

Across My Desk

By Brian Butko
Editor

Greyhound Opens \$300,000 Bus Terminal Today

Operations at Great New Building Will Start Monday Morning With 320 Coaches Handled Daily

We're not speaking of the proposed new "transportation center," or even the current bus station, but their 1930s predecessor. I found these headlines when artist/history buff Chuck Biddle invited me to the library to research Pittsburgh's bus station, built 1959. He figured it was nearing the age when a building looks old enough to be targeted for demolition, but too new to be appreciated or preserved. Sure enough, a month after our search, the station became the focus of a redevelopment plan. But its predecessor also caught our eye.

The March 13, 1937, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* featured stories about the terminal, 14 regional bus lines that would use it, and flattering stories about Greyhound. Congratulatory ads were run by everyone from the refrigeration company to the sound system installer ("only terminal in the world with this unique equipment [which] chimes to attract the attention of passengers to announcements.")

Though the ads portrayed the station as a streamlined, Art Deco wonder, a couple rounded windows were about all that translated from the renderings. Still, the details sounded state-of-the-art: six ticket windows, nine loading lanes, information/travel bureau desk, Travelers' Aid, drug store, restaurant, restrooms with showers and dressing rooms, terrazzo floor, black walnut trim, tri-tone walls. It was hailed as "Pittsburgh's Gateway to America!"

But two decades later, Greyhound and the city had built a replacement, which they crowed was "handsome, new, and, from a civic and economic standpoint, a highly functional building." (Besting even today's fast food drive-thrus, it had "a public address system which can be clearly understood.") Across the street, the "once-teeming former terminal ... was dark and silent, echoing only with the muffled rumbles of a few buses still using it." It would soon be demolished for the current Federal office building.

And now the 1959 station might be replaced. In mid-February, Mayor Tom Murphy proposed a complex, tentatively called the "Grant Street Transportation Center," with two larger buildings and more parking. In a repeat of earlier projects, officials are hoping the project will stimulate a "dismal" and "dreary" area.

This bus station, shown 1942, was replaced by the current Federal office building at Grant and Liberty Avenues.

The current Greyhound station (opened 1959) could be demolished as early as this fall.



Didja know?

A few quick facts from History Center exhibits.

Rodef Shalom, chartered in 1856, is the oldest continuous Jewish congregation in Western Pennsylvania. The congregation's synagogue is located in Pittsburgh's Oakland neighborhood.



Rodef Shalom, c. 1909.

In 1910, Pittsburgh firefighters began replacing their horse-drawn wagons with fire engines, though two horses (named Dan and Bob) were still being used as late as 1927.

Italian-born world heavyweight boxing champion Primo Carnera regularly visited an Italian American club in East Liberty called the Beneficial Society of North Italy. Carnera hailed from the same town in Italy as many of the organization's members, and made a point of stopping to socialize with friends whenever passing through Western Pennsylvania.