

LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

Union Station

Local Historic Landmark #105

300 Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr., Winston-Salem

Construction Date: 1926

Landmark Designation Date: 12/15/1997

During the late 19th century, access to rail transportation was key to Winston's industrial development. In 1873, the first regular train arrived in Winston from Greensboro. The 28-mile track, known as the Salem Branch Line, was part of the Northwestern North Carolina Railroad, later to become part of the Southern Railway. The Roanoke and Southern (later the Norfolk and Western) arrived in the city in 1889. As the tobacco industry, in particular, grew, so did the importance of having a good system of rail lines into and out of the city. In 1910, the Winston-Salem Southbound Railroad, which operated under the control of the Atlantic Coast Line Railway, provided a third rail line to serve Winston. This expansion of railroad facilities was closely linked to the city's phenomenal growth in industry, commerce, and population during the early decades of the 20th century. In 1913, the towns of Winston and Salem merged, and between 1910 and 1920 the population grew 113%, making Winston-Salem the largest city in North Carolina.

Several railroad stations – for passengers, freight, or both – were built in Winston-Salem prior to 1925. The only one of these to survive is the Winston-Salem Southbound Freight Warehouse and Office (Local Historic Landmark #82). In 1908, a passenger station was constructed in downtown Winston. However, in less than a decade, the three railroads recognized that the city needed a larger passenger station to handle the constantly increasing rail travel. Although both the railroads and the local citizens agreed upon a new station, the outbreak of World War I postponed construction. Following the war, a site on Wheeler Street (later Claremont Avenue and now Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive) was selected. The three railroads – the Southern, the Norfolk and Western, and the Winston-Salem Southbound – then formed a corporation, the Winston-Salem Terminal Company, to build Union Station.

The company secured the services of the New York architectural firm of Fellheimer and Wagner to draw up the plans for Union Station. They produced a design



for a large, handsome building in the Beaux Arts style that met the city's size and transportation needs. Over a 16-month period, the station was constructed at a cost of \$800,000. On April 14, 1926, the *Twin City Sentinel* announced in a front page story, "The fulfillment of a dream of a decade, the new union passenger station of Winston-Salem is completed."

The main level of Union Station is faced with red brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern. Details are executed in limestone. The building's north (main) entrance consists of a limestone portico supported by paired columns with stylized Corinthian columns. The portico is crowned by an entablature with alternating medallions and flutes and a parapeted cornice. Beneath the portico, the entrance features a segmental-arched surround with a carved stone eagle in the keystone position. The east (side) entrance consists of a limestone portico with paired pilasters and a parapeted cornice with a decorative classical molding. The portico surrounds a recessed entryway crowned by a sunburst panel and a round arch with a coffered ceiling.

These entrances open into the public lobbies, waiting, and travel service spaces that occupy the main floor of the structure. On the south and west elevations, the grade drops to reveal three-story service and concourse areas.

Rail service needs, particularly for passenger stations, diminished following World War II in Winston-Salem, as elsewhere in the nation. By 1963, only the Southern Railway continued to provide passenger service with four scheduled trains daily. Passenger service ended at Union Station on June 15, 1970, when the last train stopped in Winston-Salem on its route from Greensboro to Asheville. In 1975, Union Station was sold to Harvey Davis; unfortunately, before the sale, the Southern Railway demolished the impressive bridge concourse over the tracks and the loading platforms, and removed the station's original lighting fixtures. For approximately 30 years, Davis used the building for his automobile repair business, Davis Garage.

Today Union Station is owned by the City of Winston-Salem; plans are to rehabilitate the structure into a multi modal transportation center, with offices and educational facilities.



Union Station, Date Unknown



Exterior view of the Union Train Station, 1950
Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library
Photograph Collection via Digital Forsyth
(<http://www.digitalforsyth.org>)



Union Train Station, 1974
(Brick concourse has since been removed)
Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library
Photograph Collection via Digital Forsyth
(<http://www.digitalforsyth.org>)

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Union Station National Register Nomination
<http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/FY1271.pdf>

[http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?
CISOROOT=/nc_post&CISOPTR=4192&CISOBX=
1&REC=4](http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/nc_post&CISOPTR=4192&CISOBX=1&REC=4)

<http://www.pwrr.org/nstation/winstonsalem.html>



This information is also available
at the Forsyth County
Historic Resources Commission's web site:
<http://www.ForsythCountyHRC.org>