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An Historical Assessment of Four Structures in the Canadian National Railways East Yards, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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What follows is an assessment of the historical and architectural significance of four structures in the Canadian National Railways East Yards, Winnipeg, Manitoba. The buildings are: the National Cartage Building, the Canadian Northern Cartage Company Stables, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Stable, and finally, The Northern Pacific and Manitoba Engine House and Roundhouse. It is the contention of this study that, of these structures, only the final one, the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Engine House and Roundhouse, is significant on either historical or architectural grounds.

*Building #1 National Cartage Building

The National Cartage Building, now known as the Johnston Terminal Building, was erected for The Canadian National Railways. The structure as it stands today was erected in two stages, between 1928 and 1930. The background information relating to the erection of this building was clearly set out in a letter to the Deputy Minister of Railways in Ottawa, from L.V. Hummel of the Winnipeg Joint Terminal Board on February 20, 1930:

Prior to 1921 The Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific Railways each carried on its own cartage and storage business in Winnipeg. This was done with insufficient equipment and at a loss. Subsequently, a proposal was made to us by the National Storage and Cartage, Ltd., that they take over our equipment and perform the service for the railways. After due negotiations, this was arranged on a basis satisfactory to the railway, and the cartage company were

* The building numbers refer to illustration #1.



assigned [in 1921] certain space in our freight shed.

In 1927 we found we needed the space in our freight shed occupied by the Cartage Co., and it was considered advisable to erect a new warehouse and lease it to the Cartage Company, they to pay rental at the rate of 5½% on the cost of construction, plus the cost of heating and taxes.

Mr. Hummel went on to say that:

Since the construction of the warehouse, [in 1938] our traffic has increased to such an extent that last fall it was found necessary to increase the accomodation and an extension to the present premises was authorized to provide 30,000 additional square feet of storage space.¹

The initial building permit obtained from the city of Winnipeg is dated March 12, 1938.² The building contractor chosen to perform the work was the Winnipeg firm of Carter-Halls-Aldinger and Company Ltd. The result of the first phase of construction, begun in the spring of 1928, was a four storey building measuring 151'9" x 81'5".³ The cost of the construction was estimated at \$134,700.00.⁴ By 1929, plans were being prepared for an addition and on February 3, 1930 a permit was once again secured from the city.⁵ The dimensions of the four storey addition were 96' x 75'.

From its conception in 1928 to its abandonment in 1977, the building was designed and used as a warehouse and freight forwarding facility. To 1961 the warehouse was leased to the National Cartage Co. From 1962 to 1977 a new tenant, Johnston National Cartage Co. (later Johnston Terminals Co.) leased the now vacant building as its #1 warehouse.

Investigation suggests that the building has neither unique architectural features nor significant historical importance.

Building #2 Canadian Northern Cartage Co. Stables

This (100' x 96') two storey building was erected for the Canadian Northern Cartage Co., an affiliate of the Canadian Northern Railway Company, in 1909. The Canadian Northern Railway along with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, the National Transcontinental Railway and countless smaller railways were amalgamated and nationalized to form the Canadian National System in 1923. Originally the building was used as

a stable "to accomodate about 120 horses," for the Railway's Cartage and Express Division. The structure was designed by the architectural firm of Warren and Wetmore, and was built by G.H. Archibald and Co.⁶ The building initially rested on concrete foundation and footings. The external walls were of brick and stone. The roof was flat, and consisted of tar and gravel. It was steam heated and electrically lit and was connected to the City of Winnipeg Sewer and Water Systems. The cost of the initial construction was \$60,000.00.

The building was used as a stable until 1938, when it was converted into a garage for a motorized express and cartage fleet. The second floor became the stationary department office. The main floor today remains as a garage and the second floor has become a training centre for Canadian National employees.

The building's distinctive archway entrance provides its only notable architectural feature. Research failed to suggest that the structure has any special historical significance. For those who are aware of its previous use as a stable, the building serves as a reminder of the period when the horse was the primary method of transport in the cartage and freight business.

Building #3 Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Stable

The structure immediately to the south of the Canadian Northern Stables was erected for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in 1910. The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway along with the Canadian Northern Railway and the National Transcontinental Railway prior to their amalgamation shared Union Station and its terminal facilities. The Grand Trunk Pacific Stables is a remnant of this sharing agreement. Like the Canadian Northern Stables, the Grand Trunk Pacific Stables were designed by the firm of Warren and Wetmore, and were built by G.H. Archibald and Co.⁸ Except for the fact that the Grand Trunk Pacific Stables are 48' shorter and had a pitched, rather than a flat roof, and were designed to accommodate 100 horses, the building specifications were identical with those of the Canadian Northern building. The G.T.P. stable building was also renovated into a garage. A building permit, however, was not secured, and consequently, the date of this major renovation is not known. By 1938, both the Canadian Northern and the Grand Trunk Pacific had been absorbed into the Canadian National Railway system. This would indicate that a major renovation to stable buildings may well have been duplicated on the adjacent G.T.P. stable building at about the same time. The building now serves as a garage facility.

Building #4 The Northern Pacific and Manitoba Engine House and Roundhouse

Immediately to the north east of the National Cartage Building and near the bank of the Red River, stands the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway Engine House and Roundhouse. This building is the oldest of the four in question. It was constructed during 1889:

... (T)he company (N.P.&M.R.) has erected a ten stall roundhouse, a repair car shop, and a blacksmith shop, all solid brick and⁹ connected with each other under the same roof.

The roundhouse and engine house is part of the initial terminal complex that was constructed at the junction site. As originally designed and constructed, the building was designated as a shop to repair the locomotive and car fleet of the N.P. & M.R. According to the blueprints of the building on file at the Canadian National Railways Engineering Department, (see plan attached) the roundhouse was a "standard second class Northern Pacific Roundhouse." That the Winnipeg facility was a standard second class Northern Pacific Roundhouse is a certainty. This fact is mentioned in a document in the records of the Northern Pacific Railway records in St. Paul.¹⁰ The specifications of the original building are not available. A building permit was not secured from the city (nor was one required in 1889), and the Canadian National Railways does not possess any information concerning the construction of the roundhouse. What is known concerning the construction of the roundhouse is that it was constructed¹¹ during 1889 by the contracting firm of Rourla and Cuns, and that the total cost of the building was \$15,700.40.¹² A rough itemized breakdown of this cost is also available.¹² Blueprints of construction plans, are however non-existent. Incidentally, the engineering department of the C.N. mistakenly list the date of construction of the building as 1899.

An examination of the roundhouse was carried out by the tax assessment division of the City of Winnipeg in 1947. Their findings offer some insight into the specifications of the structure.¹³ The building was a one storey brick structure set on a three foot concrete base, with a concrete floor. The building's dimensions, excluding the turntable section were: 241' x 100'. The structure's eastern side had a 71' x 56.6' blacksmith shop appended to it. There is only one plan of the original building prior to the dismantling of the turntable/roundhouse section and the dimensions¹⁴ of the roundhouse portion of the building are not specified.

There have been numerous alterations to the building over the years. The most notable of these were the removal of the turntable and roundhouse sections. This portion of the building which is shown on the right hand side of the attached plan, was integral part of the locomotive repair process. A locomotive would enter the roundhouse portion of the building (by means of tracks which ran the length of the building). The turntable would then manoeuvre the locomotive into the desired location and position. The date of the removal of the roundhouse is not known. It was intact in 1902 (see attached plan) but had definitely been destroyed by 1936 (C.N.R. Engineering Dept. Files). Their condition in 1914 was less than ideal as evidenced in this excerpt from the Chief Engineer at Winnipeg to the Via President and General Manager of the Canadian Northern Railway:

The old roundhouses, of course, are now in a ruinous state and will I presume be eventually demolished.¹⁵

During the 1920's, the building was called the Winnipeg Joint Terminal Roundhouse and as late as 1924 it was listed in Henderson's Directory as occupied. However, the 1925 edition of the Directory does not list a roundhouse in the East Yards. The 1918 File Atlas of the City of Winnipeg (see illustration #2) also shows the roundhouse section intact. Moreover, the fact that the Canadian Northern Railway along with the Grand Trunk Pacific and the National Transcontinental Railways were amalgamated and nationalized to form the Canadian National Railways in 1923, suggests an approximate demolition date for the roundhouse. The amalgamated railroad had more modern roundhouses at the Symington and Fort Rouge Yards.

Aside from the removal of the roundhouse, the building has also undergone numerous other renovations and rehabilitation programs. The transition from steam to diesel powered locomotives, undoubtedly brought about changes to the repair shop. However, C.N. does not possess any concrete evidence on these alterations. Today, the structure is used for several activities. The Bridge and Building Carpentry Workshop, a Welding Training Centre, and the Prairie Log Central Locomotive, are located in the building.

The significance of the building is primarily historical and to a lesser degree, architectural. Whether the building's classification as a "standard second class Northern Pacific Engine House and Roundhouse" is significant is not known. There may be numerous other old Northern Pacific roundhouses of similar vintage and class in the United States, although it is

likely that this is the only one in Canada. Furthermore, the date of construction, 1889, would place the building into a relatively unique category as the oldest still standing roundhouse and repair facility in Western Canada. Moreover, it is one of the last substantial remnants of the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway in Manitoba.

The connection with the N.P.&M.R. gives this building a prominent position in the history of Western Canada. The N.P.&M.R. was the instrument which broke the Canadian Pacific Railway monopoly in Western Canada. However, it was by no means the first American railroad into Manitoba since the first railroad from the United States reached Winnipeg as early as 1878.¹⁶

In order to secure this connection the Government of Canada came to an agreement with an American railway syndicate led by George Stephen and J.J. Hill. Their railway (the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba) commonly known as the "Manitoba," would supply the desired connection with St. Paul in exchange for exclusive running rights on the Canadian Government constructed section from the international border north to Winnipeg. This same syndicate later became the primary movers and beneficiaries of the Canadian Pacific Railway. That railroad reached Winnipeg in the summer of 1881. After a brief period of rejoicing, many Manitobans and new settlers in the North West began to clamour for lower freight rates, especially on grain. If the Canadian Pacific was not willing to reduce their rates on their own volition competition from other railroads, many farmers believed, would force them to. The monopoly clause of the Canadian Pacific Charter made it impossible for these competitive companies to enter the field.

Unrest mounted in Manitoba, and by 1887 it was sufficient to press the then Manitoba premier, John Norquay, into pushing a charter for a new railway which would run from Winnipeg to the international border through the legislature. This new railway, named "the Red River Valley Railway," would be constructed regardless of federal disallowance of the charter. Manitobans and their government were determined to get an alternate railway with no connection to the C.P.R. or its affiliates.

Norquay's attempt, however, was defeated by his inability to successfully float a bond issue on the London money markets. This bond issue which was designed to finance the construction of the R.R.V.R.R., was sabotaged by John A. Macdonald's influence in London. Norquay's failure in completing the R.R.V.R.R., was followed by defeat of his Conservative Government in the election of 1888. The new provincial Liberal Premier, Thomas Greenway, elected on a strong provincial rights platform, was as determined as Norquay to break the C.P.R. monopoly clause and to fight federal disallowance of the railway charter. Since this turmoil that surrounded the monopoly ques-

tion throughout the 1880s began to hurt the financial position and reputation of the C.P.R. president George Stephen decided to review their stand. Macdonald informed Premier Greenway that the Federal Government would not disallow any provincial legislation similar to that of the R.R.V.R.R. Construction of the railway was free to proceed.

The plan envisaged for the R.R.V.R.R. by the Government of Manitoba called for a government built line running from Winnipeg to the international boundary. This line then would be available to all and any American Railway Companies wishing to enter Manitoba. The plan was never realized. The only way in which any American road would agree to enter the province, was if it could acquire exclusive running rights on the R.R.V.R.R. Henry Villard, Northern Pacific Railway president, was the only one to come to terms with the Manitoba Government. The Northern Pacific Railway would enter Manitoba through a subsidiary company appropriately named the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway, which was chartered under Provincial legislation on the 4th of September 1888. The Northern Pacific Railway had entered Manitoba for reasons of its own, not necessarily identical or in line with those of the Manitoba Government. Profit, not a freight rate war with the C.P.R., was their concern. Although, the competition that the N.P.&M.R. did provide was a small measure of relief from the arbitrary and prohibitive freight rates of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The major significance of this railway, and the engine house that represents it, is that it effectively broke the monopoly clause of the C.P.R. and opened the door for other railways to establish themselves in the Canadian West.

The Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway, continued to operate in Manitoba for a little more than one decade. Unfortunately, for the railway, its operations were not financially successful. By 1901, the Northern Pacific Railway in the United States and its affiliate in Canada, the N.P.&M.R. found itself in a desperate financial position. After a prolonged series of negotiations, the assets of the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway, and a number of other smaller railways were taken over by the Canadian Northern Railway. The agreement was a lease agreement with an option to purchase. A summary of the lease details were found in the Canadian National Railway Records in the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa:

The lease was made in the first place by the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway Company, The Winnipeg Transfer Railway Company, and the Waskada and North Eastern Railway Company, to Her Majesty the Queen, respecting the province of Manitoba. The province of Manitoba [subsequently]

assigned the lease to the Canadian Northern Railway Company upon certain conditions.¹⁷

The agreement amounted to a transfer of 334 miles of track clause 13, of the agreement allowed for an option to purchase for \$7,000,000.00 and this option was exercised by the Canadian Northern Railway Co.

Incidentally, during these protracted negotiations a complete inventory of Northern Pacific and Manitoba properties was undertaken. This inventory is available in the Railway Commission's files in the Public Archives of Manitoba.¹⁸ It includes a complete list of articles in the Winnipeg East Yard's Engine House and Roundhouse. In fact, the inventory is so complete that it lists every piece of equipment owned by the railway, down to office furniture, and hand tools.

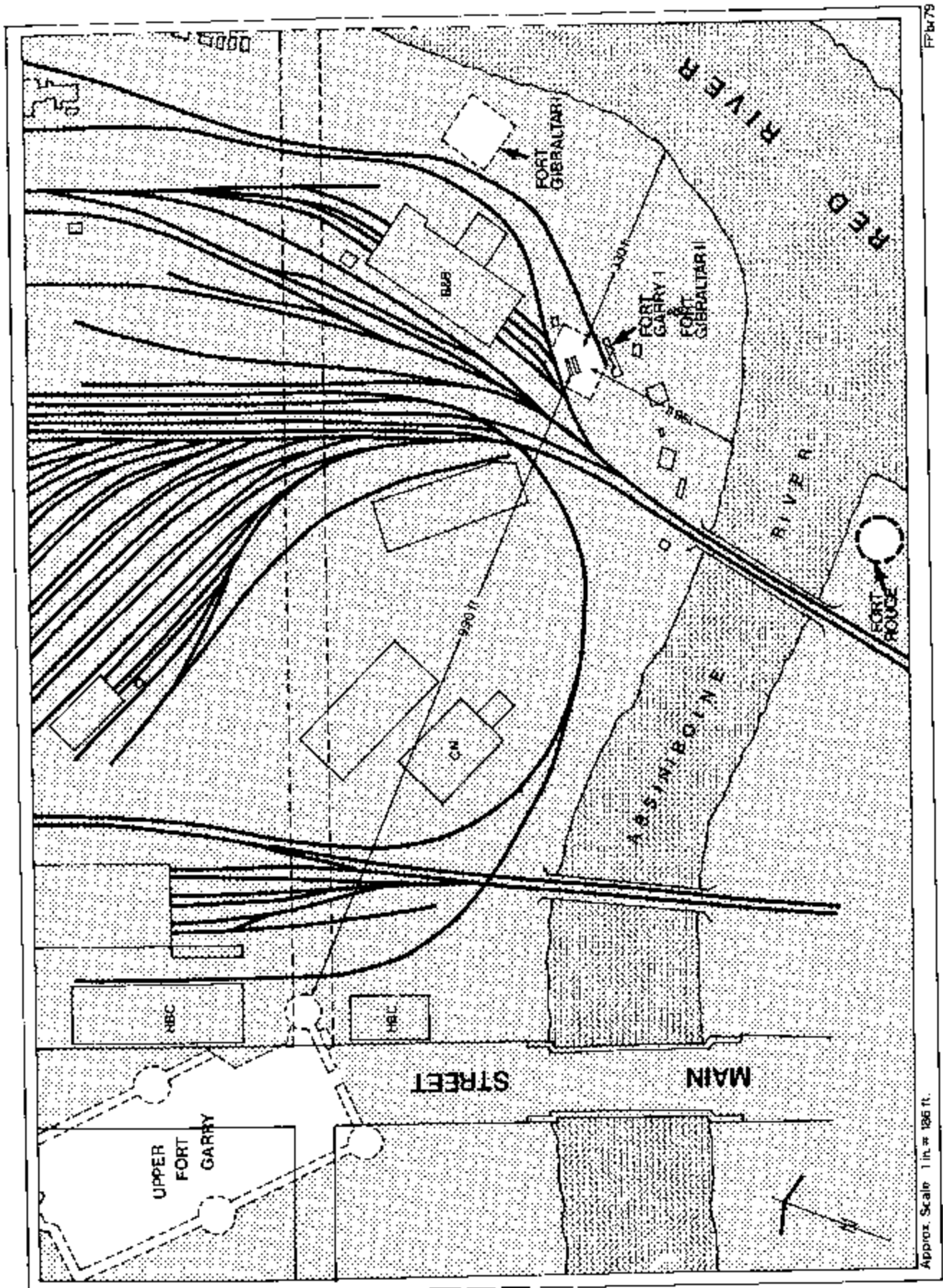
Endnotes

- 1 Canada. Public Archives of Canada (hereafter referred to as PAC) Records of the Railway and Commissions Branch R.G. 43, A2(a), Volume 103, file 1732.
- 2 City of Winnipeg Permits Branch, 100 Main Street, Winnipeg. Building Permit No. 376-1928.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid., Building Permit No. 151-1930.
- 6 Ibid., Building Permit No. 1994-1909.
- 7 Ibid., Building Permit No. 70-1938.
- 8 Ibid., Building Permit No. 2322-1910.
- 9 Manitoba Free Press, December 21, 1889.
- 10 St. Paul, Minnesota. J.M. Graham to J.W. Kendrick, Nov. 29, 1888, Minnesota State Historical Society, Northern Pacific Railway Papers - Branch Lines, Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway Co. 4.A.1.8F.
- 11 Ibid., volume 12, 4.A.2.6F.
- 12 Ibid.

- 13 Winnipeg. City of Winnipeg Tax Assessment Division, 10 Fort Street. Canadian National Railways, East Yards, Building No. 135. "Engine House."
- 14 See attached plan of Engine House and Round House Illustration No. 4.
- 15 PAC, Railways and Canals Branch. R.G. 43, Volume 8835, B.B. Kelliher to Mr. Donaldson, February 16, 1914.
- 16 The ensuring summary concerning The Canadian Pacific Railway monopoly clause and its eventual dismantling is taken from Ted Regeh's The Canadian Northern Railway, (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1976), pp. 1-20.
- 17 PAC, Canadian National Railway Records. R.G. 30 Vol. 9463, file # 1049.
- 18 Winnipeg. Provincial Archives of Manitoba - Railway Commission files R.G. 13 AZ File No. 7.

List and Description of Appended Illustrations

- 1 Plan of the Junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, showing the relative locations of the existing railway structures to the demolished fur trade forts. Prepared by Parks Canada Prairie Region Winnipeg.
- 2 Fire and Insurance Atlas of the City of Winnipeg, prepared for The Western Canada Fire Underwriters Association, Sheet No. 125, 1918. Provincial Archives of Manitoba.
- 3 Ibid., 1955.
- 4 Canadian Northern Railway Company's plan of Shops and Roundhouse at Winnipeg, September 9, 1902. Courtesy of the Canadian National Railways Engineering and Architectural Department Winnipeg.



FF 679

Approx. Scale 1 in. = 186 ft.

Figure 1

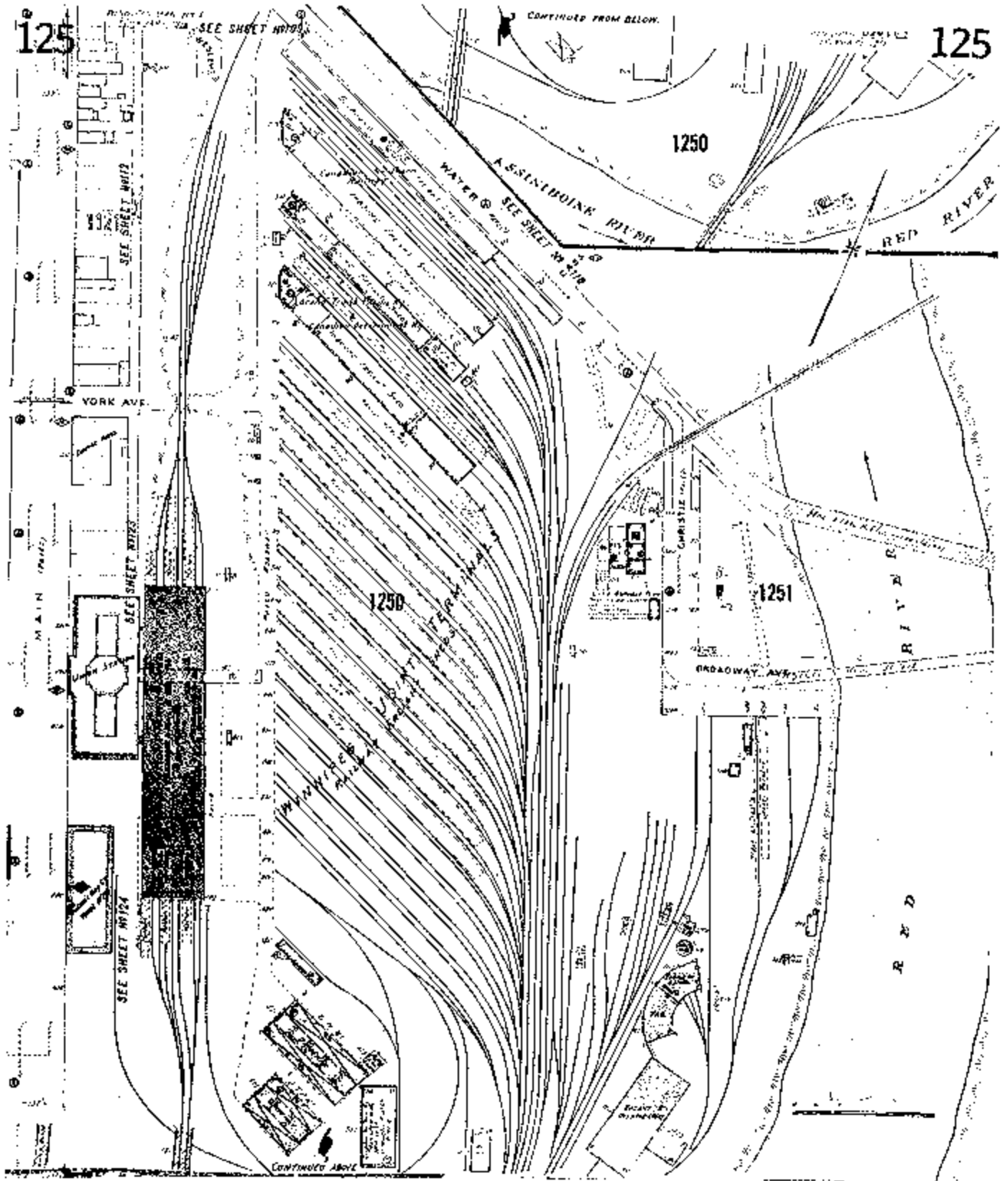


Figure 2

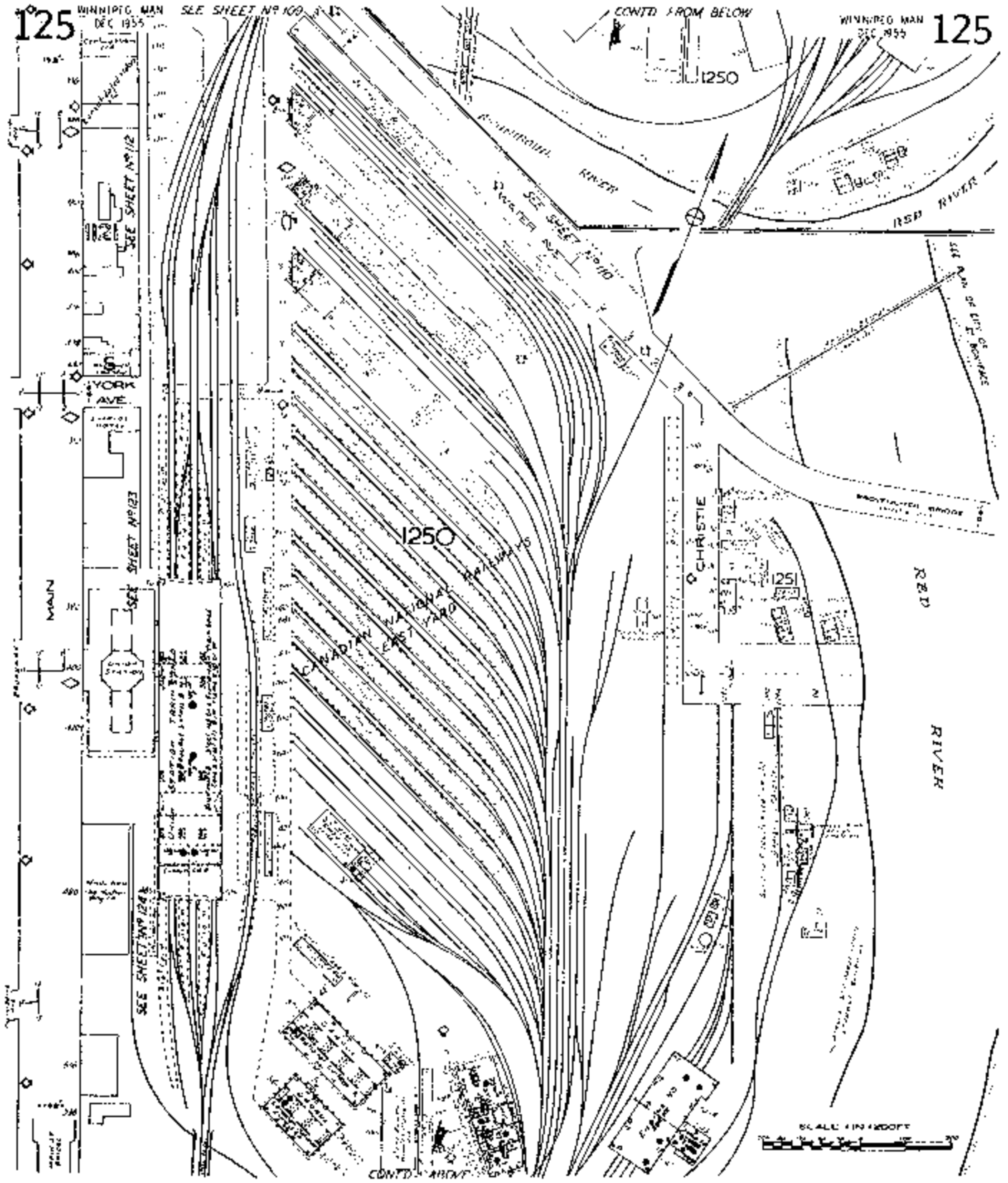


Figure 3

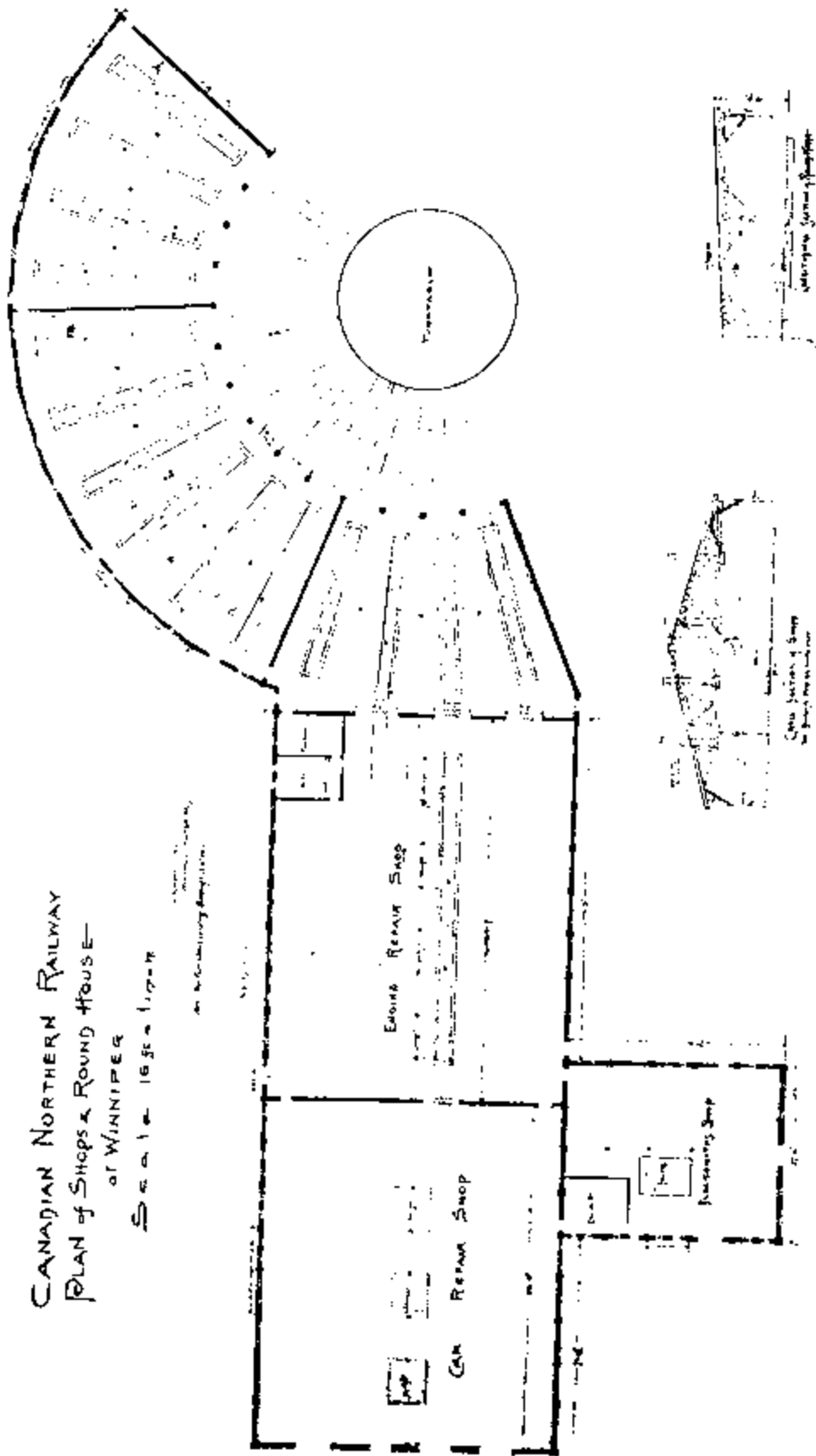


Figure 4

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