

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Washington
COUNTY:	Pierce
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

**MAR 15 1974**

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Union Passenger Station

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
1713 Pacific Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:  
Tacoma

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
#6 - Honorable Floyd V. Hicks

STATE: Washington CODE: 53 COUNTY: Pierce CODE: 053

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Burlington-Northern Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER:  
175 East 4th

CITY OR TOWN:  
St. Paul

STATE:  
Minnesota

CODE:  
027

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
County Assessor's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:  
803 County-City Building

CITY OR TOWN:  
Tacoma

STATE:  
Washington

CODE:  
53

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
None

DATE OF SURVEY:  
 Federal  
 State  
 Other  
 Local

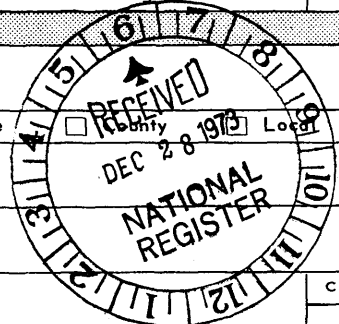
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Tacoma

STATE:  
Washington

CODE:  
53



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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Tacoma's Union Station is a large, domed, masonry structure some three stories high, although only the dome and a single-story can be seen from street level.

The central portion of the building is 108 feet by 123 feet and is flanked by two wings each 47 feet x 106 feet. The central portion beneath the dome is the passenger waiting area; the two smaller wings are used for offices.

The copper sheathed dome rests on four barrel vaults intersecting at right angles. The vaults on the north, east and south sides are quite shallow, being deep enough only to permit the interior balcony above the waiting area. The west side vault, which also serves as the main entrance, is deeper and contains a portion of the balcony as well as the entry way and foyer.

The entrance is a single round sandstone arch about 35 feet high resting on a plinth at street level. The plinth continues around the bottom edge of the central portion and is repeated on each wing. The arch has no keystone and the extrados is not cut from each voussoir but is of separate stones added to the archivolt. The face of the arch is concave and the intrados blends into a masonry decoration. Set into the arch is a heavily decorated iron arch which is divided into three parts by vertical iron columns. Four wood and glass entry doors are in the center section and three doors are in each flanking section. Above the sets of doors are three decorated cast-iron segmented arches and the remaining space above is fitted with lights separated by slender iron mullions. Below the center of the arch, two of the lights form the Northern Pacific emblem.

An entablature decorates the vaults and follows the horizontal lines of the connecting section between the vaults as well. The cornice and architrave are sandstone, but the frieze is the same red brick in Flemish bond which constitutes the majority of the structure. The architrave is marked with a course of plain corbels. A major part of the cornice above the west vault is missing and portions of the architrave are broken.

Rising some 90 feet above street level, the copper dome is perhaps the most striking feature of the Station. The dome is decorated with ribs and other small details and a large cartouche is located at each of the four intersections of the barrel vaults. The dome is topped with a circular flattened cap.

Each wing has three large windows on the street side which run almost the entire height of the walls. They are narrow with a segmented arch and a bordering row of headers outlines each window. The same window design is repeated on the other exterior face of the wings.

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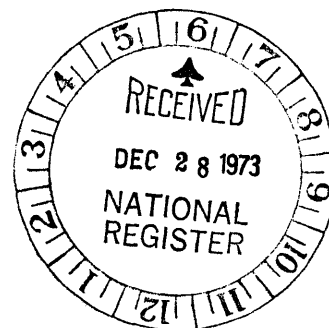
#7 - Description  
Union Passenger Station

The interior floors are terrazzo with mosaic tile detailing and the walls, to the height of the balcony, are Italian marble.

Of course, the most impressive feature of the interior is the dome itself. The interior of the dome is finished with plaster and latitudinal and longitudinal lines divide the surface into a series of grids. The interior face of each arch made by the barrel vaults as they enter the dome are decorated with large plaster ornamentation. A stairway at the base of each pendentive leads to the lower waiting room.

A balcony overlooks the central waiting area and runs across the face of each vault. The balconies are joined by an angled section running through the pendentive. The balconies are decorated with cast iron railings and ornaments including ornate corner brackets. The cast iron work has been dappled with a light green paint, apparently in an attempt to duplicate the appearance of the patina on the copper dome.

Beneath the main waiting room, another waiting room extends over the tracks. This area has few of the architectural qualities that distinguish the main structure. Stairways and elevators lead from this floor to the track level.



**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |  |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1910

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                   | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture  | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                 | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian       | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                   | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  | _____  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Tacoma's Union Station is significant not only for its valuable role as the former transportation center of the city but also for its unusual design and architecture. While many large and more opulent passenger stations were built, few possessed the clean lines and integrity of this structure.

Every railroad station had a utilitarian purpose but it was also something else. Railroad managers knew that a handsome building was an effective advertisement which announced corporate success. They knew also that the terminal was in effect the city gate, the busiest, most important and heavily used way in and out of the community. Aware of their own best interests, railroads cooperated with civic pride to produce structures which visibly demonstrated the importance of rail transport. In Tacoma the concept was the same but its effect was greater. Tacoma was a railroad town and owed its success largely to its selection as the Pacific terminus for the Northern Pacific. The structure would not only have to be an efficient one but would also have to demonstrate the important relationship of the railroad to the city.

Opened for use in 1911, the Station replaced several earlier structures and was designed by Charles Reed and Allen Stern of St. Paul. The architects had gained notoriety several years before with their design of the third Grand Central Station in New York although few elements from the Grand Central can be found in the Tacoma Station.

The architecture of the Station is unusual among railroad designs. Most major passenger depots were very formal structures, drawing heavily on Roman Classicism or Gothic Revival for their inspiration. Almost universally, they had one or more masonry towers rising from gabled roofs yet the Union Station with its large dome resting on four vaults had none of these features. It may have been that the architects found a basic idea in the rusticated stone vestibule designed by Daniel Burnham in 1902 for the Pittsburgh Union Station of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The Tacoma Union Station neatly solved a continuing design problem: how to handle the crowds when the trains were located not at the street level but several floors below. The ticket windows and baggage areas

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Alexander, Edwin P. Down at the Depot. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1970.

Droege, John A. Passenger Terminals and Trains. New York: McGraw Hill, 1916.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

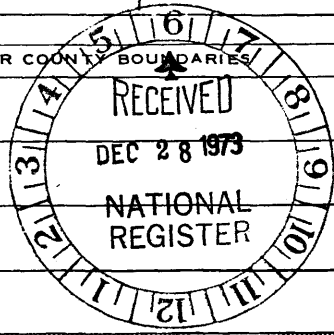
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		47° 14' 47"	122° 26' 06"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

10/542760  
522450  
①

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Carlton D. Lewis, Planning Technician

ORGANIZATION: City of Tacoma DATE: Aug. 21, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER: 340 County-City Building

CITY OR TOWN: Tacoma STATE: Washington CODE: 53

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

National  State  Local

Name Charles H. Odegaard  
Charles H. Odegaard

Title Director - Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission

Date 12/13/73

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Ernest Allen Connolly  
~~Director, Office of Historic Preservation~~  
Associate Director, Professional Services  
MAR 15 1974

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST: Wm. [Signature]  
Keeper of The National Register

Date 3.14.74

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#8 - Significance  
Union Passenger Station

were arranged on the periphery of the central concourse and four large stairways led down to a waiting area below, directly above the tracks. From here, passengers could reach track level either by elevator or stairway. This arrangement simplified both arrivals and departures by eliminating congestion and earned the Station the reputation of being a most efficient design indeed.

The Union Station remains as an important example of depot architecture and is of particular significance to both Tacoma and the Northern Pacific Railroad.

