

Collection #
M 0876
OMB 0143

UNION STATION INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA COLLECTION, 1882–1996

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Processed by

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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: Manuscript Materials: 6 manuscript boxes, 2 OMB boxes
Visual Materials: 2 photograph folders, 2 color photograph
folders, 1 OVA color photograph folder

COLLECTION
DATES: 1882–1996

PROVENANCE: Woollen, Molzan & Partners, Inc., Indianapolis, IN, March 2002; City of Indianapolis, IN, August 2002

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: M0780, OMB 0090 (Indianapolis Union railway company Maintenance of Way Department Records); SC 2130 (Union Station Records); P0157 Union Station Visual Collection

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2002.0415; 2002.0692

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Originally built in 1853, Union Station had a dramatic effect on the growth and development of Indianapolis. The station prospered for decades serving up to 200 trains and thousands of people per day, including such notables as Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt and Harry Truman.

To accommodate the increasing number of travelers, Union Station's original depot was replaced in 1888 by a three-story Romanesque-Revival style structure known today as the Grand Hall. Union Station was one of the earliest attempts by a major American city to unite the passenger and express freight services of several competing railroad companies in a single convenient downtown terminal.

In its original form, Union Station possessed a large iron train shed at street level. By the early 1900s, the surface-level train traffic was getting seriously entangled with growing vehicle traffic in the downtown area. The solution was to create an extensive new grade-separated right-of-way through downtown. As part of this project, the original iron train shed was replaced with a new, larger, poured concrete shed in 1916. The new shed offered 12 through passenger and two stub freight and express tracks. It's this combination of 1888 headhouse with 1922 train shed which survives today.

As rail travel declined through the 20th century, Union Station eventually became a dark, ghostly relic of a by-gone era. During the 1960s and 1970s, it suffered from the same pattern of deferred maintenance and slow decline common to most urban terminals. By 1979 the building had become a municipal eyesore, largely vacant and served by only a few trains a day.

In 1982, inspired by the success of adaptive reuse projects in cities like Boston's Faneuil Hall area and Baltimore's Inner Harbor, the city government stepped in and decided to try its hand at a similar project for Union Station. A local developer began a renovation project that turned the facility into an urban festival marketplace. The renovated Union Station opened its doors in 1986, several years and \$50 million later.

The 1888 headhouse became the grand entrance to the complex, housing an upscale restaurant on the former concourse floor. The eastern half of the shed became a festival marketplace, with specialty stores, bars, and a food court, while the western half was converted into a hotel. Four tracks at the north and south ends were retained, and stocked with old

heavyweight Pullmans, which were gutted to the shell and rebuilt with completely new interiors containing two rooms each. Though dressed up in inauthentic colors and lettering, the cars did at least broadly recreate the sightlines and overall images one might have seen along platforms in the 1920s or 1930s.

Faced with declining patronage and continued high maintenance costs, city officials shuttered the mall venture in 1996. Since then, the city has scrambled to find paying tenants for the various parts of the property. The festival marketplace had been torn out, replaced by a go-kart track. The hotel is still in business, now in operation as a Crowne Plaza. The headhouse is essentially vacant, reduced to intermittent use as a ballroom floor for special events at the hotel. When not in use for an event, the building is locked, shuttered, and empty again.

Sources:

Materials in collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of memorabilia from the Union Station in Indianapolis. It is arranged alphabetically by subject. There are accounts receivable ledgers, reports, and other working papers from railroads that used the station. There are also brochures, maps, freight weigh bills, and rule books from the railroad companies. The Pennsylvania Railroad has the most papers, including circulars, maps, brochures, and reports. There is general railroad history: booklets, information about Pullman cars, and clippings.

There is also information from when the station was renovated into a marketplace, including photographs and mockups of the new inside, and flyers for the local sports bar. There are many donations to the “Remember Union Station” program in 1986 which asked people to send in their memories about the building. This includes correspondence, photographs, and artifacts.

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

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1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0876).
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