

Warroad Canadian National Railway Depot, Warroad, Roseau County



IN 1900, Warroad became an official stop along the only transcontinental railroad running through the United States. Owners of the Canadian Northern Railway (CNoR) desired convenient access to Minnesota's booming timber industry for delivering large quantities of wood for new Canadian settlements.

The first train arrived from Winnipeg on February 26; an official depot opened March 3. By January 1902, trains traveled regularly between Thunder Bay (then Port Arthur) and Winnipeg. Eventually the line connected to Duluth. The freight and passenger services created economic growth for Warroad and nearby towns.

A fire destroyed the original wood depot on July 15, 1914, and CNoR commissioned architect John Schofield to design a new brick building. Construction began in September at a cost of \$30,000. The CNoR rail stations followed a standard design plan, which was economical and provided the company its own architectural style. However, Warroad's design deviated slightly due to its use for customs and immigration, unique among the rail company's depots.

The depot's two-story central portion was flanked by one-story structures. The ticket and railroad offices were on the first floor of the center section, and the second floor housed the stationmaster's quarters. The waiting room, offices for immigration and customs, and baggage area were located in the one-story wings.

In December 1918, the Canadian government bought CNoR and renamed it Canadian National Railways (CNR). Warroad remained a busy transport hub for several years, but demand dropped due to the economic impacts of World War I, the Great Depression, a decline in Minnesota's timber industry, and the creation of improved roadways in the region. An additional death knell sounded in the 1950s when the conversion from steam to diesel power meant that trains required less frequent stops for coal and water.

The last passenger train from Winnipeg to Thunder Bay stopped at Warroad on July 30, 1977. The Minnesota Department of Transportation closed the building in September 1978. It was used for storage for several years until the City of Warroad purchased it with the help of a \$25,000 donation from the family of George and Almira Marvin, founders of Marvin Windows. The depot was



Warroad Canadian National Railway Depot, circa 1915. (MNHS COLLECTIONS)

added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, and restoration work began in November 1983.

The depot opened as city offices in July 1985. The baggage area was converted to a public library, the second floor housed a heritage museum, and the waiting room was remodeled as city council chambers. The Warroad Police Department took up residence in the building when the library and museum moved across the street in 1990, and it continued to headquarter there until 2005. The historic depot is still used as Warroad City Hall. Roughly two dozen non-passenger trains travel through the town on a daily basis.

—Amy Jo Hahn

Source Notes

"Canadian Northern Railroad's New Warroad Depot." *The Duluth Herald*, April 9, 1915.

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