

RAILROADS OF WORCESTER

II

Bigger, Fewer, More, and Better the city and its railroads in the last third of the 19th century

By 1870, Worcester's population had reached a little over 41,000, a more than five-fold increase since 1840, the year the Norwich part of the Foster-Norwich station was completed. That growth had been in response to the onset of the industrial age, which in turn had been heavily dependent on the railroads. The railroads had made possible Worcester's first wave of industrial growth and a great more was to follow. The 1870s would see another forty percent increase in population, and by the turn of the century the number would be up by nearly three-fold.

Not surprisingly, the city's principal railroad station was reaching its limits of capacity, despite the fact that it was being relieved to an extent by the other depots at Washington Square, Green Street, and the Junction. The Foster-Norwich station was widely seen as overcrowded and out-of-date. Another claim against it had arisen from the need to transport passengers from one station to another to make rail connections. And there was one other major cause of discontent, clearly the one of greatest concern: the tracks running across the Common and several major streets of the core of the downtown area.

In a review of Worcester's major rail stations written for *Worcester Magazine* in 1910, a retired reporter for the *Worcester Evening Gazette*, J. Brainerd Hall, described the situation during this period:

... one readily recognized the insufficiency and defectiveness of the Foster Street Union Station; that much time was consumed in making connections by transfer across the city; the Foster Street station had become an old-timer; there was no room to modernize, and a growing demand that Front Street should be relieved from a dangerous railroad crossing and the tracks removed from the Common,-- all these were important factors demanding a Union Station in fact, and so located that it should be used by all the railroads.**

* *Worcester Magazine*, January, 1910, "The Story of Our Union Stations," pp. 3-4. Why Hall used the term *union* in "Foster Street Union Station" is unknown. No evidence has been found that it was called a *union* station, even though four different railroads made use of it and it could have been labeled as such.

Another point of concern was the danger, as well as the inconvenience, of having trains running through the busy central section of the downtown area. No data could be found on numbers of railroad accidents, but beginning in 1886 the Health Department provided statistics on causes of death in its annual reports, one of which was railroad accidents. For the twelve years for which

data were available between 1886 and 1900, the number of deaths in the city from railroad accidents averaged about fifteen per year.

To gauge the level of public concern regarding the railroads coming through the center of town, a non-binding referendum was included in the municipal elections of 1870. Voters were asked the following question:

Shall the Board of Mayor and Aldermen take such measures as may be deemed expedient for the removal of the tracks across the Common, Madison and Mechanic streets, and those intermediate; and if they are unable to effect an amicable arrangement with the railroad companies, shall they be instructed to petition the next legislature for permission to accomplish that desirable object?

Today, the wording of the question surely would give rise to complaints about the bias implicit in the wording “that desirable object,” but that matter aside, the question asked voters if they were ready to support a push by elected officials to take the necessary action. Although it was not explicit in the wording, the voters understood, according to Mayor Henry Chapin, that removal of the tracks would be accompanied by the construction of a new station, and that not until its completion would it be possible to remove the tracks.

The result was 2,330 in favor, 480 against, an approval rate of 83 percent. By 1871 the citizenry was clearly ready for the tracks through the center of the city to be taken up, and for the streets and the Common to be properly restored, contingent upon the opening of the new *union* station.

In 1872, the City Solicitor proposed a bill to the General Court calling for the construction of a new union passenger station to be used by all railroads coming into the city, and for the removal of the tracks across the Common, after and dependent upon the opening of the new station. The bill was approved and became law, known as the “Union Station Act,” Chapter 152 of the Acts of 1872.

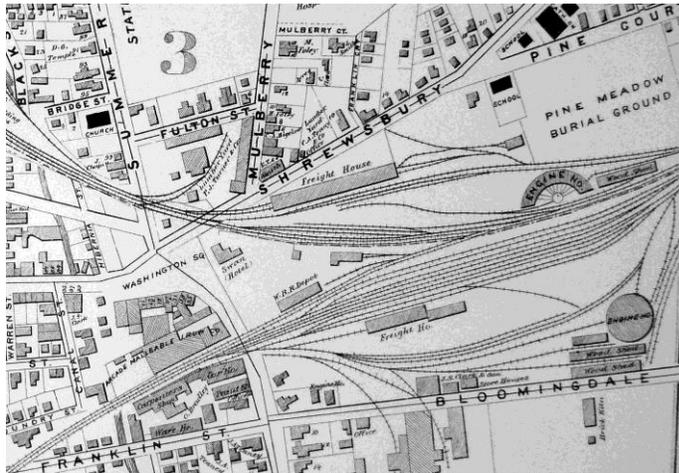
The act assigned to the city and to the railroad companies the responsibilities of each for the costs of the varied actions required, including the construction and maintenance of any necessary bridges and roads, as well as the construction and ownership of the depot and related facilities. The old station at Foster and Norwich had been built by the town of Worcester back in the mid- and late 1830s, but since that time the norm had become for railroads to finance, build, own, and maintain their own stations.

According to Mayor George Verry, in his inaugural address in 1873, the Union Station act...

“left the railroad companies the option of agreeing among themselves upon the location for this depot, or in the case of failure to agree, it provided that a commission, to be appointed by the supreme court, should settle the question.” [City Documents, 1872, p. 40]

Two alternative locations were put forward, each preferred by one or more railroad companies. The one not selected was somewhat farther to the south, probably about where the *Providence & Worcester* yard is today off Southbridge Street. When the railroads failed to come to agreement, the three-member commission appointed by the court held hearings to gather the views of the conflicting parties and then reported its findings, which were approved by the court in 1872.

The decision was that the *Boston & Albany* Railroad would build the new station on its property east of Grafton Street at Washington Square, and that it would lease usage rights to all railroads coming into the city. Most of the land in the target area was already owned by the railroad, the primary exception being the Swan hotel. Also in the way was the old *Western* depot, now serving the through-trains of the *Boston & Albany*.



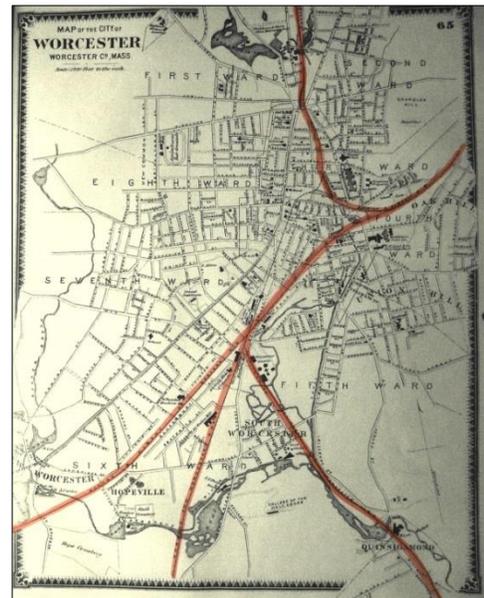
1870 Atlas of Worcester, Plate 18

This 1870 view of the area shows the “Pine Meadow” rail yard, also called the Washington Square yard, already large and well developed, equipped with two freight houses, two round-houses, and a dozen or more sidings. Note the daunting number of tracks crossing Grafton, Shrewsbury, Summer, and Franklin Streets.

The viaduct

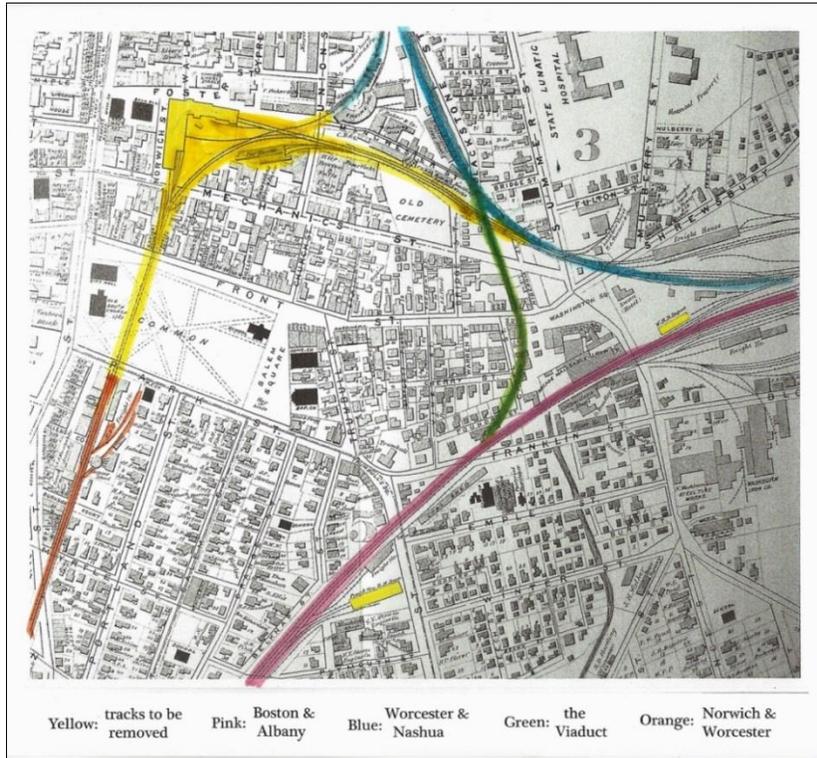
It was recognized from the beginning that with removal of the tracks across the Common there would be no way for north- or south-bound trains to run directly through the city. As can be seen in the accompanying map, there would be no path northward for trains entering from the south or the west, nor would there be a path to the south or the west for trains coming from the north.

Accommodations could be made for passenger trains going through the city by dropping cars at the new station then having them reattached to trains of other railroads leaving the city. But this was not a viable solution for longer freight trains for which the order of the cars had to be carefully managed because of the schedule of drop-offs along their journeys. Most of the freight coming down from the northeastern part of New England, as well as the Canadian provinces, would be headed westerly, whether toward upstate New York along the *Boston & Albany* or toward New York City along the *Norwich & Worcester* or the B&A connection route through Springfield.



Tracks across the common removed
Atlas of 1870 (abridged)

The solution to the problem, adopted in 1872, was to construct what came to be known as the “viaduct.” The purpose of the viaduct was to connect the east-west *Boston & Albany* tracks to those of the *Worcester & Nashua* coming from the north through Lincoln Square. This would establish a new north-south route through the city which would then allow the old route across the center of town and the Common to be removed, once the new station was opened.



from Atlas of 1870, abridged

The passenger station of the *Providence & Worcester*, although shown in yellow, remained in place, but its use thereafter was for freight service only, with passenger service moving to Union Station.

The viaduct was built in 1872-73. It ran from the mainline *Boston & Albany* tracks at about Franklin Street to the *Worcester & Nashua* tracks at Bridge Street, a length of about a thousand feet. It is shown in green in this map, which is abridged from the atlas of 1870. The viaduct ran across Front and Mechanic Streets and above a section of the abandoned Black-stone Canal.

Yellow indicates tracks to be removed, and the Foster-Norwich station. The remaining Norwich & Worcester yard off Park Street is shown in brown.

The new tracks made it possible for trains of railroads from the west or south to run north-bound through Worcester, and similarly, for trains from the north to run through the city to the south or the west. The only turn still not supported was from south to west. Although of relatively minor significance, this issue will be seen again.



Although the name is no longer in use, the viaduct still exists, and its tracks still connect north- and south-bound rail traffic through the city.

Left: A Google maps view of the viaduct from the intersection of Front and Foster Streets in 2016.

Right: Looking easterly on Front Street toward Union Station, which appears in the distance, about the late 1880s or early 90s. Note the steeple-like tower beyond the brick “block,” which was the United States Hotel. The trestle bridge over Front Street is part of the viaduct.

The wagon man stands in a crouch, his horse covered by a blanket. Utility poles carry electric, telephone, and telegraph wires, one with nine crossarms and 64 insulated connectors. The sheer quantity of overhead wires in the city at that time is awesome to consider. Such wires today are buried, and have been for many years. This photo of a photo in a book is somewhat faded, which may account for the sky looking gray and slightly dismal, but that might not be the only reason. Note the awnings on the sunnier north side of the street.



Kingsley and Knab, p. 6
early 1890s



Source: Kingsley & Knab, p. 6. Washington Square, looking westerly down Front Street. Note the trestle bridge over the street, equivalent to the second stories of nearby buildings. This was part of the viaduct. Note also the footpath marked in the street for pedestrians. Other photos of the station also show them.

The new Union Station

Decisions having been made as to where and by which railroad company the station would be built, events began happening quickly. The *Boston & Albany* hired architects for the design: Ware & Van Brunt, of Boston, a young partnership already well-established for their work in the Boston area, including a number of churches, the Cambridge Public Library, and Memorial Hall at Harvard University. Henry Van Brunt would later become nationally recognized, known for his use of the Romanesque Revival style, and he would design several large stations for the *Union Pacific* and other railroads in the west, including depots in Denver, Salt Lake City, and Portland. Worcester's Union Station was his first railroad station – or at least his first of significant size – and it probably initiated that line of specialty design work for him. Later, Van Brunt would be among the architects designing the “White City” Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893, under the leadership of Daniel H. Burnham.

The station was completed and opened for service August 4, 1875.



From the E. B. Luce collection, Worcester Historical Museum.

The architectural style was Romanesque Revival, a very popular style at the time, especially and mainly for large public buildings. Numerous other examples of the style can be found in Worcester, dating from the 1870s into the 1890s. Examples include the Armory, the Central Administration building of Worcester Public Schools on Irving Street, and the United Congregational church. Among the principal Romanesque features of the building were its semi-circular Roman arches, and the clock tower, with its high-peaked roof and corner turrets.

The depot, as the building was often called, consisted of three components: the passenger services building, the clock tower, and two train sheds -- twins but not identical twins. The south-side shed accommodated trains traveling in either direction. The massive arch of the west end portal seen here was repeated at the east end. A second arch at the east end enabled trains from the east to enter the shed and turn northward through either of two single-track portals on the north side of the building. Those tracks then ran across Shrewsbury and Summer Streets and joined the north-bound tracks of the *Worcester & Nashua* along Union and Blackstone Streets, then ran through the Lincoln Square depot on their way out of the city heading northward. (*The north side of the station can be seen in the photo on the next page.*)



The ticketing area, seen in this 1958 photo, when it was facing demolition, featured the heavy, ornate woodwork that was typical of the era. Note the arched window above the front entry, which can also be seen in the external view on the previous page.

Courtesy of Worcester Historical Museum

Inside the granite passenger services building were the ticketing bays along the central hall; ladies' and gentlemen's waiting rooms and a restaurant filled the curved-wall areas on either side of the ticketing area. In keeping with the norms of the day, the gentlemen's waiting room was on one side, with ample ashtrays and spittoons, and the ladies' waiting room was on the other, along with the dining area.

Right: Upper portion of the clock tower

The tower, according to Hall, rose to a capstone 159½ feet above the ground, with clock-faces on all four sides. The wooden tower above the clocks added another 40 feet in height, and the rod and vane another 13 feet, for a total tower height of 212½ feet.



Detail of photograph from the collections of the Worcester Historical Society, Worcester, Massachusetts

A third of a century later, in 1910, a retired newspaper writer for the *Evening Gazette*, J. Brainerd Hall, cited earlier and now writing for *Worcester Magazine*, gave a detailed account of the physical attributes of the station as it had been when it was new. [January, 1910] His description of the new building was based on notes he had made and saved at its 1875 opening, when, as a young reporter, he had been assigned to monitor the building's construction.



From the collections of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester Massachusetts

From Mr. Hall:

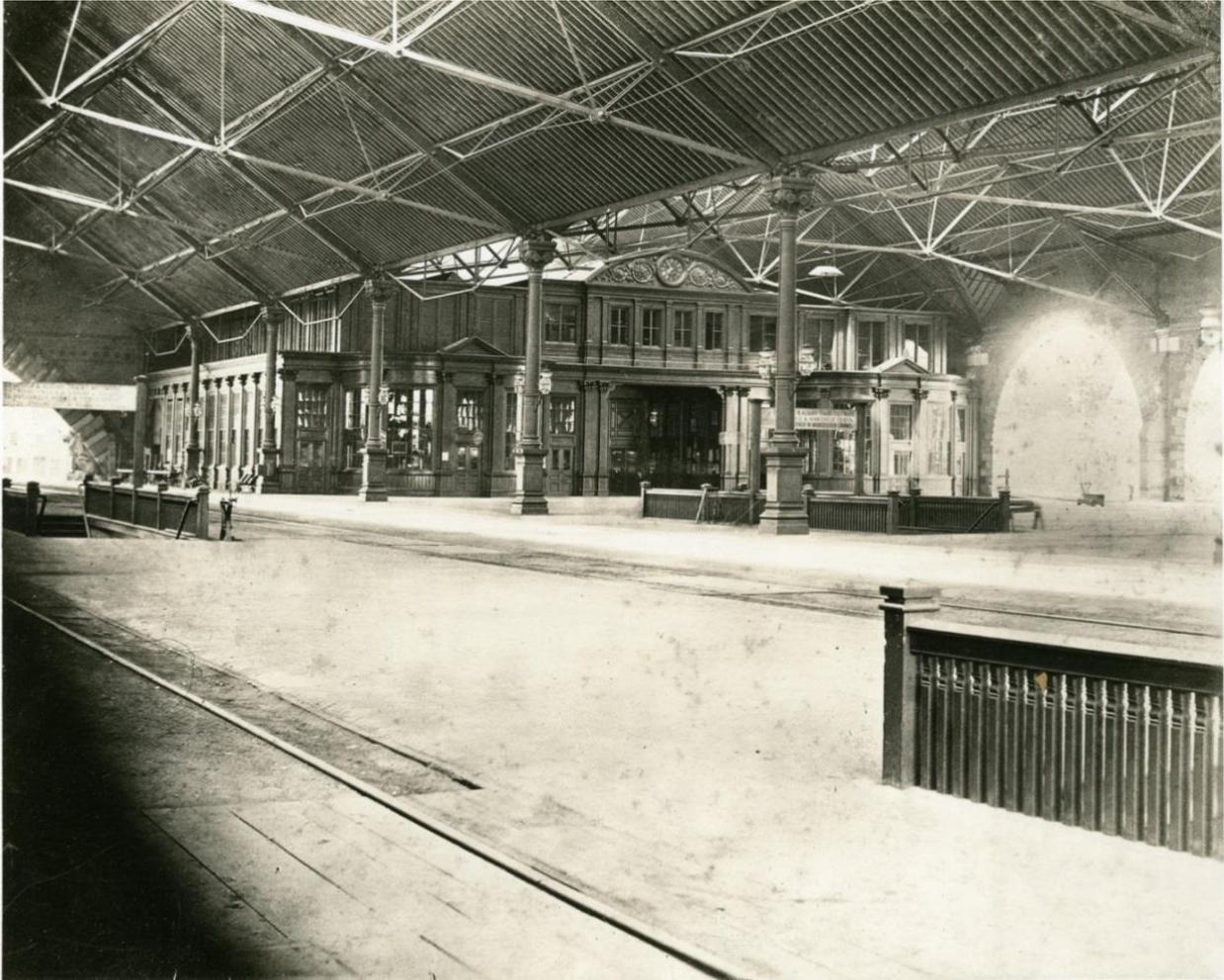
The twin-shed structure consisted of stone walls 33 feet in height on the sides and 89 feet at the peak over the entry arches. The roof was supported by an iron trestle structure, and the combined sheds came to 250 feet wide by 450 feet long.

The walls and the arches were made of rough-faced granite, which helped give the building a strong, rugged appearance, typical of the Romanesque Revival style. In this 1890s shot it is apparent that soot has overtaken the stone work of the west portal.

Soon after the opening, an architectural critic writing for the Boston *Daily Advertiser* surveyed three new stations in the region, including those in Providence and in Lowell, and was somewhat critical of Worcester's Union Station. The *Gazette* of September 8 said the critic felt that the lack of abutments to the portal arches made the structure appear to "lack solidity," that the exterior was a jumble of styles, and the clock tower was too large, dwarfing the rest of the structure. As to the critic's point about the arches, they may have appeared to be a threat to collapse, and might have made some people nervous, but they apparently were properly designed and no collapse ever occurred. The arches were semi-circular but because less than half of the circle was above ground they appeared to be too wide relative to their height. No doubt they were firmly anchored to bedrock, and their success says a lot about the natural strength of the arch.

The *Gazette* mounted a mild defense: "As regards architectural effect, some of the writer's points may be well taken from a professional stand-point. The average traveller, however, does not stop at details, but takes in general effect and is satisfied." Mr. Doe of the *Gazette* then added that the new station "has been very generally admired. Nor have we heard any complaint that its arrangements were inconvenient."

Below: On exiting the train, a passenger arriving at the new station would have seen this view, although likely with other passengers and various other people, including workmen carting baggage and the like.



From the collections of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester Massachusetts

Compared with the front of the building facing Washington Square, the internal face was distinctly more classical in styling, featuring columns, entablatures, arches, and doorway pediments. The wide-arch decorated pediment at the top, with a traditional railway station clock at the center, corresponded with the arches of the shed portals.

Note also the trestles holding up the roof; the two single-track portals on the north side; and the two stairwells leading to a “subway” under the tracks. The subway provided passengers access to Track 2 when it was blocked at ground level by a train or an imminent arrival on Track 1.

Smoke inside the sheds would rise to the clerestory at the peak where it could escape through vents. Some limits on locomotives running within the shed area were almost surely required to prevent excessive smoke.

Below: A closer look at the exterior of the shed, consisting of a portion, or *detail*, of the photo on page 6, provides a clearer view of the arches, the two griffins, the arched portals at the other end of the sheds, and a passenger coach of the *Boston & Albany*. At the far end are a locomotive and several passenger cars. There are also a few people in the shed, plus a stack of timbers.



From the Collections of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts
Detail, consisting of approx. one quarter of original photograph by E. B. Luce

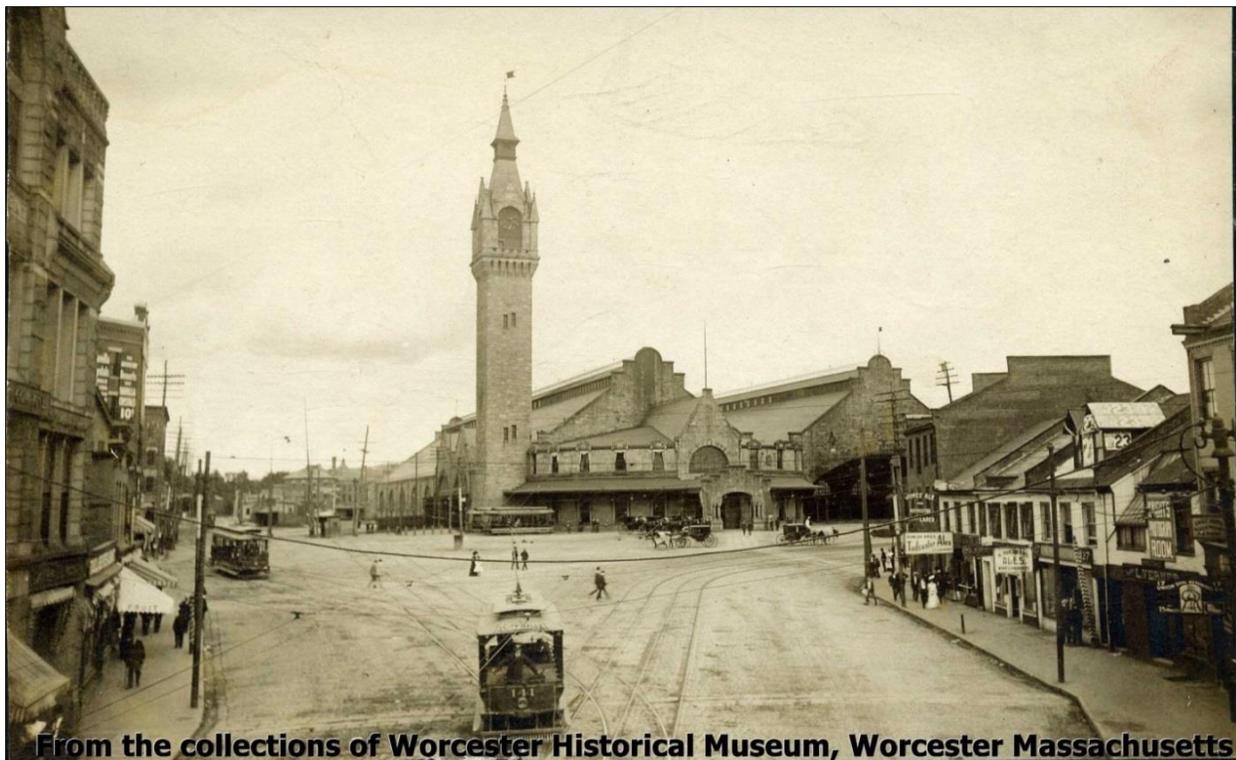
On the basis of a newspaper search, it appears that when the new Union Passenger Station opened in August, 1875 it met with a resounding lack of enthusiasm. Searches of *The Spy* and the *Evening Gazette* during that period failed to uncover any significant writing about the opening. The only article found on the new station in the *Gazette* was the September 8 account mentioned earlier regarding the architectural critique in the Boston press. It was not until September 14 that railroad schedules, published as newspaper classifieds, showed *Boston & Albany* arrivals and departures at Union Station, no longer at the Washington Square or Foster Street stations.

Delay in removal of the tracks through the center

Part of the reason for the apparent lack of enthusiasm for the opening may have been the fact that so many of the passenger trains coming into and departing from Worcester were not yet using the new station – on the order of four out of ten – and that three other stations were still operating in the downtown area. The *Boston & Albany*, owners of the station, immediately began using it fully, as did the *Boston, Barre & Gardner*, but the other three railroads did not. Some reasons for their not using it were stated in the press but are not important here. Probably the single greatest

reason was that the tracks through the center of town and the Foster-Norwich, Green Street, and Junction stations were still in place meant that they could use them so they did, rather than to undergo the conversion, and possibly the rental fees to the *Boston & Albany* for use of Union Station.

One might have thought it would be a simple matter of opening the new station and closing the old, then removing the tracks where they were no longer needed. But things did not work out quite like that. In fact, it was not until two years and four months after the 1875 opening of the new station that the tracks across the center of town were taken up, the Foster-Norwich station was closed, and full conversion to the new Union Station for passenger service in Worcester was accomplished. It was not until the latter part of November, 1877, that the word was finally given for workmen to take up the tracks. The obvious question is why?



The clock tower appears at its most spectacular in this 1895 view from the viaduct over Front Street. Also shown at Washington Square are commercial buildings of a distinctly “off-Main” appearance, also three streetcars and tracks, their catenary wire system barely visible, and a few pedestrians and horse-drawn carriages. Curving to the left is Shrewsbury Street, to the right Grafton Street.

The Romanesque Revival style of the station, especially as seen from the outside, was popular at the time in large public buildings, and it remained so into the early 1890s when styles changed course and went quickly in another direction. By the mid-1890s this architecture was clearly “yesterday’s style.”

As to why the tracks through the center of town remained in place so long after the new station had been completed, the answer was rooted in a stalled process regarding the construction of a new city street -- actually an extension of a short existing street -- which had been mandated in the Union Station Act of 1872. The key to the continued existence of the rails was the insistence of the railroad companies that they be allowed to maintain a functional north-south route through the city at all times. The viaduct had already been built, and it had proven to be a distinct improvement over the old route through the center, yet the railroads said they still needed to maintain the tracks across the Common for a period of time. The reasoning for their position was made clear in an interesting exchange of letters in the Spring of 1877 between the city's Commissioner of Public Grounds, Edward Winslow Lincoln, and the president of the *Worcester & Nashua* Railroad, Francis H. Kinnicutt.

The continued presence of the tracks across the Common, now approaching two years since the opening, had been a source of great irritation to Commissioner Lincoln, whose goal was to transform the Common into a public garden, a place for the smoky inner part of the city, and its citizenry, to "breathe," as he liked to put it. His vision was what today would be called a passive recreational park, good for walks in a park-like atmosphere, as well as sitting on park benches. The fact that the smoky trains were still running across the Common two years after the completion of Union Station must have been hard for him to bear.

Lincoln addressed a letter to the presidents of the N&W and the W&N railroads, dated April 30, 1877, in which he referred to an act of the legislature requiring that the tracks across the Common be removed upon completion of the new station. He then stated the following:

I have to request that you will cause your track (materials, etc.) to be removed as soon as possible, that the COMMISSION OF PUBLIC GROUNDS may be enabled to construct "necessary paths and avenues" across and along said "location."

Within a few days he received a response from Mr. Kinnicutt of the *Worcester & Nashua*, who, like Lincoln, was a pillar of the city's social and business elite.

We are willing and desirous of doing so, and should have removed the tracks before now, were it not for the probability that the Foster Street Extension, when made, will make it necessary for us to pass over the Common with our freight trains, while the Bridge over Mechanic Street is being placed in position. If the Mayor and Aldermen will request us to remove our tracks from the Common, knowing the reason why we have not done so, we will remove them at once.

You will confer a favor by showing this letter to the Mayor and Aldermen, that they may understand our views in regard to the matter.

F. H. Kinnicutt, President (Worcester & Nashua Railroad)
(received by E. W. L. May 5, 1877)

Kinnicutt knew that the Mayor and the Aldermen understood the railroads' position on the matter. It is unknown whether Lincoln was actually surprised when the city supported the claim of the railroads, allowing the retention of the tracks through town until the bridge was completed, but he was livid, and he didn't forget to mention it in his next annual report.

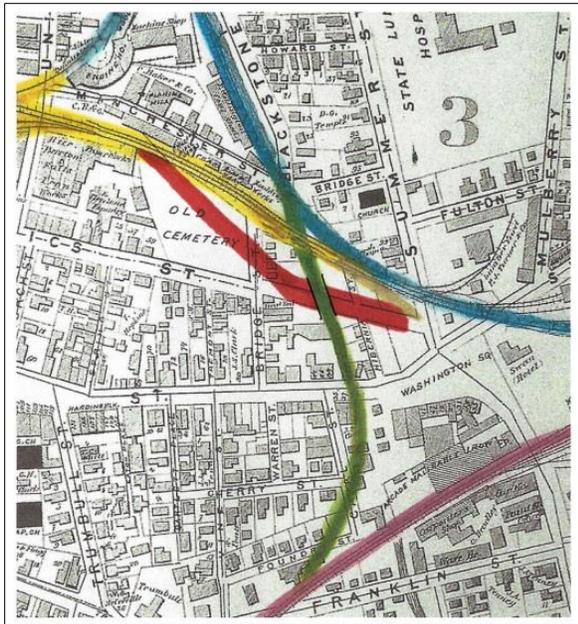
The Foster Street Extension controversy

The principal element in the story was what Kinnicutt called the “Foster Street Extension.” The original plan for the Union Station project, approved by the legislature in 1872, had specified that Foster Street, which had been only a short stub roadway near the old station, would be extended along the old and no longer used *Boston & Albany* railbed to the intersection with Summer Street at the new station, crossing the viaduct at grade along the way. The new Foster Street was intended to become a primary downtown street, wider than most at sixty feet, its principal function being to link the central part of Main Street efficiently to Union Station. At this time, the buildings of the area that would straddle any extension of Foster Street were of an industrial nature, including lumber milling, firearms, railroad services, a foundry, and other manufacturing facilities.

While the station was being constructed, support for the Foster Street Extension declined, and it was said never to have been very great anyway. One factor was the fear among Front Street merchants that Foster Street would become the favored route between the station and the central business district. The concern was that rail travelers seeking hotel, restaurant and other accommodations would be channeled to Main Street, thus bypassing Front Street. However, the decision had been made in 1872 to build an extension of Foster Street; not to do it was not an option.

Dissatisfaction with the plan among merchants and political figures arose in such force as to delay the project for several years. By early 1877, five years after the legislation and nearly two years after the completion of Union Station, sentiment for changing the route had gained the upper hand, and a petition to the legislature to establish an alternate route was successful. [Chapter 152, Acts of 1877].

The new plan curved the street southward, away from the railbed, then downhill into a merger with Mechanic Street at Bridge Street, at which point it would run under the viaduct by means of a railroad bridge long enough to handle a street spanning sixty feet that would have to be constructed. It was because of the length of time needed to install such a bridge, which would require closing the viaduct for a period of time, that the railroads had been concerned to maintain the alternate north-south route through the center and across the Common. The railroads didn't know whether or where a bridge was to be built, or when the viaduct would have to be closed to do it.



On this map, extracted from that on page 4, the yellow line crossing the green is the Foster Street Extension in the original design. The red line is the alternative, which became the accepted route. It ran through the cemetery and merged with Mechanic Street before passing under a new bridge beneath the tracks of the viaduct.

From a present-day perspective, there doesn't seem to be much difference between the two routes, but it clearly mattered to some in the civic arena at the time. In due course, the most important difference would turn out to be that the original route crossed the viaduct tracks at grade level (yellow-X-green), while the alternate route separated street traffic from the tracks by means of a bridge under the viaduct. However, press accounts that were found (in a limited search) said very little about that potential future issue.

The alternative route, now established in law, proved to be controversial as well, and a movement arose to go back to the legislature either to stop the idea altogether or at least to return to the original plan. Complaints about the Mechanic Street route included the need to take part of the Mechanics Street burial ground, and the steepness of the slope that was required for the street to pass under the new bridge with adequate clearance (specified as 13 feet). The slope of a street was more important to people in that era of horse-drawn wagons than it is today.

Frustration grew in all quarters concerned. Throughout the Summer and into the Fall, the city took no action, and it was said to be because the plan was so controversial and unpopular. Persons with financial interests in properties to be affected by the extension of the street were eager for action, and sensed that the city was not disposed to take any action at all – in effect, to stall until the problem went away. In November, 1877, a group of signers including Stephen Salisbury II, petitioned the office of the Attorney General seeking a *writ of mandamus* from the Court. The resultant *writ* was served on Mayor Pratt on November 8, with a response due from the City by mid-December. The text of the *writ* summarized what was supposed to have been done by the city, then gave the reason for its issuance.

“... yet the said Mayor and Aldermen, though requested, have unreasonably and unnecessarily neglected and refused and still continue to neglect and refuse to construct said extension of Foster Street, and said extension now remains wholly unconstructed and unfit for public travel.” [Evening Gazette, Nov-09-1877]

Removal of the tracks

The city's response to the *writ* came a few weeks later, but in the meantime it acted forcefully on another related front. Four days after receipt of the *writ*, on November 12, the City Council passed an order directing the Commissioner of Streets to begin removing all railroad tracks from the

Common and from the three streets that they crossed -- Park, Front, and Mechanic. Whether this action was in retaliation for the *writ*, or was in any way related to it, remains unclear, as nothing found in the press has established any such connection.

Naturally, the Public Grounds Commissioner was elated. In his annual report for 1877 (dated January, 1878), Mr. Lincoln proclaimed in his eloquent and eccentric style: "*The Railway-tracks are at last removed from the Common, where they shall be known no more forever.*"

That the removal of the tracks had taken so long -- two years and four months after the opening of Union Station -- had frustrated Lincoln, but finally, the lifting of the tracks meant he could now begin taking steps toward his goal of a makeover of the Common into a passive urban park -- a kind of oasis of fresh air in the smoky city. He envisioned a place of walking paths through trees and shrubs, with suitable monuments, including the big Civil War Monument in the northeast corner where the Front Street School had sat before it found itself in his crosshairs in 1871.

The response of the Mayor and the Aldermen to the *writ of mandamus* combined a bit of bluster with a deft move to delay action. Released several weeks earlier than required, its content was outlined in the *Gazette* of November 27, consisting of three statements (paraphrasing): (1) that the Legislative decree was unconstitutional; (2) that the city did not, as alleged, unreasonably hold up construction; and (3) it can't be built until next Spring anyway because of the Winter. Number (3) seems to have worked.

The following March, commercial interests wanting to go back to the original straight line over the unused B&A tracks petitioned the legislature to revert to the original plan. The request was heard and arguments were made for both sides, and the measure was promptly rejected. [*Gazette*, March 22, 1878]. After still another effort in May, appearing to some to be just another delaying tactic, the faction wanting the job to be done as planned sought another *writ of mandamus*, which was served on the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen in May. This time the result was that the city got down to work on the extension.

One of the first tasks was the long and tedious removal of the remains of a significant portion of the plots in the Mechanic Street burial ground, and eventually all of them. By Summer, work was underway on laying out the street running downhill to the intersection of Mechanic Street. The burial ground was presenting the major challenge. As of mid-June, the remains of over 700 burials had been removed, and the number was expected to reach 1000. [*Gazette*, Jun-18-1878]

The decision meant the viaduct would have to be closed for a period of time while the new truss bridge was being set in place. Efforts to discover exactly when it happened, and for how long, and what the railroads did while it was closed, proved unsuccessful. Since the tracks across the Common had been lifted months earlier, the railroads must have had to suffer some down-time on north-south runs through the city. Most likely, however, they knew the best available techniques for setting in a new truss bridge as quickly as possible -- probably in a day or two, presuming that sections were made in advance to be assembled at the site.

The street extension project ran into 1879, seven years after the original plan was approved by the legislature and about four years since the completion of Union Station.

Foster Street crossing under the viaduct, 1890s:



Looking down Foster Street at the merge with Mechanic Street, with the viaduct bridge extending 60-feet across the road.

This broad corridor running under the rails, linking downtown with Union Station, only a block away from the Front Street path, was the object of the controversy and the source of years of delay in completing the street portion of the 1872 plan.

Source: Kingsley & Knab, p. 12

Redevelopment opportunities

The long-awaited removal of the tracks across the center of town, and the razing of the Foster-Norwich station, which had stood and served its purposes for 42 years, gave the city unique opportunities for improvements in the downtown area. After the tracks were lifted significant actions followed in three principal places:

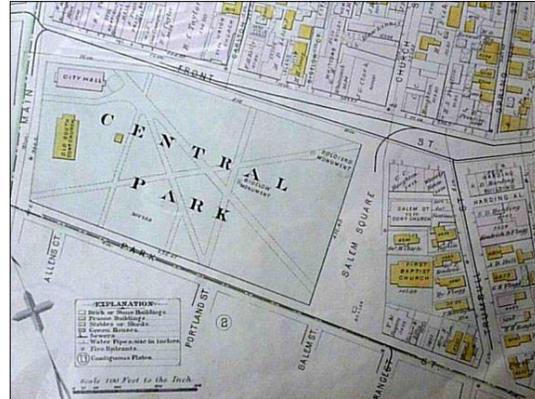
One, the space between buildings on Front Street that had formerly been occupied by the tracks was sold by the *Norwich & Worcester* (Division of the *New York & New England* Railroad) to Ransom C. Taylor, the city's biggest commercial real estate development operator, who soon put up a six-story office and commercial building (40 Front Street).

Two, after the Foster-Norwich depot was demolished and all railroad facilities were cleared, the land was sold to a somewhat eccentric but very clever and business-savvy man named Horace Bigelow, who turned it into an amusement park known as "Bigelow's Garden," centered around its major attraction, a roller skating rink.* Bigelow acquired the *Worcester & Shrewsbury* narrow gauge railway, which ran from Washington Square to Lake Quinsigamond, and he charged a low fare to carry ordinary folks of limited means to the lake where he was operating an amusement park, with boating, for their benefit.

* See Albert B. Southwick, *Once-Told Tales of Worcester County* (1985), Chp. 21.

Three, the city's own immediate response to the lifting of the rails was to re-fashion the Common into an urban park, as had been the goal of Commissioner Lincoln throughout the decade.

The Atlas of 1886 called it "Central Park." Postcards and other photos of the Common suggest that Lincoln largely succeeded in creating a park of tree-lined walkpaths and monuments.



Atlas of 1886, plate 3

The abandoned railbed across the Common became a pedestrian mall, part of "Central Park."

Two women walking the mall across the Common about 1894, located on what had formerly been the railbed of the *Norwich & Worcester*. (This could be called the city's only and probably the state's first "rail trail.")

Source: Kingsley and Knab, p. 9



Another location for possible redevelopment was Park Street, where the *Norwich & Worcester* had maintained a freight yard and service depot since about 1840. Exactly when the yard was discontinued for railroad purposes is unclear. The 1886 Atlas showed the tracks still in place, but city directory ads by the *Norwich & Worcester* (or the NY&NE) by the early 1880s no longer claimed the Park Street address for their freight operations. The Atlas of 1896 showed no tracks remaining in the area.

Park Street in the 1880s was many years behind Main and Front Streets in terms of the extent of urban development, and was less a part of the definition of "downtown" that would ordinarily attract people to the area. It was marked by empty spaces, small wooden buildings, and the remains of the freight yard, as well as its dominant building, the Notre Dame French-Canadian church.

By the 1890s, this railroad-owned land off Park Street, adjacent to City Hall, looked increasingly like prime real estate for commercial development, despite the presence of the original Notre Dame Catholic church in the middle of the block. But as can be seen in the photograph below, of the old railroad yard taken from Burnside Court in the early 1900s, it didn't look much like prime real estate.



Photo taken from Burnside Court.

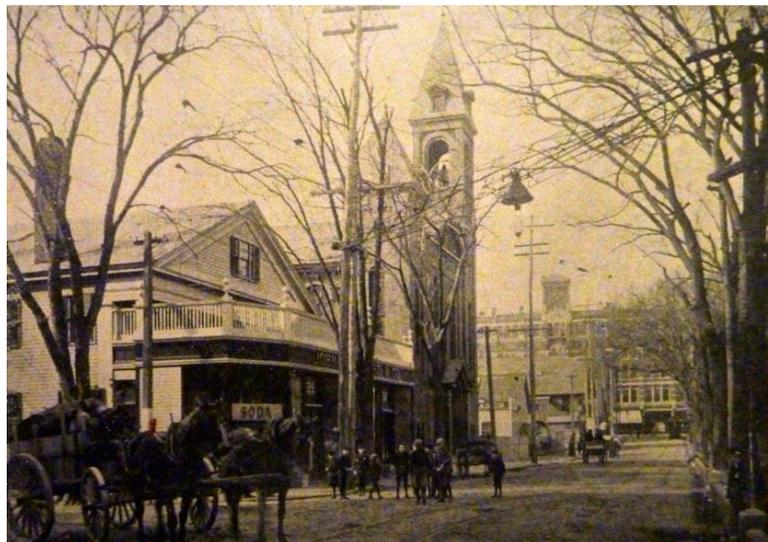
The building with the nearest steeple is the original Notre Dame church, seen from the rear. On the horizon, from left: the Chase building on Front St; the office building at 61 Park Street with a mansard roof (now gone); and the steeples of the Congregational and Baptist churches on Salem Square.

Signs on the fence to the newsboy's right prohibit trespassing, and are signed by the "NY,NH&H RR Co." This sets the date of the photograph after 1895.

In the left center area can be seen what remains of the freight building which lined the *Norwich & Worcester* tracks. Note the bay doors with bottoms at the same height as boxcar floors. The *Worcester Telegram* would build at this site in 1910.

Park Street about 1894. Beyond the church is the area of the former rail yard.

The small rail-side commercial and industrial operations beyond the church had long since lost access to railroad service. The area seemed to be awaiting its next use when some kind of down-town development, or redevelopment, activity got in motion along Park Street. That would happen, beginning about 1910.



Source: Kingsley and Knab, p. 6

As for Foster Street, the focal point of the long controversy and consequent delay in the conversion from the old to the new, any fears of its upstaging Front Street proved unwarranted. As can be inferred from the photograph on the next page, the not-so-elegant pathway from Union Station to Main along Foster Street may have encouraged rail passengers arriving in Worcester to follow Front Street instead.

Foster Street at the turn toward Mechanic Street, 1890s:

Foster Street appears to have been a fully functional industrial and commercial street, which provided a smooth and easy path to Union Station for service vehicles, but it was hardly an attraction for the railroad visitor in search of a hotel and a suitable place to dine.



Source: Kingsley & Knab, p. 14

Railroad Consolidation

The central theme of American railroad history during the last third of the 19th century was that of the consolidation of many railroad companies into a small number of much larger entities. During this period, in New England as in most parts of the United States, many independent railroads were subsumed into a system of larger railroad conglomerates, sometimes willingly, sometimes not. Involved were some of the major players of Wall Street finance, the so-called “robber barons,” including J. P. Morgan and Cornelius Vanderbilt. This primer on the railroads of Worcester is by no means a thorough or otherwise serious study of railroad consolidation, or the politics or the economics thereof. The intention here is *only to consider how the larger forces of consolidation played out in regard to the railroads which served Worcester*. Most importantly, the purpose is to consider how these changes affected the city and altered its place in the evolving transportation network of New England.

At the outset of the era Worcester had five railroads:

- o east - west - the *Boston & Albany*; *
- o north - the *Worcester & Nashua* and the *Boston, Barre & Gardner*;
- o south - the *Norwich & Worcester* and the *Providence & Worcester*.

* The *Boston & Albany* merger of 1867 was not so much a part of the consolidation movement as it was a result, many years delayed, of the original intent of the railroad interests who in the 1830s financed first the *Boston & Worcester* and then the *Western Railroad*, to link Boston to Albany.

In 1869, shortly before the decision to build a new station, the *Norwich & Worcester* was leased to another railroad firm, thus bringing to an end its status as an independently managed railroad.

The leaseholder, the *Boston, Hartford & Erie* Railroad, had as its goal, which it had initiated two decades earlier, to connect southern New England to upstate New York by rail links from Boston through (or near) Providence, Hartford, Waterbury, and Danbury, and from there to some point along the Hudson River, to be crossed by ferry or bridge. In today's terms, it was essentially the route of Interstate 84.

Shortly after the lease agreement, the *Boston, Hartford & Erie* fell upon hard times, and it went into bankruptcy in 1870, to emerge from reorganization as the *New York & New England* Railroad in 1873. It was not until the late 1880s that the connection was finally made to the far side of the Hudson. In January, 1889, a new railroad bridge, measuring over a mile long, at 6,768 feet, was opened at Poughkeepsie.* The NY&NE was waiting with tracks it had run out from Danbury to meet it. On the other side of the Hudson it would tie in with the *Erie* Railroad, to establish a direct and more efficient route between southern New England and the rich coal fields of northeastern Pennsylvania.

* The bridge served its railroad purposes until 1974, after which it stood without being used until 2009 when it was reborn as the "Walkway Over the Hudson," a pedestrian and bicycle trail of about a mile over the bridge, with extended paths at both ends.

The *Norwich & Worcester* lease was beneficial to the NY&NE by the link it provided to Worcester and points beyond, by its successful and profitable "boat train" and rail access to New London, and by the connection it provided between Plainfield and Thompson, Connecticut, which gave the NY&NE a direct line to Boston. Thus, with its new name, twice-changed, the old N&W continued to serve not only as an important railway to and from Worcester but also as an important component of a larger rail system. Locally it would continue to be called the *Norwich & Worcester*, but schedules printed in newspapers would properly call it the *New York & New England Railroad*, with *Norwich & Worcester Division* in smaller type.

To the north of Worcester, developments were taking place that would greatly affect the city's place in the overall scheme of the growing regional railroad system. In 1874, the *Worcester & Nashua* extended its reach from Nashua to Rochester, NH, a run of 44 miles, by leasing the newly-constructed *Nashua & Rochester* Railroad, which it had financed as a separate entity. Rochester was already connected to Portland by a *Boston & Maine* subsidiary, so this new link meant that passengers could now travel from Worcester to Portland without changing cars, a six-hour trip of 146 miles. Of greater significance to the railroads, if not as much to the people of Worcester, was that this connection opened a direct all-rail route from New York and Connecticut, as well as points along the way, such as and including Worcester, to "vacation land" Maine. From Portland, various railroads of Maine and Canada, including the famous Canadian *Grand Trunk* Railroad, would carry passengers to points along the Maine coast, both sides of Penobscot Bay, and to mountain and lake sites throughout the state.

An article in the *New York Times* in November virtually raved about the newly-opened line to Maine. If written today it likely would be found in the travel section of the Sunday supplement.

Passengers leaving New-York by the 10 o'clock A.M. train will arrive in Portland the same evening in the quick time of twelve hours and forty-five minutes, changing cars only once, at

Worcester, instead of at Boston, and that change being accomplished in the same depot instead of the passenger being obliged to cross town on foot or by vehicle, as in the latter city....

The managers of the Worcester and Nashua and Portland and Rochester Railroads are to be congratulated, and deserve the hearty commendation of the cities of Portland, Nashua, Worcester, and New York for the successful completion of an enterprise so surely calculated to promote and continue the business prosperity and wealth of those communities. (Nov-22-1874)

The New York to Worcester part of the trip could be done by either of two routes: New York to New Haven, Hartford, and Springfield, then to Worcester via the *Boston & Albany*; or New York to New London, then the *Norwich & Worcester (Division)* to Worcester.

In its mention of changing trains in Worcester, the *Times* article called attention to a practice in effect at that time which would soon be changed to a “through car” mode of operation, in which passengers at each end of the run would be seated in cars that would carry them all the way to their destinations. In Worcester such cars would be detached from their incoming carriers (e.g, the *Worcester & Nashua* heading south) and attached to another (usually the *Boston & Albany*).

In 1883 the *Worcester & Nashua* took complete control of the *Nashua & Rochester* and renamed itself the *Worcester, Nashua & Rochester* Railroad. Three years later, in 1886, it was acquired by the *Boston & Maine*, which combined it with the former *Portland & Rochester* to form a division of the B&M with service between Worcester and Portland. In the early years of the 20th century, the Worcester to Portland line was the route of the B&M’s famed *Bar Harbor Express* and the *State of Maine*, trains marking the high-point of the line’s history.

In 1885 the *Boston, Barre & Gardner* was acquired by the *Fitchburg* Railroad. This action made the 26-mile route to Gardner a branch of the *Fitchburg*, a way for it to reach into Worcester, primarily for freight heading west or coming from the west. The *Fitchburg* was the principal east-west carrier across the northern tier of the state (essentially the counterpart of today’s Route 2). It terminated in Troy, north of Albany, where it fed into the *New York Central* system. It was often called the “Hoosac Tunnel route,” for the 4.75-mile double-track tunnel through the Hoosac Mountain east of North Adams. The tunnel was completed in 1875 after decades of costly effort, in terms of both funding and human lives lost. The Hoosac Tunnel route of the *Fitchburg* turned out to be a lot more about freight than passenger service, and the railroad was able to offer stiff competition to the *Boston & Albany* in that respect. The BB&G Division of the *Fitchburg* also continued to connect Worcester passengers with towns north of Gardner, including those of the Mount Monadnock region.

Thus, by 1886 three of Worcester’s five principal railroads had become “absentee-owned,” or at least absentee-controlled: the *Norwich & Worcester* by the *New York & New England*; the *Boston, Barre & Gardner* by the *Fitchburg*; and the *Worcester & Nashua* by the *Boston & Maine*.

Three years later the fourth of Worcester’s original railroads would undergo a similar transition. In 1889, the *Providence and Worcester* was leased to the *New York, Providence & Boston* Railroad, a short line with a big name and great importance. Popularly known as the “Stonington Road,” its original purpose had been to link Providence to the steamboat port of Stonington, Connecticut. Thus, it was essentially a “boat train” route in the same manner as the *Norwich & Worcester*. That

same year, 1889, the NYP&B opened the 1400-foot Thames River bridge, the effect of which was to establish the first all-rail line from New York to Boston, running along the coast and up through Providence. This coastal line soon and predictably became the dominant route between the major cities. By 1892 the four railroads had been consolidated into the *New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad*, commonly known as the *New Haven Line*.

This development resulted in a partial eclipse of Worcester on the map of New England regional passenger service. Worcester was no longer on the main route between the anchor cities of Boston and New York. The *Boston & Albany* still delivered passengers to the *New Haven* at Springfield, and the old "steamboat express," a.k.a. the "boat train," remained as a popular diversion, considered to be a more enjoyable, if slower, way to travel, especially for overnight journeys. But after 1889 the primary travel path between New York and Boston was the coastal route, and it remains so today as the route of the *Acela* and other *Amtrak* trains.

For Worcester residents as railroad passengers, the former P&W 43-mile run to Providence served as a connection into the New Haven system, but that was of limited value, being useful mainly for destinations between Providence and New York along the coast, and it was not of great significance in the overall scheme of travel at the time. The route was more important for freight service, connecting central Massachusetts with Narragansett Harbor, just as it had since the days of the Blackstone Canal.

It was clear by the early 1890s that more consolidation was on the verge of occurring along the southern New England coast. Once the Thames River had been bridged and the all-rail coastal route established, in 1889, the line from Boston to New York was comprised of four railway companies: the *Old Colony* RR to Providence; the *Stonington Road* (NYP&B) to New London; the *Shore Line* to New Haven; and the *New York & New Haven* to New York. Within a few years all four were combined into the *New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad*, which became commonly known as the *New Haven Line*. This was the principal railroad controlled by Wall Street magnate J. P. Morgan. From its formation in the 1890s until the end of the railroad era, the *New Haven* would dominate rail service between New York and Boston, operating essentially uncontested in southern New England below the east-west line of the *Boston & Albany*. It was the ancestor of today's Interstate 95.

As for the roads servicing Worcester, the former *Providence & Worcester* was part of the prize when the *New Haven Line* took control of the NYP&B in 1892, and the Norwich & Worcester came into the fold as part of Morgan's acquisition of the New York & New England in 1895.

In the northerly part of the state, the *Boston & Maine* took control of the *Fitchburg* Railroad by leasehold in 1900. This gave the B&M control of east-west traffic in and out of New England across the northern tier of Massachusetts, the ancestor of today's Route 2, with numerous connecting rails to outlying cities such as Worcester. The acquisition of the Fitchburg gave it the *Boston, Barre & Gardner* route into Worcester, as well as that of the former *Worcester & Nashua*.

Finally, in 1900, the greatest of Worcester's railroads, and an outgrowth of its first, the *Boston & Albany*, was absorbed by leasehold into the *New York Central* system, the railway empire of

Cornelius Vanderbilt. In keeping with the practice of the *New York Central*, it was able to preserve the use of its well-established and reputable livery, and continued to be known as the *Boston & Albany*.

Thus, in New England at the turn of the century there were three giants left standing: the *New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad*; the *New York Central System*; and the *Boston & Maine Railroad*. Except for the use of *Boston & Albany* instead of *New York Central*, these names are enshrined in the frieze on the front of the current Union Station in Worcester.

A New England Railroad Consolidation Summary:

Big Fish Eat Medium Fish Eat Small Fish

The *Boston & Maine* ate the *Worcester, Nashua & Rochester*, and later the *Fitchburg Railroad*, which had already eaten the *Boston, Barre & Gardner*.

J. P. Morgan ate a bunch of fish along the coast, one of which had already eaten the *Providence & Worcester*. Then he named the result the *New York, New Haven & Hartford (New Haven Line)*.

Cornelius Vanderbilt and his *New York Central* ate the *Boston & Albany*.

Final result: three big fish swimming in different channels by 1900

Growth of the city and its rail service

When Union Station opened in 1875 Worcester was home to about 50,000 people, give or take, and this was nearly seven times what it had been in 1835, at the outset of railroad service between Worcester and Boston. By 1890 it would grow to nearly 85,000 people, per the census, up 70 percent in fifteen years, and in 1900 the city would reach 118,400.

Naturally, railroad carrying capacity expanded to keep pace with the growing population. The numbers of passenger trains daily, shown below for 1893, can be compared with those of 1873 for a basic measure of this expansion of rail service. However, an increase in the number of different trains per day does not give an accurate reading of additional carrying capacity was added since the railroads could and did vary the numbers of cars assigned to trains in accordance with ridership volumes and patterns. Nevertheless, it is helpful to see the general increase in daily departures, which implies the same number of arrivals.

Daily Departures from Union Station, 1893

(from *The Spy*, issue of January 12, 1893)

	<u>Departures</u>	<u>Railroad</u>
Boston	19	<i>Boston & Albany</i>
Providence	8	<i>New Haven Line</i> (P&W Div.)
Uxbridge	1	“
Norwich, New London	5	<i>New York & New Eng.</i> (N&W Div.)
Webster	1	“
Southbridge (& Webster)	1	“
Springfield:	16	<i>Boston & Albany</i>
to Hartford & south	6	“
to Albany & west	9	“
Springfield only	4	“
Webster	4	“
Gardner, Winchenden	5	<i>Fitchburg</i> (BB&G Div.)
Portland (Nashua, Rochester)	2	<i>Boston & Maine</i> (WN&P Div.)
Nashua	5	“
Clinton	1	“

Total 68 departures daily

Compared with 1873, when there were 38 departures daily, two decades later there were 68, going to the same places as were listed earlier on the chart of local railroad destinations. The increase in the number of trains, at 79 percent, was close to the increase in the populations during the same period. Again, adjusted numbers of cars on the trains limit the validity of such a comparison. By making the necessary connections one could take trains to virtually any populated place in the country. There were by the 1890s more people, more trains, and, to some unknown extent, more cars on the trains.

Railroad improvements

Not only were there more trains, the trains were also getting better – more comfortable, safer, and more enjoyable, especially for long distance travel, by the standards of the time. By the late 1880s improvements had been made in the heating and ventilation systems of cars – not yet to today’s standards, but at least rendering them better than they had been in the early years of railroad travel. Cooling the air in an efficient manner had not yet been mastered, but improved ventilation at least kept passengers from having to open windows, under most circumstances.

* Prime source on these topics: John H. White, Jr., *Project Gutenberg EBook* (www.gutenberg.com)

Mostly for longer distance travelers, a very useful and popular innovation was the “vestibuled train.” Originally the term vestibule was used for the “porches” at the ends of passenger cars,

where the steps were placed and where crew and willing passengers could step from porch to porch amid the swaying and sometimes jerking motions of the cars. Dating back to the 1830s, attempts had been made, and patents issued, for various ways to improve on the connections between cars, but not until the late 1880s did one gain broad acceptance. In 1887, the *Pennsylvania Railroad* first put into service a set of Pullman cars incorporating the *enclosed vestibule*, through which passengers could walk safely and easily. The passageway was enclosed by a container with a roof and flexible sides which used an accordion-like action to enable the cars to follow the curves in the tracks, and which protected passengers from the weather and from smoke and dust. The effect of the vestibules was to convert a “train of cars” into a train: a continuous *tube* of which all of the cars were readily accessible to the passengers. This encouraged and led to a great expansion in the inclusion of sleeping cars, diners, lounge or club cars, and parlor cars on longer distance express trains.



A *Pennsylvania* Railroad coach, 1879, showing “porch” style vestibule, with steps, guardrail, hand brake, and overhang, from John H. White, Jr., Vol. 1, p.93



A *New York Central* coach, 1921, showing vertical end-frame flexible connector for enclosed vestibule, from John H. White, Jr., Vol. 1, p.156



Internal view through the vestibule of a modern *Amtrak* train. Doors at the ends of the cars normally would be closed.

Source: wikipedia

Vestibule connections quickly became the norm on longer distance, and usually express service trains everywhere. For local coach trains it was naturally less important to make the expensive changes that were required, so the process took longer and many were never converted. The vast majority of railroad travel, especially in generally urbanized areas such as Massachusetts, was local, involving rides of usually no more than an hour or two, and often less. For such travel the coach was the norm: simple rows of seats on either side of a center aisle, with occasional bench seats facing inward, essentially the same as buses today. On the next page are two views of the interiors of coaches, circa early 1900s.

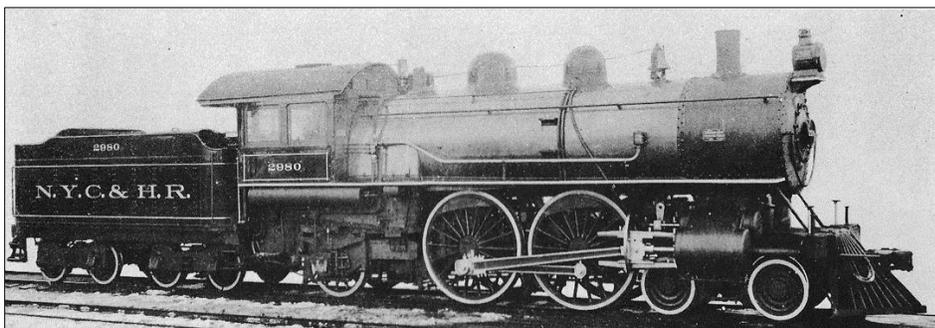


From the collections of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester Massachusetts
New York Central (Boston & Albany) coach, arch-dome ceiling, early 1900s
 courtesy Worcester Historical Museum



From the collections of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester Massachusetts
New York, New Haven & Hartford coach, early 1900s,
 courtesy Worcester Historical Museum
 Note the clerestory ceiling, with windows admitting light, not present in the *New York Central* coach (left)

Locomotives also passed through a technological transition in the latter part of the century. The need for greater power and speed to handle longer and heavier trains, both passenger and freight, led to the end of the long pre-eminence of the “American” type 4-4-0. Not one but several successors arose to the 4-4-0, and the early years of the 20th century saw constant change and development of larger and more powerful steam locomotives. The first new design, one which was for a time the most important in New England, was the “Atlantic” type 4-4-2. The addition of a two-wheel truck under the cab allowed the drive wheels to be moved forward, which made possible a larger firebox and a longer boiler, the net effect of which was significantly greater power generation and tractive capacity.



Left:
 A 4-4-2 of the *New York Central & Hudson River Railroad*, which ran to and through Worcester still under the *Boston & Albany* logo after it became a division of the *New York Central* in 1900.

Edwin P. Alexander, *American Locomotives: A Pictorial Record of Steam Power, 1900-1950*, pub. 1950, p.31

There being so many trains departing so often for so many destinations was of obvious and highly regarded advantage to the people of Worcester. But those trains also put out a very

considerable quantity of smoke and soot to foul the air and contribute to the dingy film on surfaces, plus they generated considerable volumes of sound into the atmosphere from their bells and whistles. There was also the inherent danger at intersections of the railroads and the city streets – known as “grade crossings.”

As for the smoke and soot from the burning of coal, the railroads were not the only, or even necessarily the main offenders, as coal was also used for steam heating of most buildings, including homes, and for power generation in countless industrial spaces. But the railroads certainly were responsible for a major portion of the then-unavoidable problem. As an indication of the amount of coal that was burned by the railroads, an article in the *Gazette* of November 12, 1877, said this: “*The Boston & Albany road has received nearly 30,000 tons of coal at its yard in this city since last April, for use on engines. The daily consumption is about 90 tons.*” And that was just the *Boston & Albany* -- the largest, but only one of five railroads in the city, responsible for about half the trains departing each day.

In 1893 there were 68 passenger train departures daily. Assuming an equal number of arrivals, that makes 136 passenger trains per day. Of the 68 departures, 63 were between the hours of 6 a.m. and 8 p.m., so about 126 of the 136 trains arrived or departed during those fourteen hours. That amounts to an average of six minutes and forty seconds between trains coming or going. But there were also freight trains (a smaller number but often much longer) and, most importantly, the non-stop work of the hostlers moving cars around the yard, and to and from various sidings by the use of yard engines, known as “switchers.” In addition, there were the multiple stops occasioned by the nearby subsidiary stations, at the Junction, Lincoln Square, Barber’s Crossing, and the Summit. The constant din of noise from all those bells, whistles, and chuffing locomotives was clear. But the air was not.

Such were the costs offsetting only partially the many great advantages of the railroads. People still loved and depended on their trains, which gave them mobility, and they were in no mood to limit railroad services, but the environmental costs were accumulating. But as will be seen, it was an issue of which little has yet been said that was to become the primary object of conflict between the city and the railroads in the years ahead.

During the last decades of the 19th century Worcester became a bigger city with more and better trains, with fewer downtown stations and fewer railroad companies, and with an accumulating nuisance of more smoke, soot, and noise.

* * * * *

Supplement

The Imprint of the Railroads on the City

Photo Essay

In this pre-automobile age, to get to the station, or to go from the station to one's home or a hotel or other destination was to take a streetcar or a horse-drawn carriage of some kind, or to walk. In today's terminology, the railroad station functioned as a hub of "inter-modal transportation." As can be seen in the image below, the front of the station was a typically populated by "hacks," as the simple coaches were known, as well as fancier coaches and also simple wagons used for hauling trunks and other kinds of freight. Also present after 1893 were the streetcar tracks and the overhead catenary providing electric power to the trolleys.



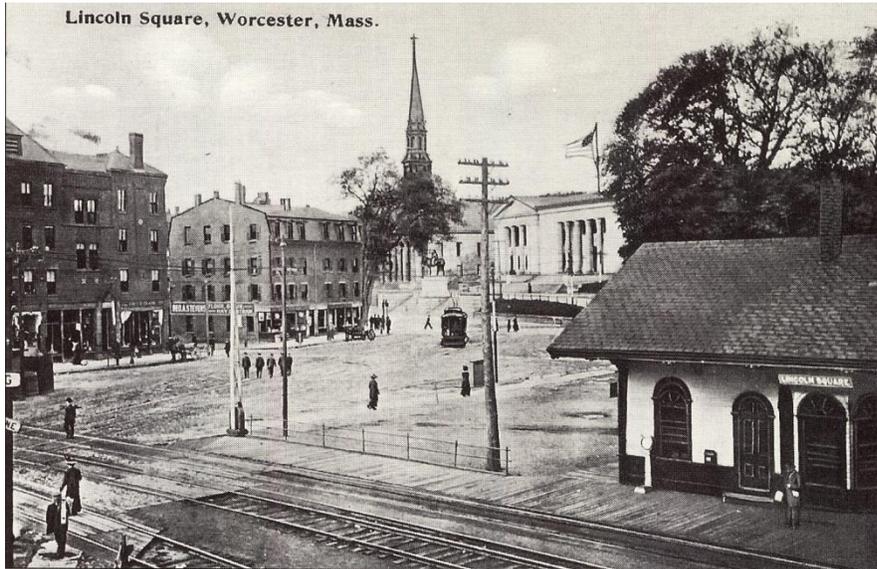
From the collections of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester Massachusetts

Note the lineup of horse-drawn coaches of various kinds, the "hacks," or taxi cabs of the day, and other vehicles scattered around the area, waiting to carry passengers from the station to their destinations. A single trolley and streetcar tracks can also be seen, while the catenary system is not quite perceptible but was certainly present. Note also the rails going into the side of the shed linking to the northern roads, and the soot staining of the granite above the west portal.

A visitor to the city arriving at Union Station during this era would have seen first the inside view of the depot itself, as seen on page 9, then would have come through the main hall and out the front to hire a hack or take a streetcar to a hotel in town, if not to residence of a friend. In the 1890s, there would have been a number of hotels in the downtown area from which to choose, including the Bay State House at 283 Main, Waldo House at 25 Waldo Street, and Lincoln House at 3

Elm Street, among others, all within easy reach by either mode of transport. None of the hotels, however, was very large by the standards of what would soon follow, the era of large downtown hotels accommodating rail travelers, mostly on business missions. The first real *Class I* hotel in Worcester was the Bancroft on Franklin Street, which opened in 1913.

Lincoln Square –a post card view, 1911:

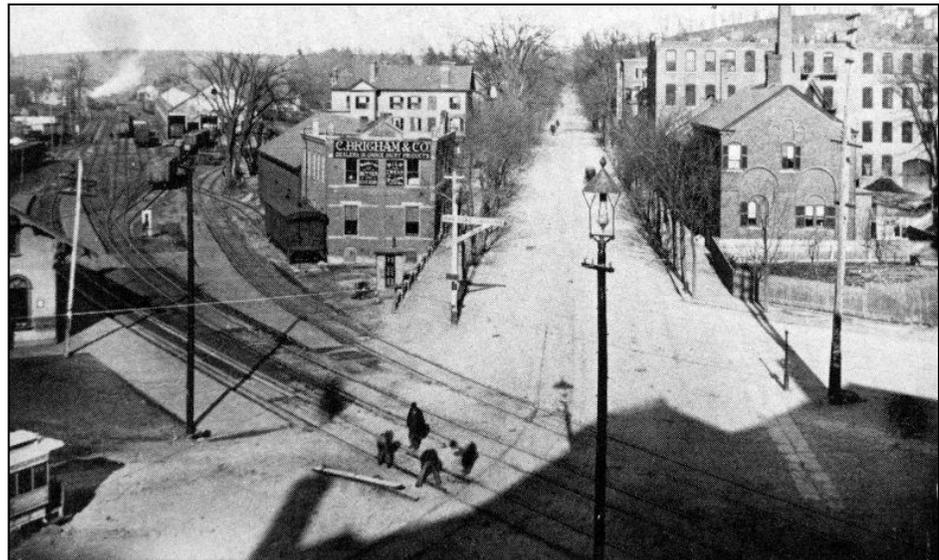


Lincoln Square, looking westerly, from a 1911 post card

Left: Note the Lincoln Square depot, the County Court-house on “Court Hill,” the General Devens statue, the spire of the Unitarian church, two commercial buildings on the square, a streetcar, and a railroad crossing gate.

Below: Looking northward up Lincoln Street, ca. 1894. Belmont Street enters on the right; the Lincoln Square Depot is on the left. The *Boston & Maine* yard and freight house lies between Prescott and the backlines of properties on Lincoln Street.

The Morgan Spring Co. (est. 1881) and the early Morgan Construction Co., were in the barely visible second building on the right and the large four-story brick building beyond it. No streetcar tracks, which were added to Lincoln Street about 1894-95. Note the trees (probably elms) recently planted on both sides of Lincoln Street. “C. Brigham & Co.,” at 2 Lincoln Street, was a dealer in milk and cheese and other dairy products, including eggs, its back doors opening onto a siding of the BB&G, which was known for its dairy runs from the north county.



At the Junction:

This photograph shows the Junction in 1905. The layout of tracks and buildings had not changed materially since the 1870s. The picture, looking east, was taken from a pedestrian bridge near the end



of Oread Street, which crossed over the tracks, providing walking access to the station from that area of the city. The train is on the B&A main line heading west.

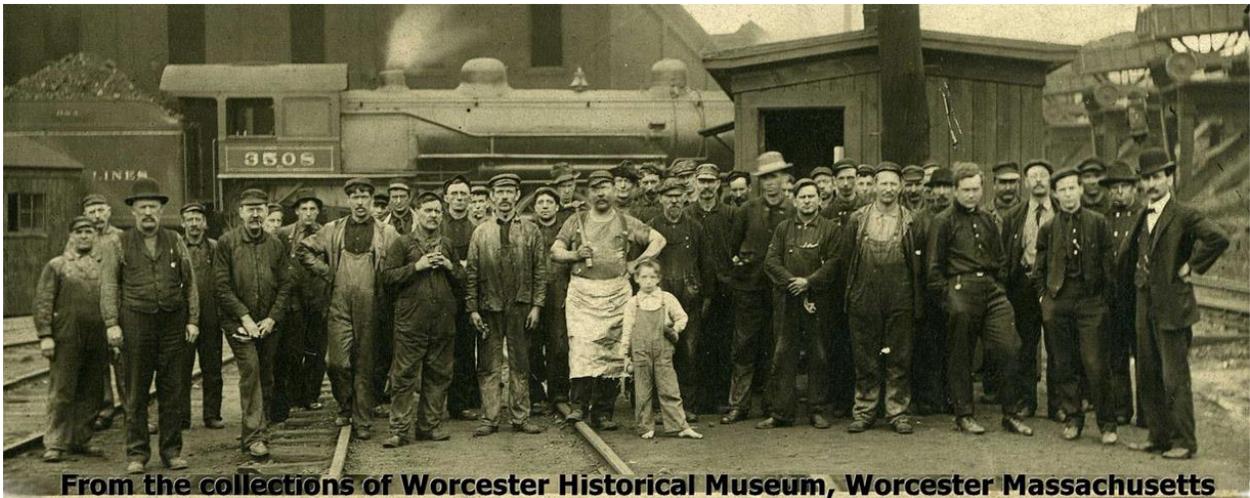
The clock tower of Union Station can be seen faintly in the distance. The N&W tracks (the *NYNH&H*) cross those of the B&A at the same elevation and continue toward their terminus at Madison Street.

The building closest to the crossover is the control tower. Note the line of utility poles running along the tracks.

Source unknown (photo of a photo in a book or magazine)

In the right foreground is a rare view of the Junction Depot. Its mansard roof, "Second Empire" styling suggests that it probably was built in the range of 1850-1870. The brick factory on the left houses two machine shops, as did other buildings along the tracks in the area. Earlier it had been the home of the Ethan Allen firearms company.

Working on the Railroad:



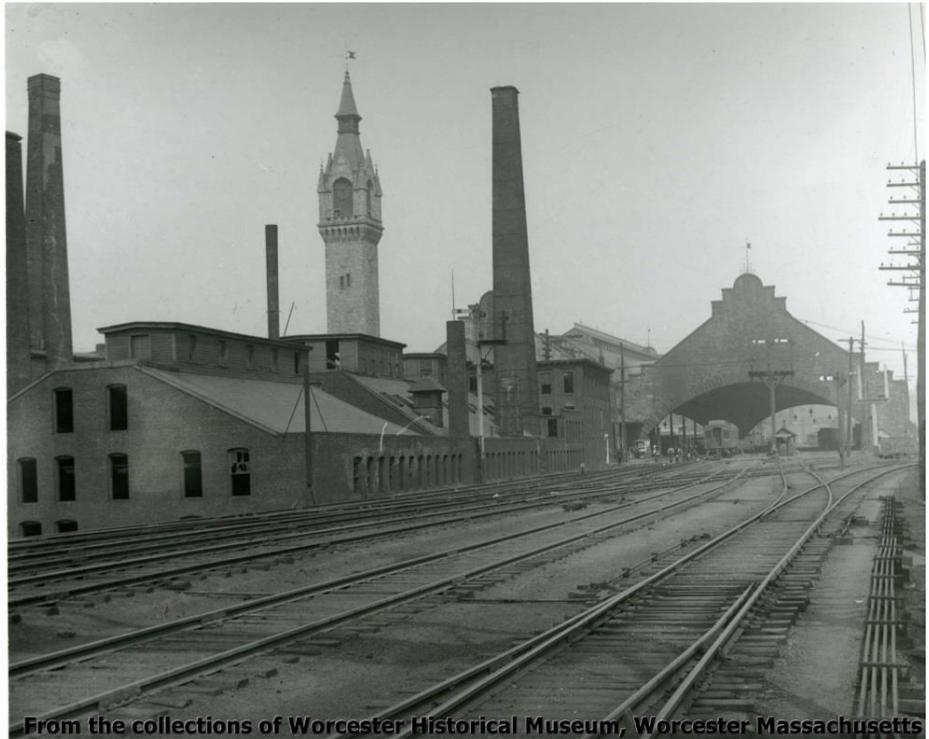
From the collections of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester Massachusetts

About forty men of the yards and shops of Union Station, ca. 1880s or 90s. Likely included among them are the great-great-grandfathers (or add a "great") of some people of Worcester today. One member of the team was acquiring his shop skills early. Courtesy of the Worcester Historical Museum.

From the tracks west of the station:

Tracks into the west portal, or bypassing it by turnout to the right. Note the track turnouts (switches), the utility poles, the gray skies, and the clock tower looming over the Arcade Malleable Iron Works, which appears to be vacant. The second Union Station, 1911, stands there today.

The picture is undated, but if the building is in fact vacant then it was vacated after 1907, the year Arcade moved to Albany Street at Muskeego. Another clue to its vacancy is that no smoke appears to be coming from the stacks.



From the collections of Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester Massachusetts

Photo from the collections of the Worcester Historical Museum

A view from Grafton Street at Union Station, ca. 1890s:



Source: Kingsley and Knab, p.5

A 4-4-0 workhorse stands outside the west portal as a few maintenance checks are in progress.

Also visible are the other griffin, another close-up view of the massive circular arch, and a horse resting before its next journey hauling whatever luggage or freight might be next.