

CHICAGO UNION STATION



Mel Patrick's photographs of Union Station include the structure at night, 1969; an arrival/departure board, 1969; and the California Zephyr ready to depart, 1968. The classic concourse on the left in the night photo was razed in 1969 and replaced with a 35-story office building. Today, Amtrak owns the station.



UNION STATION: A CHICAGO LANDMARK



Editor David P. Morgan wrote with this photo in the August 1965 *Trains*: "It could be a cathedral."

Chicago Union Station's significance photographically comes from two happenings: a photo story in *Trains* in 1965 and the first multimedia slide show in 1969.

The structure, once one of six major Chicago intercity passenger stations, served four railroads when it opened on May 15, 1925. "In point of number of station tracks it ranks fifth in the United States. From the standpoint of design it embodies much that is both novel and forward looking. It is the only double stub station in America, having two separate grids of platform tracks. ... It is one of an extremely limited number of great passenger stations in which the platforms, concourse, and waiting room are on a common level," *Railway Age* reported. A formal dedication followed on July 23.

Initially, Kaufmann & Fabry, the large commercial photography company serving many of the railroads in the city, produced the publicity photos. As might be expected, Alfred W. Johnson recorded activity at the station along with passenger train views throughout the city. The Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information photographers visited the station in World War II. But for a station of its scope, the photo selections are sparse.

Perhaps that's a reason David P. Morgan, then *Trains* editor, asked me to photograph the station in 1964. "Come with us now as John Gruber explores a structure grand enough to occupy an architect and a train-watcher," Morgan wrote in the introduction to the 13-page photo essay in the August 1965 issue.

Mel Patrick followed with a multimedia show with two projectors and music, previewed at Central Station and initially presented for the Railroad Club of Chicago. "'Chicago Union Station-A Photographic Narrative' runs 23-1/2 minutes, is introduced with a short narration, then uses 6 songs to drive a segmented look at people and trains that use the station. Photos were very carefully selected to accompany the music to produce a coherent match between sight and sound," Patrick said. "The concept of using

narration and music to accompany slides did not originate with me by any means, but this was the first full scale attempt at a railroad theme program with fast paced dissolved images."

(Mike Schafer, who was in the audience, continued the trend. Schafer is best known for "Silver Memory," about the California Zephyr, 1970, and "Chicago Is ... My Kind of Railroad Town," 1971. He has revamped and automated both shows, produced initially with Jim Heuer and others in the North Western Illinois Chapter-NRHS, Rockford. Multimedia shows now are features at Winterail, Eastrail, Summerail, and similar events.)

Today, all intercity trains in the railroad center arrive or depart from the station, soon to be redeveloped by its owner, Amtrak. When announcing development, Amtrak said in February that "the project, designed by Lucien Lagrange Architects, restores, refurbishes and enlivens a building envisioned by Daniel Burnham's 1909 Plan for Chicago. The station was initially designed by D. H. Burnham & Co. and completed by Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, the successor to D. H. Burnham & Co. after Burnham's death. The building is a historically significant element of Chicago's transportation heritage as well as the golden age of intercity rail travel." Amtrak's plan included recognition as a Chicago landmark, achieved May 1.

The renovation will not affect Amtrak and METRA rail operations. "Travelers' experience will be enhanced by the many new amenities offered to train passengers, restoring the vibrant atmosphere of the early days of the station," the Amtrak announcement concluded. *John Gruber*

Photography through the years includes two views by Jack Delano of the Office of War Information in January 1943—the Denver Zephyr with a steam locomotive and a CUS red cap (Library of Congress), plus Robert Banke's photograph of the main waiting room in December 1978.

