

Texas Historical Commission staff (CTS), 8/1/2006

27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker with post

Comal County (Job #17806) Subject RR (Atlas 13661 UTM14 584455E 3285943N)

Location: New Braunfels, 302 W. San Antonio St.

INTERNATIONAL & GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD IN NEW BRAUNFELS

AS EARLY AS 1875, NEW BRAUNFELS RESIDENTS BEGAN PETITIONING RAIL COMPANIES TO BRING LINES INTO THE COMMUNITY. THE TOWN'S FIRST MAJOR PROPOSAL, TO THE GALVESTON, HARRISBURG AND SAN ANTONIO RAILROAD, FAILED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL. BY THE END OF THE DECADE, HOWEVER, THE INTERNATIONAL & GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD (I&GN), WHICH HAD REACHED AUSTIN IN 1876, AGREED TO BRING RAIL THROUGH NEW BRAUNFELS. BY 1880, THE TOWN HAD A DEPOT AND THE FIRST TRAINS ROLLED THROUGH. IN 1885, THE RAIL COMPANY BUILT A NEW DEPOT, WHICH WAS REPLACED BY A MORE MODERN PASSENGER STATION IN 1907.

THE RAILROAD DRAMATICALLY AFFECTED THE ECONOMY OF NEW BRAUNFELS. WITH THE RAIL OUTLET, THE TOWN COULD SEND GOODS TO MARKET AND RECEIVE PRODUCTS FROM OTHER CITIES MORE EFFECTIVELY. IN ADDITION, THE RAILROAD SPARKED TOURISM IN THE AREA, PARTICULARLY BEGINNING IN THE LATE 1890s. IT WAS DURING THIS TIME THAT HELEN GOULD, DAUGHTER OF RAILROAD FINANCIER JAY GOULD, VISITED THE TOWN. SHE PROPOSED THAT THE I&GN BUILD A SPUR TRACK INTO A BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF LAND OWNED BY HARRY LANDA, WHICH WOULD BECOME KNOWN AS LANDA PARK. I&GN BUILT THE SPUR, AND SOON THE PARK BECAME A POPULAR TOURIST DESTINATION IN CENTRAL TEXAS, DRAWING VISITORS BY RAIL. TODAY, THE PARK REMAINS THE CITY'S PRIMARY PUBLIC RECREATIONAL SITE.

IN 1926, A SUBSIDIARY OF THE MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD BOUGHT OUT THE I&GN AND BY THE MIDDLE OF THE 20TH CENTURY, THE RAILROAD'S IMPORTANCE DECREASED. AFTER MERGING INTO THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD SYSTEM IN 1986, THE MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD DONATED THE 1907 I&GN STATION TO THE CITY OF NEW BRAUNFELS. TODAY, THE FORMER STATION IS HOME TO THE NEW BRAUNFELS RAILROAD MUSEUM.

(2006)

The History of the International and Great Northern Railway Station New Braunfels, Texas

By Bryan H. Weidner

The communities in Texas were no different than those in any other state that believed prosperity could be enhanced with the building of a railroad into their community. Texas was behind the other regions of the country and the effects of the Civil War only helped to inhibit the construction of railroads. The end of Congressional Reconstruction brought about the new construction of railways in Texas, though primarily limited to the eastern portion of the state.

It was during this period of the 1870's that two railroads had begun the expansion of their independent domains. The Houston and Great Northern Railroad building out from Houston had reached Palestine by September of 1872.¹ Meanwhile, the International Railroad had constructed a line from Hearne to Palestine at the same time. It had been the International Railroad that had the vision of a line from Arkansas to Laredo and ultimately Mexico.²

In 1873, the Houston and Great Northern Railway merged with the International Railroad to form the International and Great Northern Railroad. The International and Great Northern Railroad (IGN) would become the first line in the United States with connections from St. Louis, Missouri in the heartland to Mexico at Laredo, Texas.

¹ Nancy Beck Young, *HOUSTON AND GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD*: Handbook of Texas Online, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/HH/eqh8.html> (April 22, 2005).

² S. G. Reed, *INTERNATIONAL RAILROAD*: Handbook of Texas Online, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/II/eqi3.html> (April 22, 2005).

The country and the railroad industry had setbacks such as the Panic of 1873 a financial depression which help slow railroad expansion. The IGN railroad, during this time, also dealt with being in receivership.³

The mayor and citizens of New Braunfels saw the need for a railroad as the avenue to future prosperity. Their earliest attempt to campaign for the extension of a railroad was in 1875. A proposed offer was made to the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad to build track to the city and construct a depot within a radius of one and one fourth miles from the courthouse. The railroad was to receive \$75,000 payable in bonds at 7 1/2% interest. The city leaders were concerned if the railroad would build around the town rather than through it.⁴ However, their efforts did not result in a railroad in New Braunfels, as the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad would build to the east through Marion, Texas.⁵

The International and Great Northern Railroad (IGN) reached Austin in 1876 where it met the broad body of water called the Colorado River stalling any further expansion. In addition, the IGN had entered into receivership contributing to the lack of southward progress of its expansion. The International and Great Northern Railroad emerged from receivership in 1879 and prepared to face the Colorado River.⁶ The IGN surveyors requested land for a right-of-way and depot from the mayor and citizens. The city leaders raised \$13,000 to secure the needed property requested by the railroad.⁷

³ George C. Werner, *INTERNATIONAL-GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD: Handbook of Texas Online*, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/I/eqi4.html> (April 5, 2005).

⁴ Anselm Eiband, *Editorial: Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung*, New Braunfels, Texas, (Sept 17, 1875, p. 3, c. 3).

⁵ *Ibid*, (June 6, 1879. p. 3, c. 2).

⁶ *Ibid*, George C. Werner, *INTERNATIONAL-GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD: Handbook of Texas Online*,

⁷ *Ibid*, *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung*, (Nov 28, 1879, p.3, c. 2).

The IGN acquired ownership of town lots number 10 and 17 from the current owners Ferdinand and Anna Nolte recorded in Deed No. 507 on July 3, 1880.⁸ The location of lot No. 10 faced the intersection of San Antonio and Hill Streets. The second lot No. 17 was to the rear of lot No. 10 and faced Mill Street (see appendix figure 1).

Several dates can be associated with the actual arrival of the IGN Railroad in New Braunfels. The event regardless of date was a crucial milestone in the history of New Braunfels. The editor of the Neu Braunfels Zeitung recorded the event on November 19, 1880 by writing:

“Today, finally dawns the event which we had long hoped for. We have now entered into communication with the whole world by railroad and through one of the largest in the United States. In a few years the steam steed which we today did welcome, will sound its shrill whistle at some place on the coast of the Pacific Ocean. It shall go through the richest regions of Mexico to bring the world to Montezuma’s legendary residence, the capital of Mexico itself.”⁹

A young Clara Heilig whose family lived near the future site of the IGN Depot wrote a letter dated November 24, 1880. It expressed her impressions of the new railroad construction and the town citizen’s excitement as it neared completion as follows:

“Last Sunday the locomotive came whistling into town for the first time. All day there were such crowds, one could hardly get through. In the afternoon, when a friend and I arrived at the end of the line, the conductor asked the ladies if they cared to ride the four miles to camp with him. We two, and about twelve others, and just as many men went. The others did not have the courage to go. It really was foolhardy of us to go, for we all stood on a platform, and thus rode over the Guadalupe Bridge. It is eighty-five feet high.”¹⁰

Anselm Eiband and Clara Heilig exhibited the excitement of fellow citizens with the entrance of the first work train used in the construction of track southward into New

⁸ Deed Records, *Ferdinand and Anna Nolte to IGNRR*: Deed No.507, Comal County Deed of Trust Records: Volume O, pp. 806, 807.

⁹ Anselm Eiband, *Editorial*: Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, New Braunfels, Texas, (Nov. 19, 1880).

¹⁰ Clara Haelig, *Letter*, New Braunfels, Texas, (November 24, 1880).

Braunfels and onward to San Antonio. The first revenue train entered New Braunfels from Palestine, Texas was December 1, 1880. New Braunfels saw these revenue freight and passenger trains continue on to San Antonio when the IGN tracks reached that city on February 16, 1881.¹¹ Thus, the first train to enter New Braunfels occurred on November 19, 1880 and the first freight or passengers delivered to the city happened on December 1, 1880.

The town lots the IGN had purchased from the Ferdinand and Anna Nolte eventually provided the location for future IGN passenger stations. The first building used by the IGN as a Ticket and Agents Office were former store fronts of Mr. Nolte's business on San Antonio Street. The noted topographer August Koch's 1881 Birdseye View of New Braunfels (see appendix figure 2) illustrates the structure and it's location as No. 6 at the head of Hill Street facing San Antonio Street. The railroad had constructed small Victorian style by 1885 according to Sanborn Insurance Co. maps of that period (see appendix figure 3-6). The new depot construction rendered the old offices unnecessary and they were removed sometime shortly thereafter.¹²

The decade of the 1880's ushered New Braunfels into the age of railroads as it did much of Texas. The ease of shipping products to markets and receiving a variety of needed goods help the economy prosper. Texas had a vast quantity of lands to be settled and the railroads had a sizable amount of lands to sell to settlers. The earlier settlers had come by foot, horse, ox cart, and wagon. The railroads like the IGN transported the next cycle of settlers to Texas and New Braunfels.

¹¹ Herman Seele, *Jahrbuch 1880: Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung*, New Braunfels, Texas, p. 59..

¹² *Sanborn Insurance Maps Online*: 1885, 1891, 1896, and 1902.

The local economy did prosper and a new market would find a place in New Braunfels that is still an important part of the economy today. Tourism began when the daughter of the railroad tycoon Jay Gould visited the estate of Harry Landa in 1898. The natural beauty of Landa's park captivated Helen Gould that she proposed to have the IGN railroad build a spur track into the park. Her proposal to Harry Landa meant that the railroad would be responsible for New Braunfels becoming a tourism destination for the IGN excursion train passengers by 1899.¹³

In 1900, the Missouri Kansas and Texas Railroad (MKT) extended its tracks south through New Braunfels towards San Antonio. The city now had the benefits of two major railways when just twenty years earlier its city leaders had hoped for one. The MKT immediately built a larger station and a spur track into Landa's Park for its own excursion train passengers.¹⁴

The spring of 1905 would cause the city leaders to pressure the IGN to build a more substantial station. The concerned citizens may have lead the IGN to construct a new station or the railroad simply attempted to be competitive because it did build new depots in other cities it served. The next event occurred on April 6th when the President Theodore Roosevelt paid a visit and gave a speech from the rear platform of his Pullman car. The citizens decorated the IGN station, a children's choir entertained the President and a young girls group were outfitted as Roughriders.¹⁵ The last event occurred on May 14th when visitors by the hundreds attended the New Braunfels Flower Parade. The

¹³ Harry Landa, *As I Remember....*: San Antonio, Texas: Carleton Printing Co., (1945).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Herman Dietel, *Composition: President Roosevelt in New Braunfels* New Braunfels, Texas, (April 13, 1905).

visitors disembarked the train at the small IGN station during bad weather resulting in a harsh editorial.

"How much New Braunfels is in need of a more spacious station house at the IGN, can be testified by the hundreds.....people stepping down from the car, sank ankle-deep in mud and slush. Then, only few could find room in the small depot, and all others had to run to the sidewalks on San Antonio Street for shelter. ...Many other towns, whose passenger traffic is inferior to ours, have better accommodations than we have. Why is that?"¹⁶

The IGN began construction of a new passenger station in February of 1907. The local firm of Moeller, Mordhorst and Blumberg were contracted to manufacture cement block and material for the stations construction.¹⁷ The actual construction of the station began with the site excavation on March 14th.¹⁸ The date the construction was completed is not known but the IGN did request permission to dig a new cesspool on August 15th.¹⁹ The action indicates the near completion date of the construction (see appendix figure 7).

The new IGN station was designed to provide more than adequate amounts of shelter for disembarking passengers. It had two waiting rooms and a large covered passenger canopy with seats at the base of its roof support columns. The appearance of the station was unique for the IGN made of natural concrete colored molded tiles with red grout between the tiles. The roof was supported with heavy timbered brackets with ornamental wrought iron details. The large entrances were surrounded with diamond latticed glass transoms and side panels. The station remained basically the same through the 1920's and by 1930-a restroom had been added at the far end of the passenger canopy (see appendix figures 8-10).²⁰

¹⁶ Unknown, *Editorial: Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung*, New Braunfels, Texas, (May 26, 1905).

¹⁷ Unknown, *News: Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung*, New Braunfels, Texas, (Feb. 14, 1907).

¹⁸ Ibid, (March 14, 1907).

¹⁹ Ibid, (August 15, 1907).

²⁰ *Sanborn Insurance Maps Online: 1912, 1922, 1930, and 1949.*

The IGN was bought out of receivership by the New Orleans, Texas and Mexico Railroad a subsidiary of the Missouri Pacific Railroad in 1926 but the merger was not finalized until 1956. It was in the late 1950's that the interstate highway systems had an impact on the station and the railroad. Interstate trucking replaced the use of the railroad as a primary shipper and receiver of smaller quantities of freight. The railroad eliminated its separate freight facility and built an enclosed platform midway under the stations passenger canopy (see appendix figure 11). In addition, the depot received a new corrugated metal roof, which caused the removal of the chimneys and dormer. Finally, the railroads passenger service was discontinued in the late 1960's to be replaced by Amtrak, though passenger trains no longer stopped in New Braunfels.

Missouri Pacific Railroad was later merged into the Union Pacific Railroad System on January 1, 1986.²¹ The City of New Braunfels was given the 1907 IGN Station by the railroad in April 1986 with a yearly lease on the land.²² The city then leased the station and the property to the New Braunfels Historic Railroad and Modelers Society in October of the same year.²³

The International and Great Northern Railroad clearly brought economic growth and stability to New Braunfels. In fact, the railroads entry into the city brought the most change and the new industry of tourism. Today, the site and former IGN station is home to the New Braunfels Railroad Museum and once again a tourist destination.

²¹ Bryan Weidner, *Oral Interview of A.T. Kott*, San Antonio, Texas, (April 2005).

²² Unknown, *News: The Herald-Zeitung*, New Braunfels, Texas, (April 17, 1986).

²³ Bryan Weidner, *Oral Interview of William Ervin*, New Braunfels, Texas, (April 2005).

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4. Landa, Harry. As I Remember...., San Antonio, Texas: Carleton Printing Co., 1945.
5. Haelig, Clara. Letter, Private Collection: New Braunfels, Texas, November 24, 1880.
6. Dietel, Herman. Composition, President Roosevelt in New Braunfels, Private Collection: New Braunfels, Texas, April 13, 1905.
7. Seele, Herman, Jahrbuch 1880: New Braunfels, Texas Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, 1880.
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12. New Braunfels Historic Railroad and Modelers Society. Floor plan map IGN Depot 1956: New Braunfels, Texas.
13. Eiband, Anselm. Editorial: Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung: New Braunfels, Texas, Sept 17, 1875, June 6, 1879 and November 19, 1880.
14. Author Unknown. Editorial: Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung: New Braunfels, Texas, May 26, 1905.
15. Author Unknown, News: Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, New Braunfels, Texas, Feb. 14, 1907, March 14, 1907 and August 15. 1907.
16. Author Unknown, News: The Herald-Zeitung: New Braunfels, Texas, April 17, 1986.

17. Weidner, Bryan. Oral Interview of A.T. Kott: San Antonio, Texas, April 2005.
18. Weidner, Bryan. Oral Interview of William Ervin, New Braunfels, Texas, April 2005.

Appendix:

Figure 1: Lots 10 and 17 portion of city map drawn by J.J. Groos in 1860.

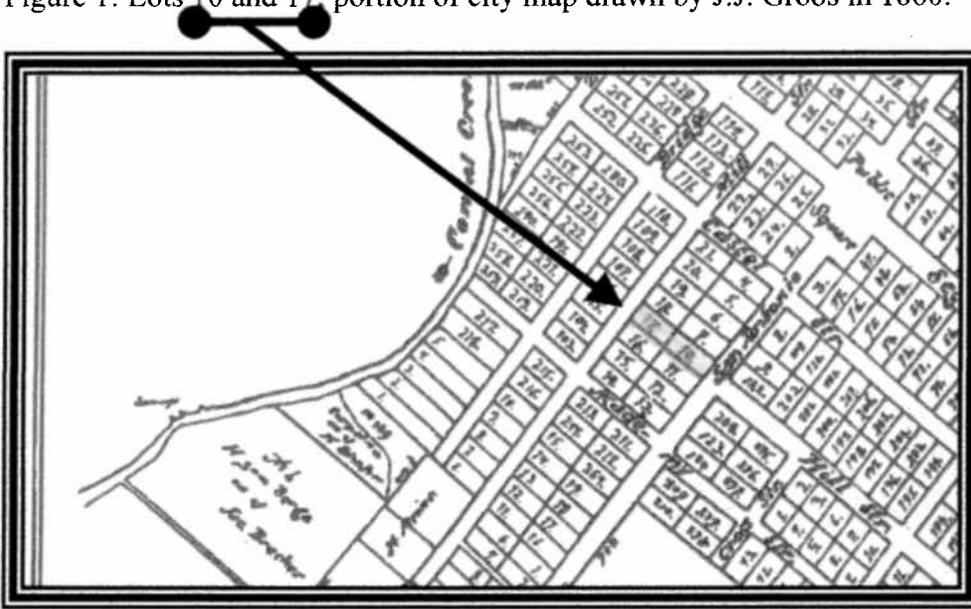


Figure 2: IGN Offices in F. Nolte's former shop labeled No.6 from 1881 Birdseye view by August Koch.

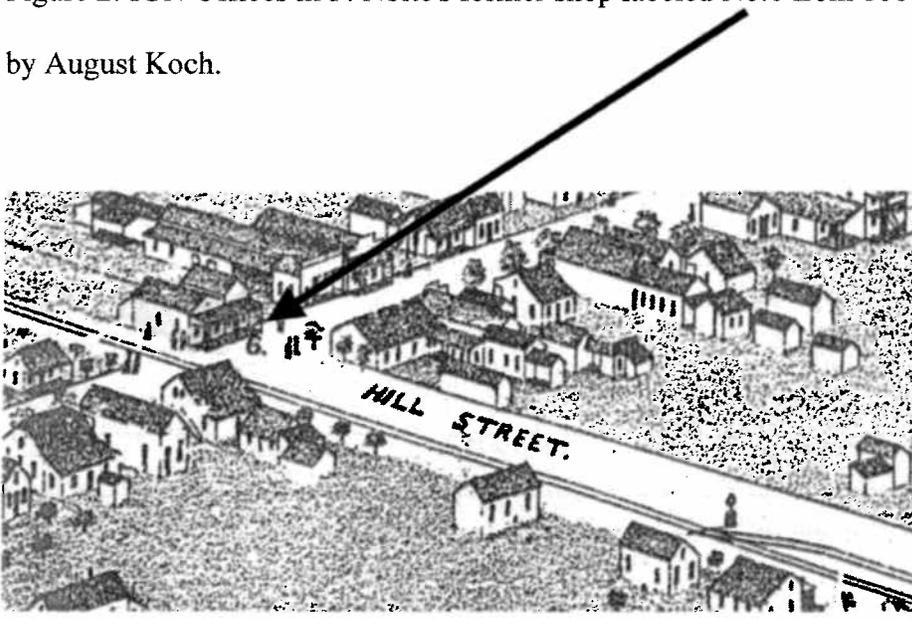
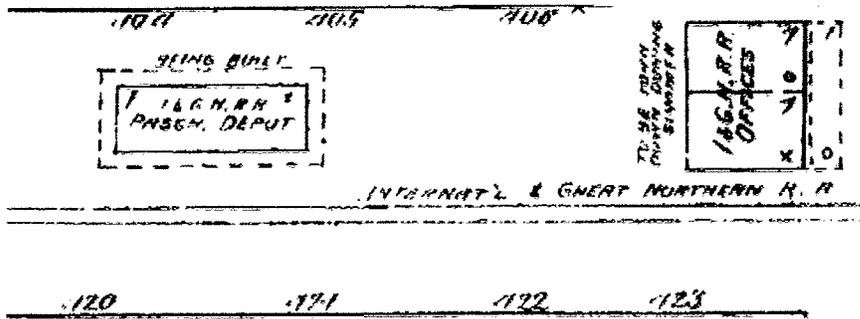


Figure 3: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1885.



Figures 4, 5 and 6: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for 1891, 1896 and 1902, which indicated no changes during that period.

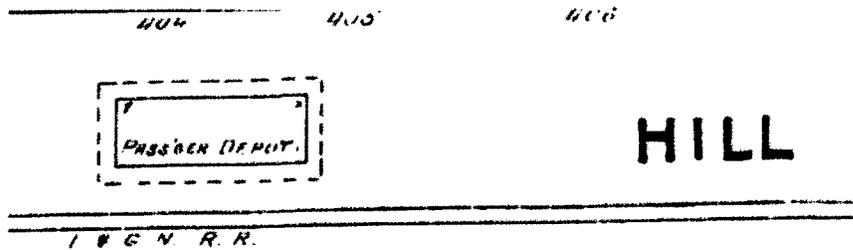
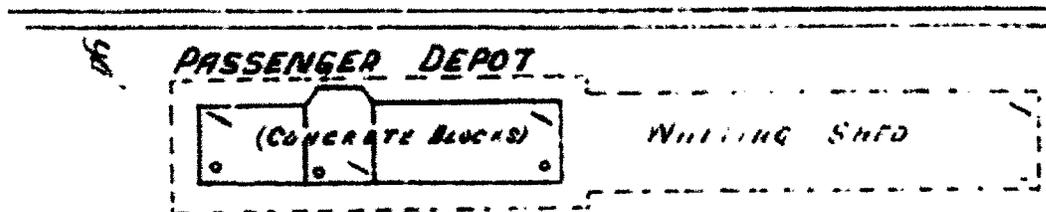


Figure 7: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1907.



1907

Figure 8: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1922.

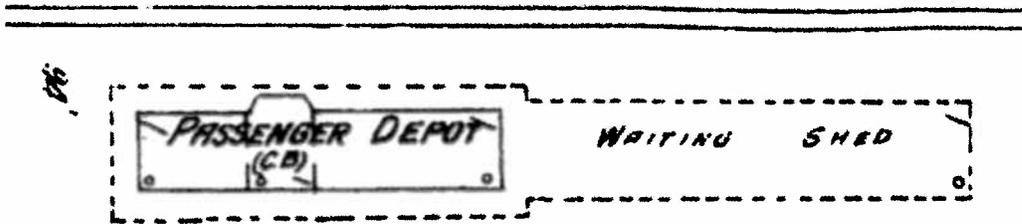


Figure 9: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1930.

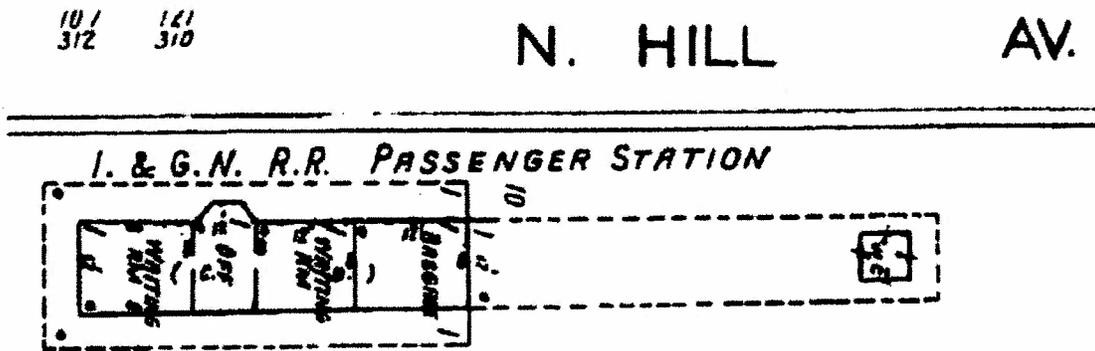


Figure 10: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1949.

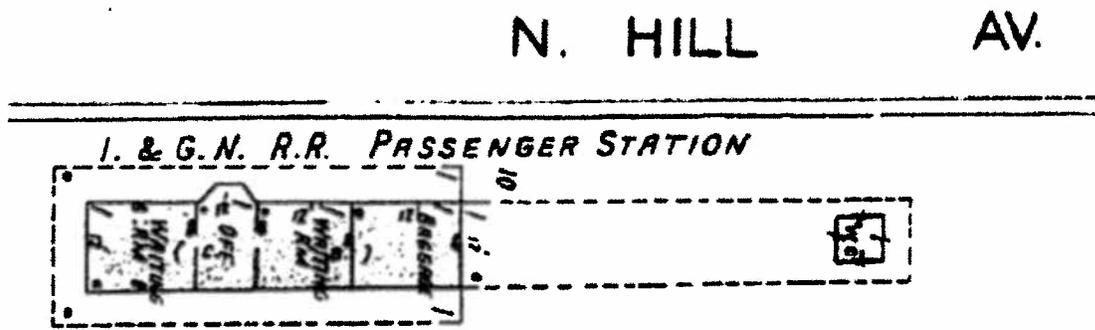
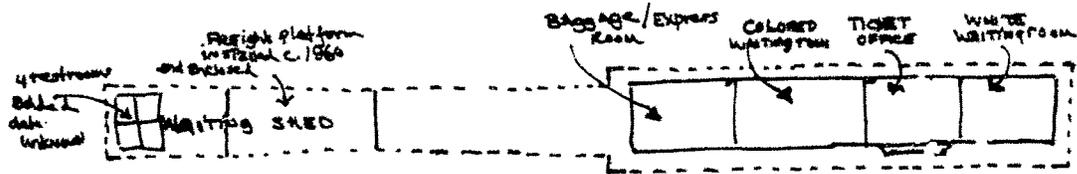


Figure 11: Drawing courtesy of New Braunfels Historic Railroad and Modelers Society of the depot as it looked in 1956.



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Harrisburg

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(2006)

Check one and sign:

- I approve text as written. Proceed with order.
- I approve text with minor revisions as noted. Proceed with order.
- I request these revisions and a new copy of text.

Signed: _____

Jim H. Sweeney

Texas Historical Commission staff (CTS), 8/1/2006

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HARRISBURG

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