

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
OCT 8 1975
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED NOV 25 1975

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC Hartford Union Station

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Union Place

--- NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Hartford

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
1st - William Cotter

--- VICINITY OF

STATE Connecticut

CODE
09

COUNTY
Hartford

CODE
003

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<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 type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

Architects' office

NAME The Connecticut Company

STREET & NUMBER 53 Vernon Street

CITY, TOWN Hartford

STATE
CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Hartford City Clerk

STREET & NUMBER 550 Main Street

CITY, TOWN Hartford

STATE
CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

DATE 1975 MAEK FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN Hartford

STATE
CT

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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

Hartford Union Station occupies an entire downtown block adjacent to Bushnell Park. The area is one of street-level commercial activity and multi-story buildings of various heights. The station consists of a large three-story central mass flanked by two somewhat smaller two-story wings, all rectangular in plan. The whole building is constructed of brownstone from Portland, Connecticut, cut into large, rough-faced blocks, and is in the Romanesque style created by H. H. Richardson.

The facade of the central part is composed of a series of similar rounded arches which frame the main entrance and eight large windows. Above these is a molding of stylized floral design, and above this, a second series of smaller, round-arched windows. The latter feature, however, is a reworking of the original design, in which a gable roof rose from just above the molding. Steeply gabled wall dormers projected from the main roof above each of the large arches, thus relieving the excessive linearity of the present configuration. This unit contains the high-ceilinged main waiting area. Many interior details and furnishings - a mural above the stairs leading to the platform, the ticket counter, a central information desk, some benches - while not original, date from 1914 and together with the sheer volume of the room, evoke something of the original milieu.

Adjoining the main part of the building on each side are two almost identical wings which contain other waiting and service areas. The facade of each is defined by two rows of deep-set rectangular windows. While those of the first story are small, the upper windows are larger and are divided into two lights by stone transoms. Both sets are spaced along the facade in clusters of three and five, with some single openings. The steep gable roof, covered with Spanish tile, is parallel to the street, and on each side, there barely protrude three small shed dormers. The ends have the same window treatment as the front, and in addition have in the gable a set of three small windows whose arches are supported by colonnettes. An octagonal pinnacled tower is placed at both corners facing the street. The rough stonework of these side wings is relieved by a course of smaller smoother stone at midpoint. Their attics are still being used by the railroad for storage of records.

The station is laid out parallel to the tracks in the basic one-sided plan. Since the entire platform is one story above street level, access to further tracks is simply by corridors and stairs. The four tracks are sheltered by two train sheds and a roof attached to the station. The latter is supported by a series of large iron brackets of spiral form. The sheds are carried on exposed iron trusses which are supported by iron columns and simple curved brackets.

The most serious alterations to the building were made necessary by the 1914 fire which destroyed the roof and gutted the interior. The waiting room was refurbished, but the original gable roof was replaced by the flat, steel fire-proof roof which covers the central part now. Other changes have resulted from normal wear, but because of the plight of rail transportation, repairs have been deferred. Finally, the curtailment of rail service has forced a certain amount of retrenchment from the station's original appearance: the street entrance to the platform has been closed off, as have secondary entrances to the main waiting area, the further tracks are no longer used, and parts of the station have been turned to other uses, including office space, a school and a bus terminal. This reuse, however, has in no way endangered the integrity of the building. Indeed, the area is the subject of attempts by a private foundation to preserve both the physical appearance and the busy, commercial feel of a railroad terminal and its environs.

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CONTINUATION SHEET	ITEM NUMBER	PAGE
Hartford Union Station	4	one

Whereas the land and building are owned by the Connecticut Company, the platforms and train sheds are owned by the railroad.

Penn Central Transportation Company
6 Penn Center Plaza
Philadelphia PA

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input 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 checked="" 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 1889 - completed BUILDER/ARCHITECT George Keller, architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Hartford's Union Station is significant as both an historical and an architectural resource. When it was built in 1889 it was the largest and most costly station in the state, and its proportions and style make clear the importance of the railroad in nineteenth-century society. As a well-executed example of a major style, it provides a link with the aesthetics of the previous century.

Hartford in 1887 was a major New England transportation center. Five railroads served the city, and there were separate routes connecting it with Boston, Providence, Saybrook, New Haven, Danbury and Poughkeepsie, with two routes to Springfield. The first passenger station was outgrown in 1850, and by 1887, the traffic had again overburdened the facilities. Moreover, as the number of trains increased, the grade level crossing and platform of the second station became more dangerous. Work was begun on the present station in 1887 and completed in 1889. Hartford was a growing commercial city whose many financial institutions depended upon the communication and transportation network provided by the trains. The new station was a symbol of Hartford's vitality and the railroads which contributed to its growth.

Union Station is an example of the proliferation of Romanesque design which followed the death in 1886 of H. H. Richardson. The effect of the style was well suited to such a building: simple forms enclose large interior spaces, while the exterior features create a feeling of massiveness and monumentality appropriate to the status of a major urban station. A wide range of Romanesque vocabulary is encompassed in this building - the rusticated, massive stone, the arcaded facade, steep gabled roofs, small dormers, deep window reveals, towers, medieval moldings. Yet George Keller, who did not get credit for the design, showed more than an academic familiarity with Richardsonian detail. The overall effect is one of honesty and strength, evoked by large simple forms, free from conceits, and set off with controlled, even terse, ornamentation.

In initial appearance the train sheds and platform shelter, as well as the similar south entrance marquise, offer a contrast to the heaviness of the building: their exposed iron trusses and supports create an air of lightness. Nevertheless, there is a common revelation of structure in both the supportive iron work and the stone arches, and this enhances the contrast inherent in the materials themselves. There is, moreover, a functional consideration in this contrast: while the Romanesque is well suited to enclosing large spaces, it is difficult to imagine a Romanesque train shed (colonnades?) which could shelter without pretension.

Finally, the architectural impact of the station is heightened by its position adjacent to Bushnell Park (a National Register property). Keller also designed its most prominent ornament, the Memorial Arch, which is similar in both material and style to the station. Hartford has few examples of such continuity.

