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Union Elevated Railroad, Madison/Wells Station
(Union Elevated Railroad, Madison/Fifth Ave. Station)
Madison and Wells Streets
City of Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

**HAER No.** IL-1G

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

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# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
# UNION ELEVATED RAILROAD, MADISON/WELLS STATION
(Union Elevated Railroad, Madison/Fifth Ave. Station)
Madison and Wells Streets
City of Chicago
Cook County

Location: Madison and Wells Streets, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois

Present Owner: Chicago Transit Authority

Present Use: Rapid Transportation

Significance: Significant in the history of American industrial archaeology, the Union Loop Elevated is also important for its association with financier and traction magnate, Charles T. Yerkes and for its role in defining and shaping Chicago's downtown. According to Theodore Anton Sande, author of *Industrial Archeology: A New Look at the American Heritage,* to "the industrial archeologist, the Chicago Loop provides an ideal case study" (1976, 113). Having made its first run in 1897, the Union Loop Elevated is one of only a few extant examples of transit systems that have remained in continuous operation for nearly a century. A "massive web of riveted steel girders and shining tracks," the Loop Elevated was designed by John Alexander Low Waddell, a Canadian-born engineer who played an important role in the history of American bridge design.

## PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: 1897

2. Architect: The designer of the Loop Elevated and the Madison/Wells Station (originally known as Madison and Fifth Ave. Station) was John Alexander Low Waddell (1854-1938), Consulting Engineer of Kansas City, Missouri. For additional information on Waddell, see HAER No. IL-1.

3. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown

4. Original plans and construction: A full set of original plans for the Madison/ Wells St. Station (then known as Madison and Fifth Ave.) were developed in 1896 by John Alexander Low Waddell. The client's

name is listed as Northwestern and Union Elevated Railroad, Chicago, Illinois. The drawings are on microfilm in the archives of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA Archives, Engineering Dept. reviewed by J. Sniderman July 1, 1994).

There is a smaller set of drawings for the Madison St. and Fifth Ave. station dated 1897, that bare the name of A.M. Hedley, Consulting Architect of Chicago. On these drawings, the client's name is listed as Union Elevated Railroad. Depicting a somewhat modified, less ornate version of the building shown in the original plans, Hedley's drawings seem to have been used to modify and simplify Waddell's work, prior to the construction of the station in 1897 (CTA Archives, Engineering Dept. reviewed by J. Sniderman July 1, 1994).

It is likely that the modifications were made to the plans because the Union Elevated Railroad Company was re-thinking circulation and ticketing methods prior to the construction of stations. In 1897, Hedley served as consulting architect to make those changes. Hedley's drawings place the ticket booth in the upper level and provide an open-air lower level cross-over, while Waddell's drawings show an enclosed lower level area with ticket and cross-over functions. Hedley's drawings also show a simplified version of the classical ornamentation shown on Waddell's drawings (CTA Archives, Engineering Dept. reviewed by J. Sniderman July 1, 1994).

Little is known about Alfred M. Hedley, however, he may have been a relative of Frank Hedley, who was the Lake Street General Manager at the time (Cudahy 1982, 27). Alfred M. Hedley's name appears in the Lakeside City Directory of 1897, but does not reappear in subsequent years (Lakeside City Directory 1897).

5. Alterations and additions: The Madison/ Wells St. Station has had numerous minor alterations over the years, however, its overall appearance and character is quite intact. Below is a chronological list of the more extensive alterations to the station:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1903 | Platform extension were added to the station (City of Chicago Sept. 1981, II-4). |
| 1907 | Original exit kiosks at street level were eliminated and new stair constructed (CTA Archives, Engineering Dept. |

reviewed by J. Sniderman July 1, 1994)

1912-13 A number of changes were made to the Union Loop Elevated to allow for through-routing and unified service with free transfer between lines. This included platform extensions, construction of an addition stairway and modifications to the other exit stairs, erection of transfer bridges and canopies etc. (City of Chicago Sept. 1981, II-4; CTA Archives, Engineering Dept. reviewed by J. Sniderman July 1, 1994).

1921 The station was converted to a one-agent operation (CTA Archives, Engineering Dept. reviewed by J. Sniderman July 1, 1994)

1925-27 Platform extensions were made, along Wells St. where the extension created a continuous platform (City of Chicago Sept. 1981, II-4; Chicago Rapid Transit Company, 1924, 1926, 1928).

c. 1960 Continuous platform running along Wells St. was removed (City of Chicago Sept. 1981, II-4).

1967 System-wide modernization program included replacing multi-paned glass with corrugated fiberglass windbreaks. (City of Chicago Sept. 1981, II-4).

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Information:

1. Engineering Character: The Madison/Wells Station is of engineering merit based on four criteria. First, the station is of merit in the history of American industrial archaeology. Second, it is of merit for its association with financier and traction magnate, Charles T. Yerkes. Third, it is of merit for its role in defining and shaping Chicago's downtown. Fourth, the Madison/Wells St Station is of merit as one of only a few extant examples of transit systems that have remained in operation for nearly a century.

2. Condition of Fabric: The building is in fair to poor condition (to be demolished).

3. Summary Description: The Madison/Wells Station is a two level station that is elevated over the street by steel buttressing girders. The elevated is divided into two portions, the substructure and superstructure. The substructure consists of a foundation, tress elevations, transverse sections, and a structural system. The superstructure, consists of two levels. The first level serves as a transitional level for elevated passengers. The second level or platform level consists of two mirrored platforms separated by elevated tracks. One platform serviced the Madison/Wells Station to the west, the mirror platform serviced the Madison/Wells Station to the east.

In general, the integrity of the Madison/Wells Station remains intact despite general maintenance deterioration and numerous minor alterations (see alterations and additions section for discussion).

B. Description of Substructure:

1. Overall Dimensions: Not applicable. The Madison/Wells Station's substructure is an integral part of the overall Union Loop elevated substructure. Therefore, the individual Madison/Wells Station's overall dimensions are not applicable.

2. Foundation: The structural system is rooted in the street below the Union loop elevated system and is surrounded by asphalt.

3. Structural system: The station is supported by a steel buttressing girder system. This buttressing girder system in part consists of vertical I-sections that are rooted into the street below and surrounded by asphalt. These vertical I-sections measure 1'3" x 1'4 1/2". The vertical I-sections directly support closely spaced flat I-beams. These closely spaced flat I-beams in turn form part of the inverted truss elevation. Specifically, the elevated tracks are superimposed on the tress elevations which in turn is supported by the vertical I-sections. Additionally, the first-level of the station is suspended from the buttressing system. The second-level is supported and extended out from the buttressing system.

C. Description of Superstructure:

1. First-level: The building's first-level interior is in very poor condition. The ceiling is incomplete, layers of peeling paint with areas of heavy oxidation. It is apparent that there has been some attempt to repair damages throughout the years.

The first-level of the station is accessed via stairways which originate from the street level. There is one stairway on each corner of the Madison/Wells intersection. There are four staircases with twenty-five stairs each leading from the street to the first level of the station. These steps measure 4'x 11" x 7". Two turnstiles, that serve as exits from the second-level, exist on the east side of the first-level. In general, the entire first-level serves as a transition bridge that provides access to the east and west bound trains. The first-level provides this access above the street level and reduces passenger and vehicle traffic at the Madison/Well St intersection.

The ceiling of the first-level is in poor condition. Some traces of the original patterned metal ceiling exist however the majority of the area contains only exposed rafters. The room leading to the second-level contains walls that are covered with the same patterned metal. The condition of the walls and the patterned metal are good. The metal is painted white and is a raised boxed floral design. The bottom portion of the wall are painted blue slats and the top portion is the same metal boxed floral design. These two patterns are divided by a wooden chair railing. The walls are made of sheet metal and painted white. There are no exterior windows that are used on the first-level of the station. There are, however, half walls. The top half of the wall has been left open for ventilation.

2. Second-level station: The second-level is in good condition. The level is laid out approximately the same on the north and south sides. At the top of the stairs facing south there is a blue metal grate fence which is now used as a storage area. To the left of this is a door. In the northwest corner of the second level, there is an old wooden storage cabinet.

On the east wall of the west side of the station, there is a ticket booth. This booth contains two windows. One window services

the north entrance to the train platform and the other services the south entrance to the train platform. An entrance door to the ticket booth that separates the two windows. Above each ticket window there are two types of old passenger counters. One is for the paying customer and one is for the customer who used a token. There are two token turnstiles leading to the north and south doors. Two blue chipped double doors, one on the north and the other on the south, serve as entrances to the train platform.

3. Second-level train-loading platforms: The roof of the station is slanted at each side and meets at a point in the middle. It is made of corrugated sheet metal. The roofs that cover the stairways are flat, slant down towards the street and are also made of corrugated sheet metal. The roofs that cover the stairs are in poor condition, the paint is peeling and the corrugated sheet metal is heavily oxidized.

At the south end of the train platform there is a pedestrian transfer bridge that connects the west bound train platform to the east bound train platform. This pedestrian transfer bridge crosses over the elevated tracks. The pedestrian transfer bridge allows passengers to switch train direction without paying an additional transfer fee.

The transfer bridge has twenty steps leading up to the first landing, then four steps leading up to the actual bridge. The handrails on the outside of the staircase are wood and the rail running up the middle of it is metal. The floor is wood slats. A wooden swing gate is located in the middle of the bridge. There are six fluorescent lights on the roof of the bridge and two on the roof of the staircase. The roof covering the stairs and bridge is made of corrugated sheet metal.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General Setting and orientation: The Madison/Wells Station is located in the heart of downtown Chicago and contributes to the definition of the loop area. The station is specifically located above the Madison/Wells street intersection. The station is surrounded by office buildings, restaurants and parking facilities.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings and Photographs:

Chicago Transit Authority Archives, Engineering Dept., drawings on microfilm made available by CTA staff member Clifford Hayes, reviewed by J. Sniderman July 1, 1994.

Chicago Transit Authority Library, photographs and reports made available by CTA staff member Violette Brown, reviewed by J. Sniderman July 1, 1994.

Commission on Chicago Landmarks, photographs and photo-reproduction of drawing entitled "Elevation of Bridge Connecting Premises of Schlesinger and Mayer at 141 Van Buren with Union Loop R.R." in the files of CCL staff member, Tim Samuelson reviewed by Sniderman June 29,1994.

B. Bibliography:

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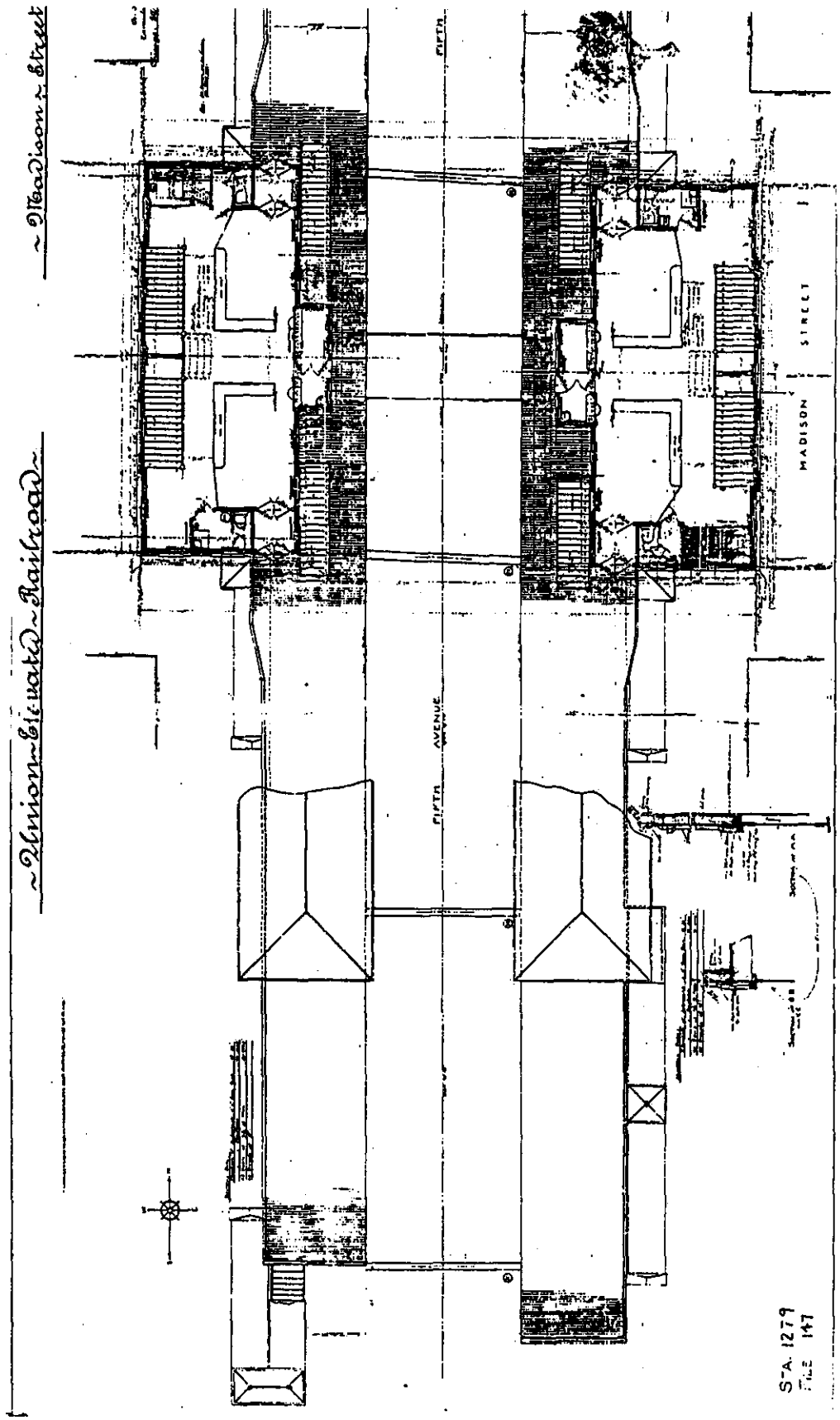
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

This project was undertaken by the City of Chicago as it fulfilled Section 106 compliance requirements for a project that will affect the Madison/Wells Station. The station is slated for demolition. The City of Chicago contracted Archaeological Research, Inc. for the HAER documentation. Key project personnel included Julia Sniderman, historical researcher, Dr. John Vogel, historical consultant, Tom Yanul, photographer, Nancy Phillips, and Karen Poulson, staff researchers and David Keene, principal investigator.


~Madison~Street
~Union~Elevated~Railroad~
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FILE 147