

U.S. Military Academy - West Shore Railroad Passenger Station
(NYC RR Station, Cadet Activities Club) HABS No. NY-5708-29
East of Williams Road just north of the South Dock
and south of the Power Plant
U.S. Military Academy
West Point
Orange County
New York

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY - WEST SHORE RAILROAD PASSENGER STATION
(NYC RR STATION, CADET ACTIVITY CLUB)

LOCATION: East of Williams Road just north of the South Dock and south of the Power Plant, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, Orange County, New York.

USGS West Point Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 18.587280.4581990.

PRESENT OWNER
AND OCCUPANT: U.S. Military Academy, Department of the Army.

PRESENT USE: Cadet Activity Club.

SIGNIFICANCE: The West Shore Railroad Passenger Station is a neo-gothic structure which replaced an earlier nearby station. It represents a popular type of transportation to the Academy in the era between that of boats and automotive vehicles.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1924-26. Drawings are dated 1924. A photograph from the Stockbridge Collection (U.S.M.A. Archives, (#1358) is noted "open by June-1926." The Annual Report of 1926 notes that the station opened that year.
2. Architect: Drawings are signed A. E. Dougherty, "Designing Engineer, Engineer Department, New York."
3. Original and subsequent owners: The West Shore Railroad was leased and operated by the New York City Railroad Company, Buffalo and East River Division; U.S. Military Academy, Department of the Army.
4. Original plans and construction: The West Shore Railroad Station was built immediately to the south of the first train station. This first station, a frame Stick Style structure, was in use until after the completion of the new station in 1926, as evidenced by a photograph from the Stockbridge Collection (#1358) in the U.S.M.A. Archives.

The interior of the building originally contained the following rooms: Waiting Room, Ticket Office, Smoking Room, Men's and Women's Toilets, Storage Platform, Baggage Room, and a below grade

Heater Room. See sketch plan for layout and dimensions. The Ticket Office had a counter on its south wall where there were three ticket windows. Separating the Ticket Office from the Smoking Room was a wall with a selling counter and a door. The Smoking Room, only entered by a door from the platform, had a built-in seat across the entire length of its north wall and a shorter seat on its west wall. The Men's Toilet was reached through the Smoking Room while the Women's Toilet was reached through the Waiting Room. The Baggage Room/Storage Room was entered from the sliding doors on the north. Original drawings indicate that the Baggage Room and the Storage Platform area were one room but they might have been separated soon afterwards by the brick wall which now divides them. A 1971 plan shows them as separate rooms and calls the Storage Room the "Old Freight Office." The Storage Platform part of the room had a raised platform across its west side and a sink against its south wall. Beneath this area was a Heater Room which was reached by stairs from the Baggage Room. A coal chute on the platform led to the Heater Room. The original canopy extended only the length of the building, 101'-0".

The accompanying sketch plan was made from prints of the original drawings which are in the possession of the Facilities Engineer, U.S. Military Academy. These are labelled "W.S.R.R. Leased and Operated by N.Y.C.R.R. Buffalo and East River Division Passenger Station at West Point, N.Y. Engineering Department, New York, Sept. 8, 1924." They are signed by C. S. Spaulding 1926; A. E. Dougherty, Designing Engineer; four other signatures cannot be deciphered. Photographs of two prints are included in the Grashof volume of this project

5. Alterations and additions: The station continued in use until sometime in the 1950s, after which time it served other functions (undetermined) until its renovation in 1980 or 1981 as a Cadet Activities building. Alterations are undated but most of them probably date to this most recent renovation. Alterations that took place prior to the renovation as a Cadet Club are the replacement and extension of the platform canopy roof and the extension of the concrete platform (1973?). The canopy was extended to the north and south of the building. Besides the replacement of downspouts and the erection of an iron fence the length of the extended canopy, the exterior of the station is unaltered.

Most interior alterations probably date to the recent renovation although a 1971 drawing indicates that the Ticket Office and Smoking Room had already been joined by the removal of a wall. Other major alterations include a ticket window in the Waiting Room, which was cut into a doorway (original drawings indicate

a different ticket window arrangement); a doorway cut in the Smoking Room/Storage Room wall; the removal of the storage platform, sink, steps in the Storage Room; and the possible addition of the brick wall dividing the Baggage and Storage Room. Minor alterations include the addition of new wall lamps and chandeliers (colonial style) in the Waiting Room; the construction of a new built-in bay window seat in the Ticket Office space; the removal of the ticket counter; the removal of two built-in benches in the Smoking Room; carpet applied over the "Kalman" floor of the Smoking Room and the wood floor of the Ticket Office; tile applied over the cement floor of the Storage Room; and the construction of a counter in the Storage Room, which was converted to a kitchen.

- B. Historical Context: For the historical and architectural context of this building within the overall development of West Point see HABS No. NY-5708, Volume 2: "West Point: An Overview of the History and Physical Development of the United States Military Academy."

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The West Shore Railroad Station was appropriately designed in a neo-tudor gothic style which better suited this railroad entrance to the Academy than the previous Victorian Stick Style station. Although small and treated with a minimal amount of decoration, the steeply-pitched, open gable ceiling of the Waiting Room conforms to the grand space usually associated with railroad waiting rooms.
2. Condition of fabric: Both the interior and the exterior fabric of the building is in excellent condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The one-story building is long (101'-4" east elevation) and narrow (20'-4" south elevation) having one bay each on the north and south elevations. Twenty-eight feet of the building's north end is slightly off-set and narrower than the south end (see sketch plan). A partial basement measures approximately 13' x 18'.
2. Foundations: Foundations consist of a reinforced concrete slab and piers.
3. Walls: The Station deviates from most of the other neo-gothic buildings at the Academy by having brick rather than stone walls. Nevertheless, this light-colored brick laid in five-course American Bond is similar in color to interior facing brick used in many Cram,

Goodhue and Ferguson buildings. The trim of the building is a light-colored terra cotta: window sills and lintels, beltcourse, jam stones, chimney cap, label molds, buttress caps, coping, corbels, and crenels. The cast stone base is an exception to the terra cotta trim. Walls are unbroken except for shallow brick buttresses which provide a rhythm along with the fenestration pattern. These buttresses rise to the crenelated parapet and also form the corners of both gable ends, the cross-axial gable bay of the Waiting Room, and they enframe the pseudo sallyport entrance on the south elevation. A beltcourse runs along the west wall between the windows and the parapet, and forms the label mold of the higher Waiting Room cross-gable bay. The building is off-set 28' on its northern end. The north section has a lower roof line, no parapet, no beltcourse and no label molds except for the north elevation. This northern end is treated in a lower hierarchical manner because of the Baggage and Storage Room function.

4. Structural system, framing: The Station is a load-bearing brick wall structure on a reinforced concrete foundation. Floors and the loading platform are poured cinderfill slabs; steel I-beams support the floor slab above the basement. The three interior walls consist of, south-to-north, a 4" terra cotta partition wall, a load-bearing brick wall and a brick partition wall. Roof framing consists of principal rafters with two sissor trusses, purlins and a ridge board in the southern part of the building and common rafters in the central and northern part of the building.
5. Platform: Along its east elevation and extending north and south is a concrete slab of the loading platform. This is covered by a canopy with a tongue-and-groove ceiling and composition roof supported by steel brackets.
6. Chimney: One brick chimney rises above the roof on the west near the intermediate north gable parapet. This octagonal chimney has a 12" diameter terra cotta flue and a crenelated terra cotta chimney cap.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are four doorways: two on the east, and one each on the north and south. Each doorway has an opening framed with terra cotta jamb stones and a terra cotta Tudor arch. The oak doors, which are original, are partially glazed with vertical boards hung on wrought iron strap hinges, the exception being the north doors, which are sliding pocket doors. The bi-valve doors on the south, east (southern) and the single door on the east (northern) have 12, 12 and 20 leaded glass lights each respectively; the north doors have 6 lights each. The doorways of the east elevation have both

sidelights and transom windows while the north doorway has only a transom window and the south doorway has neither. The south doorway, however, has terra cotta spandrels and is enframed by pilaster buttresses and a crenelated band, forming an engaged sallyport entrance.

- b. Windows: Although they are of similar construction: wooden frames, wooden mullions, terra cotta sills and steel casements with 6" x 12" rectangular quarrels, the windows vary in size and trim according to location, those of the southern part of the building being more elaborate. The east and west windows of the public part of the building are tri-partite in composition with a horizontal transom bar; the regular tri-partite window is vertically divided into 21-42-21 lights and the higher tri-partite of the Waiting Room cross-gable windows are 33-66-33. A square of eight lights opens in each of the otherwise fixed casements. A bay window on the east elevation with four mullions identifies the Ticket Office. The two east and west bays of the Baggage/Storage Room wing have double windows of 25 lights each on the east, the latter having a transom bar dividing it into 10-over-20 lights. Gable-end windows consist of a double (20 lights each) and a single window (8 lights) on the south, and a single window on the north (8 lights). Label molds and jamb stones are used on the tri-partite windows on the west and the windows of the gable ends but on the east, only the high cross-gable windows have a label mold due to the canopy.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The Station has a principal steep-pitch gable roof intersected by a cross-gable; the roof of the Baggage Room wing is an extended gable roof which is lower than, and off-set from, the main roof. Slate with copper flashing covers the roof.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A terra cotta cornice molding is found only on the west elevation of the principal part of the building. The four gables of the principal section have straight parapets while the east and west side walls have crenelated parapets.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The building is an enfilade series of four principal rooms with two restrooms against the west wall near the center. The first two rooms on the south are party rooms, the third room is a kitchen, and a northern-most room has an unidentified use (See sketch of original floor plan, supplemental material).

2. Stairways: An open-string wooden staircase leads from the northern most room (Baggage Room) down into the heater room of the basement under the kitchen.
3. Flooring: From south-to-north the floor materials are "Kalman" floor and base (a granolithic material); carpeting (over wood); tile; and concrete.
4. Walls and ceiling finish: The large southern room is the most decoratively finished space in the building. The walls have a 5'-9" high, 7/8" thick tongue-and-groove chamfered oak wainscoting, above which is plaster. Above the carved oak cornice is an open principal rafter roof with pine planks above the purlins; four sissor trusses with acorn drop pendants span the ceiling, which is more open in the center on account of a cross gable. The next room has papered walls and a sheetrock ceiling. Along the walls in the northern part of this room (Smoking Room) are theghosts of built-in seats. The two northern rooms have brick walls and sheetrock ceilings.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Vertical oak board doors lead into each restroom.
 - b. Windows: There is no interior window trim of note. One ticket window between the Ticket Office and the Waiting Room survives. This window remains open and has its original open grille.
6. Decorative features and trim: Built-in benches line the east and west walls of the Waiting Room approximately 28' and 36' respectively. These oak benches of narrow horizontal strips are typical of railroad station benches. A built-in bench, added to the former Ticket Office, follows the splayed wall of the bay window. This bench might have been made from the two disassembled benches from the Smoking Room.

Original drawings indicate that a built-in phone booth might have stood in the southwest corner of the Waiting Room.
7. Hardware: The most notable extant original hardware is the wrought iron strap hinges of the east and south exterior doors and the restroom doors on the interior.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: The Station originally had its own source of heat. A boiler (extant) in the basement Heating Room supplied radiators which were concealed in the backs of the benches in the Waiting Room and probably in those of the Smoking Room as

well. In the Waiting Room, registers are set flush in the windowsills behind the benches. A coal chute from the loading platform led to a coal storage area in the basement. The Station is now heated by steam from the main Power Plant.

- b. Lighting: Original lighting fixtures consist of a pair of lanterns flanking the south doors. Other fixtures, such as the wall-mounted brass lamps and the colonial chandeliers in the Waiting Room and the wall lights flanking the two east doors, are later. The chandeliers, especially, are out of character with the building.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The West Shore Railroad Station is one of the few buildings down on the Hudson River plain south of the Point. It sits at the very bottom of Williams Road just north of the railroad crossing to Ernst Road and the South Dock. The Station is sited on the narrowest part of the river plain with Williams Road and a steep rocky embankment to the west, and railroad tracks, Ernst Road and the Hudson River to the east.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings: Original ink-on-linen working drawings are in the Facilities Engineer's Office, Directorate of Engineering and Housing, U.S. Military Academy. Subsequent alteration drawings are also found there.

- B. Early Views: Early photographs can be found in the U.S. Military Academy Archives and Special Collections.

C. Bibliography:

- 1. Primary and unpublished sources: Records, U.S. Military Academy Archives and Special Collection. See bibliographic essay in the Lange volume of this project for a listing of record groups.

- 2. Secondary and published sources:

Annual Reports, U.S. Military Academy.

Grashof, Bethanie C. "Building Analysis and Preservation Guidelines for Category I and Selected Category II Buildings at the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York,": Historic American Buildings Survey, 1983. HABS No. NY-5708.

Lange, Robie S. "West Point: An Overview of the History and Physical Development of the United States Military Academy," Historic American Buildings Survey, 1983. HABS No. NY-5708.

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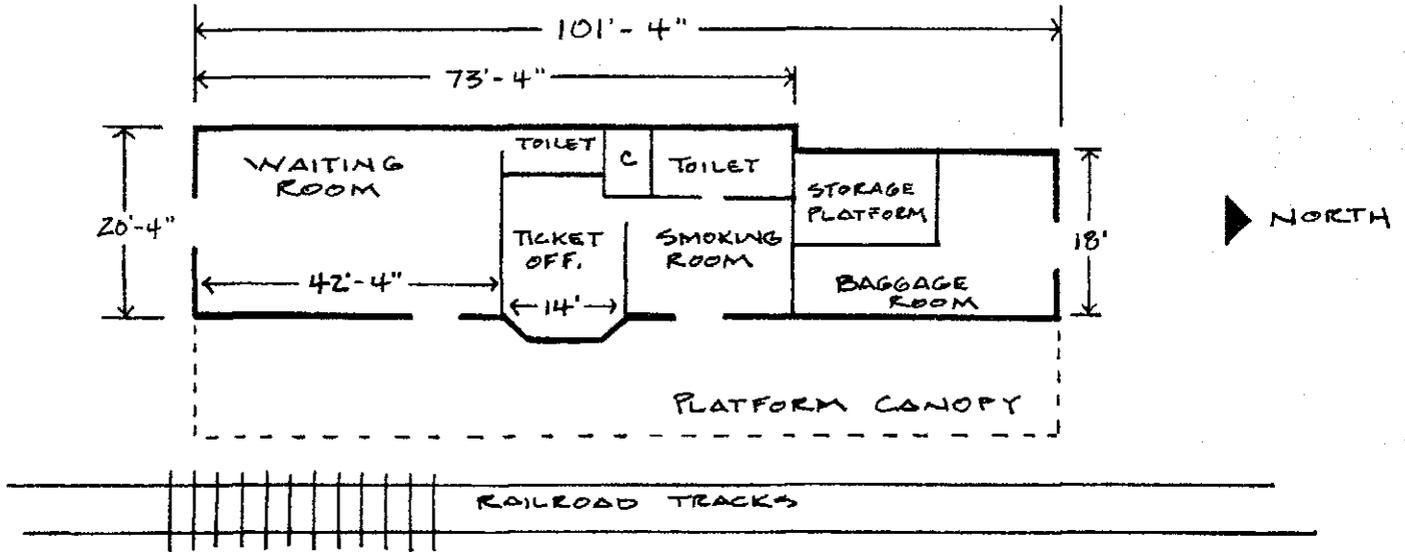
D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: New York Central Railroad records.

E. Supplemental Material:

1. Sketch of original plan

E. Supplemental Material.

1. Sketch of Original Plan.



ORIGINAL PLAN, 1926
WEST SHORE RAILROAD STATION

U. S. MILITARY ACADEMY
WEST POINT, N. Y.

TAKEN FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS
NOT TO SCALE
T. C. M. 1/84

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation is part of a multi-year project sponsored by the National Park Service and the United States Military Academy, explained in the United States Military Academy, HABS No. NY-5708, Volume 1, "Methodology," This written documentation was prepared by Travis C. McDonald, Jr., architectural historian, in 1982-1985 based on fieldwork conducted in 1982.