of time gave it important advantages. Atchison was reduced to emphasizing the efficiency

<sup>9</sup>Wolfenbarger, p. 17.

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and speed of its ferry boats. The failure of Atchison to bridge the river before 1875 dealt a severe blow from which it was unable to recover. Not only did the delay in constructing the bridge hamper Atchison's efforts to secure additional rail lines, but even after the bridge was constructed, it charged tolls for freight much longer than any of the nearby Missouri river bridges.

The impact of losing the bridge construction race wasn't immediate, but by the 1880s, Atchison was having trouble obtaining an eastern line. The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad and the Kansas City, St. Joseph & Council Bluffs Railroad arrived too late in the city to influence the course of events. Atchison's inability to give wholehearted support to competing eastern lines resulted in a failure to gain the support of either. Another blow to the community was when the Missouri Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads made Kansas City their eastern terminus. Thus despite its early advantage, Atchison failed to become the railroad center of the state.

However, the existing railroads in Atchison were nonetheless significant to the city's economy. In 1874, the eight railroads centering in Atchison employed 733 men in their machine shops and their freight and passenger depots, pumping a monthly aggregate of \$74,680 in salaries and supplies in Atchison. Besides the direct effect of these railroad salaries, it is clear that rail transportation was vital to the rest of the town's economy. In fact, the railroad years were the true boom years for the town -- it was during this time that industries came to Atchison, the large wholesale firms developed, and the commercial life of Atchison reached its peak. Industries figuring prominently in the growth of Atchison during the railroad years included grains, milling, and grain storage. In 1878, Atchison was reputed to have three of the largest grain elevators in the west. The lumber business was also prominent, and depended upon the rails for shipping. With so many rail lines coming into Atchison, it was important to have a foundry, and in 1872 the city voted \$10,000 in bonds to anyone who would establish a foundry. Manufacturing was also a key industry during the 1870s, and in this period only Leavenworth and Topeka were more important in manufacturing in the state. Also clearly dependent upon the railroads for shipping were the wholesaling and jobbing industries, a somewhat logical extension of the outfitting trade which eventually proved to be one of the most significant commercial enterprises in Atchison. Even as late as 1940 the railroad furnished one of the main payrolls in Atchison and constituted the largest tax-paying group in the county.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Wolfenbarger, p. 18.

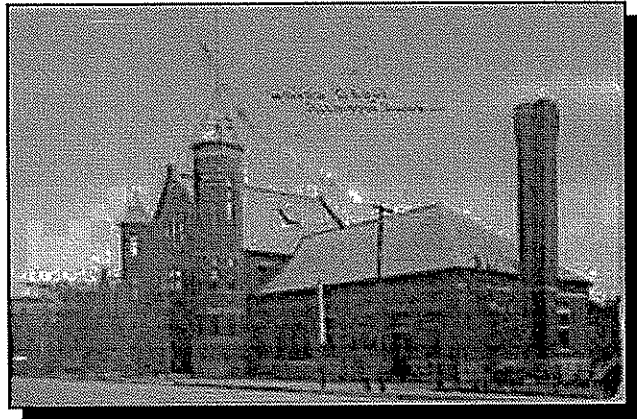
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In part a reflection of the large number of rail companies in Atchison, and partly due to no one line's dominance in the community, a large Union Station was built for passengers in 1880 for \$120,000. At the time, it was the most costly structure in the city and the largest depot in state, was built for \$120,000 in 1880. A fire damaged the building in 1882, but it was quickly repaired. Another fire in 1888, however, completely destroyed the building. The Union Depot was rebuilt and opened in 1890. This station, which at one time saw eighty-five passenger trains a day, was demolished in the early 1950s.



Atchison's "Union Station"

Present at the 1880 ribbon cutting ceremony for the Union Station in Atchison was Santa Fe president, Fred Gurley. A review of the Santa Fe's passenger schedule in Atchison at that time might cause one to wonder at the need for his presence. Less pomp and circumstance was probably evident when the Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot at 200 South Tenth Street was completed that same year, in spite of the fact that its significance to the AT&SF company was undoubtedly greater than the Union Station. Its size and construction materials are indicative of the heady times and expansion goals of the AT&SF during this period, thus associated the freight buildings with the historic context "Historical overview-- Boom times for railroads: 1865-1890." Although the Santa Fe company was an innovator in the use of standardized plans along its line, this early freight house is not standard. Resembling some in the Topeka shops area, it was probably one of the first freight depots on the Santa Fe line. Expanding freight service led to an addition on the east end after 1912.

In the 1940s, the freight station also served as one of the passengers stops for the Santa Fe along the Doodlebug line from Topeka to St. Joseph, Missouri (in addition to stopping at the Union Station). When the Santa Fe stopped using the building as a freight depot, the freight area was leased to a number of companies and used as a warehouse, although the railway company continued to maintain offices in the building until June 1, 1985. In December 1986, the Santa Fe gave the building (but not the land) to the City of Atchison. A short-term lease for the land under

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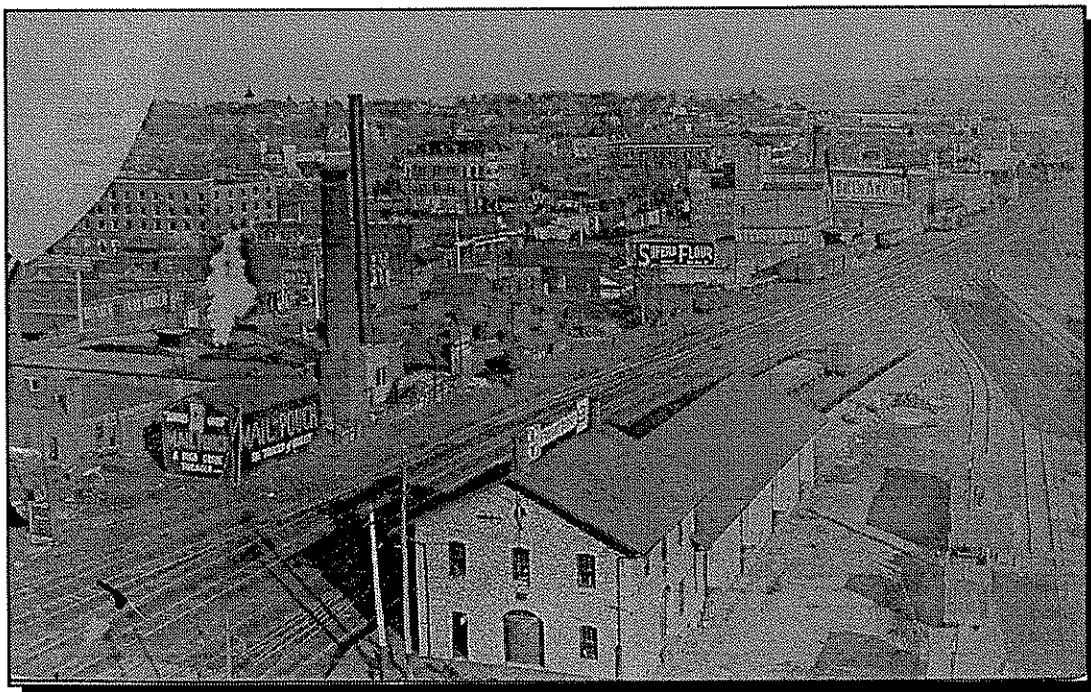
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the building along with a 40-foot strip adjoining it on the south was also given to the City at this time.<sup>11</sup>



1908 aerial view of the Santa Fe freight depot

In 1987, the City of Atchison passed a resolution establishing the Santa Fe Freight Depot Restoration and Utilization Committee. This committee supervised fund raising of over \$700,000, directed the renovation of the building, and negotiated the purchase of the land on which the depot sits as well as all available adjoining land through the Santa Fe Pacific Realty Corporation. Opened again in 1988, today the rehabilitated depot building houses the Atchison

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<sup>11</sup>"Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe," pamphlet, Freight Depot Visitors Center, historical Museum and Chamber of Commerce, n.d.

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County Historical Society Museum, a Visitors Center, and the Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce.<sup>12</sup>

The Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot is the last extant historic railroad building along the "Atchison Sub" line, now abandoned, which went from Topeka to Atchison. It is one of few surviving on-site freight buildings along the "Kansas" route of the AT&SF. That route eventually started in Atchison County, then led through Jefferson County, Shawnee County, Osage County, Lyon County, Chase County, Marion County, Harvey County, and into Reno County where it split into two branches -- one went through Reno and Stafford counties, and the other through Reno, Rice, Barton, and Pawnee. Both ended up in Edwards County, where the line continued through Ford County, Gray County, Finney County, Kearny County, Hamilton County, and on through to the Colorado border. From there, the line went into New Mexico and into Santa Fe.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot built in 1880 is the last extant historic building which is associated with the operation of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad in the City of Atchison, the birthplace of this significant railroad company. Its significance to the community, as well as the state, is summarized in a plaque outside the depot building:

To commemorate the birthplace of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company in Atchison, KS 2/11/ 1859. From this small beginning, a rail line connecting Atchison and Topeka, Kansas, a great transportation system evolved bringing much pride and renown to our city which gave its name to an institution of vital importance to this area and the nation.

**Architecture:** The Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot is significant for its association with the historic context "Architecture of Kansas Railroads: 1865-1940," and as an excellent representative of a "freight house" building as defined in the "Railroad support structures" property type listed in the MPS "Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas." Railroad support structures are amongst the most threatened of railroad-associated buildings, and the Atchison

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Stephen Chinn, "Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad" (*Early Railroad History in Kansas Web Site*, <http://history.cc.ukans.edu/heritage/research/rr/santafe.html>, cited 1/17/00).



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Santa Fe Freight Depot is a rare surviving example of this property type. The building has a rectangular floor plan which was aligned with the railroad tracks. It was originally divided into two main sections -- a two story portion for offices on the west end, and the freight section on the east. Incoming freight was unloaded from trains onto the wooden dock which adjoined the tracks on the north side, moved through the large north doors into the building, and then out through the large south doors onto wagons or other horse-drawn equipment (later trucks). The procedure was necessarily reversed for out-going freight. General company offices were originally located on the second floor at the west end of the depot, and freight offices on the ground floor of the two-story portion of the building. Later, the ground floor of this section was used for general offices purposes as well. Since the freight section of the building was unheated, a frame warming hut (now restored) was built inside towards the northwest corner of this portion.

Clearly utilitarian in its design, the Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot did not utilize standard construction; instead, as one of the earliest freight depots on the AT&SF line, it may have served as a model for similar buildings in the Santa Fe's Topeka yards. It was constructed of rubble limestone construction with ashlar quoins and fenestration surrounds. The one-story portion does not utilize pillars in its large open interior space; instead, the rock walls are completely supported with a "saddle and beam" framework. The original size of the depot was 150x40 feet; an eighty-five foot addition was built on the east end after 1912. The addition utilizes similar construction and design elements.

Freight structures in smaller Kansas communities were often flimsy wood buildings, or in later years, were the early combination depots which were no longer used for passengers. The size and construction materials of the Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot, on the other hand, indicates the significance of the town's freight economy to the AT&SF (as compared to its passenger traffic, which was serviced from a "Union" depot).

The Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot retains integrity of design as reflected in its scale, floor plan, roof shape, and fenestration patterns, and integrity of materials and workmanship on its exterior. The basic division between offices and freight section still remains, as does the warming hut in the northwest corner of the freight section. The depot building is also in its original location alongside the tracks in the historic industrial section of Atchison, and thus retains a high degree of integrity in setting, location, feeling, and association. The Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot therefore meets the registration requirements for integrity as outlined in the MPS "Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas."

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot is shown as the heavy line on the accompanying map entitled "Boundary & photograph map," and whose legal description is as follows:

Parts of lots 22-32, Block 23, L.C. Challiss Addition, City of Atchison, Kansas.  
Beginning at the southwest corner of lot 11; thence northeasterly to a point on the east line 65.0' north of the southeast corner of lot 1; thence south along the east line of block 24 to a point 44.0' south of the northeast corner of lot 42; thence southwesterly to the west line 121.0' south of the northeast corner of lot 32; thence north 136.0' along said west line to POB, block 24, L.C. Challiss Addition.

**Verbal Boundary Justification**

The Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot was originally located on land owned by a railroad company, which also included property containing the adjoining railroad tracks and extended beyond the city limits. The present boundaries have been modified to include all land and buildings that are both associated with the nominated property and that are under the ownership of the City of Atchison (the present owner of the depot building.)

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*The following information applies to photographs 1-3:*

**Name of photographer:** Deon Wolfenbarger

**Location of original negative:** Kansas State Historical Society; 6425 S.W. 6th Avenue; Topeka,  
KS 66615-1099.

**Date of photograph:** April 2000

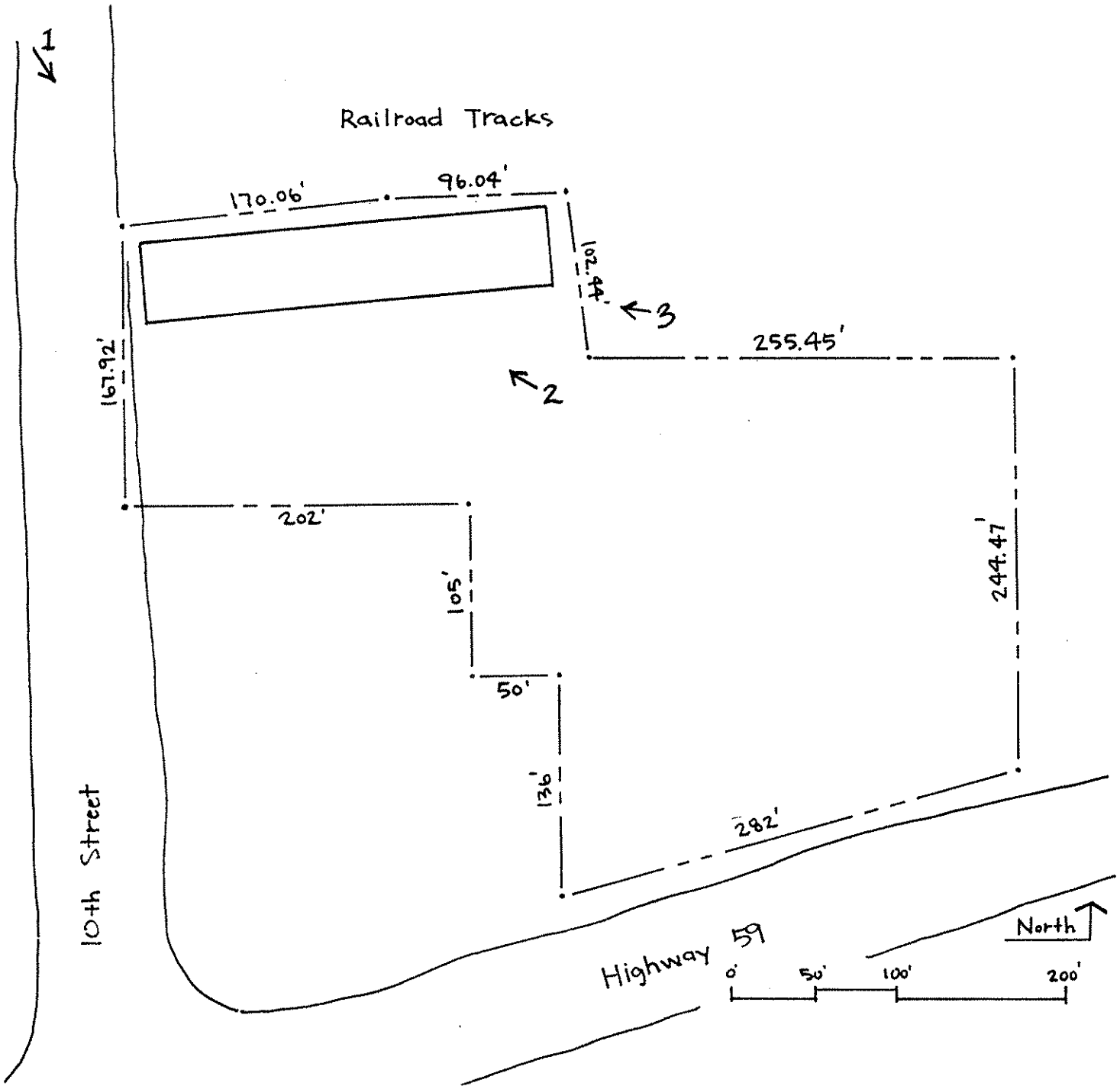
*Further information is listed in the following:*

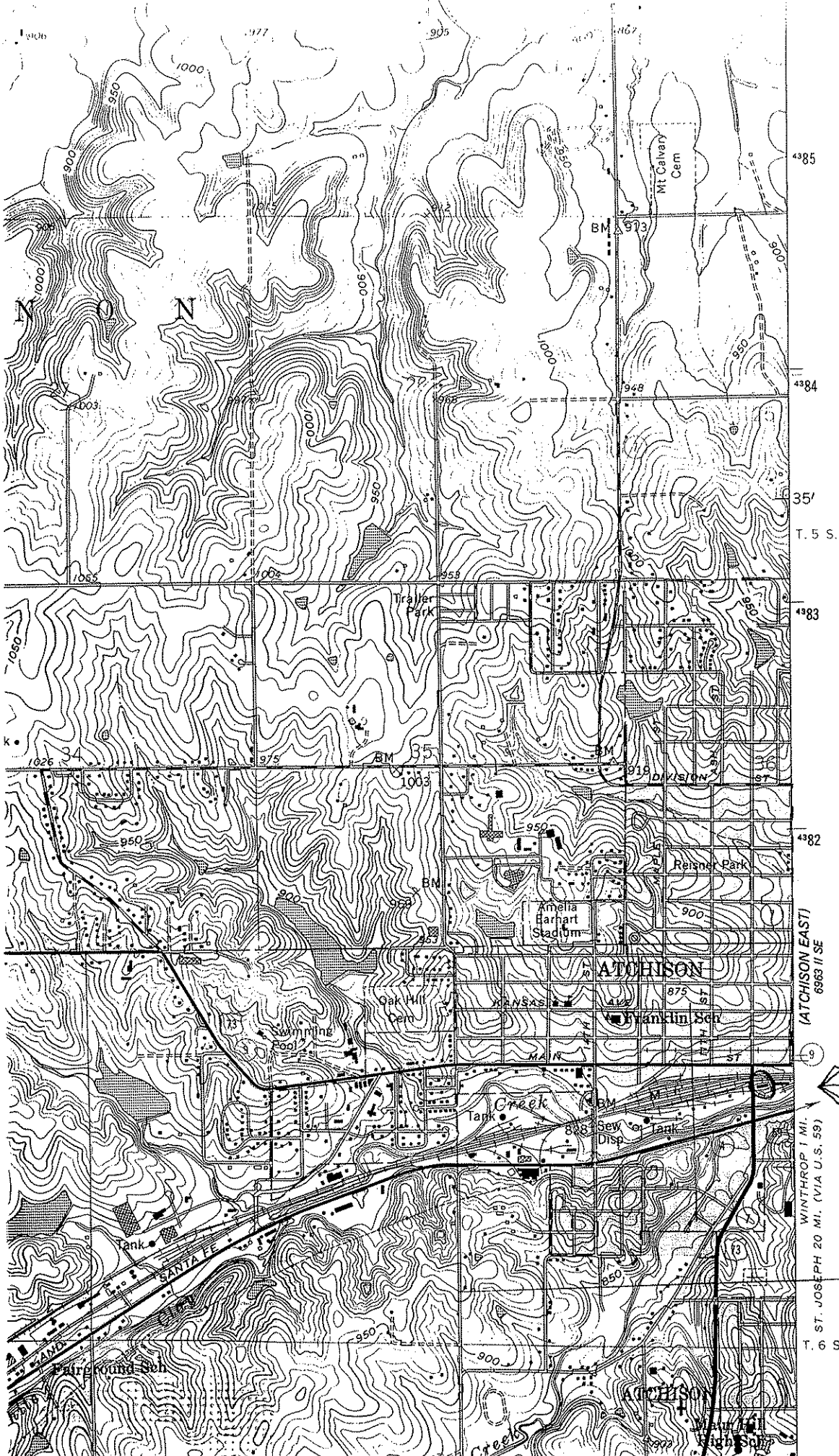
**Photograph number**

**Description of view**

1. Looking southeast towards the north (trackside) and west elevations, exterior.
2. Looking northwest towards the south and east elevations, exterior.
3. Looking west/northwest towards the east and south elevations, exterior.

Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot  
Atchison County, Kansas  
Boundary & photograph map





Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot  
 Atchison; Atchison County, Kansas  
 155 0317310E 4380865N

(ATCHISON EAST)  
 6863 II SE  
 WINTHROP 1 MI.  
 T. ST. JOSEPH 20 MI. (VIA U.S. 59)  
 T. 6 S.