

= Grand Central Station ( Chicago ) =

Grand Central Station was a passenger railroad terminal in downtown Chicago , Illinois , from 1890 to 1969 . It was located at 201 West Harrison Street on a block bounded by Harrison , Wells and Polk Streets and the Chicago River in the southwestern portion of the Chicago Loop . Grand Central Station was designed by architect Solon Spencer Beman for the Wisconsin Central Railroad ( WC ) , and was completed by the Chicago and Northern Pacific Railroad .

The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad purchased the station in 1910 and used it as the Chicago terminus for its passenger rail service , including its Capitol Limited service to Washington , D.C. Major tenant railroads included the Soo Line Railroad , successor to the Wisconsin Central , the Chicago Great Western Railway , and the Pere Marquette Railway . The station opened December 8 , 1890 , closed November 8 , 1969 , and was demolished in 1971 .

= = Construction = =

In October 1889 , a subsidiary of the Wisconsin Central Railroad began constructing a new passenger terminal at the southwest corner of Harrison and Wells Streets ( then called Fifth Avenue ) in Chicago , to replace a nearby temporary facility . The location of this new depot , along the south branch of the Chicago River , was selected to take advantage of the bustling passenger and freight market traveling on nearby Lake Michigan .

Architect Solon S. Beman , who had gained notoriety as the designer of the Pullman company neighborhood , designed the station in the Norman Castellated and chose brick , brownstone and granite for construction . The structure measured 228 ft ( 69 m ) along Harrison Street and 482 ft ( 147 m ) along Wells . Imposing arches , crenellations , a spacious arched carriage @-@ court facing Harrison Street , and a multitude of towers dominated the walls . Its most famous feature , however , was an impressive 247 ft ( 75 m ) tower at the northeast corner of the structure . Beman , an early advocate of the Floating raft system to solve Chicago 's unique swampy soil problems , designed the tower to sit within a floating foundation supported by 55 ft ( 17 m ) deep piles . Early on , an 11 @,@ 000 lb ( 5 @,@ 000 kg ) bell in the tower rang on the hour . At some point , however , the bell was removed , but the tower ( and its huge clock , 13 ft ( 4 @.@ 0 m ) in diameter ? at one time among the largest in the United States , remained .

The interior of the Grand Central Station was decorated as extravagantly as the exterior . The waiting room , for example , had marble floors , Corinthian @-@ style columns , stained @-@ glass windows and a marble fireplace , and a restaurant . The station also had a 100 @-@ room hotel , but accommodations ended late in 1901 .

Not as famous as the clocktower but equally architecturally unique was Grand Central Station 's self @-@ supporting glass and steel train shed , 555 ft × 156 ft × 79 ft ( 169 m × 48 m × 24 m ) , among the largest in the world at the time it was constructed . The trainshed , considered an architectural gem and a marvel of engineering long after it was built , housed six tracks and had platforms long enough to accommodate fifteen @-@ car passenger trains . The final construction cost totaled over one million dollars .

The Chicago and Northern Pacific Railroad , a subsidiary of the Northern Pacific Railway , formally opened Grand Central Station December 8 , 1890 . Seeking access to the Chicago railway market , the Northern Pacific had purchased Grand Central and the trackage leading to it from the Wisconsin Central with the intention of making the station its eastern terminus . When it opened , Grand Central hosted trains from the WC ( which connected with its former trackage in Forest Park , Illinois ) , and the Minnesota and Northwestern Railroad ( M & NW ) , which made also a connection at Forest Park . By December 1891 , the tenants also included the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad , and in 1903 , the Pere Marquette Railway also started using the station .

Weakened by the prolonged economic downturn of the Panic of 1893 , the Northern Pacific went bankrupt in October 1893 , and was forced to end its ownership of the Chicago and Northern Pacific , including Grand Central Station . Ultimately , tenant railroad Baltimore and Ohio purchased the station at foreclosure in 1910 along with all the terminal trackage to form the Baltimore and Ohio

## Chicago Terminal Railroad ( B & OCT ) .

= = Services = =

The smallest of Chicago 's passenger rail terminals , Grand Central Station was a relatively quiet place , even during its heyday . Grand Central never became a prominent destination for large numbers of cross @-@ country travelers , nor for the daily waves of commuters from the suburbs , that other Chicago terminals were . In 1912 , for example , Grand Central served 3 @,@ 175 passengers per day ? representing only 4 @.@ 5 percent of the total number for the city of Chicago ? and serviced an average of 38 trains per day ( including 4 B & O suburban trains ) . This number paled in comparison to the 146 trains served by Dearborn Station , the 191 by LaSalle Street Station , the 281 at Union Station , the 310 by the Chicago and North Western Terminal and the 373 trains per day at Central Station .

The station did host some of Baltimore and Ohio 's most famous passenger trains , including the Capitol Limited to Washington , D.C. Unfortunately , however , the circuitous trackage leading to the station from the east forced these trains miles out of their way through the industrial southwest and west side of the city ( See map to the left ) . Other tenants such as the Soo Line Railroad ( which purchased the WC in 1909 ) , the M & NW ( which became known as the Chicago Great Western Railway in 1893 ) , and the Pere Marquette Railway ( which merged into the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway in 1947 ) , were nowhere near the scale of B & O 's operations in the intercity passenger rail market .

= = = Intercity Passenger Trains = = =

Grand Central Station served as a terminal for the following lines and intercity trains :

Baltimore and Ohio Railroad : Capitol Limited , Columbian , and Shenandoah to New York City and the Chicago - Washington Express to Washington , D.C. , along with other trains to Cumberland , Maryland and Wheeling , West Virginia .

Chicago Great Western Railway ( until 1956 ) : Legionnaire , later Minnesotan , both to Minneapolis , Minnesota . Other trains to Kansas City , Missouri and Omaha , Nebraska . All passenger services ceased in 1956 .

Minneapolis , St. Paul and Sault Ste . Marie Railway ( Soo Line ) ( until 1899 , and from 1912 to 1965 ; used Central Station in between and after ) : Laker to Duluth , Minnesota .

Pere Marquette Railway : Grand Rapids Flyer and Grand Rapids Express to Grand Rapids and Muskegon , Michigan and , ultimately to Buffalo , New York . Upon the 1947 merger with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway , PM trains were renamed Pere Marquette .

From December 1900 to July 1903 , the New York Central Railroad and Chicago , Rock Island and Pacific Railroad used Grand Central , as their LaSalle Street Station was being rebuilt .

= = = Suburban Commuter Trains = = =

In addition to intercity passenger rail service , Grand Central Station hosted several short @-@ lived intraurban passenger rail operations . To coincide with the World 's Columbian Exposition in 1893 , the Baltimore and Ohio operated a special passenger train between Grand Central Station and Jackson Park , with intermediate stops at Halsted Street , Blue Island Avenue , Ashland Avenue and Ogden Avenue . Grand Central Station also served as a terminal for at least two suburban commuter lines . One , operated by the Wisconsin Central , operated trains west of Grand Central Station to Altenheim . The second began service in 1900 by the Chicago Terminal Transfer Railroad , and continued when B & O purchased the line in 1910 . It operated six trains a day between Grand Central and Chicago Heights , stopping in Blue Island , Harvey , Thornton and Glenwood . The line was unsuccessful and ended as early as 1915 . None of the other tenant railroads operated commuter trains from Grand Central Station .

= = The end = =

The lightly used terminal became even quieter in the years following World War II , with Grand Central serving 26 intercity passenger trains , down from nearly 40 at its busiest . Passenger trains were dropped and service was curtailed , and by 1956 the Chicago Great Western , which as late as 1940 had run six trains per day in and out of Grand Central ceased operating passenger service into Chicago . As a result , by 1963 only ten intercity trains remained , of which six were operated by the Baltimore and Ohio . The number of passengers that used the remaining service shrank proportionately : by 1969 , the year the station closed , the station only served an average of 210 passengers per day .

Due to its small size , its age and perceived obsolescence , Grand Central was the target of a long @-@ term political effort by the city government to encourage consolidation of passenger terminals in the south Loop . It was ultimately this political effort that sealed the fate of Grand Central , described in 1969 as " decaying , dreary , and sadly out of date " .

Faced with decreasing passenger numbers and intense political pressure to consolidate , the railroads operating into Grand Central Station re @-@ routed their trains into other Chicago terminals , beginning with the Soo Line into Central Station in 1963 . The remaining six Baltimore and Ohio and ex @-@ Pere Marquette trains last used Grand Central Station on November 8 , 1969 and were routed into their new terminus at the Chicago and North Western Terminal the following day .

Sitting unused , Grand Central Station 's value as an architectural and engineering masterpiece was discounted by its railroad owner , who believed the value of the land for urban redevelopment to be quite substantial . As a result , the trackage was scrapped and the entire terminal was razed by the railroad in 1971 .

= = Present @-@ day = =

Approximately 6 @.@ 5 acres remain vacant between Harrison and Polk ; the site currently serves as a de facto dog park in the South Loop . In 1984 , developers began construction of River City , just south of the site . River City was intended to be a complex of four 85 @-@ story office and residential towers stretching along the Chicago River from Harrison to Roosevelt Road designed by Bertrand Goldberg , designer of the landmark " Marina City " along the main branch of the Chicago River ) . Only a 17 @-@ story apartment building was completed in 1986 , however it can accommodate additional floors as part of an expansion . Several other plans for office towers , condominiums , or retail development on the Grand Central Station terminal site have all been proposed over the past several years , and all have been shelved .

The land at the corner of Harrison and Wells , the lot on which the station itself stood , remains vacant . In March 2008 , CSX Transportation ? the successor company to the B & O ? sold the property to a Skokie , Illinois @-@ based capital group with the intent of redeveloping the site with mixed @-@ use high @-@ rise buildings .

MGLM Architects proposed constructing a new rail station on the site in February 2012 to accommodate high @-@ speed trains between the city core and O'Hare Airport . The firm feels that this location would be preferable to adding additional capacity at the already crowded Union Station .

As of October 2013 , a proposal to build two towers containing 700 units ( rental & possibly condo apartments ) has resurfaced for 1 @.@ 5 acres of the 6 @.@ 5 acre site . The development known as " Franklin Point " is being backed by Jay @-@ Z business partners Arnold " Alex " Bize and Naum Chernyavsky .

= = = Legacy = = =

More than thirty years after its destruction , Grand Central Station has only relatively recently been identified by local historians , railroad enthusiasts and architecture critics as " the queen of the city 's

old train stations " . Author Carl W. Condit remarked that the station was " an important Chicago building even if it never received much recognition " . Architect Harry Weese bemoaned its " wanton destruction " . Ira J. Bach noted that when the terminal was demolished : " Chicago lost its greatest monument to the institution which had created it : the railroad . "

= = = The B & OCT Bascule Bridge = = =

At the time Grand Central was completed , passenger trains approached the terminal by crossing the Chicago River to the southwest over a bridge between Taylor Street and Roosevelt Road , constructed in 1885 . This first bridge was replaced by a taller structure in 1901 to accommodate larger boats and ships on the south branch of the river .

When the Chicago River was straightened and widened in the 1930s , the United States Department of War insisted the Baltimore and Ohio build a new bridge adjacent to that of the St. Charles Air Line Railroad which crossed the river between 15th and 16th Streets . The new bridge 's location ( 41 ° 51 ' 40 " N 87 ° 38 ' 06 " W ) , about seven blocks south of its previous crossing , exacerbated the circuitous route of the B & OCT trackage leading to Grand Central Station . Both the B & OCT bascule bridge , and that of the St. Charles Air Line Bridge immediately adjacent to it , were built in 1930 , and both are bascule bridges .

As of 2013 the B & OCT bridge sits unused . An uncertain future awaits the old B & OCT bridge : the trackage it once served may never be rebuilt ; or the bridge may find new life if Chicago continues its railroad heritage and becomes the hub of a planned national high @-@ speed rail network , thus possibly making use of the railway bridge once again .