

Central R. R. Station, Plainfield, N. J.

DRAFT

NORTH AVENUE STREETSCAPE AND PEDESTRIAN MALL
HPO Project #21-1463-2 North Avenue Commercial Historic District
Plainfield, Union Co., New Jersey

SEPTEMBER 20, 2022

2017 View of the North facade

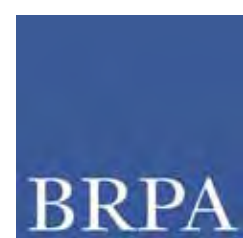


Barton Ross & Partners LLC
Architects





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North Avenue Streetscape and Pedestrian Mall
Schematic Design

HPO Project #21-1463-2
Plainfield, Union Co., New Jersey

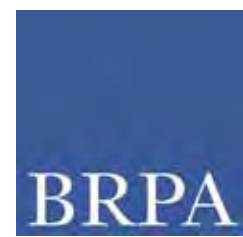
HISTORIC CONTEXT

0.02

September 20, 2022



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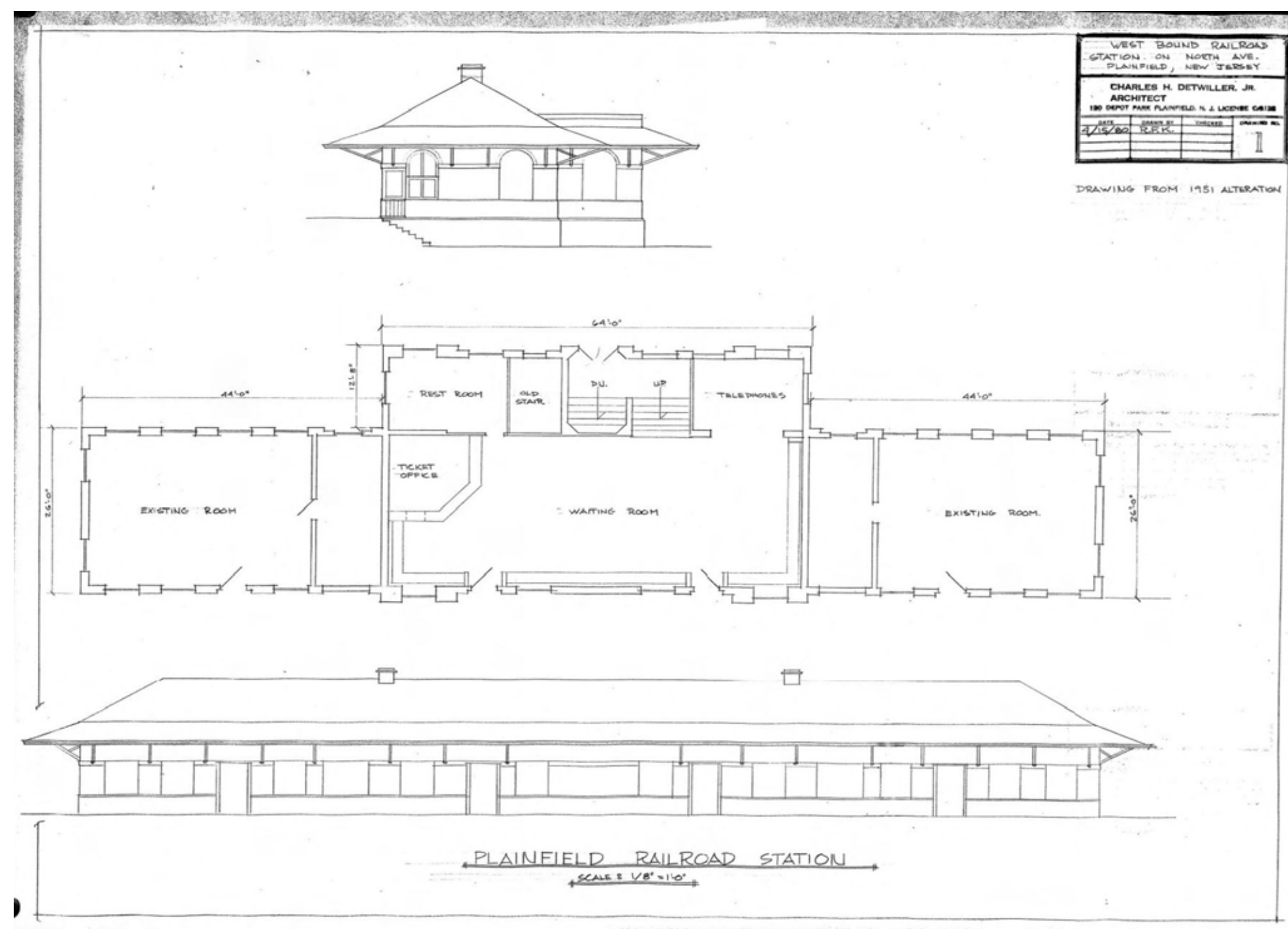
North Avenue Streetscape and Pedestrian Mall
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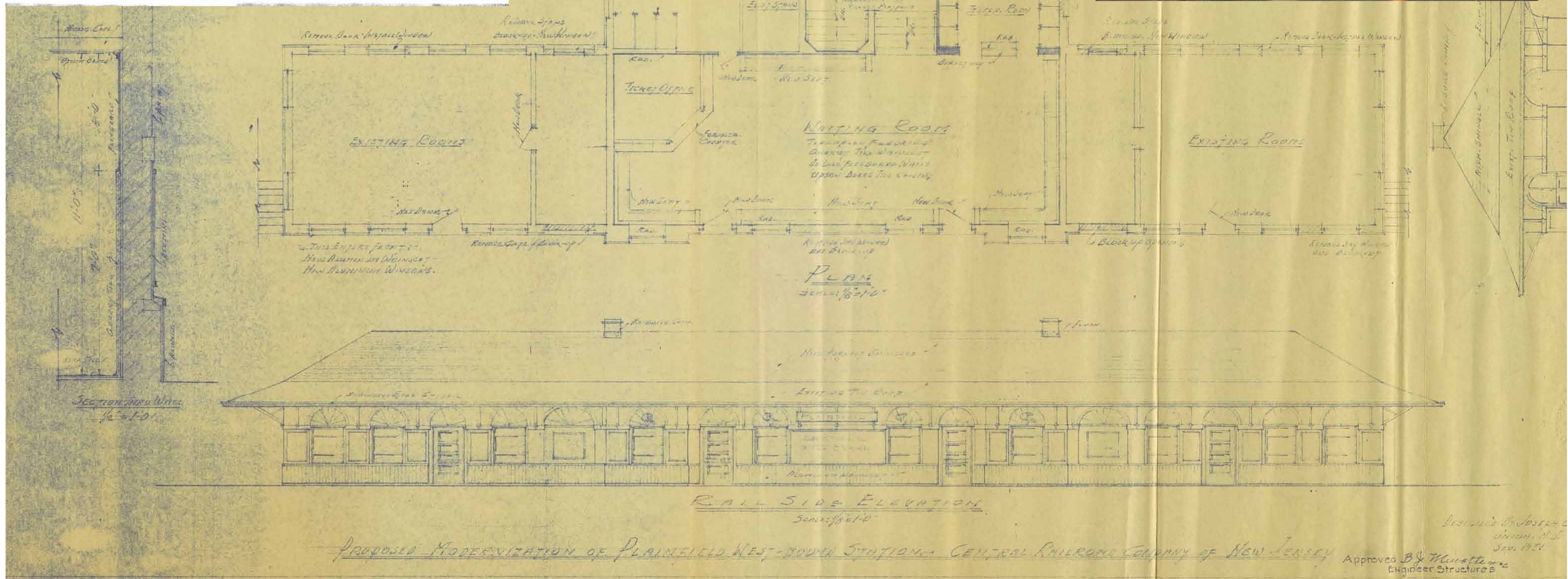
HISTORIC WESTBOUND STATION BUILT CA. 1874

0.03

September 20, 2022



**Historic Westbound station
as altered in the 1950s (see
drawings) and as it appeared
before demolition in 2006**

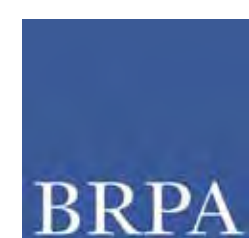


WESTBOUND STATION ALTERATIONS 1950S



EXISTING CONDITIONS & CONTEXT

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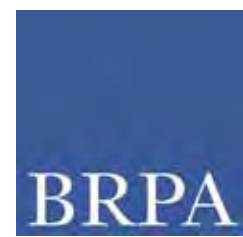
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0.05
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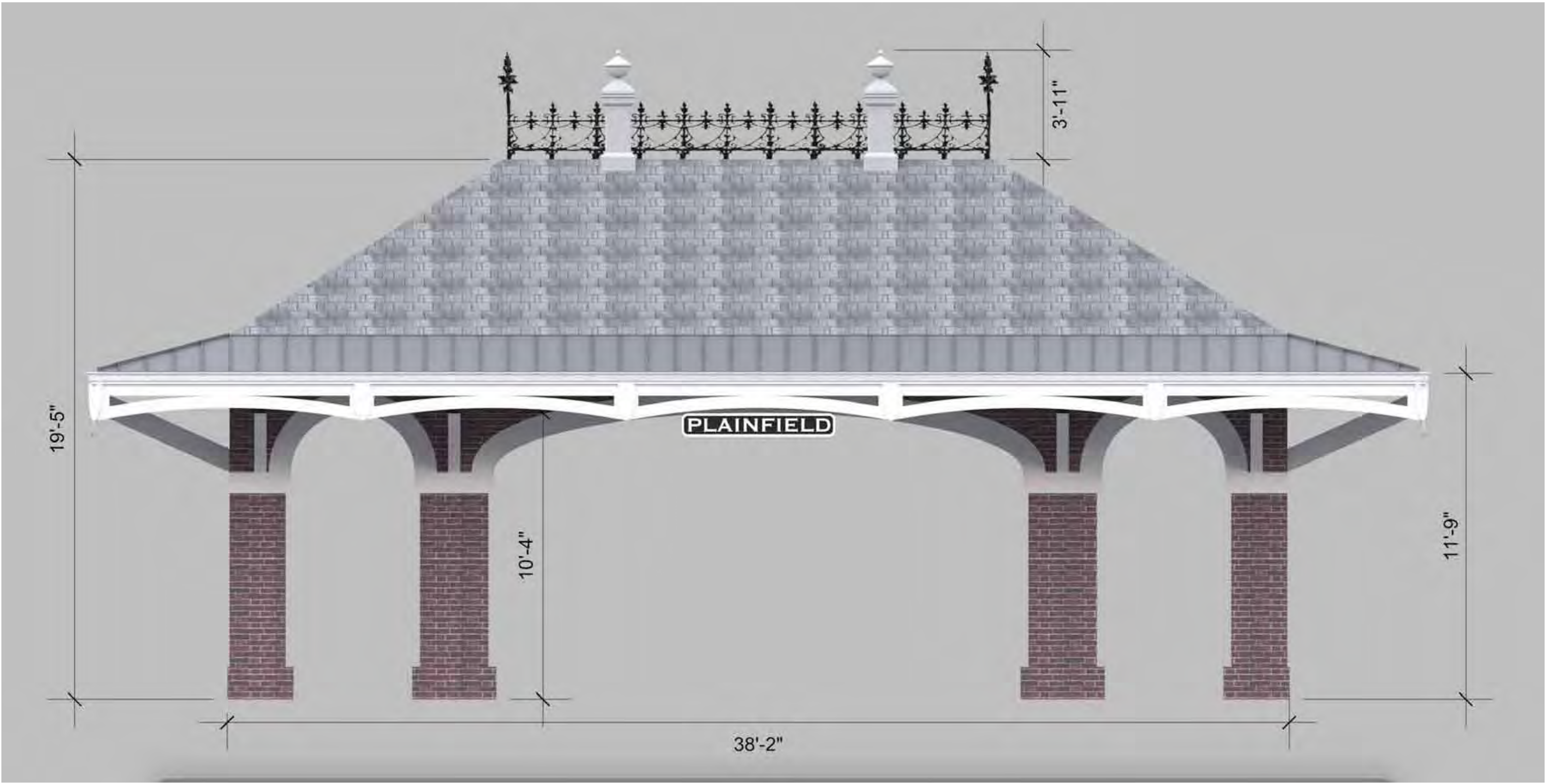
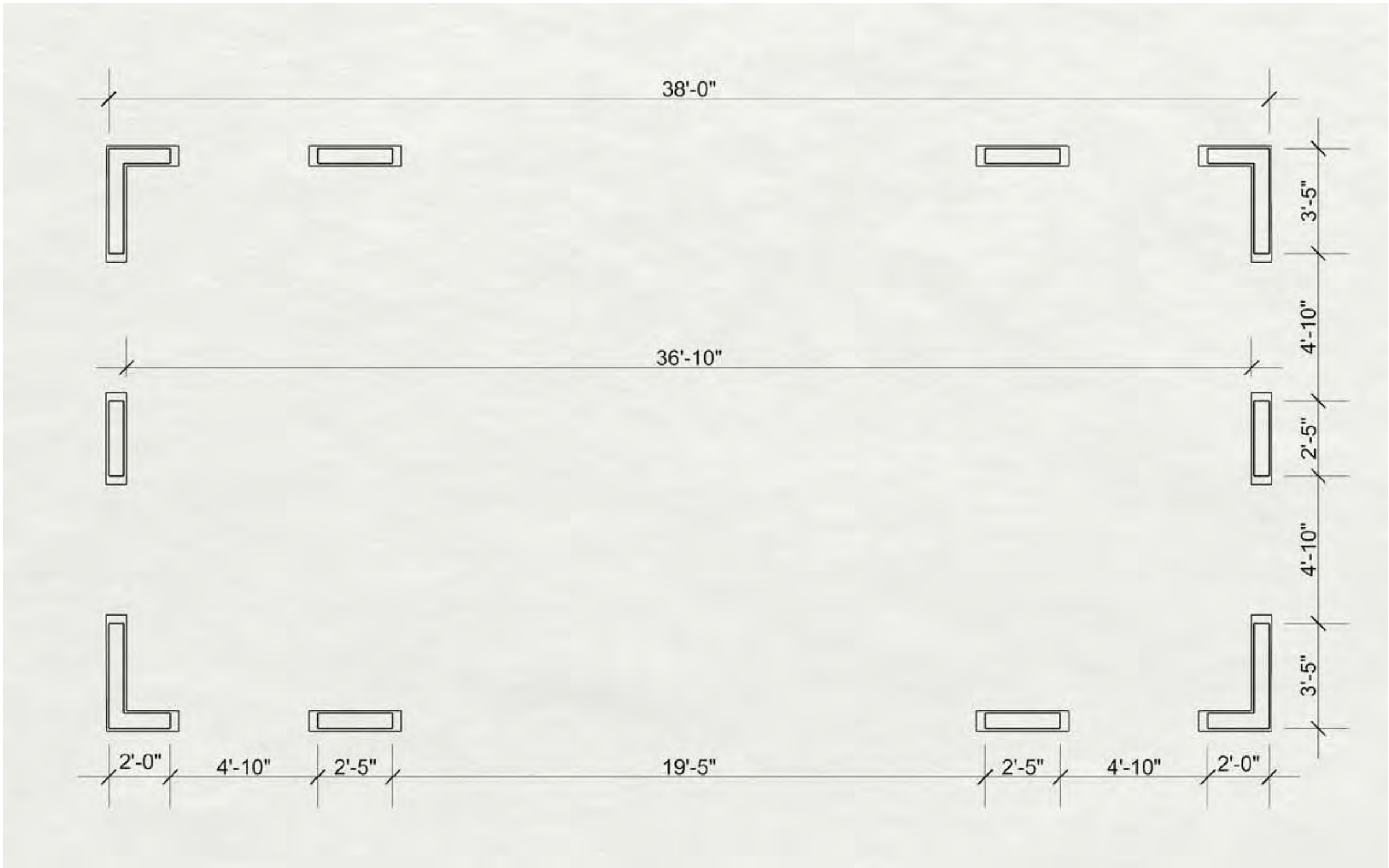
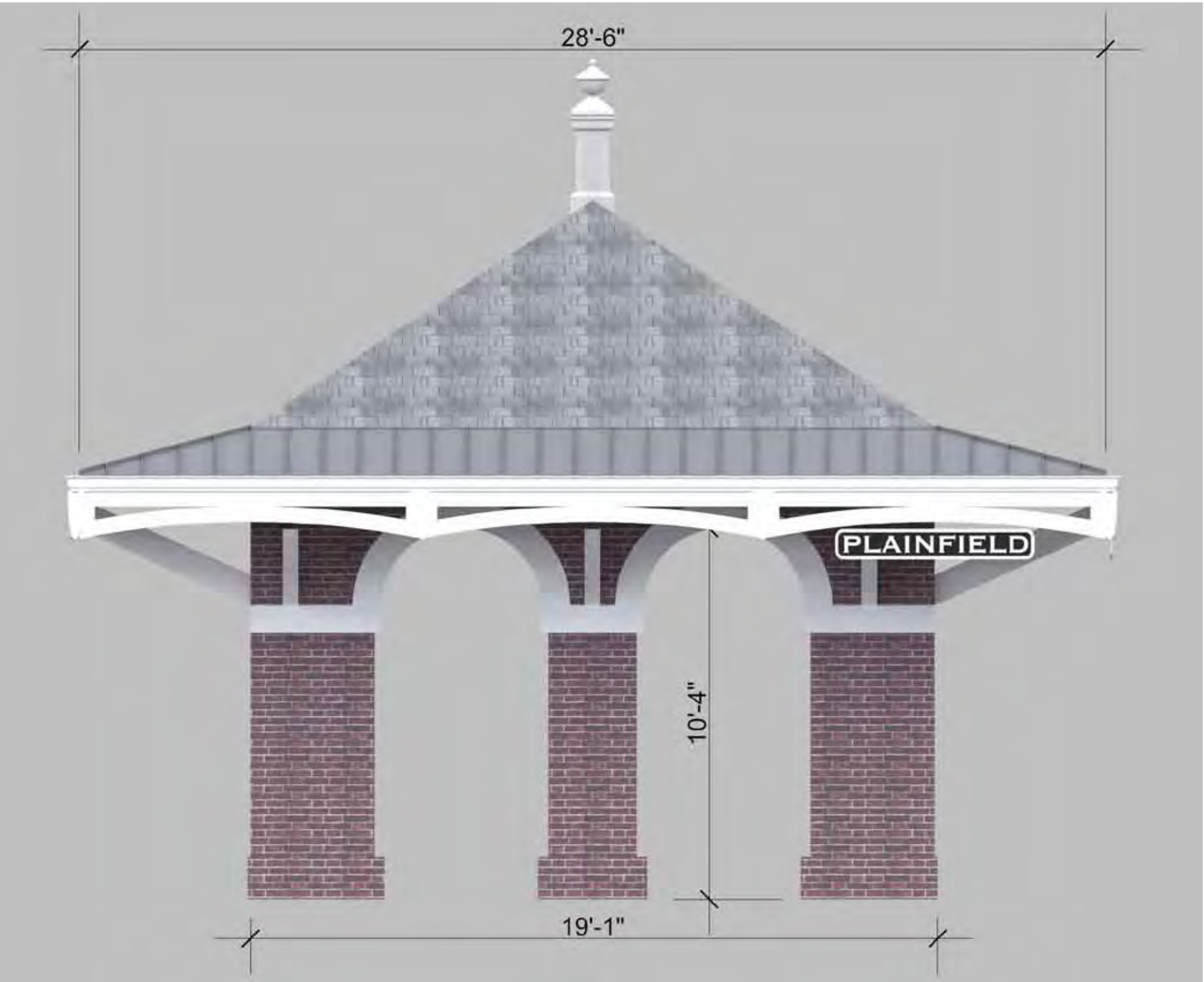
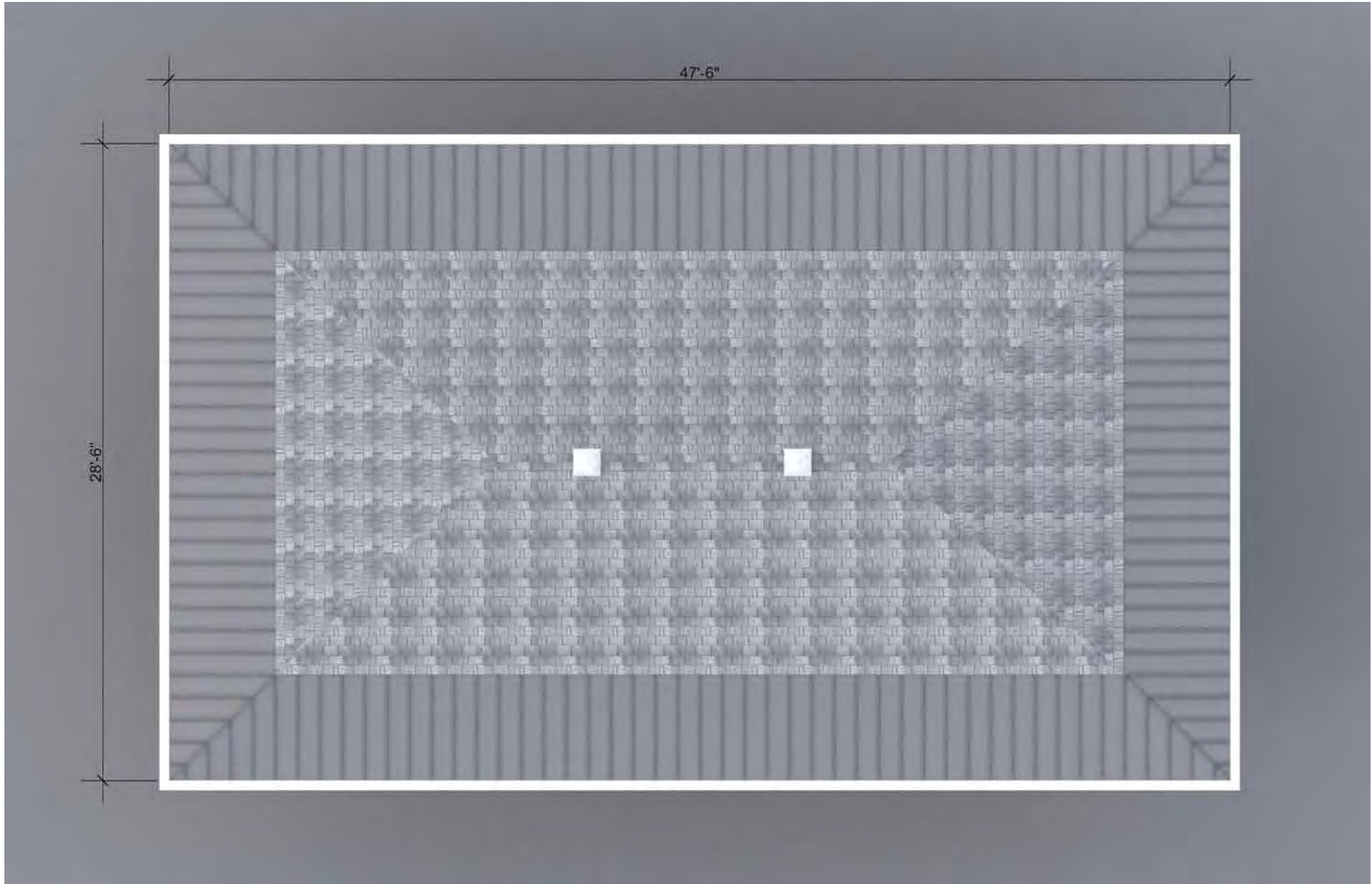
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North Avenue Streetscape and Pedestrian Mall
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RENDERING OF THE NEW PAVILION

1.00
September 20, 2022



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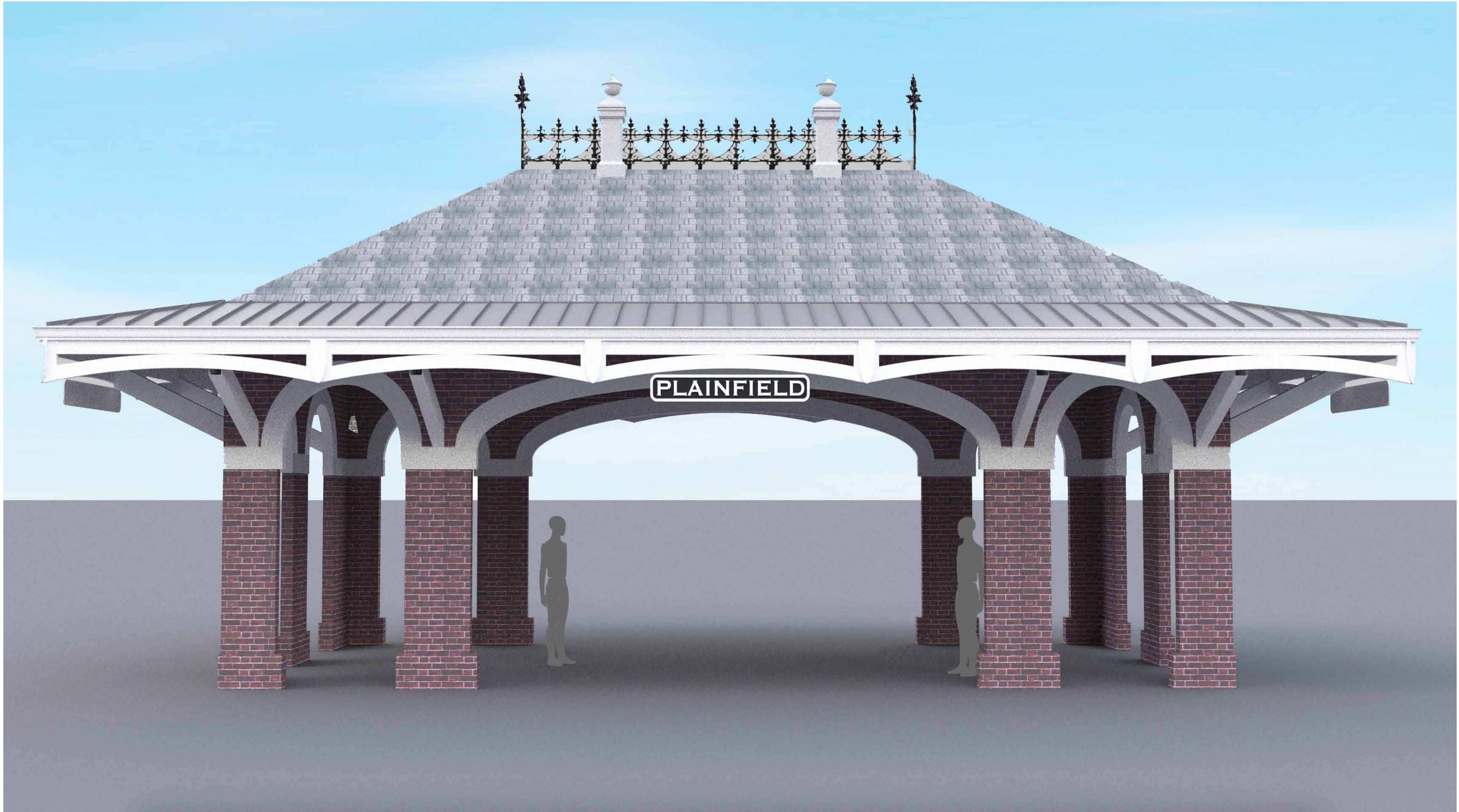
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North Avenue Streetscape and Pedestrian Mall
Schematic Design

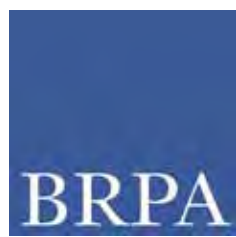
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DRAWINGS OF THE NEW PAVILION

1.01
September 20, 2022



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RENDERING OF THE NEW PAVILION

1.02
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“Asphalt Color –
When Black Asphalt Just Won't Do”

100lb PASACT

Asphalt Color Selection Guide

inPHusion HX™ - Color Additive for Hot Mix Asphalt

















inPHusion HX is a concentrated powder additive that permanently changes the color of Hot Mix Asphalt. It is added to the Hot Mix Asphalt at the asphalt batch plant and the colored asphalt is delivered to the project site fully colored. Conventional asphalt paving procedures are utilized in laying integrally colored asphalt. When mixed with a commercial grade Hot Mix Asphalt it turns the asphalt from black to a beautiful uniform earth tone color. inPHusion HX prolongs asphalt pavement life, reduces the solar reflective index (SRI) and heat island effect, and beautifies the pavement. There are no toxic, carcinogenic agents or organic solvents in inPHusion HX.

	Sienna	Eco-Red	Rust Red	Bronze	Basalt
50 lb Loading					
80 lb Loading					
100 lb Loading					

NOTE: Dry color concentrate loaded per ton of asphalt

inPHusion ES™ - Color Additive for Asphalt Emulsion Sealer

inPHusion ES is an innovative cost effective concentrated liquid color additive for asphalt emulsion seal coatings. When mixed with a commercial grade asphalt emulsion seal coat, it turns the coating from black to a beautiful uniform earth tone color. It prolongs asphalt pavement life, reduces the solar reflective index (SRI) and heat island effect, and beautifies the pavement. There are no toxic, carcinogenic agents or organic solvents in inPHusion ES.

	Bark	Lava	Khaki	Granite
0.5 lb Loading				
1.0 lb Loading				
1.5 lb Loading				
2.0 lb Loading				

NOTE: Liquid color concentrate loaded per gallon of asphalt emulsion sealer

* The colors on this color card approximate, as closely as possible, the appearance obtained in natural light. Variables, including job conditions and finishing techniques, affect the final color. If color accuracy is critical, a pre-construction sample utilizing actual job site materials and construction methods is required. Information contained in this brochure is, to the best of our knowledge, true and accurate. However all recommendations or suggestions are made without guarantee. Since the use of the products is beyond our control, ChemSystems, Inc. disclaims any liability incurred in connection with the use of our products and any information contained herein.

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The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Department of Interior regulations, 36 CFR 67) pertain to historic projects of all materials, construction types, sizes, and occupancy and encompass the exterior and the interior, related landscape features and the building's site and environment as well as attached, adjacent, or related new construction and are incorporated herein in their entirety. The Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

STONE PAVERS



Belgian Block – Jumbo 11" X 8" X 4"
Use: Installed as driveway edging / curbing cemented into the ground with typ. desired 3" reveal above the driveway surface and 8" below. Used at a diagonal angle to transition areas of the property where there is a grade change. Gray Jumbo Estimated Cost: \$3.85 each



Cobblestone – Bedminster “Tan” color 12" X 6" X 4" and mixed pallet 12" X 12" X 4" 12" X 18" X 4" 12" X 24" X 4"
Use: Installed as a drive apron paver installed into the ground flush with the driveway surface. Can be dry laid or set with a concrete grout. Cover with an environmentally safe clear coat product for added protection.

Estimated Cost: \$12.00 each (negotiable)

Stone Contact:
BRAEN Supply, Inc.
1434 Ringwood Avenue
Wanaque, NJ 07420
www.braensupply.com
973 835-1419



100lb Hot Mix Asphalt color additive to match historic appearance

Historic landscaping to be reimagined

Note circa 1907 postcard with block curbing and chip seal paving



MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS

LIGHTING



16' high Acorn Pedestrian Pole



TYPICAL CITY OF PLAINFIELD
ARCHITECTURAL LIGHTING FIXTURE
(INTERSECTION)

STREET FURNITURE



Victor Stanley Ornamental Bench (C-10), Black



Victor Stanley Trash Receptacle (S-42), Black



USPS Mailboxes, Parking Meters, and other features should align in the "Furniture Zone"

LIGHT POLE ENHANCEMENTS



Hanging Baskets with Light Pole Bracket (for 34' High Gateway 2000 Pole only)



Banners with Light Pole Bracket (for 34' High Gateway 2000 Pole only)



ADA Truncated Dome Paver

NORTH CAROLINA PLANT

Pine Hall Brick Truncated Dome ADA pavers comply with the ADA requirement for detectable warnings for use in the Public Right Of Way according to R304 Guidelines. Red in-stock. Dark Accent, Full Range, Autumn, Rose and Cocoa available as a special order.

Test Report – ADA Truncated Domes

BIA Tech Note 14E – Accessible Brick Pavements

PHB Tech Bullet – ADA Clay Pavers

FOR A FULL-SCREEN VIEW THAT INCLUDES MORTAR COLOR AND DETAILS, CLICK THE MAGNIFYING GLASS ON THE TOP RIGHT OF THE MAIN IMAGE.



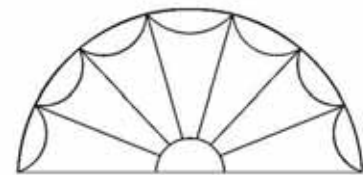
MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS

The Plainfield Railroad Station Plainfield, NJ



AN HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

June 15, 2022, with research by



Tim Adriance

HISTORIC RESTORATION

Restoration Consulting Services

86 East Main Street, Bergenfield, NJ 07621

201-674-8031 tim@timadriance.net

Introduction

Several studies and reports concerning the railroad station buildings, in the center of Plainfield have been created over the years. This report endeavors to provide additional, information not found in the other reports. In addition, some errors concerning the timeline in other reports are corrected here. A narrative timeline of the history is first presented utilizing printed sources. Then through maps, aerial images, and photographs the history of the site's details will be fleshed out.

Historical Narrative

Before Europeans settled the region, the local natives walked paths that they blazed through the woods. Many of those paths are now our roads, which the early settlers widened to move wagons and carts along. Those early roads often were dusty, muddy, full of ruts, snow covered and, during many times of the year, almost impassable. The navigable rivers also helped as a means of transport for goods and people, but they were frozen most of the winter. Reliable transportation was a necessity, and, like today, travel to New York City was important to commerce. But bad roads prevented transportation from being consistently reliable and efficient.

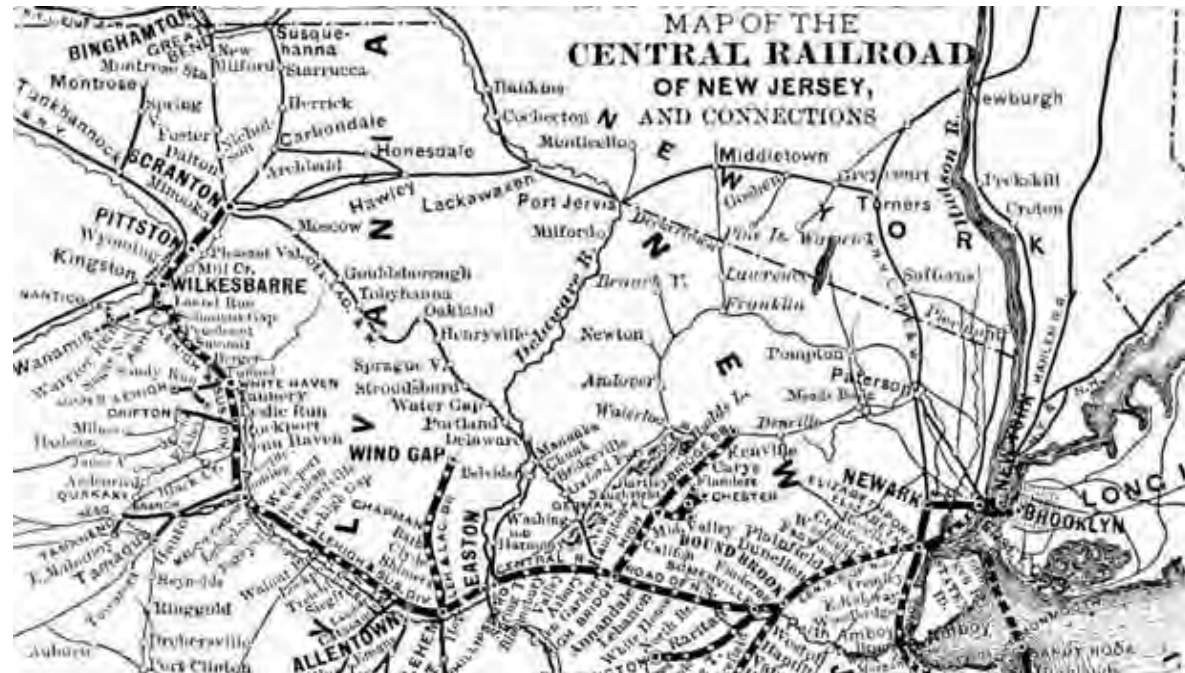
Finally, the answer to ground transportation problems was solved, when the first American railroad was created. Inventor and Revolutionary War veteran Colonel John Stevens, after perfecting a steam ferry in 1804 (just a few weeks after Robert Fulton's pioneering trials on the Hudson River), went on to dream that a steam engine could pull wagons on rails and sought financial backing for his idea. His dream was widely dismissed. To answer his critics' claims that railroads were impractical, in 1825 at the age of 76, Stevens built and operated the first American steam-powered railway on a half mile circular track on the grounds of his estate in Hoboken, which today is the site of Stevens Institute of Technology.

Stevens, though, did not invent the idea of rails; that was actually done in England, when in 1605 a half mile of rails with outer vertical flanges were laid to create a path on which horse drawn wagons from a mine were run. However, Stevens improved on the idea by putting the flanges on the wheels and creating the type of rail still used today. Stevens proved his dream would work, but it was others who would bring it to daily use, and thus American railroads were born.¹

In central New Jersey, John O. Stearns built what originally was known as the Elizabethtown & Somerville Railroad, which opened in 1836. It was built in the cheapest possible manner, with wood rails that had flat iron straps attached to the top. The iron had a weakness of occasionally coming loose and projecting up through the cars, thus killing people. These loose iron pieces became known as "snake heads." John Taylor Johnston and associates purchased the railroad in 1847. And immediately they commenced rebuilding it and extending it to Philipsburg and Easton by 1852. For a time, it became the tidewater connection for three anthracite railroads. A new name, the Central Railroad of New Jersey, was eventually chosen,

¹ Adriance Tim, A History of Bergen County Railroads, Autumn Years Magazine, Spring 2018, page 43.

and the railroad expanded. Johnston also invested largely in real estate along the rail line. He especially developed Plainfield, which became known as “The Queen City of New Jersey.”^{2 3} Johnston lived on a large estate in Plainfield, and as a noted collector and fancier of exotic trees, he planted numerous rare trees and shrubs around the railroad stations in Plainfield.⁴



This 1882 map shows a portion of the Central Railroad of New Jersey system.

The first record of a station at Plainfield is on the 1850 J. C. Sidney *Map of Essex County, New Jersey* where it is noted simply as “Depot.”⁵ A search of the Library of Congress Newspaper Database revealed the first mention of the Plainfield depot in a Plainfield real estate ad published in the *New York Daily Tribune* on July 14, 1851.⁶ The station was likely wood frame with wooden platforms and included a restaurant (one source called it a saloon).

² Plainfield Evening News, October 18, 1887, page 1.

³ Brill, Peter, Central Railroad of New Jersey: A history, Classic Trains. Retrieved from <https://www.trains.com/ctr/railroads/fallen-flags/central-railroad-of-new-jersey-a-history/>.

⁴ *Historic Tour, Plainfield N.J.*, Prepared by The Planning Division City of Plainfield, undated brochure (c.1970s) Plainfield Public Library collection. Retrieved from <https://www.plainfieldlibrary.info/pdf/LH/HistoricTour1970s.pdf>.

⁵ J. C. Sidney. 'Map of Essex County, New Jersey, with the Names of Property Owners &c. from Actual Surveys' (Newark: Hiram A. Belding, 1850) [Library of Congress]. Retrieved from <https://library.princeton.edu/njmaps/counties/union.html>.

⁶ *New York Daily Tribune*, July 14, 1851, page 2.

According to the *Plainfield Constitutionalist* newspaper Voorhees Van Vliet ran the restaurant “at the old Plainfield depot.”⁷



1850 J. C. Sidney Map of Essex County, New Jersey with the Depot noted within the circle.

The *Lambertville Record* newspaper, in a November 1873 article concerning the moving of a house in Flemington by Mr. J. B. Jenkins, a house mover from Plainfield, noted that he had moved the depot at Plainfield “this season.” Unfortunately, the article does not say where he moved it to, but this confirms the construction activity of a new depot was planned and did not fully start until sometime in 1873.⁸ The new station would eventually be known as the Plainfield Station, the North Avenue Station, and later the Westbound Station.

The Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Directors to the Stockholders of the Central R. R. Co. of New-Jersey for activity performed in 1874 recorded that:

“A large and handsome brick station house, with Ohio stone trimmings, has been erected at Plainfield, on the proper elevation, and will be ready for occupation in the spring.”⁹

⁷ *Plainfield Constitutionalist* newspaper, “George Van Vliet Dies in New York,” November 1907.

⁸ *The Lambertville Record*, November 5, 1873, page 3.

⁹ Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Directors to the Stockholders of the Central R. R. Co. of New-Jersey, January 1, 1875. Charles H. Jones & Co., Printers, New York, page 11. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/books/edition/Annual_Report_of_the_Board_of_Directors/8lZLAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=inauthor:%22Central+Railroad+of+New+Jersey%22&printsec=frontcover.

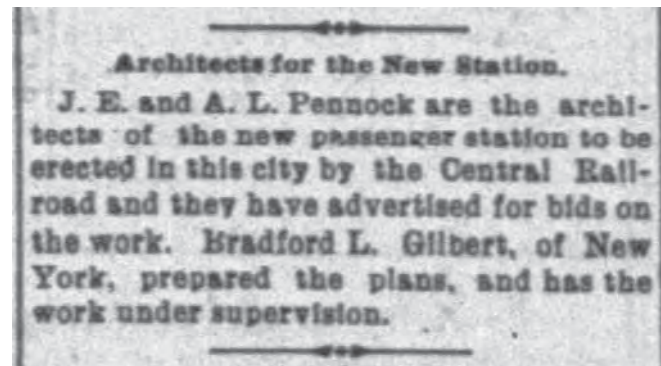
The Twenty-Ninth Annual Report for 1875, noted that:

“The elevation of the road through Plainfield has been perfected and completed, and the new stone and brick station-house has been occupied the most of the year,” and “The grounds around the building have been tastefully laid out, and the station is now the handsomest one owned by the Company.”¹⁰

Increased passenger service, separate tracks for westbound and eastbound trains, and the fact that most passengers in need of a station while waiting for morning trains were commuters standing by the eastbound tracks – caused the railroad to plan a second station building.

In February 1893, *The Jersey City News* reported that the Central Railroad of New Jersey made what was described as “a large purchase of real estate” in Plainfield. The intention for the purchase was said to be for a “fine new freight depot” that was to be erected on the newly purchased land located east of the then existing freight depot. The newspaper reported that the site of the old freight depot will be transformed “into an attractive park, with driveway for private carriages and a waiting room for passengers.”¹¹ Map evidence suggests that the “fine new freight depot” was never built, and in fact the old freight depot was removed by 1897. Plans for a new eastbound station building were obviously moving ahead.

The *Plainfield Courier News* reported on June 15, 1900, that J. E. and A. L. Pennock are the architects of the proposed new passenger station to be built by the Central Railroad, and they have advertised for bids on the work. Bradford L. Gilbert, of New York was noted to have prepared the plans, “and has the work under supervision.”¹² On January 28, 1901, the *Plainfield Courier News* reported that Plainfield’s new railroad station “was the object of attention” when it, and the grounds were inspected by officials of the Central Railroad. According to the newspaper “they found everything in a satisfactory condition and expressed themselves as pleased with the general appearance of the place,”¹³ and plans were made for the grand opening. The station was completed in just seven-and-a half months.



Newspaper announcement concerning the new station.

¹⁰ Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Directors to the Stockholders of the Central R. R. Co. of New-Jersey, January 1, 1876. Charles H. Jones & Co., Printers, New York, page 12. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/books/edition/Annual_Report_of_the_Board_of_Directors/8IZLAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=inauthor:%22Central+Railroad+of+New+Jersey%22&printsec=frontcover.

¹¹ *The Jersey City News*, February 7, 1893, Last Edition, page 2.

¹² *Plainfield Courier News*, June 15, 1900, page 1.

¹³ *Plainfield Courier News*, January 28, 1901, page 1.

On Monday, March 4, 1901, the *Plainfield Courier News* ran an article with the headline “East Side Depot Open.” It was noted that the first passengers to New York purchased tickets the day before in time for the 4:49 train, and that the first person was Dr. Roland Tomlinson of LaGrande Avenue. The article went on to say that the fence between the east and west bound tracks was being installed and would be ready by the following day. In addition, the tunnel between the new and old station would also be open. The new station was described as “neat looking” with “natural wood finish.” The lighting was noted to be by chandeliers. The paper went on to say there were plenty of exits on the train side. The ticket office was described to be in the center of the north side with a plate glass window and a hole in the center for “the tall passengers to communicate their wishes” and that “the short passengers will have to let someone talk for them or use sign language.” The article further stated that two oak tables were there “if passengers need to leave a written word or write a check.” The passengers could reach the platform “under cover of a roof” and that the platform promenade was covered by a 400-foot-long roof. It was noted that the baggage at the time of the opening was only being handled on the west bound side station.¹⁴ A September 2001, looking back article in the *Courier News* gave more detail on the opening of the new station stating, “when it was built in 1901, it was considered an architectural achievement.” The site of the station was recalled being the location of the “old Rushmore lumber yard” and that “the station complex included a landscaped park from East Fourth Street.” The article noted that the park was seen as “a progressive response to the new concept of municipal beautification.”¹⁵

On June 28, 1907, the *Plainfield Courier News* reported details concerning the raising of the tracks through Plainfield, and the rebuilding of the bridges. As part of the work, the concrete walk and promenade (the track platform) at the North Avenue station was to be raised to conform to the grade. The railroad not wanting to impact the “flag walk” which extended from the concrete walk to the building - simply pitched the walk so that the storm water would run away from the building into a “center gutter covered with an iron grating.”¹⁶ Of note, a May 1917, real estate advertisement in the *Plainfield Courier News* stated that the local streets were macadamized, and that the sidewalks were flagged.¹⁷

In October 1951, while America was in the throes of the post-war mid-century modern building boom, the *Plainfield Courier News* ran an editorial welcoming an announcement that the main station in Plainfield was to be remodeled and modernized. The editorial stated that “a modern railroad station in any city helps make a good impression upon visitors” noting such a city was “up and coming,” and “not one in its last doldrums.” The paper’s editor declared “the present Plainfield depot may not be the most unattractive one in these parts of the state, but certainly smacks an appearance of decades long gone by.”¹⁸ It has been thoughts like this that have destroyed many significant architectural treasures – such as the Plainfield westbound station.

¹⁴ *Plainfield Courier News*, March 4, 1901, page 1.

¹⁵ *Courier News*, September 30, 2001, page B-2.

¹⁶ *Plainfield Courier News*, June 28, 1907, page 1.

¹⁷ *Plainfield Courier News*, May 29, 1917, page 4.

¹⁸ *Plainfield Courier News*, October 5, 1951, second edition, page 14.

The *Plainfield Courier News* reported on October 19, 1951, that remodeling of the Jersey Central Railroad's North Avenue depot had started that week. The article revealed that Mr. and Mrs. Eugene E. Brown had rented the second floor of the station as an apartment for the previous 22 years. Brown was a ticket agent at the Liberty Street station in New York, but sometimes filled in for a day at the Plainfield station. The apartment was noted to be "big," and consisting of 10 rooms, and a bath. The couple's son Kenneth (then a high school senior) used the attic above to practice his drums. The attic was described as "under the gingerbread roof which combines Mansard style peaks and dormers." The newspaper reported that "the entire second floor was to be removed," and that the initial work that week was "striping the walls and ceiling of the downstairs waiting room." And that workmen took out a row of phone booths, and that some of the interior brickwork was now exposed. The ticket office was stated to be still in operation, but as the work progressed it would be temporarily moved to the baggage room (which had its own separate entrance through an outdoor archway).¹⁹

The modernized and remodeled westbound Plainfield passenger station was to be officially opened on Sunday March 23, 1951. The *Courier News* reported many modern materials were used. The outside was described as two-toned grey masonry with green trim, and the trackside face was finished with decorative aluminum. The interior color scheme was green and tan.²⁰

On March 5, 1981, the *Courier News* ran an article concerning the NJ Transit plans to perform renovations on the Raritan Valley Line, including the Plainfield station. Richard Hernon, acting director of engineering and construction said "\$159,000 has been earmarked for improvements to Plainfield passenger facilities." The money was to pay for refurbishing the exteriors of both the westbound and eastbound stations. Part of the overall monies, \$20,000, was to be used to pay for a proposed \$35,000 renovation of the westbound station into an "art center."²¹ The renovations were completed in 1986,²² although no record of the "art center" was found.

The Plainfield railroad station was placed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places on June 22, 1984.²³ The nomination was part of the Plainfield North Avenue Commercial Historic District, submitted on February 28, 1984.²⁴

¹⁹ *Plainfield Courier News*, October 19, 1951, page 21.

²⁰ *Plainfield Courier News*, March 19, 1952, page 1.

²¹ *Courier News*, March 5, 1981, pages A-1 & A-18.

²² NJ TRANSIT Historic Architectural Resources Background Study for the Rehabilitation of Undergrade Bridge MP 22.99 Over Watchung Avenue & Undergrade Bridge MP 23.11 Over Park Avenue Raritan Valley Line Plainfield, Union County New Jersey, Lynn Drobbin & Associates, June 2012, page 20.

²³ Retrieved from <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/84002837>.

²⁴ Retrieved from https://tapinto-production.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/7838/North_Ave_Historic_Register.pdf.

On July 19, 2000, the *Courier News* published an article announcing ground was broken for a "\$9.7 million restoration" of the Plainfield Station. Among the planned changes were: "historical renovations" to the eastbound station; construction of a pavilion; new high-level platforms with canopies; improvements to the pedestrian tunnel under the tracks; and elevators to access the platforms. Major construction was slated to begin in two weeks, starting with the parking lot.²⁵ As part of the plan the westbound Plainfield railroad station was to be demolished. The structure was unfortunately in a bad off condition as it had a significant loss of historic integrity. This was largely due to the 1951 renovations conducted by the Central Railroad of NJ that included: the removal of the second and third (attic) floors; the ticket office bay; the enclosure of the breezeways; the removal of breezeway stairs; and modernization of the interior. The New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office gave New Jersey Transit authorization to conduct the demolition; although the westbound station building was documented in accordance with Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS).²⁶ The documentation is not on the Library of Congress HABS website. The *Courier News*, on August 24, 2000, published a photo under the heading "Last Stop for Plainfield Station." The photo showed the old westbound station being demolished.²⁷



***Courier News* photo showing demolition of the westbound station in August 2000.**

Today the look of the Plainfield station complex is largely that of the work started in 2000.

²⁵ *Courier News*, July 19, 2000, page B-1.

²⁶ NJ TRANSIT Historic Architectural Resources Background Study for the Rehabilitation of Undergrade Bridge MP 22.99 Over Watchung Avenue & Undergrade Bridge MP 23.11 Over Park Avenue Raritan Valley Line Plainfield, Union County New Jersey, Lynn Drobbin & Associates, June 2012, page 20.

²⁷ *Courier News*, August 24, 2000, page C-3.

Map Study

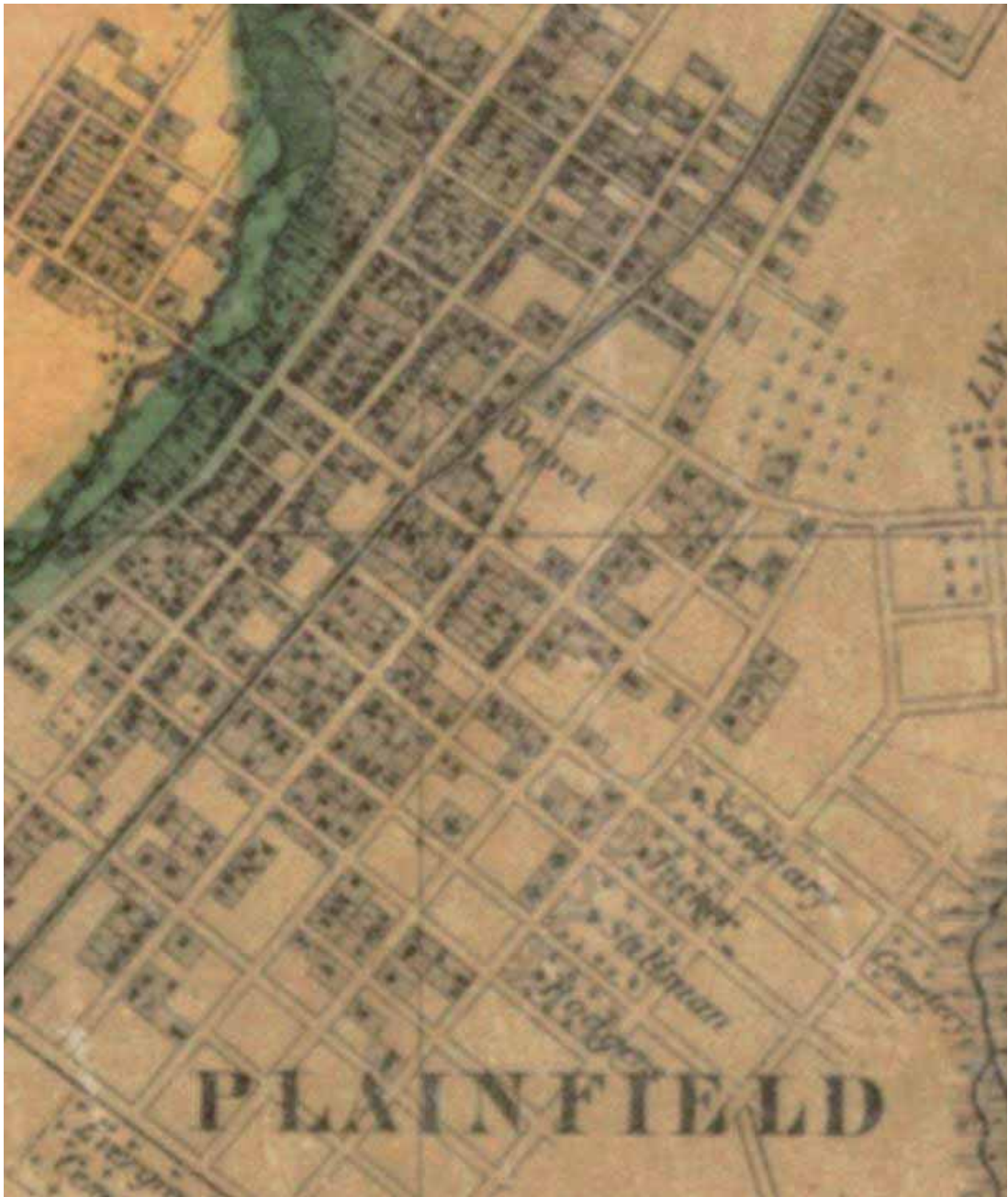
An excellent resource in the study of historic sites are the various maps, and often details can be gleaned from them. In particular, the *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* are exceedingly full of detail, and the fact that they were periodically updated allows for significant interpretation of a site.

There are 18 map sections ranging from 1850 to 1982 that show the Plainfield station. Elaboration of details found on the maps will be presented in this section.



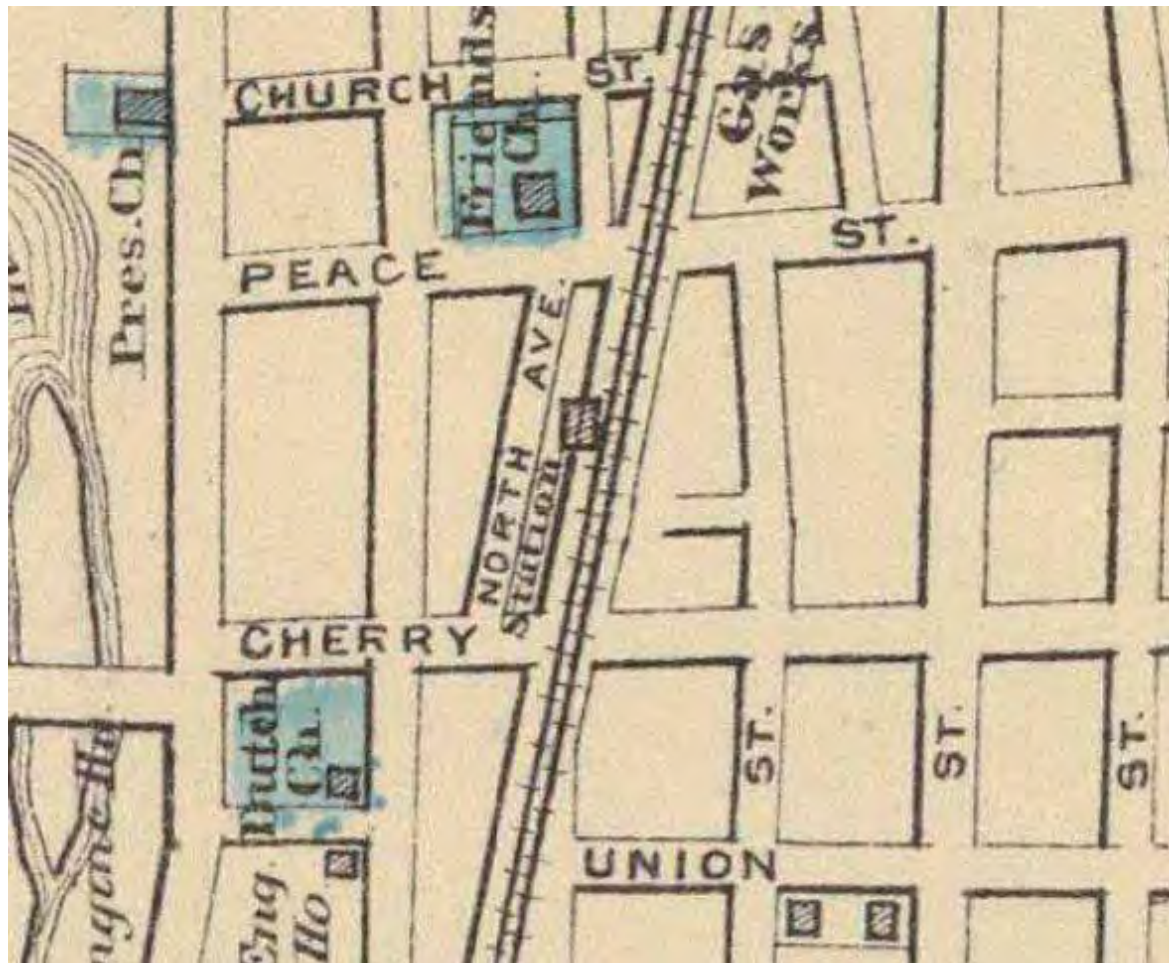
Above is the 1850 J. C. Sidney. *Map of Essex County, New Jersey*²⁸ with the depot noted within the circle. This is the only pre-1875 map showing a structure south of the tracks in proximity to the station. All other maps indicate the station to the north, thus it is unclear what the building was.

²⁸ J. C. Sidney. 'Map of Essex County, New Jersey, with the Names of Property Owners &c. from Actual Surveys' (Newark: Hiram A. Belding, 1850) [Library of Congress]. Retrieved from <https://library.princeton.edu/njmaps/counties/union.html>



This is a section of the 1862 Ernest L. Meyer and P. Wetzel. *Topographical Map of Union County, New Jersey*.²⁹ The depot is noted north of the tracks along North Avenue parallel to the tracks. Overlaying the map into *Google Earth* and scaling the depot – shows it was about 80 feet long.

²⁹ Ernest L. Meyer and P. Wetzel. 'Topographical Map of Union County, New Jersey' (New York: Ferd. Mayer & Co., 1862) [Huntington Library]. Retrieved from <https://library.princeton.edu/njmaps/counties/union.html>



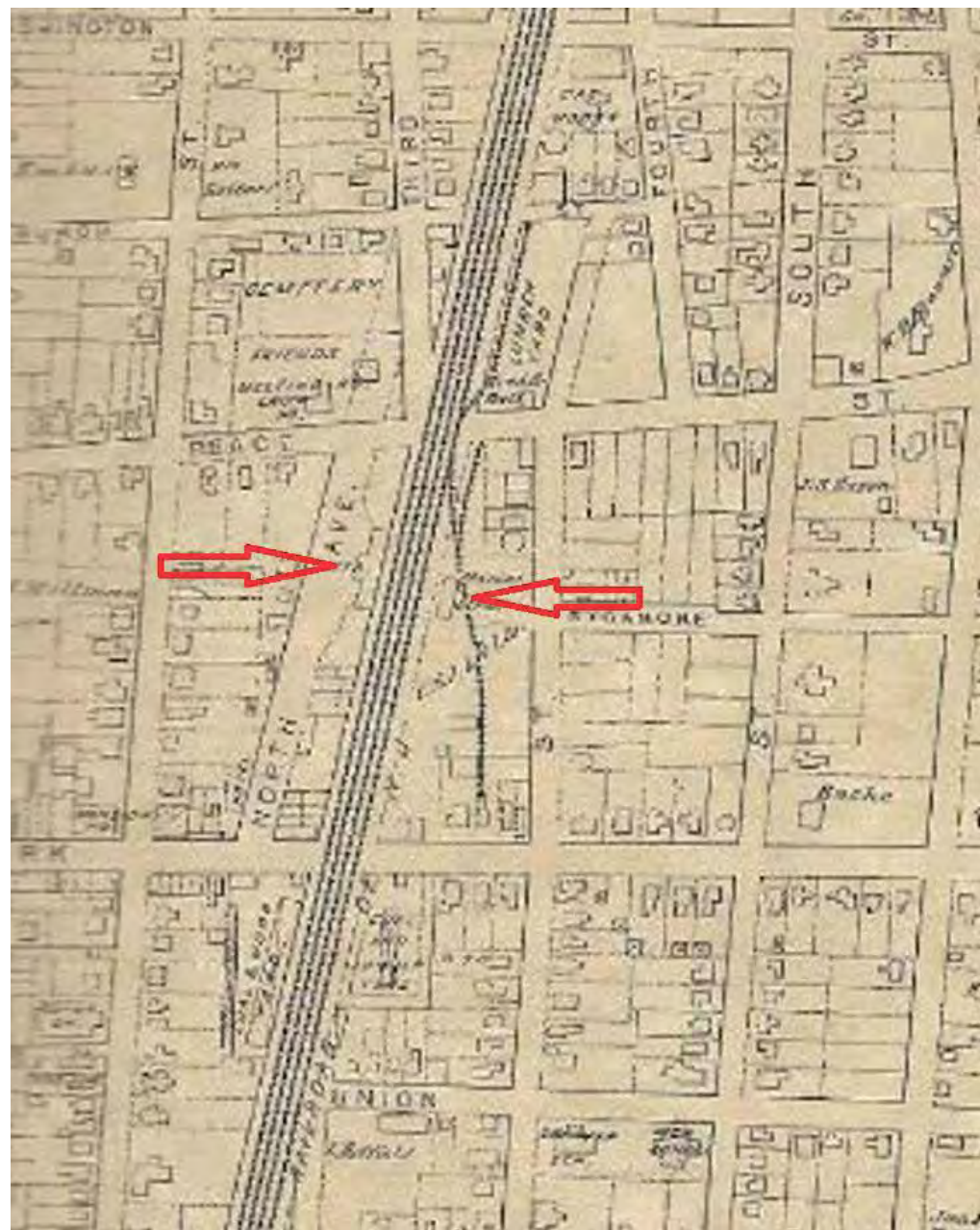
This 1872 F.W. Beers *Map of The City of Plainfield*³⁰ shows the station as a rectangle siting oddly catty-corner to the tracks (the map is greatly simplified, and likely inaccurate). Of note, there are two sets of tracks.

³⁰ State atlas of New Jersey based on State Geological Survey and from additional surveys by and under the direction of F.W. Beers. Published by Beers, Comstock & Cline, 36 Vesey Street, New York. 1872. Lithogc. Power Press Printg. of Charles Hart, 36 Vesey St., N.Y. Engraved on stone by Louis E. Neuman, 36 Vesey St., N.Y. Retrieved from <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~26181~1100097:City-of-Plainfield,-Union-Co,-N-J->



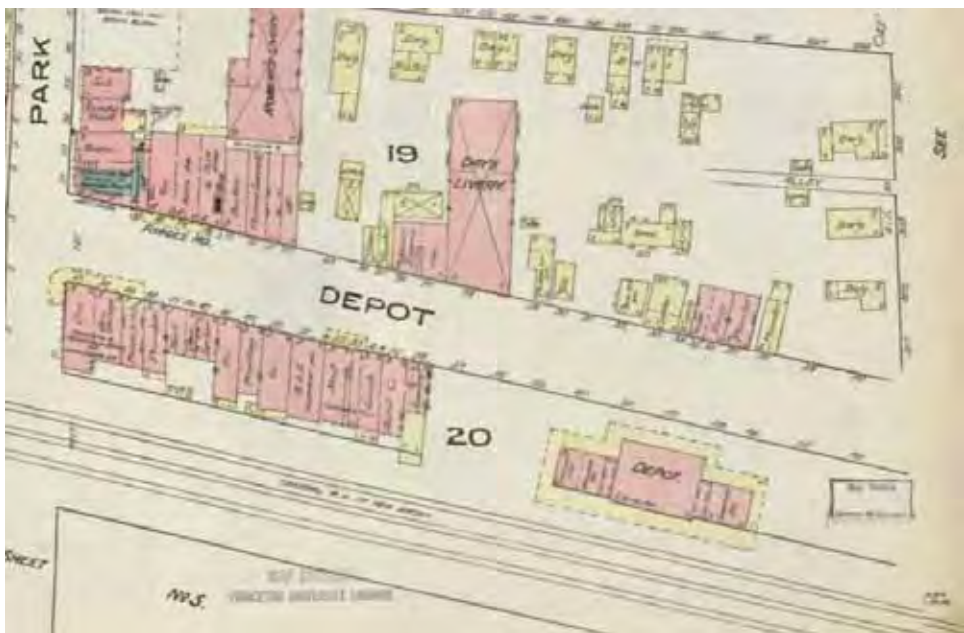
This 1878 *Map of Plainfield, N.J.*³¹ is the first map showing the station completed in 1875. Unfortunately, the resolution of the map from the Rutgers collection is poor, but the station is visible south of North Avenue abutting the tracks.

³¹ *Map of Plainfield, N.J. compiled from official records. Plan showing Park Avenue from Plainfield City Line to Holly Grove Farm, 1878* Dunham, J.R (Surveyor); Dunham, F.A. (Surveyor); G.H. Walker & Co. Retrieved from <https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/30321/>



This portion of the 1882 *Atlas of Union County, New Jersey*³² shows the station (indicated by the left arrow), and the freight depot (indicated by the right arrow). Note the carriage parking area in front of and to the sides of the station (angled away).

³² Elisha Robinson and Roger H. Pidgeon. *Atlas of Union County, New Jersey: From Actual Surveys and Official Records* (New York: E. Robinson, 1882). Retrieved from <https://www.ebay.com/itm/290375588977?mkevt=1&mkcid=1&mkrid=711-53200-19255-0&campid=5338722076&customid=&toolid=10050>



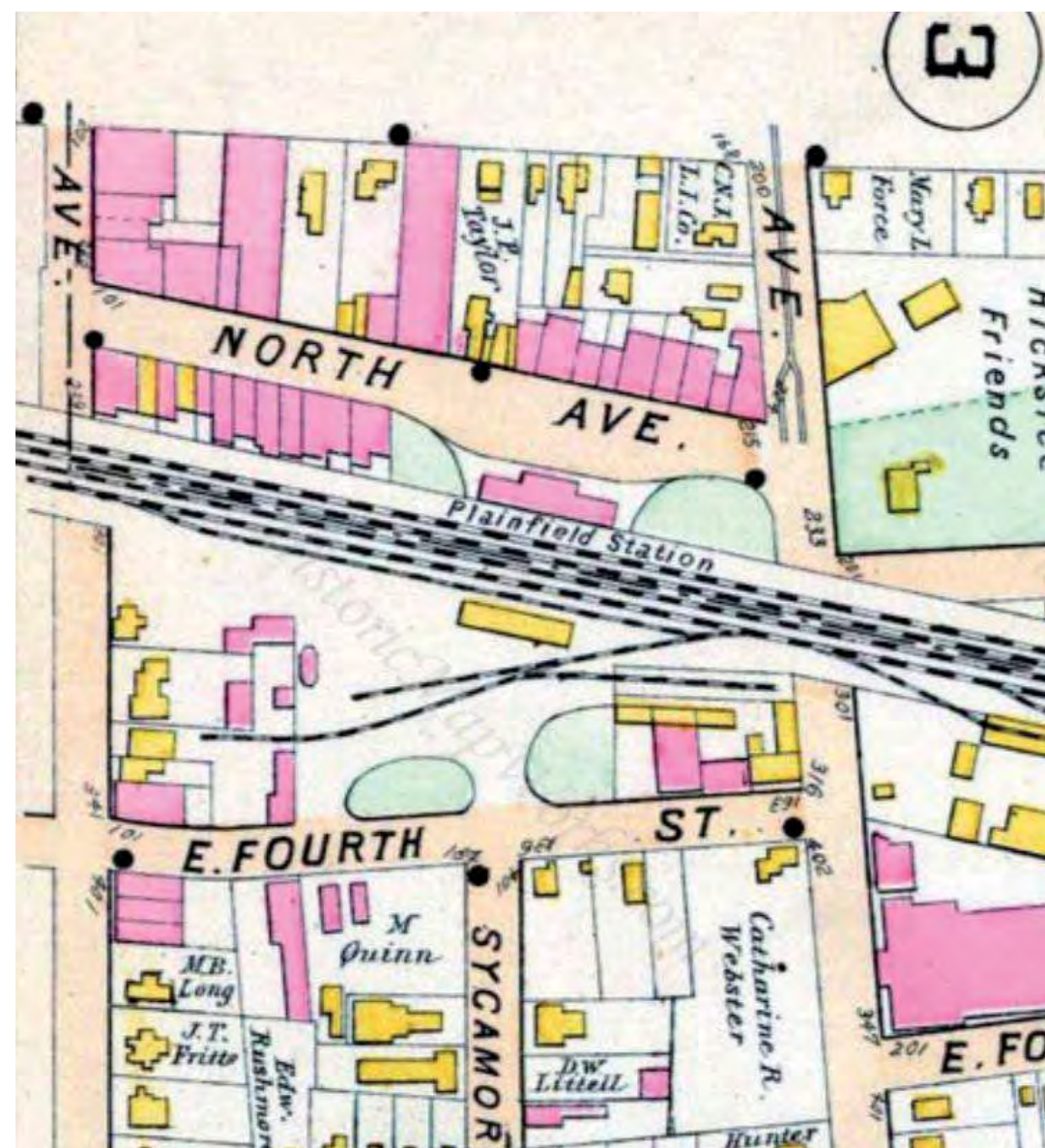
These two 1886 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* Plainfield sheet sections³³ show the station as a masonry structure with a perimeter wood roof assembly. The station had the main passenger area in the center flanked by open passageways on each side, a large smoking room was to the east, and baggage room and freight office was to the west. Note that street in front of the station runs straight in line. To the south of the tracks a frame freight depot stood in an open area, logically facilitating wagon traffic.

³³ 1886 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, Plainfield, N.J., Sheets 4 & 5. Retrieved from <https://maps.princeton.edu/catalog/princeton-j6731608z>
<https://maps.princeton.edu/catalog/princeton-df65vb171>



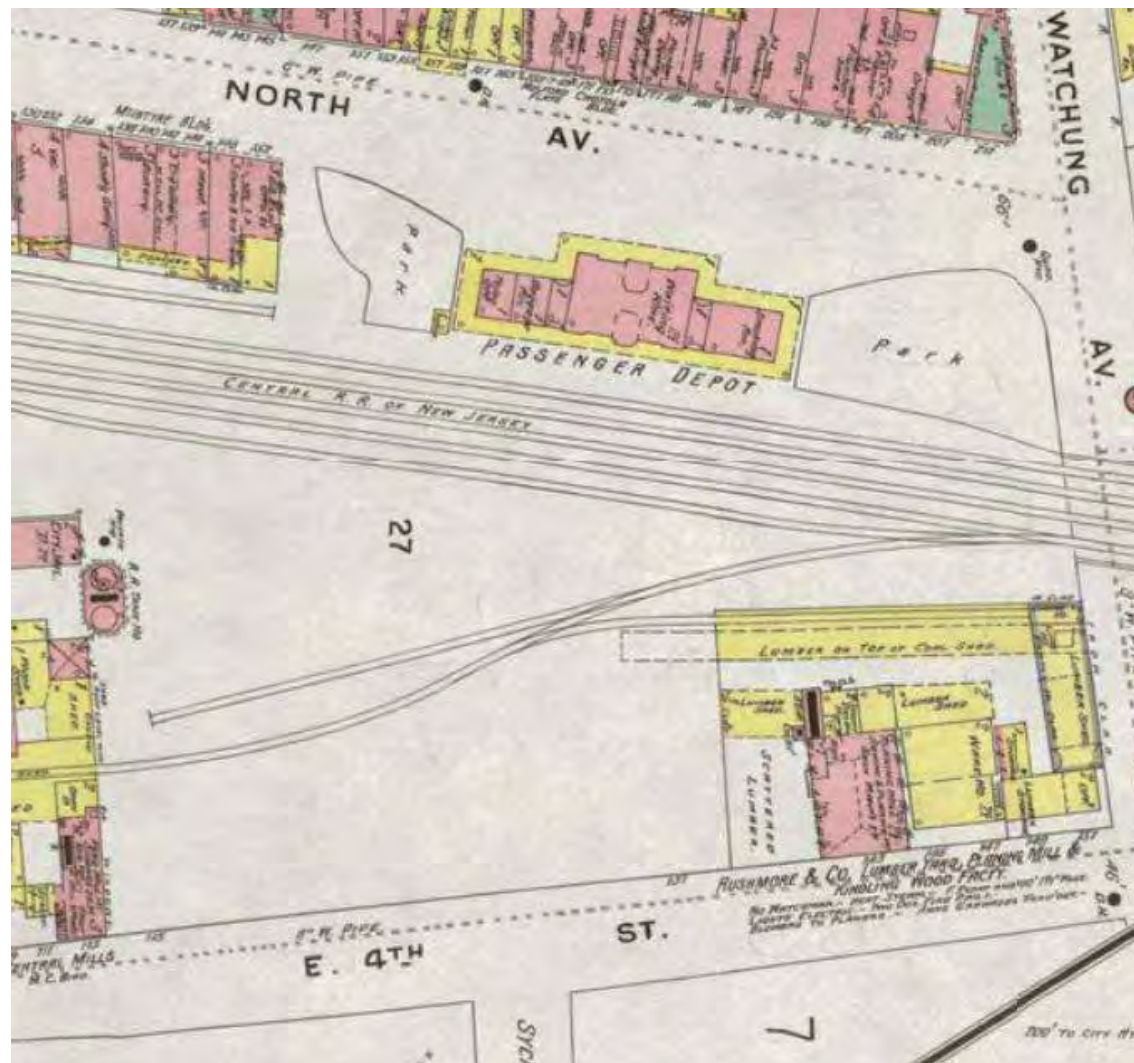
This 1892 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* Plainfield sheet section³⁴ shows the station as a masonry structure with a perimeter wood roof assembly. There is detail in main passenger waiting area that shows the ticket booth layouts. Also, there is detail concerning the front of the building, where the ends extend outward slightly. Again, the center area is shown flanked by open passageways on each side, a large smoking room was to the east, and baggage room and freight office was to the west. Note that the street in front of the station no longer runs straight in line, thus allowing for parking, and parks were created on each side. To the south of the tracks the frame freight depot no longer stands in a clearly open area, as tracks are now shown there. Note the steps and ramp to the freight platform.

³⁴ 1892 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, Plainfield, N.J., Sheet 6. Retrieved from <https://maps.princeton.edu/catalog/princeton-cf95jd77t>



This section from the 1894 F. A. Dunham, *Atlas of the City of Plainfield and North Plainfield*³⁵ shows the station and the freight depot in less detail than the previous map. Note that a walkway is delineated around the station, and the parks are shown more curved. The parking is clearly shown as a widened section of North Avenue. Of great note are the parks along East Fourth Street (south of the freight depot which clearly speak of the beautification efforts of John Taylor Johnston).

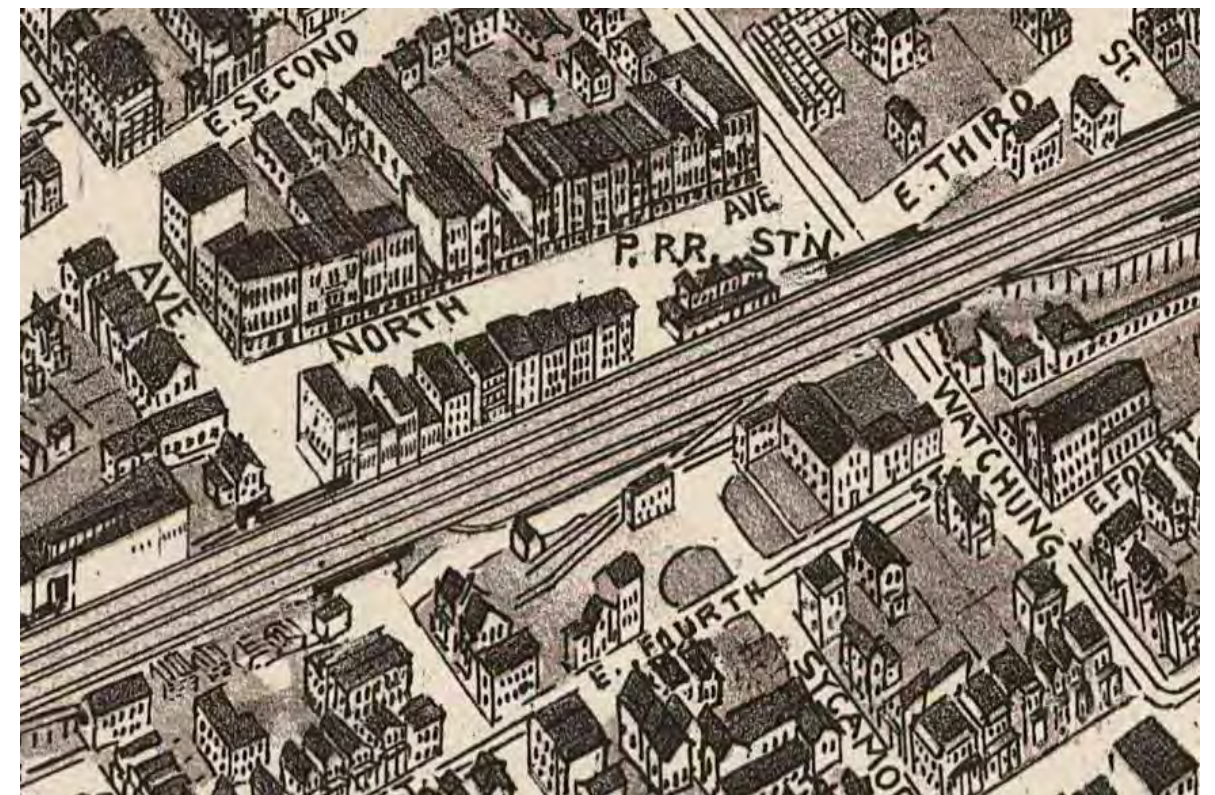
³⁵ F. A. Dunham, *Atlas of the City of Plainfield and North Plainfield Union County and Borough of North Plainfield Somerset County New Jersey*, 1894. Sheet 9. Retrieved from <http://www.historicmapworks.com/Map/US/10904/Plate+009/Plainfield+and+North+Plainfield+1894/New+Jersey/>



This 1897 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* Plainfield sheet section³⁶ shows the station unchanged from the 1892 Sanborn map (page 15), although a telegraph office now occupies the far western space. To the south of the tracks the frame freight depot no longer stands. *The Jersey City News* reported that the Central Railroad of New Jersey made what was described as “a large purchase of real estate” in Plainfield, this was the Rushmore & Co. Lumber yard property. The intention for the purchase was said to be for a “fine new freight depot,” which was never built. But rather, the railroad moved ahead with plans for a new eastbound station building. That station building did include “an attractive park, with driveway for private carriages and a waiting room for passengers.”³⁷ Note the park areas on East 4th Street shown on the 1894 F. A. Dunham map (page 16) are not shown here, as Sanborn maps rarely show landscape features.

³⁶ 1897 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, Plainfield, N.J., Sheet 9. Retrieved from <https://maps.princeton.edu/catalog/princeton-8g84mp57w>.

³⁷ *The Jersey City News*, February 7, 1893, Last Edition, page 2.



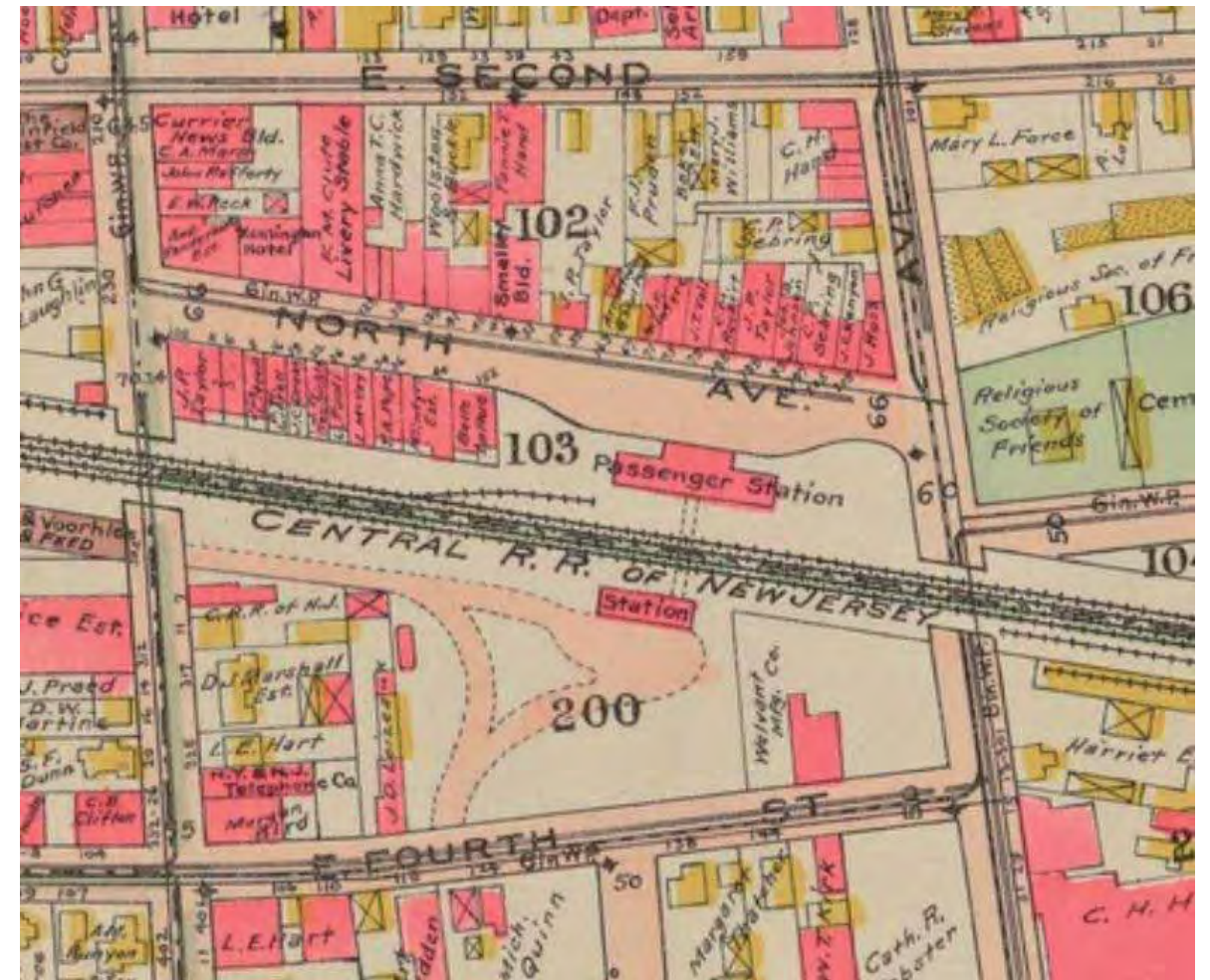
This is a section of the 1899 Landis and Hughes *Plainfield and North Plainfield, N.J.*³⁸ bird's-eye-view map rendering showing the station area. The map shows the station mislabeled as “P.R.R.” when in fact it was the C.N.J. station. The station is also shown too far east, and the flanking front parks are omitted. What may have been the freight depot is shown south of the siding tracks, and two stories tall. The freight depot was only one story and was located by the mainline tracks. The parks along East Fourth Street depicted on the 1894 F. A. Dunham map (page 16) are shown here.

³⁸ Landis and Hughes. *Plainfield and North Plainfield, N.J.* [New York, 1899] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/75694735/>.



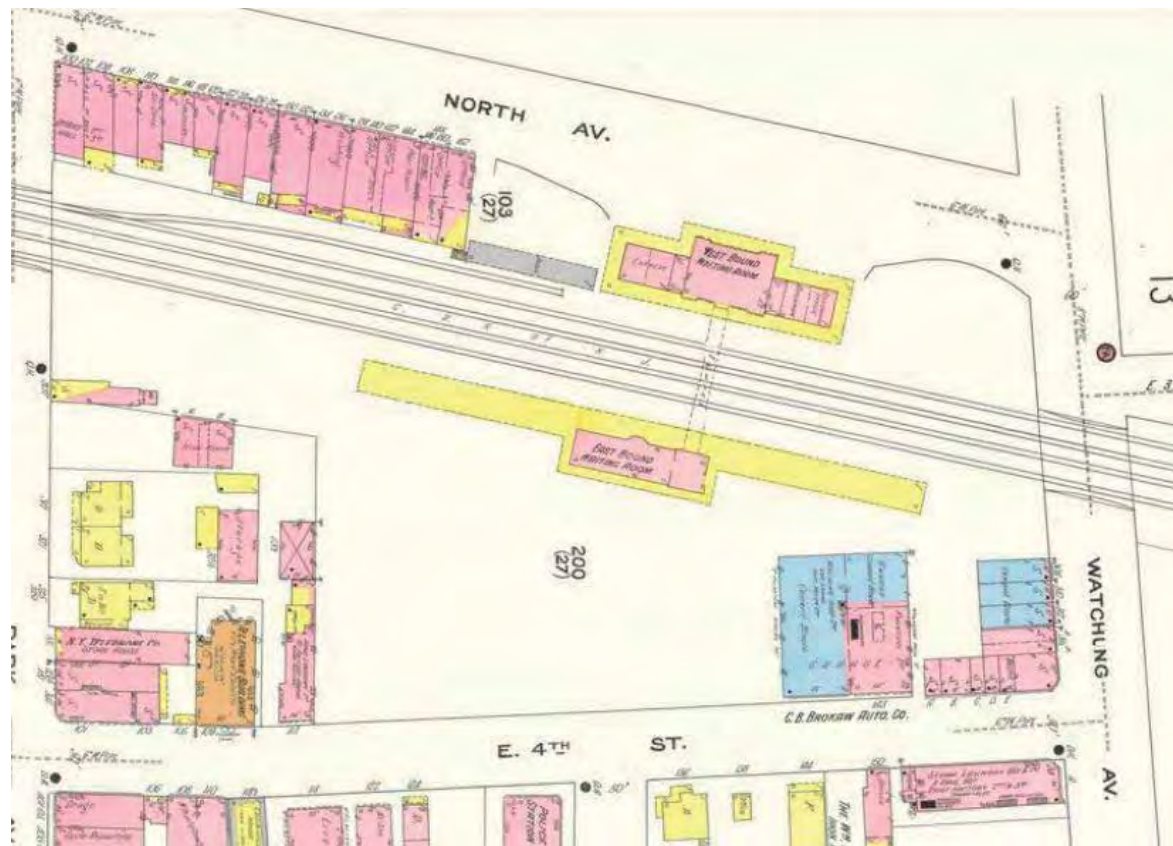
This 1904 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* Plainfield sheet section³⁹ shows the center section of the west bound station unchanged from the 1897 Sanborn map (page 17). The former eastern smoking room is now the baggage room and the telegraph office. And the western section now contains two express offices. To the south of the tracks the new eastbound station building is shown as a mainly one-story masonry structure, with a square two-story section to the east. Covered wood platforms surround the structure and extend along the tracks (note the newspaper stand on the platform). Note the tunnel under the tracks. The park areas flanking the mains westbound station are again shown, but on East 4th Street no parks, drives, and or parking areas are shown here (again Sanborn maps rarely fully show landscape features).

³⁹ 1904 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, Plainfield, N.J., Sheet 9. Retrieved from <https://maps.princeton.edu/catalog/princeton-sb397b56s>



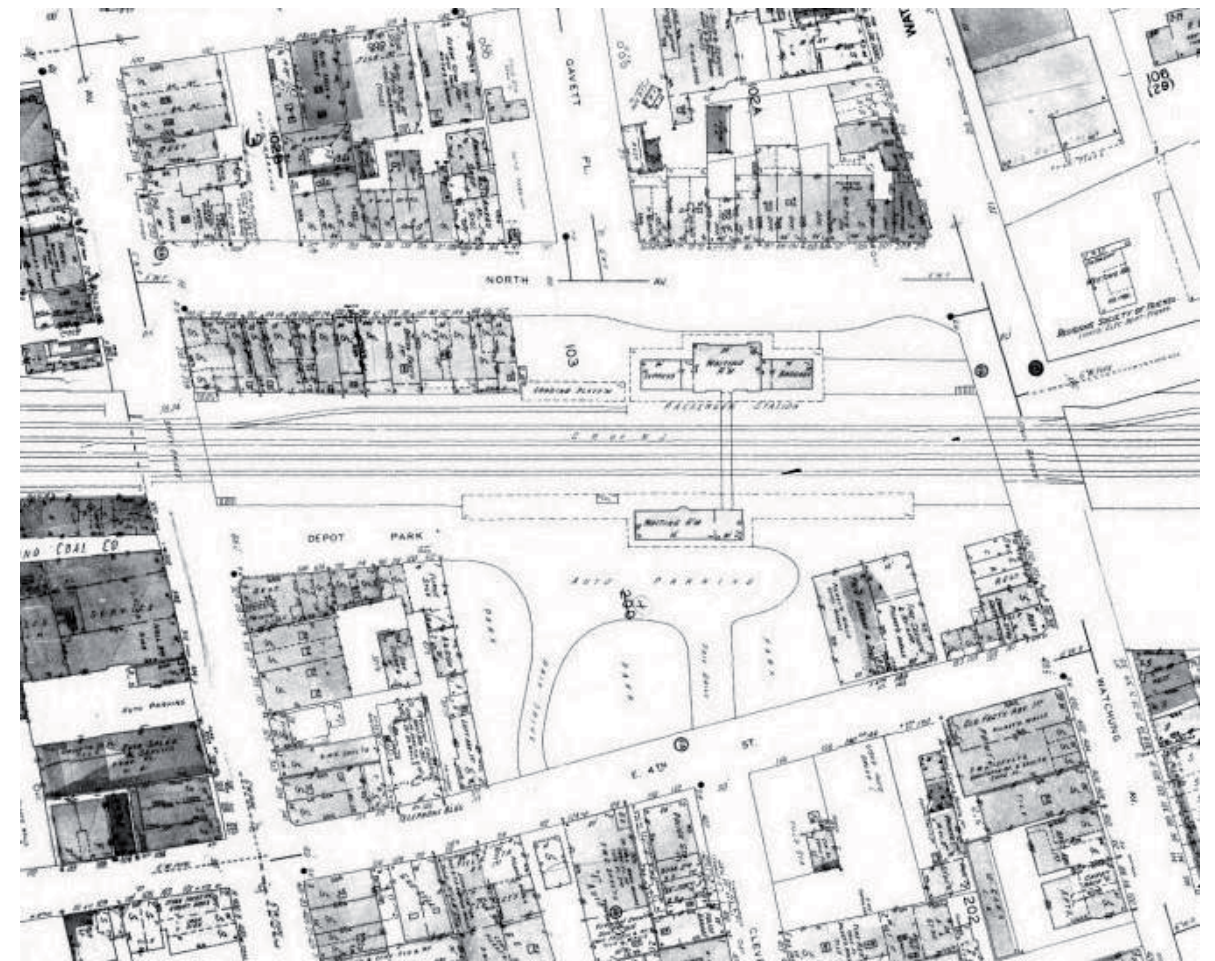
This section of the 1906 "*Atlas of Union County*"⁴⁰ shows both the westbound and eastbound stations, albeit without detail. What is notable here is that this is the first rendition of the drives, parking, and landscaped areas around the eastbound station. Period photographs give more information as to what these areas consisted of.

⁴⁰ "*Atlas of Union County, New Jersey. 1906. From maps and data by Jacob L. Bauer county engineer. Private plans, surveys and official records. Under the supervision of and published by E. Robinson & co. 428 Lafayette St.*" *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*. 1906. Retrieved from <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/b9a483db-4bec-dee3-e040-e00a18064eb1>



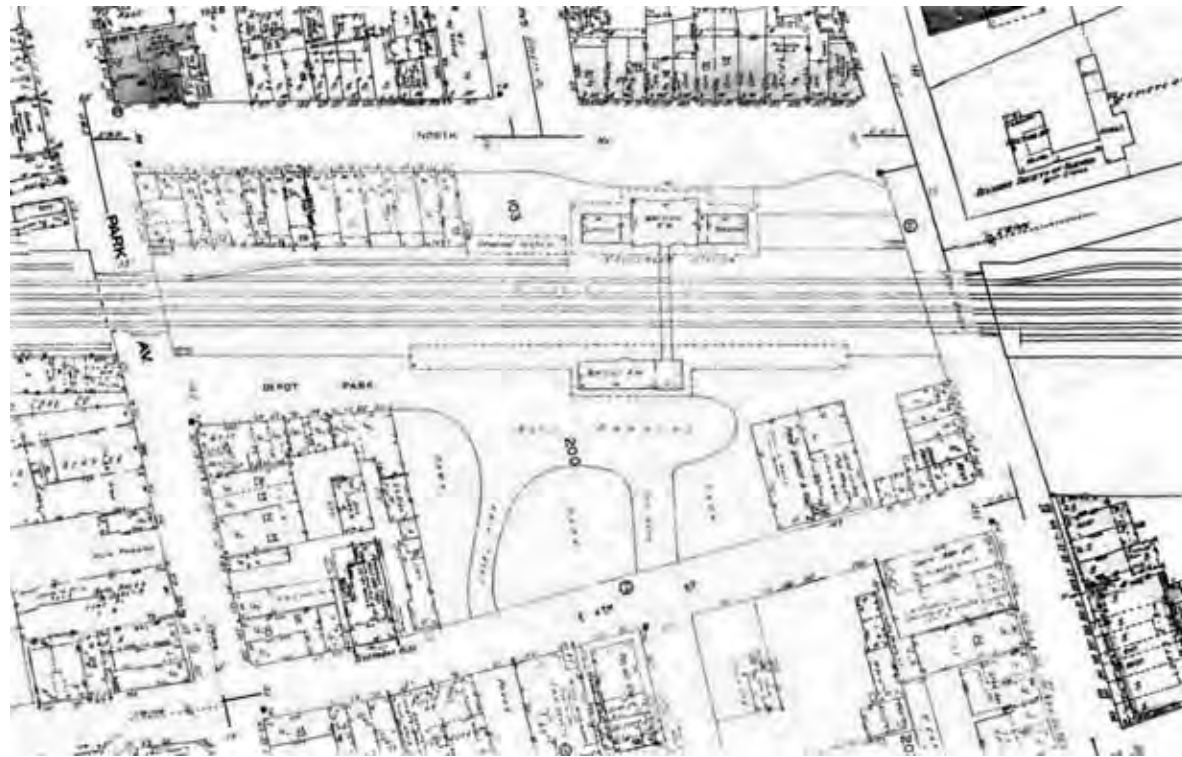
This 1910 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* Plainfield sheet section⁴¹ is virtually the same as the 1901 Sanborn map section (page 19). Although one change is the one-story structure constructed of iron located along a siding track west of the westbound station. It is unclear what the use of this structure was, but it was located on railroad property.

⁴¹ 1910 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, Plainfield, N.J., Sheet 16. Retrieved from <https://maps.princeton.edu/catalog/princeton-tm70mw66m>

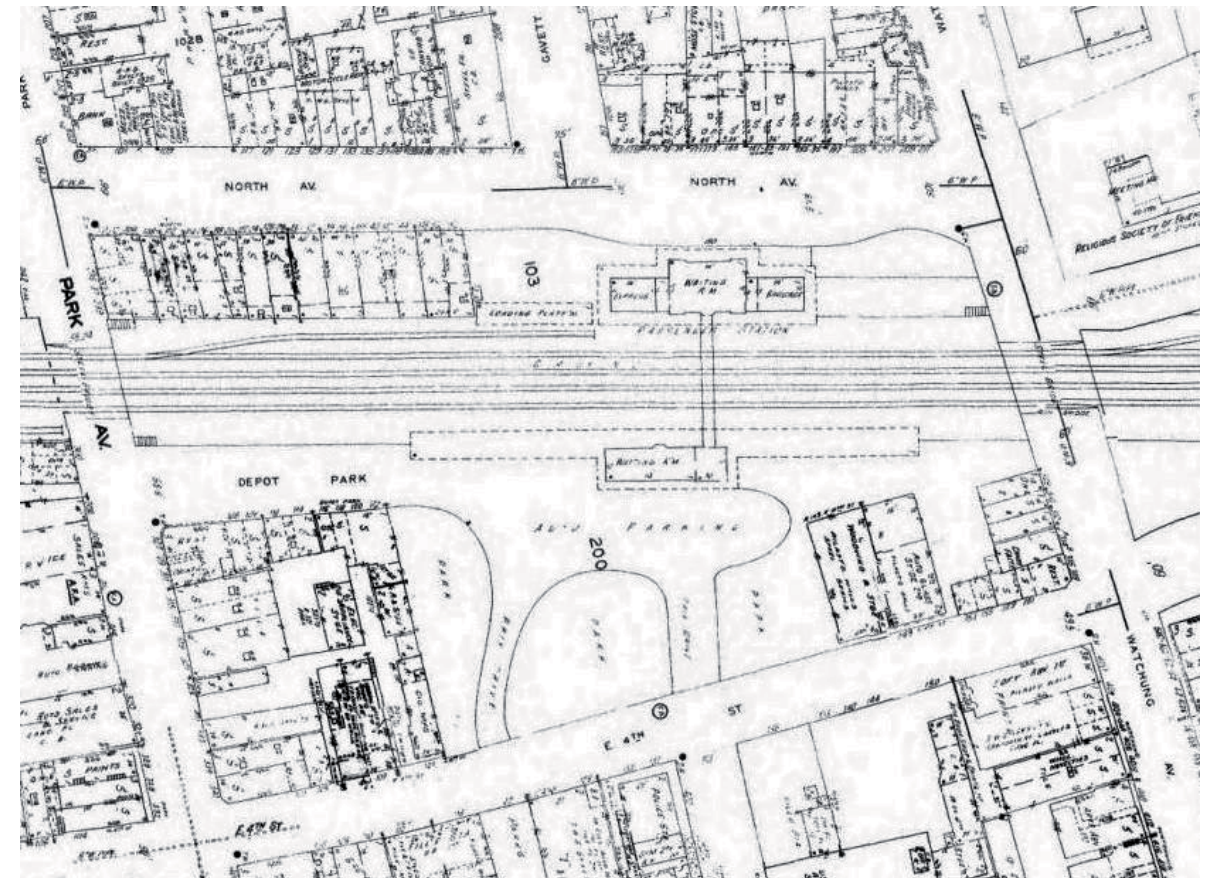


This 1950 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* Plainfield sheet section⁴² shows both station buildings in the same configurations as the 1910 Sanborn map section (page 21). The iron structure shown in 1910 is labeled here as a “Loading Platform.” What is noteworthy is that this is the first Sanborn map to show drives, parking, and landscaped areas around the eastbound station. What is labeled “Depot Park” does not appear to be a landscaped park, but rather a parking/driveway area as it connects without interruption to the auto parking area directly in front of the station building.

⁴² 1950 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, Plainfield, N.J. Retrieved from: NJ TRANSIT Historic Architectural Resources Background Study for the Rehabilitation of Undergrade Bridge MP 22.99 Over Watchung Avenue & Undergrade Bridge MP 23.11 Over Park Avenue Raritan Valley Line Plainfield, Union County New Jersey, Lynn Drobbin & Associates, June 2012.



This 1956 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* Plainfield sheet section⁴³ is virtually identical to the 1950 Sanborn map section (page 22) and is presented here solely to show that no distinguishable changes to the station areas were made at this time.



This 1963 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* Plainfield sheet section⁴⁴ is virtually identical to the 1950 Sanborn map section (page 22), and the 1956 Sanborn map section (page 23). It is presented here solely to show that no distinguishable changes to the station areas were made at this time.

⁴³ 1956 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, Plainfield, N.J. Retrieved from: NJ TRANSIT Historic Architectural Resources Background Study for the Rehabilitation of Undergrade Bridge MP 22.99 Over Watchung Avenue & Undergrade Bridge MP 23.11 Over Park Avenue Raritan Valley Line Plainfield, Union County New Jersey, Lynn Drobbin & Associates, June 2012.

⁴⁴ 1963 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, Plainfield, N.J. Retrieved from: NJ TRANSIT Historic Architectural Resources Background Study for the Rehabilitation of Undergrade Bridge MP 22.99 Over Watchung Avenue & Undergrade Bridge MP 23.11 Over Park Avenue Raritan Valley Line Plainfield, Union County New Jersey, Lynn Drobbin & Associates, June 2012.



This 1982 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* Plainfield sheet section⁴⁵ is virtually identical to the 1950 Sanborn map section (page 22), the 1956 Sanborn map section (page 23), and the 1963 Sanborn map section (page 24). It is presented here solely to show that no distinguishable changes to the station areas were made at this time.

⁴⁵ 1982 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, Plainfield, N.J. Retrieved from: NJ TRANSIT Historic Architectural Resources Background Study for the Rehabilitation of Undergrade Bridge MP 22.99 Over Watchung Avenue & Undergrade Bridge MP 23.11 Over Park Avenue Raritan Valley Line Plainfield, Union County New Jersey, Lynn Drobbin & Associates, June 2012.

Aerial Images

A series of aerial images of the Plainfield station area will be presented in this section. Some of the images are better quality than others, which is representative of the advances in technology. Notable information revealed in the images will be expounded upon.



This 1930 image⁴⁶ like most of the series of images from this period is without clarity, and aside from notable trees south of the eastbound station – little is gleaned here.

⁴⁶ Retrieved from <https://newjersey.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?layers=4e7de8d868c248f99c3fddc5bf8c0386>



This 1940 image⁴⁷ is unfortunately incomplete, but the area around the eastbound station is visible. The building itself is relative to the map images. Here we see trees west of the station along the tracks, and south of that is a driveway. The two drives from East Fourth Street are evident and vegetation is seen between the drives - and flanking them. No distinguishable delineated parking spaces are noted.

⁴⁷ Retrieved from historicaerials.com



This 1947 image⁴⁸ shows both station buildings. The image was taken at a time (likely winter) when long shadows were cast, and thus some details are obscured. The buildings appear relative to the photographic images. The details concerning the areas surrounding the buildings are largely unchanged from the 1940 image (page 27).

⁴⁸ Retrieved from historicaerials.com



This 1957 image⁴⁹ for the first time shows the then altered westbound station, and the tower on the eastbound station (previously obscured). Shadows of the trees are notable, and automobiles are visible parked in various locations.

⁴⁹ Retrieved from historicaerials.com



This 1963 image⁵⁰ shows both station buildings unchanged from the previous image. The trees are evident (and without shadows). Here the multiple parking areas can be clearly seen, with numerous vehicles parked.

⁵⁰ Retrieved from historicaerials.com



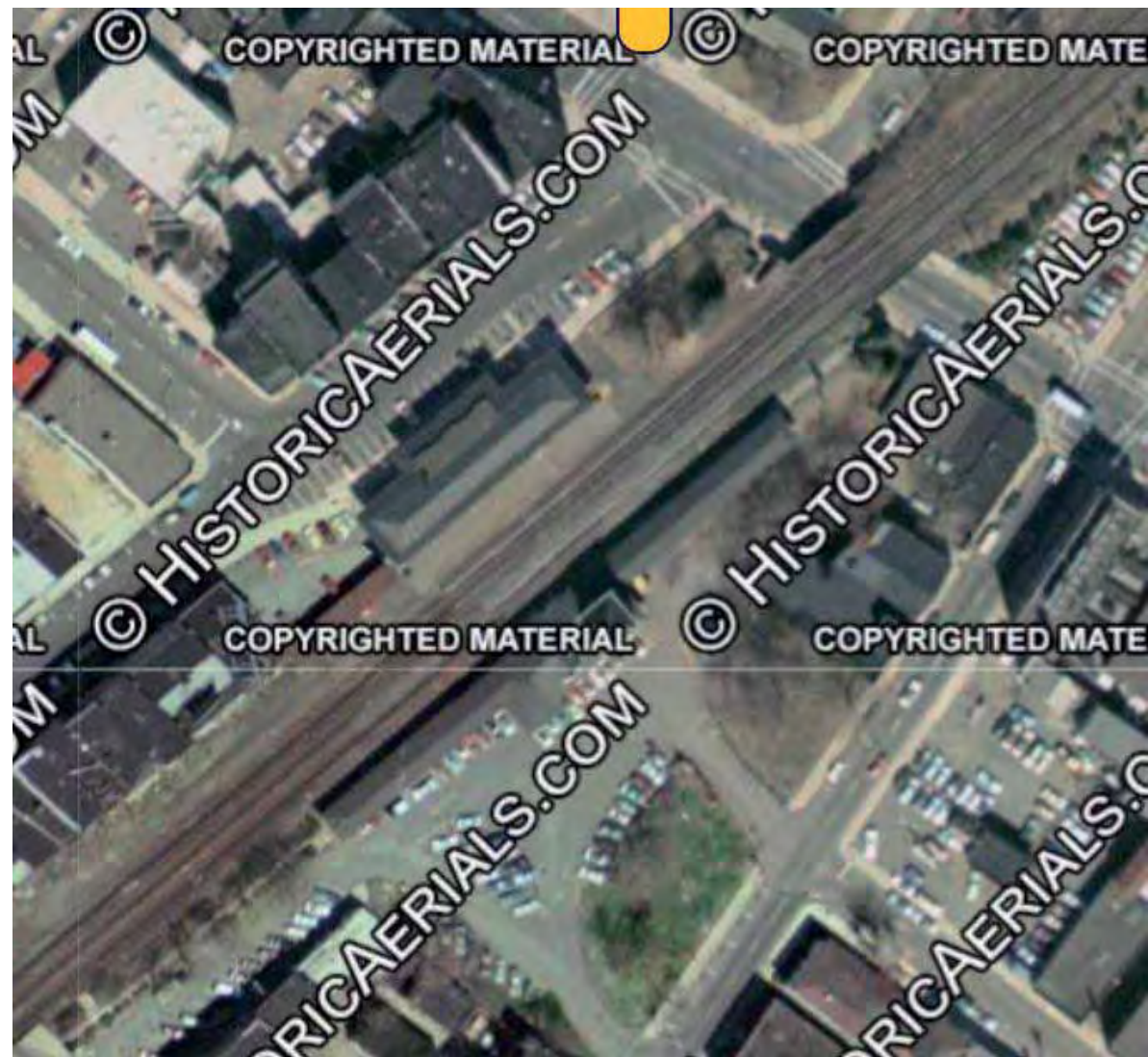
This 1970 image⁵¹ shows both station buildings unchanged from the previous image. The trees are evident, and grassy areas appear to be seen. Here the multiple parking areas can be clearly seen, with numerous vehicles parked, and with delineated painted parking space lines.

⁵¹ Retrieved from historicaerials.com



This 1972 image⁵² is less clear, although it shows both station buildings unchanged from the previous image. The trees are evident, and grassy areas appear to be seen. Here the parking areas cannot be distinguished. Not seen are the expected numerous vehicles, thus leading one to believe the image may have been taken on a Sunday.

⁵² Retrieved from historicaerials.com



This 1979 image⁵³ is first in color. Both station buildings are seen unchanged from the recent previous images. Here the numerous parked cars can be distinguished, and painted parking spaces seen. No leaves are seen on the trees, but the grass, and some bushes can be seen.

⁵³ Retrieved from historicaerials.com



This 1995 image⁵⁴ is less clear than the previous image, although it shows both station buildings largely unchanged from the previous images. The trees are evident, and grassy areas appear to be seen. Here the parking areas cannot be fully distinguished. Not seen are the expected numerous vehicles, thus leading one to believe the image may have been taken on a Sunday.

⁵⁴ Retrieved from *Google Earth*



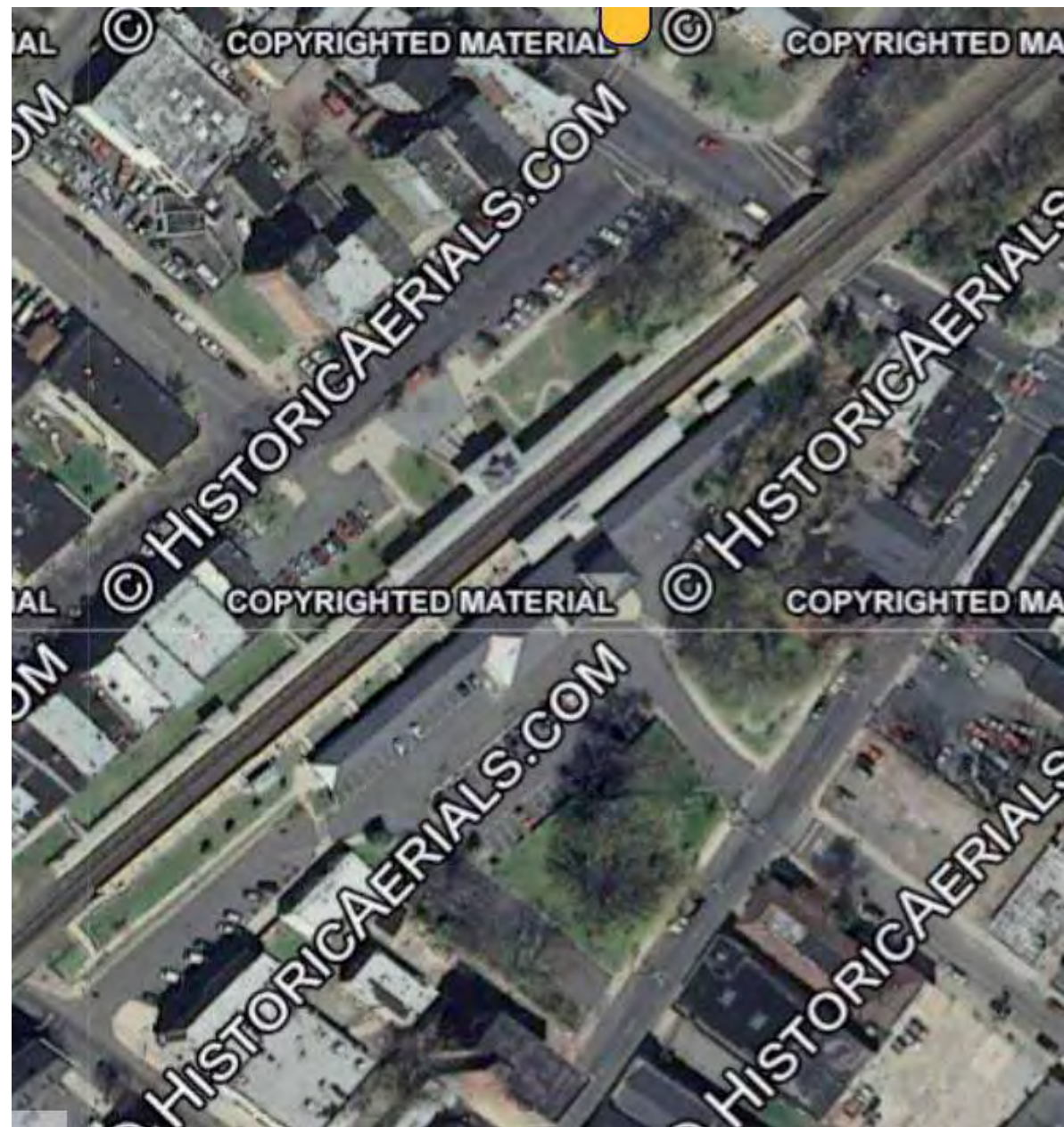
This 2002 image⁵⁵ is in color (although not vibrant). Here for the first time the currently extant westbound station is evident, and the parking/landscape area in front appears to be still under construction. The eastbound station proper appears unchanged, although a new covered platform is visible adjacent to the tracks. The center landscaped area south of the eastbound station appears to be under construction. No leaves are seen on the trees.

⁵⁵ Retrieved from historicaerials.com



This 2007 image⁵⁶ shows the completed alterations to the station complex. The parking areas are clearly seen, as are the various sidewalks. No leaves are seen on the trees.

⁵⁶ Retrieved from historicaerials.com



This 2012 image⁵⁷ shows the completed alterations to the station complex in better detail. The parking areas are clearly seen, as are the various sidewalks. No leaves are seen on the trees.

⁵⁷ Retrieved from historicaerials.com



This 2019 image⁵⁸ shows the station complex in vibrant color. The parking areas are clearly seen, as are the various trees.

⁵⁸ Retrieved from smartsiteplan.com



This 2020 image⁵⁹ shows the station complex in it's near extant condition.

⁵⁹ Retrieved from *Google Earth*

Photographs

Numerous photographs of the Plainfield station complex exist, and they have been divided into three categories: (1) images of only the westbound station; (2) images showing both the westbound and eastbound stations; and (3) images of the eastbound station only. Some of the dates of the images are known from postmarks, notations, and the fact they are from printed sources. The images speak for themselves, and as such only minimal commentary will be presented.

Westbound Station



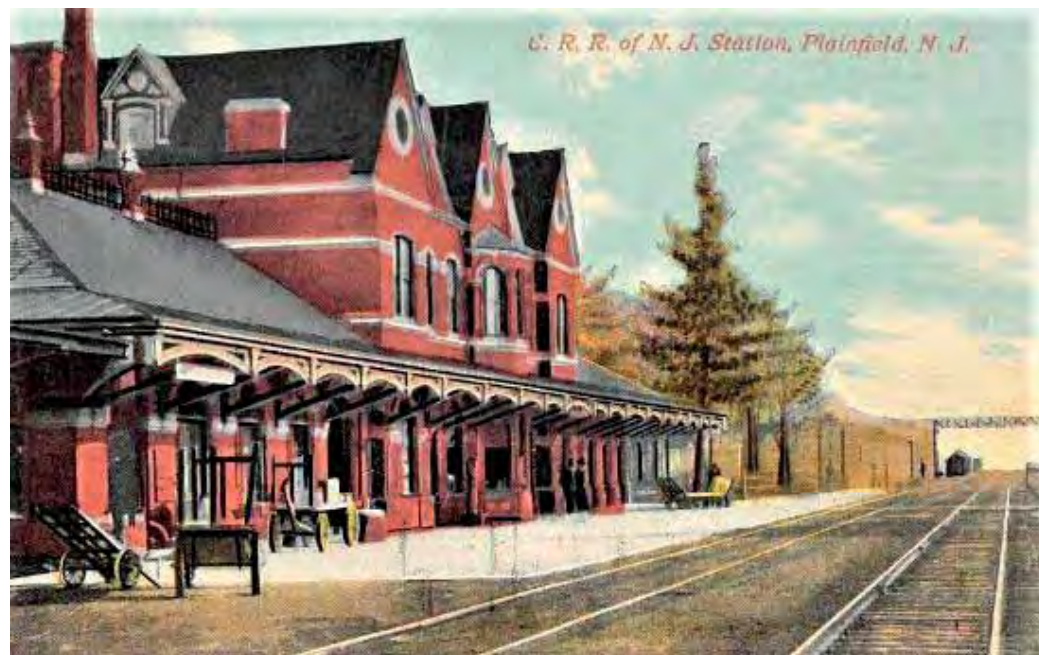
This image is said to be from 1906-07 and presents a clear picture with detail of the structure.



This post card image said to be from 1909. Here we see the station, an unpaved street, curbing, sidewalks, fencing by the park, and mature trees. In addition, note the street light.



This post card image said to be from 1913 shows the front of the station. What appears to be a lamp post stands near the curb.



This post card image said to be circa 1910 shows the track side of the station. The image lacks detail.



This post card image said to be from 1915 shows a busy front of the station. Note the unpaved road, sidewalk (possibly concrete), lamp post, mature trees.



This image is from the 1926 Courier News *Plainfield and Vicinity in Pictures* book. Note the balcony is no longer evident on the front of the station. The iron fencing by the park remains unchanged. New streetlights are present, and the road is now paved.



This undated image shows the trackside of the station from the southeast. The clarity is poor.



These two circa 1984 images show both sides of the station (front above, trackside below), and the destruction caused by uncaring alterations in a quest for modernization.



This *Courier News* photo from August 2000 documents the demolition work.

Both the Westbound and Eastbound Stations



This 1906 photograph by Edward A. Laing gives a good view of the Eastbound station platform, an apparent concrete sidewalk, and imature trees.



This postcard image is from 1907. Note both stations are visible.



This circa 1909 winter time postcard image shows both stations from the east. Note the train is on the far eastbound track, causing passengers to stand on near the tracks.



This circa 1910 postcard image gives a wide view from the west of both stations.



This circa 1910 postcard image from the west shows little of both stations.



This image is from the 1926 Courier News *Plainfield and Vicinity in Pictures* book gives an almost aerial view of the stations from the southeast.



This undated (possibly circa 1915) postcard view gives a good glimpse of the stations from the east. Note the streetlamp by the stairs leading to the eastbound station.

Eastbound Station



This 1906 postcard image of the station shows the unpaved roadway, curbing of stones, and some bushes.



This postcard view from 1906 shows the track side of the station from the northwest.



This circa 1906 postcard image gives a wide view of the south side of the station. Note the stones used as curbing.



In this 1907 postcard view carriage ruts are visible in the drives (proving it was dirt). The news stand is visible on the platform. A greater variety of plantings are visible. No lighting is evident.



This circa 1919 postcard image shows the station from the east.



This undated (possibly circa 1915) postcard view gives a good overall view of the south side of the station complex. Note the lack of lighting. The railroad likely knew that this station was mainly used for only morning commuting – thus they saved money by not installing lights.



This image is from the 1926 Courier News *Plainfield and Vicinity in Pictures* book gives a good view of the park area along East Fourth Street. Note the paved street, concrete sidewalk and curbing, and the cars parked head facing the park area.



This circa 1980s photo possibly shows an rail excursion run of some type (note the vintage car to the left of the locomotive). Note the tracks near the platform were removed, and the pavement.



This 1984 image provides good detail of the track side of the station.



This rendering from 2000 shows some of the proposed changes to the station.