

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK OR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION

New Designation

Amendment of a previous designation X

Please summarize any amendment(s) Interior Spaces/Northern Approach from Property Line
Property name Union Station

If any part of the interior is being nominated, it must be specifically identified and described in the narrative statements.

Address 50 Massachusetts Avenue, NE

Square and lot number(s) Square 720, Lots 171, 827 and 828, Square 713, Lot 47; Square 717 Lot 815; Square 715, Lot 10

Affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission ANC 6C

Date of construction 1907 Date of major alteration(s) _____

Architect(s) Daniel H. Burnham

Architectural style(s) Beaux-Arts

Original use Transportation Present use Transportation

Property owner United States of America

Legal address of property owner c/o US Department of Transportation, 400 7th Street SW, Washington, DC 20590

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) DC Preservation League

If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.

Address/Telephone of applicant(s) 401 F Street, NW, Room 324, WDC 20001, 202.783.5144

Name and title of authorized representative Rebecca Miller, Executive Director

Signature of representative  Date 7/19/2012

Cover sheet continued on 2nd page.

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) Committee of 100 on the Federal City

Address/Telephone of applicant(s) 1317 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, 202.681.0225

Name and title of authorized representative George Clark, Chair

Signature of representative *G. R. Clark* Date 7-10-12

Name and telephone of author of application John DeFerrari/William Wright 202.783.5144

Date received *9/24/12*
H.P.O. staff *[Signature]*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Union Station (including interior spaces)

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 50 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E. not for publication

city or town Washington, D.C. vicinity

state District of Columbia code DC county _____ code 001 zip code 20002

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/train depot

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurants

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/train depot

COMMERCE/TRADE/stores

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurants

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:

Classical Revival, Beaux Arts, Italian Renaissance

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: Granite, brick, steel

roof:

other:

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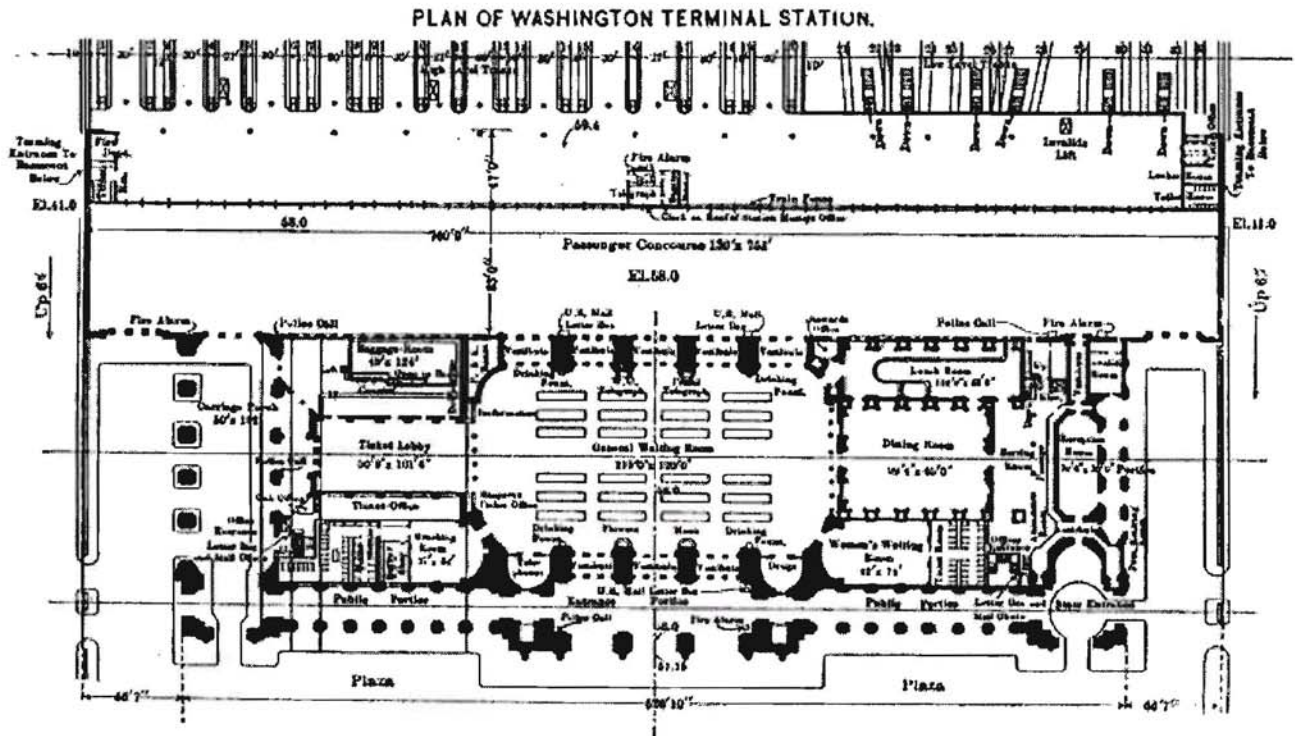
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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Union Station stands at the intersection of Massachusetts and Delaware Avenues NE, just a half-mile north of the U.S. Capitol. Designed by renowned architect Daniel H. Burnham (1846-1912) and his assistant, Peirce Anderson (1879-1924), it offers one of America's most impressive examples of Beaux Arts architecture. The station's exterior was included in the *National Register* in 1969. Because it was an early nomination, documentation accompanying the nomination was limited. In 1979, a supplemental nomination addressing the plaza in front of the station, including the Columbus Memorial, was added. This amendment to the nomination contains additional documentation of the station's interior spaces, particularly the headhouse, and of the northern approach. The headhouse—the part of the building south of the original passenger concourse—is a stunning granite and marble structure 630' wide, 120' deep, and, in places, 100' tall. As shown in the figure below, it is divided into four major spaces as well as several smaller rooms. Those four sections, listed from east to west by their original function, are: the State Reception Room (also known as the President's Suite), the Dining Room, the General Waiting Room, and the Ticket Lobby. [Burnham and Anderson continued the neoclassical vocabulary of the station's exterior throughout these interior spaces, which incorporate such features as modified triumphal arches, Ionic columns, and a barrel vault. This elegant design and the luxurious materials together create a landmark of exceptional significance. This amendment also documents the northern approach from the property line to the train sheds and platforms at the station's rear. The approach was an integral part of the terminal, as well as a significant engineering accomplishment.



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Narrative Description

Union Station can be divided into three main parts: (1) the headhouse, at the southern end of the complex, (2) the passenger concourse in the middle, and (3) the train sheds, platforms and approach to the north. When the facility opened in the fall of 1907, all three elements were owned by the Washington Terminal Company, which was jointly controlled by the Baltimore & Ohio and the Pennsylvania Railroads.

Union Station's headhouse is the large structure immediately facing Columbus Plaza. The most elaborately decorated element of the terminal, it boldly conveys the power and wealth of the railroads that owned the building and the importance of Washington and the United States, a reflection of its construction at a time when the station served as the entryway to the Nation's Capital. The basic plan of the headhouse draws on the Roman Baths of Diocletian, another public space that needed well-defined, separated areas and efficient circulation.

Although Daniel Burnham's firm won the competition to design Union Station and Burnham himself is most often associated with the Station as its architect, it was actually Burnham's associate, Peirce Anderson, who led the design work. As discussed below, Anderson was well-versed in Beaux-Arts design principles and made an exceptional urban public space of the station's interior.ⁱ

Proceeding through the station's front entrances, one immediately arrives at the **General Waiting Room** (also known as the **Main Hall** or **Great Hall**) is 120' wide by 219' long, with a barrel-vaulted ceiling 96' above the floor at its highest point. The ceiling is divided by four broad, gilt-trimmed ribs springing from massive 35' tall granite piers. Gilded octagonal coffers fill the spaces between the ribs. The room is brightly lit by a large semicircular window 72 1/2' in diameter at the east end, three semicircular windows (each 27 1/2' in diameter) in the arcaded south side, and five more 27 1/2' windows in the arcaded north side. On the north side of the headhouse, leading to the passenger concourse (and now the main shopping area) are five archways 30' wide and 50' high and with coffered ceilings. Within each archway is a short colonnaded portal with two central, engaged Roman Doric columns. The archways on the south side of the hall span colonnade portals of the same design as those of the north side, the central three serving as the front entrances of the building.

Above the classical entablature surmounting each set of these columns stand a pair of statues, sculpted by Louis Saint-Gaudens (1854-1913), brother of celebrated sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. The statues depict soldiers of the Roman Empire standing at attention with shields resting on the ground in front of them. Similar statues surmount the corresponding colonnade portals on the south (entrance) side of the hall as well as the colonnades at the east and west ends, for a total of 36 statues. Transverse colonnades on the east and west sides of the Waiting Room reflect the design of the colonnaded portals on the north and south sides but are continuous, each supported by eight Roman Doric columns and surmounted by eight soldier statues. These colonnades help define the room's space, separating it from the east and west halls without impeding the easy flow of pedestrian traffic.

A message of power and wealth is conveyed both by the waiting room's design and the materials originally used in its construction and decoration. The 25,000 square feet of floor space is covered with marble, arranged in groups of four 24" white squares punctuated with a 6" maroon diamond at their intersections. (The current floor was reconstructed in 1988 based on the original design; none of the marble appears to be original.) As originally constructed, an array of twenty-four double-sided benches, each 800 pounds of polished mahogany, lined up across the central part of the room. Bronze grills covered the radiators at the ends of each of the great mahogany benches. When the station opened, in the alcove just east of the main doors was a drug store whose soda fountain featured

ⁱBurnham to George P. Wetmore, May 19, 1910, Papers of George P. Wetmore, Box 1, Commission of Fine Arts, Correspondence--General, 1912-1913, Library of Congress.

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marble, onyx, brass, and silver; in the west alcove were mahogany and glass telephone booths. Mahogany was also the wood of choice for counters that stood in between the doorways on the room's north and south sides: on the former were two stands for sending telegrams, while along the latter were newsstand and a florist. Occupying the remaining spaces between the doors were drinking fountains with granite basins.

Currently the main hall is largely open space, except for a raised, circular steel-and-wood restaurant structure at the center of the room and a number of retail counters located at various spots around the sides of the hall.

Continuing through the stone colonnade on the west side of the General Waiting Room brought travelers to the **Ticket Lobby** (also called the **West Hall**), a name that described only half its activities. Along its south wall were five bays of ticket windows, three bronze-barred positions to a bay. On the north side was the baggage room, accessible through one of four sets of mahogany doors that led to a wooden counter where travelers exchanged their luggage for a claim check. The floor throughout the wing continued the white and red marble pattern of the waiting room, and running down the center were five knee-high oval radiators covered with the same latticed bronze as the ends of the waiting room benches.

Overhead is a barrel-vaulted ceiling, reaching sixty feet up. The ceiling is largely covered with square skylight windows, providing a great deal of light not only for this hall but for the western end of the main hall as well. At the western end of the hall is the former carriage entrance, now providing access to a bicycle storage facility and escalators leading down to a Metro station. This entrance is within a colonnade of four Roman Doric columns. Four additional Roman-legionnaire-like statues are set against the wall above the entablature of this colonnade, in symmetry with the transverse colonnade. The north and south walls of the hall are arcaded, with rectangular granite piers separating adjoining spaces, which are currently occupied by retail shops. Above the entablature, which circles the entire hall, is a granite band with a row of clerestory windows on the north and south sides. Those windows have a design similar to the skylight above them and contribute to the overall lightness of this space.

The ticket lobby beautifully demonstrates Anderson's skill. His floor plan placed ticketing and baggage—the two services travelers usually wanted first when they came in from the city—conveniently close to each other, and setting them next to the carriage porch gave quick access to anyone who arrived by private vehicle. Putting them off to the side also benefited those who needed neither, since lines at their counters did not slow late arrivals rushing from the front doors to the gates or vice versa.

Anderson also managed to make the ticket lobby distinct but keep it within the overall design. He used the colonnade to separate it from the waiting room, and the smaller barrel vault emphasized its subordinate status. Yet he also wanted to make its services easy to find and reach, since many people who wanted them would be unfamiliar with the station or in a hurry. Anderson therefore left the space above the columns open, which allowed light, sound, and people to pass easily between the two rooms. His use of materials—marble floors, bronze heater grates, and mahogany—further strengthened the ticket lobby's integration into the overall plan.

The **Dining Room** (also called the **East Hall**) is separated from the general waiting room by a transverse colonnade, similar to the others in the main hall, in front of the wall below the big east window. Entrance comes through three portals (originally fitted with pairs of wood and glass doors) that are framed inside the east hall with slender architraves. To create an even stronger sense of separation, on the east side of the wall, the doors are screened by an arcade of piers flanked by Ionic columns. The east hall has a three-story-high, flat ceiling with skylights and clerestory windows along its north and south sides, again creating a bright, light-filled space. The windows are separated by beams painted with garlands. The east hall offers an atmosphere distinct from the main or west hall; while it is also grand in conception, its warm decoration and lower ceiling height suggest a more intimate space—suited to dining—rather than the hurly-burly of the public waiting rooms or the train concourse. The room has much more surface decoration than the main hall or west hall. The walls are designed as arcades of alternating

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cream-colored piers and alcoves. Originally the alcoves were painted a dark green, which created a rhythm of light and dark with the light-colored piers. Framing the alcoves are distinctive Ionic columns of a very different style than the much plainer granite columns in the other two main areas. The smooth bottoms of these columns are maroon and their fluted tops off-white with darker veins: Both the piers and the columns appear to be marble but are actually concrete painted through scagliola, a technique from ancient Rome that allowed architects to obtain the appearance they wanted at much lower cost.

Above the arcaded sections of the walls lies a heavy entablature surmounted by a large decorative frieze. The frieze is pierced on the north and south sides by ten rectangular windows that alternate with Pompeian panels decorated with winged horses and abstract patterns highlighted with gold leaf. The column capitals and entablature are all extensively detailed with gilt accents. On the east wall, blank wall space fills the outermost sections where alcoves would be expected. These spaces include large red panels with decorative designs and paintings that continue the Pompeian motif.

The floor is tiled in white marble. As originally appointed, the floor space was filled with mahogany dining tables and leather-cushioned chairs interspersed with large potted ferns.

At the far eastern end of the headhouse is the former **State Reception Room** (also called the **Presidential Suite**), now used for a restaurant. After President Garfield was assassinated in 1881 as he crossed the main waiting room at the Pennsylvania Railroad station on the Mall, the government and the railroads had agreed that any new terminal would separate high officials from everyone else. The State Reception Room had its own entrances from the street, its own exit to the concourse, and even its own toilets; the single route from the rest of the headhouse was inaccessible to the public. The three-room "President's Suite" drew on many of the same design elements as the rest of the building, adding Presidential seals and wool carpeting to pilasters, Ionic columns, stenciled foliage, marble, and granite.

However, little attention was originally paid to furnishing these elaborately decorated rooms. In 1910, Washington Terminal Company President James McCrea, frustrated by the cost overruns that had occurred during construction, ordered station managers to buy only inexpensive wicker and rattan furniture.ⁱⁱ In the coming years, the railroads paid little attention to the suite, which was not seen by the general public.

Other distinct spaces on the main floor of the headhouse include the following:

Between the Dining Room and the State Reception Room was the **Serving Room**, a preparation area for the former. It now provides public access between the two spaces.

The **Lunch Room** was located just north of the Dining Room. The dominant original feature in this high-ceilinged room was a marble counter shaped like a backwards "J" that was long enough to provide seating for many customers. Originally the walls were decorated with murals in the same Pompeian style as the adjoining dining room. During the 1988 renovations, this space was divided into two floors, with a stairway to the upper level installed near the entrance from the General Waiting Room. The lower space is now used for retail.

The **Ladies' Waiting Room** was adjacent to the Dining Room on the south side, with its entrance at the southeast corner of the General Waiting Room. Originally designed as a large open space, the room offered large bright windows on its south side and a graceful, elliptically arched ceiling. It featured fine tapestries on its walls and served as a smoke-free haven for women travelers. During the 1988 renovations, this space, like the Passenger Concourse,

ⁱⁱ Highsmith and Landphair, p. 72.

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was divided horizontally by the insertion of a raised steel-framed, mid-level platform. Both levels of the renovated space are currently used as a restaurant.

The **Smoking Room** was adjacent to the Ticket Lobby on the south side, with its entrance at the southwest corner of the General Waiting Room. This was the area reserved for men, across the main hall and corresponding to the Ladies' Waiting Room. It was more functional and less decorated than the Ladies' Waiting Room, and was divided into smaller rooms. Immediately off the General Waiting Room was the "reading" or smoking room, with a cigar stand; farther west were a barbershop and then a restroom. Like the Ladies' Waiting Room, this space was divided during the 1988 renovations by the insertion of a raised steel-framed, mid-level platform. Both levels of the renovated space are currently used as a restaurant.

The **Passenger Concourse** is the large open interior space immediately north of the headhouse. The concourse was originally an immense open space, 760 feet long, 130 feet wide, and 44 feet tall, and it was open to the tracks to the north. Making the area seem even larger was the light washing in from the platforms, from the large windows at either end, and from the skylights running the length of the roof.

Within the concourse, originally there was an iron fence stretching from one end to another on the north side, separating it from the train platforms. In the center of the concourse was the rectangular metal stand of the Union News Company. Above, the ceiling ran in five lengthwise sections: three—the two along the edges and the one down the center—were white plaster punctuated with octagonal coffers; in between were two rows of skylights. From the ceiling hung four rows of powerful but harsh arc lamps, seventy-two in all, that provided nighttime illumination. Under foot was another of the station's careful details: most of the floor's squares and rectangles were Portland cement, but incorporated into the pattern were contrasting maroon sections (created by adding dye to the mix) that played off the colors in the headhouse floor. The current marble floor is more elegant than the original.

In the 1970s, as part of the failed attempt to convert the station into the National Visitor Center, approximately 70 feet was removed from each end of the concourse in order to create room for ramps to serve a new parking garage erected behind the station. During the 1988 renovations, the concourse was adapted for retail use. The previously open space was divided up into an array of retail stalls of different sizes and shapes, including through the addition of a steel-framed second level in the center of the area. This raised area is accessible via several stairways and escalators from the original concourse level. Large openings were cut on the south side of the concourse floor near the entrances to the General Waiting Room. These holes provide space for stairways and escalators leading down to a food court and retail area in the building's basement, in space originally used for the movement of baggage and smaller freight.

Because retail facilities would be filling the concourse, the 1988 renovation added a new structure for passengers. Adjacent to the terminal's northern edge, the new concourse reaches across the station's remaining 640' width, and connects to the 1200-space parking garage installed over the western-most tracks. It is divided into three east-west sections connected by passages in its center and western edge. The southern area is primarily a series of retail facilities offering goods such as food and magazines. In the center is the main east-west corridor, used mainly by travelers who have entered the building via the Metro; the 1980s construction added escalators and an elevator to the northwest corner of the expanded building. In the concourse's northern section is additional retail space, escalators serving the second floor landing that provides access to the parking garage, men's and women's restrooms, and the main waiting area for train travelers.

The new concourse reached into space originally devoted to tracks and platforms. Since its opening, Union Station has combined stub-end and through tracks—that is, some of its tracks dead-ended into the building, requiring trains to leave in the same direction they entered, while others continued past the terminal, with trains pausing before

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resuming their original direction. In Washington the stub-end tracks handled only traffic coming from and then leaving the north; the through tracks continued under the station to provide service from north to south or vice versa. The station opened with 33 tracks, a number that varied over the years depending on the size of trains and business demands.

Regardless of whether they were stub-end or through, the tracks sat next to concrete platforms typically 20 feet wide and over 900 feet long.ⁱⁱⁱ The length varied according to location and time, with some extended to improve handling of the avalanche of passengers during World War II. Down the center of each platform were cast-iron columns whose fluted shafts and Ionic capitals employed the same neoclassical vocabulary that appeared throughout Union Station. Painted cream and maroon to fit with the colors that would appear inside, the columns extended fourteen feet up to the shelter's roof, an almost flat "v" that consisted mainly of skylights. Each half of the roof had enough slope to direct precipitation towards drainpipes hidden in the center of every other pillar, and the two wings explained why railroaders sometimes referred to Union Station's "butterfly sheds." Because every shelter—also called an "umbrella shed"—had to stop at the edge of its platform to prevent rubbing against big locomotives, passengers could find themselves welcomed by wind-blown rain, sleet, or snow. The current platforms continue to use umbrella sheds, though it is unclear how much original material remains.

The northern approach continued to the point where the tracks crossed Florida Avenue and ownership passed to the Baltimore & Ohio and the Pennsylvania. Closest to the station, the approach was the same 760' width as the original concourse, but began to narrow around H Street. By the end of the throat, as railroaders called the funnel that brought the original 33 tracks down to 10, the railroad right-of-way was XX feet wide. The topography of the immediate area, as well as of the land farther north to Maryland, required moving the tracks above ground level. The city of Washington needed the tracks elevated so that crossing streets could pass underneath, and the railroads wanted the climb north to be as gradual as possible to limit demands on their engines. The resulting viaduct took two forms. Over the streets steel and concrete supported the tracks; in between each crossing was an enormous amount of fill, a total of approximately 750,000 cubic yards.^{iv} Holding the earth in place were massive concrete retaining walls as much as 35 feet tall. Their exteriors were faced with ashlar made from sandstone, and they ran all the way back to the southern edge of the station itself.^v These majestic walls largely remain as originally built and highlight the major engineering work that was involved in creating Washington's new terminal.

The viaduct also hosted a number of structures important to the operation of the terminal. On its eastern edge between H and I Streets was the Express Building, which handled small freight and perishable items. This red brick, 420' long building, was adapted into offices in 1989. Initially on the western side of the approach was the station's power plant, whose 250' smokestack towered over the adjacent homes. It was demolished in the 1970s to create room for the Metro right of way. Still standing in the middle of the tracks just a little farther north was K Tower. Named after the street just to its north, this two-story building hosted the main interlocking, a system that connected switches, signals and sensors in ways that made it very difficult for operators to route two trains onto the same track. Though the technology has changed enormously since the initial system, which was considered the most sophisticated in the world when it began operating, the tower continues to control train movements in and out of the station.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Track Plans for Washington Union Station," *The Railroad Gazette* (Jan. 15, 1904), 41.

^{iv} Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, General Plan Showing Position of New Yards & Terminal (Jun. 29, 1903), Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum.

^v W.F. Strouse, "The Washington Terminal Improvements of the Baltimore & Ohio and the Pennsylvania Railroads," *Engineering News* (Nov. 10, 1904), 415-420.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation

Period of Significance

1907-1961

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Period of Significance (justification)

The station was the transportation hub of Washington until the 1950s. It was one of the most prominent and celebrated buildings in Washington, with its Beaux Arts design reflecting and promoting the neoclassicism that has dominated the city's architecture.

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Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Washington's Union Station has been at the heart of life in the nation's capital since its opening in 1907, and it remains one of the world's most admired railroad terminals. Its two main areas of significance are transportation and architecture. Because of the railroad's dominance of intercity travel before 1950, Union Station was a central element for transportation to and from Washington. From the headhouse (which contained a number of elegant interior spaces including the waiting room, the ticket lobby, the restaurant, and the Presidential Suite) to the concourse (where passengers queued from their trains) on through to the northern approach (including the gates and platforms), the terminal provided a literal and figurative welcome to the city. It did more than simply fulfill that role in a functional way. The building's elegant neoclassical design, finely chosen materials, and enormous size helped define the experience of visitors and residents and provided a concrete example of the wealth and power of both the station's railroad owners and of the country whose capital it served. Its construction, which enabled the Pennsylvania Railroad to leave its station and tracks on the Mall, also made possible key features of the McMillan Plan, particularly the creation of the Mall in its current form. Because of both the skill with which architects Daniel H. Burnham (1846-1912) and Peirce Anderson (1879-1924) fulfilled those roles, the station is significant.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

I. Criterion A

Union Station was at the heart of the development of modern Washington. For the first half of the 20th century, it was the capital's dominant arrival and departure point, providing a memorable welcome and sendoff and fueling the local economy. After a period of decline in mid-century, the station has returned to a place of prominence in the life of the city, both architecturally and economically. No part of the building documents this crucial position better than the headhouse, especially the General Waiting Room, the Ticket Lobby, the Dining Room, and the State Reception Room.

Before Union Station opened in 1907, two separate depots provided these functions. The station for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O) stood at New Jersey Avenue and C Street NW, on land that is now part of the Capitol Grounds. It was close enough to the U.S. Capitol that each fall the local fire company had to give the Capitol dome a bath to ensure ash that had spewed from the B&O's locomotives would not catch fire from a random spark.^{vi} The Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) depot was located at Sixth and B Streets NW, now the site of the West Wing of the National Gallery. The PRR's station along with its tracks, which also handled all traffic from Virginia, occupied part of the National Mall.

Having been designed when Washington had less than half of its 1900 population of 275,000, these stations were, as the city's leading paper put it, "inadequate and discreditable."^{vii} Their limited spaces were particularly apparent because of travel patterns to and from the capital. More than in most cities, visitors arrived in bursts, coming for

^{vi} Elliott Woods to Commissioners of DC, October 19, 1900, Architect's Letterbooks, 1900-1902, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol. Woods wrote similar letters requesting the fire company visit on November 4, 1903 and November 7, 1906.

^{vii} Editorial, *Evening Star*, Mar. 7, 1894, 4.

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events such as inaugurations and conventions. Experience with crowding had proven so bad, in fact, that some conferences actually chose other cities. This loss of tourist business was particularly troubling to an economy like Washington's, since it had only a limited industrial sector.

Late in the 19th century, both the B&O and the PRR began planning for larger stations. They initially expected to build separate facilities, but a series of events led them to combine facilities into a "union station" at the intersection of Massachusetts and Delaware Avenues NE, just blocks north of the Capitol. This decision was driven by the PRR, which in the 1890s had taken corporate control of the B&O after the latter had gone bankrupt in large part because of a brutal recession. The Pennsylvania favored long-term planning, including the construction of modern facilities that could handle the demands of the next 50 years. Owning the building and the tracks that served it was the Washington Terminal Company, which was jointly owned by the B&O and the PRR.

Designing the new terminal was D.H. Burnham and Company, at that time the country's largest and most famous architectural firm. Famed for his ability to win business, Burnham had first worked with the Pennsylvania in 1888 as designer of the building the railroad used in Chicago. He subsequently lobbied hard to convince the PRR to choose his firm to design the separate station it originally planned for Washington. Having won that commission, they kept the job once the joint station was approved.

Though Union Station is regularly credited to Daniel Burnham, Burnham and others have noted that the project was actually led by Peirce Anderson, the firm's chief designer. While Burnham contributed to the station, it was Anderson who visited other major railroad terminals in search of ideas, signed the construction drawings before they went to the contractors, and, most important, created the design.^{viii} This division of responsibility was typical in a Burnham firm: in the past, other collaborators such as John Root had handled the majority of the artistic work.^{ix}

Despite the mythology that has grown around the station's birth, Washington's new railroad terminal was not part of the McMillan Plan. There were many connections between the two projects, starting with Burnham, who chaired the commission. The McMillan Commission was also another piece of evidence showing the Pennsylvania that its hold on Mall property was growing weaker. Yet had the commission failed to produce a final report, or had produced a far different design, the railroad would likely still have built Union Station as part of its commitment to larger facilities that would serve its business for decades to come.

When Anderson began to design Union Station, he had to meet two seemingly contradictory demands. He needed to produce a dramatically larger structure to handle the hundreds of thousands of visitors who arrived for a big event, but he also could not dwarf the 25,000 people who passed through on an average day. Making his work particularly important was the terminal's role as the gateway to the city. When the first train arrived on October 27, 1907, rail was still by far the dominant mode of long-distance transportation. Some visitors did travel to Washington by steamship, but the Wright brothers would not have their historic flight until later in the year, and the primitive state of automobile technology, let alone the condition of the roads, meant that no one drove to the capital.^x

Anderson's solution was to divide the building into sections. Closest to the tracks was the passenger concourse, a massive but minimally decorated space. Arriving passengers then passed into the headhouse, a stylishly grand and ceremonial welcome to the nation's capital.

^{viii} Chappell, 273-275; Hudson Harper to J.G. Langdon Sep. 17, 1901, Series I: Business Correspondence, Burnham Papers.

^{ix} Hines, esp. 22-25.

^x Blanton, 64.

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On the west end of the headhouse was the Ticket Lobby, which contained both the ticket windows and the baggage counter. On the east end was the Dining Room, vital because the organization of the U.S. railroad industry made Washington a transfer point between lines serving the south and others serving the north. This need to change trains often produced long layovers and therefore many hungry travelers. At the eastern end of the headhouse was the Presidential Suite, a collection of rooms designed to separate top officials from the rest of the crowd. This feature resulted from the 1881 assassination of President James Garfield, who was shot as he crossed the main waiting room at the old PRR station, which did not have a separate entrance for dignitaries.

The General Waiting Room filled the center section of the headhouse. Its 25,000 square feet typically hosted 24 massive mahogany benches arranged in six rows of four, but this arrangement changed according to conditions. During World War II, for example, extra ticket counters were placed in the western section of the room in order to reduce the lines at the normal windows. The information booth, which originally stood on the western edge of the room, became larger and more centrally located during both World Wars.

The headhouse illustrated important issues about life in the capital. The city's role as the seat of government was clear from the many officials who arrived there. They included foreign visitors, such as King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England and King Hassan II of Morocco and diplomats coming to conferences; military leaders returning home, such as General Pershing after World War I; and presidents. Typically, the arrival or departure of these dignitaries would be accommodated through the Presidential Suite without any contact with the General Waiting Room. The complications of race relations also appeared in the headhouse. There were no "colored" waiting rooms, so all people shared the same space, a relatively rare occurrence in a deeply, if unofficially, segregated city. Blacks and whites were not treated equally, however: in the Dining Room, a group of black diners would be separated by mahogany screens from the rest of the room. When Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, a history professor at Howard University, collected oral histories from African American women who had arrived in the '30s, she found that entering the terminal often was "their most memorable 'new-in-the North' experience." As one of them recalled:

It was so big. And when you looked up at the ceiling, you knew you were North! I remember looking up, the ceiling so tall and beautiful with gold all over it. I just knew that gold was going to fall into my hands! And so many people. I never had seen so many...We went out (me still hoping that gold would fall and crying) and got a streetcar.^{xi}

The headhouse impressed others about the importance of Washington. The nearly 100' high ceiling of the waiting room was for many visitors the highest span or structure they had seen. When the station opened, nearly a dozen states had no occupied structures as tall.^{xii} One children's book noted that its main characters "stopped and stared up and around, amazed at its size."^{xiii} Often visitors were struck by the activity of hundreds if not thousands of people moving about with purpose. Adding significantly to the experience was the view from the station to the outside. This view was best illustrated in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, when Jimmy Stewart stops dead before he leaves the building: through the glass of the front doors, rising above the formal park bordering both sides of Delaware Avenue, was the breathtaking dome of the U.S. Capitol.

The centrality of the station to life in Washington was best illustrated during World War II. The all-out war effort put tremendous demands on the building: it averaged more than 100,000 travelers per day and peaked, during the holidays, at more than 200,000 people every 24 hours. Mixing on the headhouse's marble floors were soldiers

^{xi} Clark-Lewis, 70-71.

^{xii} Various Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Geography & Map Division, Library of Congress.

^{xiii} Humphrey, 6.

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heading off to camp or the front; government officials traveling to factories and field offices; “government girls” coming to the capital to contribute to the war effort and to feel some of the city’s excitement. The USO took over the Presidential Suite, daily serving thousands of soldiers from all branches with food, beverages, and even chairs for taking a nap. The constantly changing scenes led *Parade Magazine* to write in 1942, “against a backdrop of classic marble, cold concrete and warm brass, lush magazine covers and screaming headlines is staged the whole disorderly drama of a nation at war.”^{xiv}

After World War II, the building appeared to be heading into a permanent decline. The rise of automobiles and airplanes gave travelers alternatives they found faster, more convenient, and more fashionable than train travel. By 1962 daily traffic had shrunk to 35,000 travelers, seemingly verifying a 1958 Interstate Commerce Commission report that predicted that passenger rail would soon “take its place in the transportation museum along with the stagecoach, the sidewheeler, and the steam locomotive.”^{xv}

The building’s condition suffered, and over the years many of the original interior furnishings, such as the mahogany benches, were removed. There had been very little maintenance during the lean years of the Great Depression, and the constant pounding of wartime traffic exacerbated problems, including worn floors and a dirty exterior. The Washington Terminal Company did make some changes after 1945, such as cleaning the exterior in the late 1940s and installing a terrazzo floor in the general waiting room in the early ‘50s, but the railroads’ main strategy was to find a way out of the building.

The company ultimately worked with the National Park Service and local boosters to come up with new ways to make Union Station once again a central part of coming to Washington. The search for alternatives took more than a decade and ended when the Park Service took a long-term lease on the terminal so it could create the National Visitor Center, which attempted to orient travelers to the capital much in the way visitors centers at national parks do. Its main feature was what the Visitor Center’s promoters called the Primary Audio-Visual Experience, a multi-screen slide show cut into the floor of the waiting room. Because of its positioning and limited value—why watch slides of Washington when the real places are just outside the door?²—PAVE soon became known as “the Pit.” The Visitor Center also installed a bookstore in the east hall and a “Hall of States” exhibit in the west hall. All parts of the headhouse received cosmetic work that altered the original character of the building. In the bookstore (the former Dining Room), for example, crews painted over the Roman decorations near the clerestory windows. However, few visitors patronized the elaborate center, and the Park Service closed it in 1981, just five years after it had opened.

This early effort at adaptive reuse was widely derided as a failure. A second attempt during the 1980s was much more successful. In 1981 Congress passed legislation to convert the station into a festival mall and transportation center, including the addition of a new railroad terminal to the north of the original concourse. This work, completed in 1988, included restoring important features of the headhouse, such as installing a new marble floor that matched the original white square/red diamond pattern, restoring the general waiting room ceiling, and recreating the decorative elements of the east hall. However, this project also added some inappropriate physical elements, most notably the raised café in the center of the general waiting room, which blocked both the main north-south and the main east-west axes. It also heavily emphasized retail activities, pushing virtually all transportation elements into the concourse or the new terminal. Several rooms—the Ladies’ Waiting Room, the Lunch Room, and the Smoking Room—were compromised by the insertion of platforms to increase the amount of space that could be used for retail or restaurant purposes. Despite these numerous alterations, the renovations

^{xiv} “The Capital’s Railroad Terminal,” *Parade Magazine*, Dec. 13, 1942.

^{xv} Quoted in Reutter, 23.

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helped restore the station to a place of prominence in life in the capital, and today more than 90,000 people enter the building on an average day.

II. Criteria C

Since Union Station's 1907 opening, travelers, Washingtonians, and architectural historians have consistently praised its design, particularly the major interior spaces of the headhouse.

There were three major reasons Washington's new station needed to be dazzling yet serious. First, as one survey of American terminals has noted, "the train station was the image of the community, presenting at a glance something about its size, affluence, livelihood and social range of its citizens, their taste in architecture."^{xvi} That general desire tied into the second factor affecting Union Station, the growing power of the United States. By the turn of the century, the country had the world's largest economy, and its military strength was also growing rapidly. As local boosters saw it, the new terminal must reflect this prominence. Third, the railroads themselves wanted to demonstrate their importance and wealth, and there was no place better to do that than in the capital.

Peirce Anderson was ideally suited to work in the Beaux-Arts idiom so exquisitely reflected in interior design of Union Station. Not only had Anderson been trained at the school that gave the style its name, but its emphasis on neoclassical elements fit beautifully with the dominant architecture of public buildings in Washington. More generally, many previous buildings had also shown that the style worked well at the monumental scale the station would need to meet practical demands. Neoclassicism was also the most fashionable style at that time, including in the City Beautiful movement, which had gained tremendous popularity since the success of the Daniel Burnham-led 1893 Chicago's World Fair. Further, the tenets of the movement ran throughout the McMillan Commission's plans for Washington

The headhouse illustrated the commitment to neoclassical features. Based on the Baths of Diocletian in Rome, its floor plan was generally symmetrical, with the large waiting room at the center of the east and west wings. Yet Anderson adjusted the wings so they served the practical needs of travelers for tickets, luggage, and meals. Classical architectural elements included Doric columns, statues of Roman legionnaires, and the striking barrel vault over the waiting room.

Adding to the impressive effect were the materials. The floors were made from marble, and most of the furniture was mahogany. The walls were covered with light granite from a quarry in Vermont that had never been used for a major building. The waiting room ceiling contained panels of gold leaf; the top of the dining room offered designs borrowed from Pompeii.

From the time the station opened, visitors praised its beauty. After joking that the building was so big that "the climate at the south end is different from the climate at the north end, and the attendants speak with a different accent," a visitor from Peoria compared it to the Chicago Fair. A Texas congressman noted that, "like every other person who has occasion to come frequently to Washington I have been impressed with the beauty of that building and have rejoiced in it as a work of art that the whole country might be proud of." Foreign visitors were equally impressed, with a Briton, an Australian, and a German all saying that Washington's new station surpassed even Frankfurt's, generally considered the best station in the world.^{xvii}

^{xvi} Meeks, 39-40; Grow, 8-9.

^{xvii} "Like Paved Prairie," *Star*, Jan. 26, 1908, Part I, 9; James L. Slayden to Samuel S. Smith, May 6, 1910, Box 1544, Folder 3, Pennsylvania Railroad Records, Hagley; "Forsees Mighty City," *Post*, Apr. 22, 1908, "People Met in Hotel Lobbies," *Post*, Sep. 23, 1909, 6; "Chats of visitors to the Capital," *Post*, Jan. 30, 1908, 6.

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Professional response was just as complimentary. Though it condemned the occasional substitution of inferior materials, the *Architectural Record* concluded, “the effect...is both monumental and charming.” The building became the model for other terminals, particularly the 1915 Kansas City Union Station, which was “a virtual clone.” Anderson would design dozens of other significant buildings over the next two decades, including Chicago’s Union Station, but a leading dictionary of American architects called the work in Washington “his greatest achievement.” Railroad men were equally complimentary, with the superintendent of the New York, New Haven & Hartford using its layout to illustrate excellent design and calling it “a splendid example of the city gate designed in perfect harmony with the architecture of the community.”^{xviii}

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Architects Daniel H. Burnham and W. Peirce Anderson

Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846-1912) was a nationally famous architect and early proponent of the City Beautiful movement. Burnham was born in Henderson, New York and moved with his family to Chicago when he was eight years old. His interest in architecture and skill at drawing were apparent from an early age. After being tutored in Massachusetts and then failing to gain admittance to Harvard College, he returned to Chicago, where his father was able to place him as an apprentice in the office of architect William LeBaron Jenney. Subsequently Burnham gained additional training as a draftsman in the firm of Carter, Drake, & Wight. In 1873, Burnham joined John Wellborn Root in breaking off from that firm and organizing their own partnership, which had a prosperous business lasting from 1873 to 1891, when Root died. Burnham & Root had a drafting force of at least 60 and has been credited with designing over 165 private homes and 75 other buildings. In 1890, Root and Burnham were given key roles in planning the upcoming World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. When Root suddenly died the following year, great responsibility was put on Burnham, who rose to the occasion and became world famous for his design of the exposition’s “White City.” The success of the 1893 exposition dramatically increased Burnham’s fame—in 1894 he received honorary degrees from Harvard and Yale—and helped him build what became the world’s largest architectural firm. By the turn of the century, the 200 people at D.H. Burnham & Co. were designing mansions, churches, banks, university halls, department stores, warehouses, skyscrapers and train stations. The Columbian Exposition also affected his methods, deepening his commitment to the Beaux-Arts style and to a more comprehensive approach to city planning. Although Burnham probably never said, “Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood,” the phrase that became known as his motto accurately reflected his ambitious outlook.

His connection to Union Station began around the turn of the century, when we won the commission to design a new, larger Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) terminal. In early 1901, that project merged with the plans for a separate new Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O) depot to produce Union Station. Since the Pennsylvania controlled the B&O at this time, its president, Alexander Cassatt, chose Burnham to design the joint project.

Also early in 1901, Burnham was called to Washington to serve as chairman of the Senate Park, or McMillan, Commission. It was Burnham who chose Charles McKim and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., to join him as members of the commission. With this ambitious project to re-envision an entire city’s core on a new, monumental scale, Burnham began a new phase of his career as a proponent of City Beautiful. The McMillan Commission’s recommendations for the nation’s capital would become the single-most influential architectural plans for the city

^{xviii} “The Union Station,” *Architectural Record*, 190-97; Spivak, 28; Withey & Withey, 20; Droege, 64, 114.

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since L'Enfant's original design. A number of other major cities would subsequently seek his assistance, including San Francisco, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago. In 1910, just two years before his death, Burnham was chosen to chair the newly established Commission of Fine Arts, which, among its early projects, played a major role in determining the site, architect, and sculptor for the new Lincoln Memorial. Burnham died while on vacation in Germany in 1912.

It is important to note that Union Station was not actually part of what has also been known as the McMillan Plan. Even before the three commissioners began their work, the Pennsylvania had begun investigating how to remove its station, from its location on the Mall at Sixth and B Streets NW. Though the railroad had permission to build a larger new station at the same tie, it increasingly feared that the drive to beautify Washington would ultimately force it off the Mall. To avoid building new facilities twice in a short period, it began investigating alternative nearby sites. While the PRR's decision to clear off the Mall was separate from the McMillan Plan, that relocation was crucial to the Park Commission's final design.

While Burnham had the commission for the Union Station project, it was actually his associate, William Peirce Anderson (1870-1924), who did the design work. Anderson had grown up in Utah and upstate New York, graduated from Harvard in 1892, and received a master's in electrical engineering at Johns Hopkins in 1894. A talk with Burnham reinforced his doubts about continuing in that field, and, at Burnham's urging, he decided to join the many American architects-to-be heading to Paris. Accepted into the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, he finished his degree in 1899 and celebrated with the traditional, yearlong graduation tour of the continent's architectural sites. Upon returning to the U.S. he went to D.H. Burnham & Co., starting as a draftsman but quickly becoming its chief designer. Tall and reserved—architect Thomas Hastings affectionately joked about collaborating with “Wild Billy Anderson”—his artistic talent was clear in the watercolors he occasionally painted. While Burnham contributed to the station, it was Anderson who led the project, from visiting other major railroad terminals in search of ideas to signing the construction drawings before they went to the contractors. After Burnham's death in 1912, Anderson remained as one of Chicago's leading architects, a principal in Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, the successor to Burnham's firm. Honing his skills on the masterfully executed Washington Union Station, Anderson became an expert at designing large-scale modern public facilities, such as train stations, post offices, and museums, that retained classical proportions and grandeur. He would later design projects such as the Post Office adjacent to Union Station, Philadelphia's 30th Street Station, and a number of buildings in Chicago, including the Field Museum and Union Station.

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Acreage of Property

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title John DeFerrari, William Wright

organization D.C. Preservation League, Committee of 100 on the
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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

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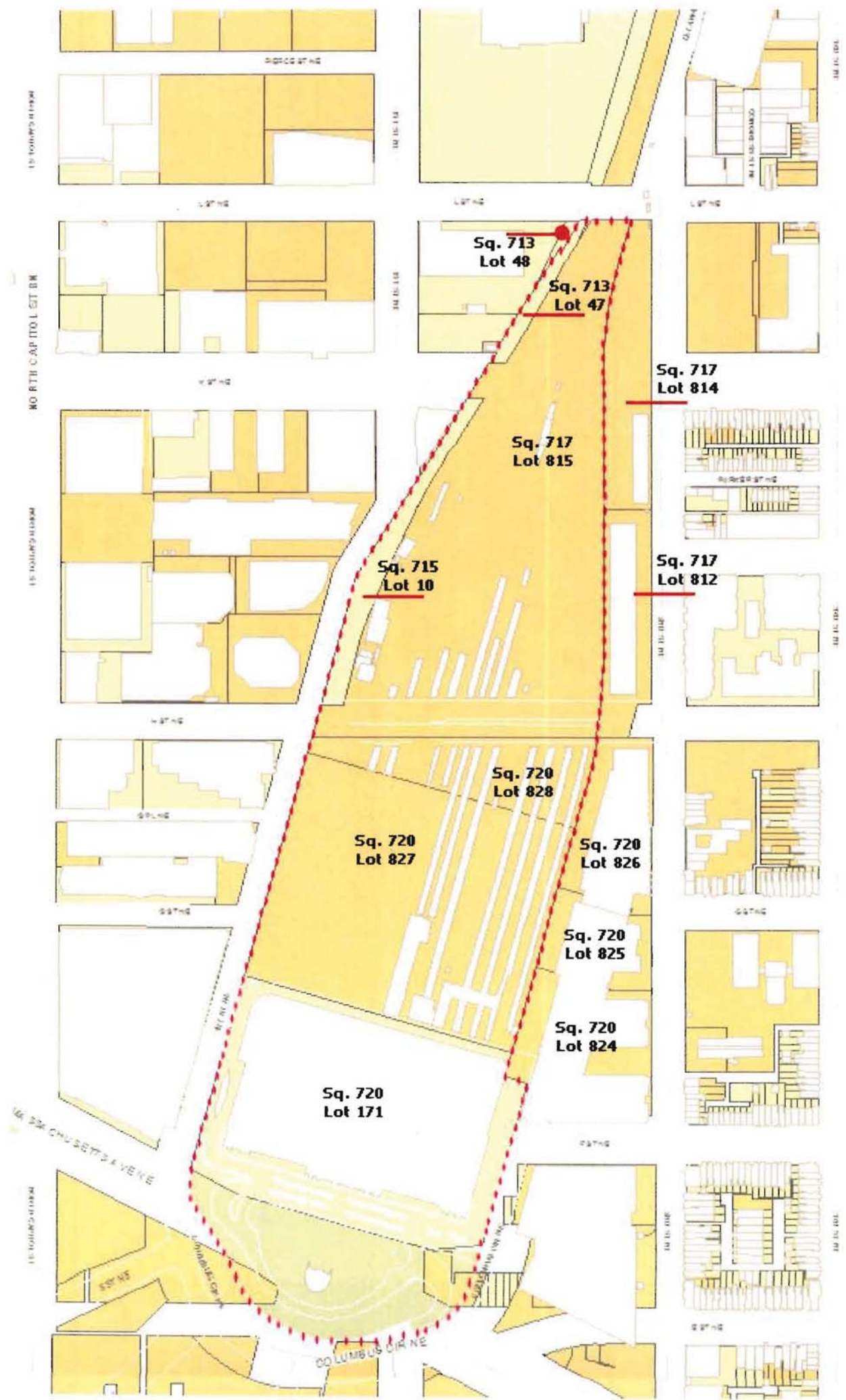
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