

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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received AUG 9 1984

date entered SEP 7 1984

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic New York Central Terminal

and/or common Buffalo Central Terminal

## 2. Location

street & number 495 Paderewski Drive \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Buffalo \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of

state New York code 036 county Erie code 029

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name See Continuation Sheet

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Erie County Hall

street & number 25 Delaware Avenue

city, town Buffalo \_\_\_\_\_ state New York

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title New York Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_\_\_ yes  no

date 7-27-1975 \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Albany \_\_\_\_\_ state New York

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>NA</u>

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The New York Central Terminal is a monumental steel-frame brick clad complex built between 1927 and 1930 and located astride Curtiss Street in the southeast quadrant of the city of Buffalo, Erie County. The approximately 61 acre complex, located two miles from the central business district, is in an area characterized by the East Buffalo freight and stock yards, light manufacturing facilities, and commercial structures. The nomination contains ten contributing elements:

- 1) the main terminal building flanked by three attached wings: the baggage and mail building, the U.S. Terminal Railway Post Office building, and the train concourse with platforms (now disconnected) and the underground baggage tunnel and above-ground truck ramp.
- 2) a detached power plant building;
- 3) a separate Railroad Express Terminal Building;
- 4) signal towers No. 48 and No. 49 and their adjacent signal repair shops;
- 5) two small utility buildings.

The principal feature of the complex is an octagonal tower that rises 271 feet above the track level and stands over and forms a part of the rectangular station building. All of the buildings in the complex were constructed within a three year period with the exception of the Railroad Express Terminal, which predates the complex by ten years. The majority of the buildings in the complex reflect the Art Deco style and are unified by their buff-colored rough faced brick exteriors, vertical projecting piers, and limestone and concrete trim. Despite some deterioration, the rail complex retains a high degree of architectural integrity. The only non-contributing structure within the nominated area is an early twentieth century oil tank located to the east of the terminal.

The boundaries of the approximate 61-acre nominated property were established to include all of the extant historic features directly associated with the operation of the terminal itself including segments of the extensive system of tracks and roadways that served the complex. This includes only the 14 sets of tracks which pass under the concourse and onto which trains were switched to stop at the terminal. Other tracks surrounding the complex—on which trains passed by the terminal without stopping—were excluded.

As delineated on the enclosed map, the southern boundary is the south edge of the outermost track that passes under the train concourse. The eastern boundary was established at the approximate point at which the series of train tracks curves to pass under the train concourse. This occurs at a point approximately 225 feet to the east of signal station No. 48.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1917; 1927-30      **Builder/Architect** Fellheimer and Wagner

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The New York Central Terminal is architecturally significant in New York State as a monumental example of an Art Deco style civic structure. Built between 1927 and 1930, the huge complex consists of the main terminal building flanked by three wings, a power plant, six supporting structures, and the open green space to the west of the terminal. A Railroad Express Terminal Building, built prior to the complex in 1917, is also included within the nominated area. The station is especially distinguished for the degree and scale with which it manifests the Art Deco style in both its immense exterior design and its lavish, grand interior. Nearly all of the architectural features associated with the style are evident in the station's massing, materials, and details and are further highlighted by the high degree of craftsmanship and design quality evident in its construction. The terminal attests to Buffalo's role as the geographic center of American commerce from the beginning of the railroad age in the mid-nineteenth century until its climax in the mid-twentieth century. With a total of fourteen lines serving the city, Buffalo's railroad network was second in size only to that of Chicago. The complex is also noteworthy as a representative work of the regionally prominent architectural firm of Fellheimer and Wagner, specialists in railroad station design. One of the last great railroad complexes built in the expansionist era of the 1920's, the New York Central Terminal retains high architectural integrity and remains as one of the few extant landmarks representing Buffalo's role as a national railroad transportation center.

Ownership of much of western New York, including what is now the city of Buffalo, was in the hands of the French, British and Six-Nations Indian tribe throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The British won formal control of the area with the 1763 treaty ending the French and Indian War, only to have to cede it to the new American government in the Treaty of Paris twenty years later. However, the British remained in control of most of the Niagara frontier until 1796. In 1793, Robert Morris of Philadelphia bought the land west of the Genesee River from the state of Massachusetts. After retaining a strip for himself surrounding the river, Morris sold the remainder to the Holland Land Company, a group of Dutch investors. The settlement of the area was rather slow due to the continued presence of the British at Fort Niagara and other outposts as well as the lack of roads leading into the area.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 61 acres

Quadrangle name Buffalo, N.E.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	7	6	76	6	0	0	4	7	5	0	2	0	0
Zone	Easting			Northing									

B 

1	7	6	76	8	8	0	4	7	5	0	6	2	0
Zone	Easting			Northing									

C 

1	7	6	7	7	0	5	0	4	7	5	0	6	4	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

D 

1	7	6	7	7	2	6	0	4	7	5	0	7	8	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

E 

1	7	6	7	7	6	2	0	4	7	5	0	7	2	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

F 

1	7	6	7	7	8	2	0	4	7	5	0	8	0	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

G 

1	7	6	7	7	8	4	0	4	7	5	0	7	6	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

H 

1	7	6	7	7	4	8	0	4	7	5	0	5	9	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

I 

1	7	6	7	7	0	5	0	4	7	5	0	3	2	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

J 

1	7	6	7	6	6	6	0	4	7	5	0	0	8	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The nomination boundary is delineated on the enclosed Sanborn map. (see also verbal boundary justification in item 7.)

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries NA

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Claire L. Ross (see continuation sheet)

organization Division for Historic Preservation date May 1984

street & number Empire State Plaza telephone (518) 474-0479

city or town Albany state New York

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Julia S. Stoker*

title Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation date 8/3/84

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*J. Almon Byers* Entered in the National Register date 9-7-84  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief of Registration

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Mr. Anthony Fedele, President  
Central Terminal Plaza Inc.  
495 Paderewski Drive  
Buffalo, NY 14212

Mr. Michael Buinickas  
Manager of Property Central  
National Railroad Passenger Corp.  
400 Capital Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Conrail Transportation  
Property Tax Dept.  
P.O. Box 8499  
Philadelphia, Pa. 19101

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The northeastern boundary was drawn to exclude the site of five coach repair shops - structures once associated with the complex but which were demolished in the 1960's. No features associated with the repair shops survive and the boundary drawn to exclude their site also excludes another group of tracks which bypassed the station. The northern boundary encompasses the city tax lots on which were constructed the terminal and its support structures (now in private ownership). Paderewski and Memorial Drives and the circular traffic plaza form the northwest edge of the nominated parcel. These thoroughfares, along with Curtiss Street to the south, delineate a triangular open green space which was designed to serve as a "courtyard" for the complex. Constructed to handle the huge volume of traffic flowing into the terminal, the roadways form a dramatic visual focal point for the entire railroad complex. The southwest boundary follows the property lines of the current private owner as established by city maps and excludes other tracks which bypass the station.

Main Terminal Building

The general configuration of the main terminal is a six-story rectangle with a twenty-story tower at the northwest corner, a five-story wing projecting west along the southwest corner, a three-story structure abutting the five-story wing and also projecting west, and a 450-foot train concourse projecting to the south. To the north of the building is a balustraded plaza running the full length of the facade and partially around the east and west sides.

The main terminal building is a six-story, rectangular barrel-vaulted structure measuring 300 feet long by 225 feet wide and 100 feet high. Positioned at the bend of Curtiss Street, the terminal is visually dominated by the octagonal, twenty-story tower on its northwest corner. The terminal has a granite base, grey brick facing and limestone trim. It is distinguished by large round arches under the barrel vaults on the east and west elevations. Flanked by pylons, these arches frame windows which nearly fill the entire ends of the building. A slightly smaller relieving-arched window marks the northeast corner of the structure. The building has vertical piers which divide the elevations into four-bay sections. Double-hung sash predominate. Projecting brick panels compose the cornice.

The tower at the northwest corner of the station is 80 feet in diameter and 271 feet high. The tower is composed of a series of setbacks flanking vertical piers. The buttresses, which mark the corners of the octagon, continue to the top to form an octagonal "crown" distinguished by a series of arched niches surmounted by stylized stone finials. Large clocks with stone surrounds are positioned above the eleventh story on each canted corner. Ornamental canopies are suspended above the north and west tower entrances as well as the northeast and east entrances on the main terminal building. The canopies are supported by wrought-iron cables with stylized Art Deco motifs and are decorated by the emblems of various railroad companies. Above the canopies are two-story, three-bay glazed windows topped by a stone frieze with different stylized geometric panels. Many of the first floor wrought-iron spandrels have a stylized crest or wave motif.

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One of the major exterior elements of the complex is a steel and reinforced concrete station plaza which encircles the facade and bends partially around the east and west elevations. The one-story plaza is demarcated by a stone balustrade with obelisks supporting light fixtures. The plaza measures 150 feet wide and 600 feet long and is level with the main floor of the station. Twenty feet below the station plaza is a circular plaza on Lindbergh Drive which measures 250 feet in diameter and constitutes the focus of six radiating thoroughfares. The main thoroughfare, 150 feet wide by 600 feet long, sweeps up a gently sloping incline to the station plaza itself. The area beneath the plaza encloses a street car terminal, a parking garage, baggage facilities, and a trucking center.

The tower on the northwest corner of the terminal provides the entrance lobby to the passenger concourse directly to the south. A battery of elevators in the lobby of the tower leads to the fifteen floors of office space above. Dark grey Botticino marble covers the floor and walls of the entrance lobby. The main passenger concourse, which lies in a general east-west direction, is 66 feet wide, 225 feet long and consists of a barrel-vaulted ceiling with 64-foot domes at both ends. There is a balcony at each end of the concourse. The concourse is decorated with sky blue and buff-colored Guastavino tile which extends down the walls to meet a continuous twelve-foot wainscoting of light and dark Botticino marble. Large round-arch windows light the interior.

At the west end of the concourse are eighteen curvilinear ticket offices which are entirely enclosed by glass, with the exception of the bronze grilles which form the ticket windows. The ticket counters, along with the concession counters and the circular information booth in the center of the concourse, have Botticino marble tops and wainscoted fronts surmounted by bronze-finished frames and ornate overhead grille friezes. The lighting fixtures in the concourse consist of bronze pedestals with frosted globes mounted on marble corbels, a number of ceiling lights, and two ornamental chandeliers supported from the vaulted ceiling. The floor is composed of four different colored terrazo tiles (cedar and pink Tennessee, Botticino, Red Verona) with a dark border and sectional stripes to ornament and break up the large floor space.

The interior retains nearly all of the original storefronts complete with their period signs and advertisements. The main entrances and exits have prominent stone pier surrounds with glazed panels above, wrought-iron stylized Art Deco motifs, and grillework with wave patterns.

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Large Art Deco style floor lights flank each entrance/exit. The Art Deco decoration extends to the telephone booths, water fountains, and mail boxes. Positioned in front of the northeast entrance atop a five-foot marble podium is a large bronze statue of a buffalo placed there in 1958 to replace the stuffed buffalo which had stood there since the station's opening.

Although a lofty open space, the concourse was relatively quiet when in use due to a special sound-proof structural system. The foundation pillars were set in vibration mats consisting of alternate layers of asbestos and lead. In addition, the walls and domed ceiling were faced with a unique type of tile that has the property of absorbing sound. Finally, the floors were insulated by lining the concrete base with two-inch-thick cork slabs.

The waiting room adjoins the south side of the concourse and is connected to it by a series of doorways. The room measures 108 feet long by 59 feet wide and has a high arched ceiling. The interior decorations include dark Botticino marble wainscoting, above which are panels of plate glass mirrors under large arches. The arch springers and ceiling are panelled in the Spanish antique style and painted sky blue with a prominent cloud effect. The end walls are adorned by medallions representing the Statue of Liberty, West Point, Niagara Falls, and a locomotive symbolizing transportation. Also at the end of the room are large, marble-faced clocks flanked by six-foot plaster plaques set in relief. The original back-to-back oak settees which provided seating space for passengers have been placed in storage.

Along the north side of the passenger concourse opposite the waiting room is the restaurant, which is 100 feet long and 56 feet wide. Six-foot ornamental iron grilles divide the restaurant into three sections: a coffee shop, a lunch room and a dining room. A wainscoting of black and gold marble encircles the room, which has a low ceiling with heavy beams and recesses decorated in the Art Deco style with gold and silver leaf. The central lunch room has a double "U" shaped counter which has a skirt of Botticino marble and black Carrara glass tops along the coffee shop counter. Geometric designs in brilliant reds, greens, and golds decorate the plaster walls.

The baggage room, to the west of the waiting room, is connected with the main baggage floor below by means of a spiral chute for lowering packages. Parcel checking facilities are located at the east end of the terminal near the main concourse. Adjoining the baggage room and waiting room to the rear are the lavatory facilities for men and women. These rooms are finished with white Carrara glass and have black and white hexagonal floor tiles. Mahogany doors separate them from the waiting room. The exit lobby is located at the northeast corner of the terminal, opposite the train concourse, and has a twelve-foot-high wainscoting of light and dark Botticino marble and buff-colored Guastavino tile on the vaulted ceiling.



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Secondary passenger facilities such as newsstand soda fountains, travel agents, liquor stores, barbers, concession stands, and telegraph offices are scattered throughout the station. All of the stands are Art Deco in design with Botticino marble, Carrara glass, and ornamental ironwork with a silver and bronze finish.

Offices occupy the upper three floors of the passenger terminal. Located below the main concourse is the track level, mezzanine floor, and the basement. Extending under only a portion of the building, the basement contains food storage rooms and the heating and ventilating systems. The track, or street level, floor is occupied by storage rooms, rental areas, and a baggage room. The mezzanine floor is composed of locker, dormitory, and lavatory facilities for train crews as well as rental and storage areas. The continuity of the mezzanine floor and the basement is broken at midpoint by the extension of Curtiss Street, which was relocated and extended in conjunction with the station project. The large thoroughfare is used for delivering supplies and serves the baggage and mail facility located adjacent to it.

Adjoining the southwest corner of the main station building and extending west along Curtiss Street is the steel-frame, five-story baggage and mail building. The fifteen-bay building is sixty feet wide and 350 feet long with brick facing which matches the main station. Delineated by piers, each bay is comprised of four window bays with double-hung sash. The fourth bay to either side of the center, which is six stories in height, has a slightly higher projecting parapet than the others. The upper three floors are used for office space while the lower street level is divided in half between the handling of baggage (east half) and the handling of railway mail (west half). Both sections have concrete trucking platforms, rolling steel doors, and canopies.

Abutting the northwest corner of the baggage and mail building is the three-story railway post office building. The sixteen-bay brick structure has a flat roof and a central row of monitor lights. Delineated by brick piers, each bay is composed of four horizontal window bays separated by brick mullions. The second and sixth bays from each end have parapet projections while the central four bays are stepped higher than the others. A train shed covered with corrugated metal awnings extends past the west end of the building.

The fifty-foot-wide train concourse extends from the south side of the passenger terminal for a distance of 480 feet over all of the platform tracks of the station layout. The brick facing and stone trim matches that of the station. The six round-arched bays are divided by a series of slender brick piers with enclosed stairways, resembling

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buttresses, extending below each bay from both sides. The seven stairways on the west lead from the terminal to the track platforms while those on the east provide entrance back into the terminal. The train concourse is positioned twenty-one feet above track level with the stairways and ramps giving access to the trains from the platforms, which serve two tracks each. The platforms, which vary in length, are distinguished by curvilinear canopies. A four-bay, flat-roofed wing originally connected the six-bay, gable-roof train concourse to the main terminal. However, in 1981 the connector was demolished in order to make a thoroughfare for the larger, modern trains. Beneath the station tracks is an underground baggage subway which extends 660 feet to the southeast of the main terminal. A one-story, nine-bay brick structure houses the truck ramp which leads into the underground baggage subway.

Power Plant Building

Located approximately 300 feet directly to the east of the station is the three-story, brick power plant with limestone trim and coping. Each elevation of the rectangular structure has a tall central structural bay divided into three window bays by slender piers. Double wooden entrance doors are on the ground floor. The taller central bays are flanked by two triple window bays to either side. The large rectangular multi-pane windows have corbeled lintels. Truncated piers form buttresses at each corner of the building. Entrances on the north and south corners have large round-arched, multi-light transoms with brick corbel lintels. A large smokestack originally protruded from the central part of the roof but only the lower five feet remains. The power plant contains coal boilers, air compressors, and an electric sub-station. The coal boilers produced steam which was distributed through an extensive system of pipes and ducts to the station building and throughout the yards for car heating, brake testing, and car lighting.

Railway Express Building

Situated to the southwest of the main terminal is the Railway Express building constructed in 1917. The structure is 60 feet wide, 860 feet long, and two stories high. The concrete structure has a flat roof and plain cornice. The north and south elevations are punctured by thirty-six bays of large, multi-pane, factory-type sash; the east and west sides have three bays of similar fenestration. The first story on the north side consists of raised loading platforms with large sliding metal doors. A flat awning is connected by cables between the first and second stories on the north side; however, some sections of the awning are missing. A large train shed covering four tracks extends the full length of the south side and projects far beyond the end of the building. A small, one-story, flat-roofed addition projects from the west side.

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Signal Towers and Repair Shops

The nomination also includes Signal Towers No. 48 and No. 49 and their respective signal repair shops. Tower No. 48 is located east of the station; Tower No. 49 is positioned past the west end of the station behind the Railway Express Terminal. Both buildings measure approximately twenty-one feet wide by 109 feet long and are two-story, seven-bay brick utilitarian structures with flat parapet roofs and metal awning-like cornices. Tower No. 48 has second floor bay windows on the north and south elevations. Tower No. 49 has one second floor bay window on the north elevation and two on the south side with exterior iron stairs leading to them. Both structures were constructed of sound-proof material to prevent interference with the other signal towers in the Buffalo area. To the west of each signal tower is a detached one-story, five-bay brick signal repair shop with a flat parapet roof.

Utility Buildings

Located between the signal towers and the main terminal block are two small, two-story, five-bay brick structures with flat roofs. The utility buildings contained various tools and locker space for the yard workers.

The majority of the structures retain high architectural integrity with the exception of the Railway Express building which has most of its windows missing. In 1981, a connecting wing of the concourse was demolished in order to accommodate the larger, modern trains. The terminal is presently vacant.

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In 1797, Joseph Ellicott, the first agent of the Holland Land Company, began his survey of western New York. Ellicott laid out the city of Buffalo from 1803-1804 with eight streets radiating at equal angles from the designated hub of the city. During the war of 1812, the city served as a staging point for several largely unsuccessful American forays into Canada. The period from the end of the war in 1815 until the beginning of the canal period in 1825 saw considerable growth in the area as people were attracted by its rich, fertile soil. The village of Buffalo was incorporated in April 1816 and by 1820, the population had risen to over two thousand.

The major event in the early nineteenth century development of Buffalo was the construction of the Erie Canal. Started in Rome, New York in 1817, the canal was completed with Buffalo as its western terminus in 1823. Its opening two years later inaugurated a period of great growth and development in Buffalo. Population and trade expansion resulted from the area's favorable location as a transportation point connecting the Atlantic Ocean and the Eastern Great Lakes. By 1830, Buffalo was the shipbuilding capital of the Great Lakes and possessed a population of over 8,000. Two years later when the city was incorporated, the population had topped 10,000. During the late 1830s and 1840s, shipping and trade increased at a phenomenal rate, assuring Buffalo steady economic growth. By the mid-1850s, however, a new transportation system was developing which would quickly surpass the role of the harbor and canal system in making Buffalo a major transportation center.

As early as 1831, several prominent Buffalo citizens had suggested the construction of a railroad between Buffalo and the Hudson River, but it was not until 1836 that the first steam railroad, the Buffalo and Niagara Falls, was placed in operation. In 1843, the Buffalo and Attica Railroad was built connecting Buffalo with a chain of minor railroads which traversed the state and ended in Albany. The year 1852 was eventful in Buffalo's railroad history for the construction of four major systems: the New York and Erie Railway, the Buffalo and Rochester Railroad, the Buffalo and State Line, and the Buffalo and Brantford. The latter two connected Buffalo with Chicago and Canada respectively. With the financial panic of 1857 and the ensuing Civil War, railroad construction came to a halt and for the next twenty years, most companies consolidated in order to survive. The city of Buffalo continued to prosper, however, and by 1862, it had a population of 100,000 and was served by eight major railroad companies.

Positioned at the junction of the eastern end of the Great Lakes and western end of the Erie Canal, Buffalo had become the greatest inland port of transshipment in the United States by the latter half of the nineteenth century, earning the nickname "Queen City of the Lakes." With its harbor and rapidly developing railroad network, Buffalo was at

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the geographic center of American commerce from the middle of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, railroad entrepreneurs consolidated old lines and built new ones linking Buffalo with all sections of the country. A total of fourteen lines served the city including the New York Central, the Erie, the Lackawanna, the Pennsylvania, the Nickel Plate, and the Lehigh Valley. The city was physically transformed by the creation of extensive corridors, yards, and facilities with over 700 miles of track within the city for storage and switching of trains alone. One historian has noted that "No American city during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries owed more to railroads than did Buffalo."<sup>1</sup> As a result of the city's role as a major transportation center and with its inexpensive unlimited electric power from Niagara Falls, Buffalo experienced a period of industrial growth during the latter half of the nineteenth century second only to that of Chicago. Auxiliary industries connected with the railroad developed as did other industries anxious to take advantage of the city's transportation facilities and cheap electric power.

Buffalo became a transfer point in rail-water routes linking the Great Lakes with the nations's rail network. The low cost of lake transport still gave the carriers some advantage over the rails, especially in the transportation of bulk commodities. New wheat growing territories opened to the west and north and their crops traveled to market via lake freighters to Buffalo where they were stored in large grain elevators, making the city the largest grain depot in the world. As a result of the massive quantities of wheat entering the city, huge complexes of grain elevators were constructed. Many of these still survive giving Buffalo the distinction of having the best extant historical collection of elevators. From the grain elevators, the wheat was shipped to eastern markets via Buffalo's huge railroad network.

With the construction of the Buffalo and Washington Railway in 1873, which opened a direct connection with the sources of anthracite coal in Pennsylvania, and several other railroad lines which carried coal almost exclusively, Buffalo became the center of an enormous coal market and depot. The city was once again physically transformed as each railroad company that carried coal built its own trestle and stocking yards holding an average of 100,000 tons. The city continually set records for the shipping of anthracite and bituminous coal during the 1880s and 1890s. The same influence that caused the rapid development of the coal business had a similar effect on the iron industry. Ore docks were constructed by five of the major railroad companies and

<sup>1</sup>Richard C. Brown and Bob Watson, Buffalo: Lake City in Niagara Land. (Buffalo: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1970), p. 161.

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Buffalo once again established records as a major iron ore shipping center. The availability of the mineral resources combined with the city's great railroad network made Buffalo an important manufacturing center. Flour mills, steel mills, and a host of diversified manufacturing enterprises developed in the city. Buffalo also became a large cattle market, second only to Chicago.

At the turn of the century, Buffalo had a population of over 300,000 and was regarded as having the greatest railroad yard facilities in the world. Two railroad stations were in operation: The Exchange Street Station serving the New York Central system (1870) and the Erie Railroad Passenger Station (1880). In 1916, the Lehigh Valley Company opened its Main Street Station and the following year, the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad established its passenger station. None of these stations is extant.

By 1923, the five principal railroad passenger terminals served fourteen different lines. Buffalo was at its height as a railroad center with the railroad employing over 20,000 people. However, the multitude of different tracks and companies and the widely scattered passenger terminals caused problems for the city. There were congestion delays in local freight shipments plus the huge expense of carting goods to the widely scattered freight houses and tracks as well as passenger inconvenience resulting from the different stations located throughout the city. The possibility of constructing one large passenger terminal to serve all of the railroad lines had been debated since the turn of the century. Because of the huge volume of rail traffic in and out of the city, the new terminal had to fulfill specific requirements. After much debate, ground was broken at Curtis and Lovejoy Streets in the southeast quadrant of the city on March 29, 1926. The terminal was completed and opened on June 22, 1929. The structure cost approximately \$15 million and was built to serve over 200 trains and 10,000 passengers daily.

The terminal was designed by the well-known New York City architectural firm of Fellheimer and Wagner. Steward Wagner (1886-1958) studied architecture at Columbia University and the Beaux Arts Institute of Design in New York City. He practiced with various partners from 1910 to 1914 and then enjoyed a highly successful private practice from 1914 to 1921. Alfred Fellheimer (1895-1959) obtained his degree in architecture from the University of Illinois before moving to New York City and joining forces with Allen H. Stem, a specialist in railroad station design. The firm of Stem and Fellheimer designed Union Station (1915) in Utica, New York (listed on National Register, 1975). In 1921, Fellheimer and Wagner formed a partnership that lasted until Wagner's death in 1958. The firm designed several large industrial buildings in the New York City area including the Warner and Lambert Factory in Morris Plains, the Bakelite Laboratory in Bound Brook, the Hoffman-

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LaRoche Pharmaceutical Plant in Nutley, and Allied Chemical Company Laboratory in Morristown. The firm also received recognition for its design of the New Jersey Turnpike and its various support structures as well as for buildings at Queens College and Elmhurst General Hospital.

Fellheimer and Wagner enjoyed their greatest success, however, as specialists in railroad station design. The firm designed numerous secondary stations throughout the country as well as contributing articles on railroad station design to the leading architectural journals of the period. In the 1920s, they received their largest station commissions: North Station in Boston (1926), New York Central Terminal in Buffalo (1927), and the Union Passenger Terminal in Cincinnati (1929). Regarded as their masterpiece, the terminal in Cincinnati was listed on the National Register in 1972.

The firm of Fellheimer and Wagner was noted for efficiency and individuality in design, attention to detail, effective resolution of transportation and site problems, and efficient use of grand interior spaces. Their designs for railroad stations reflected the firm's commitment to creating a cohesive visual impression by relying on simple and dignified exterior architectural treatments which served to unify the typically large, sprawling structures. In addition, the architects designed each station to be as self-sufficient and self-sustaining as possible.

The New York Central Terminal is significant as a highly representative example of Fellheimer and Wagner's work as well as one of the few documented, extant structures by the firm. Since the Boston Station (1926) had to be designed around existing structures, the Buffalo station was the firm's first opportunity to experiment with railroad station design on a grand scale. Considered the prototype for the Cincinnati Terminal, which was also designed in the Art Deco style, the Buffalo station exhibits several features which the firm employed successfully in their later work. Among these features are separate entrances for vehicular and pedestrian traffic, adjoining auxiliary structures, a clear circulation pattern, ample space for freight and rail traffic, and a multi-service passenger lobby. The fifteen-floor office tower and the commercial spaces in the lobby attest to the firm's desire to make the structure financially self-supporting. In effect, the design of the New York Central Terminal characterized Fellheimer and Wagner's "formula" for a successful railroad station, which they ultimately perfected in the Cincinnati terminal. The Buffalo Station is also significant as an exceptionally distinguished, completely representative example of the Art Deco style of design.

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The Art Deco style had first appeared in the mid-1920s as new stylistic influences emanating from Europe had an impact on American architecture.

In breaking with the revivalist tradition of the Beaux Arts school, the Art Deco style artistically expressed the modern machine age. Essentially a style of decoration, Art Deco embellishment includes low-relief geometric designs, zigzags, chevrons, stylized floral motifs, fluting and frets. The style is characterized by angular composition and an emphasis on verticality; towers are often employed using setbacks and piers. The simplified and streamlined forms were emphasized by the use of modern, machine-produced materials such as concrete, pressed metals, stainless steel, terra cotta, glass, and mirrors. The choice of the Art Deco style for railroad station design was particularly appropriate for it represented a complete break from the Neoclassical style that had been popular for earlier stations and it accurately symbolized the expansionist, machine-conscious era of the 1920s.

The terminal exhibits many exterior architectural features characteristic of the style including a stepped or set-back facade rising to a pilastered and buttressed tower, stylized figure sculpture, decorative window spandrels, stone and concrete decorated trim, and the use of chevrons, volutes, foliate patterns, and low geometric relief. The interior is embellished with materials and decoration typically associated with Art Deco design including marble, brass grilles, glass panels, polychromatic mosaic tiles, filigreed ironwork screens, stylized geometric or foliate patterns, and black and white Carrara glass. The use of Art Deco shapes and forms abounds on the interior in the streamlined shape of the concession stands, the zigzag and chevron cresting on the ironwork, the stage-like marble pilasters framing wide, squared entrances and exits, and the stylized lighting fixtures. Art Deco patterns are found on nearly every interior feature including the water fountains, the clocks, the telephone booths, and the mailboxes. The terminal remains as a virtually intact, representative example of the Art Deco style in Buffalo.

Like many other cities in the mid-west, Buffalo experienced a tremendous population growth in the early twentieth century as the industrial and agricultural base of the country shifted from the eastern seaboard to the mid-west region. Buffalo's growth was due mainly to its role as a major transportation hub and industrial center. Much of the new construction that occurred in the city was in the Art Deco style, which peaked in popularity in the mid-1920s and early 1930s during the city's period of sustained growth. The New York Central Terminal is one of two large-scale, monumental examples of the Art Deco style in Buffalo. The Buffalo City Hall, built between 1929 and 1931 by the firm of Dietel and Wade, is also a classic example of the style. In addition, the city has retained numerous small-scale examples of the Art Deco style in the form of commercial buildings,



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restaurants, storefront, and banks.

The nomination also includes several support structures designed as part of the station complex: a power plant building, two signal towers and their repair shops, and two utility buildings. The Railroad Express Terminal building, constructed ten years prior to the terminal, was also incorporated into the design of the complex. All of the auxiliary buildings are examples of utilitarian, early twentieth century industrial design and exhibit such features as bands of modern sash, metal and concrete trim, flat roofs, and a lack of ornament. Integral to the operation of the terminal, these structures are all substantially intact and contribute to the functional integrity of the complex.

Although the Great Depression started shortly after the terminal opened, the railroad industry continued to flourish in Buffalo until the 1940s. By the mid-twentieth century, however, the automobile and the airplane quickly diminished the role of the railroad on a national level. Due to its location outside of the downtown business district, however, the terminal was never utilized to its fullest except during World War II when it served as a transportation headquarters for troops. In 1955, New York Central started the first of many attempts to sell the Buffalo terminal. Today the structure is in private ownership and remains empty.

The virtually unaltered New York Central Terminal remains architecturally and historically significant as a distinguished example of the Art Deco style for a large-scale civic structure in the city of Buffalo as well as the most important extant landmark associated with Buffalo's tremendous role as a national railroad transportation center.

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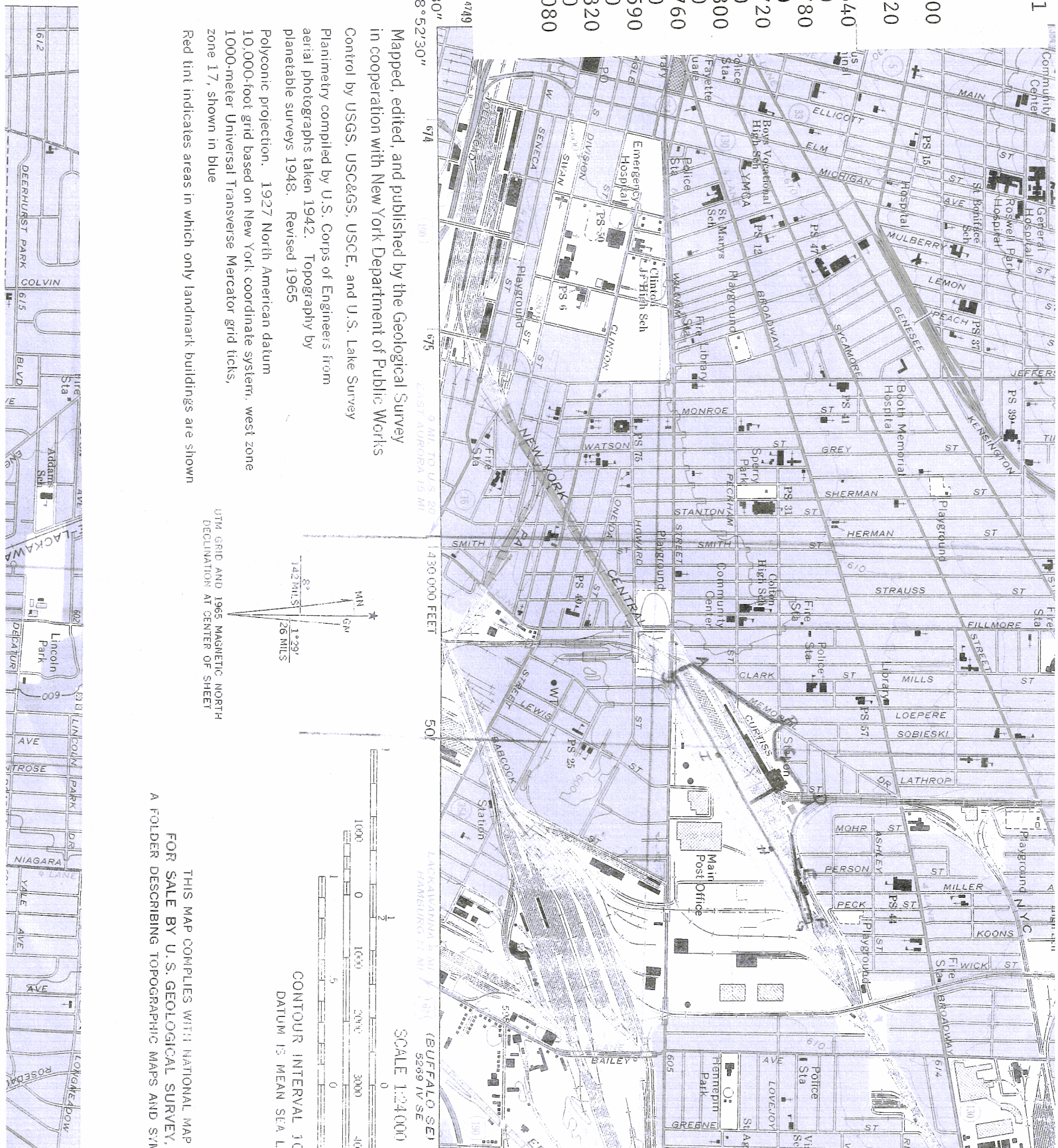
Research and draft information prepared by:

Mary Jo Dorko  
Preservation Consultant  
218 Morris Street Apt. 2  
Albany, New York 12208

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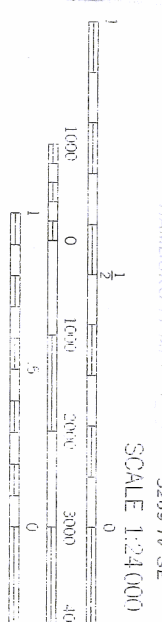
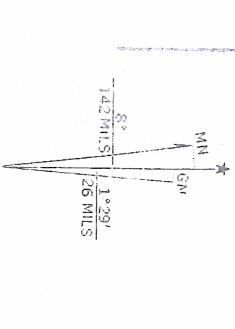
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aerial photographs taken 1942. Topography by  
planetable surveys 1948. Revised 1965

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on New York coordinate system, west zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 17, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



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