**SITE FILE COPY**

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory - Nomination Form

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

**COMMON:**
Union Station

**AND/OR HISTORIC:**
(Kansas City) Union Station

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET AND NUMBER:**
Pershing Road & Main Street *

**CITY OR TOWN:**
Kansas City

**STATES CODE COUNTY:**
Missouri 64108 29 Jackson 095

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

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**PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate):**

- Agricultural
- Government
- Park
- Transportation
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Private Residence
- Other (Specify)
- Educational
- Military
- Religious
- Scientific
- Entertainment
- Museum
- Religious
- Scientific

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

**OWNER'S NAME:**
Kansas City Terminal Railway Company

**STREET AND NUMBER:**
Union Station

**CITY OR TOWN:**
Kansas City

**STATE: CODE:**
Missouri 64108 29

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:**
Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Jackson

**STREET AND NUMBER:**
County Courthouse (Kansas City Annex), 12th and Oak Streets

**CITY OR TOWN:**
Kansas City

**STATE: CODE:**
Missouri 64106 29

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

**TITLE OF SURVEY:**
Missouri's Contribution to American Architecture (John A. Bryan)

**DATE OF SURVEY:**
1928

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:**
Published: St. Louis: St. Louis Architectural Club, 1928

**STREET AND NUMBER:**
n.a.

**CITY OR TOWN:**
n.a.

**STATE: CODE:**
n.a. 29

*Congressional District 05 The Hon. Richard Bolling House of Representatives
6. (Kansas City) UNION STATION

Missouri State Historical Survey (state) 1971
Missouri State Park Board
P.O. Box 176
1204 Jefferson Building
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101 Code: 29
7. (KANSAS CITY) UNION STATION

The Kansas City Union Station is a monumental scale, "T" plan, railroad station designed by Jarvis Hunt, Chicago architect, in the Beaux-Arts Classic style. The building was constructed primarily of grey-white Bedford limestone and polished New England granite. The station was opened in 1914. The structure is oriented approximately 15° east of north-south, and is located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Pershing Road and Main Street in Kansas City, Missouri. The building and its appurtenant structures cover an area of 5.57 acres.

EXTERIOR

Main Block
The building is reminiscent of the large-scale spaces and facade treatment of a Roman bath. Three major arches, each nearly 90 feet in height, create a vast openness on both long sides of the rectangular-plan, 510 x 150 foot, front block. The front block, or headhouse, stands 126 feet high above the surface of the south parking lot, formerly a plaza.

Each arch is flanked by columns, giving paired columns to either side of the central arch on the primary (south) facade. The wall protrudes in a massive pylon at either end of the long sides of the main block. The walls are granite at the base and limestone above. Each course of stone blocks is rusticated for half the height of the walls and columns. The upper halves of the flanking pylons have alternating courses of rusticated and flat-faced stone.

The entablature design is based on the Roman Doric Order with Beaux-Arts mannerisms. The pediments are unornamented. A parapet wall rises above the entablature. Podiums topping each pylon, and above the apex of both pediments, suggest that acroteria originally intended for the building were never installed.

On the primary facade the arch stonework is refined by a concave surface immediately surrounding each window. This surface enriches the visual impact of the building by dramatizing the multi-planar wall surface varying from thick, stone masonry to a broad expanse of paned glass in the round-arched windows.

The primary entranceways to the building are through doorways under the two side arches on the south facade. Both main entranceways have metal and glass marquees extending over a broad sidewalk in front of the building. The central, arched window frames a monumental podium, apparently also intended to receive an ornamental sculpture which was never installed.

The pedimented end walls of the main block have a single, large window centered under the entablature.
7. (KANSAS CITY) UNION STATION

Side Wings
The side wings are three stories high with masonry courses of alternating rusticated and flat-faced limestone on a polished granite base. The three exposed walls of both wings have five windows on each floor plus a terminal pavilion at their distal corners. The pavilions rise higher than the roof of the rest of the side wings and have one window on each floor centered on each face. Each tier of three windows is framed by a pair of recessed columns, and set in a niche. Each of these four end pavilions could also have served as a podium for ornamental sculpture.

Rear "T"
The rear "T" extends 450 feet north bridging the through track system which serves the station. This portion of the building joins the front main block at the central third of the rear (north) wall. The length of this extension approximately equals the length of the front block plus side wings. The "T" has 8 bays each containing a segment arch window in the clerestory and a flat arch window in the main story. Stone mullions partition each window into thirds.

INTERIOR
The front main block houses the 240 x 100 foot ticket lobby. The ceiling is 108 feet high. The lobby is the major circulation area and service center for the station facility.

The side wings house terminal company offices, baggage service areas, and a restaurant. A large clock is suspended from the soffit of the archway connecting the front main lobby with the waiting room in the rear "T."

The rear "T" was, until recent months the waiting room. East and west doorways in the waiting room open into the intermediary Midway, or concourse, which connects by means of stairways and escalators to the tracks below. Persons arriving from trains are channeled through the east and west concourses toward the ticket lobby rather than into the waiting room. The design thereby provides for separate ingress and egress. Active involvement in meeting or leaving trains was also separated from the more sedentary activity of awaiting trains. The waiting room is now partitioned off with a wood panel. Passengers now wait in the ticket lobby.

Marble in varying, warm, rosy-brown shades was used as the predominate interior finish on floors and walls. The original light fixtures and other fittings are in place. The rooms have flat ceilings, heavily coffered in ornamental plaster.
7. **KANSAS CITY UNION STATION**

The major alteration to the interior is the removal of original waiting benches and installation of plastic seats within recent years, and additions of various service machines. The ticket counter has been altered from its original semi-circular plan; and the restaurant arrangement and decor are of recent design. In 1947 escalators were installed to augment vertical circulation between the tracks and the waiting room above. The remainder of the building survives with a high degree of original fabric undisturbed.

**Setting**

A parking lot served by a circle drive off Pershing Road creates a broad, open area in front of the station enabling passers-by to view the entire facade.

A roofed driveway entrance is located at the extreme west end of the building beyond the west side wing.

The rear "T" provides access by stairways and escalators to the tracks over which it is built. There is no train shed per se. Passengers were sheltered by platform canopies. The area being nominated to the National Register includes most of the tracks immediately adjacent to the building.

To the south the building faces the Liberty Memorial (designed by Harold Van Buren Magonigle, dedicated November 11, 1926), a Kansas City monument to World War I Veterans, set at the edge of a limestone bluff. A small park, named Washington Park, is located east of the station. Crown Center, a major new commercial development, is currently under construction at the southeast corner of the intersection of Pershing Road and Main Street.

**FOOTNOTES**


8. **KANSAS CITY UNION STATION**

Kansas City's Union Station, opened on October 30, 1914, is significant as: 1) a monumentally proportioned Beaux-Arts Classic style railroad terminal building; 2) the most prominent architectural contribution to the City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City; and 3) the facility serving the transportation and commercial needs of a growing major metropolitan area for 30–40 years from the time of its opening until the 1940's and 1950's.

The Kansas City Union Station was built during an era of railroad station construction classified as "The Third Phase; Meglomania (1890–1914)" by Carroll L.V. Meeks in his authoritative treatise on railroad terminal architecture, *The Railroad Station, An Architectural History*. Meeks describes this period as follows:

The peaceful years which were brought to a tragic conclusion by the catastrophe of 1914 exhibited the positive and negative qualities of a late period. Elephantiasis overtook every aspect of railroading, including the terminals, now built to dimensions never before approached. Aesthetically, the obviously striking effects of the previous more romantic decades were replaced by the equally obvious appeal of unprecedented size...5

The impression of monumentality which the station gives on the exterior, and the generosity of its interior spaces, especially in the ticket lobby of the front main block, characterize the Kansas City Union Station as an example of this phase of railroad station architecture.

Dr. George Ehrlich, Professor of Art History and Chairman of the Department of Art and Art History, University of Missouri—Kansas City, offers the following commentary on the Union Station:

Representative of a genre of architecture that combined a complex engineering problem with the esthetic problem of creating a new type of City Gate for a technological era,
8. (KANSAS CITY) UNION STATION

the Union Station in Kansas City ranks as a major achievement in this synthesis. It is not a great train shed as is common in Europe or in St. Louis; rather it is a monumental interior, one of the best in the United States now that so many other railway stations have been demolished. In a unique location with considerable open space on all sides and adjacent to a major redevelopment project, the Union Station functions as a monumental exterior and it can serve as a focal point for myriad activities even if it is no longer a principal port to the city.6

The City Beautiful Movement, a mode of urban planning, flourished in Kansas City during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. George E. Kessler, one of Kansas City's early planners, was primarily responsible for developing the plan. This aspect of Kansas City's development is fully discussed by Wilson. In essence the City Beautiful planning method involves the "deliberate use of naturally scenic topography whenever and wherever possible."7

The City Beautiful Movement reflects the thinking of a number of late nineteenth century planners including Ebenezer Howard. Howard desired to dismantle the city by relocating urbanites in medium-sized, self-sufficient towns. The "Garden City" was an alternative to the city, and although an impractical ideal, nevertheless provided an intellectual antecedent to the "City Beautiful."

Urban planners in the late nineteenth century substantially agreed that cities were congested, sordid, impoverished, sinful and basically "evil." Cities were viewed as bastions of vice, as homes of vile political "machines," and places where the materialistic glitter of the "gilded age" found its truest expression. On the other hand, planners believed that "nature," the rural countryside, was a place of spiritual renewal and moral enlightenment. The ethic of rural superiority, dating from the writings of J. Hector St. John De Crevecoeur in the eighteenth century, became deeply ingrained in American philosophy throughout the 1800's, and is evidenced in urban planning which attempted to harmonize the virtuous countryside with the wicked city.

Parks, wide streets, tree belts, play grounds, school lots, green lawns, shrubbery and trees, when interspersed with tall buildings supposedly provided a place for city kids to know "nature" and therefore be exposed to the influence of the "good earth." If Howard was unable to take city
dwellers back to the country, later planners were going to bring the fields into the city.

The City Beautiful Movement evolved not only from the agrarian bias, but also from a desire to create physical order within the city. Inefficient and chaotic urban development would have to be rationalized. Small and uneven structures were to be removed and replaced by mammoth buildings around which would be placed spacious greenbelts. Thus emerged the "City Monumental" which found expression in the civic plan Chicago authored by Daniel H. Burnham, and was manifested in two great fairs, The World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, at Chicago, and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, 1904, at St. Louis, as well as in Le Corbusier's "Radiant City." The "City Beautiful" was a culmination of the need to create order in a chaotic landscape, and a method of incorporating nature within the urban matrix.8

Kansas City being a fast-developing city which had been a frontier cowtown of approximately 700 in 18509 had exploded to a population of 165,752 by 1900.10 The city was still highly rural in flavor—a favorable psychological climate for the floresence of the City Beautiful Movement.

In regard to architecture the City Beautiful format placed buildings in an appropriate, scenic, landscape setting for which the architecture provides visual climax to geography and the open space affords a better appreciation of the architecture. In fulfillment of these tenents topography determined the southerly orientation of the Union Station headhouse, i.e. away from the Kansas City Central Business District, and the placement of the track areas in the areas of lowest elevation.

Architect Jarvis Hunt devised a scheme for comprehensive development of the station site and the area extending south to Twenty-Seventh Street, three long blocks south of the station. His plan called for a civic center and what might have been the "center for all Kansas City's major public buildings."11 The idea came to partial fruition in the Liberty Memorial.

ARCHITECT

Planning for a new Kansas City Union Station began in 1901 when the Kansas City Terminal Railway Company secretly commissioned Chicago architect Jarvis Hunt to design a new station. The new station was the third for Kansas City. It replaced an outmoded station on Union Avenue built in 1878 on the city's west bottoms.12 Two architectural firms were also commissioned to draw plans for the new station. They were Daniel H.
8. (KANSAS CITY) UNION STATION

Burnham and Co. of Chicago; and Howe, Hoit and Cutler of Kansas City.
Hunt was selected in 1906. Fuller Construction Company of Chicago
received the contract for general construction.

After numerous delays and postponements the $5,850,381 structure
opened with a gala city-wide celebration. On the following day, November
1, 1914, regularly scheduled passenger train service began.

Jarvis Hunt (1859-1941), was a nephew of New York architect, Richard Morris
Hunt, "One of the nation's most distinguished nineteenth century archi­
tects..." Richard M. Hunt was the first American architect to attend
the Ecole des beaux-arts in Paris. His nephew followed him both in his
profession and in his design predilection. Jarvis Hunt was born in
Wethersfield, Vermont. He was educated at Harvard University and at the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He went to Chicago in 1893 to
supervise construction of the Vermont State Building and remained there.
His other major commissions included the railroad terminals at Dallas,
Texas, and Joliet, Illinois; the Newark, New Jersey Museum; the original
group of buildings at Great Lakes Naval Training Station, Oak Bluffs,
Illinois; and the Lake Shore Athletic Club.

Carl W. Condit describes Jarvis Hunt as "... a highly successful Chicago
eclecticist whose largest commission was Kansas City Union Station (1910-
13). His best-known works in Chicago are the American Trust and Savings
Bank (1906), the Lake Shore Club (1924) and the 900 North Michigan Avenue
Building (1927)."

PRESENT STATUS OF THE STATION

Although the station originally accommodated some 300 passenger trains
daily, with the general demise of the rail passenger industry it serves
approximately half a dozen trains daily at present.

A restaurant, The Landmark, recently opened in the east side wing, serves
a gourmet business luncheon and evening meals. The restaurant is
promisingly active.

Tentative plans to reuse the 54 acre complex for high-rise apartments,
officess, a shopping plaza, transportation facilities, and parking areas
were announced in June 1971. These plans call for demolition of the
terminal building.

The Landmarks Commission of the City of Kansas City, Missouri has urged
expedition of the Union Station nomination to the National Register of
8. (KANSAS CITY) UNION STATION

Historic Places as an aid to preservation of this important Kansas City structure.22

Adaptive uses for the station are currently being considered. They may incorporate the proposed shopping plaza use with retention of the building. A symposium on the building as a preservation problem, to be sponsored by the University of Missouri at Kansas City, is planned for Spring 1972.

FOOTNOTES


6. Dr. George Ehrlich, Letter to the State Historical Survey and Planning Office, Missouri State Park Board, September 9, 1971, on file at the Missouri State Park Board, P.O. Box 176, 1204 Jefferson Building, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101.

7. Wilson, p. 139.


11. Ibid., p. 107.

12. Wilson, p. 92.

13. Ibid., p. 104, cites the Kansas City Terminal Railway Company, Secretary's Record, 1906-07.


15. Wilson, p. 156.

8. (KANSAS CITY) UNION STATION


22. Landmarks Commission of the City of Kansas City, Letter to the State Historical Survey and Planning Office, Missouri State Park Board, July 7, 1971, on file at the Missouri State Park Board, P.O. Box 176, 1204 Jefferson Building, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101.
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


2. Chicago School of Architecture. Chicago: University of Chicago, [1964].


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 20.24

11. FORM PREPARED BY

M. Patricia Holmes, Chief Architectural Historian

State Historical Survey & Planning Office, Park Board

P.O. Box 176, 1204 Jefferson Building, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

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 [x] State [ ] Local [ ]

Name ________________________________
Joseph Jaeger, Jr.

Title Director, Missouri State Park Board, and Missouri State Liaison Officer

DATE November 12, 1971

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

DATE ________________________________

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

DATE ________________________________
9. **(KANSAS CITY) UNION STATION**


10. Landmarks Commission of the City of Kansas City, letter to the State Historical Survey and Planning Office, Missouri State Park Board, July 7, 1971, on file at the Missouri State Park Board, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson Building, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101.


**OTHER PERTINENT REFERENCES**


9. KANSAS CITY UNION STATION


KANSAS CITY UNION STATION

Area being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

M.S.H.S.
November 5, 1971.
Photo Log:

Name of Property: Union Station
City or Vicinity: Kansas City
County: Jackson County State: MO
Photographer: H. Roger Grant and Wayne Davenport
Date Photographed: Feb. 1970 and May 1971

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 6. Looking N from the Liberty Memorial. View of the primary (S) façade. Parking lot replaces the original landscaped park in front of the station. Building is essentially unaltered from the original condition. The three arched windows are approximately 90 feet high. Building is S of the Kansas City Downtown, and faces away from it.

2 of 6. View from SE, looking NW. Old view of the Kansas City Union Station. Front main block at center, flanked by W (left) and E (right) side wings. Building has the same appearance at present (1971).

3 of 6. Looking SW from NE. Front main block and E side wing at left, rear “T” at right, tracks with platform canopies in passenger area. Tracks do not terminate at station, but pass under the rear wing and continue on far side, making a “through” station. Main Street, located on viaduct elevated over tracks in middle ground, forms the eastern border of area being nominated to the National Register.

4 of 6. Looking NW, view from SE. Interior view of front main block. Arched portal at right gives access to the waiting lobby in the rear “T.”

5 of 6. Looking 15° E of S from 15° W of N. View of central arched window in front main block from midpoint in the rear “T” waiting room. Since photo was taken in Feb. 1970, a wood partition has been installed under the central clock, making the waiting room accessible. Plastic seats are recent replacements of original wooden waiting benches.

6 of 6. Detail of the plasterwork in coffered ceiling of the front main block interior, Kansas City Union Station.