



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

APPLICATION: HL-137

AGENDA ITEM: PH-1

PREPARED BY: Craig Jimenez, Director
Community Development

MEETING DATE: March 23, 2016

TITLE: Historic Landmark HL-137
Monrovia Santa Fe Depot – 1709 South Myrtle Avenue

APPLICANT: City of Monrovia

REQUEST: Designate the Monrovia Santa Fe Depot as a historic landmark.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: (Categorical Exemption (Class 1))

BACKGROUND: Monrovia's Santa Fe Depot is arguably one of the community's most historically significant structure and local landmark designation as been discussed for many years. The building was evaluated and included in the City's 1985 Historic Resources Survey as well as Section 106 review in 2004. However, as the building was under ownership of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), pursuant to the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, Metro would have had to consent to the application in order to proceed. As part of the foothill Gold Line Extension construction negotiations, the City received ownership of the Depot property in 2013.

Since the City now owns the building, the City Council directed staff to prepare and process an application for local historic landmark designation, pursuant to Monrovia's Historic Preservation Ordinance.

The timing on the application is apropos to the rest of the activity that is surrounding the Depot, which is located in the middle of Station Square Transit Village adjacent to Monrovia's Gold Line Station. At the end of 2015, the City Council approved a lease and improvement agreement (Agreement) with Daylight Limited, LLC for the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the Depot. The Agreement dedicated \$1.5 million from the City's Gold Line Construction Authority funding for the Depot's repair and upgrade. Architectural/structural plans and building elevation renderings are currently being prepared for a proposed restaurant/café concept at the Depot.

In accordance with the terms of the Agreement, the Historic Preservation Commission appointed Commissioners Hendrix, Houston, and Ryan to serve on a subcommittee to assist Staff, providing additional oversight of the rehabilitation work at the Depot. Designation of the building as a historic landmark will also ensure that changes to the building are done under the purview of the Commission through the Certificate of Appropriateness process.



ANALYSIS: The existing Depot is the third Santa Fe facility to occupy this area. In 1887, the first railroad tracks were constructed through Monrovia by the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad. The following year, the railroad was purchased by the Santa Fe Railroad which then used the line to complete their link between Los Angeles and points east. Santa Fe built the first depot in 1887. It was a Victorian-era design and generally in the same area as the current building.

To accommodate a growing population, that structure was demolished and replaced by a larger building in 1897 which was of a similar style. According to the Monrovia Daily News, in 1923, the local Chamber of Commerce initiated a two-year campaign to replace the 1897 depot with "...a station that would reflect more of the modern status of the city than the old-fashioned building...".

In 1925, construction began on the existing Depot which was designed by Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe staff architect William A. Mohr. The Sumner-Sollett Company constructed the building. Built at the height of the Spanish Colonial Revival period of architecture, the building also incorporates some neoclassical elements. A full description of the building is contained on the attached DPR form. The depot was completed in 1926 at a cost of \$30,000. The Claremont Depot (also designed by Mohr) was completed in 1927 and was designed as the sister station to Monrovia's.

The Monrovia Santa Fe Depot is classified as a "combination depot". This type of station combined passenger and freight functions into a single building. The office areas were generally in the middle of the building, separating the passenger and freight functions at opposite ends of the building. This was the most common building type for providing service to southern California communities.

Monrovia's depot had interior and exterior waiting areas on the east end of the building, a ticket office in the middle with the baggage and freight room on the west end. A large unenclosed platform sits to the far west of the building.

The depot continued serving the City with a railroad office and passenger service until May 12, 1972. The building fell into gradual disrepair over the past five decades, however, as stated above, the process to rehabilitate the building has started.

Criteria

The Historic Preservation Commission must determine the applicable designation criteria for landmark status for Monrovia Santa Fe Depot. As specified by the Historic Preservation Ordinance, a property must include one or more of the applicable designation criteria. Staff has determined that the building meets four criteria which are presented for the Commission's consideration.

Criteria 1 – It is identified with persons or events significant in local, regional, state or national history.

The Depot serves as a physical record of events that shaped the City of Monrovia and its associated railroad and citrus industry. The Depot made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Monrovia's history, specifically as an essential portal for the transportation of passengers and locally produced agricultural goods. It is Monrovia's only remaining railroad-related building.

Criteria 2 – It is representative of the work of a notable building, designer, or architect.

The building was designed by architect William A. Mohr. William A. Mohr was a staff architect for the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway. He also designed stations in San Bernardino, Phoenix, and Claremont.

Criteria 4 – It embodies one or more distinctive characteristics of style, type, period, design, materials, detail, or craftsmanship.

The Monrovia Depot is an excellent example of the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style with Neoclassical influences, as applied to early southern California railroad stations of the 1920's.

Criteria 5 – It has a unique location or physical characteristics or represents an established and familiar visual feature of neighborhood, community, or the city.

This area has been the primary rail transportation hub in Monrovia since 1887. Its location is a very familiar and established visual feature in the City. Additionally, with the implementation of light rail service on the Metro Gold Line, the Depot is the focal point of public improvements and development in Station Square Transit Village.

DPR Form

Using the California Historical Resource Status Codes, Staff has assigned a rating code of 5S3 (appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation). If the Historic Preservation Commission determines that the building is eligible for listing for local designation and the City Council concurs, then the code will be changed to 5S1 (individual property that is listed or designated locally). The DPR form is attached for the review, comment and approval of the Commission.

Additionally, for Section 106 compliance, the property was surveyed, evaluated, and documented per Caltrans regulations in 2004. At that time, it was concluded that the property appears eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, under Criteria A and C, at the local level of significance:

- Criterion A for its historic associations with regional transportation, the local citrus industry, and the City's economic growth and development.
- Criterion C for its architectural significance and association with a prominent railroad architect.

Therefore a status code of 3S (appears eligible for NR as an individual property through survey evaluation). Based on the building's eligibility for the National Register, the Monrovia Depot also appears eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission forward a Nomination Statement to the City Council recommending that the Monrovia Santa Fe Depot be designated as a historic landmark. If the Historic Preservation Commission concurs then, following the public hearing, the appropriate action would be a motion to:

Recommend the designation of the Monrovia Santa Fe Depot as Historic Landmark Number 137 to the City Council.

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary #
HRI #
Trinomial
CHR Status Code

Other Listings
Review Code

Reviewer

Date

Page 1 of 4 *Resource Name or #: Monrovia Santa Fe Depot (HL-137)

P1 Other Identifier: Monrovia Santa Fe Depot

*P2 Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

a. County: Los Angeles

c. Address: 1709 Myrtle Avenue City: Monrovia Zip: 91016

e. Other Locational Data: APN # 8507-003-933

P3a Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)
The Monrovia Santa Fe Depot is crowned by a cross-gabled roof and is primarily one-story with a soaring two-story height central section. The architectural style of the wood-framed building is Spanish Colonial Revival with Neoclassical elements. Smooth stucco finishes the exteriors and red clay tiles cover the gabled roofs. The horizontal building plan parallels the main railroad tracks, which are south of the depot and travel in a northwest/southeast direction. The building is sited on a large, irregularly shaped lot and is surrounded by commercial and industrial uses and the platform for the Metro Gold Line.

On the building's east end is an outdoor arcaded waiting area. Centering the depot is a two-story indoor ticket office and waiting area. On the west end of the building is the baggage room and flat-roofed freight storage room. Roof elements include gently upswept cornices that create shallow eaves on the gabled elevations. Spanish Colonial Revival elements include the multi-level red tile grilles, stucco finish, arched, circular, and rectangular openings, wrought iron window grilles, and arcaded waiting area.

(Continued on Page 3)

P3b Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP17- Railroad Depot

*P4 Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other

P5b Description of Photo: (view, date)

Looking northwest, 1961

P6 Date Constructed: 1925-26

Source: City permits

P7 Owner and Address:

City of Monrovia

415 S. Ivy Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016

P8 Recorded by:

Jan Ostashay, Peter Moruzzi
PCR Services Corp.
233 Wilshire Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA 90401

P9 Date Recorded: 8/26/03

P10 Survey Type:

Section 106
compliance

P5a Photograph



P11 Report Citation: Historic Property Survey Report: Monrovia Depot Rehabilitation Project

Attachments: NONE Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (List):

- B1 Historic Name:** Santa Fe Railroad Depot
- B2 Common Name:** Monrovia Depot
- B3 Original Use:** Railroad Depot
- B4 Present Use:** None
- B5 Architectural Style:** Spanish Colonial Revival
w/Neoclassical elements

B6 Construction History (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

May 21, 1925: Railroad Depot for A.T. & S. F. Railroad: Sumner-Sollett Co. contractor. Value: \$16,000
 February 23, 1962: Plumbing work.
 Removal of cast concrete and other decorative elements (date unknown)

- B7 Moved:** No **Date Moved** _____ **Original Location** _____
- B8 Related Features:** _____

B9a Architect: William H. Mohr **b. Builder:** Sumner-Sollett Company

B10 Significance: Theme: Transportation/Architecture **Area:** Monrovia

Period of Significance: 1925/26 **Property Type** Railroad Depot
 Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as well as integrity.

A combination freight and passenger depot has been at the present location since 1887, one year after the railroad was first introduced into the area. The present depot building, designed by noted railway architect William H. Mohr and constructed by Sumner-Sollett Company, was completed in 1926. Mohr's previous work included stations in Oakland (1910), San Bernardino (1918), and Phoenix, Arizona (1923). Mohr's final documented Southern California Santa Fe station is the Claremont Depot dedicated in November, 1927. It is very similar in scale, massing, and architectural style to the Monrovia Depot except for distinctive cast concrete Churrigueresque elements. The Santa Fe Railway often chose Spanish Colonial Revival architecture as a visual way of communicating the region's Mediterranean connection, its' sunny climate, and architectural sophistication based on European precedents.

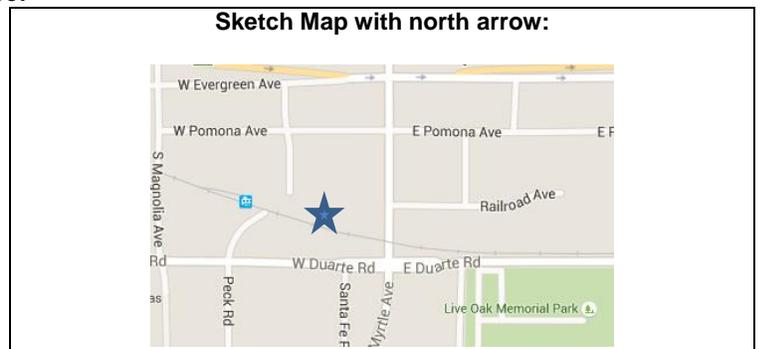
During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the fruit industry formed the economic base for the city and most of the San Gabriel Valley. Fruit packing plants were located adjacent to the railroad tracks and spurs in most valley cities, with Monrovia being no exception. After surviving the land bust of the 1890s and a decade-long drought, Monrovia's agricultural business prospered. Two large citrus enterprises, the Monrovia & Duarte Exchange and E.F. Spence's Packing House, were located on the east side of Myrtle Avenue directly across from the Monrovia Depot, which as situated on the west of the street. (Continued on page 3)

B11 Additional Resource Attributes: HP17. Railroad Depot

B12 References: DPR 523 FORM (1993)

B13 Remarks Updated 3/2016

B14 Evaluator/ Date 8/26/03
 Jan Ostashay, Peter Moruzzi
 PCR Services Corp.
 233 Wilshire Blvd.
 Santa Monica, CA 90401



P3 Description (Continued)

The symmetrical, Neoclassical, two-story center section is characterized by ornate cast concrete decorative elements, especially on the south (trackside) façade. Here, the semicircular arched entrance is flanked by two pairs of round fluted ionic pilasters atop square classically-styled pedestals. The pilasters support a prominent entablature of the Composite order with a deeply projecting cornice. Centering the entablature directly above is a triangular pediment, also of the Composite order, supported by square pilasters. On the opposite north façade, the entrance is sheltered by a projecting arcade with a shed porch roof covered in red tiles. Semicircular arches supported by round Doric pilasters (and missing) Doric columns define the arcade space. An arched entrance beneath the arcade is flanked by tall rectangular windows. Centering the second story façade above the arcade is a large oval window with molded trim. Smaller, round windows are located on the second story east and west elevations of the central section.

The one-story east wing serves as a partially-enclosed arcaded waiting area. A side-gabled, red-tiled roof covers the space. Round, cast concrete Doric columns and pilasters flank the semicircular arched openings. Within the waiting area is a round-arched entrance. The depot's side-gabled, one-story west wing, also sheathed by red tiles, features a small projecting squared bay on the south elevation that apparently was the ticket office. An extension of the main roof covers this projection. Plywood obscures the windows, several of which have wrought iron grilles. A large, flat-arched opening centers the wing's south elevation. On the north side of the west wing, a raised segmental arched opening with original doors and hardware served as a baggage entrance. Narrow rectangular windows with wrought iron grilles are east and west of the opening.

The freight /baggage wing, which is one-story, flat-roofed, and located on the west end of the depot, is characterized by large square freight openings on the north and west elevations. Wood stairs lead to a raised concrete platform that begins on the north elevation and continues west paralleling the railroad spur that is on the south side of the platform. A wood ramp is attached to the platform's far west end. Narrow rectangular windows fronted by iron grilles are on the north and south sides of the freight/baggage wing. The name "Monrovia" in simple, iron letters adorn the west and south elevations of the freight/baggage wing below the roofline. These letters also appear on the east elevation above the arcaded outdoor waiting area.

B10 Significance (Continued)

The growth and development of Monrovia mirrored that of other citrus towns in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. The publicity regarding agricultural income possibilities and the access provided by the railroad brought increasing numbers of settlers to Monrovia, among other towns in the "citrus belt."

With the end of World War II and the beginning of suburban expansion into the citrus groves, the Monrovia Santa Fe Depot began to see considerably less citrus freight traffic. Additionally, the development of interstate highways, air travel, and the growing dominance of the automobile significantly reduced the demand for rail transportation. This significant shift in transportation modes caused many Santa Fe stations in the area to go into decline and close. The Monrovia Santa Fe Depot did, however, continue to provide Monrovia with a modern railroad office and passenger terminal until May 12, 1972 when it permanently closed. The Monrovia Santa Fe Depot is currently abandoned and awaiting rehabilitation and will serve as the focal point of Monrovia Station Square Transit Village which also contains the transit plaza and platform for the Monrovia Station of the Metro Gold Line light rail.

The Monrovia Santa Fe Depot retains original integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The building is in poor condition with plywood covering most windows and doors. Vandals have removed much of the cast concrete Neoclassical decorative details from the south façade, including cast concrete urns and associated embellishments that flanked the pedimented window on the second story. Also missing is the wrought iron balconet that fronted the pedimented window. As noted earlier, the cast concrete columns that supported the arcaded porch on the north elevation are missing. Window frames, windows, and most original doors have been removed. Many of the original red clay roof tiles have fallen. The wrought iron Santa Fe logo that once centered the east gable peak of the arcaded waiting area is missing. The interior spaces have been mostly stripped of decorative elements although some original glazed plain and figurative tilework remain.

The Monrovia Santa Fe Depot is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Monrovia's history, specifically, as a portal for the transportation of passengers and locally produced goods. From 1926 until the middle decades of the 20th century, the Monrovia Santa Fe Depot was a vital element in the economic development of the city and surrounding region particularly as it relates to the transportation of citrus products to the rest of the nation. Additionally, the depot provided national passenger service for Monrovia residents during these years. Therefore, the building appears eligible for local listing under the Monrovia Historic Preservation Ordinance as well as listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local level of significance.

Architecturally, the Monrovia Santa Fe Depot is an exceptional example of the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style with Neoclassical influences as applied to a railroad station in the mid-1920s. It is also the sole representative of the type in the local community. Character defining features of the building include cross-gabled roof, stucco finish, red clay roof tiles,

two-story central section with Neoclassical decorative cast concrete elements, arched, circular and rectangular openings, wrought iron

Page 4 of 4 *Resource Name or #: Monrovia Santa Fe Depot (HL-137)
B10 Significance (Continued)

window grilles, arcade, concrete columns and pilasters, and interior glazed ceramic tiles. The physical integrity of the Monrovia Santa Fe Depot has been compromised in recent years with the loss of cast concrete decorative elements, several pilasters and columns, original roof tiles, and interior elements and decorative features. Despite these conditions, the Monrovia Santa Fe Depot remains in its original location and retains sufficient original materials, design, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association from its period of significance to be considered an excellent example of its type. Additionally, the building represents the work of a renowned railway architect, William H. Mohr, whose most notable previous building was the enormous Mission Revival style San Bernardino Station built for the Santa Fe Railway in 1918. Therefore, given the combination of the building's distinctive qualities that render it an important example of its type and the building's association with master architect William H. Mohr, the building appears to qualify for listing in the National under Criterion C at the local level.