

April 2020

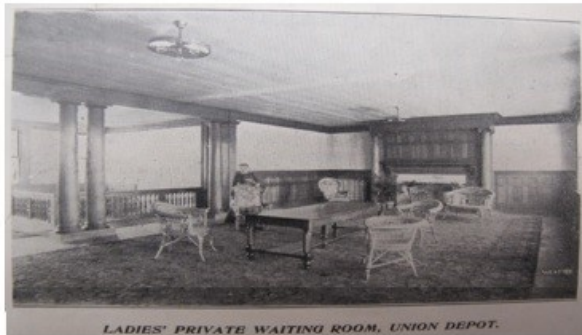
DES MOINES HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORYGRAM

DesMoinesHistoricalSociety.org

The Union Depot 1899-1975

In the Spring of 1896, the City Council voted to vacate portions of 6th and 7th streets for this building along Cherry street on the south side of the Polk County Courthouse. The Des Moines Union Railroad, headed by Frederick M. Hubbell, hired George E. Hallett of Des Moines to design the station. Upon completion, in the evening of April 3, 1899, a celebration was held for 300 invited male guests for a banquet, speeches and a tour. Following these events, the building was opened to the ladies and public to tour. The next day trains began operating out of the Union Station.



LADIES' PRIVATE WAITING ROOM, UNION DEPOT.

A feature of the station was the ladies waiting room on the second floor with a large fireplace and oak mantle. The tiled floor was covered with Turkish rugs. There were comfortable chairs and a good library.

In 1937, as railroads were leaving Union Station due to high rents, the west two-thirds of the station was demolished. The Tribune reported "By 1950 Des Moines had seven stations for eight railroads which operated 38 passenger trains into and out of the city each 24 hours (in the 1890s, 15 lines had operated 90 such trains a day)."

Over the years many railways used the depot. The last passenger train service out of Union Station was on September 30, 1959. It was demolished in 1975.

