



# SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY

## NEWSLETTER

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### LAST GASP OF LAST CHICAGO STATION?

Always the country's premier railroad terminal city, Chicago rapidly is coming close to losing its last station. Gradually, the city's onetime six passenger terminals have been demolished (IC's Central, B&O's Grand Central), defiled (Union), or abandoned (Dearborn). A fifth, LaSalle St., lives on borrow time, a shadow of its former self. That leaves the Chicago & North Western's North Western Station (1908-11), a Neoclassic hulk located off the Loop at W. Madison & N. Canal sts., still mostly in original condition.



David Daruszka photograph.

But now, it appears, there may be none. C&NW, still solvent but only marginally so, wants to sell the property to Tishman Midwest Management Corp. Tishman in turn has proposed the usual highrise office building in its place. The 50-story replacement, Tishman says, will include "some type of passenger facility" — presumably a variation of the motel-lobby style now popular for new and rebuilt urban railroad terminals.

Built at a time when C&NW was a major power in the Midwest and a primary transcontinental connection, North Western Station epitomized what architectural historian Carroll Meeks labelled the "Megalomania Period" of terminal design. The four-story two-level granite structure was designed in City Beautiful Italian Renaissance style by Chicago architects C.S. Frost and A.H. Granger—both, incidentally, in-laws of C&NW's then-president Marvin Hughitt. Behind its imposing headhouse, 16 tracks stub-ended underneath a slotted Bush trainshed. With rail traffic then growing exponentially, North Western was designed to handle an awesome 250,000 passengers a day.

John Droegge's 1916 classic *Passenger Terminals and Trains*

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All editorial correspondence should be directed to: Carol Poh Miller, Editor, SIAN, 1260 Granger Ave., Cleveland, O. 44107. (We are using up pre-printed stock.) Questions of membership, address changes, etc. should still be addressed to Rm. 5020, as below.

extolled North Western as one of the most beautiful and efficient urban terminals anywhere. Its architecture later lost critical favor but its efficiency endured. Although the transcontinental and, indeed, *all* intercity trains are gone, North Western was always predominantly a suburban terminal — built to cope with hordes of people and multiple train movements in peak periods. Currently it serves a thriving commuter traffic of over 90,000 passengers a day, still far short of its designed capacity but more than double its 1915 load. Trains may have disappeared elsewhere, but rush hour at North Western is still a sight to behold. In fact, there is tentative talk of adding some Amtrak Milwaukee runs since Union Station (the city's other major station) is becoming overburdened.

Happily, despite some 1965 interior alterations, North Western has survived in reasonably pristine original form, complete with its Bush trainshed and semaphore interlocking system. It is, in short, an almost perfectly preserved 1910-era metropolitan railroad terminal from its columned facade to its rear approach tracks.

Unhappily, it managed to get overlooked by preservationists perhaps preoccupied with more picturesque structures. The Tishman proposal initially created little local stir. At close to the eleventh hour two Chicago railroaders, David Daruszka and William Francik, formed the Friends of the North Western Station to save it. FNWS hopes to get public support for a compromise solution involving rehabilitation of the station and construction of the office building over the trainshed. The group currently is working for National Register listing and city landmark designation. (As we go to press, we have learned that, at a hearing on Mar. 16, the station was turned down for National Register listing by the Ill. Historic Sites Advisory Council in Springfield. An architect hired by the developer testified that the station interior has been too remodeled to make it worth saving.)

FNWS needs all the help it can get, and quickly. To contribute ideas, advice, moral support, or money, contact Friends of the North Western Station, 7549 N. Oakley, Chicago, Ill. 60645. H.H.H.

#### NORDBERG STEAM STAMP RESCUED

The world's last surviving steam stamp has narrowly escaped the junkman. The steeple-compound stamp, built by the Nordberg Mfg. Co. in 1900, had stood in Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry since 1938, but the museum planned to scrap it to make room for new exhibits. Peter Molloy [SIA], director of the Western Museum of Mining and Industry in Colorado Springs, Colo., learned of the impending loss last summer from Robert Johnson [SIA], of the Whistles in the Woods museum. The stamp's immense size (90 tons, 40 ft. high) made for expensive rigging and transportation, but the museum was able to raise the necessary funds with the help of Blinderman Construction Co., which initially had been hired to junk the stamp. Blinderman's charge for disassembling and packing the stamp was a fraction of the actual cost. Rexnord Corp., which took over Nordberg a few years ago,