

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received **AUG 28 1986**

date entered **SEP 25 1986**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Union Station

and/or common Danbury Passenger Station

**2. Location**

street & number White Street and Patriot Drive N/A \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Danbury N/A \_\_\_ vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Fairfield code 001

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name State of Connecticut Dept. of Transportation: Wm. Lynch, Director of Rail Operations Attention: Jack Reidy

street & number 24 Wolcott Hill Road

city, town Wethersfield N/A \_\_\_ vicinity of state Ct.

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Danbury City Hall

street & number 155 Deer Hill Avenue

city, town Danbury state Ct. 06810

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no

date 1986 \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town 59 S. Prospect Street, Hartford state Ct. 06106

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Danbury's Union Station, owned by the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation, is located on an approximately one-and-one-half acre parcel of land east of downtown Danbury between White Street to the north and railroad tracks to the east and southwest. A modest parking lot for 25 cars separates the building from White Street to the north.

The building is a one-story, eclectic brick structure, 99' x 123'. It is L-shaped, consisting of two rectangular, gable-roofed wings placed perpendicular to one another. The two wings conform to the alignment of the tracks which curve from northeast to south, to the south of the building, and which parallel its east elevation (Photographs 1, 4, Figure 1). Each wing terminates in an octagonal facade which contains an entry and faces a set of tracks. These facades are its visual focus, as the gable roofs of the wings splay into three sections over the end bays to create the octagonal effect. An additional octagonal section, also facing the tracks to the south, projects from the intersection of the two wings (Photographs 3,4,5). The roofing material, originally slate, has been replaced with roll asphalt. In addition, the original cresting and a small hip-roofed dormer in the north elevation were removed in the 1950s. A single brick chimney rises from the intersection of the gables in the center of the building.

The building is of buff and brown brick, with lintels and sills of smooth brown sandstone accenting windows and doors. Original doors, windows, and transoms are largely intact, although several windows and transoms have been boarded up. The doors are double, semi-glazed and with three panels in each leaf. Each has a leaded, multi-light transom (Photographs 6,7). Fenestration is mainly uniform, consisting of long rectangular openings with double-hung, one-over-one sash, but there is considerable variation throughout the structure, concessions to the demands of the interior. Flanking the southwest facade are double-hung windows which create the effect of sidelights. In adjacent bays are small paired, multi-light windows, a single example of which can also be found to the north of the entry in the west facade. Fenestration in the east elevation wall, the interior of which faces the general waiting room with its high wainscoting, consists of banks of small windows. A pair of these, to the south of an entry, are identified on the original floor plans as transom windows, with hoods, bulging bases, and small recessed sash. Balancing this pair of transom windows on the other side of the entry is a bank of four small windows of similar size but without elaborate surrounds. A single transom window is in the north elevation (Photograph 8).

Originally, a bracketed wooden roof which sheltered the passenger platforms ran beneath the eaves along the entire perimeter of the building and connected with cover sheds which extended the shelter to the north and east (Figure 1). These were also removed during the 1950s when they became physically deteriorated and passenger service was in decline.

The building's interior is largely intact. At present, only the former express room remains in active use as a waiting room. Partitions created a ticket window and a rest room in this room and a dropped ceiling was

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installed beneath the deteriorating wooden ceiling, but the original matchstick wainscoting and benches remain (Photograph 9). A bank of three entries in the north elevation (now kept locked) admitted passengers into the main entrance hall, a space 32' x 46' which in turn leads through a basket-handle arch of brick into the general waiting room (Photographs 10, 11). Walls in both rooms have matchstick wainscoting and high chair rails, and are clad in vertical wood sheathing in the entrance hall but in the waiting room are of painted brick or plaster. Doors in the east wall of the entrance hall lead to rest rooms and a baggage room, no longer in use. The general waiting room, 74' x 40', is located in the south wing and is the largest room in the station. To the east of the entry arch is a brick fireplace with mantel and with floral molded brick used as ornament (Photograph 12). The room also contains the original ticket window. Doors and windows have molded architrave surrounds of varnished pine (Photographs 13, 14, 15). Small rooms used by the track signal department in the south wing and for the telegraph office in the octagonal projection in the center of the building are presently not available for inspection.

# 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Criteria A, C

**Specific dates** 1902 **Builder/Architect** A. Malkin, builder

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Union Station is significant to the history of Danbury as its former center of rail transportation (Criterion A) and is also significant as a good example of a turn-of-the-century railroad passenger depot. Its style is eclectic, with Richardsonian and Colonial Revival references in the hip roof and use of a sidelight arrangement of windows in one facade, but is distinguished primarily for its workmanship and the integrity of its interior (Criterion C).

The station, completed in July, 1902, has seen continuous service in its original use. It was built at a cost of approximately \$23,000 by the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad, popularly known at the time as the Consolidated road. The Consolidated road had acquired control over the three major rail lines which served Danbury during the nineteenth century and which had been key elements in the city's rise to national prominence as the leading center of hat manufacturing in the country.

Historically, Danbury's valley location near the New York border and its early founding date in 1684 made it a crossroads for inland transportation routes that developed in the northern Fairfield County region. After the American Revolution, a network of turnpikes terminated or crossed in the town, and a number of Danbury individuals were at the center of early efforts to promote canals and railroads as routes to market for its growing manufacturing interests, particularly hats. The first successful rail connection was a purely localized effort, the Danbury & Norwalk Railroad. Completed in March, 1852, it connected Danbury travelers and manufacturers with the New York and New Haven Railroad at Norwalk. This improvement in transportation sparked a wave of growth which saw the industrialization of the local hatting trade and a doubling of population within a decade. In 1871 a branch of the Housatonic line, which ran between Bridgeport in the south and Pittsfield, Massachusetts, was completed between Bethel, on the Danbury & Norwalk line, and Hawleyville, on the Housatonic. In 1881, the completion of the New York & New England Railroad, a major east-west carrier between Boston and the New York Central at Brewster, New York, placed Danbury once again at a crossroads, this time of major rail routes, and sparked another wave of industrial, commercial, and population growth during the 1880s which culminated in the issuance of a city charter in 1889. The Housatonic Railroad leased the Danbury & Norwalk in 1886 and in turn was acquired by the Consolidated road in 1892. The New York & New England went into bankruptcy the following year and also came under the control of the Consolidated road. It became the New York Division of the Consolidated road, while the former Housatonic/Danbury & Norwalk became the Highland Division.

Each of these previously independent lines had built their own passenger and freight stations on Main or White Street. However, as early as 1894 the Consolidated road received petitions from Danbury to construct a new

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.25

Quadrangle name Danbury

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<u>18</u>	<u>630</u>	<u>640</u>	<u>458</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>10</u>
	Zone	Easting		Northing			

B							
	Zone	Easting		Northing			

C							
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D							
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E							
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F							
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G							
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H							
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

N/A

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title William E. Devlin, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Danbury Preservation Trust date 1/22/86

street & number P.O. Box 2201 telephone 748-0094

city or town Danbury state Connecticut

# 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), 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date 8/20/86

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

*John A. ...*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 9/25/86  
National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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station. Finally, in 1901 tracks were realigned and Union Station was constructed on the former site of the passenger depot of the New York & New England. The new station was said at the time to be "one of the largest station buildings on the New York Division."<sup>1</sup>

During the early twentieth century, Danbury was an important railroad center. At the time the station was built, it served a large number of passengers, as 125 passenger trains a day stopped in Danbury, by actual count of railroad schedules.<sup>2</sup> The trains were used extensively by business travelers enroute to or from the more than fifty firms in the city which manufactured hats or related products. Employment in hatting was seasonal, based on Easter and Christmas sales, and hatters used the trains extensively in traveling to or from other hatting centers in search of work. The station also served residents of nearby rural towns who worked in Danbury factories, shopped in its commercial district, or attended the only high school in the region. Some Danburians commuted between the city and New York or Bridgeport. Finally, the station saw seasonal influxes of summer boarders, and an even larger influx in early October, when special trains brought crowds to the Danbury Fair, the largest event of its kind in Connecticut. As the center of transportation, Union Station served an important function in presenting a positive face for the city. In 1913 a large electric sign, in the shape of a crown inside a derby hat and emblazoned with the slogan "Danbury Crowns Them All," was erected on the roof of a coal shed opposite the station, greeting travelers until sometime in the 1930s, when it was destroyed by a storm. Passenger rail service declined after World War II, and during the 1950s the station's cover sheds and bracketed roof and other ornamental features were removed. In 1965 the New Haven Railroad began receiving federal subsidies, and the following year the Pennsylvania Railroad took over the New Haven's passenger service, and in 1968 became, with other bankrupt railroads, Penn Central. In 1973 Consolidated Railroad Corporation, or Conrail, took over the Penn Central freight lines, while the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation took over passenger service, and with it ownership of Union Station. The main part of the station was abandoned after the last train ran on the Pittsfield run in 1972. A small ticket window in the former express room continues to serve travelers and a small number of commuters who use a Budd car to Norwalk. Most of the space in the station is now unused.

Union Station's design reflects Danbury's traditional roles as a transportation crossroads and a busy center of commerce and manufacturing. The station is a variation on a prototype developed by an architect or architects for the New York, New Haven and Hartford line. It strongly resembles the passenger stations built by the line in Torrington in 1898 and in Stamford in 1896. All of these stations are one-story structures of yellow or light brown brick, with eclectic stylistic features, long cover sheds, identical transom windows, and interior matchstick wainscoting. The style of the Danbury station is eclectic, influenced by H. H. Richardson's stations of two decades earlier but with Colonial Revival

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references in the form of small-paned windows, and particularly the sidelight arrangement of windows in the south facade. The use of octagonal facades, the alignment of shapes with the two sets of tracks, and the sweeping cover sheds, now gone, gave Danbury's Union Station an unusually dramatic appearance. Union Station combines elements of several usually distinct functional types of railroad depots, a combination which is unique and which says much about Danbury. It is, first, a union station, built at the intersection of two different railroad lines with tracks coming from different directions and with its shapes aligned with the different sets of tracks. Second, it is a commuter station. Its interior arrangement, with the especially large waiting room and entrance hall served by multiple entrances and spacious rest rooms, with other operations consigned to separate, subordinate quarters, clearly facilitated the movement and catered to the convenience of hundreds of passengers at a time. Finally, the size and scale of Union Station make it a small city station, defined by Harold A. Edmondson and Richard V. Francaviglia as often "rivalling the proportions of their big-city counterparts.. Roofs were usually made of tar paper, slate, or tile, and they often had wide, overhanging eaves. Interior plans typically called for a waiting room, rest rooms, telegraph offices, a baggage room, and, sometimes, a women's retiring room" all of which are found in Union Station.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, despite the loss of exterior ornamental features, Union Station is otherwise a good example of a turn-of-the-century passenger station, particularly in its large interior spaces.

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<sup>1</sup> Danbury News, October 15, 1901, page 6.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Tom Barry, railroad historian and producer of "The Last Train to Pittsfield," May 20, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Edmondson, Harold A., and Francaviglia, Richard V., The Railroad Station Planbook, Milwaukee: Kalmbach Books, 1977.

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Boundaries as shown on attached survey. Union Station is the public portion of the railroad property owned by the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation. The tracks, freight yards and associated buildings to the south are not included in this nomination.

