

**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 an 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 Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating House
other names/site number Site #DE0294

2. Location

street & number Southeast of the Seamans Drive and Railroad Street Intersection not for publication
city or town McGehee vicinity
state Arkansas code AR county Desha code 041 zip code 71654

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
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 certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Plain-Traditional

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
walls BRICK

roof ASBESTOS
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more 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** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- 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.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

STATE

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION
COMMERCE

Period of Significance

c.1910-c.1948

Significant Dates

c.1910

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Missouri Pacific Railway, Builder

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) has 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>648858</u>	<u>3722085</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

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 Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date August 23, 2010
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name City of McGehee
street & number PO Box 612 telephone
city or town McGehee state AR zip code 71654

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

SUMMARY

The Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating House is located in the heart of downtown McGehee adjacent to the Missouri Pacific (now Union Pacific) railroad line and immediately to the southeast of the Missouri Pacific Depot (NR-listed June 11, 1992). The one-story building is rectangular in plan, and rests on a continuous brick foundation with a stone water table. The walls are brick veneer over frame construction. The building is topped by a hipped roof with wide projecting eaves that is now covered in asbestos shingles, although it was originally covered with clay tiles.

ELABORATION

The Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating House is located in the heart of downtown McGehee. The building is located immediately to the southwest of the Missouri Pacific (now Union Pacific) railroad line and immediately to the southeast of the Missouri Pacific Depot (NR-listed June 11, 1992). The one-story building is rectangular in plan with the long façades paralleling the railroad line. The Eating House rests on a continuous brick foundation with a stone water table. The building's walls are brick veneer over frame construction. Currently, all of the building's windows and the vast majority of the doors are boarded up. The building is topped by a hipped roof with wide projecting eaves now covered in asbestos shingles, although it was originally covered with clay tiles.

Southwest Façade

The southwest façade of the building fronts Railroad Street. Beginning at the northwest end of the building there is a doorway followed by four window openings followed by a door. Just to the southeast of the second door, the roof is pierced by a low brick chimney topped by a stone cap. Proceeding to the southeast along the façade, there are three more window openings followed by a doorway, which is followed by a single window opening. All of the building's windows have stone sills and lintels and the doorways also have stone lintels while the water table acts as the bottom of the doorways.

Southeast Façade

The southeast façade is fenestrated by a single window opening on the left and a large doorway is on the right. A gently-sloped concrete ramp leads from the ground level to the door.

Northeast Façade

The northeast façade of the building fronts the railroad line. Beginning at the southeast end, the building has a window opening followed by a door followed by another window opening followed by a door. Roughly in the center of the façade is a large door. The large door is followed by two windows, which is followed by a door. This door appears to be the only original uncovered door. The door consists of four recessed panels in the bottom half and four square panes of glass in the upper part. A single-pane transom window is located above the door, although it is partially covered. To the right of the door is a window opening followed by a door that is followed by another window opening.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

A large deteriorating asphalt area, where passengers would have mingled and waited for trains, is located in front of the building.

Northwest Façade

The northwest façade is fenestrated by a single window opening on the right and a doorway is on the left. The doorway has a door with a window in the top half. A decorative panel covers the transom area above the door. A brick sidewalk with concrete borders connects the building with the depot to the northwest. A gable-roofed open breezeway, which was built between 1928 and 1944, also connects the building with the depot.

Integrity

The largest change to the Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating House was the replacement of the original clay tile roof with the current asbestos roof in the late 1940s. When the roof was replaced, at least two small dormers were removed on the northeast side, as seen in historic photos. It also appears that some of the door and window openings may have been altered at some point, as evidenced by changes in the brick and mortar work around some of the openings.

Overall, however, the building retains good integrity. Most of the building's openings have remained the same. Although they are boarded up, it is believed that the windows and doors remain in place. The design of the building, with the stone water table, brick walls, and hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves, still reads as a railroad related building. In addition, the setting around the building, with the depot to the northwest and the railroad line to the northeast, still reflects the building's setting when it was built in the early 1910s.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

SUMMARY

Prior to the period when having dining cars on passenger trains was common, it was necessary to have restaurants along the railroad lines so that passengers would have easy access to good meals. The most famous of these companies by far was the Fred Harvey Company whose Harvey Houses were operated along the route of the Santa Fe Railroad throughout the Southwest. However, other railroads had contracts with similar companies that operated restaurants and hotels that catered to railroad passengers. The Missouri Pacific Railway, and its subsidiary the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern, for example, had a contract with the Van Noy Railroad News Company to operate eating houses and hotels along their system.

The Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating House in McGehee, which was built c.1910, was one of only a few examples of the company's operations in Arkansas. The building, which contained a restaurant, lunch counter, and kitchen, provided an important service to the railroad's passengers as they passed through McGehee, a division point on the Missouri Pacific line. For its associations with providing services to railroad passengers during the first part of the twentieth century and the role of the Missouri Pacific Railway in McGehee's history, the Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **statewide significance** under **Criterion A**.

HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

Although the first railroad line in the United States was laid in the late 1820s, very little railroad construction was completed in Arkansas prior to the Civil War. The Memphis & Little Rock Railroad, which had laid some track westward from Hopefield and eastward from Little Rock, and the Mississippi, Ouachita, & Red River, which had laid a few miles of track inland from Chicot and Arkansas City, were the only railroads to complete any construction prior to 1860.¹

The Civil War, however, delayed the building of railroads by a decade, and it was not until the 1870s that railroad building took off again. The St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern built a line south from St. Louis to the Arkansas border. They wanted to go to Texas, and purchased the Cairo & Fulton. Although the Cairo & Fulton had not done any construction, they had secured rights-of-way prior to the Civil War. The St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern reached Little Rock by 1872, and had completed the first line across Arkansas when it reached Texarkana in 1874.²

The second railroad line to reach across the state incorporated the Memphis & Little Rock Railroad, and the newly constructed Little Rock & Fort Smith, which had reached the coal fields of Clarksville in 1874 and Fort Smith five years later. The Little Rock & Fort Smith was purchased by Jay Gould (who already owned

¹ Elliott West. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987 reprint of 1941 publication p. 54.

² *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

the Iron Mountain lines) in 1882, and became part of the Iron Mountain system – the largest railroad system in the state in the late nineteenth century.³

Another important railroad in Arkansas during the late nineteenth century was the Missouri Pacific Railway, which came into existence in 1872 out of a reorganization of the Pacific Railroad Company. (The Pacific Railroad Company broke ground on their first line in St. Louis on July 4, 1851.) In 1879, the railroad came under New York financier Jay Gould's control and he developed a system extending through Colorado, Nebraska, Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana. The Missouri Pacific Railway merged with the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern in 1917 to become the Missouri Pacific Railroad. By the early 1980s, the Missouri Pacific had just less than 11,500 miles of track in eleven states, before it merged with the Union Pacific and Western Pacific Railroad companies on December 22, 1982.⁴

Desha County was established on December 12, 1838. In January 1861, a portion of the county was given to Drew County while a part of Chicot County was given to Desha County in February 1879 and a portion of Lincoln County was given to the county in March 1879. Unfortunately, the early records of Desha County are scarce due to the fact that while they were stored in Texas for preservation during the Civil War, portions of the records were mutilated, lost, or destroyed.⁵

By the late 1800s, the only incorporated town in the county was Arkansas City, although other communities did exist. According to the *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas*, Watson and Red Fork, for example, "are good local trading points, and the same may be said of Walnut Lake...and Dumars... Laconia, in Mississippi Township, is a flourishing village of considerable commercial importance, having the advantages of a good river trade. Besides the places mentioned, there are in the county the following named post-offices, at some of which some little business is done in the way of local trade: Beith's Landing, Halley, Henrico, Hopedale, McGehee, Medford, Pendleton, Reedville, Trippe, Waddell, [and] White River."⁶

A post office was established in McGehee in 1879 and the community was named for the first postmaster, Abner McGehee. Throughout the late 1800s, McGehee remained a very small community of "perhaps only twenty inhabitants." It was not until the Missouri Pacific Railroad arrived in McGehee in 1905 to establish a division point that the town's population swelled. By 1910, McGehee's population was over 1,000 and by 1920 it was over 2,000.⁷ The importance of the railroad, which *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas* called

³ West, p. 55.

⁴ "About Missouri Pacific: A Brief Overview," from www.mo-pac.com/about.html.

⁵ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890, p. 998.

⁶ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890, pp. 1003-1004.

⁷ Hanley, Steven, and Ray Hanley. "Wish You Were Here." *Arkansas Postcard Past, 1900-1925*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1997, p. 216.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

“the most important railroad in the State,” in McGehee’s history was also illustrated in the book when it stated that the “establishment of railroad shops in 1905 catapulted the village into industrial prominence, and accounted for its rapid growth [The population was 3,663 at the time of the book’s publication.]. ...The Missouri Pacific shops still provide the leading pay roll of the town, and its position as a junction helps to make it the principal commercial center of southeast Arkansas.”⁸

By 1915, the Missouri Pacific Railroad complex included several platforms and storage buildings, a machine shop, and a fifteen-stall roundhouse with turntable. Although it was already an extensive complex by 1915, the complex continued to grow tremendously and by 1944 it consisted of a car shed, parts building, “rip track wood mill,” store room, lumber and oxygen gas building, bolt room, store rooms, office, pump house, machine shop with parts storage, lime house, water filter house, boiler house, paint shop, wash room with lockers, the fifteen-stall roundhouse and two 35,000 barrel fuel oil tanks.⁹

Although the maintenance and repair of railroad equipment was one of the most important activities that the Missouri Pacific engaged in in McGehee, meeting the railroad’s passenger and baggage needs was also a key component of their operations. By 1912, a passenger depot had been built and an office building for the Western Union Telegraph Company was also located to the south of the depot, which would become American Railway Express offices by 1928.¹⁰

However, one of the most interesting buildings that the Missouri Pacific had in McGehee was the “Railway Eating House” as it was labeled on the 1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. In the early days of railroads, trains did not have dining cars so it was necessary for passengers to get off the train at a station stop to get food. An 1838 traveler described the experience, saying: “At every fifteen miles of the railroads...the cars stop, all the doors are thrown open, and out rush the passengers like boys out of school, and crowd around the tables to solace themselves with pies, patties, cakes, hard-cooked eggs, hams, custards, and a variety of railroad luxuries too numerous to mention. The bell rings for departure, in they all hurry with their hands and mouths full, and off they go again until the next stopping place induces them to relieve the monotony of the journey by masticating without being hungry.” Passengers could also take food with them on the train, but it also had its disadvantages. As one reporter wrote, “The bouquet from those lunches hung around the car all day and the flies wired ahead for their friends to meet them at each station.”¹¹

⁸ West, p. 280.

⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps for McGehee, Arkansas, 1915 and 1944.

¹⁰ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps for McGehee, Arkansas, 1912 and 1928.

¹¹ Porterfield, James D. *Dining by Rail: The History and the Recipes of America’s Golden Age of Railroad Cuisine*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993, pp 6-7.

The initial step towards dining cars was the Pullman Company's introduction of the hotel-car, which was a sleeping car with a kitchen and pantries at one end. Portable tables could be set up in between the seats of

Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating
House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

each section so that meals could be served. The first hotel-car was the *President*, which was placed in service on the Great Western Railway of Canada in 1867. The dining car as we know it today was introduced on the Chicago & Alton Railroad in 1868 when the *Delmonico* was put in service.¹²

Even though dining cars began to appear on passenger trains in the 1860s, it was not until the twentieth century that they became common. As a result, it was still necessary to provide restaurants along the lines that could provide meals to the passengers. It is not known exactly when the first eating houses were established, but it seems to have been during the 1850s. Charles George founded an eating house in Waukegan, Illinois, in 1856 while the Pennsylvania Railroad built the Logan House in Altoona, Pennsylvania, in 1854-1855.¹³ The railroad realized the importance of eating houses in that the railroad could generate extra income by operating or granting licenses to operate the eating houses.

Railroads also helped to promote the eating houses to passengers. Announcements were made on the trains or advertisements were sometimes placed in train schedules. For example, a brochure promoting the Delaware Railroad, contained the following advertisement:

HO! FOR REFRESHMENTS!!
-----at-----
R. E. SMITH'S
RESTAURANT
MIDDLETOWN STATION. DELAWARE RAILROAD.

Where the hungry traveler will find,
Good refreshments of almost every kind;
Pie and Milk, with hot coffee too;
Broiled Chickens, or an Oyster Stew.

Buckwheat Cakes and Sausages, fresh from the pan
Apples, Cakes, and good old Ham;
My house is small, but never fear,

¹² Clarke, Thomas Curtis, et al. *The American Railway: Its Construction, Development, Management, and Appliances*. Secaucus, NJ: Castle, 1988 reprint of 1889 publication, pp. 243-244.

¹³ Porterfield, James D. *Dining by Rail: The History and the Recipes of America's Golden Age of Railroad Cuisine*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993, pp 11, 13.

But if you stop you'll get good cheer.¹⁴

Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating
House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

The most famous of these companies that operated eating houses was the Fred Harvey Company, which provided eating houses along the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe throughout the American Southwest. However, the Fred Harvey Company had competition, including the Van Noy Railway Hotel and News Company, which had contracts to provide similar services on the Missouri Pacific and its subsidiary, the St. Louis, Iron Mountain, & Southern, among other railroads. The Van Noy Railway Hotel and News Company was the brainchild of Ira C. and Charles S. Van Noy, both of whom worked previously for the Union News Company of Kansas City, Missouri. In 1893, they set out on their own, opening a retail cigar and news business. In 1897, their business was incorporated as the Van Noy Railway Hotel and News Company with Ira serving as president and general manager and Charles serving as secretary and treasurer.¹⁵

On October 1, 1914, the company merged with the Brown News Company to form the Van Noy-Brown News Company. Ira remained president of the new company while Charles became vice president. The following year, the company merged with the Interstate News Company of New York to become the Van Noy Interstate News Company, which was the largest company of its kind in the nation. Throughout its existence, the company's headquarters remained in Kansas City.¹⁶

At its peak, the Van Noy Interstate News Company was in charge of the distribution of newspapers, magazines, books, candy, and cigars on 90,000 miles of the country's 250,000 miles of railroads. In addition to the Missouri Pacific, the company sold goods on the Denver and Rio Grande, Western Pacific, Kansas City Southern, Illinois Central, and the Southern Pacific lines.¹⁷

By the early twentieth century, the Van Noy Company was a very successful and well-respected enterprise. A history of Kansas City, Missouri, published in 1908, stated:

They now have control of thirty two thousand miles of road on five lines, together with fifty-two hotels and eating houses, twenty-one distributing offices and twenty news and cigar stands. Their employees number about

¹⁴ Porterfield, James D. *Dining by Rail: The History and the Recipes of America's Golden Age of Railroad Cuisine*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993, p. 12.

¹⁵ Millstein, Cydney. "The Ira C. and Charles S. Van Noy Residences, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, State Historic Preservation Office, 1987. Section 8, page 2.

¹⁶ Millstein, Cydney. "The Ira C. and Charles S. Van Noy Residences, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, State Historic Preservation Office, 1987. Section 8, page 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

sixteen hundred and the business is conducted in harmony with the most carefully systematized and well planned commercial interests. Their capital at the incorporation was twenty thousand dollars and today their business represents an investment of three hundred and eight thousand dollars. The firm name is

Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating
House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

known throughout the entire west and stands as a synonym for commercial integrity as well as enterprise.¹⁸

John Willy, editor of *The Hotel Monthly*, gave an account of a stop at the Missouri Pacific's Van Noy Eating House in Joplin, Missouri, in the magazine's January 1918 issue. Willy wrote:

The train reached Joplin, Mo., at seven p.m., twenty minutes for dinner in Van Noy eating house. The menu consisted of apples and oranges, a vegetable salad, olives, potato soup, crackers, meat, browned mashed potatoes, omelette, corn muffins, raisin pudding, tea or coffee, all very good, the charge seventy-five cents. We observed that three out of five at the table did not take crackers, apparently on account of wheatless day (crackers may have been oatmeal), and four did not take sugar. The meats were served from a platter, Russian style, and the rolls served from tray instead of left on table, so no waste, although no restriction.¹⁹

The Van Noy Company and its employees were committed to providing quality service and products to their customers. A letter written to *The Hotel Monthly* in May 1918 by Charles Redcliff, manager of the Van Noy Eating House at the Milwaukee Depot in Sioux City, Iowa, is a perfect illustration of some of the trouble that they went through to provide the best possible foods and beverages for their patrons. Redcliff wrote:

I am making the best possible coffee, as you will know when you drink it. The urn has a great deal to do with this. While it is a seven-gallon urn, it will only brew three gallons at a time. The coffee is made in a china crock set

¹⁸ Whitney, Carrie Westlake. *Kansas City, Missouri, Its History and Its People, 1800-1908*. Volume II. Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing, Co., 1908, p. 658-659.

¹⁹ "Week Before Christmas Strenuous One for Hotel Monthly Editor." *The Hotel Monthly*, Volume 26, No. 298, January 1918, p. 55. The food served in the eating houses varied depending on the region of the country. The 1876 edition of *The Pacific Tourist*, for example, when talking about the Union Pacific railroad, wrote: "Travelers need to make no preparations for eating on the cars, as meals at all dining hall are excellent, and food of great variety is nicely served; buffalo meat, antelope steak, tongue of all kinds, and always the best of beefsteak." In: Porterfield, James D. *Dining by Rail: The History and the Recipes of America's Golden Age of Railroad Cuisine*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993, p. 17.

in hot water bath in the urn. I use eight ounces of coffee to the gallon. The coffee is spread out and rained on thru the strainer with pin point holes, and filtered thru Japanese paper. I use two pieces of this paper to make the filtering more effective. All the strength of the coffee is taken out in the first brew and the coffee is kept hot and palatable until used. The beauty of it is that it is made so quickly, and in any quantity, three gallons or under, at a time.

Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating
House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

We had to use ingenuity in producing sandwich fillings for our lunch room when the meatless edict hit us. The best substitute I found was Sockeye salmon. I would open a can of this, remove the skin, take out the back bone, then mince, then spread this on bread and butter, cover with bread, and serve as freshly made as possible.²⁰

The Van Noy Interstate Company provided services to the Missouri Pacific until 1923. *Railway Age* reported in its October 7, 1922, issue that:

The Missouri Pacific will not renew its contract with the Van Noy Interstate Company for the operation of its restaurants and hotels following its expiration on February 26, 1923. President Bush of the Missouri Pacific states that no plans for the future have been decided upon. It is said that, although relations with the Van-Noy organization have been cordial, the carrier is making the change to insure a more uniform service for its patrons. The Van-Noy Company has had a contract with the Missouri Pacific for 15 years.²¹

It is not known how many establishments the Van Noy Company operated in Arkansas. Other than McGehee, it is known that the Van Noy company operated a hotel and restaurant in Newport (since demolished), and it is quite possible that they operated others along the Missouri Pacific's lines throughout the state. In addition, it is known that they operated facilities at Texarkana and Sulphur Springs, Arkansas, on the Kansas City Southern line.²²

²⁰ "Fish Sandwich for Railroad Lunch Room." *The Hotel Monthly*, Volume 26, No. 302, May 1918, pp. 79-80.

²¹ "Missouri Pacific to Terminate Van Noy Contracts." *Railway Age*, 7 October 1922, p. 668. It is interesting that the Missouri Pacific was looking for more uniform service for its customers. Apparently, when a young Walt Disney worked for the Van Noy Company, "he was often given rotten fruit to sell and ended up losing money on the job." Fried, Stephen. *Appetite for America: How Visionary Businessman Fred Harvey Built a Railroad Hospitality Empire That Civilized the Wild West*. New York: Bantam Books, 2010, p. 394.

²² Porterfield, James D. *Dining by Rail: The History and the Recipes of America's Golden Age of Railroad Cuisine*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993, p. 50.

The McGehee Van Noy Eating House was built c.1910 at the same time that the depot was built. In 1912, the Sanborn map for McGehee showed that the building was divided into three parts. The northern third had a lunch counter, the middle third was the kitchen, and the southern third housed the restaurant. The 1915 Sanborn map still showed that the building was the railroad eating house and it was labeled as a restaurant on the 1920 Sanborn map.²³

Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating
House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Interestingly, by 1928, the building was used for storage, likely showing that the Missouri Pacific had not found a replacement company for the Van Noy Company. However, by 1944, the year that the last Sanborn map was done for McGehee, the building was again a restaurant. Also, the open breezeway, which still connects the building to the depot today, had been built.²⁴

The restaurant in the McGehee Van Noy Eating House closed c.1948.²⁵ Today, the building is vacant although plans are in place to renovate the building to become a museum dedicated to Arkansas's two Japanese-American relocation camps, which were located at nearby Rohwer and Jerome.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

The Missouri Pacific Railway was an extremely important entity in McGehee throughout the first part of the twentieth century. The arrival of their line in 1905 caused McGehee's population to grow tremendously as the railroad needed workers. The fact that McGehee was a division point on the railroad also illustrates how important the railroad was to the local area. The fact that McGehee was a division point meant that the railroad would have had a great presence in town because of all of the repair work and associated activities that the Missouri Pacific would have carried out in McGehee. The importance of the railroad is also shown in the fact that in the 1930s, "The Missouri Pacific shops still provide the leading pay roll of the town..."²⁶

The number and types of buildings that the Missouri Pacific had in McGehee also illustrates the importance of the railroad in the community. The fact that McGehee had a Van Noy Eating House also shows that the railroad had an important presence there, since not all communities with stations would have necessarily had an eating house. The establishment's significance is further bolstered by the fact that it was so long-lived. As the book *Dining by Rail: The History and the Recipes of America's Golden Age of Railroad Cuisine* states, "Seldom, after the turn of the twentieth-century, did eating houses cater to those riding on through trains. The railway eating houses, though, were still thriving even into the 1950s in locations where they had

²³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps for McGehee, Arkansas, 1912, 1915 and 1920.

²⁴ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps for McGehee, Arkansas, 1928 and 1944.

²⁵ May, Jack. Mayor of McGehee. E-mail to the author. 18 August 2010.

²⁶ West, p. 280.

become something of a local institution, or where the station continued to play a key role as a travel hub or urban center.”²⁷

The Van Noy Eating House is also important for illustrating the evolution of passenger train travel. Although we are very familiar with dining cars on today’s passenger trains, they were not always so common, even into the twentieth century. It was often necessary for stops to be built into a train’s schedule that allowed passengers time to get food at an eating house or a restaurant near the station. Since the quality of

Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating
House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

food in restaurants near the stations was beyond the control of the railroad, the eating house represented a way in which the railroad could control the food’s quality and provide better services to the passengers.

Since not every community with a passenger station had an eating house, the Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating House in McGehee was one of only a few examples of the company’s operations in Arkansas. The building, which contained a restaurant, lunch counter, and kitchen, provided an important service to the railroad’s passengers as they passed through McGehee. For its associations with providing services to railroad passengers during the first part of the twentieth century and the role of the Missouri Pacific Railway in McGehee’s history, the Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **statewide significance** under **Criterion A**.

²⁷ Porterfield, James D. *Dining by Rail: The History and the Recipes of America’s Golden Age of Railroad Cuisine*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993, p. 23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

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Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating
House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From the southwest corner of the Seamans Drive and Railroad Street intersection, proceed northeasterly parallel to the south side of Seamans Drive to the east side of Railroad Street to the point of beginning. From the point of beginning, proceed southeasterly for 150 feet along the east side of Railroad Street, thence proceed northeasterly perpendicular to Railroad Street for 70 feet, thence proceed northwesterly parallel to Railroad Street for 150 feet, thence proceed southwesterly perpendicular to Railroad Street for 70 feet to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary encompasses the land historically associated with the Missouri Pacific Railway Van Noy Eating House.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Historic Page
 Photos 1



Undated photograph (likely 1930s or 1940s) showing the Missouri Pacific Depot in the foreground with the Van Noy Eating House in the background. (From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.)