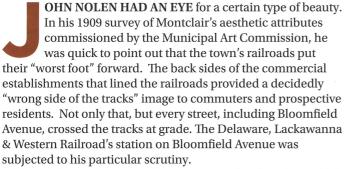
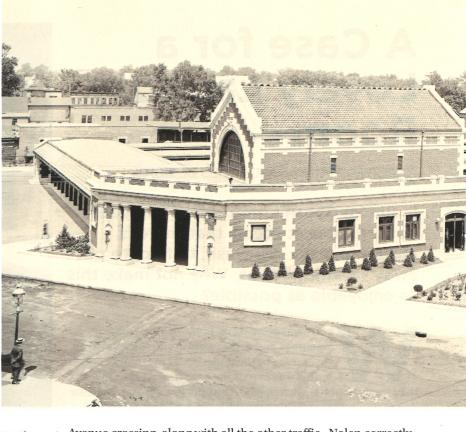
Montclair's Lackawanna Terminal: 'A Certain Type of Beauty'

CONTRIBUTED BY BY MARK SCHMITT, DIRECTOR, JERSEY CENTRAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Montclair was then served by a two-story brick station, which had replaced a primitive wooden original in 1893. By 1910, the station facilities were considered "old, obsolete, and inadequate," to quote the report. Thirty passenger trains stormed into the station daily then turned to head back to Newark and Hoboken. Sixty trains a day rumbled across local streets. Four hundred trolley cars pounded across the railroad's Bloomfield



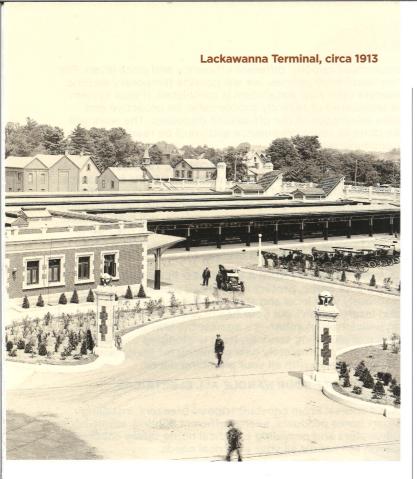
Avenue crossing, along with all the other traffic. Nolen correctly saw this as "ugly and dangerous."

His report's timing was propitious, for the Lackawanna was near the height of its prosperity and in the hands of a progressive president, William H. Truesdale, who was already well into a three-decade program rebuilding his company's infrastructure everywhere from New York to Buffalo. The railroad's financial resources were formidable, and its pride in constructing new stations and facilities was unmatched.

Within four years of Nolen's report, the Lackawanna's property underwent a complete metamorphosis. A new six-track stubend terminal replaced the old single-track station. The engine and freight handling facilities were relocated to Bay Street. Grove Street was elevated above the new terminal and incorporated into the station design by the addition of stairways from the overpass directly onto the train platforms below. The new terminal's design contemplated electrifying the railroad at some future time, which as it turned out, would be another 20 years.







All the bothersome street crossings were eliminated: either elevated, depressed or abandoned.

The new passenger station, designed by Truesdale's in-house architect, William Hull Botsford, was a work of art. The design was of the Grecian Doric order, executed in high-quality tapestry brick and roofed with Brookville green-glazed tiles. The waiting room ceiling was carried on oak beams and several of the auxiliary rooms were paneled in quartered oak. The floors were marble terrazzo and the exterior colonnade was marble-chip concrete. The grounds were tastefully landscaped and planted. With chest-swelling civic pride, Montclair declared a holiday on June 28, 1913, and the Lackawanna Railroad formally presented the town with its new terminal, which had cost a reported \$500,000, a princely sum in those days (the equivalent to \$12.5 million today). A band played and 100 decorated automobiles paraded to the terminal. Botsford could not be there for the celebration: The architect perished on the Titanic the year before, at the age of 26.

The work had been conceived and executed in a first-class manner with a view to longevity. The terminal fulfilled its original purpose for a half-century, until, 1969, when it faced demolition by urban renewal. Preservationists and a recession beat back that threat. In 1973, the complex earned its place on the National Register of Historic Places. By 1981, the trains had moved to a bus shelter near Bay Street, and the terminal was repurposed as a shopping center.

Now a new development plan is steaming ahead. Once again, the historic integrity of this landmark is threatened. Hopefully, the terminal's rejuvenation can be accomplished with style, grace and respect for history. Those who conceived this station understood the need to build wisely and well, not only for their own generation but for those to come. They could not have foreseen what the automobile would mean for the railroad industry. Certainly, their Montclair terminal outlived its usefulness as a railroad facility a half-century ago. Those present at the time saw this clearly enough. However, they also recognized its value as a work of art and architecture, its utility as a re-purposed public space, and as a memorial to civic pride and the leaders like Nolen, Truesdale, Botsford and the thousands of commuters from throughout West Essex who passed through its classical portals daily.

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Upper Montclair NJ (next to Beyond the Bagel)

