

DATA SHEET

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
FEB 20	1975

1. NAME

COMMON:
Union Station

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Exchange Terrace

CITY OR TOWN:
Providence (Cong. District: Beard - 2)

STATE: Rhode Island CODE: 44 COUNTY: Providence CODE: 007

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

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Ownership Multiple (in question)

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Providence City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:
Dorrance and Washington Streets

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:
Providence Rhode Island 44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Interface: Providence and R. I. Hist. Preservation Comm.

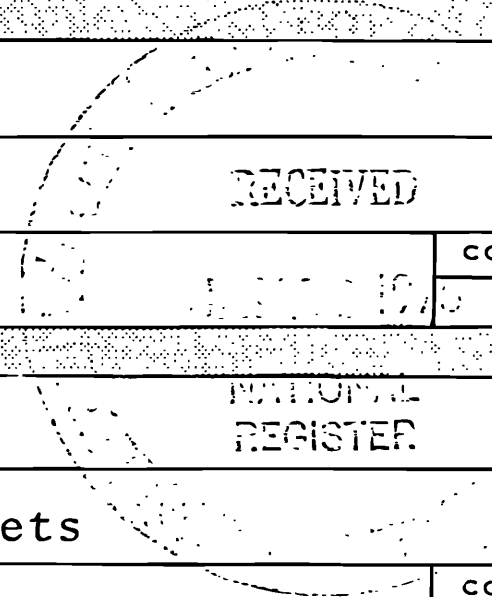
DATE OF SURVEY: in progress Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:
Providence Rhode Island 44

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER: FEB 20 1975

DATE: FEB 20 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Union Station is set on a low artificial hill at the northern edge of a large public open space. It was designed by the firm of Stone, Carpenter and Willson and was built by the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad between 1896-98. The station complex originally consisted of five buildings symmetrically arranged on axis, all with granite foundations, yellow mottled brick walls, and red sandstone trim. The eastern most section of the station burned in 1941, and the four remaining buildings were painted grey in 1952.

The main building of the complex serves as a passenger terminal. It comprises two sections. The front (south) portion is a two story hip-roofed brick block about 220 feet by 65 feet. The rear portion, covered by a sawtooth roof, is a one story brick block about 280 feet by 45 feet. On the exterior of the southern section, monumental Tuscan pilasters support an entablature with modillioned cornice and dentil frieze. They also divide the wall surface into three bays along each side and seven bays across the front. Each bay contains two shorter pilasters and an entablature which acts as a stringcourse, separating the first story from the second. A 60-foot tall triumphal arch breaks forward from the main mass to form the center bay of the south facade, and two small one story wings extend from each side of it across the adjacent bays. The main entrance at the foot of this arch (the upper part is glazed and houses a large glass-faced clock) has four polished columns: two between the three outer doors and two between the three inner doors.

The interior of the main block is one large rectangular space partitioned into various service areas. In the waiting room pilasters corresponding to those outside, support massive ceiling beams of steel and wood. These beams intersect to form giant coffers, which are filled with embossed steel panels. The floor is terazzo on concrete, with an 18-inch wide Greek fret mosaic border. Eleven 13-foot double-faced wooden benches occupy the east end of the room, while a restaurant (now closed) takes up the west end. A partition and a mezzanine, erected to provide kitchen space for the restaurant, run across two bays of the west wall, obscuring them from view. The center bay of the south wall and the northernmost bay of both the east and west walls all contain entrances (ramps slope from the waiting room floor down to the two side entrances). The rest of the bays have windows arranged in two registers, one at the ground floor level and one at the clerestory level. The clerestory windows all have decorative metal grilles of "Roman" design. The waiting room is in poor condition. The brown paint on its ceiling is peeling badly, and the thin wood veneer applied to its walls is cracking and curling up. The interior was originally finished all in white: white plaster walls, white glazed brick wainscot, and white painted metal ceiling. One can now see some of the original glazed brick wall cover on the east wall (it was exposed when a bank of old phone booths was ripped out about four years ago).

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

(See Continuation Sheet 1)

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

(Continuation Sheet) - 1

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
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(Number all entries)

7. Description (Continued)

North of the waiting room is the second section of the building. Its center part, about 45 feet square, opens from the waiting room through to a steel-framed glass and hardboard passenger shelter on the platform. Two glass display cases were installed in the center of this concourse in 1952. To the west of this passageway, an area about 60 feet by 45 feet is divided into men's rooms, a trainmaster's office, a newsstand, a police station, and a baggage room (the newsstand and police station have been abandoned; the baggage room was originally furnished as a barbershop). To the east of the passageway, an area of equal size is divided into women's rooms, a ticket booth, a ticket office, and a five-room office suite for the station superintendent (the ticket area was once occupied by a candy and tobacco store, while the ticket and information booths were located in the arch-wings on both sides of the main entrance).

Subways run under the platform of the inner tracks, providing safe access from the terminal to the outer tracks. The entrances to the subways are located at each end of the rear section of the terminal. The east subway has been boarded up since 1952, but the west subway is still open, except for its outermost part.

Granite colonnades once stood at each end of the passenger terminal, linking it to the neighboring buildings and sheltering the subway entrances. These colonnades were removed in 1952, and a glass and hardboard shelter was erected over the entrance to the west subway at that time. The immense iron and glass train shed over the platform was also demolished in 1952, and was replaced by several T-shaped canopies. In 1954, the iron and glass porte-cochère in front of the station was taken down and replaced by a much smaller aluminum awning. ✓

To the east of the terminal building is the REA Express building. It is a two story brick block with a high granite basement, and measures approximately 72 feet by 84 feet. It has a classic cornice like that of the terminal, and a hipped roof with a massive chimney rising from its center. Stringcourses separate the first and second floors, and the window rhythm demarcates five bays across the front and three bays along each side. The sides of the building have been altered somewhat (e.g. a garage door and a fire escape have been installed on the east side), but the character of the building has not been changed much by these alterations. Inside, the wooden floors are of heavy mill-type construction, and the partitions are built of brick. This building was once used for baggage, but has been used for express service since the express building burned down in 1941 (the basement of the express building still survives; it is paved over and is used as a loading area by REA trucks). ✓

(see Continuation Sheet 2)

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

(Continuation Sheet) - 2

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
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(Number all entries)

7. Description (Continued)

To the west of the passenger terminal is a building equal in size and similar in design to the REA building. This structure once housed the station restaurant, but the restaurant was moved into the waiting room soon after the station was opened, and the building was subsequently used as a baggage room and a railroad telephone exchange. A wooden addition was built onto the back of the building in 1942. Baggage facilities were moved into the main building in 1971; this building now houses the station complex boiler room in its basement, and some telephone relays on its second floor. The most remarkable features of the restaurant building are the large recessed entry in the center of the east side, and a fireplace with carved floral designs which once graced the dining room.

The railroad office building stands to the west of the restaurant building. It is a three story brick block with a granite basement, measuring about 124 feet by 65 feet. It has the same classic cornice and hipped roof that the other buildings have. The basement floor, located above ground level, has two segmental-arched entrances, one in the center of the south side and one in the middle of the west side. The two end bays of the south front project slightly, and the section between them is divided by pilasters into nine bays at the first floor level. The east and west sides are divided into five bays. All the floors are marked by string-courses, with a double line running between the first and second floors. Inside, the building has a combination of concrete, asphalt tile, and wooden floors, along with a variety of brick, frame and plaster, and wooden partitions. This building, once used for railroad offices, is now vacant.

Today, Union Station is in a state of extreme disrepair. Maintenance of the complex has been almost totally ignored for twenty years. The few "repairs" that have been made (e.g., removing the colonnades and train shed) have generally been detrimental in nature. In spite of this, the station is still structurally sound, and it retains a hint of its former grandeur.



SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1896-98**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input 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

The significance of Union Station lies primarily in its great impact on the evolution of Providence's urban form. Before the station was built, the city's railroad facilities were squeezed in between the central business district and an elliptical Cove basin. Grade level tracks approached from the west and ran off to the north, isolating the CBD from a developing industrial area to the northwest and from the largely undeveloped land on Smith Hill to the north. As the volume of train traffic expanded, this arrangement became increasingly unsafe and inadequate. In 1889, after sixteen years of study, the city adopted a plan which called for filling in the Cove basin and constructing an elevated station and track system on its site, with underpassing through streets. Though it had its opponents, the plan provided the best solution to the many complex problems involved. In accordance with its proposals, the Cove was filled in 1892, a step which radically altered the city's character.

Implementation of the railroad plan inspired the formulation of a comprehensive design scheme for central Providence. A proposal was made to develop the large open space in front of the station as a public square, with a new Federal building opposite the City Hall, and Smith Hill was chosen as the site for a new State House, largely because the provision for a street under the station would enable the laying out of a boulevard from City Hall to the capitol.

In light of these concepts, plans for a Richardsonian style station was abandoned, and a new classically detailed station was designed which harmonized more closely with the Renaissance-inspired architecture of the City Hall and State House.

The station was built between 1896-98, and the State House between 1895-1901. In 1908 an academic classic Federal Building was erected facing City Hall, completing the scheme first envisioned for Exchange Place back in 1894.

Unfortunately, not all of the design proposals were realized. The boulevard from City Hall to the State House was never laid out, and the area between the rear of the station and the foot of the capitol terrace, once to have been a park, is now largely given over to parking lots.

(See Continuation Sheet 3)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Cady, John Hutchins: The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950 (Providence, 1957), pp. 179, 194-5, 201.
 2. R. L. Banks and Associates, Inc. and Real Estate Research Corp.: Primary Economic Feasibility Appraisal, Railroad Relocation Project No. R.I. R-8, Providence, R.I. (1963), pp. B-20, B-22, B-25, B-26, B030.
 3. Dubiel, Frank P.: Union Station, Providence, R.I. (pamphlet published by the author; Fall River, Mass., 1974) pp. 31-3, 63, 67-70.
 4. Public Park Association: "Rhode Island State House on Smith Hill, Grand Boulevard, pamphlet No. 10" (Providence, probably 1892), p.5.
- (See continuation Sheet 3)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

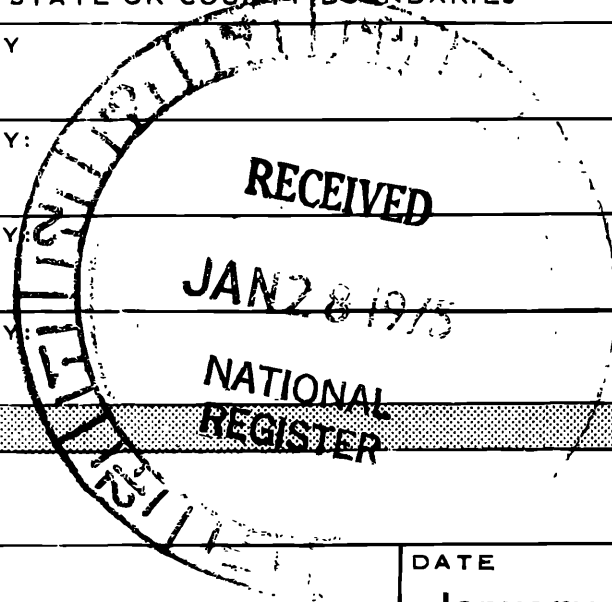
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "	SEE CONTINUATION SHEET 3	° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

UTM
OK
(see cont. sheet)
HL

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **5**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Robert Jones**

ORGANIZATION: **Interface: Providence** DATE: **January, 1975**

STREET AND NUMBER: **101 Dyer Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Providence** STATE: **Rhode Island** CODE: **44**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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: *Dwight R. Williams*

Title: **State Historic Preservation Officer**

Date: **January 23, 1975**

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

A. B. Wortsense
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: *7/20/75*

ATTEST:

Ronald M. Greenberg
Keeper of The National Register

Date: *2/20/75*

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

(Continuation Sheet) - 3

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
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(Number all entries)

8. Significance (continued)

As the railroad lost its importance, people came to criticize the station's location. They bemoaned the loss of the Cove, and complained that the elevated station was a "Chinese wall", and an undesirable barrier through the core of the city. With the revival of interest in rail travel, however, people are beginning to appreciate the station's proximity to the central business district. There is great interest in renovating the huge spaces of Union Station for use as an intermodal terminal, and in completing the great park once planned for the area behind the station. Union Station is the keystone of yet another urban design program for Providence. Always a major physical presence in the city, it can once again be a vital part of the community.

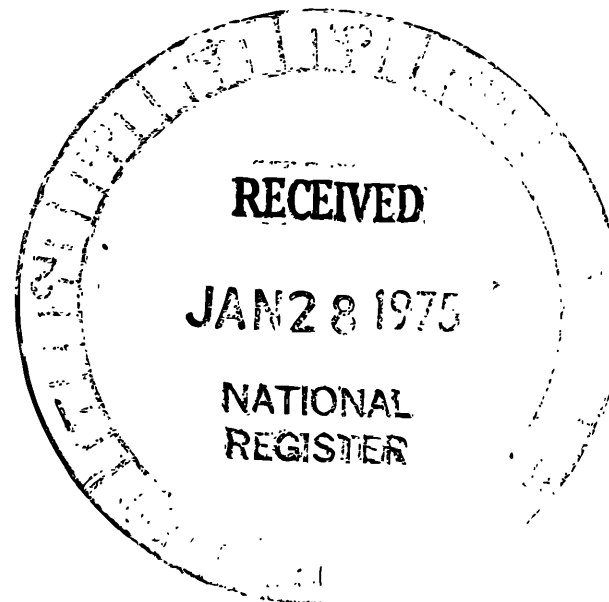
9. Major Bibliographical References (continued)

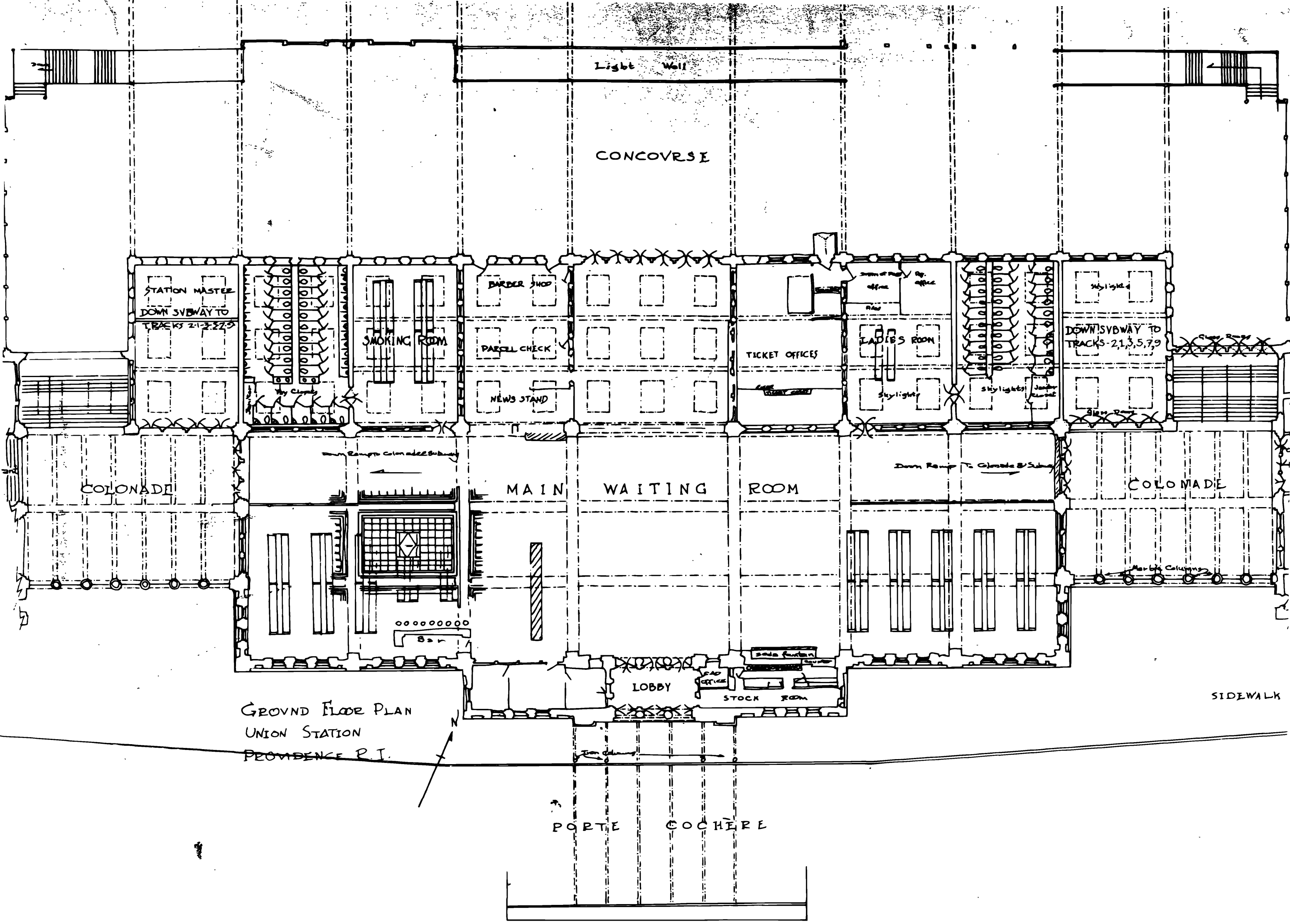
5. The Providence Journal, article on Union Station in the following issues:

- 13 June 1889, p. 4
- 29 December 1891, p. 3
- 11 November 1893, p. 4
- 5 February 1894, p. 3
- 23 February 1896, p. 16
- 18 September 1898, p. 20

10. Geographical Data

NWA	19	299400	4633000
- NE B	19	299640	4633100
SE C	19	299660	4633040
SW D	19	299430	4632940





GROVND FLOOR PLAN
UNION STATION
PROVIDENCE R.I.

Light Well

CONCOURSE

STATION MASTER
DOWN SUBWAY TO
TRACKS 2, 3, 5, 7, 9

SMOKING ROOM

BARBER SHOP

PARCEL CHECK

NEWS STAND

TICKET OFFICES

LADIES ROOM

DOWN SUBWAY TO
TRACKS 2, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9

COLONADE

MAIN WAITING ROOM

COLONADE

LOBBY

STOCK ROOM

SIDEWALK

PORTE COCHÈRE

Union Station

Pierhead

Rhode Island

Tracing of plans