

The Hotel

The building which is now the hotel began construction in 1917, serving as the train shed of the Union Station. However, it would not be completed until 1922 due to the shortage of iron during WWI. It was converted to a hotel in 1986 and is still connected to three active tracks.

The Ghost Statues

The ghost statues you see around the hotel were once located in the old Festival Market Place (now the Grand Hall and Conference Center). When it closed, they were brought over to the hotel. The mannequins are dressed in authentic clothing from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s (the heyday of train travel) and fiber glassed over to give them the ghost look.



Train Car Rooms

The thirteen train cars located on the second floor are original 1920s Pullman Train Cars. They were brought from southern Indiana and were driven into the building using the existing railway. After the cars were locked into place, construction of the west wing of the hotel was completed around them. The cars were then renovated and turned into guest rooms. Each car has 2 rooms making a total of 26 beautifully unique guest rooms. There is no other hotel in the world that has train cars inside the physical structure of the hotel.



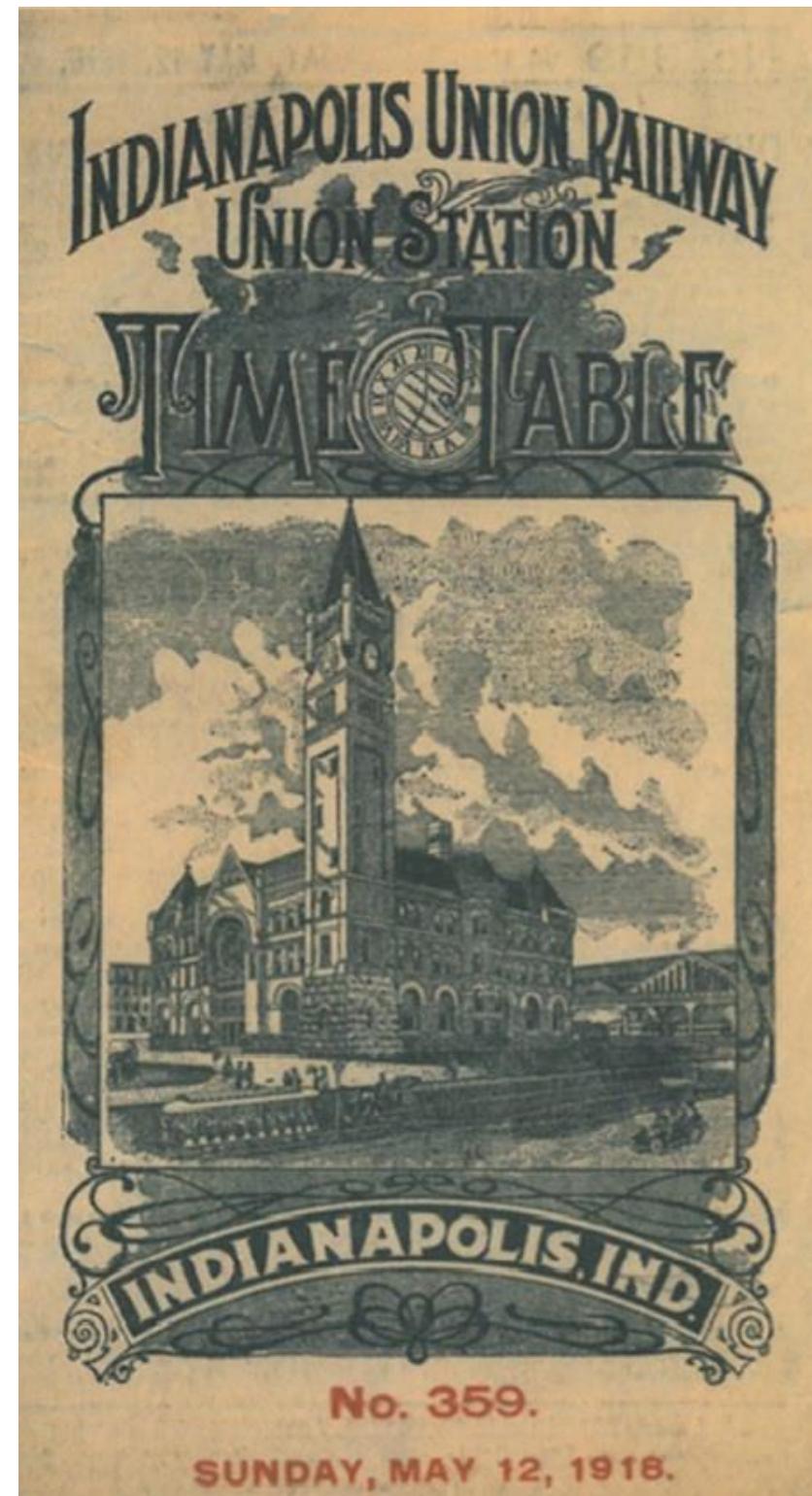
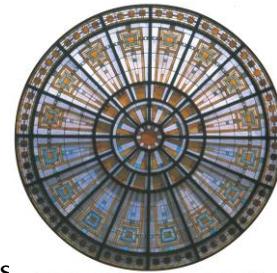
Architecture of Union Station

In 1886 civic leaders hired architect Thomas Rodd to build a new “head house” befitting the importance of railroads in Indianapolis. Union Station’s majestic re-brick and granite “headhouse” is recognized as one of America’s finest and Indiana’s first Romanesque Revival-styled structures. It was referred to as a “geometric phenomenon” because every shape imaginable was used. The intricate plaster work



was recreated during reconstruction. The cost of the plaster reconstruction was equal to the original construction cost of the entire Union Station. The Union Station still has all original

terrazzo floors. As you stand in the Grand Hall, notice the gray tint to the wheel windows. This is a result of the windows being “blacked out” with black paint during WWII, which would keep the building from being seen easily from the air in the case of German or Japanese air raids. In addition to the two beautiful stained glass wheels, the Union Station’s ceiling is dominated by over 3,000 square feet of stained glass. As you walk down the hallway of the Union Station, you will notice several bricked off stairwells. These stairwells are how travelers would reach their train platform.



The Life of Union Station

In 1853, four railroad companies, which had before served passengers with individual terminals, opened the first “union” station ever built. The building which is currently the Grand Hall and Conference Center was built to replace the original building in 1888 in order to accommodate increase in railway traffic. In its heyday, 500,000 passengers passed through Union Station each month, with almost 200 trains passing through daily. The increase in traffic clogged the streets. To combat this problem, the Union Railway Company planned a system of twelve elevated tracks in a two story train shed. The first train arrived on these tracks in 1918, but the project was not completed until 1922 due to a decrease in resources during WWI. With the increased demand for other forms of transportation, business in Union Station began to diminish. By 1936, only 59 trains passed through each day. WWII increased traffic in Union Station as men and materials were moved throughout the United States, but business slowed again after the war.

Saving Union Station

By 1970, the demand for automobile and air plane transportation outweighed the demand for train travel, and the Union Station stood empty facing the threat of demolition. A local architect formed the “Committee to Save Union Station” which helped to promote an adaptive-use project. In 1982 plans were approved by the city to restore



the historic property. In 1986 Union Station reopened its doors as the Festival Market Place. However, ten years later, the marketplace closed, and reopened in 1999 as Crowne Plaza’s Grand Hall and Conference Center.

Passing Through

The Union Station has a rich history of famous visitors. President Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Dwight D. Eisenhower were among the prominent figures to visit the Union Station concourses. Abraham Lincoln passed through the station on two occasions. The first, to give his inaugural address in Washington, DC and then again on his way to Illinois to lie in state after his assassination. In 1861, Thomas Edison worked at the Union Station as a telegraph operator but was fired for conducting too many “useless” experiments.

From Train Shed to Hotel

In 1986 the train shed was converted into what is now the Crowne Plaza hotel. The hotel was built on tracks 1-8, leaving tracks 9-11



operational and running just south of the hotel. The many skylights you see were once open to release the smoke and steam from the trains. It is said that only three of the original iron beams were cut in order to construct the hotel.

Iron Horse

The basement of Union Station, now referred to as the Iron Horse, was once used to house a barber shop, a women’s sitting room and was third class steerage. Individuals who were considered to be beneath a certain social class would wait on this level until their trains arrived. Up until the 1960’s, all African Americans had to wait in this room.

The room is unique for many reasons: the bricked arched ceilings are not to be found anywhere else in Indianapolis. The stone “feet” of the building can be seen in this room as well. Located in the Southeast corner of the Iron Horse are the beginnings of the underground tunnel system that ran under Union Station. At one time our three tunnels ran to the post office, the jail, and the state house. The statehouse tunnel was used by dignitaries who wanted a more direct path to the station. The post office and jail were connected because during that time, mail and prisoners were never taken through the general population.

Forty Yards down from the doorway the tunnel splits into three directions. The first one goes towards the Slippery Noodle. This is important because we know that the Noodle has underground tunnels that were used for the Underground Railroad. Although not connected currently, it is thought that at one time we were connected and that we too would have been part of the Underground Railroad.