

The CB&Q Depot at Washington, Iowa

Nelson P. Moyer

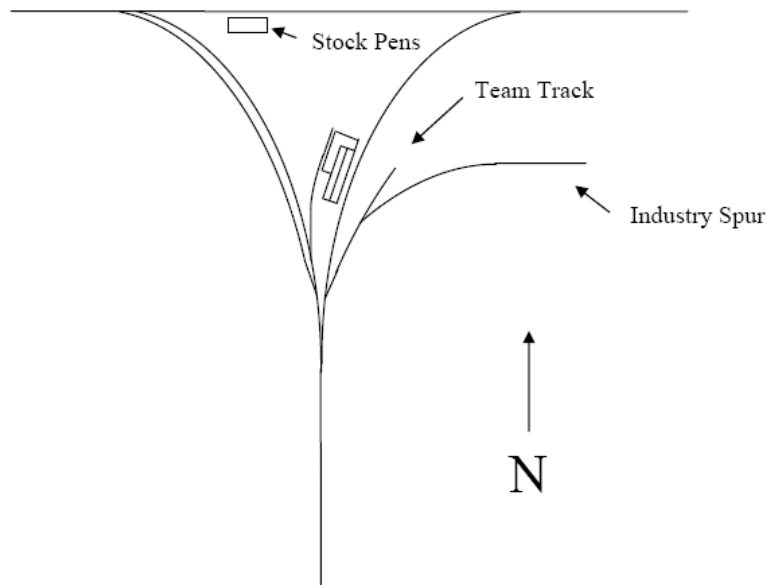
All photos and drawings by the author unless otherwise noted.

Historical Perspective

Washington, IA is the County Seat of Washington County. It was the Northern terminus of the Burlington & Northwestern narrow gauge railroad, where the B&NW interchanged with the Rock Island and the Milwaukee railroads. The original B&NW depot was robbed and burned in 1895, and the new depot was built shortly afterwards. Published reports differ on the length of the rebuilt depot. One report states that the depot measured 22'x70' and sat on a wooden foundation, while another report gives the dimensions as 22'4"x 84'. The depot as it stands today, measures 22'4"x 58'9".

The rebuilt depot had indoor plumbing and gas lights. A brick platform measuring 2624 square feet and a wood platform measuring 2994 square feet served the depot (unclear if this was the original or rebuilt depot). There was 1129 square feet of brick paving around the depot, presumably for vehicle access. The depot was located between the legs of the wye on the South end, facing the Eastern leg on North 6th Avenue at the corner of East 3rd Street. Stock pens were located on the Northern leg of the wye.

Depot Location



Note: Drawing not to scale

The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad acquired the B&NW and continued to provide passenger and freight service. The original narrow gauge tracks were converted to standard gauge in 1902. Mixed train passenger and freight service continued into the 1960s, but passenger service was terminated after the Burlington Northern merger. The last train from Washington was a Burlington Northern GP7 with one boxcar of wool and a way car on August 13, 1979. The line was formally abandoned in 1981, and the track was pulled up for salvage beginning March 11, 1981.



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The depot was moved to the Washington County fairgrounds in November 1973. The chimney was removed prior to the move, and the depot was placed on a cinder block foundation at the fairgrounds. A metal roof was installed to replace shingles.



Left front view of depot after move to the fairgrounds.



Right front view of depot after move to the fairgrounds.



Rear view of depot after move to fairgrounds.



Waiting room end view of depot after move to fairgrounds.

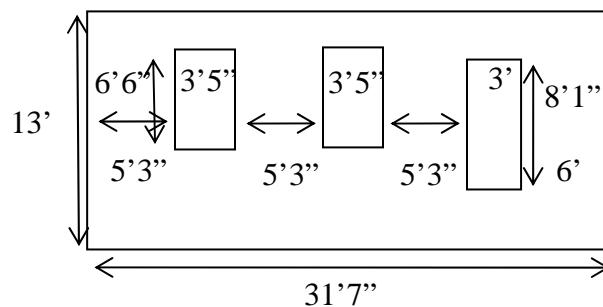


Freight room end view after move to fairgrounds.

Construction and Reconstruction

The depot rebuilt in 1895 was of wood construction, with 7½ inch clapboards on the lower part of the walls and boards and batons with nominal 10 inch centers on the upper part of the walls. A horizontal 2x6 inch board extending outward from the wall approximately 1 inch, separating the clapboard from board and baton construction. Corner trim consisted of 1x4 inch boards, and window framing was made from 1x6 inch boards. The trim at the top of the agent bay gable appears to be made of 8 inch boards. The freight door was made of 1x4 inch boards placed vertically with a 1x6 inch board frame around the periphery and 1x6 inch board X-brace across the door from corner to corner for reinforcement. A photograph from 1965 shows tan shingles on the roof. Gutters were evident in early photographs, but only on the front of the depot. No train order signals are evident, probably because Washington was the Northern terminus of the line, and crews would receive orders directly from the station agent. WASHINGTON was painted in white on both ends of the depot and above the agent bay, and the Burlington Route logo was painted just below the town name on both ends of the depot. The black and white photographs do not reveal whether the logo was painted in black and white or included the red border. Photographs taken in 1952 and 1965 do not reveal the logo or town name on the ends of the depot, suggesting that the depot was repainted and these features were not replaced. Only the logo appears above the agent bay in these photographs. No gutters were present in the 1952 photograph, and pull-down shades are evident at the waiting room windows in photographs from several eras.

Published reports state that the depot was shortened by removing 30 feet from the waiting room in 1941. If the original length was 70 feet and the current length is 58'9", then either the original length or the length removed from the waiting room must be in error. Extrapolations from early photographs suggest that approximately 30 feet were indeed removed, so the reported length of 70 feet may refer to the length of the original depot that burned, not the depot built to replace it. The original depot had one window to the left of the front door, while the rebuilt depot had two windows to the left of the front door. These observations support the conclusion that the original depot was 70 feet long and the rebuilt depot was approximately 90 feet long. The approximate dimensions for the front of the original waiting room were extrapolated from photographs as shown below (not drawn to scale):



These dimensions are based upon the window width and spacing of the waiting room ends (3'5" and 5'3" respectively), and the extrapolated dimensions correspond to the report that approximately 30 feet were indeed removed from the waiting room. These dimensions suggest that the depot rebuilt after the fire actually measured 22'4" by 90'4". We probably will never know the exact length.

The front door of the depot was elevated 21 inches above the foundation. The step arrangement cannot be determined in the surviving photograph from the early 20th century, however photographs taken in 1941 and 1969 suggest that the platform area in front of the depot was elevated approximately ten inches to track level, and what appears to be a single step in front of the doorway. A photograph of the depot taken in 1952 clearly shows two wooden steps up to the doorway, presumable as a result of removing the passenger platform sometime earlier.

The depot had a single brick chimney that extended approximately 36 inches above the peak of the roof. The chimney was modified when the depot was shortened, as a photograph from 1941 shows that the original chimney did not have a tile flue, but a tile flue is visible in photographs taken in 1952 and 1965 after remodeling. The chimney was removed when the depot was moved to the fairgrounds in November 1973.

No photographs clearly showing the rear of the depot have been discovered, so the window placement for the part of the waiting room that was removed is unknown. It is

probable that two windows of the same size and placement as those appearing on the front of the depot were on the rear waiting room wall of the depot.

Few photographs of the freight dock are known to exist. A photograph from the John vander Mass Collection shows the North end of the depot, including the freight door and freight dock. (John vander Maas Railroadiana Collection , The University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa). It appears that part of the dock wrapped around the back of the depot to serve the freight door on the back (West) side of the depot, though this is not clearly shown. A few black and white and color photographs of the depot have been published in *Rails to a County Seat* and *Burlington Bulletin No. 30*, *The Burlington and Western* and the *Burlington and North Western Narrow Gauge Branch Lines*. Close examination of photographs taken in 1941 and 1952 show that the freight dock on the North end extended approximately 18 inches past the front of the depot, however this extension does not appear in a 1971 photograph. The freight dock was apparently quite high, but the exact dimensions cannot be determined, however the bottom of the freight door of the depot was measured at 45 inches above the foundation. Seven 7½ inch clapboards were counted between the foundation and the freight door threshold, and that corresponds exactly to the 45 inch height of the freight door above grade. This height corresponds to the calculated height based upon the photographs taken in 1941 and 1952, that show the extension of the freight dock on the North end of the depot. Those photographs, and another photograph taken in 1971 suggest that the freight dock extended approximately 8 feet out from the freight door on the North end, and approximately 8 feet from the back of the depot. Stairs to the freight platform were located at the front of the freight dock (front of the depot) and at the South end of the rear freight platform. The sides of the freight dock were planked with five courses of 9 inch boards, which support a height above grade of 45 inches. A spur curved from the West leg of the wye to permit freight cars to be spotted alongside the freight platform. This arrangement would suggest the freight cars were loaded and unloaded at the rear freight door and truck deliveries took place at the end freight door. The freight platform was not drawn to scale due to insufficient data.

Modeling Considerations

The depot may be modeled in the original length or shortened length, depending upon the era represented. Alternatively, modeler's license may be invoked to model the original version in any era. The only structural change evident on the shortened depot besides waiting room length is the rebuilt chimney. The front door step configuration apparently depended upon whether or not a platform extended to the track to accommodate passenger service.

While the general construction of the freight dock may be determined from a few surviving photographs, the area of the freight dock must be freelanced according to placement of the depot on a layout. Most likely the freight platform extended out from the depot 8 feet on the North and West sides. A spur curved from the West leg of the wye adjacent to the freight dock that could accommodate at least two freight cars.

A raised board passenger platform, approximately 8-10 inches high, appears to the front and side of the original depot, and this platform was probably replaced with a brick platform when the depot was rebuilt. Later, it appears that the bricks were removed and the platform appears to be covered with pea gravel. The platform is not evident in later pictures, suggesting it was not maintained after the demise of passenger service. Eventually, this area became overgrown with weeds.

The original paint colors were the standard CB&Q scheme of Indian red with bronze green trim. The depot is currently painted dark red with black trim. A color photograph taken in 1965 shows tan shingles. The CB&Q used both green and tan shingles, so either would be appropriate.

The interior of the depot is unchanged since the depot was remodeled. The freight room is elevated 29 inches above the floor of the waiting room and office. A restroom opens to the waiting room, encroaching into the rear of the agent office. A cast iron stove stood in the agent office, venting to the chimney at the partition between the office and waiting room. The depot is currently being used as a storage room, and the clutter impeded accurate measurements of the interior.

This depot can easily be built in either wood or styrene. A check of the parts vendors listed in Walther's catalog did not reveal any exact matches for cast doors or windows, so a modeler would have to scratchbuild them or use modeler's license in selecting commercial products. The Burlington Route Historical Society web site lists Model Flex Maroon Tuscan Oxide Red or Dark Tuscan Oxide Red as the wall colors and Model Flex European Dark Green for the trim. The reds are quite different, so you can choose the red that you feel most closely reproduces CB&Q colors. Either green or tan shingles may be used, depending upon era being modeled. Green would be appropriate for the steam era and tan would be appropriate for the diesel era.

Drawings

The depot was measured and photographed in September 2009 at its present location on the Washington County fairgrounds. HO scale drawings of the depot before and after remodeling were prepared using the drawing tools in Microsoft Word.

References

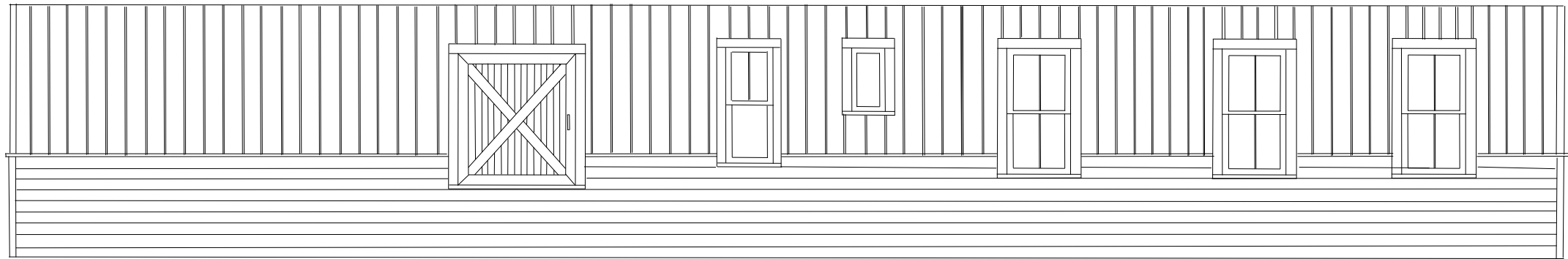
Burlington Bulletin No. 30, The Burlington & Western and Burlington North Western Narrow Gauge Branch Lines, David E. Lotz, Burlington Route Historical Society, 1994.

Rails to a County Seat, David Lotz and Charles Franzen, Washington, Iowa Print Shop, 1989.

Original Configuration – Front



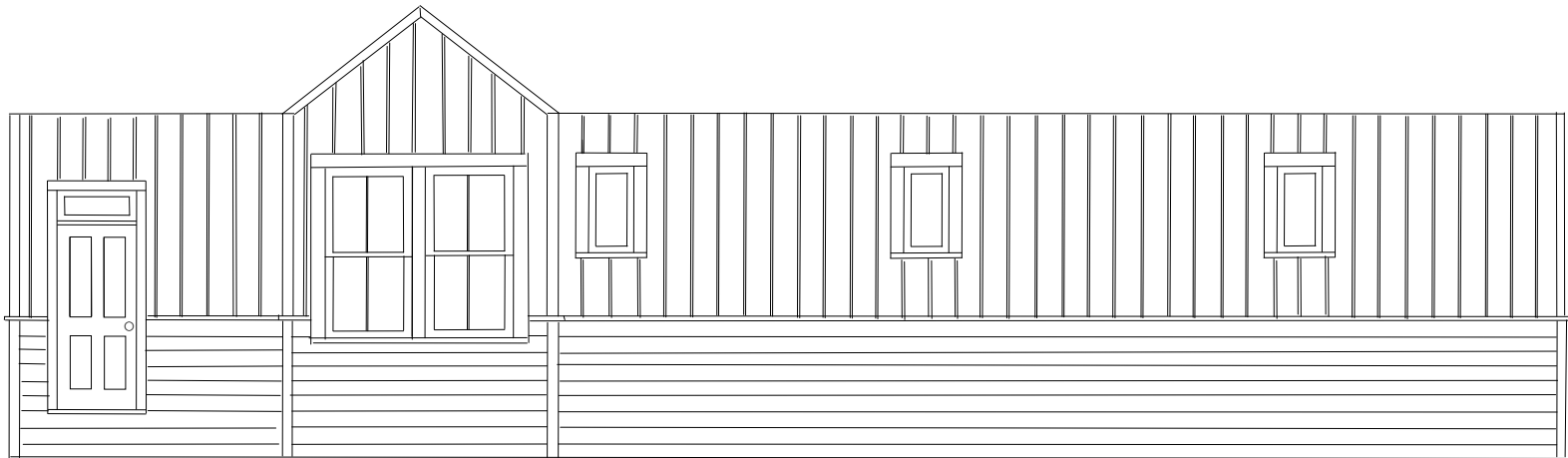
Original Configuration – Back



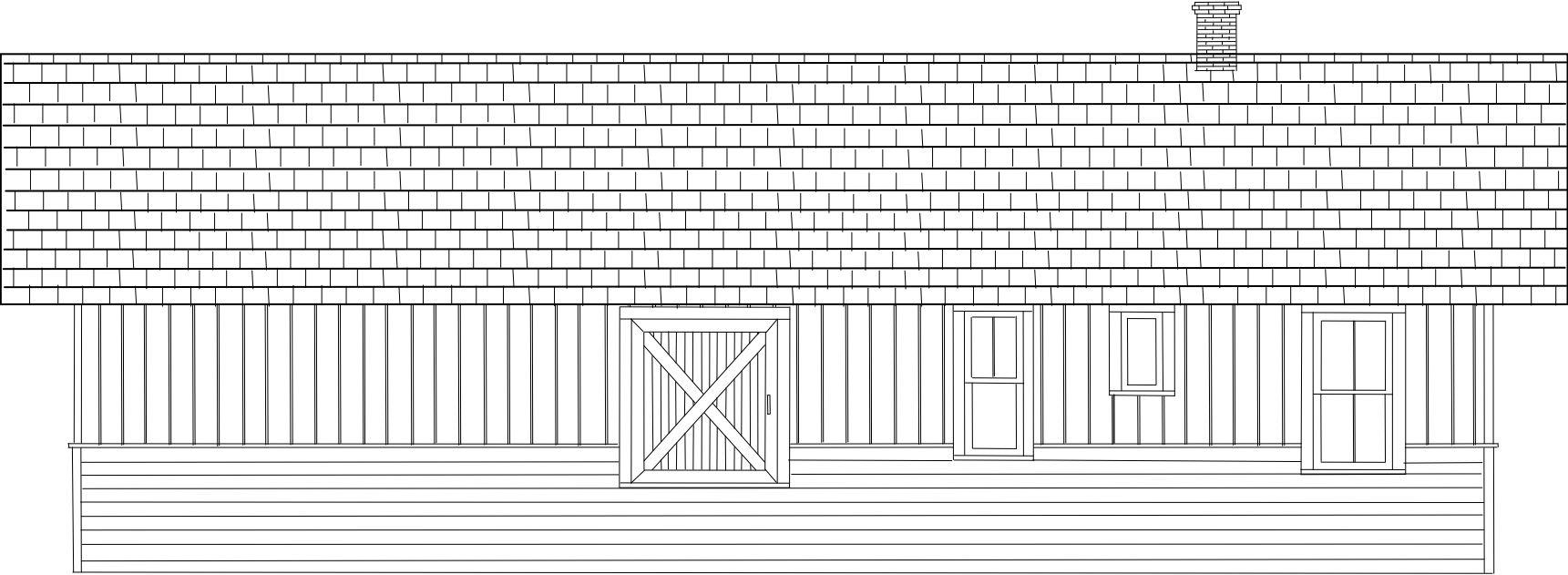
Front Elevation with Roof



Front Elevation



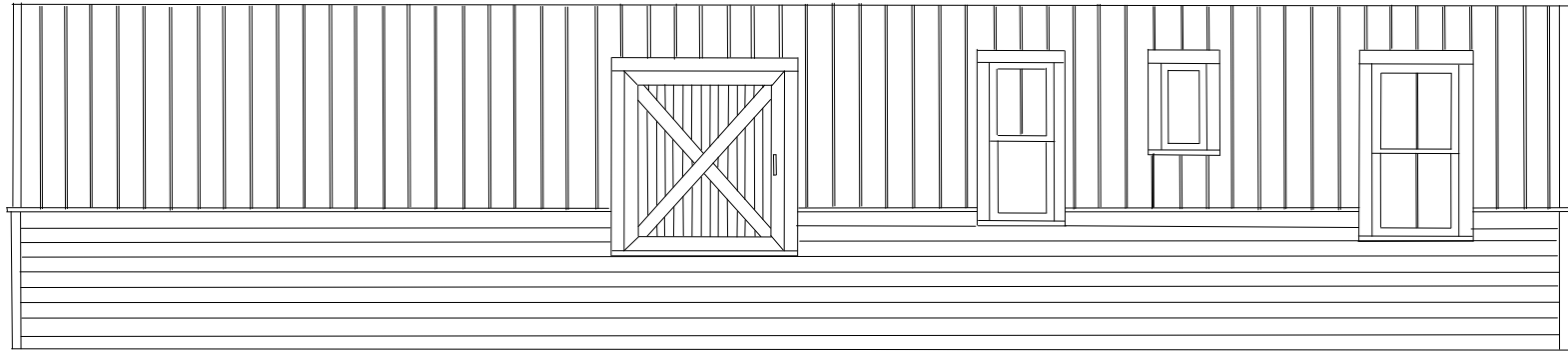
Back Elevation with Roof



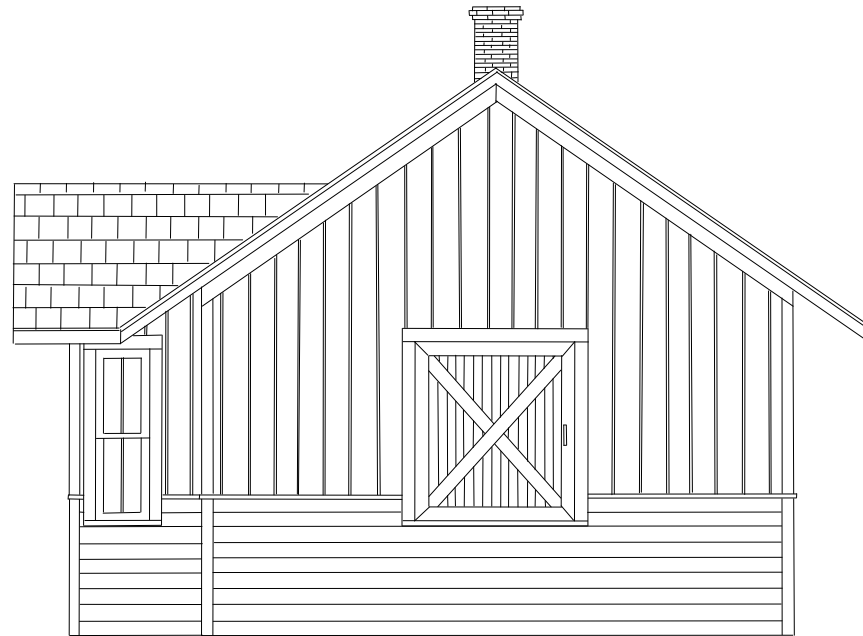
Roof Template

Note: Extend template 31'7" for original depot length

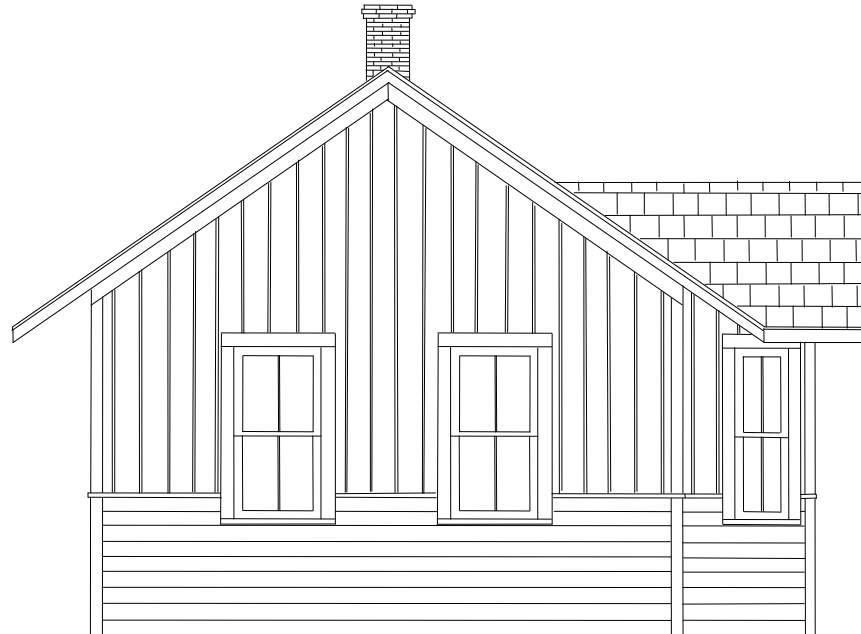
Back Elevation



Freight Door End Elevation



Waiting Room End Elevation



Window, Door, Roof and Chimney Detail

Chimney Detail

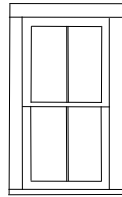


Side View

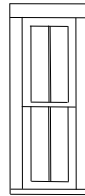


End View

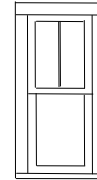
Window Detail



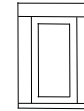
Main Windows



Side Bay Windows

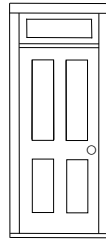


Back Window

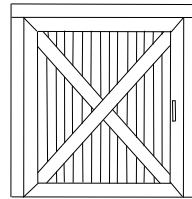


Freight House Windows

Door Detail



Door



Freight Door

Gable Roof Template

