WESTERLY STATION
14 Railroad Street
Westerly
Washington County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-401

HABS
RI
5-WEST,
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WESTERLY STATION — HABS No. RI-401

HABS RI 5-WEST, 3-

LOCATION: 14 Railroad Street, Westerly, Washington County, Rhode Island

USGS Ashaway, RI Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates
18.263260.4584720

PRESENT OWNER: State of Rhode Island

PRESENT OCCUPANT: National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak)

PRESENT USE: Railroad Passenger Station

SIGNIFICANCE: Built in 1913, Westerly Station is a focal downtown Westerly landmark and an important component of the Westerly Downtown National Register Historic District. The station is a large, ornate example of the Mission style, which was adopted by the New Haven Railroad for several types of buildings during a facility reconstruction program initiated in the early twentieth century. The construction of the station coincided with a major civic improvement campaign in Westerly that resulted in the construction of several other prominent local landmark buildings in the downtown area and the enhancement of the city's transportation infrastructure. Westerly Station continues to serve Amtrak railroad passengers today.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. PHYSICAL HISTORY:

1. Date of Erection: Construction on the Westerly Station was begun in 1912, but the station was not formally opened until April 15, 1913 (date on central parapet, *Westerly Sun*, April 15, 1913).

2. Architect: The architect has not been positively identified, but architectural evidence suggests the station may have been designed by the New Haven Railroad's in-house architect F.W. Mellor. Mellor has been documented has having served as the in-house architect for the New Haven Railroad during the early 1910s. Westerly Station is designed in a style consistent with other known Mellor designs of the period.

3. Original and Subsequent Owners: The original owner was the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad Company, which acquired the Stonington Railroad line in 1892. In 1969 the New Haven Railroad, and the Westerly Station were acquired by the Penn Central Railroad. In 1971 Congress formed the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), which then acquired ownership of the station. In 1997 the Westerly Station was sold to the State of Rhode Island.

4. Contractors: Unknown

5. Original Plans and Construction: Few changes have been made to the original appearance of the station.

6. Alterations and Additions: With the exception of the removal of several metal grilles that originally covered some of the windows and transoms, no major alterations or additions have been made to the main building. A concrete and steel canopy was removed from the eastbound platform in 1952. The attached historic views show that the arches of the eastbound and westbound pedestrian underpass stairway shelters were originally open. They have, with the exception of the easternmost bay of the eastbound shelter, been enclosed with wood frame and stucco walls, which are pierced by arched windows and doorways (date unknown).

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Much of Westerly's historic period development is owed to its location on major transportation arteries that linked the major cities of the Northeast. Located on the headwaters of the Pawcatuck River, the most significant river route in southern Rhode Island, the city initially served as an important waterborne travel and shipping point for the surrounding countryside. By the mid-seventeenth century, a system of roads, including Post Road (U.S. Highway 1), was established and connected Westerly with Providence and Boston to the north and New York to the south. Settlement, however, remained sparse in the small village until the mid-nineteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution began to gather steam (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission: 1978:10).

Westerly's position as a shipping center was augmented by the completion of the Stonington and Providence Railroad (S&P) through the village in 1837 (Karr 1995:125). The 47-mile Stonington Road was constructed only two years after the opening of New England's first railroad, the Boston and Providence (B&P). Before the establishment of those rail lines, travel between New York and Boston was difficult. The overland route along winding Post Road took several days to complete. Ship travel, while faster and more comfortable, required rounding the arm of Cape Cod, a dangerous journey during storms. The B&P line provided the first viable alternative to ship travel around the Cape. After its completion, goods were transported by rail to India Point in Providence and off-loaded onto ships bound for New York via Narragansett Bay. The completion of the Stonington Road made the trip faster and safer by allowing shippers to bypass the sometimes treacherous sea passage around Point Judith at the southwest corner of Narragansett Bay and providing direct access to the relatively calm Long Island Sound (Warner 1995:4).

One of four stops on the Stonington Road, Westerly gained prominence in the region as a shipping point and provided impetus for the expansion of the area's industrial production. Textile production was the leading industry, but other manufacturing facilities followed and helped sustain modest growth in Westerly throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission: 1978:10).

In 1858, the parent company of the Stonington Road, the New York, Providence, and Boston Railroad Company (NYP&B), extended the line from Stonington to Groton, Connecticut. The new connection made it possible, with the exception of a ferry ride across the Thames River, to travel by train from Boston to New York City (Karr 1995:125). In 1872, the NYP&B added a second track to the Stonington Road and undertook a program to improve depot facilities along the line. Westerly received a new depot, which was constructed just east of the site of the original station along what is now Railroad Avenue (Warner 1995:8).

The final barrier to rapid rail service along the northeastern seaboard was eliminated in 1889, when the large steel Thames River Railroad Bridge was completed from Groton to New London. The scenic "Shore Line," which included the NYP&B's Stonington Line and the line south of the Thames River to New York, soon became the favorite of intercity rail travelers along the Northeast corridor. In 1892 the rapidly expanding New Haven Railroad leased the entire line from New York to Boston (Karr 1995:125-126).

Talk of replacing the two-story, wood-frame structure that had served as Westerly's depot since 1873 began in the late 1890s, but no concrete action was taken by the New Haven Railroad until 1911 when the railroad announced a major plan to upgrade facilities in Westerly. Included in the plans were the construction of a new passenger and freight depots, the elimination of a dangerous grade crossing at Canal Street, and the reduction of a sharp curve between West and West Broad streets (Warner 1995:9-12).

While the track straightening and Canal Street crossing problems were significant safety concerns, planning for the new passenger depot generated the most local excitement. During the railroad era, the relative size and design of a depot was a measure of the confidence of railroad officials in the town and was considered an important element in forming a visitor's first impression of the

community. Local officials often lobbied hard for an impressive edifice that would bring prestige to their town.

Negotiations for a new depot between the Westerly Town Council and the railroad began as early as 1906 when a handsome, but relatively small building was proposed. The railroad offered a more substantial building as part of its general improvement plan of 1911. Local officials, however, were still not satisfied. Finally, in May 1912, Edwin Milner, a Westerly native and an officer for the New Haven Railroad, unveiled a set of improved plans that exceeded the expectations (Warner 1995:11-12).

The new plans called for the construction of what Milner termed a "Spanish Renaissance" style building. It was to be one story in height and measure 123 feet in length and 48 feet in width. The foundation of the building was supposed to be faced with Westerly granite, but was later changed to more economical brick. The walls were terra cotta block finished with stucco and the roof was to be surfaced with ceramic pantile, which was appealing to local officials since it fit in nicely with a similar roof installed on the nearby Westerly Memorial Library. Three arcaded passenger shelters with arches, columns, and roofs that matched those of the station and a 240 feet-long platform shelter were also planned for the site (Warner 1995:12; NY.NH.&H.RR., Providence Div., Passenger Station at Westerly, R.I., Plan, 1912: sheets 1-11).

Although no concrete source evidence has been found concerning the architect of Westerly Station, the design is consistent with other contemporary works of F.W. Mellor, who served as the New Haven Railroad's in-house architect during the period in which the depot was constructed. Mellor oversaw the railroad's early-twentieth-century reconstruction program, which produced a number of passenger stations, interlocking towers, and electrical buildings designed with Spanish Colonial and Mission style elements (Ozog 1984:14).

Construction of Westerly Station commenced in the summer of 1912 and was completed the following April. Work on several ancillary facilities, including a subway passage to the westbound track, continued into the fall of 1913. The total cost of improvements made by the New Haven Railroad in Westerly between 1911 and 1913 amounted to more than $500,000 (*Westerly Sun*, March 1, 1914).

Soon after the completion of the improvement program, the Westerly Sun reported that the "town can now boast of having the finest layout for the handling of freight and passenger traffic of any place on the Shore Line division of the New York, New Haven and Hartford road between New York and Boston"(*Westerly Sun*, March 1, 1914). In the context of local development, the station was part of a general period of civic improvement, which saw the construction of a number of impressive buildings in Westerly's downtown area, including the James A. Welch Building at 41-43 Broad Street (1911), Westerly Town Hall and Courthouse on Broad Street (1912), Westerly Post Office on High Street (1913-14), Murphy Building at 2-8 Canal Street (1913), Industrial Trust Building at 14 High Street (1916) and the Crandall Block at 10-16 Canal Street (1917) (Renshaw 1978: section 7, pp. 3-13).

The most significant alteration to the original appearance of the station occurred in 1952, when the masonry and steel platform canopy on the eastbound side of the tracks was removed after a flagman on a passing train was critically injured after being struck in the head while leaning out the window of one of the train's two engines. In 1969, the Penn Central Railroad acquired all of the New Haven Railroad's assets, including Westerly Station. Two years later, after the U.S. Congress formed the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, the station became a stop on Amtrak's Northeastern route (Warner 1995:13). In 1997, Westerly Station was sold to the State of Rhode Island, but remains in operation as an Amtrak station.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. GENERAL STATEMENT:

1. Architectural Character: The Westerly Station is an excellent example of the Mission style as it was applied to early-twentieth-century civic buildings. Identifying features of the style present on the station include a low-pitched hip roof with flanking hip extensions, red ceramic pantile roof surfacing, an ornate parapet, scroll eaves brackets, stucco walls, brick quoins, and geometric window grillwork.

2. Condition of Fabric: The overall condition of the exteriors of the main station building and the eastbound and westbound pedestrian underpass stairway shelters appears to be good. The station interior, including the east and west freight and baggage rooms, is original and unaltered, although some minor water damage to paint and plaster has occurred. Some of the columns of the pedestrian shelters are cracked at the base and shows signs of failing.

B. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR:

1. Overall Dimensions: Westerly Station is a one-story building with a central block with wings plan. The overall footprint of the building measures 123 by 48 feet, with the long axis parallel to the east/west-oriented railroad tracks located on the north side of the building. The building rests on a concrete foundation that houses a partial basement, which consists of three rooms dedicated to heating apparatus. The rest of the area under the main floor is crawl space with dirt floors. Two ancillary pedestrian shelters, which flank the station on the east and west, measure approximately 40 by 15 feet. A larger shelter, measuring about 60 by 15 feet, is located north of the tracks.

2. Foundations: The foundation of the station consists of poured concrete footers and walls that rise six inches above grade to form an exposed plinth.

3. Walls: The exterior walls are constructed with hollow terra cotta tile faced at the base with brick set in a Flemish bond pattern. A prominent granite belt course runs above the brick about three feet from the top of the foundation plinth. Brick quoins detail the corners of the building. The remaining portions of the exterior walls are surfaced with a rough concrete-based gray stucco.

4. Structural Systems: Westerly Station is constructed with a load-bearing masonry structural system, consisting of a poured concrete foundation and hollow clay tile walls. The pedestrian

underpass stairway shelters are of poured concrete and timber frame construction with stucco cladding.

5. **Porches**: A shed roof arcade, which leads to main entrance of the passenger waiting room, runs between the two hip roof extensions on the south elevation. It has five arched bays that are divided by granite Tuscan columns. The roof of the porch extends to cover the rectangular projections, which house the station's bathrooms. Tuscan pilasters are attached to the corners of the bathroom extensions.

6. **Chimneys:** A single short, square stucco chimney with brick quoins rises from the southeast corner of the station roof.

7. **Openings:**

a. Doorways and Doors: The south elevation contains a central rectangular entrance with a pair of single full-panel glass doors topped by a four-light transom. This elevation also contains doorways in the flanking freight and baggage rooms. These doorways are centrally located in their rooms, and contain paired wood doors with ten panels each and a transom that matches the one above the main entrance. The north elevation contains two sets of paired of doors—one set on either side of a central polygonal bay extension—that are similar to the main entrance on the south elevation. The doors for the flanking hip roof extensions are identical to those on the south elevation. The westbound elevation includes a simple single wood door with transom located at the south end of the elevation. All of the doorways have wood frames.

b. Windows and Shutters: The south elevation contains six large one-over-one double-hung, wood-sash windows, symmetrically arranged with two to each side of the central doorway in the recessed arcade and one each in the stucco wall to either side of the arcade. Five single pane horizontal pivot windows pierce the upper wall of the main unit near the eaves line and are protected with decorative geometric pattern metal grilles. The north elevation contains six large one-over-one double-hung, wood-sash windows. Two narrow one-over-one windows with metal grilles are paired at the center of the polygonal extension. The remaining windows flank both sets of waiting room doors. The east and west elevations are each penetrated by four single pane, horizontal pivot windows with a shared granite sill. The windows of the east side are covered with geometric pattern grilles. The grilles for the west side windows have been removed.

8. **Roof**

a. Shape, Covering: The central unit of the station has a low-pitched hip roof with flanking hip roof extensions to the east and west. The eaves line of the main roof unit is broken at the center of south slope to accommodate a gable dormer with an ornate terra cotta parapet end. A shed roof arcade runs along the south facade of the main unit between the two hip extensions. A shed roof overhang supported by scroll brackets extends the length of the north elevation. The three passenger canopies have hip roofs that match the pitch of

the main building. All roof elements are clad with red ceramic pantile.

b. Cornice, Eaves: The eaves of all the roof elements are open and wide. They exhibit decorative notched rafter ends and, in the case of the main unit, are supported by a heavy transverse timber resting on single and paired cantilevered wood beams with ornate scroll bracket supports. All roofs have wood gutters and heavy, round, galvanized metal downspouts running into cast iron drain pipes.

c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: The major decorative feature of the Westerly Station is an arched terra cotta parapet that fronts a central gable dormer on the south slope of the main roof. The parapet breaks the main roofline and rises to the approximate height of the roof ridge. It has a classical tripartite form, consisting of a central broken arch panel and flanking rectangular shoulders with a heavy molded cornice. The arch of the central panel is interrupted by an elaborate carved escutcheon bearing the letter "W." Below the escutcheon is a round wreath that surrounds an oculus of white marble. The numbers "19" and "12" and initials "NY.NH.&HRR" are set in bas relief below the wreath. Flanking the central portion of the parapet are ornate pilasters with scroll bases and ionic capitals. The pilasters support elaborate burning urn finials.

C. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR:

1. Floor Plans: See attached historic view of the original plan.

2. Stairways: The main building contains a single basement stairwell. It is accessed through a paneled wood door at the southeast corner of the main passenger waiting area. It has concrete stairs and a metal pipe railing. Stairways to the underpass linking the eastbound and westbound shelters are constructed of poured concrete and have heavy metal pipe railings. The walls of the stairwells are also constructed of poured concrete.

3. Flooring: The floors of the passenger waiting room and bathrooms of the main building are surfaced with glazed ceramic, burnt orange tiles set in a diagonal pattern and edged by a smooth, glazed cement border. Floors in the adjacent wings are unfinished concrete slab. The passenger shelter floors are also concrete slab.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The interior walls and ceilings of the main building are finished with smooth plaster.

5. Openings: The passenger waiting area of the main unit of the station is surrounded by a series of small rectangular windows located just below the coved ceiling. The north wall contains a central rectangular doorway flanked by two rectangular window openings on either side. Rectangular doorways flanked by single rectangular windows are located on either side of a polygonal ticket booth on the north wall. A single rectangular door and one window pierce the east and west walls. Each bathroom contains a single rectangular doorway and one rectangular window. The flanking room extensions are lit by a series of five small rectangular windows on their outer walls and have rectangular doorways with transoms on the north and south walls.

6. Decorative Features and Trim: Most of the decorative features and trim are found in the main passenger waiting area. Wood panel wainscoting rises from the top of a cement base to the sills of the windows. All window and door frames in the room have molded wood surrounds. A molded cornice runs around the room below the upper rectangular windows. Rectangular panels formed by applied picture molding are located between the upper windows. The ceiling is divided into coves by large paired beams that support the roof. The coves are finished with decorative egg and dart and cove moldings.

7. Hardware: Much of the original cast iron hardware, including door knobs, latches hinges, and decorative rosette bulbs on the exterior of the doors to the passenger waiting area, remains. Decorative geometric metal grilles, which once covered all of the small single-pane windows and doorway transoms, remain on some of the windows.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating: Unknown

b. Lighting: Much of the lighting for the building is natural. A series of original electric globe lights hangs the beams of the roof in the passenger waiting. A modern florescent light has been installed in the ticket booth.

c. Plumbing: Original porcelain sinks and toilets remain in the bathrooms.

9. Original Furnishings: An elaborate ticket agent's booth is located on the north wall of the passenger waiting room. It has an irregular polygonal footprint and extends into the room some eight feet from the wall. The walls of the booth are framed by large pilasters, which rise to a classical entablature with modillons on the north wall of the waiting area. It is topped in the center by decorative arched pediment that formerly held the station clock. A round clock face is surrounded by wood molding, a carved swag, and volutes. A molded dentil cornice runs around the top of the booth. Square wood panel columns with Ionic capitals divide the bays. The openings have decorative geometric grilles. Wood counters that extend from the bottom of the openings are supported by scroll brackets.

Two long, wood, double-benches with decorative carved scroll arms are located in the center of the passenger waiting room.

D. SITE:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The Westerly Station is located on a roughly east-west lengthwise axis, immediately south of the railroad tracks in Westerly Center. Canal Street, located adjacent to the station grounds to the west, runs north-south beneath the tracks under a plate girder deck bridge. West Street, located approximately 100 yards to the east, crosses the tracks on a through truss bridge (HAER No. RI-46). The Railroad Avenue and Canal Street streetscapes include single- and multi-story, turn-of-the-century commercial architecture. This area, the Westerly Downtown Historic District, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1984). The area

to the north of the station and tracks is a vacant lot, originally occupied by railroad freight structures and rail-served industries.

2. Historic Landscape Design: A wide, paved semi-circular driveway separates the station from Railroad Street to the south, and appears to follow the configuration of the original driveway. Additional parking areas are located at the east and west ends of the lot, and a drop-off area extends to the curb in front of the station. Vestiges of historic plantings are suggested by juniper and ground cover in small, rectangular, stone-lined beds flanking the Railroad Street entrance arcade and a few small flowering trees and a juniper hedge in a grassy area to the west of the station. A trimmed juniper hedge separates the station driveway from the Station Street sidewalk.

3. Outbuildings: The station is flanked on either side by hip roof passenger shelters. A third shelter is located off the northeast corner of the station on the north side of the tracks. That shelter and the one on the south side of the tracks east of the main building are tied together by an underground pedestrian tunnel. The two shelters adjacent to the station on the south side of the railroad measure approximately 40 by 15 feet. They have hip roofs and a series of four arched bays. The shelter on the north side of the tracks measures approximately 60- by 15-feet and has six bays. The arched bays of the shelters are divided by Tuscan columns that are constructed of hollow clay tile with concrete stucco sheathing. The corners are formed by rectangular columns. The bays of the underpass shelters have, with the exception of the easternmost bay of the eastbound shelter, been enclosed with wood frame and stucco walls, which are pierced by arched windows and doorways. The west shelter retains its original form. All of the shelters exhibit signs of deterioration in the form of cracked stucco. Some of the cracks on the columns are wide and deep enough to suggest they may be in danger of failing.

An original platform canopy on the east side of the railroad tracks was removed in 1952. Measuring 240 feet in length, the platform featured an arched roof, which was supported by steel Y posts on poured concrete bases.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings: "NY.NH.&H.RR., Providence Div., Passenger Station at Westerly, R.I." Eleven sheets (sheet No. 5 missing). February 1912. Original plans of Westerly Station are located at Amtrak Engineering Document Control, National Railroad Passenger Corporation, 30th and Market Streets, Philadelphia, P.A. The only identifiable difference between the plans and as built station is the substitution of red brick for the proposed Westerly granite to sheath the base of the building and corner quoins.

B. Historic views: Located at the Westerly Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Department, Westerly, Rhode Island. Photo dates are unknown.

C. Bibliography

1. Primary Sources

"Map of Westerly, Washington Co., R.I. and Pawcatuck, Stonington, New London Co., Conn."

ca. 1862. Copy located at Westerly Public Library, Westerly, Rhode Island.

"Map of Westerly, Washington Co., R.I. and Pawcatuck, Stonington, New London Co., Conn."
ca. 1875. Copy located at Westerly Public Library, Westerly, Rhode Island.

Sampson & Murdock Co.
1927 *Map of Westerly, R.I. and Pawcatuck, Conn.* N.P.

2. Secondary Sources

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1995 "Historical Evaluation Report: Westerly Railroad Station, Westerly, Rhode Island." Exeter, RI.

Westerly Sun (Newspaper)
April 13, 1913, p. 1
March 1, 1914, p. 1

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

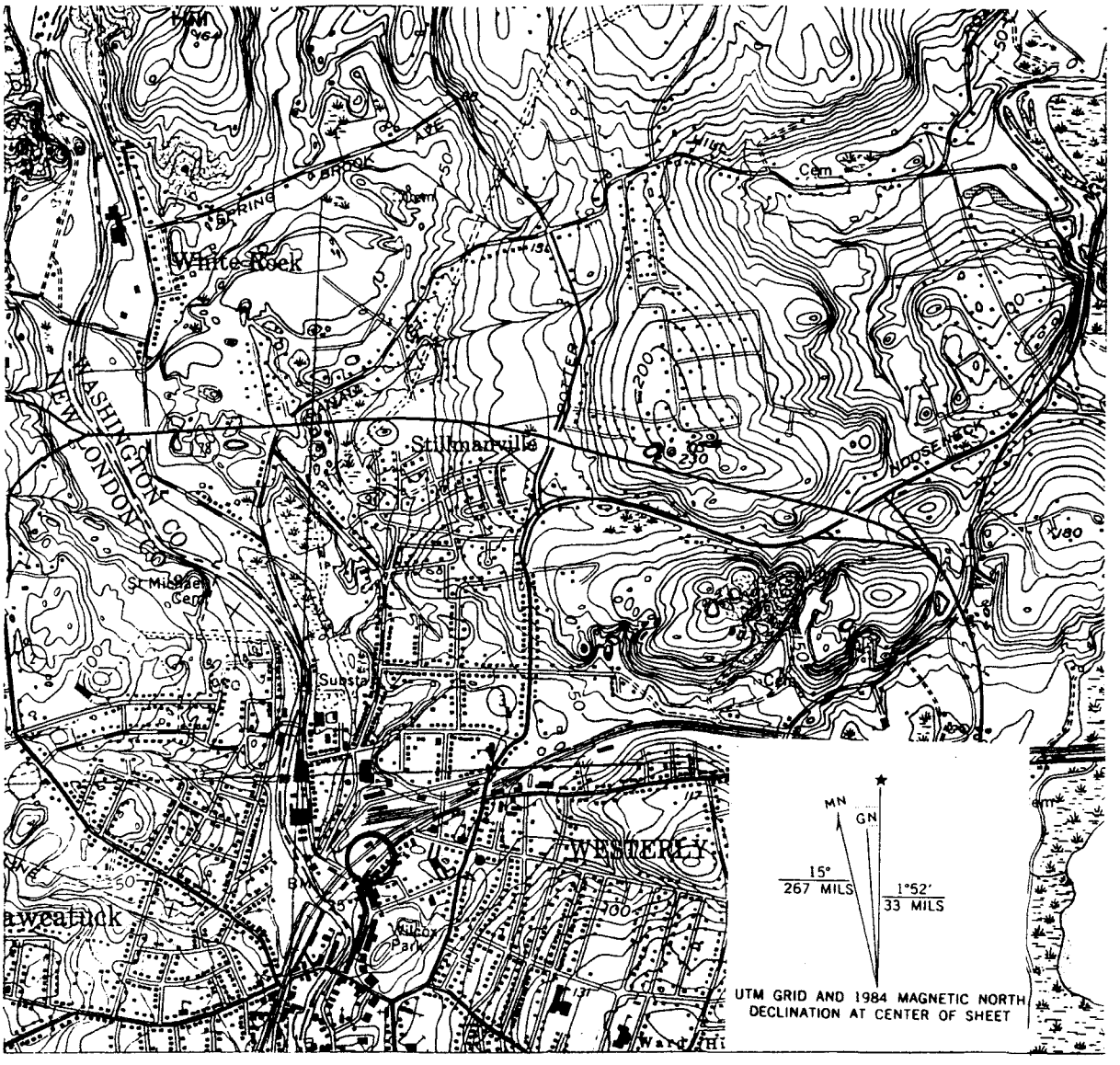
The National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), in association with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), is proposing a number of infrastructure projects to upgrade the Northeast Corridor Railroad right-of-way in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. In consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), Amtrak and FRA have determined that the proposed "Northeast Corridor Improvement Project--Electrification: New Haven, Connecticut to Boston, Massachusetts" project will have adverse impacts on significant historic properties. Three memoranda of agreement outlining

stipulations to eliminate, minimize, or mitigate adverse project impacts have been drafted by Amtrack, the FRA, and the respective SHPOs, and have been accepted by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The stipulations included the recordation of Westerly Station, Westerly, Rhode Island, a property listed as a contributing element in the Westerly Downtown National Register Historic District. The proposed project will necessitate the installation of catenary poles and overhead wiring and has been determined by the Rhode Island SHPO to cause an adverse effect.

The Public Archeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL Inc.) Of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, was retained by ABB Environmental Services, Inc. On behalf of Amtrak and FRA to prepare HABS documents for Westerly Station. This report was compiled in July 1997.

Prepared by: Matthew Kierstead and Stephen Olausen
Title: Industrial Historian and Senior Architectural Historian
Affiliation: The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.
Date: August 29, 1997

USGS Location Map
Westerly Station
Westerly
Washington County, Rhode Island
Scale 1:24,000



Portion of a Map of
Westerly, Washington Co., R.I. and Pawcatuck, Stonington, New London Co., Conn.
ca. 1862
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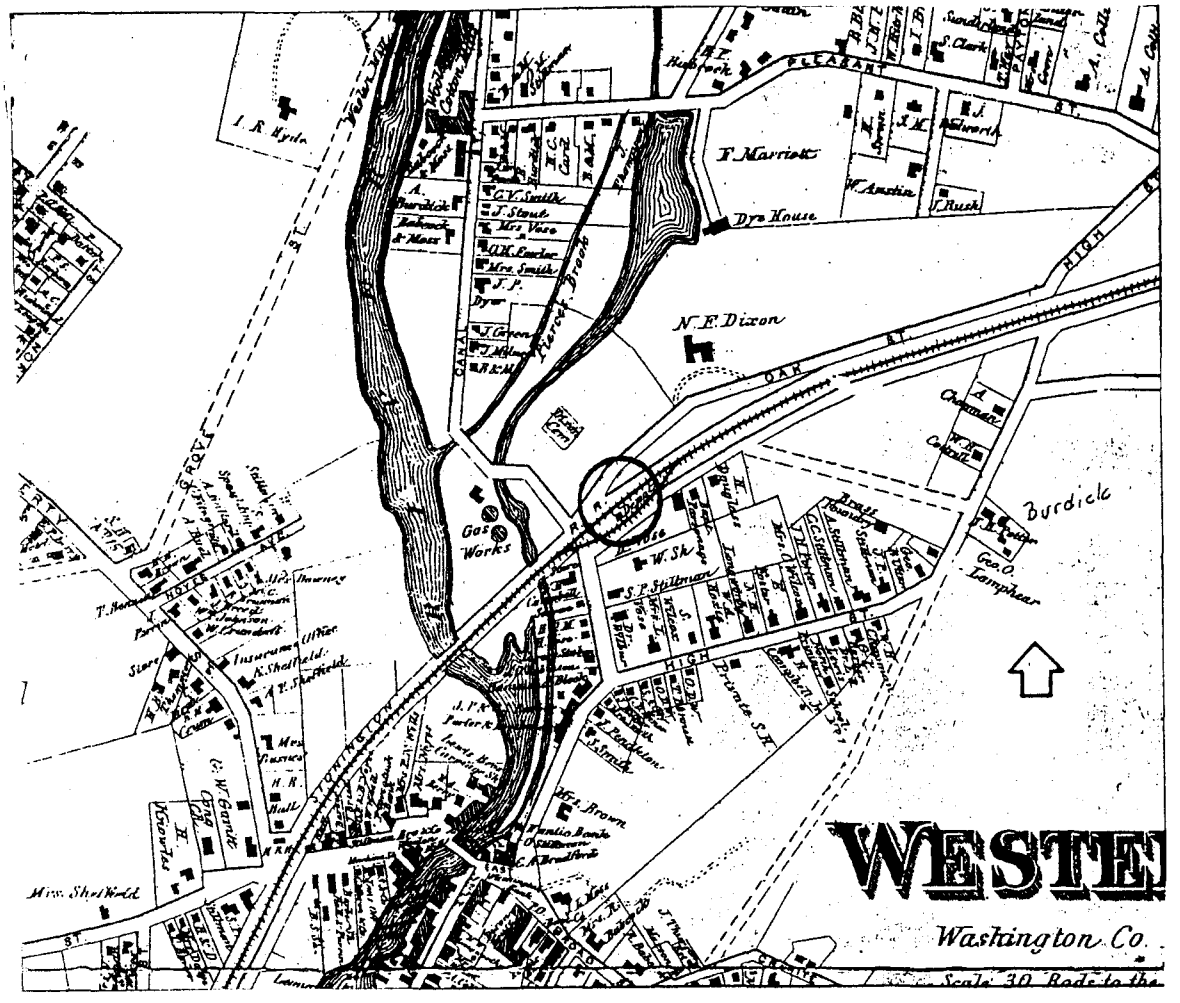

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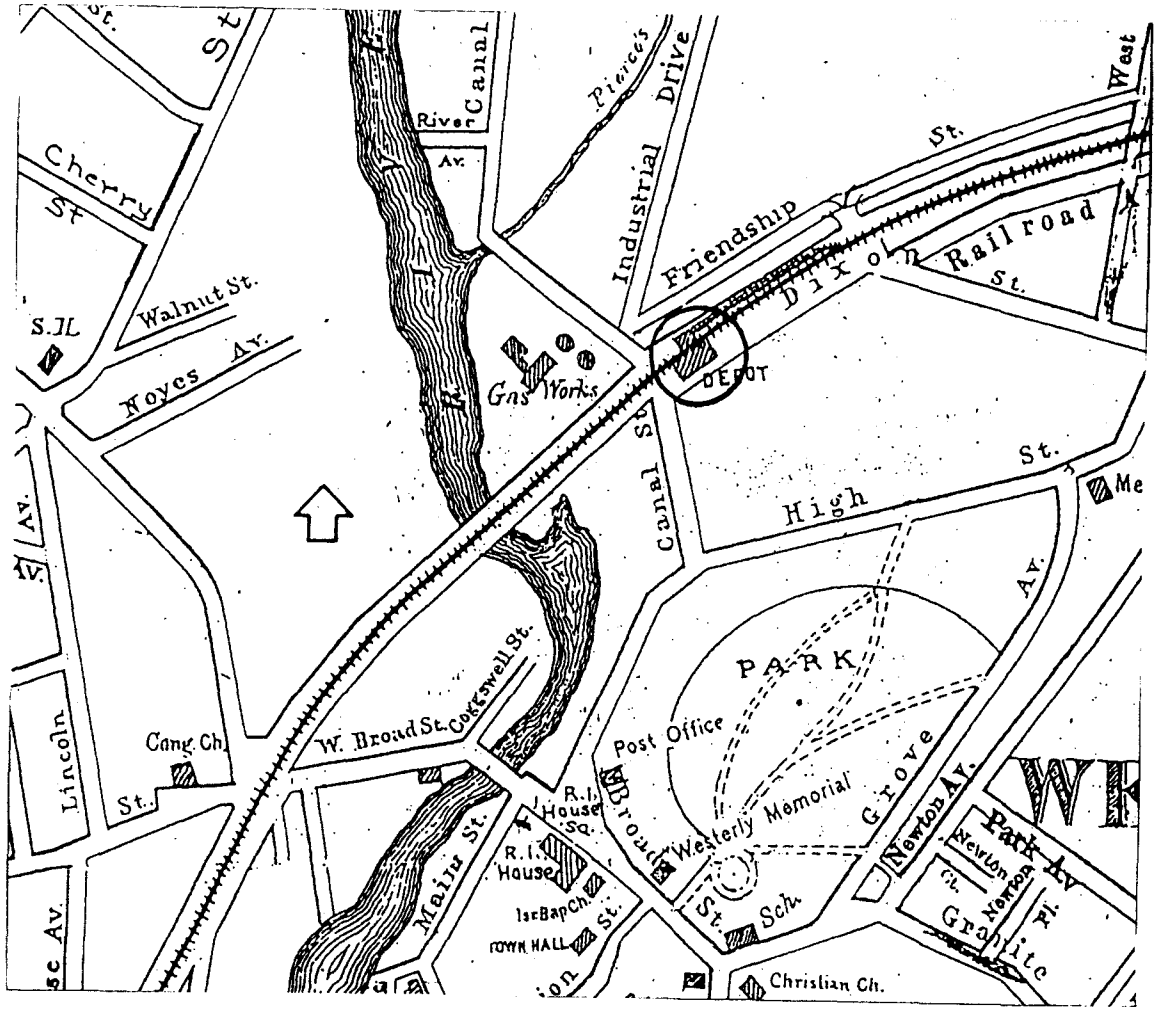
Scale Unknown



Westerly Station
Site Plan
Westerly
Washington County, Rhode Island
Scale 1:100