

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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87 AUG 27 1988

Aug. 27, 19

DATE ENTERED

NOV 13 1988

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal
AND/OR COMMON Los Angeles Union Station

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 800 North Alameda Street
CITY, TOWN Los Angeles VICINITY OF 25th
STATE California CODE 06 COUNTY Los Angeles CODE 037

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Southern Pacific, Santa Fe, Union Pacific
STREET & NUMBER 800 North Alameda Street
CITY, TOWN Los Angeles VICINITY OF STATE California 90012

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Los Angeles County Hall of Records
STREET & NUMBER 300 West Temple Street
CITY, TOWN Los Angeles STATE California 90012

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historical Monument No. 101
DATE August 2, 1973 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Cultural Heritage Board, Room 1500, City Hall
CITY, TOWN Los Angeles STATE California 90012

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The main portion of the Los Angeles Union Station extends 850 feet along Alameda Street in a north-south direction, and consists of a series of tile-roofed rooms and arcades in varying proportions. The larger and taller of these are near the center, the others tapering down toward the two ends. Perpendicular to and easterly of the main mass, are a waiting room and an arcade, also tile roofed, plus a wall, which together with the adjoining north-south oriented service area form an "H".

The reddish brown of the Mission tile roofs is complemented by the cream color of the outside walls and the terra cotta-colored dado which is all around the main building. In contrast to the general horizontality is the clock tower, which rises to 125 feet and stands near the main entrance.

The archway over the main entrance and the adjoining tower give one a slight feeling of entering a California Spanish mission. As you pass this entrance, you enter a huge foyer, square in plan and flanked on all four sides by broad arches.

This great foyer opens to the north and to the east upon impressive halls with finely decorated beamed ceilings. Below are floors paved with red quarry tile plus broad multicolored swaths with geometric patterns created with marble from Vermont and Tennessee, as well as from Belgium, France and Spain, combined with Montana Travertine. These swaths, suggestive of immense carpets, run the length of the two main halls and converge into a square-shaped pattern in the middle of the entrance foyer. Belgian black marble, ceramic tile and travertine form the border on the walls. Doors and windows are bronze.

The upper walls and the ceiling panels of the main rooms are covered with acoustic tile. The acoustics are superb throughout.

The north hall is used for ticketing and waiting. It measures 80 x 140 feet and has a ceiling 50 feet high. The east hall is the main waiting room. It measures 90 x 150 feet, has a 40 foot ceiling, and is flanked on the north and south sides by spacious patios which feature plants typical of Southern California and have benches that provide additional seating for waiting.

South of the entrance foyer is an open arcade whose arches echo the ones which flank the foyer. This arcade is used as an additional entrance and exit and provides a view of the south patio from the front of the station. The floor of the arcade is red quarry tile as is the floor of the former Fred Harvey Restaurant with which it connects to the south.

The restaurant is approximately 70 x 100 with a 30 foot ceiling. On the wainscot and around the doors and windows is the same colored tile as is found in the rest of the building. On one side of the restaurant is a red tile stairway with a wrought iron railing that leads to a mezzanine above the kitchen area.

At the north and south ends of the front part of the station are arcades that extend toward the adjoining streets and provide protection from the ele-

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ments to those arriving or departing by public transportation. These tile-roof low-rise extensions have a scale approaching that of a residence and contribute greatly to the charm of the building.

Just east of the main waiting room is a spacious corridor in which the same materials of the floors and walls in the main halls are continued. Surrounding the corridor on the other three sides are service facilities which extend under so the track area. The tracks are reached by way of a tunnel that is at the same level as the station and which acts as a spine to a series of ramps that go up to the raised track level.

The massing and general proportions of the main station buildings, the tile roofs, the archways, the patios, all reflect a strong California Spanish Colonial influence. However, the detailing is a blending of 1930's Art Deco and Spanish, in some instances the former being stronger than the latter, as is the case with the light fixtures and furnishings.

The overall style of the station could be called "composite transitional" which was this quality which for several decades made the station look very up-to-date while at the same time having strong links to the past.

The basic California Spanish Colonial theme was selected for the specific purpose of having the station blend with the El Pueblo de Los Angeles, the Birthplace of the City, which is just across Alameda Street (and is already in the National Register of Historic Places).

There has been no major remodeling since the station was built. Cleaning and painting are the main things that are needed to make it look like the original.

The boundaries described in this nomination and shown in the submitted map are the original boundaries of the Station. Additional property was later purchased by the railroads along the eastern fringe, giving the Station frontage on four streets.

Structures and areas, other than those previously described, consist of the following:

1. The service areas just east of and on a similar level as the main Station consist of two sections. On the north side is the baggage-handling area which has concrete walls and floors. A reduced portion of this area is still being used for baggage handling. On the south side is a mechanical equipment room and an area formerly used as a freight depot by the now defunct Pacific Electric Interurban Railway. This area also has concrete walls and floors and portions of it are being used for storage not related to the Station.

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2. In the upper level, above the service areas just described is a truck-height concrete platform, 60 feet wide and 800 feet long, roofed over by a steel type roof. The platform is open on the east side and flanked by a row of industrial-type overhead doors along the west side. At each end of the platform is a two-story, flat-roofed office building of concrete construction, of a particular style but painted the same color as the main station building. Two small office buildings and the platform were formerly used by the Rail Express Agency when it was in operation.
3. Also in the upper level and over the pedestrian islands between the railroad tracks, are Y-shaped sheds consisting of corrugated-iron panels supported by steel columns, both of which are badly rusted and in need of cleaning and painting. These sheds provide protection from the sun and the rain and are expected to continue to be needed as long as the tracks are used for passenger trains.

The facilities above described have no special aesthetic value and are historical only to the extent that they served a utilitarian function as a part of the overall station, when it was in full operation. However, their location is such that any new development that takes place in their vicinity needs to be carefully designed so as to blend with the significant portion of the station, both aesthetically and functionally. That is the main reason why they have been included in nomination.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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 1936 - 1939

BUILDER/ARCHITECT John & Donald B. Parkinson, A

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Los Angeles Union Station is a very handsome landmark that is a milestone in architectural history and in the history of transportation in America. Although less than 50 years of age, the property is of exceptional importance. Built when railroad passenger service was on the decline, it was the last of the great passenger terminals to be built in a monumental scale in a major American city. Because of this, and its impressive appearance, it has been called "The Grand Finale of the Golden Age of Railroads in America." It combined three major railroad systems into one terminal in the heart of the city, using a stub-end track arrangement. Architecturally, the building is one of the finest expressions of the 1930's styling in this country. It skillfully combines Streamlined Moderne with Spanish Colonial Revival to create an expression which is two-fold; the sleek, streamlined transportation imagery of Streamlined Moderne, highly appropriate to a center of railroad transportation, and the historical imagery of Spanish revival architecture, a major element of the Southern California cultural landscape. Integrity is almost totally intact, with original decoration, ornamentation, fixtures and furnishings still in place. Architecturally it remains one of the great examples of its type and period in this country.

The Los Angeles Union Station is probably the only major station in the Spanish Colonial style ever built in America, as well as the only major station in which landscape was an important and integral part of the original design. What makes it so outstanding is that both of these were done so well as to lead many to believe that it is the most handsome railroad station ever built.

The main reason why the Spanish style was chosen was to have the station blend with the El Pueblo de Los Angeles across Alameda Street to the west. The Terminal Annex Post Office, which flanks the station on the north, was built almost concurrently with it, has a similar architectural style, and provides a harmonious backdrop to many views of the station from the south, looking north. These three mutually-complementing elements constitute a fine example of good community planning.

The architects who designed Union Station were very cognizant of the nature of the location and its surroundings. No other major station so perfectly reflects the climate, geography, and the heritage of the region in which it was built.

The area of the site had been a part of the original Pueblo de Los Angeles. The west half later became a part of the first Asian (Chinese) community in Southern California. That community started shortly after the Gold Rush and was strengthened by additional settlers in the later 1860's when the first rail line in Southern California was built. This line ran from Los Angeles to Wilmington along what is now Alameda Street. Most of the laborers who built the line were Chinese.

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The first railroad station in Los Angeles (1869) was located near the southern corner of the present Station site. This first station was used by newly arrived Anglo settlers who had traveled on sailing ships and came ashore at Wilmington. It was also used by Chinese laborers who lived in the nearby vicinity of the station and worked on farms served by the new rail line. The building of this rail line station stimulated the construction of the Pico House Hotel facing the Old Plaza, also in 1869.

In 1876, Southern Pacific completed the first major rail line to come to Los Angeles. This new line ran along Alameda Street in front of the present Station, joined the Wilmington line in the vicinity of the original Station. The Wilmington line soon became a part of Southern Pacific and a new Southern Pacific Station was built a few blocks to the north. A few years later, when the Santa Fe and Union Pacific came to Los Angeles, they each built their own stations.

✓ The construction of the present Station marked the end of a 30 year legal battle whereby the City of Los Angeles sought to force the three railroads serving the City to build one Union Station. Prior to 1939, Passenger trains ran along the middle of some of the City's most important streets, interfering with traffic and causing numerous accidents.

A Union Station, in the same vicinity as the present one, was first proposed in 1922 by the Allied Architects' Plan for the Los Angeles Civic Center. In their plan, Chinatown had to be relocated to North Broadway and was named New Chinatown.

The completion of the present Station, plus the Terminal Annex Post Office immediately to the north, were considered very major achievements in urban development and transportation at the time and both played an important role in the logistics of World War II, particularly the later phase which was centered in the Pacific.

During the period of its peak use, during World War II and the years immediately following, the present Station had 30 scheduled trains coming in and 30 going out for a total of 60. However, during this period a great majority of these trains had two "sections" meaning two separate, complete trains operating on the same schedule, for a grand total of more than 100 trains every 24 hours. These figures were obtained from the Superintendent of the Station.

As the metropolitan freeway network gradually took shape, once again Union Station found itself in the middle of the hub of the latest ground transportation system. A number of recent studies have indicated that the most logical place to locate a very modern Multi-Modal Transportation Center is where the proposed El Monte Busway extension would converge with the existing railroad tracks that serve Union Station. Plans are proceeding on that basis and include a possible subway and an elevated "people mover."

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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Thus, the immediate vicinity of Union Station, not only has been the vorte of the area's gradually evolving land transportation system throughout most of City's history, but is expected to continue that role far into the foreseeable future.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. California Arts and Architecture - June 1939
2. Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Board - Designation 101
3. L.A. Union Passenger Terminal -
4. (Owners of the property)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 41 **UTM NOT VERIFIED**

QUADRANGLE NAME Los Angeles, California QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 1	38, 62, 2, 0	3, 76, 86, 0, 0	B	1, 1	38, 58, 5, 0	3, 76, 86, 8, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1, 1	38, 59, 2, 0	3, 76, 90, 6, 0	D	1, 1	38, 61, 5, 0	3, 76, 89, 8, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
E	1, 1	38, 62, 0, 0	3, 76, 91, 1, 0	F	1, 1	38, 61, 4, 0	3, 76, 91, 4, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
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	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

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

Ruben Lovret, City Planner

ORGANIZATION

Los Angeles City Planning Department

DATE

August, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

Room 605, City Hall

TELEPHONE

(213) 485-3744

CITY OR TOWN

Los Angeles,

STATE

California

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) 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Kenneth M. Ellison

TITLE

DATE

8/22/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/13/81

ATTEST:

Patricia Anderson
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

11/24/80

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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The nominated property is bounded on the west by Alameda Street, on the east by a line 1200 feet from and parallel to Alameda Street, on the south by the Arcadia Street off-ramp of the Santa Ana Freeway, and on the north by Macy Street except for a portion where the track area extends northerly in an irregular shape bounded on the north by Vignes Street.

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Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal

(ADDENDUM) (Original nomination)

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The boundaries described in this nomination and shown in the submit maps are the original boundaries of the Station. Additional property was later purchased by the railroads along the eastern fringe, giving the Station frontage on four streets.

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In 1876, Southern Pacific completed the first major rail line to come to Los Angeles. This new line ran along Alameda Street in front of the present Station and joined the Wilmington line in the vicinity of the original Station. The Wilmington line soon became a part of Southern Pacific and a new S. P. Station was built a few blocks to the north. A few years later, when the Santa Fe and Union Pacific came to Los Angeles, they each built their own stations.

The construction of the present Station marked the end of a lengthy legal battle whereby the City of Los Angeles sought to force the two railroads serving the City to build one Union Station. Prior to 1900, passenger trains ran along the middle of some of the City's most important streets, interfering with traffic and causing numerous accidents.

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Thus, the immediate vicinity of Union Station, not only has been the vortex of the area's gradually evolving land transportation system throughout most of the City's history, but is expected to continue that role far into the foreseeable future.

The Los Angeles Union Station is a very handsome landmark that is a milestone in architectural history and in the history of transportation in America.

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LOS ANGELES UNION PASSENGER TERMINAL, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

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Supplemental Information

The Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal is significant for its role in the history of transportation in the city of Los Angeles and the United States. Its integrated design combined the passenger and express operations of three separate railroad companies into a single new terminal complex on a short dead-end track. The final product resulted from more than 20 years of litigation between the city, state, and the railroad companies. Prior to the construction of the unified terminal complex, Southern Pacific, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe, and the Los Angeles and Salt Lake (later the Union Pacific) owned their own depots at three different locations east of the central city, although Southern Pacific and Union Pacific later shared a single depot in the decade prior to the construction of LAUPT. Some of the trains were carried to their respective terminals through city streets at grade, creating a dangerous situation as automobile traffic increased. The incoming lines of the three companies were in relatively close proximity; the combination of the three into a single terminal appeared relatively easy. However, the railroad companies were opposed to attempts to combine their operations in a single terminal. Numerous legal battles finally culminated in the 1931 court decision which resulted in the construction of the new union terminal at a site immediately east of the Los Angeles Plaza. The type of terminal layout then became a major point of litigation, resulting in additional delays. Santa Fe favored a through terminal; the Union Station plan, however, was to create a stub-end terminal with all three lines consolidated on a short, dead-end trackage system. The operational disadvantages of utilizing this type of system was a major objection of the railroad companies. The stub-end system created an end-of-the-line station with the tracks ending at bumpers; it had been used in the construction of most of the major urban passenger terminals in the United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The LAUPT plan placed the main passenger terminal building at the side of the stub-end track network, with a series of ramps and an underground passage connecting the platforms with the waiting room.

The site selected for the new LAUPT complex was that of the old Chinatown area immediately east of the Los Angeles Plaza. The city favored this location, bringing the combined rail network into the center of the city near the civic center. Construction of the complex began in 1934 after the clearance of much of the old Chinatown. The first phase involved the construction of a large earth platform on the eastern portion of the property, elevating the track area 12 feet above Macy Street on the north and 16 feet above Aliso Street on the south. The ramps and pedestrian subway connection to the site of the main terminal building were also constructed in this early phase. However, a dispute over the proposed location of an adjacent postal facility caused further delay of the construction of the main terminal building. The Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal finally opened on May 7, 1939.

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LOS ANGELES UNION PASSENGER TERMINAL, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

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developed Los Angeles International Airport in the 1950's, rail passenger service at LAUPT began a steady decline. The number of trains was reduced over the years. Today, LAUPT continues to function under the operation of Amtrak with several transcontinental trains operating from the station and six trains daily to San Diego. At present, the California Department of Transportation plans to increase passenger rail service in the Los Angeles-San Diego corridor; ridership on this route has increased substantially over the last several years.

The LAUPT complex retains a very high degree of its original design integrity as an integrated unit. The major alteration has been the removal of the former Pacific Electric Freight service yard at the south end of the complex and its replacement by an addition to the Railway Express Agency offices in the 1950's. The new addition was built in a style which repeated that of the earlier retaining wall at the ground level; the second level was built as a covered freight platform. This addition is not significant historically or architecturally to the LAUPT complex.

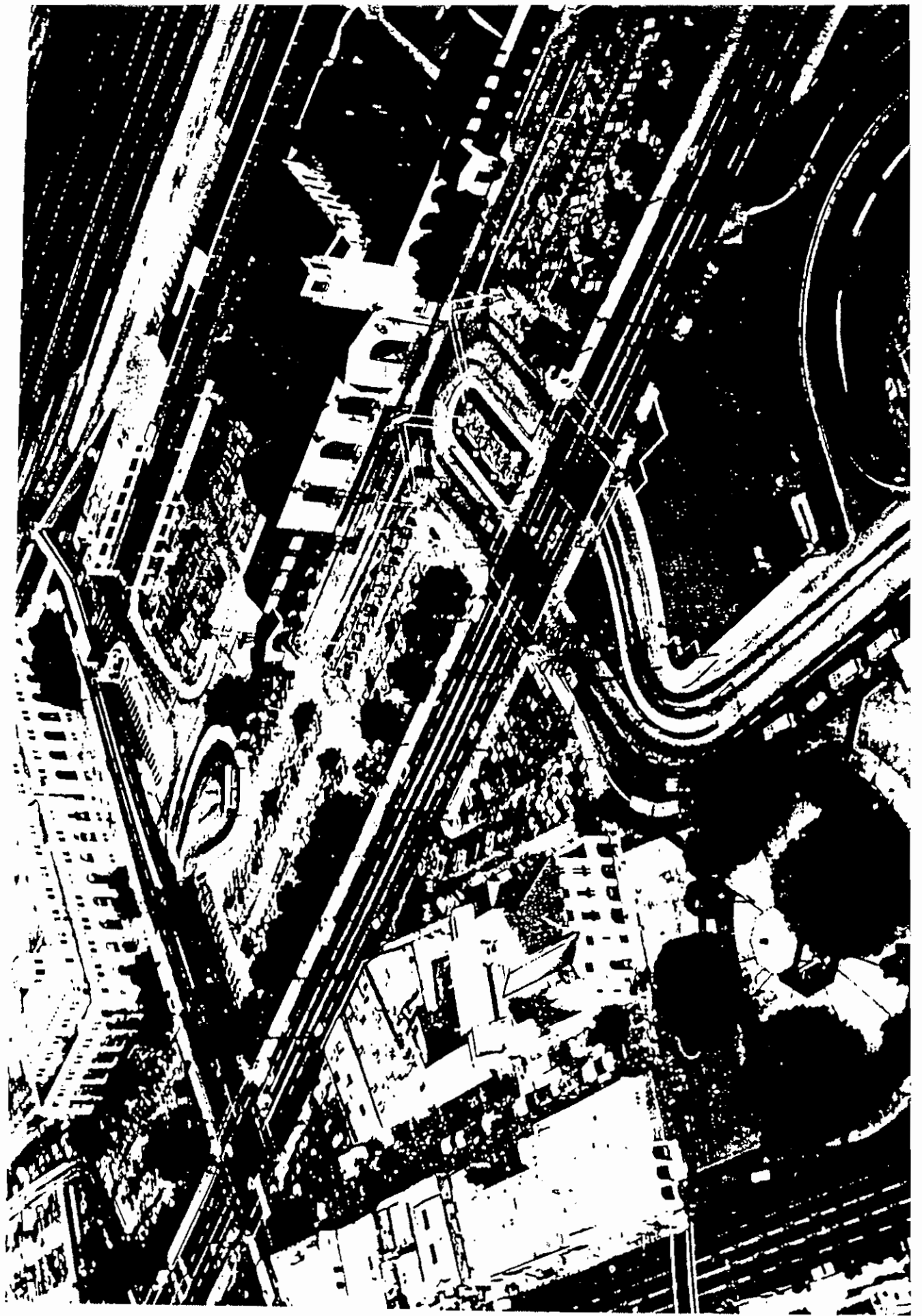
In summary, the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal complex is significant in the history of transportation in Los Angeles, the state, and the nation. Its integrated design reflects the historical evolution through years of litigation to consolidate three major railroads into a single terminal complex. In addition the main passenger terminal building remains one of the great architectural statements of its time. With its high overall integrity, the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal complex still remains the "Last of the Great Stations."

SOURCES:

Bill Bradley, The Last of the Great Stations: 40 Years of the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal, Interurbans Special 72, Interurbans Publications, Glendale, California, 1979. 110 pp.

John A. Droege, Passenger Terminals and Trains, Kalmbach Publishing Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1969. 410 pp.

S. V. Meigs, "The Union Passenger Terminal, Los Angeles, California," unpublished manuscript, c. 1934. 30 pp.

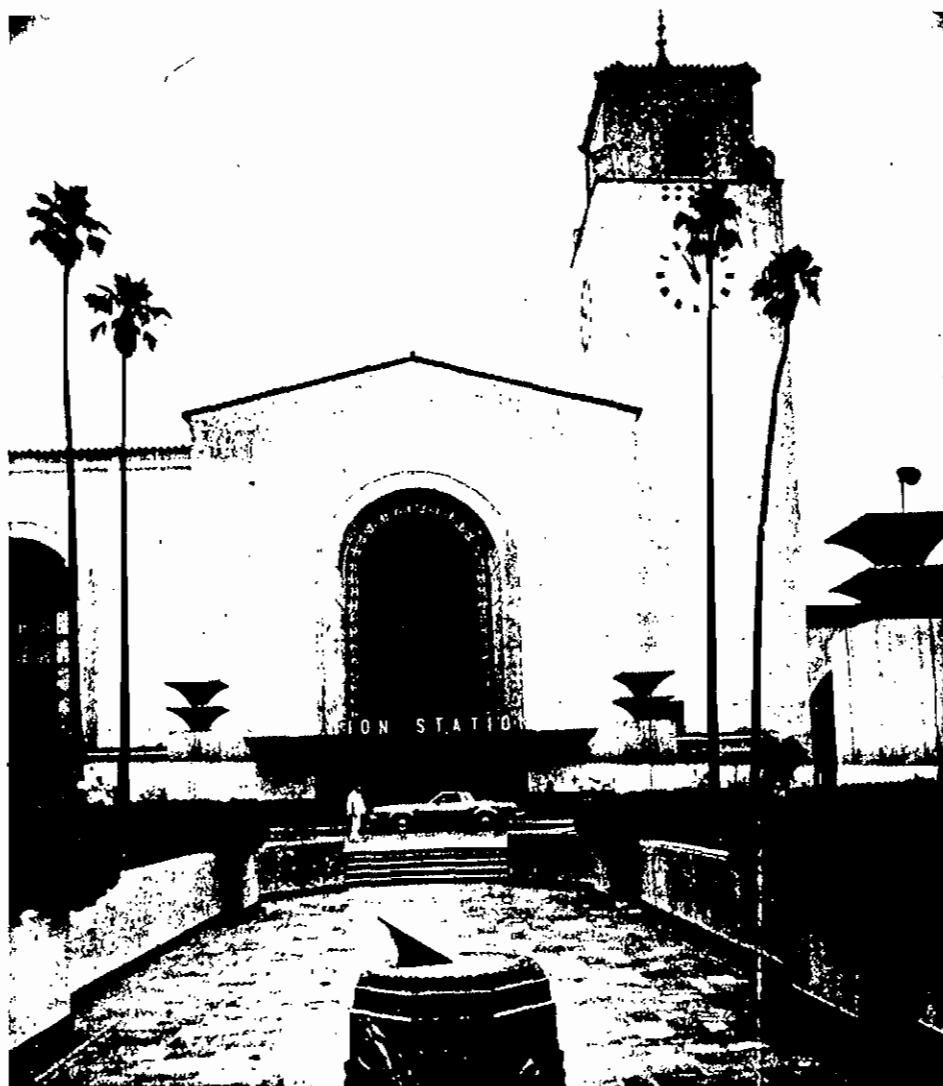




LOS ANGELES UNION STATION

the visible past

text and photographs by walter houk



It's a monumental structure, but the Union Passenger Terminal is in scale with its surroundings. It was designed to blend with the period buildings at the Old Plaza across Alameda Street and gets along with them very well. The design is a simplified Spanish style, while a link to the past is practically undated despite the station's 40th anniversary earlier this year.

On July 6 the State Historical Resources Commission will meet in Los Angeles to consider listing the Union Passenger Terminal on the National Register of Historic Places. This agency is the channel for all California applications for the National Register, a status that qualifies buildings for protection and often for federal funds. The terminal is already designated Historic-Cultural Monument No. 101 of the City of Los Angeles.

The occasion is a good time to take stock of the terminal, also known as Union Station, especially now that its halls are again becoming lively with the movement of rail passengers. Completed in 1939 after six years of building at a cost of \$10 million, it was the last great rail station built in America.

As principal gateway to the city, it was intended to introduce the arriving traveler to the California good life. This accounts for the spacious hall with lofty 50-foot ceilings, a graceful clock tower, arcades and two generous patios filled with trees and shrubs. The inclusion of landscaping in the building design was radical for that era.

The mission allusion was dominant, but the 1930s' present showed in Moderne detailing, as was by then an established architectural idiom. Bronze door and window designs, light fixtures, furnishings and signs show curiously unmitigated modernity, although they are never in conflict with the totality.

Finishing materials were first class and well chosen. They included a bright ceramic tile border for a travertine wall, tile floors and red and white swaths of inlaid colored stone that stretch like carpet runners down the centers of the hall.

The building was also innovative technically. A new material was acoustical tile, used on wall and ceiling to absorb the reverberations that afflicted large hard-walled public spaces. The result was superb acoustics.

An advanced system moved trains in and out and loaded passengers on and off at 16 feet per minute with great efficiency. Even when World War I traffic peaked at 100 trains a day and crowds were memorable, there was little sense of congestion. And the post office erected as part of the complex just north across Macy Street also functioned smoothly.

Union Passenger Terminal was built by the railroads serving Los Angeles: Southern Pacific, Santa Fe and Union Pacific. Their architects Gilman, J. H. Christie and R. J. Wirth, get the credit, although the design is usually attributed to consulting architects John and Donald B. Ineson, who also did Bullocks Wilshire, the Colony and other Los Angeles buildings. What is extraordinary is the unity and quality of design produced by such a committee effort.

The 44-acre site is included in the National Register application. That is important because such well-located open land is always coveted by potential builders. The latest is an agency that wants space for a major parking structure.

The 40th anniversary occasioned publication of an excellent picture book, *The Last of the Stations*, by Bill Bradley (Interurbans: \$10.95). Available at bookstores and at the station, it is a handsome presentation of the building's history, ground, construction, inaugural festivities, its trains and its Amtrak present.

appreciating union station



main entrance to Union Station is under the marquee tile-lined archway. The ceiling rises 125 feet. In the foreground are a sundial and a large indirect lighting fixture, very modern in 1939.

The lofty north hall has a flat-beamed ceiling, tall windows, large-scale light fixtures and walls of ceramic tile. Ticket counters used by three railroads are of walnut, and the floor boasts a central swath of polished stone inlay.

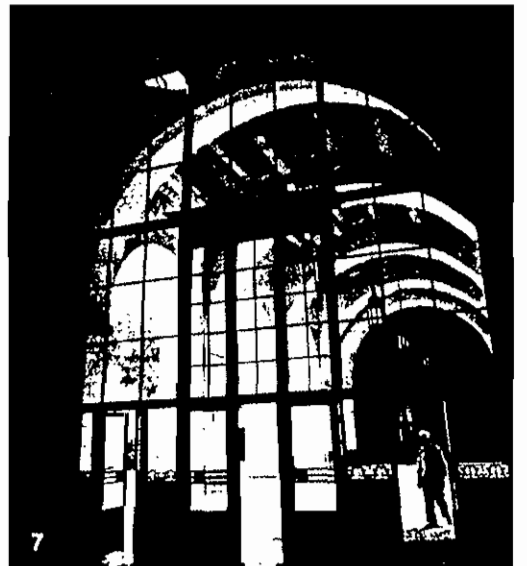
Eight passenger-loading ramps, which are built by tunnel from the cavernous area, are sheltered by levered steel butterfly roofs. They provide access to the tracks and to today's Amtrak trains. At right, one of the porous "iron horses"

steams forth, just as they did in the old days.

5 The open-air south arcade, in the foreground, is just as imposing in height as the entrance foyer to which doors lead beyond the glass wall. Poured concrete construction permitted tall wide-span arches.

6 A shell-like arch top is an abstract reference to the Moorish component of the station's Spanish Colonial design theme. The colorful ceramic tile wainscot is a more direct allusion, and both of these traditional elements are compatible with Moderne detailing.

7 This view looks out from the foyer to the south arcade (see photograph 5). To the left is a free-shaded patio that greets incoming travelers; beyond is space that once housed a bar and restaurant.



letters



our visible past

It is with pride that I read your article on the Los Angeles Union Station (*The Visible Past*, June 24). It was my father Jan G. van der Linden who, as one of the several architects employed by the railroads for this great project, had many of his design concepts chosen. Each of the architects was asked to submit ideas for motifs.

My father labored long and hard making hundreds of draw-

ings (some of which I still have). He was overjoyed as he came home to his family daily to report on the progress of the station and his recommendations for the mission styling that was approved by the head architects.

Born and educated in Holland, my father was a licensed California architect. He was a highly skilled artisan and he loved the beautiful Colonial Spanish architecture of the California missions. The lines of the main facade and the detail work of the

archways and Moorish ornamentation employed throughout the Los Angeles Terminal are a result of his creative talent.

My father was but one of among the unsung heroes of the depression years who worked the planning and building of the "jewel of Los Angeles," the Los Angeles Union Station. His name is not a cornerstone of the building, but rings through the rafters of the main concourse and echoes throughout every archway, and window.

Francis C. van der Linden
Los Angeles

some words about beer

As importers of fine pre-war beers, we are most gratified by the excellent article and coverage given to beers in your June issue (*The Great Beer Mystery*).

As usual, Robert Lawrence Mazer did a superlative job of educating the consumer to the points of beer and brewing.

John L. Mazer
Wisdom Import Sales Co.

As a world-traveled connoisseur of beer for nearly 50 years, endorse your judges' high rating of Anchor Steam beer (*A Taste*).

In 1939, the year of Union Station's triumphant opening celebration in Los Angeles, there were inauspicious events simultaneously afoot in New York. While Cecil B. DeMille and the Native Daughters of the American West paid a choreographed homage to the history of trains with traditional marching bands and floats, the futuristic New York World's Fair of 1939 was projecting doom for the trains and the train stations, announcing the demise of standard mass transportation.

The Fair's prediction of glorious free-way travel and interstate flight came true enough to eventually empty Union Station of the grateful crowds. However, the station has survived so tenaciously that it can now enjoy the completion of a full cycle of history. Mass transit promises to return to the city that learned to resist it best. And Union Station is destined to be reequipped for the practical future, to serve as a model center for all modes of public surface travel — just as it did 40 years ago. More trains, more public buses and commercial buses, proposals for a new subway and a very new people mover will recognize Union Station as the portal of an expanding downtown.

Union Station was the last of the large urban stations. Its first proposals preceded the actual construction by 20 years and its functional eclipse followed another 20 years later. In 1959, the Boeing 707 introduced Los Angeles to a new era in which the accessibility of long distance destinations was exceeded only by the inaccessibility of the plane stations. The new airports, sited in industrial wastelands, were indistinguishable from the warehouses nearby.

The nobler halls of Union Station were left without even the commuter patronage that postponed the decay of Eastern stations, for they depended on transcontinental traffic. However, through its design (and the fact of its siting on the periphery of expensive real estate) Union Station could deny its own death pronouncement.

The stuff of its sturdy architecture retained dignity even without the presence of the daily 15,000 visitors that it was capable of handling, and minus their accompanying revenue for maintenance. But suddenly the crisis of gas has crowded the San Diego corridor and decorated the station with seasonal crushes of travelers. Architecture hobbyists come to inspect the Art Deco

details. And finally, the theme of the opening day parade, "The History of Transportation," is revived by plans shared by Caltrans, the Community Redevelopment Agency, the Southern California Rapid Transit District and Amtrak to transform the station into a center of transit connections.

Modest Monumentality

Union Station was a triumph of architecture by committee, the product of a multi-venture of architects and consultants working for three unwilling clients. The Southern Pacific, Union Station and Santa Fe railroads had to succumb to the city's vision for a single uplifting and space-saving gateway to replace the three existing stations. Architects J.H. Christie, R.W. Wirth and H.L. Gilman, representing the train companies, supervised the work of the principal firm, John and Donald Parkinson. The chief designer named within that office was architect Edward Warren Hoak, a Pasadenan with the nation's best obtainable Beaux-Arts education, that of the University of Pennsylvania.

Long before the Parkinson contract, the early ideas about an eventual union of stations described a Beaux-Arts classical building that would package most of the functions into a single volume in the tradition of Grand Central Station, "one of the grandest spaces the early twentieth century ever enclosed," according to Henry-Russell Hitchcock. However, the architects chose not to compete with such volumetric bravura, designing in the Spanish Colonial style with linked pieces of great halls, rooms, arcades, and gardens that make a more modest impression of having grown incrementally.

The massing of the terminal and the casual manner of connections invents an informality never associated with great urban depots. Architecturally, the station soothes the traveler where he would expect to be overwhelmed. It celebrates his *marche* away from the main halls and through the parking lot using arcades that line the 800-foot Alameda Street facade. The transport itinerary is completed by buses (once trolleys) and taxis that stop at opposite ends of the arcades where they meet the city streets.

Unlike the plebian bulk of public buildings, and most notably different than the airports to follow, Union Station took on the responsibility of

fulfilling its program rather than simply housing it. It made grandeur comfortable, sparing neither beauty nor accommodation in the process. And most remarkably, it provided a tender lesson in native living, an introduction to the pleasurable contradictions of Southern California for the huddled masses arriving barely thawed from Grand Central.

The fresh arrival would find himself deposited in a microcosm of local flora, shaded by eucalyptus, palm, rubber, pepper, orange, and olive trees. Passing from loggia to loggia, he would find the Fred Harvey Restaurant and a length of arcades leading to more transport. The outward bound, traveling with less leisure, would enter the ticket concourse under an aggressive series of timber trusses, then proceed to the waiting room through a single colossal arch. The waiting benches, facing the north and south gardens, improved upon the monastic norm with a modernized design of upholstered walnut.

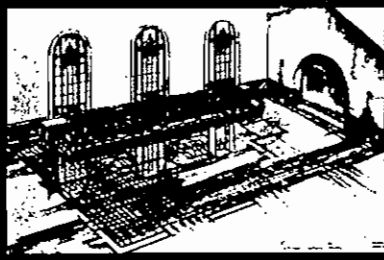
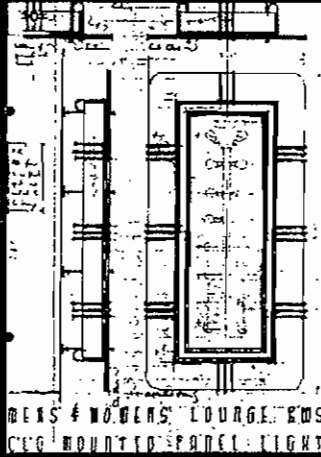
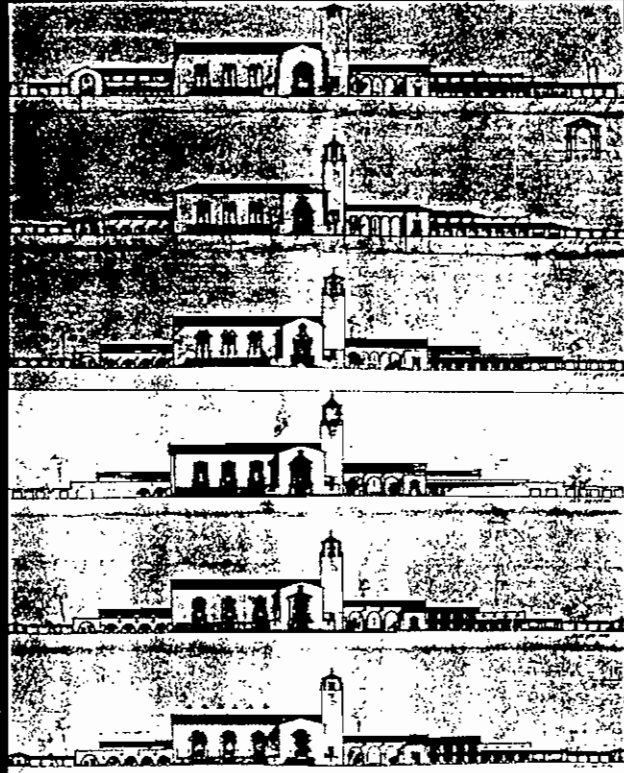
A somber baronial emptiness reigns over the two main public halls, the ticket concourse and the waiting room even when they are adequately peopled. In the distance between the dramatic roof structure and the intricately patterned floors and wainscoting, the walls are surfaced with austere expanses of acoustical tile that create a conspicuous silence. It is that vacant distance between the small and the large scales that allow the station its special claim to a reassuring monumentality.

Sincere Dissimulation

Because Los Angeles characteristically considers imitation and dissimulation to be praiseworthy fruits of the imagination, Union Station also, is not what it seems. The design of the station provides instruction in the nature of the artificial since the new arrival would soon have to take initiation to the Angeleno practice of entering unnatural endeavors in direct competition with natural wonders.

The trees in the garden are real; the timber trusses in the ticket concourse and the girders and joists in the waiting room are less than real. The heroic feat of spanning each room's 80-foot width in wood is accomplished by the use of simulation. The "wood" is a sculpted envelope of painted plaster that hides the fact of the steel frame.

The roof structure is not immediately suspect for its trickery when inspected



from the floor 60 feet below. But while the giant trusses and joists make a first impression of familiarity, they form a second and simultaneous signal of impossibility since the span is too great and the construction date too late for a likely use of wood. The ceiling too, is false. Visible vents of the patterned ceiling above the roof structure screen the heating and cooling ducts that force

Served with an architectural requirement for 42" walls, the engineers camouflaged the building's steel structure with two B" walls of concrete. At the points where the steel columns meet the roof structure, the full depth is filled. In between, the hollow spaces contain return air ducts. If the station is restrained in its interpretation of Spanish Colonial details, it is flamboyant in the

Signals in the Details

New dignity has been laid on the station with the discovery that Moderne details were superimposed over the antique entirety of the Spanish design. Variations of either style had appeared in earlier and purer forms throughout the 1920s, but the combination of Art Deco and Spanish Colonial was unexpected even within the checkered

smaller scale are Deco: signage, furniture, neon-light fixtures and zig-zag flooring. The Spanish Colonial identifies the place, invites the traveler into the gardens to wait and relax, and lends a sense of established well-being to the halls. But it is the Deco elements that orient him with more determination of speed and purpose to the equally Moderne trains waiting outside. Radio

Montana Travertine and two other marbles set on a base of black Belgian marble. Each hall is striped with a single marble path that provides a fast directional surface through the quarry tile flooring. The waiting room marble with its jazz pattern of triangular inlays of Verde Antique and Alicante marbles points directly to the trains. But the ticket concourse path leads to an aggrandized drinking fountain set in a 40'-high niche, the focal point of the hall and another kind of oasis greeting to the traveler. Water closets on either side of the fountain are treated with proper processional flourish.

Edward Warren Hoak, AIA

Union Station was the proudest work of an architect trained in the expectation that architecture included attention to all surfaces of a building. But as that attention grew more costly and became less desirable as a commodity in the '40s and '50s, Edward Warren Hoak left the Parkinson office to protect his private notion of quality for 12 years more, in independent practice. Then, Hoak retired from design to spend his last 20 working years realizing atomic test structures for the engineering firm Holmes and Narver.

Although Hoak's public relations resume there ignored his contribution to Union Station, his drawings, recently acquired by the Huntington Library in San Marino, testify to his authorship.

Under the tutelage of Paul Cret at Penn, Hoak was a contemporary of Louis Kahn, solving pompous Beaux-Arts programs with the requisite water-color tableaux. Those early drawings, though exquisitely inked, concealed the spontaneous rendering style that Hoak would later unleash for the Union Station commission. His preference for exaggerated views in charcoal lines recall Sant'Elia's train stations.

Soon after an awarded tour of Europe and graduation in 1928, Hoak returned to California to lend his command of world architecture to large buildings for the Parkinson firm. Hoak earned the opportunity for the Union Station commission through his design work on the USC gymnasium and the Title Guarantee and Trust Building in Los Angeles, both of 1930.

Hoak's devotion to the details of Union Station is thorough. Adjusting his rendering style to the spirit of the task, Hoak was as capable of describing Moderne light fixtures with exacting charcoal on legal pads (to be

transposed to the working drawings) as designing full-scale Spanish Colonial grilles in sweeps of charcoal on linen.

The Next Era

Hibernation now comes gracefully to Union Station. The ticket agents, once the focus of the great ticket concourse, now occupy but a corner of the expanse of walnut ticket booths. The restaurant and cocktail lounge have been sealed and preserved since 1967, opening only for rare private parties. The neon Western Union signs have been extinguished. But the gardens have continued to flourish independently of ticket sales, and the thin patina of wear only enhances the character of the station.

Assessors have inspected the station property to put a price on that character. Union Station has sustained itself just long enough to enjoy a timely combination of events that promise to keep it from the fate of either Cincinnati's Union Station, distant from the city core and empty of use, or that of Union Station in Washington D.C. where enthusiastic remodelling efforts have gutted the building.

Proposals for the station are advancing from all sectors of the city. Entrepreneurial interests have envisioned supper clubs, boutiques, and legitimate theatres filling the various halls and summoning the tourists from Olvera Street. Academics would rather celebrate the station's siting on the original Los Angeles pueblo in a more instructive way, as a Hispanic-American cultural museum or a photographic center documenting the city's history. City agencies are designing the Union Station into their plans for increased transit service within the city and improved commuter connections to those lines.

None of the volunteered uses require the entire 40 acres of station property and few can justify the \$12 to \$18 million assessed purchase price for their individual projects. Fortunately Caltrans is committed to acquiring the property to house the multifarious functions under a single ownership. Thus the Caltrans title will not only protect the station from a splintering of intentions and parcels, but it will also facilitate streamlined application for state and federal funds for renovation and reuse.

The original purpose of Union Station will be enhanced. It may be a gateway to the inner city instead of the entry to all of California, but at least the trains

will prevail. And the station will assume a new role as it becomes a commuter terminus serving, at last, the type of passenger that has kept all the other urban terminals alive. Amtrak and Caltrans will cooperate in sending commuters into Union Station in trains, new busways and buses.

The most controversial plans fix Union Station as the terminus for the proposed people mover, the system designed to ease city traffic by guiding commuters downtown on aerial buses from parking points at the periphery. The Community Redevelopment Agency had to choose between renovating Union Station for reuse or building anew. They concluded that the new accommodations would destroy the record of the station's original use. Parking for 2,000 cars, waiting and ticketing area for extended suburban bus lines and current city lines and maintenance space for the people mover will occupy a new structure on abandoned track area.

Comparison between the two adjacent buildings may prove to be grim. One will emerge amid apologies and defenses, produced for citizens panicked about the prospect of housing and transporting themselves in greater concentrations and wary of all personal compromises towards that future. The other building was designed to extol those concentrations. It was created by the confident optimism of an age that built in a grand tradition for the approval of the future. Union Station, nearly dismissed by an era of autonomous transport, continues to amplify the meaning of arrival and departure.

Barbara Flanagan

Barbara Flanagan is an architectural designer who first saw Los Angeles through the Vista-Dome of a SuperChief bound for Union Station.

DRAWING KEY

1. Charcoal rendering of final design. 2. Study for waiting room. 3. Instructions for working drawings of light fixture, charcoal on legal pad. 4. 1936 studies for main elevation. 5, 6. Charcoal studies of ticket concourse.

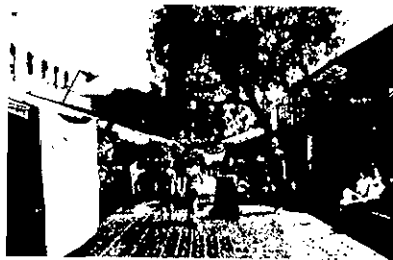
Edward Warren Hoak's drawings of Union Station belong to a recent donation of the architect's records to the architectural archives, established one year ago, at the Huntington Library in San Marino. The archives are curated by Alan Jutzi and overseen by an advisory committee of university and professional group representatives under the direction of Stefanos Polyzoides.

of restrained Classical elements and ample money, but the great acclaim of the hotel was based on its widely advertised gas lighting fixtures and two zinc bathtubs.

At the north end of the plaza is the entrance to Olvera Street (1 H), the city's oldest theme shopping mall. Unlike Chinatown or Little Tokyo, Olvera Street is an entertainment center more than an ethnic neighborhood. This tiny pedestrian way, paved with Spanish tiles and brick, has over seventy businesses lining it. Rustic brick-and-adobe buildings are packed together, with porches and outdoor cafés arranged in festal emulation of a Mexican border town. Often their floor levels are not the same as the street's, so special flights of stairs and diagonal views lead up and down into colorful shops. Open-air stands selling Mexican candy, taquitos, ceramics, postcards and huaraches fill the center of the street, in the dappled shade of canvas awnings, palms and ancient olive trees.

At 14 Olvera Street is the Avila Adobe (1 I) (ca. 1818), the oldest house in Los Angeles, now a museum. It meets the street with a heavy beamed porch covered in grapevines. In back, the house wraps around a dusty Early California courtyard with a few fruit trees and cactus along the edges. A little farther down Olvera Street is a fountain and a triple row of bricks, which is all that remains of the Zanja Madre (the Mother Ditch) (1 J), the water course that brought water from the Los Angeles River to the pueblo between 1781 and 1863.

Like the rest of the public realm in Los Angeles, the Old Plaza is exotic, charming and hopelessly inadequate. It is odd that the center of one of the world's great cities should be occupied by a South of the Border tourist trap, but it's a charming little tourist trap and a useful reminder that the tiny pueblo once served by a single ditch lies not much more than a century behind the bumptious metropolis.



1 1 H · Olvera Street



1 1 I · Avila Adobe

1 2 · UNION STATION

800 North Alameda Street

John and Donald B. Parkinson; J. H. Christie, H. L. Gilman, R. J. Wirth, architects; Herman Sachs, color consultant; Tommy Tomson, landscape architect, 1934-1939

Union Station, in its heyday, was the western end of the line for rail passengers from all over the North American continent. Its architectural style, restrained



1 2 · Union Station



1 3 · New Chinatown

Spanish Colonial Revival with Streamline Moderne touches, has soaked up the romance of the ranchos and beamed back a vigorous assertion of the city's modernity. In true California style, indoors and outdoors are artfully interwoven in the design. The shadows of slender Mexican fan palms caress the huge white walls, while tall and glassy arched openings allow shafts of sunlight to slip through the lofty interiors. A giant-size freestanding arcade connects the main concourse to the restaurant, encouraging travelers to enjoy the California climate en route. Behind the main concourse the high-ceilinged waiting room is filled with light from flanking courtyards. The northern court contains California live oaks and jacarandas, the remains of a fountain, and beautiful tiled benches. Over the north wall loom the domes of the post office next door. The southern courtyard was originally planted to be the quintessence of Southern Californian garden design. Landscaped with now-enormous fig trees and Mexican fan palms, birds-of-paradise, ginger and orchid trumpet vines, the garden was meant to provide a fragrant haven for travelers already intoxicated with the thrill of having arrived in Eden, or despondent over oncoming exile.

The detail is as sophisticated and sure as the spaces. Interior colors are muted earth tones; the walls are warm gray concrete block. Small openings are accented by white shell-like moldings that slither around the edges. At the east end of the waiting room, thick columns sport a wainscoting of colorful ceramic tiles patterned like Navajo rugs; the pattern changes its scale as it slips down onto the ceramic tiled floor. The presence of most of the original furnishings keeps alive the building's exuberance. Heavy wood chairs in the waiting room offer comfort and privacy from the crowds that are no longer there. Glass-backed Art Deco signs still provide elegant directions. An original drinking fountain in the main concourse sums up the verve and careful opulence of the whole place: its basin is Z-shaped, cut into a single block of dark marble with a font at each end of the Z, the drain in the middle. The near-desertion of the station now puts a nostalgic golden patina of time and shifting fortunes over a still modern masterpiece.

In the 1930s, Streamline Moderne, the "smart" style, swept the nation; every-

licitous uses of the style were the aerodynamic trains of Norman Bel Geddes and Raymond Loewy. These sleek, powerful vehicles streaking across the American landscape captured the imagination of the nation. Architects, engaged to design new train stations, were quick to employ Streamline Moderne, echoing the lines of the trains, though the traditional railroad station in Southern California was still designed in Mission, Spanish, Pueblo or Churrigueresque style.

The Streamline Moderne, like its Hispanic predecessors, did not eschew ornament, unlike the International Style that began in the same era: witness the dazzling semi-Navajo chromed interior of the Super Chief club car, or the parallel Navajoid manifestations on the walls of Union Station. This is a remarkable building, at once chic Moderne, regional southwestern (as befitted arrival at the end of the line) and radiant Spanish Colonial Revival; it is a triumph that transcends but never avoids style.

I 3 • NEW CHINATOWN

Bounded approximately by North Alameda, Ord, Yale and Bernard streets; main activity is between the 700 and 1000 of North Broadway, ca. 1930 and after

New Chinatown, moved when Union Station was constructed, is both a tourist spot and a working community. Its center covers two blocks of picturesquely disposed pedestrian streets that run between two-story buildings with suitably Oriental motifs grafted onto surfaces of beige, green or salmon stucco trimmed in red, aqua or gold wood and tiles. Roof lines are accented with tiny lights, neon strips or scampering dragons. Octagonal windows, moon gates, curved roof lines and continuous balconies spice up the shops and restaurants.

The highest concentration of Chinese ornament appears along Gin Ling Way, a pedestrian street between Broadway and Hill Street, about halfway between College and Bernard streets. Behind elaborate gateways, tiny streets amble past buildings that seem almost to founder beneath intricate masses of brightly colored tiles and carved wood and overhanging upturned roofs—even the phone booths have become vermilion pagodas. Near the middle, across from Sincere Imports, is a wishing-well fountain made up of a six-foot-high mountain with small plants and smaller statues within a fish pond. Tiny paths and bridges lead up to figures of the eight Chinese Immortals, with, at the top, the inevitable goddess Kwan Yin protected by blue lions and a shrine. The plaza continues across Hill Street into Chung King Court, where there's another fishpond and a miniature mountain with a Kwan Yin on top, though it's all considerably smaller and tamer than the first.

Most of the newer buildings have joined in the excitement as well: tiled roofs with upturned corners cover an Oriental Union 76 gas station (900 North Hill Street); super-torii Japanicisms envelop a Bank of America (850 North Broadway); Foo dogs and ginkgo trees flank the front door of an East-West Federal Savings (935 North Broadway). The Mandarin plaza (970 North Broadway) contains a particularly traffic-stopping yellow-and-orange pagoda roof at the entrance to its ordinary stucco shops. The cunning fake chinoiserie of it all is in danger of being attacked as blatant racism these days, but its innocence should serve it as a shield.

Bounded approximately by First, Third, South Los Angeles and Alameda streets

California's dismal history of racial oppression didn't stop when the Indians were wiped out. One of its most recent manifestations was after Pearl Harbor, in 1941, when U.S. citizens of Japanese descent were thrown out of their homes (to the enormous profit of real estate speculators) and sent to internment camps inland. Ever since their return at the end of World War II, Little Tokyo has been the cultural center of Los Angeles' Japanese community, one thousand strong. Located in just a few blocks bordering First Street on the eastern edge of the civic center, the area contains over a hundred Japanese American businesses.

First Street is the attractive major commercial strip. Although the two-story buildings have not been flamboyantly Orientalized, the tiny scale of the shops and the delicate merchandise and plastic-food displays in the windows speak of Japan. The area remained unchanged until the recent completion of the New Otani Hotel and Japanese Village Plaza, which have brought in waves of tourists.

The Japanese Village Plaza (between First and Second streets, near Central Avenue) might be seen as just another in an overabundance of theme shopping centers, but in this case the exotic atmosphere is a delight and a success. An open-air, village-scaled pedestrian mall winds through an entire block; on each side are one- and two-story shops with white stucco walls, blue-tiled roofs and exotic details such as round-timber porch columns and wood slat screens recollective of bamboo, all used with just enough restraint. The narrowing and opening out of the walkway provides a rich sequence of spaces and views: a splashing fountain enlivens one jog; a careful composition of natural rocks and ginkgo trees bedecks another; the north end is marked by a tall, heavy-timbered tower with another blue-tiled roof. Village Plaza is a masterly addition to Little Tokyo, very much in the spirit of the place and far more interesting than the New Otani Hotel (120 South Los Angeles Street), which is just another high-rise with a standard collection of pastel-awned boutiques at its base. But the New Otani does have a pleasant and startlingly sited Japanese garden, complete with rocks and trees and waterfalls, on a third-floor roof terrace.

I 5 • LOS ANGELES CITY HALL

200 North Spring Street

John C. Austin, John and Donald Parkinson and Albert C. Martin, Sr.;

Austin Whittlesey, interior, 1926-1928

Every world city is represented to us by an image or landmark, but Los Angeles has been hard pressed to provide just the right one. Some images have blossomed out of almost nothing, like the huge white HOLLYWOOD sign on the side of Mt. Lee in the Hollywood Hills, and some have fallen into neglect, like the Venice canals. Some are ambitious but slightly too silly to succeed, like the theme building at the airport. If there has come to us a single image of L.A., it is doubtless the tower of City Hall, with the world's first four-level freeway interchange nearby, dripping vines like a Piranesi view of ancient Rome.

Since its completion, City Hall (5 A) has been the enthusiastically received



IRIS SCHNEIDER / Los Angeles Times

There's not much of a crowd at lunchtime in Union Station, even if you count the pigeons that stroll across its

UNION STATION

Memories of a fading era live on where a sarcastic Ronald Reagan gave an opinion, where John Madden gives directions—and where untidy pigeons leave their mark.

An old Chinese man used to come and sit in the north patio years ago, just kind of stare into space. It turned out he'd been born here—on the property. Before the train station was built, this was part of Chinatown. He said he was born where the coffee shop is now.

—Amtrak stationmaster
Les Page

By STEVE HARVEY,
Times Staff Writer

There is a haunting quality to Union Station. The high ceilings are a part of it, as well as the vast halls with their many empty chairs and closed ticket booths, and the silence.

It's so quiet that often the flapping wings of the resident pigeons can be heard on their hopeful sorties through the coffee shop.

Much of the interior, from the black walnut beams and the 3,000-pound chandeliers down to the marble mosaic walkway in the waiting room, remains remarkably intact after almost half a century.

"You can almost sense the presence of all the politicians and movie stars who've walked through here," said CBS broadcaster and aerophobe John Madden, who says he rides 100,000 miles of rails some years.

The station's dim lighting adds to the B-mystery-movie atmosphere. Not long ago, in fact, a ticket clerk recognized an escaped felon on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list—the FBI furnishes the station with photos—and the fugitive was arrested as he tried to board a train.

A few days later, recalled Jack Kinney, an Amtrak employee, "a guy came in off the street, kind of a funny look in his eye, and said, 'I understand one of your ticket clerks turned in a guy. Which one of you was was it?' It was kind of spooky."

□

Transit projects seem to generate controversy in Los Angeles. Union Station, like the planned Metro Rail, was a project that was debated for years—for almost three decades, in fact.

Originally, the Southern Pacific, Union Pacific and Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroads had separate stations. In 1915, the city of Los Angeles proposed a new terminal for the three (hence the name "union") to upgrade facilities and reduce the number of grade crossings on the streets.



Man in traditionally styled hat fits right into old-fashioned interior; limo parked outside conjures up image of more glamorous days, when station hosted politicians and stars.



After two court defeats, the railroads grudgingly agreed to pay for the construction, which took six years and cost \$11 million (the amount currently budgeted for about 1½ miles of

track for Metro Rail).

To make room on the 48-acre site a few blocks northeast of City Hall, part of Chinatown was razed. Ironically, it was the Chinese who had built much of

the railroad for meager wages.

Critics nicknamed the station's architectural style "mission moderne." The Spanish heritage was evident in its exterior design. Architects H. L. Gilman, J. H. Christie and R. J. Wirth created a Moorish clock tower, high-arched windows and slanted red tile roofs. The influence of consulting architects John and Donald Parkinson was reflected in the many Art Deco touches, such as the pencil Gothic sign work.

A half million people attended opening day ceremonies in 1939, which culminated with a historical parade featuring horsemen, mule-skippers, stagecoaches, horse cars, trolleys and an 1869 locomotive, the Southern Pacific's Collis P. Huntington.

At first, more than 60 trains a day passed through the station. But railroading was already on the decline, and then came jet airliners and superhighways. One of the gloomiest phrases for a train man is "air mail."

The station was down to nine trains a day by 1971 when the government-subsidized National Railroad Passenger Corp.

(Amtrak) took over passenger operations at Union Station. The agency leased the facilities from Santa Fe Southern Pacific Corp., which controls 77% of the property through its two railroad subsidiaries, and Union Pacific, which owns the rest.

Rail service has increased somewhat. Union Station, now also a depot for Trailways buses, currently sees 18 trains (and about 7,000 passengers) a day. But the Reagan Administration has talked of eliminating Amtrak's \$600 million-plus subsidy, which would likely spell doom for the station.

Maybe it was only a coincidence, but stationmaster Les Page recalls a strained conversation he had with Reagan a quarter century ago.

"A lady needed help with her bags and Reagan was passing by," he said. "He said I should help her. I told him that I was assistant stationmaster and because of union rules I couldn't. I could go get someone but I couldn't help her. He made a smart remark about that's why the railroads were going out of business."

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Bob Pfister is Union Station's censor.

"One time someone wanted to
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STATION: Spooky Relic of a Fading Era

Continued from Page 1

shoot a wacky movie here where the doorman was supposed to be shirtless and the red cap surly," said Pfister, the station manager. "But we made them change that."

"The airport would never have a scene like that," explained Tom Buckley, public relations chief for Santa Fe Southern Pacific.

"The airport" is an inevitable topic of conversation of train people.

Buckley recalled the time he told a producer that the cost of filming a movie at Union Station was \$5,000 a day plus insurance requirements and the producer asked how he'd come up with that figure. "I didn't tell him but I'd read in the papers three days before that that's what the airport charges," Buckley said, laughing.

Aside from costs, film companies must also agree to a list of restrictions—no opening the ancient Venetian blinds, for instance.

"We're afraid they'd fall," Pfister admitted.

Lighting can also be a problem because the station is purposely kept somewhat dim so its computers won't overheat.

No matter the cost and red tape, movie companies keep phoning.

"They've shot so many here I can't keep track of them," Pfister said as he thumbed through a file cabinet full of scripts. "True Confessions.' That one with Barbara Streisand in it—yeah, 'The Way We Were.' 'To Live and Die in L.A.' something called 'The Woo Woo Kid'—I didn't recognize any of the titles in that. . . . Years ago there was even one called 'Union Station.' Had a big star. . . ."

"William Holden," Buckley said. "That was our 'Airport.'"

□

Even a casual inspection of the freshly painted exterior, shiny brass light fixtures, ornate drinking fountains and high-backed leather chairs reveals why Union Station's been called "The Last of the Great Stations" (the title of its biography by Bill Bradley), why it's an official cultural landmark, why architecture students come to pay tribute, why travelers snap photographs of it and send copies to Pfister's office. Madden ranks it in a first-place (with Chicago's Union Station) among the nation's best.

He even diagrammed some side streets that passengers could take out of the station's waiting room if they had spare time.

You can cut either to the left or right and find patios," he said. "Or you can go straight up the middle, through the door and across the street to one of the restaurants on Market Street."

Actor James Mason used to sleep on the grass in the patios between

trips.

For all its obvious beauty, there is another side to Union Station—the closed portions off-limits to the public. Its ghost town.

Pfister and a secretary work in a small office in an otherwise deserted, two-story annex to the station, their door locked to keep out transients.

Scheduled to be demolished to make room for a Metro Rail station, the annex houses old locker rooms and showers (where conductors and porters once washed up), rooms full of discarded equipment with walls bearing old train schedules and floors covered with years-old newspapers.

An empty two-cell jail languishes behind a door marked "Police."

"It was used when law enforcement agencies transported prisoners," said Southern Pacific's Buckley, whose father was a locomotive engineer. "They could leave prisoners in there and go across the street and get a bite. That was before jets came in the late '50s."

On the other side of the station sits the defunct but well-preserved Fred Harvey Restaurant, named for the king of depot diners whose dying words were said to have been: "Tell the boys not to cut the ham so damn thick."

It's a Moorish-influenced wonderland of arched ceilings, leather banquettes, corked walls and multicolored tiles bearing parrots. Its Art Deco cocktail lounge features a copper-sheeted bar, bubble-encased mirrors, red stripes of indirect lighting and black marble sinks in the "Powder Room."

"This place used to really jump," recalled Buckley. "Jurors came here. Soldiers passing through. Movie stars. When Metro Rail comes here, we think people will be pounding on our door to come in and lease it."

While Buckley was talking, someone wandered in.

"Maybe it's Wolfgang Puck," he joked.

But it was a transient.

□

Ticket clerk Jack Kinney, a 30-year veteran and a third-generation railroad man, remembers the days when comic Jackie Gleason used to throw parties for his cast in one of Union Station's offices—he'd have big tubs of potato salad and cole slaw and other food.

He remembers seeing actor Jimmy Cagney in a white suit and white shoes, and the time he asked newspaper columnist Walter Winchell for some identification before changing a \$100 bill and Winchell snapped: "Here's my Mafia card."

The clientele isn't quite so glam-

orous anymore.

"We got one guy who takes the Desert Wind to Vegas who says he's Howard Hughes," Kinney said. "We always say, 'Have a nice trip, Mr. Hughes.' Another woman claims she's Ronald Reagan's sister."

The pigeons, which seem to use Union Station as their hangar, can be a distraction, too. One of the gray-and-white bombardiers scored a direct hit on Kinney once while he was working. "It was embarrassing because I was getting a customer a ticket," he said. "After I finished with him, I just walked out—just went home and took about three showers."

But, at least, his surroundings endure—the painted ceilings, the bronze-framed doors, the red quarry tile floors.

They were a pleasant surprise for ticket agent Ed Francis, a

fourth-generation railroad man who transferred from Springfield, Mass., three years ago.

"First time I walked in, my head caught the ceiling and I said 'Wow,'" he recalled. "There's warmth here, not like some of the stations in the East that have more of a warehouse-type feeling."

There were other surprises, too.

"One day I see this attractive blonde woman with a low-cut dress and she's carrying several suitcases and got three small kids with her," Francis said. "As she comes through the door, one of the kids starts to run away. She reaches for him and her breasts just pop out of her dress. She starts to fix her dress and the kid takes off again. And she says, 'Oh, the hell with it!' grabs the kid and just walks into the station with her breasts hanging out."

"That's when I knew I was in L.A."

LOS ANGELES UNION PASSENGER STATION

by Dan Hoye/Los Angeles Conservancy

THE CONCEPT FOR A UNION STATION:

Union Station is so named because it represents the "union" of more than one railroad in establishing a common shared facility. Across the country, the concept of a "Union Station" was a result of civic improvement programs, such as in Washington D.C. and Los Angeles (where it was first proposed in 1915 and again in 1922).

The traffic congestion on downtown streets caused by trains was one of the reasons why the city and the railroad commission called for grade separation and one consolidated station. Previously, Southern Pacific was at Sixth and Alameda, Santa Fe was at Second Street and Santa Fe Avenue, and Union Pacific was formerly on East First Street.

The organizers of the Union Station project spent more than 20 years in litigation between the city, state, and the railroad companies. A court decision in 1931 finally cleared the way for the "station," which was then designed and built between 1934 and 1939. The planners for the new station eschewed opulence for a more modest and functional tourist center, one that would express the region's more marketable characteristics - including its Spanish heritage, its year-round climate, and above all its relaxed mystique.

LAST OF THE GREAT TRAIN STATIONS:

The irony is that by the time this long-standing dream became a reality, it was 1939, perilously close to when passenger trains would gradually slip away from their former glory. Even then, there were those who speculated that this would be "the last of the great train stations built in the U.S." which in fact proved to be correct.

SITE WAS OLD CHINATOWN:

Union Station was built on the cleared site of Old Chinatown. In spite of some local hostilities, the local Chinese population contributed greatly towards the early development of local rail lines. Chinese labor opened landlocked Los Angeles to the nation with the grading of the Newhall road. Thousands of Chinese dug the difficult San Fernando tunnel to bring the first outside railroad link with the Southern Pacific.

In the 1930s, all of Old Chinatown which stood along the east side of Alameda Street was torn down to make way for Union Station. Many families moved southward towards the produce market area. Some of the Chinese businesses moved nearby to China City, a project bounded by Sunset Blvd. between Spring Street and Main Street. Others who left Old Chinatown went to the 900 block of North Broadway and developed New Chinatown.

ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS:

The new building was designed by committee: The Consulting Architects, John and Donald Parkinson, worked with three railroad architects: H.L. Gilman, J.H. Christie, and R.J. Wirth. The project's landscape architect was Tommy Tomson while the color consultant was Herman Sachs (best known for his Art Deco porte cochere mural at Bullocks Wilshire.)

Plans at one time were delayed when some called for the new Terminal Annex of the Post Office to be incorporated into the Union Station complex, but this idea was nixed in favor of a separate building across Macy Street.

CONSTRUCTION:

When Mayor Frank Shaw was finally able to allocate a million dollars in civic funds raised from a gasoline tax, the Union Station project began to make headway. 400,000 cubic yards of earth were moved in order to raise the tracks 12 feet over Macy Street and 16 feet over Aliso Street. Construction of the main building cost \$4 1/2 million. The steel reinforced concrete structure was financed in part by Southern Pacific (who paid 44%), Santa Fe (who paid 33%), and Union Pacific (who paid 23%).

ARCHITECTURE - EXTERIOR:

From the outside, the building's appearance suggests an early California Mission with its clock tower, Moorish finial, high arched windows, slanted red tile roofs, and patios. A series of arcades connect the station with low-rise buildings on either side, the whole complex set 200 feet back from the street. In front of the main entrance is a small sunken rose garden with a Moderne-style black marble sundial and Moderne light posts.

ARCHITECTURE - INTERIOR:

While the exterior is charmingly romantic, the interior was created as an up-to-date facility. Because of the influence of the Parkinson's, many features are strongly redolent of 1930s Art Deco, complete with touches of streamlining. Note the original leather-upholstered settees, Venetian blinds, strip panel lighting, and evocative pencil Gothic lettering for much of the signage. As a result, Union Station is one of the nation's few buildings to successfully combine the Spanish Colonial Revival with the Streamline Moderne style.

MAIN ENTRANCE:

The main entrance arch has an extended metal marquee topped by stand-up lettering. The 50-foot-high arch is rimmed with colorful tile work, and within the arch is a panel of patterned concrete and glass. One enters on axis between the ticket booths to the left, the restaurant wing to the right, and the waiting room and trainsheds straight ahead.

TICKET CONCOURSE:

The largest room is the ticket concourse where Spanish Colonial decor is most fully expressed. Lofty and ornate walnut beamed ceilings support 3000-pound circular chandeliers. Tall arched windows are faced with lacy iron grillwork. The 115-foot-long ticket counter is original and is made of American black walnut wood.

Beyond the restrooms at the north end of the concourse, there was once a barber shop. On the southern end, there was a telephone room with its own switchboard - this area has been remodeled as the security offices today. Still present are several small door openings accented by white scalloped shell moldings.

WAITING ROOM:

The upper walls and ceilings of the station's larger rooms are faced with several varieties of acoustical tile, including ground-up corn cobs which help trap bouncing sound. The use of acoustical tile for the reduction of "station echo" was something of a novelty back then. Tile wainscoting, a thin strip of Belgium black marble and travertine add color to the lower walls. Red quarry tile covers most of the floors, except around the edges and down the center, where different strains of marble lie in a pattern suggesting a carpet runner.

Outside light is filtered through the tall windows, which are fitted with amber cathedral glass and Venetian blinds. Night illumination comes from the impressive Spanish-style chandeliers (10 feet in diameter) which hang suspended from the ceiling. Bronze-framed doors lead to the two garden patios on either side of the main waiting area. These patios were seen as an introduction to our beautiful climate and indoor/outdoor lifestyle. The northern patio has tiled benches and a fountain along with plantings of California live oaks and jacaranda trees. The southern patio has enormous fig trees, Mexican fan palms, birds-of-paradise (the official city flower), ginger and orchid trumpet vines.

TRAIN RAMPS:

At the end of the station near the train ramps, the decor shifts markedly to a more functional streamlined style - panels of florescent lighting, stylized columns with gently flaring capitals, and brilliantly tiled drinking fountains with an almost Navajo or Native-American Southwest Indian look. The passenger tunnel leads to 8 ramps and 16 tracks. The loading platforms still have their original butterfly canopies overhead.

OPENING DAY FESTIVITIES:

On May 7th, 1939, Union Station was finally opened to the public after several days of ceremonies and pageantry. From Wednesday, May 3, to Friday, May 5, Los Angeles staged one of the biggest extravaganzas in its history to celebrate the station's opening. There was a parade of floats down Alameda Street attended by half a million people, formal dedication ceremonies hosted by film star Leo Carillo, tours of the new station, and lots of live entertainment. The building was "dedicated to the spirit of private enterprise and the continuing growth of Southern California."

A show entitled "Romance of the Rails" was presented several times daily in a specially constructed 6000-seat amphitheater on the station's tracks. Through narration, music from a men's chorus of railroad workers, and elaborate staging, the show depicted the history of Southern California and its development through transportation. From Promontory Point in Utah to the arrival in Los Angeles of the Southern Pacific in 1876 to the introduction of horse drawn streetcars, the show covered them all. High modern locomotives, brightly decked out in striped bunting, were paraded past the crowds.

HISTORY OF USE:

The new station started modestly after its opening. For the first three years of its operation, Union Station served some 7,000 passengers daily and maintained a staff of 325, not counting railroad ticket sellers or employees of Railway Express and the Pullman Company. An average day saw 33 arrivals and 33 departures into the station - this was to be the norm for the next 20 years.

During World War II, over 100 trains a day ached to carry the loads of uniformed veterans. Trains were SRO - standing room only. After the war, business returned to normal. In 1948, some 66 trains were still going in and out daily. However, the city of Los Angeles then began to spend large sums of public money to improve Mines Air Field in Inglewood. Eventually, it would become Los Angeles International Airport. Airlines moved their flights there from regional airports such as Glendale and El Monte.

The daily number of rail departures from Union Station dropped by two starting in 1953, with two more lines dropped the next year. By the late 1960s, there were only 15 lines in and out. Amtrack, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, began operating to create a more positive attitude towards passenger train travel which continues today.

Currently, big plans call for a multi-million development of the Union Station property. Some envision the historic buildings as a regional transportation center surrounded by highrises. The city and private developers continue to review their options.

RESTAURANT

The once bustling Fred Harvey Restaurant, part of the famous chain of railroad depot eateries, is located in the south end of the station. It was designed by noted architect Mary Colter, who is best known for creating many buildings in the Grand Canyon area such as Hopi House and the Desert Watchtower.

The Harvey House Restaurant at Union Station shows a Moorish influence with a scale more intimate than the station's larger rooms. The arched ceilings still maintain their original metal chandeliers. Cream-colored walls surround tiled wall panels decorated with parrots, and a brightly patterned floor of red, black, and buff cement tile. In the center of the room is the free-standing U-shaped stainless steel lunch counter which seats 27. The booths, including those elevated along the walls, could seat 260. Multi-course meals were served on real china set on linen tablecloths.

There was also an adjacent Art Deco cocktail lounge with a copper sheathed bar, bubble encased mirrors, red strips of indirect lighting, and black marble sinks in the "Powder Room." Frosted glass panels with champagne bubbles and grapes can still be seen around the entrance.

UST:X5

Tommy Tomson, A.S.L.A.

Tommy Tomson was a prominent landscape architect in Southern California during the 1930's and 40's, yet little documentation remains today on either the man or his work. Two projects which received wide acclaim and were attributed to him are the Los Angeles' Union Station and the Santa Anita Raceway. His other work included private gardens for prominent Hollywood movie actors and an office building for Myron Seznick in Beverly Hills.

The south patio at Union Station was designed to advertise the glory of Southern California. As passengers arrived by train they were guided out of the station through the patio which was planted with lush vegetation, olive, pepper, and palm trees. This experience provided visitors with a vivid and memorable entrance to the City.

It is believed that Tomson received no formal schooling but acquired experience through work with local nurseries. He became registered with the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1934 and was listed as residing in Pacific Palisades. For a few years in the mid-thirties he lived and worked in Portland, Oregon, later returning to Southern California. He also kept a house in Palm Desert for which he designed the landscaping.

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