

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Michigan Central Railroad Engine Repair Shops  
AND/OR COMMON

Tonn and Blank Building

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

104 N. Franklin Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Michigan City

— VICINITY OF

3rd.

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Indiana

18

LaPorte

091

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

### CATEGORY

— DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

— STRUCTURE

— SITE

— OBJECT

### OWNERSHIP

— PUBLIC

PRIVATE

— BOTH

### PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

— BEING CONSIDERED

### STATUS

OCCUPIED

— UNOCCUPIED

— WORK IN PROGRESS

### ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

— YES: UNRESTRICTED

— NO

### PRESENT USE

— AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

— EDUCATIONAL

— ENTERTAINMENT

— GOVERNMENT

— INDUSTRIAL

— MILITARY

— MUSEUM

— PARK

— PRIVATE RESIDENCE

— RELIGIOUS

— SCIENTIFIC

— TRANSPORTATION

— OTHER

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Park Building Corporation

STREET & NUMBER

104 N. Franklin Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Michigan City

— VICINITY OF

Indiana

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Office of the Assessor of Michigan City

STREET & NUMBER

Warren Building, 723 Franklin Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Michigan City

Indiana

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Michigan City Historical Society Survey

DATE

1966

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Michigan City Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Michigan City

Indiana

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

### CHECK ONE

### CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT

DETERIORATED

UNALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE

GOOD

RUINS

ALTERED

MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

FAIR

UNEXPOSED

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This building was erected by the Michigan Central Railroad in 1851 and 1852. It is 255 feet long, 62 feet wide, 21 feet high at the eaves and 37 feet high at the peaks of the parapet gables. The walls are of Joliet limestone, 24 inches thick. The stone was brought to Michigan City by barge. The roof timbers are 10 x 12 inch hand hewn from red oak. The bottom chord is a single piece 60 feet long. The original building had six engine repair stalls whose stone archways are still visible. The brick floor shows wear from the work at the anvils in the blacksmith area. The building was used before the advent of electric power. The original power was steam (the boiler stub stock is still in place) with the engine running a central drive shaft. This shaft was located on the bottom chord of the roof framing. There were power take-off pulleys and clutches at each stall. This building is a good example of mid 19th century heavy repair shop.

A sixteen stall roundhouse was built at the same time and of the same materials. It stood to the south and east of this building. The present business, who purchased the buildings in 1928 razed the roundhouse.

The original repair shop is used by Tonn and Blank, Inc. as offices and shop facilities in their real estate and construction business.

Minor alterations such as the change of door and window fixtures have not changed the strong solid feeling of this massive structure.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
X 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1851-1852 BUILDER/ARCHITECT \_\_\_\_\_

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Tonn and Blank Building (the Michigan Central Railroad Engine Repair Shops) is significant historically as it relates to transportation and commerce in this area and in the country as a whole, and architecturally as an example of heavy shop construction in the mid 19th century.

Michigan City, founded in 1833, was the only lake port in Indiana. It was located at the northern end of the Michigan Road, on the banks of Trail Creek near the point where it empties into Lake Michigan. Manufactured goods and salt were brought in by ship and were distributed overland as was farm produce.

The Mammouth Internal Improvement Bill of Indiana (1836) initiated a vast program of transportation development. Michigan City was a pivotal point in shipping from across the lake and land transportation from the east to Chicago, thence west and south. The Michigan Central Engine Repair Shops was erected in 1851-1852 when Michigan City issued city bonds for \$12,000 for that purpose. The railroad agreed to maintain the shops at this division point between Michigan and Chicago. With the improvement of the harbor at Michigan City after 1870, traffic on the lake was heavy with large shipments of lumber, paper pulp and salt from Michigan and Wisconsin. Exports from Michigan City included packed salt pork and fish, farm produce, as well as furniture, railroad equipment and sand.

Following World War I and the development of the harbor at Chicago, lake shipping to the Michigan City harbor declined materially. Because of the consequent reduction of the transshipment of goods by rail, the Michigan Central Railroad's division point and repair shops were removed to Niles, Michigan in 1918.

This building is a rare surviving example of railroad service buildings. Its massive construction is in part required by the large interior space required for railroad repair shops. The engineering solution to this problem in 1850 was strength in mass.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Records, Office of the Assessor, Michigan City, Indiana  
 City Clerks Records, Book A, p. 467, Michigan City  
 Oglesbee and Hale, History of Michigan City, Indiana, E J Widdell, 1908  
 Bull, Gladys, Historical Study of Michigan City, Indiana, unpublished manuscript,  
 1931, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 1

UTM REFERENCES

A	16	5080110	4618780	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Owen E Nicewarner (Chm. Hist. Sites & Bldgs. Comm) & Mrs. Wm. Harriss

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Michigan City Historical Society

January 29, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Post Office Box 512

219-879-6722

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Michigan City

Indiana

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE February 3, 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER