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NEWS

Vintage Photos Of Union Station's First Years, Celebrating Its 75th Anniversary

By [Jean Trinh](#)

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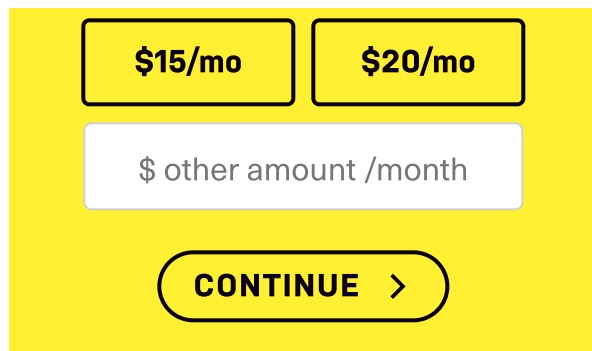
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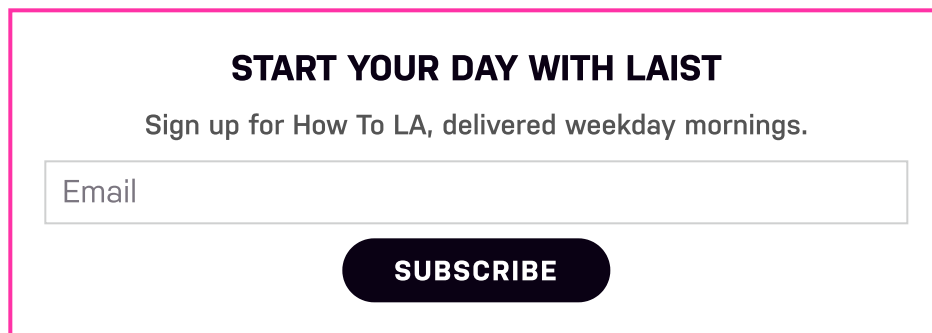
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When Union Station first opened its doors on May 3, 1939, it was a grand affair. As part of a three-day grand opening celebration for what has been dubbed as "[the last of the great train stations](#)," half a million Angelenos came out to celebrate this landmark in downtown. Now, 75 years later, Union Station is still serving patrons on its railroads and acts as a time capsule linking to the past.

It was a different time back when Union Station first [served as a hub](#) for connecting three railroad companies and their terminals —Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, and Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe. It was a bustling centerpiece for the city, and once was a place where porters would be waiting at the depot, pushing along carts to help passengers with their luggage. Inside the station, there was the Harvey House restaurant, known for its fine dining and female servers made popular by the 1946 film, [The Harvey](#).

[Girls](#), starring Judy Garland. Even a barber shop sat inside Union Station for any quick grooming needs.

"[Union Station] represented a big step forward for the city," Bill Bradley, author of *Los Angeles Union Station, Tracks to the Future* [said in an interview](#) with Metro. "[Los Angeles] now could be seen as a major city with a major train station, on par with something like Grand Central in New York or Union Station in Washington. I think it gave people a boost of confidence, especially with the Depression—it had been a difficult decade."

The station's signature mission revival, Spanish colonial and Art Deco flair was designed by a [father-and-son duo](#), architects John and Donald Parkinson. They built the station where [old Chinatown was once located](#) because it was the most central spot in L.A., pushing out the residents who lived there to where Chinatown is now. After they completed building Union Station at 800 N. Alameda Street for \$11 million, the grand opening celebration followed with parades floats, marching bands and steam engines.

"You have to remember that Los Angeles in 1939 was not New York City," Seymour Rosen who attended the opening when he was a teenager, told [Metro in an interview](#). This was a major thing. There were so many people. And to see such a grand structure. It was an exciting moment in my life."

Disney animator Ward Kimball, who had created characters like Jiminy Cricket in *Pinocchio*, [shot a six-minute color home video](#) of the opening. Metro and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts

and Sciences recently restored this video, which is the only known footage of this large event. It can be see here:

Another interesting piece of history inside Union Station was its Harvey House restaurant that was designed by [Southwestern architect Mary Colter](#). The prestige of the Harvey girls who waited tables was on par with something like PanAm stewardesses later on. It was more than a waitress job to them. Owner Fred Harvey would bring women from the ages of 18 to 35 from the East and Midwest out to the West Coast to work at his restaurants, [according to director Katrina Parks](#) of *The Harvey Girls: Opportunity Bound* documentary.

The trailer for the documentary can be seen here:

"It was really just an unprecedented opportunity for women, especially out West," Parks said. "You know, there were very few options for these women in these railroad towns. This was one of the few ways you could remain independent. They sent money back, often to their families."

The Harvey House closed in 1967 though and has since only been used for special events and film shoots, [according to Metro](#).

And really, Union Station has had its share of popularity in Hollywood film shoots. *Blade Runner* was filmed there as well as music videos for Fiona Apple and Pharrell Williams (for his 24-hour music video for "Happy").



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