

11/27/93

To D.C.
12-22-1993

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wabash Railroad Station and Railway Express Agency

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 780 East Cerro Gordo Street not for publication

city or town Decatur vicinity

state Illinois code IL county Macon code 115 zip code 62523

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Walter L. Lohr (SHP) 12-20-93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain.) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Wabash Railroad Station
Name of Property

Macon, Illinois
County and State

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	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/Rail related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Brick

Terra Cotta

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Period of Significance

1901-1943

Significant Dates

1901

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Link, Theodore, architect

Menke, Edward H., builder

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
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Description

The Wabash Railroad Station and Railway Express Agency is located at the east end of, and running parallel to, East Cerro Gordo Street (Cerro Gordo terminates at this point before continuing further east of the Illinois Central Railroad tracks) in Decatur, Illinois. The two-story rectangularly-shaped yellow brick building stands to the south of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad tracks and to the west of the Illinois Central Railroad tracks. The Wabash Railroad Station, built in 1901, is separated from East Cerro Gordo Street by a 70 foot wide paved parking lot and grassy area and from the Norfolk and Southern tracks to the north by a 13 foot wide asphalt boarding area. To the west of the Station, connected by a breezeway, is the one-story Railway Express Agency also built in 1901.

The Wabash Railroad Station measures 156 feet 6 inches long and 56 feet 6 inches at its widest point. The exterior is constructed of yellow brick with terra cotta trim. The main (south) and east entries have classical pilasters, Ionic capitals and a classical pediment with modillions in the gable above. The front (main) entry formed the base of a three story tower which has since been removed (date unknown). The wings of either side of the front entry are not identical but the building has an overall sense of balance. A distinctive feature of the building is that the front entrance has a rectangular doorway flanked by arched windows while the east entrance has an arched doorway flanked by rectangular windows.

The Railway Express Agency is 115 feet long and 25 feet wide. It is constructed of the same brick and stone as the Station. The Railway Express Agency has stone quoins at its corners. The front (south) side of the building has five door openings with transoms. Six pairs of windows are arranged between each door. They have terra cotta trim and are double-hung, nine-over-nine. The east end of the Express Agency has a single door opening. The rear (north) side openings mimics the front. The east end has no openings. The west end butts up to another unrelated commercial building. This commercial building is currently a pet shop. There is no connections between the two buildings.

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The Station has a stone foundation with smooth-cut stone blocks that rise up the walls approximately three feet. Wide terra cotta trim sets atop these stone blocks. The corners of the building including the front wings have stone quoins. The front gable entry extension has brick quoins. The roof of the Station is a combination of hip and gable while the Railway Express Agency's roof is hipped. Both roofs were replaced in 1990 with brown asphalt shingles. The Station has gutters and downspouts in both front and back as well as the Railway Express Agency.

The Station has an attic and partial basement. The attic has round vented windows in the gable ends. The 25 front first floor windows are set on bracketed sandstone sills and topped with molded arcaded sandstone frames. The smaller windows are grouped in threes and fours, while the larger windows are individually set. The larger arched windows have eight panes surrounding an arched top and a one-over one window. There are 27 second story windows on the front facade. The second story windows are set on a terra cotta belt course that runs the perimeter of the building. These windows are unornamented. A second belt course runs the perimeter of the building between the first and second floors which adds symmetry to the Station. The windows on the second floor are double-hung nine-over-nine windows. They have four square corner panes with four rectangular panes between, and a large square pane in the middle.

The east elevation has a pair of arched windows towards the south on the first floor and single rectangular shaped windows on both sides of the east entry. The second floor has six windows.

The eighteen rear first floor windows are rectangular and masonry framed with columns in between the sets of triple windows. There are two doors towards the east of the building and a three-sided window bay towards the west. There are nineteen windows on the second floor and a bay window with four windows in the northwest corner. The bay was used as a look-out up and down the tracks.

The west elevation has the connection to the Railway Express part of the building, four windows, and a small door on the first story. The upper level has the continuation of the bay in the northwest corner with four windows and five windows to the south.

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All of the outside doors have been replaced (probably during the time when Amtrak occupied the building). They are currently steel, aluminum, and glass. Most inside doors are original. These are 1/2 wood, 1/2 glass, some with transoms and mail drops. Where modifications have been made, the doors are plain hollow core doors.

All windows on the first floor remain intact except one on the north side of the building that has been taken out and boarded. This window can be easily reconstructed. Many of the second floor windows have been broken out due to vandalism.

The building has been remodeled a few times to keep up with the times and to adapt to changing uses. Originally the building had a large waiting room along the north side of the first floor. A news stand was located to the right of the front entry and the ticket office was located to the left of the front entry. A smoking room and men's toilet was located in the southeast part of the building. The watch inspector's office was located in the northeast corner. West of the waiting rooms was a restaurant and a kitchen to the south. The women's rest rooms were located to the west of the ticket office and south of the waiting room.

The waiting room interior had tile floors, Georgia marble wainscoting, frescoed ceilings and panelled walls. The English style furnishings had antique oak trimmings. The women's rest room was furnished with fourteen seats. The woodwork was painted white and the walls light cream. It was separated from the main waiting room with swinging gates. The women's toilet area was also elegantly furnished with heavy porcelain wash bowls, plate glass mirrors, and marble wainscoting.

The building has two stairways to the second floor. One on the far east end and a second about halfway between the front entrance and the west end. The stairs are plain wood treads with plain round wood handrails. The stairwell walls are plaster.

The second floor had a central hallway with the division offices of the Wabash Railroad aligned along this hallway. Fourteen offices served such officials as the division superintendent, the chief dispatcher with five dispatchers working on each of the three shifts, the telegraph manager, general roadmaster, train

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Wabash Railroad Station & Railway Express Agency

master, resident engineer, and fuel inspector. The dispatching and telegraph office occupied the northwest corner of the building. The north and west bay windows provided a good view of the yards for a considerable distance. The dispatchers' tables were arranged so that their backs faced the view.

The walls and ceiling of the superintendent's office were decorated by A. Harman with prevailing trims of light yellow. The room was decorated with two fine rugs and new furniture throughout. A private bath adjoined the office.

Remodeling was carried out in the station in 1936 to alleviate upkeep problems that led to water leakage, loose plaster, and generally dirty conditions. In 1955 the newsstand was closed.

By 1963 the first floor waiting room had expanded into the newsstand area and ticket office towards the south. The ticket office and green Georgia marble ticket counter was moved to the northwest and the trainmasters' offices was expanded into the waiting room along the northeast. The original green Georgia marble that runs up the walls from the floor approximately five feet was left in place. Above the marble, soundproof tiles were added. The restaurant and kitchen had become six separate offices that opened onto a central reception area. A wood and glass door and wall that reaches the ceiling separates this area. These offices have simple wood trimmed doors and window, tile and concrete floors, dropped ceilings, and dry-walled partitions.

The eastern 2/3 of the building was most recently used by Amtrak, which ceased operations in 1976. In the early 1980s, Amtrak attempted a revival of passenger service for a short time. Amtrak dropped the ceilings in the first floor and added florescent lighting fixtures. The ceilings in the second floor were also dropped to install florescent lighting. Amtrak also installed some partitions in the waiting areas which have been removed to open up the first floor.

The Railway Express Agency is divided into two sections connected by a single door. The walls are unfinished, floors are concrete, and the ceilings are open rafters and beams.

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Amtrak abandoned the Station in the early 1980s. Vandals removed most of the electric wiring and broke nearly every window on the second floor. Because of this, inclement weather has caused deterioration of the ceilings, plaster walls, window sashes, and windows. The planned rehabilitation includes repairs to the interior and exterior of the buildings including tuckpointing, cleaning and small piece replacement of missing work. Some gutters and downspouts which are missing will also be replaced.

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Statement of Significance

The Wabash Railroad Station and Railway Express Agency meets Criterion A for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It is a locally significant building relating to transportation. It served as a division headquarters, dispatchers' offices, maintenance offices, as well as a passenger depot for the Wabash Railroad and later the Norfolk and Western Railroad. It was a functioning division headquarters and passenger station from 1901, the year the Station was built to the early 1980s when Amtrak abandoned the Station. The period of significance is from 1901 to 1943, the fifty-year cutoff for the National Register of Historic Places. The exterior integrity of the building has essentially been preserved, except for the tower, which was removed. The interior has been modified over the years to meet the demands of the times. The original marble walls and granite tile floors remains as does the ticket counter. The walls and woodwork are in the style of the early 1900s.

A new era commenced in the history of Macon County the day first train of railroad cars ran into Decatur. The Great Western Railroad was the first railroad constructed through Macon County in April 1854. The first train arrived on April 21, 1854. The Great Western Railroad Company changed names several times through reorganizations and mergers. In 1865 it became a part of the Toledo, Wabash, and Western Railway and in 1877 it reorganized as the Wabash Railway Company. The Wabash Railway Company was consolidated in 1879 with the St. Louis, Kansas City, and Northern Railway Company and became known as the Wabash, St. Louis, and Pacific Railroad. Reorganization came again in 1889 under the name of the Wabash Railroad Company. In 1964 the Norfolk and Western Railroad absorbed the Wabash Railroad Company.¹

The first station serving the Wabash Railroad and the Illinois Central Railroad was the Union Station built and opened in the summer of 1856. It was a two story building located to the east of the present Wabash Station on East Cerro Gordo Street. The Station included the Central House Hotel. Union Station remained in existence until the existing Wabash Station was dedicated on

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June 18, 1901.² A newspaper account from the Decatur Herald on June 18, 1901 gives a description of the empty station.

Everywhere is wreck, ruin, decay, and settled melancholy. Even the rats have deserted it and the ghosts refuse to linger in the silent, mouldy, cobwebbed corridors. The only sign of recent life is a card nailed over the ticket windows reading, 'Hurrah, moved into the new station,' and that shocks one like the ghastly mockery of a joke scribbled on a tombstone.

The Illinois Central Railroad built their own station in 1900 adjacent to and east of the present Wabash Station. That station was razed in 1951. A small storage/baggage area of that station remains.³

Plans for the new \$70,000 Wabash Railroad Station and Railway Express Agency were announced in April 1900. Surveyors staked the site on May 23 of the same year. St. Louis architect Theodore Link was hired to design the plans for the Classical Revival styled building.

Theodore Link was born in Germany in 1850. He studied engineering in Heidelberg and Paris before immigrating to the United States in 1870. Link moved to St. Louis, Missouri in 1874 and became a draftsman for the Bridge and Building Department of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad. He was hired in 1875 to draw the plans for Forest Park in St. Louis. In 1876, Link became the Superintendent of Public Parks in St. Louis. In 1891, Link, along with E. A. Cameron, designed Union Station in St. Louis. Link also designed entrances for Westmoreland and Portland places in St. Louis; buildings at Monticello Seminary in Godfrey, Illinois; St. Mark's Episcopal Church; the Alton Public Library; the East St. Louis Ice and Cold Storage Building; and numerous private residences in St. Louis.⁴

Menke Stone and Lime Company of Quincy, Illinois was hired to construct the building and provide the stone. Four days before the dedication, Theodore Link, and Edward H. Menke who represented the building contractors, inspected the building. Employees and dispatchers moved into their new offices on June 16

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and 17, 1901 although they would not officially open for business until June 18, 1901.

At the dedication of the Wabash Station on June 18, 1901, general superintendent, H. L. Magee spoke for the railroad commenting "If the Wabash had a few more Decatur's scattered along the line, we would have electric fans and a barbershop on every train." During the dedication of the Station, four hundred incandescent lights burned inside the building and train sheds as the crowds inspected areas that would later be closed to all but employees. A dozen arc lights burned outside, one of them hanging in the tower to show off its beauty.⁵

The Wabash Station was the only station in Decatur that housed railroad division offices. It was also home to one of the largest forces of dispatchers in the country. All of the Railroad's middle division officials and the Regional Superintendent, A. Robertson resided in Decatur at the time of the Station's opening. The Wabash Railroad was the only line that served east-west traffic through Decatur.⁶

Passenger train service reached its peak in 1907 in Decatur when 72 trains a day stopped in the city. To the economy of Decatur, the railroads were of incalculable value. The Wabash Railroad in 1927 was the largest employer in the city. That year 3500 people were employed with the line in Decatur. Annual shipments forwarded by the line through Decatur averaged \$350,000 to \$400,000 in the early 1900s. Annual receipts were \$120,000 and passenger receipts varied between \$90,000 to \$100,000 during the 1900s. Decatur was the hub of the Wabash Railroad's operations.⁷

During World War I a Red Cross canteen hut was built near the Station. This hut served the thousands of military personnel that passed through on the trains. It was staffed by volunteers and on one of the busiest days in June 1918 more than 3000 sandwiches, 5000 cookies, a similar number of doughnuts, ice cream cones, bananas, and other tasty treats were consumed during the trains' brief stops. During World War II, war mothers and other women operated a canteen at the Wabash Station serving during an eighteen month period, 335,000 servicemen as they passed through Decatur.⁸

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Many famous people have used the Wabash Station during its years of service. On June 4, 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt who had come to Decatur by train to dedicate Millikin University's new campus went by carriage to the Wabash Station and left at 4:35 p.m. to return to Washington D.C. In 1908, Eugene V. Debs, founder of the American Railway Union greeted 300 people at the Wabash Station as he traveled aboard his train, "The Red Special," during his third try for the U. S. Presidency. On October 2, 1952, one month before Dwight Eisenhower was elected president, he made a fifteen minute stop in Decatur. A cheering crowd of over 20,000 welcomed Eisenhower at the Wabash Station. He spoke briefly from the rear platform of his observation car and shook hands with many who crowded up to reach him.⁹

The decline of the need for Wabash passenger trains began as early as the 1920s. In August 1931, the day station master's post was eliminated. The Wabash was not alone in suffering from the decline of passenger service needs in the following years. Competition with private autos and other forms of public transportation left many stations deserted during several hours of the day. The last passenger train of the merged Wabash Railroad and Norfolk & Western, the Blue Bird, pulled out of the Station in 1972. Amtrak attempted to reestablish passenger service during the late 1970s and early 1980s but the effort was unsuccessful.

The Wabash Station was sold by the railroad to the present private owners who are in the process of rehabilitating the building. It is the last remaining historic railroad station in Decatur.

Endnotes

1. Smith, John W., Esquire. History of Macon County. Rokkers Printing House, 1876. Banton, O. T. History of Macon County to 1976. Decatur, Illinois: Macon County Historical Society, 1976.
2. Banton, O. T. History of Macon County to 1976. Decatur, Illinois: Macon County Historical Society, 1976.

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3. Keller, John G. Past and Present Macon County Illinois.
Chicago: S. J. Clark Publishing Co., 1903.

4. Landmarks Letter, Vol. 20, No. 3. St. Louis, Missouri:
Landmarks Association of St. Louis, May 1985.

5. Beeson, et al. Places and People in Decatur, 1900-1929.
Decatur, Illinois: Zonta Printers, 1976.

6. Keller, John G. Past and Present Macon County Illinois.
Chicago: S. J. Clark Publishing Co., 1903.

7. Banton, O. T. History of Macon County to 1976. Decatur,
Illinois: Macon County Historical Society, 1976.

8. Ibid.

9. Eisenhower High School Special Project. Writing Across the
Curriculum. Decatur, Illinois: H. R. Creative Graphics, 1991.

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Bibliography

Banton, O. T. History of Macon County to 1976. Decatur, Illinois: Macon County Historical Society, 1976.

Beeson, et al. Places and People in Decatur, 1900-1929. Decatur, Illinois: Zonta Printers, 1976.

Eisenhower High School Special Project. Writing Across the Curriculum. Decatur, Illinois: H. R. Creative Graphics, 1991.

Keller, John G. Past and Present Macon County Illinois. Chicago: S. J. Clark Publishing Co., 1903.

Landmarks Letter, Vol 20, No. 3. St. Louis, Missouri: Landmarks Association, May 1985.

Smith, John W., Esquire. History of Macon County. Rokkers Printing House, 1876.

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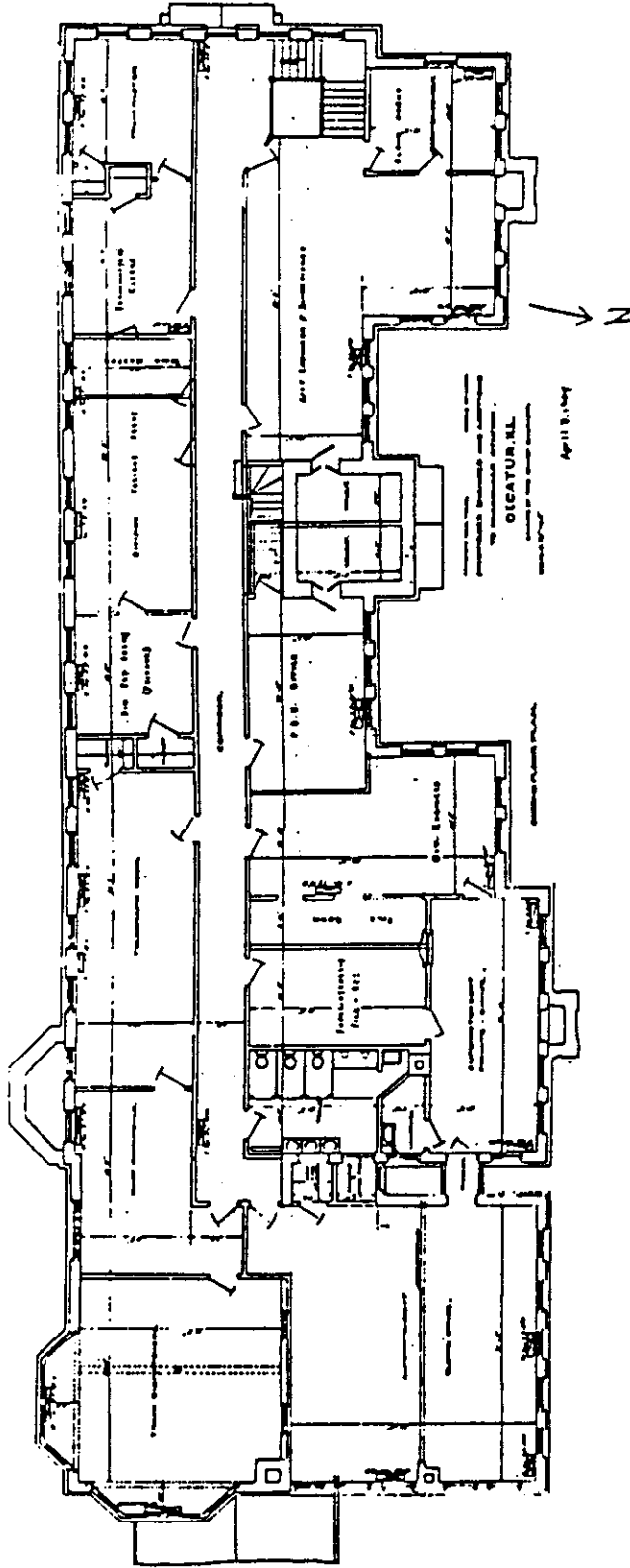
Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of Lot Five in Block One of Henry Prather's Addition to the City of Decatur, Illinois, as per plat recorded in Book 97, Page 99 of the records in the Recorder's Office of Macon County, Illinois. Running thence north 0 12' 46" E for 134.76 feet to a point 20.00 feet south of the centerline of the north-south yard track I.C.C. #167; thence east 89 30' 15" E along a line 20.00 feet south of the center line of north-south yard track I.C.C. #167 and parallel to for 349.66 feet; thence south 14 11' 34" for 133.00 feet, chord measure to a point on the north line of East Cerro Gordo Street; thence west 89 29' 46" W along the north line of East Cerro Gordo Street for 317.55 feet to the point of beginning, containing 1.009 acres, more or less, situated in the City of Decatur, Macon County, Illinois.

Boundary Justification

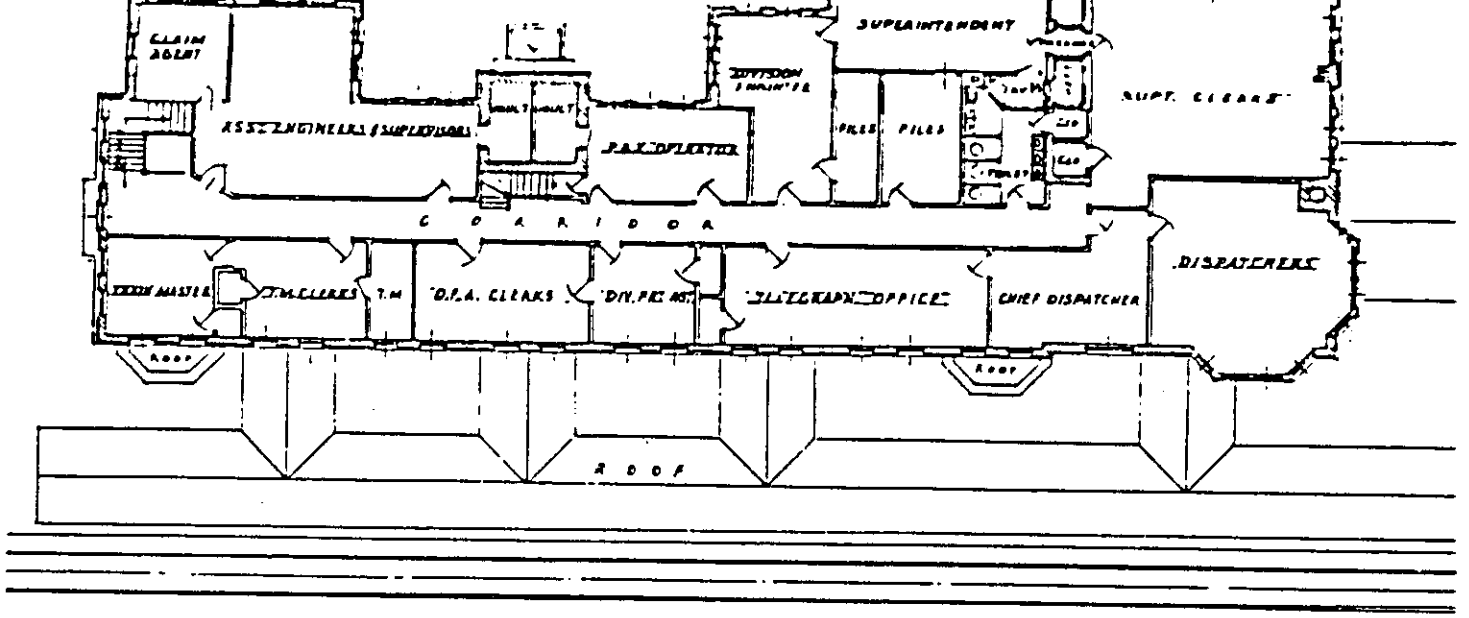
The boundary of the Wabash Railroad Station and Railway Express Agency includes the Station, Railway Express Agency, front paved parking and grassy area directly in front and the passenger loading area in the rear of the building. These elements combine to make up all of the aspects associated with the original historic construction of the Wabash Railroad Station and Railway Express Agency.

Wabash Railroad Station
Decatur, Illinois

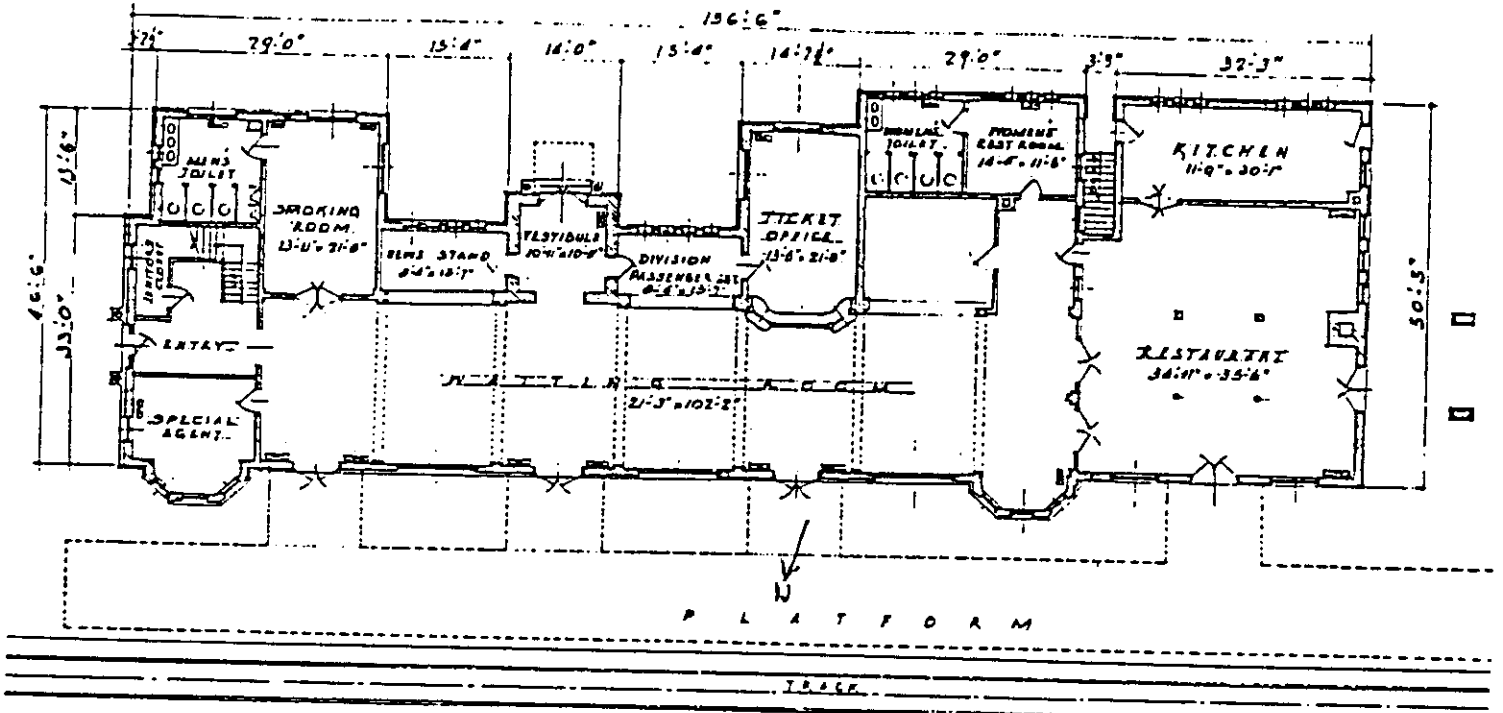


Second Floor Plan April 8, 1904

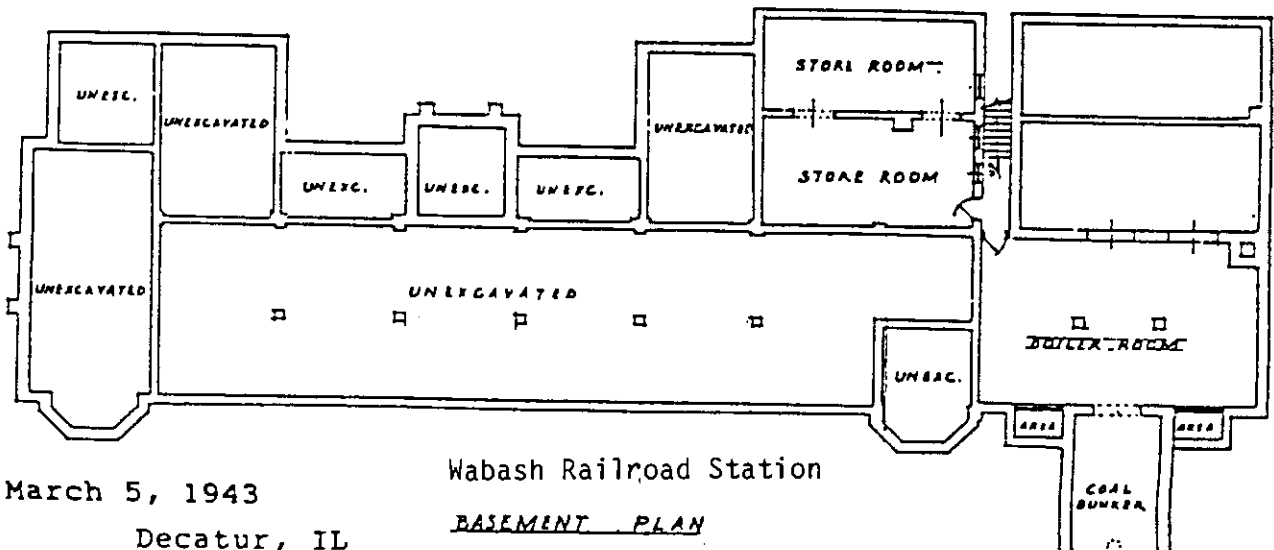
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EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN



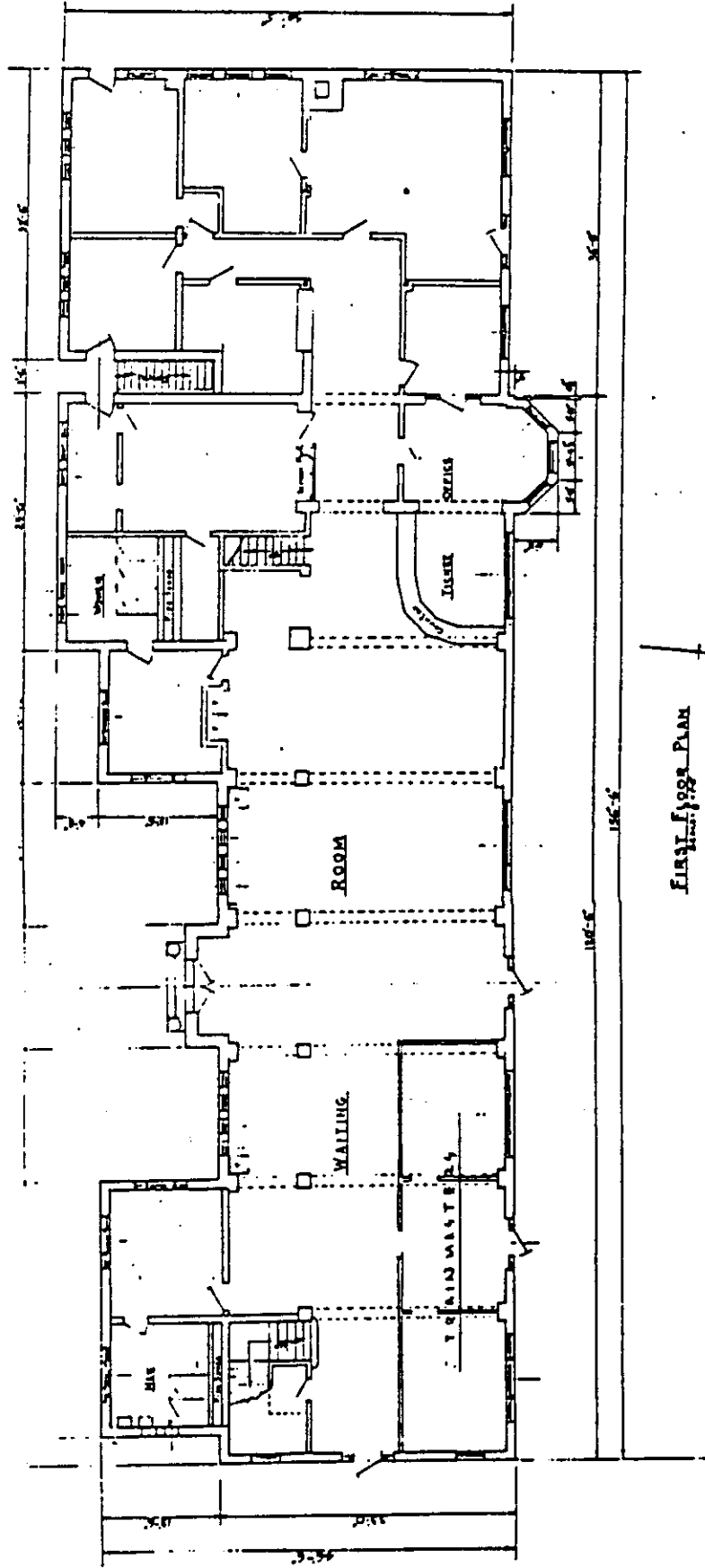
EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN



March 5, 1943
Decatur, IL

Wabash Railroad Station
BASEMENT PLAN

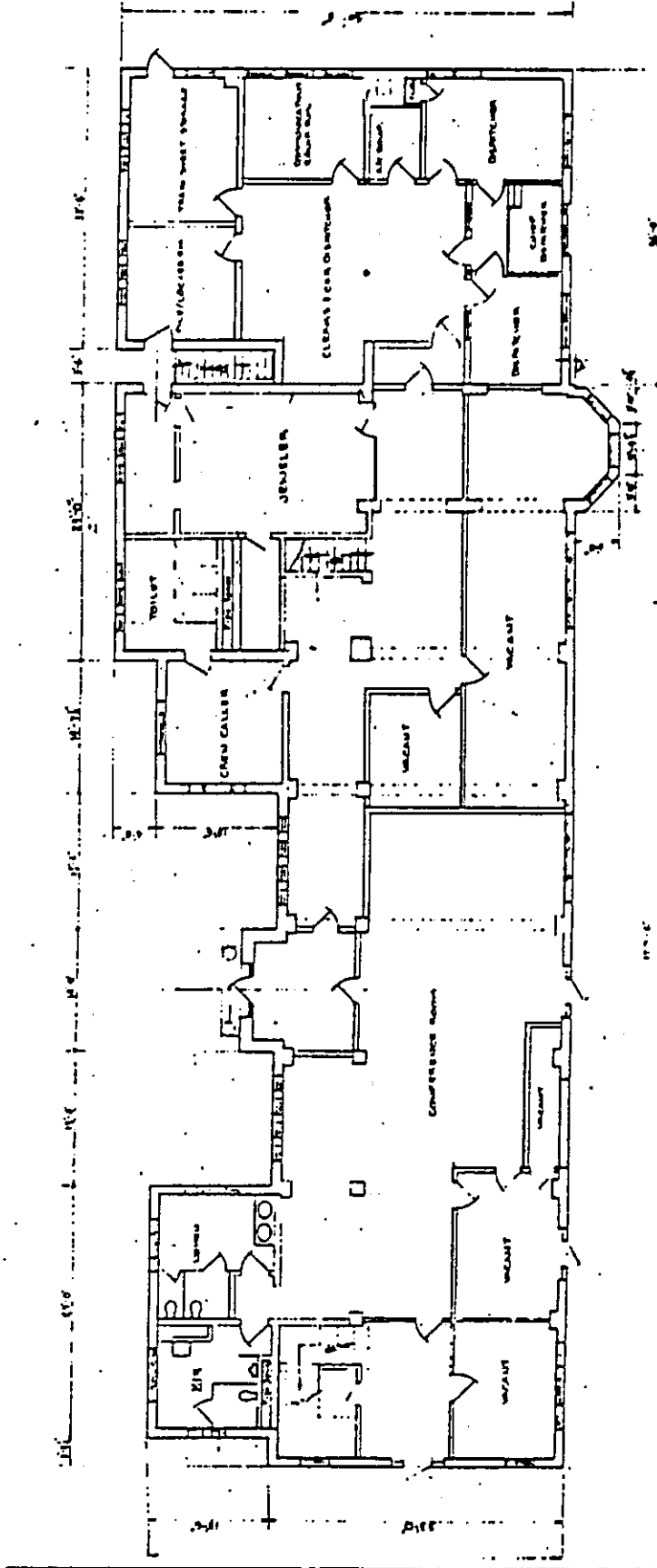
Wabash Railroad Station
Decatur, Illinois



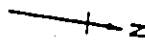
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

First Floor Plan June 12, 1963

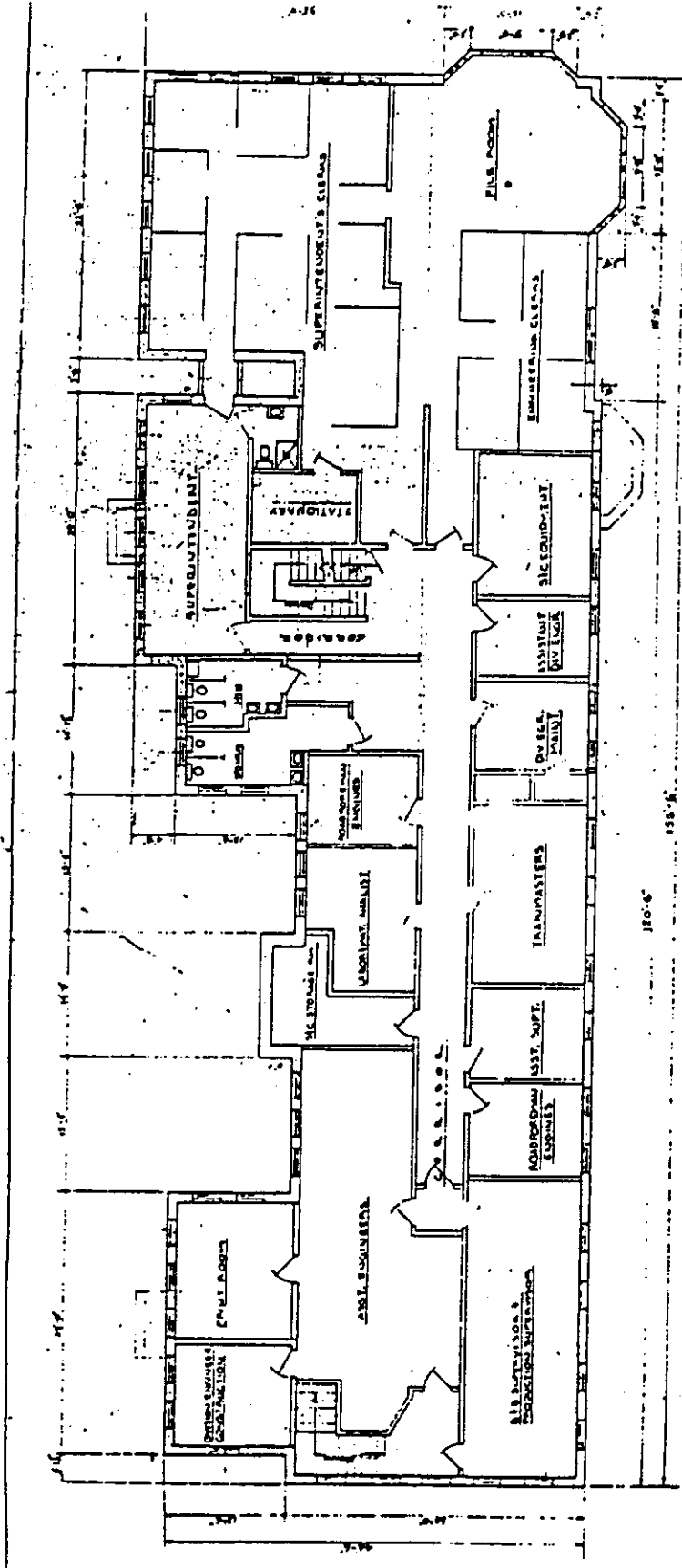
Wabash Railroad Station
Decatur, Illinois



First Floor Plan June 27, 1984



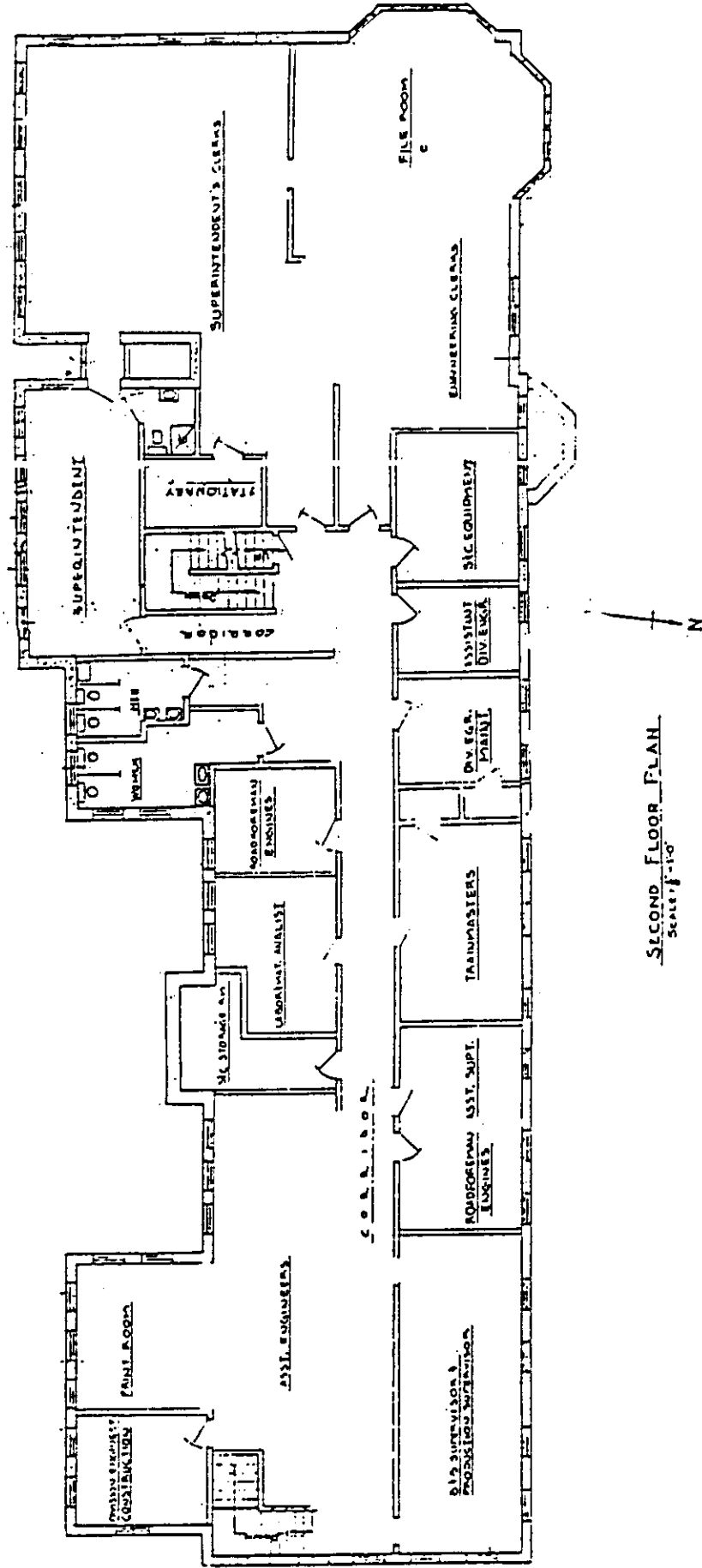
Wabash Railroad Station
 Decatur, Illinois



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
 2011-1-10

Second Floor Plan June 27, 1984

Wabash Railroad Station
Decatur, Illinois



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

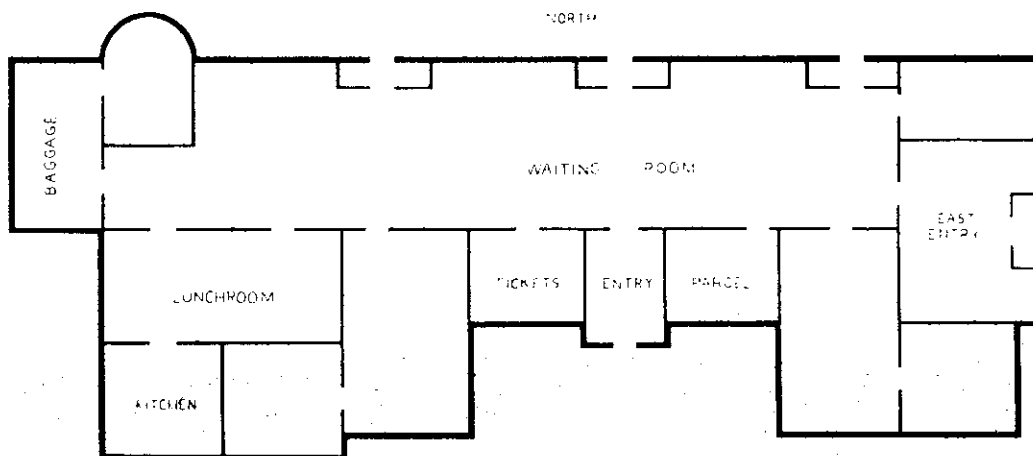
Second Floor Plan Current (1993)



Source:
 Progressive Decatur
 Decatur Review Printing and Stationery Co., 1904.



Photo: Diana Slavero
 Wabash (N&W) Train Station 1991.



Drafting: Wilicia Brown