



Los Angeles Union Station History

“The Last Of The Great Train Stations”

Los Angeles Union Station is the largest railroad passenger terminal in the Western United States and is widely regarded as “the last of the great train stations”.

The station was commissioned in 1933 as a joint venture between the Southern Pacific, Union Pacific and Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroads and was intended to consolidate the three local railroad terminals.

It was designed by the father-son architect team of John and Donald Parkinson with an innovative blend of Spanish Colonial, Mission Revival and Art Deco architecture now commonly referred to as Mission Moderne. The stunning facility was completed in 1939 for a reported \$11million and opened with a lavish, star-studded, three-day celebration attended by a half million Angelenos.

In the 76 years since its opening, Union Station has captured the spirit and soul of Los Angeles and has emerged as a vital portal to the promise of the California dream.

The station was designed as an expression of the California lifestyle with a spacious ticket hall equipped with a 110-foot-long ticket counter crafted from American Black Walnut, a vast waiting room featuring towering 40-foot windows adored with brass, massive art deco chandeliers, inlaid marble floors and hand painted mission tiles, along with expansive shaded patios, towering palm trees and a clock tower looming 100 feet above the city.

Located in the southern area of the station’s main building, the famous Harvey House restaurant with its “Harvey Girls” was a favorite amongst passengers. Designed by famous Santa Fe architect Mary Coulter, widely regarded as the inventor of

“Southwestern Design” it was the last in a long line of Harvey restaurants across the country.

Within just a few years of opening, Los Angeles Union Station transformed into a bustling 24-hour, seven-day-a-week operation with as many as 100 troop trains carrying tens of thousands of servicemen through the terminal every day during World War II.

By the 1950’s Americans favored cars and planes to the rails and there were fewer passengers through the station but it remained a vital part of LA’s transportation scene for decades. In 1972, Union Station was designated as a Los Angeles Historic–Cultural Monument and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

In April 2011, Metro completed the acquisition of the Los Angeles Union Station property, including 38 acres and 5.9 million square feet of development rights. Union Station is currently in the first phase of a new Master Plan announced in 2015. Metro’s long range, visionary plan establishes the framework for transforming Los Angeles Union Station into a world-class transportation facility and will enable the station to better handle the growing number of transit riders and accommodate high-speed rail.

Today, Union Station has evolved into a vibrant transportation center in the heart of the city serving 100,000 passengers daily. It is the primary regional hub for Amtrak and Metrolink’s commuter train service, and as a transfer point for Metro’s Red, Purple and Gold Lines. Linked to the Patsaouras Transit Plaza, the station offers essential transit connections to destinations throughout Los Angeles.

Additionally, the station has been transformed into a lively public space, featuring a series of signature events, cutting edge performances, evocative music, unprecedented art exhibitions and thought-provoking cultural programing that have completely redefine the Union Station experience. Union Station has forged a new direction as a center for culture, innovation and ideas, while continuing to embrace its storied past.

A vital gateway to the rebirth of Downtown’s vibrant arts, entertainment and food scene, the station is a portal to important cultural venues including The Broad, The Disney Concert Hall, The Music Center and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

With a nod to the past and an eye on the future, Union Station is one of LA’s premiere destinations.

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