

= Union Station ( Erie , Pennsylvania ) =

Union Station is an Amtrak railroad station and mixed @-@ use commercial building in downtown Erie in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania . The Lake Shore Limited provides passenger service between Chicago , New York City , and Boston ? Erie is the train 's only stop in Pennsylvania . The station 's ground floor has been redeveloped into commercial spaces , including The Brewerie at Union Station , a brewpub . The building itself is privately owned by the global logistics and freight management company Logistics Plus and serves as its headquarters .

The first railroad station in Erie was established in 1851 but was replaced with the Romanesque Revival @-@ style Union Depot in 1866 . Through a series of mergers and acquisitions by competing railroad companies , which started not long after the establishment of Erie 's first railroads , Union Depot became jointly owned and operated by the New York Central and Pennsylvania railroads . To meet the changing needs of the rapidly growing city , planners designed a more modern structure to replace the original depot . The new Art Deco Union Station , dedicated on December 3 , 1927 , was the first railroad station of that style in the United States .

While Union Station was busy from its opening and through World War II , passenger rail service began to dwindle after the war when air and highway travel became more popular . By the 1960s , the New York Central drastically cut service , while the Pennsylvania abandoned service to Erie altogether . Both railroads were merged in 1968 to form Penn Central , and passenger rail was transferred from Penn Central to Amtrak in 1971 . At one point , from 1972 to 1975 , even Amtrak service in Erie was suspended . With reduced demand for train travel , Union Station was largely neglected and allowed to decay until Logistics Plus bought it in 2003 . Since then , it has been restored and portions re @-@ purposed as commercial and retail space .

= = Design = =

Union Station is in downtown Erie on West 14th Street between Peach and Sassafras streets . Designed by architects Alfred T. Fellheimer and Steward Wagner , it was the first Art Deco railroad station to be designed and built in the United States . Previously , Fellheimer had been influential in the design of Grand Central Terminal in New York City , and both architects collaborated on several railroad stations for the New York Central Railroad , including Buffalo Central Terminal in 1929 and Cincinnati Union Terminal in 1933 .

The main building of Erie 's Union Station , three @-@ stories tall , is of steel and masonry construction . The entire exterior is clad in " rough brown " brick and sandstone layered in a Flemish bond , trimmed in terracotta , and lined with granite at the ground level . The main station building has a frontage of 116 feet ( 35 m ) along Peach Street and 206 feet ( 63 m ) on 14th Street ; a two @-@ story , narrow extension continues another 403 feet ( 123 m ) towards Sassafras before terminating at a small , attached office building . The extension eased the transfer of mail , baggage , and freight between trains and street level while the offices of the freight company were housed in the attached building at the Sassafras Street end of the station complex .

When the station initially opened , entrances from 14th Street open into a large , octagonal rotunda where ticket offices , checked baggage , and a newsstand were located . As the railroad tracks are grade separated behind Union Station , the platforms are accessed by pedestrian tunnel under the tracks with stairs that lead to the platforms . The tunnel entrance is directly across the rotunda from the street entrance ? a portion of which is now used as the kitchen for a brewpub housed inside the station . The concourse , off the rotunda , led to the Peach Street entrances , and contained space for a soda fountain , a barber shop , and telegraph offices , as well as access to the station 's 111 @-@ by @-@ 35 @-@ foot ( 34 m x 11 m ) waiting room . Facing Peach Street , a dining room and lunch counter run by the Union News Company , which operated the majority of the dining services in New York Central stations , were at the opposite end of Union Station from the rotunda . The entire ground floor was laid with terrazzo featuring a mosaic border and Botticino marble paneling along the plaster walls . A green and tan color scheme was originally used throughout the entire building . Superintendents for both the New York Central and Pennsylvania railroads , as well as

other railroad officials , had offices on the second floor of Union Station .

The station 's low @-@ level , concrete platforms are approximately 450 feet ( 137 m ) long covered by steel , " butterfly @-@ style " canopies with wooden roof decking . New York Central made use of four tracks situated on two island platforms ; the Pennsylvania Railroad used two tracks on a single island platform . A network of tunnels beneath the station facilitated the transfer of mail to and from the former Griswold Plaza Post Office nearby . A bomb shelter , still stocked with cases of " U.S. Civil Defense All @-@ Purpose Survival Crackers " from the early 1960s , is next to the station 's boiler room and its three , coal @-@ fed furnaces .

= = Services and facilities = =

Amtrak 's Lake Shore Limited arrives at Union Station twice daily , westbound from New York Penn Station and Boston South Station , and eastbound from Chicago Union Station , with scheduled arrivals in the middle of the night and in the early morning , respectively , as of January 11 , 2016 . Union Station is on the Lake Shore Subdivision , the CSX Transportation main line from Erie to Buffalo , New York , at railroad milepost 86 @.@ 9 . It is 436 miles ( 702 km ) east of Chicago , 523 miles ( 842 km ) west of New York City , and 723 miles ( 1 @,@ 164 km ) from Boston . The next station west of Erie is Cleveland Lakefront , and eastbound is Buffalo ? Depew . The station was the 13th busiest in Pennsylvania during fiscal year 2015 with an annual ridership of 16 @,@ 633 passengers , a decrease of 9 @.@ 2 percent from the previous year .

Service on the Lake Shore Limited consists of reserved coach seating and Viewliner sleepers , as well as amenities like a dining car service . As the Erie station is not equipped with a ticket office , nor Amtrak 's Quik @-@ Trak ticket machines , all tickets from the station have to be pre @-@ paid . The station is , however , equipped with a waiting room and public restrooms . The Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority 's downtown circulator , the Bayliner Trolley , provides service between the station and downtown Erie . The trolley only operates , however , at the scheduled arrival time of the eastbound Lake Shore Limited .

= = History = =

During the 1840s and 1850s , a flurry of railroad @-@ building activity led eventually to the completion of four separate railroads converging in Erie . A break @-@ of @-@ gauge between the first two railroads ? the Erie and North East Railroad and the Franklin Canal Company ? ensured that the citizens of Erie profited from the delays necessary to transfer cargo between the lines . When it was proposed in 1853 to standardize the track gauge to allow through traffic , a conflict that became known as the Erie Gauge War ensued . The residents of Erie , who saw it as an affront to their desire that the city become a major lake port , dismantled railroad bridges and tore up railroad tracks in the city in an effort to prevent the impending standardization . As part of the dispute 's settlement , both railroads provided financial support for the construction of the Erie and Pittsburgh and Sunbury and Erie railroads . The Cleveland , Painesville and Ashtabula Railroad acquired the Franklin Canal Company in 1854 , and the Erie and North East was merged with the Buffalo and State Line to form the Buffalo and Erie Railroad a few years later . The Sunbury and Erie was renamed the Philadelphia and Erie Railroad in 1861 . The Pennsylvania Railroad soon acquired the Sunbury and Erie through a 999 @-@ year lease and funded completion of the line by 1864 .

= = Predecessor stations = =

The first railroad station in Erie was built in 1851 and consisted of a " clumsy looking " or " rude brick structure " . President @-@ elect Abraham Lincoln addressed a crowd outside of this station on February 16 , 1861 , while traveling to Washington , D.C. , for his inauguration . Construction on a new station was started in early 1865 as a joint venture between the Cleveland , Painesville and Ashtabula , and Buffalo and Erie railroads , and was completed in February 1866 . Both the Erie and Pittsburgh , and Philadelphia and Erie railroads also leased portions of the new station for their

services as well . In addition to the leased space , the Philadelphia and Erie continued to maintain a freight station on State Street below Hamot Hospital for several years afterward .

The station , known as Union Depot , consisted of a brick , Romanesque Revival structure facing Peach Street between two sets of railroad tracks . It stood 40 feet ( 10 m ) tall , topped with a distinctive cupola , and its platforms extended 480 feet ( 150 m ) towards Sassafras Street along both sides of the depot . The depot was equipped with the modern amenities of the day including outdoor gas lighting , a barber shop , gentleman 's and ladies ' parlors , and a dining room ; the second floor contained offices and sleeping quarters for railroad officials .

The Cleveland , Painesville and Ashtabula became the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway in 1869 , and absorbed the Buffalo and Erie Railroad later that year . The Pennsylvania Railroad leased the Erie and Pittsburgh for 999 years in 1870 . On March 5 , 1902 , nearly 10 @, @ 000 people turned out at Union Depot to greet Prince Henry of Prussia during his tour of the United States ; the prince remained in Erie for approximately 10 minutes before his train continued to Buffalo and Niagara Falls , New York . On December 22 , 1914 , the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad was merged with the New York Central .

### = = = Construction = = =

In 1913 , the city of Erie appointed a committee of city planners and civil engineers led by John Nolen that was tasked with determining the best course of action to support the continued growth of the city . In its final report , the committee recommended , among other civic improvements , that " for the improvement of the railroad facilities in Erie " a new Union Station be constructed , as well as the " abolition of all [ railroad ] crossings " . At the time the only streets in Erie where the railroad was grade separated were State , French , and Ash Streets , and Buffalo Road , while the remainder had level crossings . The committee felt it was desirable that , on account of Erie 's topography and the existing railroad grades , the tracks be raised in the downtown to accommodate new roadway underpasses . The city signed an agreement on September 30 , 1915 , with the New York Central and the Pennsylvania railroads to eliminate every level crossing between Ash and Cascade Streets through the construction of bridges or the closing of the streets . As compensation , both railroads pledged to replace Union Depot with a new station .

The work to re @-@ grade and install drainage on Peach and Sassafras Streets coincided with the building of the station from 1925 to 1927 , and cost the city approximately \$ 110 @, @ 000 . A temporary station was also erected at 14th and French Streets , and was used after the old Union Depot was demolished in 1925 until the completion of the new station . Union Station was dedicated on December 3 , 1927 , in a ceremony presided over by the presidents of the New York Central and Pennsylvania railroads , the mayor of Erie Joseph Williams , and former mayor William Stern who helped initiate the project . The Griswold Plaza Post Office , on the north side of 14th Street , opened in 1932 along with the tunnel connecting it to Union Station .

### = = = Operations = = =

When service from Union Station was inaugurated in 1928 , both eastbound and westbound trains were departing the station almost every hour bound for destinations across the United States . Passengers in the station 's expansive waiting room could patronize its news stand , telegraph office , barber shop , shoeshine stand , or its lunch counter and soda fountain . Train schedules were handwritten on a large blackboard , while station staff announced the arrival and impending departures of the trains by megaphone .

In the 1930s , the New York Central provided the majority of the service in Erie with over 20 trains daily , including the original Lake Shore Limited . The famed 20th Century Limited , however , passed through Union Station nightly without stopping . Union Station was on the New York Central 's main line , often referred to as the " Water Level Route " , with trains that traveled west to Cleveland , Toledo and Chicago , and east to Buffalo , New York City , and Boston . The New York Central also had service from Erie via a branch line to Youngstown , Ohio , with connections to the

Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad . Conversely , the Pennsylvania Railroad ran only a few trains from Erie ? mainly the Northern and Southern Expresses to Harrisburg , Philadelphia , and Washington , D.C. , as well as a daily train to Pittsburgh .

The Bliley Electric Company , a manufacturer of crystal oscillators used in radio transmitters and receivers , moved from 8th and Peach streets to space on the second floor of Union Station in 1933 . Despite the possibility that soot and vibrations from passing locomotives could cause calibration problems for Bliley 's quartz crystals , Union Station 's proximity to the railroad provided " efficient transfers of [ the ] heavy crystal stock from the train to the [ crystal ] slicing department . " Bliley Electric soon grew to occupy the entire second and third floors of the station . During World War II , the company operated 24 hours a day and employed local women to grind and fashion the crystals ; the crystals used in the operation were stockpiled in the rail yard , where it and the entire complex were guarded by soldiers with Great Danes . Bliley Electric eventually moved its entire operation to a larger , purpose @-@ built facility in 1966 .

= = = Decline = = =

The post @-@ war boom in automobile travel and the construction of the Interstate Highway System , as well as competition from commercial airlines , led to the inevitable decline of passenger rail . The Pennsylvania Railroad eliminated passenger service between Erie and Pittsburgh in April 1948 . It eventually ended through service to Philadelphia , requiring passengers to transfer in Emporium , Pennsylvania , and discontinued service from Erie altogether on March 27 , 1965 . By 1968 , the number of New York Central trains was also reduced to five per day . The two railroads were merged on February 1 , 1968 , and formed the Penn Central Transportation Company . Penn Central continued to run the former New York Central passenger trains , until the last departed Union Station on April 30 , 1971 . The newly created National Passenger Rail Corporation , more commonly known as Amtrak , took over nationwide passenger rail operations the next day . Amtrak continued to operate a New York @-@ to @-@ Chicago train until January 1972 , the Lake Shore , which had a station stop in Erie starting in November 1971 . However , the poor condition of the track between Buffalo and Chicago , as well as the service 's general lack of profitability , led to the Lake Shore 's demise . Erie remained devoid of any passenger rail service until Amtrak reintroduced the former New York Central train , the Lake Shore Limited , on November 30 , 1975 .

During that time , upkeep of Union Station became neglected by the railroads , and the station gradually deteriorated from its heyday . The presence of dirt , trash , and human waste were a normal occurrence at the station . At one point , in 1973 , the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry ordered Penn Central to close Union Station citing " sanitary reasons " ; at the time , it was only used by the crews of its freight trains . In the winter , the station often became an " unsanctioned shelter " for the homeless , who burned the station 's wooden doors for heat . The few passengers that did travel by train were often reluctant to use Amtrak 's makeshift waiting room in the station rotunda , due to the unsettling sights and fear of being accosted . Penn Central persisted with freight service until it declared bankruptcy and became a part of Conrail on April 1 , 1976 . Conrail , in turn , was dismantled on June 6 , 1998 , and the former New York Central rail lines were transferred to CSX , and Norfolk Southern Railway gained control of the former Pennsylvania lines .

= = = Renovation and restoration = = =

Union Station was purchased for \$ 1 @.@ 5 million by the Erie @-@ based logistics and transportation firm Logistics Plus on October 30 , 2003 . The company renovated the station 's third floor and part of the second floor for use as its corporate headquarters , thus restoring a landmark and revitalizing the surrounding neighborhood . Chief executive officer of Logistics Plus , Jim Berlin , observed that the building 's transportation motif made the building ideal . " [ T ] hough Union Station will never be the center of transportation again , " he said , " it can be a place from which transportation ? global transportation ? can be managed " . The original proposed plan included revamping Union Station into an urban , mixed @-@ use development with retail spaces , a

pedestrian mall and a museum similar to Pittsburgh 's Station Square . In May 2007 , Logistics Plus lined the parapet of Union Station with 50 flags symbolizing the locations it does business in and the home countries of its employees .

Since the 1990s , Union Station has also been " an incubator of Erie 's modern [ beer ] brewing " starting with the brewpub Hoppers , which operated in the station from 1994 to 1999 . When Hoppers relocated and became a full production brewery under the name of Erie Brewing Company , Porters , a fine dining restaurant and beer bar , opened in its place . The Brewerie at Union Station took over the space , and opened in October 2006 after the closure of the restaurant earlier that year . During the run @-@ up to the 2008 presidential election , Union Station was site of " whistle @-@ stop " by ABC 's Good Morning America news team on a charter Amtrak train . Sam Champion , Chris Cuomo , Robin Roberts , and Diane Sawyer , the news anchors , interviewed local residents at the Brewerie about campaign issues . The Good Morning America stop lasted about 30 minutes , and the resulting television segment aired on September 18 , 2008 .

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 , the Federal Railroad Administration identified ten regions for potential development as high @-@ speed rail corridors ? Erie lies in a gap near three corridors : the Chicago Hub Network , the Empire Corridor , and the Keystone Corridor . The local passenger rail advocacy group , All Aboard Erie , proposed a feasibility study in 2014 for high @-@ speed rail service to connect to the corridors at Cleveland and Buffalo . The group also wants determine if rail service would be possible using the existing tracks and right of way between Erie , Youngstown and Pittsburgh .

= = Commercial tenants = =

Union Station serves as the corporate headquarters for Logistics Plus . It was formed in 1996 to manage domestic logistics for GE Transportation , the largest employer in Erie . The company 's offices were relocated from Jamestown , New York , to the station in 2004 . Logistics Plus occupies the 16 @,@ 000 @-@ square @-@ foot ( 1 @,@ 500 m<sup>2</sup> ) third floor and 5 @,@ 000 square feet ( 500 m<sup>2</sup> ) of the second floor . The rest of the building is leased out to a variety of tenants including Amtrak , the Brewerie , a hookah lounge , a wine shop , a hair salon , a banquet hall , and an art studio .

The Brewerie at Union Station is a microbrewery and restaurant ? officially categorized as a " brewpub " by the Brewers Association ? that operates out of Union Station . The brewpub makes use of a portion of the station 's ground floor and its octagonal rotunda . In 2013 , the Brewerie produced approximately 500 barrels of beer ( 15 @,@ 500 gal ; 59 @,@ 000 l ) from its 3 @.@ 5 @-@ barrel ( 109 gal ; 410 l ) Price @-@ Schonstrom brewing system .