

TORONTO UNION STATION
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE of CANADA
COMMEMORATIVE INTEGRITY STATEMENT

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TORONTO UNION STATION NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE of CANADA

COMMEMORATIVE INTEGRITY STATEMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Toronto's Union Station occupies the south side of Front Street, from Bay to York Street. It is the largest of the great metropolitan railway stations built in Canada in the first decades of the twentieth century. Together with its near neighbours, the Royal York Hotel and the Dominion Public Building, it marks out the precinct of monumental structures that is the legacy of Toronto's experiment with the "City Beautiful" movement. Like many others of its kind in North America, Union Station expresses the grand architectural style of the Parisian *École des Beaux Arts*, while incorporating explicit Canadian themes in its decorative motifs. The successful use of monumental design, classical detailing, and formal setting makes it one of the most outstanding examples of Beaux-Arts railway architecture in Canada.

Since 1927 Union Station has served as the city's principal passenger depot for inter-urban and commuter trains. In that time it has withstood the ravages of time, heavy use, at least one fire and the threat of demolition, to be designated a national historic site of Canada in 1975. The station is now owned by the City of Toronto, and it continues to serve its historic function as a major urban transportation facility. Union Station is familiar to travellers from all over the country and to generations of Torontonians it has been the gateway to their city.

1.2 National Historic Site Objectives

The National Historic Sites Policy sets out the following objectives:

- *To foster knowledge and appreciation of Canada's past through a national program of historical commemoration.*
- *To ensure the commemorative integrity of national historic sites administered by Parks Canada, by protecting and presenting them for the benefit,*

education and enjoyment of this and future generations, in a manner that respects the significant and irreplaceable legacy represented by these places and their associated resources.

- *To encourage and support the protection and presentation by others of places of national historic significance that are not administered by Parks Canada.*

1.3 Definition and Purpose of Commemorative Integrity

The term commemorative integrity is used to describe the health or wholeness of a national historic site. A national historic site possesses commemorative integrity when:

- *the resources that symbolize or represent its importance are not impaired or under threat;*
- *the reasons for the site's national historic significance are effectively communicated to the public;*
- *the site's heritage values are respected by all whose decisions or actions affect the site.*

2.0 DESIGNATION AND CONTEXT

2.1 Designation

In June 1975 the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recommended to the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, *that Windsor Station in Montreal and Toronto Union Station are of national architectural significance and should be commemorated by plaque only.* With the Minister's approval of this recommendation, Toronto Union Station became a national historic site. In 1976 the Board approved the text for the commemorative plaque for Union Station. This plaque was unveiled in 1979, and the text reads as follows:

Conceived in 1913-14, this station was built between 1915 and 1920 to designs of Ross and Macdonald, H.G. Jones, and J.M. Lyle, but was not opened until 1927 because of problems arising from the relocation of track. It is the finest example in Canada of stations erected in the classical Beaux-Arts style during an era of expanding national rail networks and vigorous urban growth. Its sweeping facade and imposing Great Hall exhibit characteristics of the Beaux-Arts movement.

2.2 Commemorative Intent

2.2.1 Definition of Commemorative Intent

Commemorative intent refers specifically to the reasons for a site's national historic significance. It is determined from the recommendation by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, approved by the Minister. The question as to why a place has been designated a national historic site is answered in a *Statement of Commemorative Intent*.

2.2.2. Statement of Commemorative Intent:

The Toronto Union Station was designated a national historic site in 1975. The reason for its national significance, as derived from the 1976 plaque inscription, is: ***it is the finest example in Canada of stations erected in the classical Beaux-Arts style during an era of expanding national rail networks and vigorous urban growth.***

2.3 Designated Place

2.3.1 Definition of Designated Place

The *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* empowers the Minister to commemorate “historic places”. The Act defines *historic place* as a “site, building or other place of national historic interest or significance, and includes buildings or structures that are of national interest by reasons of age or architectural design”. A place so designated by the Minister on the recommendation of the Board, is commonly referred to as a national historic site. Information on what constitutes the designated place of a particular national historic site is drawn from the Board's written conclusions, in the minutes of its deliberations. The designated place is a geographically definable location which is circumscribed by boundaries.

2.3.2 Description of the Designated Place

At Toronto Union Station National Historic Site, the designated place encompasses those structures which constitute the railway station: specifically the main station building (headhouse) and attached train sheds with the connecting passenger concourses, the exterior moat and driveway, the north-south teamways on the east side of York Street and the west side of Bay Street, and the railway platforms.

2.4 Historical and Geographical Context

Union Station was so called because it provided facilities for more than one railway. It was built for the Toronto Terminals Railway Company, incorporated 13 July 1906, a wholly owned subsidiary of Grand Trunk Railway and Canadian Pacific Limited. Inscriptions over the main entrance to the station include “Canadian Pacific Railway” and “Grand Trunk Railway”, and the date “Anno Domini MCMXIX”. By the time construction was completed in 1927, the Grand Trunk Railway had become part of Canadian National Railways.

Railway passenger service had begun in Toronto in 1853. Two years later the Grand Trunk arrived and built a station at Bay and Front Streets. At various times it shared this facility with other railways, most of which it absorbed, until the need for a larger station led to the construction in 1873 of a new one west of York Street. In 1887 Canadian Pacific entered Toronto, built improved freight and engine facilities on the waterfront, and placed its passenger terminal in the Grand Trunk’s station. This first Toronto Union Station was enlarged 1893-1895 and served until after the opening of a new Union Station in 1927.

Construction

The present Union Station owes its origins to the widely-held notion that a great city like Toronto deserved better railway facilities, and to the devastating fire of 1904, which left much of the old waterfront in ruins. Even before the fire the railways themselves had disrupted the early nineteenth century relationship between Toronto and its harbour. The city had been very much a part of this process, as the business elite saw railways as inseparable from progress. The Esplanade, a thoroughfare that had overlooked the harbour since 1818, was virtually surrendered to the Grand Trunk Railway, and replaced by a jungle of tracks and level crossings. Despite its enlarged size, the old Union Station was seen as inadequate and inefficient. Once again the city took the initiative, assumed title to the properties destroyed by the fire, and negotiated an agreement with the railways. This agreement spelled out the necessity of separate grade levels between trackage and the streets, the location of a new Union Station between York and Bay Streets, and the essentials of a long-term lease of the city’s land.

Despite this agreement, and the incorporation of the jointly-owned Toronto Terminal Railway Company, the way ahead was far from smooth. The design and construction of the new station building proceeded in the face of wartime shortages of materials and labour. Plans were approved in April 1914, and in September of that year preliminary site work began. Exterior walls and columns were completed by 1918. In 1920 the railway company offices were ready for occupation, as was the Post Office Department’s space in the east wing. What was missing, however, was the essence of a railway station – passenger access to the trains. The design and construction of the passenger concourses and train sheds still awaited resolution of the grade separation problem.

Canadian Pacific was a reluctant partner. The grade separation scheme of 1909 threatened the company's existing yard facilities. The development of North Toronto station, operated jointly with the Canadian Northern, began to divert Canadian Pacific traffic away from the waterfront. The Toronto Harbour Commission, created in 1911, also intervened in the project, leading to a modified scheme being approved by the Board of Railway Commissioners in 1913. The heart of this project would be the construction of a concrete and earth-fill viaduct the length of the Esplanade, with subways at intervals to accommodate intersecting streets. The scale of this work was to be enormous. Final agreement on design revisions, and on cost sharing between the city and the railways, was only achieved in 1924.

The 1924 agreement opened the way for the construction of the new station's passenger concourses and platforms. Work on the interior of half the concourses was completed in July 1927, and the new Union Station was opened officially by the Prince of Wales on 6 August. The following Thursday baggage, equipment and staff moved over from old Union Station, and the new facility was opened to the public. Access to trains, however, was only available at the old station platforms, to which passengers had to pick their way until traffic could be transferred onto the new viaduct in stages. Six elevated tracks serving the new station were completed in December 1929, and train service commenced with due ceremony at the end of January 1930. The remaining half of the concourses was completed and placed in service in December. The design of the concourses and train sheds permitted through-track (as opposed to stub-track) operation, as old Union Station had done before. New Union Station became operationally complete in August 1931, with the installation of its elaborate interlocking and signalling system.

The Building

The Toronto Terminals Railway company assembled an impressive architectural team including the Montreal architectural firm of Ross and Macdonald, CPR architect Hugh G. Jones, and the well-known Toronto architect John Lyle. Together they designed and built the largest and most elaborate of the Beaux-Arts railway stations in Canada. Its imposing facade stretches 752 feet along Front Street and culminates in a central entry porch fronted by giant columns with what appears to be almost a separate structure rising up behind the entablature. On either side of the central colonnade, three-storey wings punctuated with fourteen bays of severely delineated fenestration terminate in corner pavilions.

The sense of spectacle invoked by the facade is continued on the interior where passengers enter into a monumental ticket lobby whose lavish decor includes Tennessee marble floors, walls faced with exotic Zumbro stone under a two-storey high vaulted ceiling decorated with coffered tiles. Giant arched windows based on those of Roman baths flood the interior with diffused light. From this "Great Hall," passengers could progress directly to the train platforms through a subterranean concourse projecting southward under the platforms or move laterally to waiting rooms or offices. The rare through-track arrangement runs parallel to the axis of the main station building. The tracks are sheltered by large, attached Bush train sheds designed by A.R. Ketterson.

3.0 RESOURCES THAT SYMBOLIZE OR REPRESENT THE NATIONAL HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF TORONTO UNION STATION

This section of the commemorative integrity statement contains details on the resources - the whole and the parts of the whole - which are directly related to the reasons for designation. These resources have been assigned the highest level of historic value and are referred to as level 1 cultural resources. For Toronto Union Station these resources consist of the Designated Place (as described above in Section 2.3.3). A description of its historic values is included, relating them to the site as a whole as well as certain component parts with particular architectural qualities or design roles which reflect and sustain the Beaux-Arts design. These values may be symbolic or associative as well as physical. In order to provide guidance for the management of the site, and to ensure that the level 1 resources are not impaired or under threat, an outline of the conditions necessary to achieve this state is included as well.

3.1 Designated Place

As described in Section 2.3.2, the designated place is a railway station. It is, however, no ordinary station, but *the finest example in Canada of stations erected in the classical Beaux-Arts style*. Certain architectural attributes create that distinction, in addition to its associated history, and these constitute its historic values.

3.2 Historic Values of the Designated Place

- *Monumentality of massing* - the structure is organized around a central, double height interior Ticket Lobby (the "Great Hall"), expressed on the exterior by a giant colonnade and raised central attic framed by sweeping lateral wings and corner pavilions. This monumental aspect is reinforced by the moat, or sunken drive, and its parapet wall, which provide a visual separation from the foreground, making the long front facade appear to rise from below.
- *Legibility of plan* - the rational approach to planning associated with the Beaux-Arts style is expressed on the exterior by the alignment of the central colonnade and raised central attic with the central Great Hall.
- *Axial planning* - the symmetrical layout of kinetic spaces and the resulting circulation patterns proceeds axially, with the primary traffic corridor progressing through the central giant colonnade, into and through the Great Hall, and directly toward the train sheds and platforms in the rear. Secondary traffic patterns extend laterally into the wings.
- *Processional experience* - the transition from the exterior forecourt, through the

colonnade and main entrance, and into the Great Hall, is designed to inspire a sense of the grandeur of the surroundings.

- *Classical vocabulary* - the formality and enduring quality of the station is underscored by the use of an architectural vocabulary consisting of structural and decorative elements that take classical form, one of the prominent characteristics of the Beaux-Arts style. These elements include *the columns in classical orders and formal architraves which characterize the front facade and main entry; and the large arched openings, the deliberate introduction of natural light from above, the barrel-vaulted ceiling, patterned stone floor and inscribed frieze of the Great Hall, as well as coffering and other classical detailing, including fittings, fixtures and hardware.*
- *Materials* - the classical origins of the station's Beaux-Arts design are recalled by the use of such materials as *marble, bronze, limestone, Guastavino tiles and translucent glass*, which further reinforce the symbolism and monumentality of the building by providing a sense of enduring quality and importance.
- *Landmark quality* - the Beaux-Arts emphasis on an axially designed setting, with its focus on *a central, monumental structure* is clearly demonstrated by Union Station's striking domination of the entire city block between York and Bay Streets. *The forecourt, or set-back from Front Street, and the attempt to frame the station with complementary architecture* such as the neighbouring Dominion Public Building, create a formal setting which accentuates Union Station's identity as a major public monument.
- *Associated history* - the station speaks strongly to the era of vigorous, planned growth, an era in which railways were expanding and the city of Toronto was becoming a modern metropolis.

3.3 Objectives

The designated place will not be impaired or under threat when:

- the cultural resources and their associated values are respected;
- the cultural resources and their associated values are not lost or impaired from natural processes within or outside the site, nor are they lost, impaired or threatened from human actions within or outside the site;
- management decisions are based on adequate and sound information and are made in accordance with the principles and practice of cultural resource management;
- adaptations, alterations and other interventions to the designated place to

accommodate new and evolving uses, functional layout, or circulation patterns are designed and implemented in a manner that is sensitive to the coherence of the original design and ensures the legibility of new work;

- the formal setting of Toronto Union Station continues to be sustained by the open forecourt (the set-back from Front Street), access to natural light, and the visual relationship with nearby complementary buildings;
- Toronto Union Station continues to serve a public purpose, its principal common spaces remain publically accessible, and the clarity of function and orientation of these spaces are sustained and reinforced;
- the axial plan is reflected in the primary internal traffic corridors;
- the historic values of the designated place are communicated to station users, visitors and the general public.

4.0 MESSAGES OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The achievement of commemorative integrity requires the effective communication to the public of the reasons for Toronto Union Station's national historic significance. These reasons are derived from the Statement of Commemorative Intent (see Section 2.2.2 above), and to facilitate effective communication they are embodied as messages of the highest level of priority.

4.1 Messages of National Significance

- *Toronto Union Station is the finest example in Canada of stations erected in the classical Beaux-Arts style.*
- *Toronto Union Station reflects an era of expanding national rail networks and vigorous urban growth.*

4.2 Context Messages

Context messages are included with each message of national significance where they are needed to understand the reason for the national significance of the site. While context messages are essential to understanding the reasons for the national significance of the site, they are not themselves messages of national significance.

- The classical Beaux-Arts style is named for *l'École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, where architects were taught to seek logic, harmony and uniformity in their designs. It is characterized by the use of forms and decorative elements derived from classical antiquity, deliberate siting and orientation, and massive scale.
- Toronto Union Station was planned, and its construction commenced, during the first decade and a half of the 20th century, a time when two new transcontinental railways were built in Canada as well as many miles of branch lines. Economic expansion and immigration also led in these years to growth in the population of Canada's cities, and to the establishment of new urban centres.

4.3 What is a National Historic Site?

Toronto Union Station is a national historic site of Canada, that is, a place designated by the Government of Canada as a site of importance to all Canadians for historical reasons.

4.4 Objectives

The reasons for Toronto Union Station's national historic significance will be effectively communicated to the public when:

- they are conveyed by the overall heritage presentation experience;
- station users, visitors and non-visitors who experience heritage presentation understand the reasons for the national historic significance of the site;
- the site's stewards (owners, managers and staff) understand the reasons for the its national historic significance;
- the site's Level 1 resources are maintained in a condition that reinforces and sustains the main messages, and the public understands and appreciates the design, function and origins of Toronto Union Station;
- the effective communication of messages and their understanding is monitored.

5.0 HERITAGE VALUES

5.1 Resources Not Directly Related to the Reasons for National Historic Significance

Cultural resources which are *not* of national historic significance but have historic value are described as level 2 resources. At Toronto Union Station these level 2 resources consist of components of the designated place which are not overt physical expressions of the classical Beaux-Arts architectural style, but are otherwise valued as important functional elements or characteristic design features of this large, early 20th century urban railway station.

The level 2 resources are:

- a) the east and west exterior facades of the main station building, and the teamways;

Values: the smooth stone surfaces and existing patterns of fenestration and access of the east and west facades; the utilitarian design and finishes of the teamways, characterized by the strong rhythm of the masonry colonnade, and their historic role, together with the moat, as circulation paths;
- b) the train sheds;

Values: their industrial character, defined by arched trusses spanning columns between the tracks, the cascade of end facades and pattern of smoke ducts; their functional relationship to the platforms, the through-track arrangement, and the viaduct;
- c) the arrival and departure concourses;

Values: the large open volume and symmetry of the arrival concourse, and its austere neutral finishes; the layout of the departure concourse and detailing such as shallow coffering of the plaster ceiling, light fixtures, original doors and painted directional signs;

- d) original detailing and historic features throughout the station such as the glass-floored walkway, early glazed double elevator doors with circular indicators, mail chutes, radiators, brass door fittings, marble and terrazzo stairs, the original plan and surviving interior fabric of certain parts of the upper office floors, and extant original finishes and fittings (wood panelling, plaster ceiling detail, radiator covers, light fixtures, marble and tile floors) in the main floor office suite, washrooms and vestibule;

Values: these details and features have been part of the station building since it was constructed, exhibit a good visual quality and evidence of workmanship, and collectively enhance its heritage character

5.1.2 Objectives

These level 2 resources will not be impaired or under threat when:

- the cultural resources and their associated values are respected.
- management decisions are based on adequate and sound information and are made in accordance with the principles and practice of cultural resource management.
- responses to changing operational needs, maintenance and functional requirements, and physical interventions, are guided by respect for historic values.
- the historic values of these resources are communicated to station users, visitors and the public.

5.2 Messages not Directly Related to National Historic Significance

In addition to the messages described in Section 4.0 above, the communication of other messages is an important part of respecting the full range of heritage values associated with Toronto Union Station:

- The history of rail travel as it affected Toronto, and the stories of its other railway stations, particularly Old Union Station.
- The story of the architects and engineers who designed and built Toronto Union

Station, in particular John M. Lyle (1872-1945), a Toronto exponent of the Beaux-Arts style.

- Toronto Union Station was designated in 1989 under the *Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act*. The station is subject to a heritage easement agreement between the owner, the City of Toronto, and the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

5.2.1 Objectives

Effective communication of the messages not directly related to the national historic significance of Toronto Union Station will be achieved when:

- part of the heritage presentation experience conveys these messages;
- these messages and their presentation do not overwhelm or detract from the presentation and understanding of the site’s national historic significance.
- station users, visitors and non-visitors who receive these messages understand them;
- the effectiveness of the communication and understanding of these messages is monitored.

5.3 Other Heritage Values

5.3.1 Toronto Union Station and the Community

This station has been an important part of Toronto life for 70 years or more, and is probably the most widely-known railway station among travellers from other parts of Canada. Union Station’s website states “it has served as a major transportation hub for Canada, having welcomed countless visitors and immigrants to this land and seen millions of people off on train journeys to every corner of the country. Tearful partings and joyful reunions form an integral part of its history”. It has played a significant role in the maintenance of a vibrant city core. A proper Beaux-Arts monument is intended to have a beneficial impact on the community around it that goes beyond the merely utilitarian, and Union Station appears to have achieved this goal.

5.3.2 Toronto Union Station is Thematically Related to Other National Historic Sites

- **John Street Roundhouse (Toronto)**, built in 1929 west of Union Station as part of a major project to replace CPR yard and engine facilities displaced by the construction of the approach viaduct. Designated in 1990.
- **Union Station - Winnipeg Railway Station (Canadian National)**, a western example of Beaux-Arts style railway architecture. Designated in 1976.

5.3.3 The Family of National Historic Sites

Toronto Union Station is one of more than 800 national historic sites across Canada.

5.3.4 Objectives

These heritage values will be respected when:

- the World Heritage Convention's requirement that heritage should be relevant to the community is fulfilled through a continuing relationship between the people of Toronto and Union Station that transcends the merely utilitarian;
- Toronto Union Station remains a public place;
- the public is aware of the thematic relationship between Toronto Union Station and the John Street Roundhouse, and with Union Station in Winnipeg, and information is made available about these designations.
- Toronto Union Station's membership in the larger family of national historic sites is made known, and information about other national historic sites is provided to the public.

6.0 APPENDICES

6.1 Historic Sites and Monuments Board Minutes, and Text of the Commemorative Plaque

In June 1975, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recommended: *that Windsor Station in Montreal and Toronto Union Station are of national architectural significance and should be commemorated by plaque only.*

In November 1976 the text for the commemorative plaque for Union Station was approved. The plaque was unveiled in 1979. The plaque text reads as follows:

Conceived in 1913-14, this station was built between 1915 and 1920 to designs of Ross and Macdonald, H.G. Jones, and J. M Lyle, abut was not opened until 1927 because of problems arising from the relocation of track. It is the finest example in Canada of stations erected in the classical Beaux-Arts style during an era of expanding national rail networks and vigorous urban growth. Its sweeping facade and imposing Great Hall exhibit characteristics of the Beaux-Arts movement.

6.2 Designated Place

Toronto Union Station

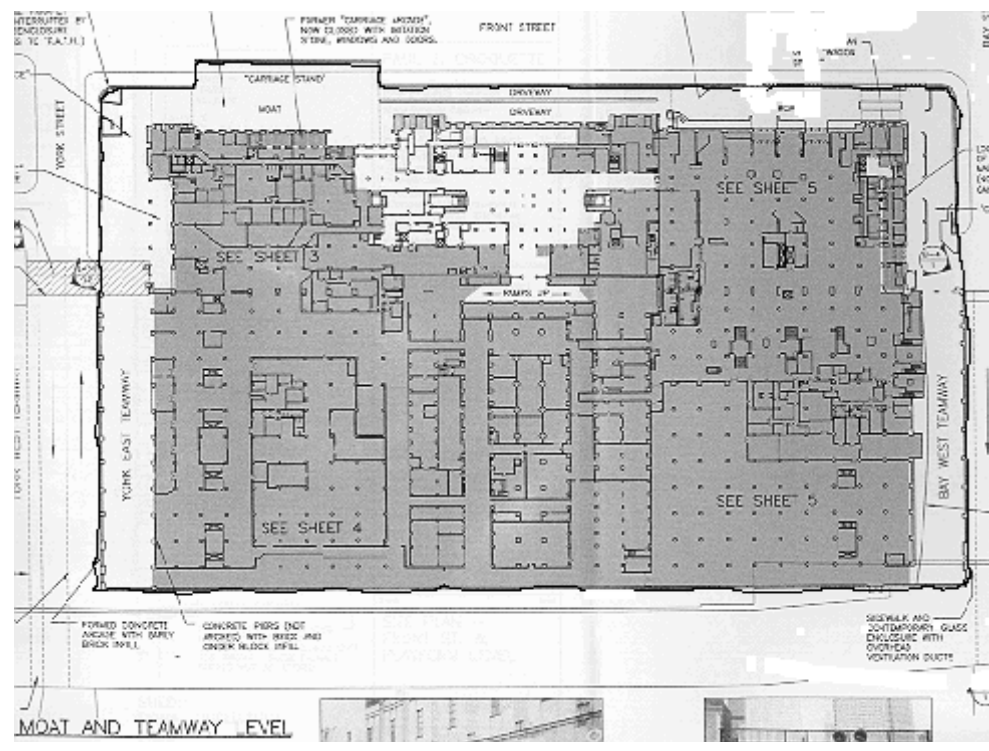


Figure 1 -

dark line denotes designated place (Moat and Teamway Level)

Train Sheds

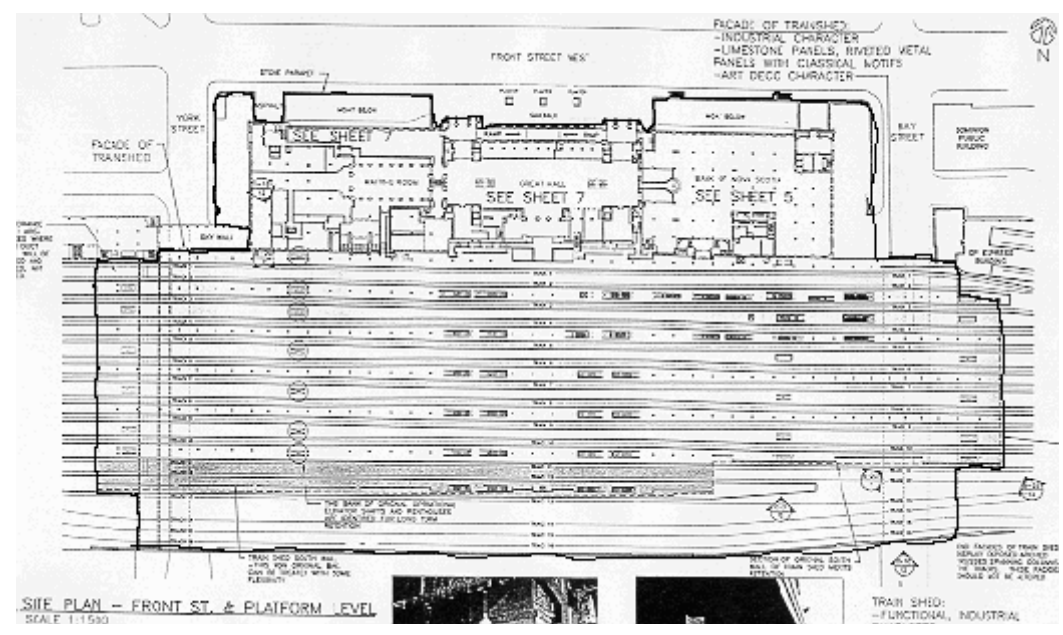


Figure 2 - dark line denotes designated place (Front St. & Platform Level)

Base Map Source: *Toronto Union Station: Review of Heritage Zones*, April 1999, PWGSC, May 1999.

6.3 Commemorative Integrity Workshop Participants

Thirty people participated in the workshop that lead to the writing of this document.

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