

THE STATION

History and
Renovation of the
Michigan Central
Station
in Detroit Michigan



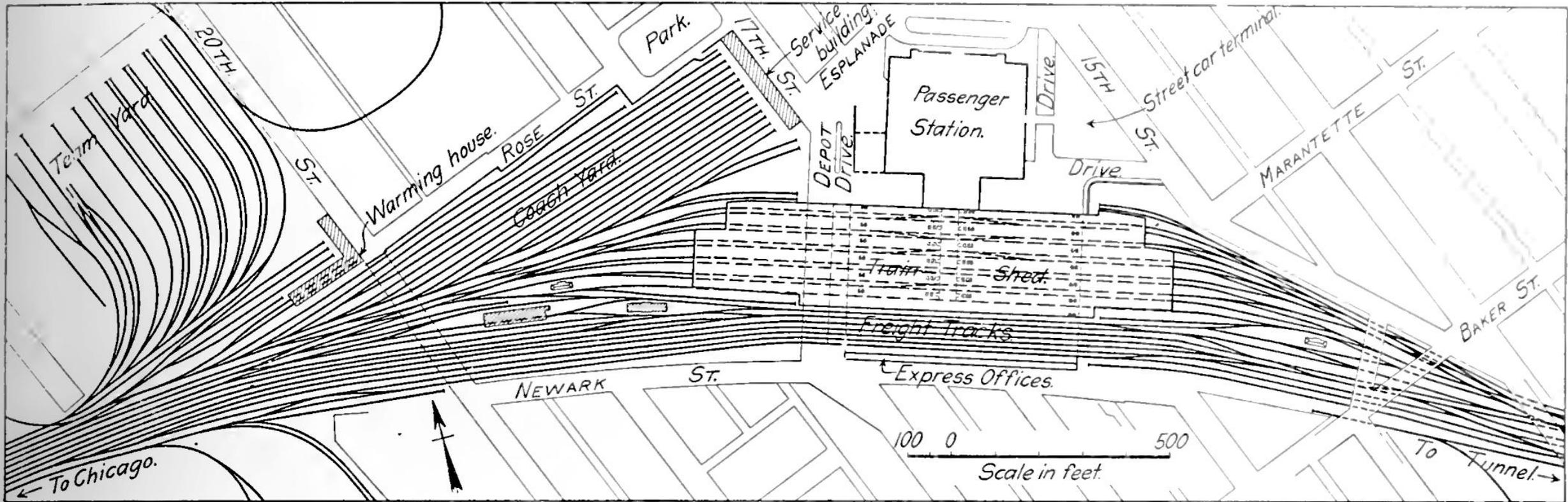
History

- Formally dedicated on January 4, 1914, the station remained open for business until January 6, 1988, when [Amtrak](#) service was relocated.
- The station building consisted of a train depot and a 230-foot (70 m) office tower with thirteen stories above two mezzanine levels (total of 18 stories). The tallest rail station in the world at the time of its construction, at a cost of \$15 million.
- Beaux-Arts Beaux Arts style architecture was designed by architects who had previously worked on New York City's Grand Central Station.
- It replaced the original depot in downtown Detroit, which had been shuttered after a major fire on December 26, 1913, forcing the still unfinished station into early service.
- The year the station was completed, Ford produced 200,000 cars a year.



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- Serviced the New York Central, Baltimore & Ohio, and Canadian Pacific Railway.
- At the beginning of WWI, the peak of rail travel in the United States, more than 200 trains left the station each day.
- 1920 – Ford produced 1 million cars a year. Detroit was the 4th largest city in America
- In the 1940s, more than 4,000 passengers a day used the station and more than 3,000 people worked in its office tower in 500 offices.



General Plan of New Passenger Terminal at Detroit



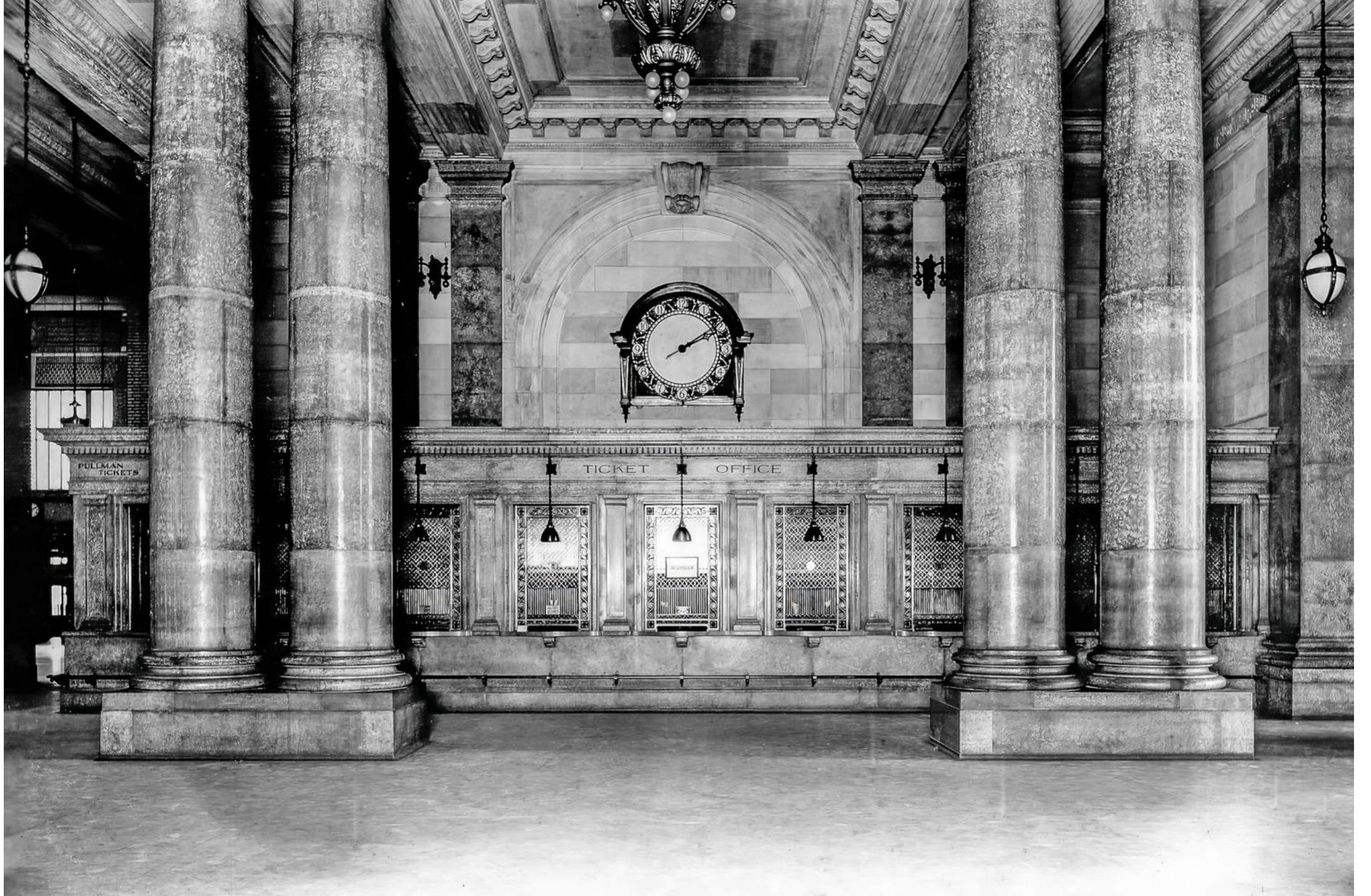
Waiting Room

**Another view of
the Waiting
Room**





Ticket Windows between Waiting Room and Concourse



The Arcade –

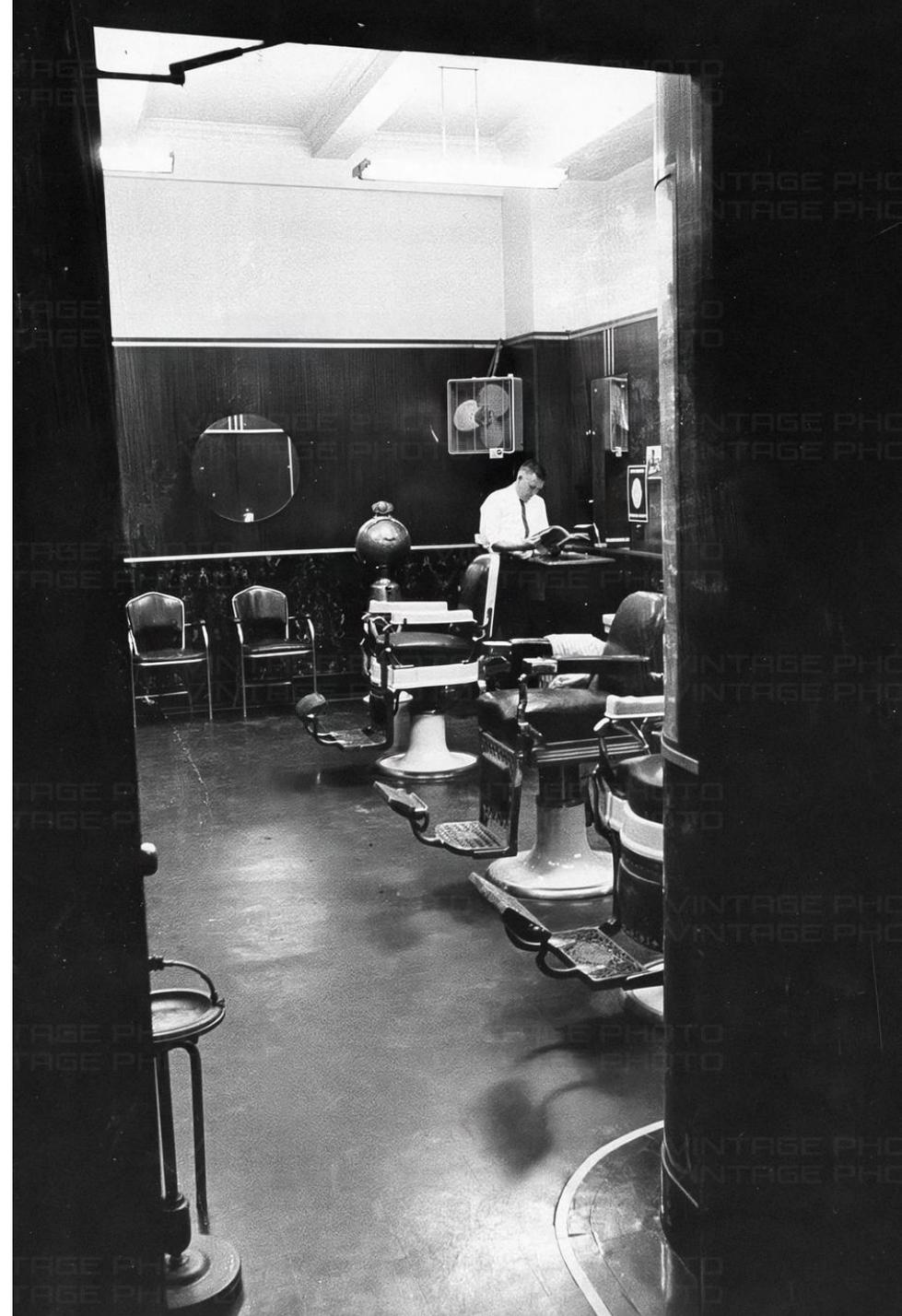
**Featuring a
Drugstore, Cigar
Shop, Parcels,
Telephones,
Barbershop,
Elevators to
upper Floors to
each side at the
end, and
Restrooms.**

**Entrance flanked
by information
and News
booths.**





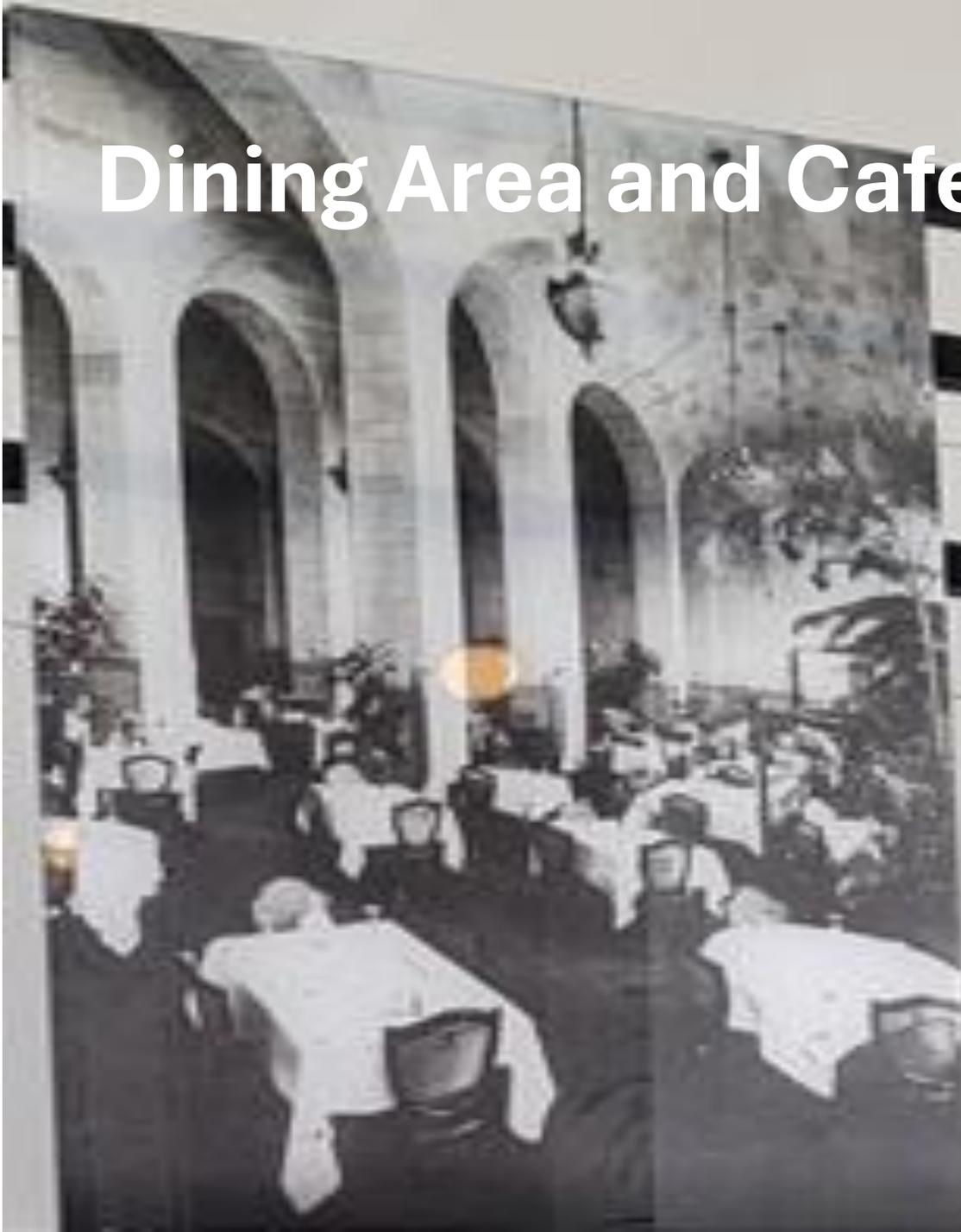
**Waiting Room
window & the
Barbershop**



Cafe



Dining Area and Cafe





Women's Waiting Room

Changing Times

- 1956 - New York Central attempted to sell the facility for \$5 million (one-third of its original cost).
- 1960 - New York Central ended its direct service south to Toledo, on its own timetable yielding that responsibility to the B&O.
- 1963 - B&O moved its trains over to the Fort Street Union Depot.
- 1964 - New York Central ended the last of its trains bound north for Bay City
- 1967 – Pooled New York Central/Central Pacific trains and the Canadian Pacific trains to Windsor were discontinued.
 - NYC Name Trains were discontinued at end of the year.
 - The restaurant, arcade shops, and main entrance were closed, along with much of the main waiting room.
- 1968 – Penn Central ran segmented operations

Amtrak

- 1971 – Assumes control of passenger service
- 1975 – Main entrance and Waiting Room re-opened. Station declared a Historic Landmark.
- 1988 – January 5th, last train leaves the station.
- The Station closes after 75 years of operations.



Three Decades of Abandonment

- Many projects for renovation or use and even demolition was proposed over the next 30 years, but nothing came to fruition.
- Movies filmed in the ruins included:
 - 8 Mile (2002)
 - The Island (2005)
 - Transformers (2007)
 - Batman vs Superman: Dawn of Justice (2016)
- Year after year, the building was scavenged and stripped of value by scrappers, vandalized, but mostly suffered deterioration by the elements.
- The Michigan Central Station became symbolic of the decline of Detroit, particularly the bankruptcy of the city in 2013.

Rot



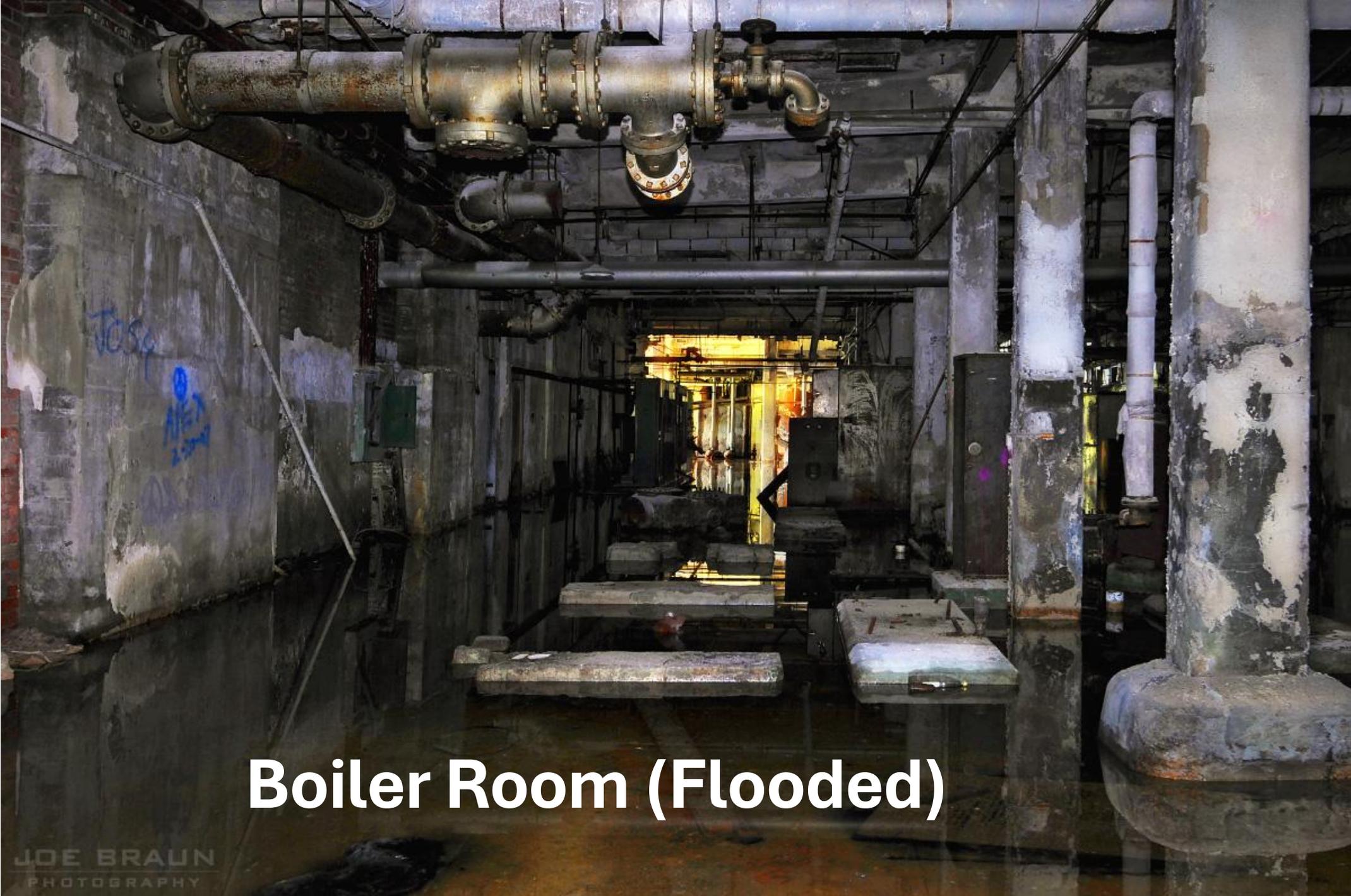
Michigan Central Station in 2008 – 10 Years Before Ford's Renovations
(Vault Series)

2009



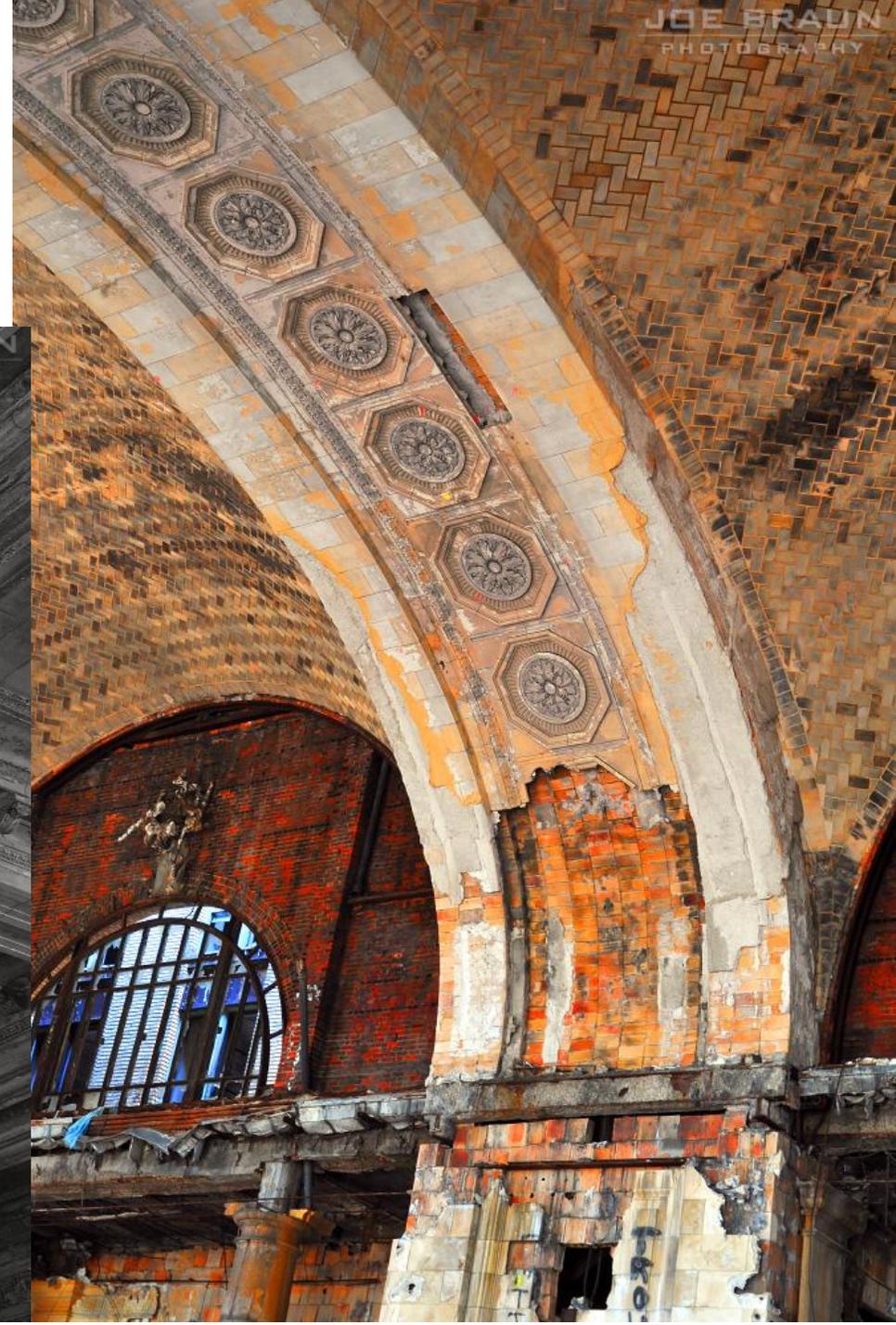
2013





Boiler Room (Flooded)

Ceiling Tile Collapse from Moisture





Heavy all the stone support is missing throughout the building, some shales or destroyed by vandals.

Photography of Charles Smith by The Mirror Company



Braces anchor the top of a Grand Hall column, badly damaged from decades of water damage coming through broken windows.





Photo courtesy of Shalom Hertz



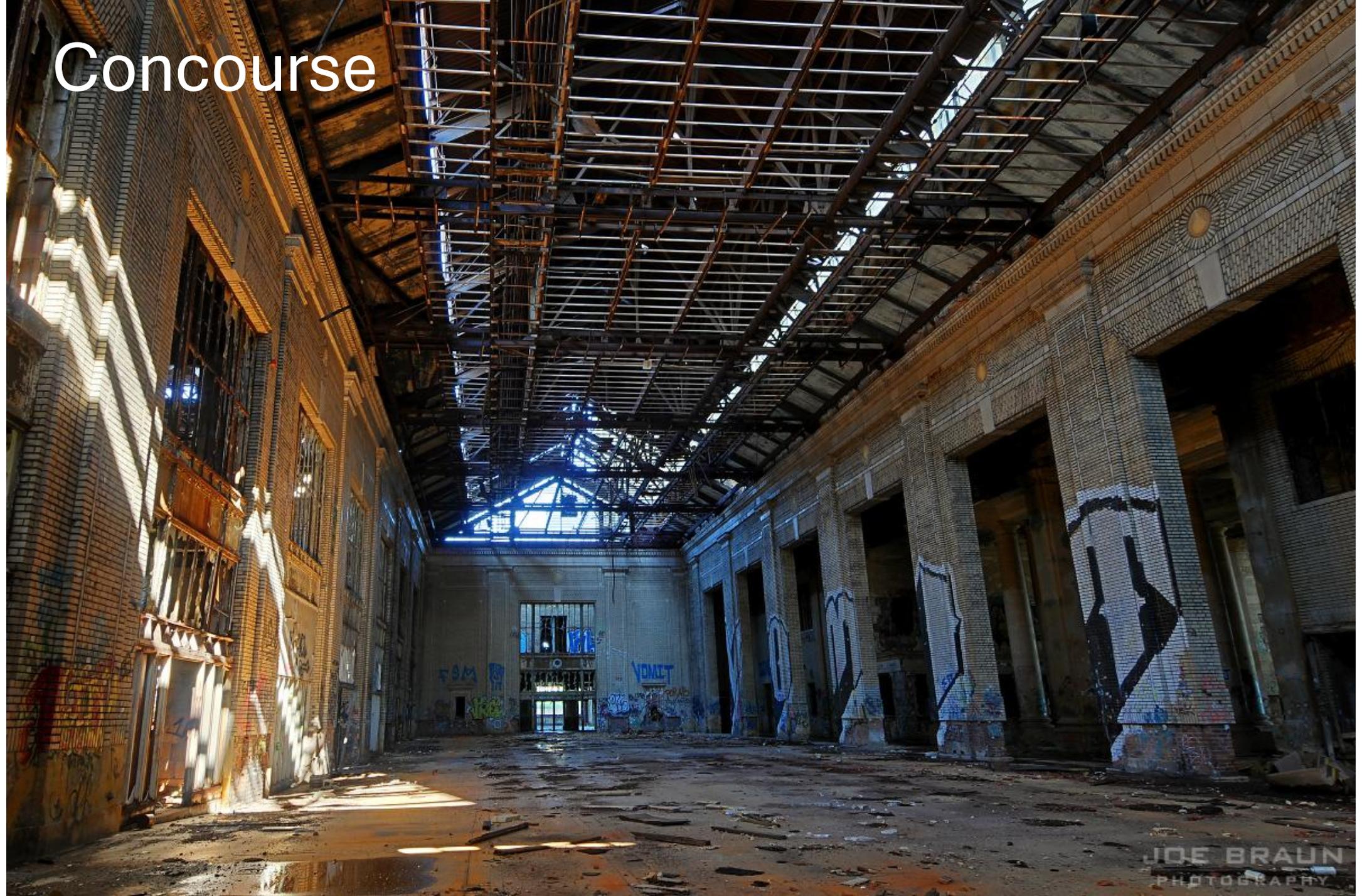
View and in 2011 into the Grand Hall, showing how the building was exposed to the elements for decades.

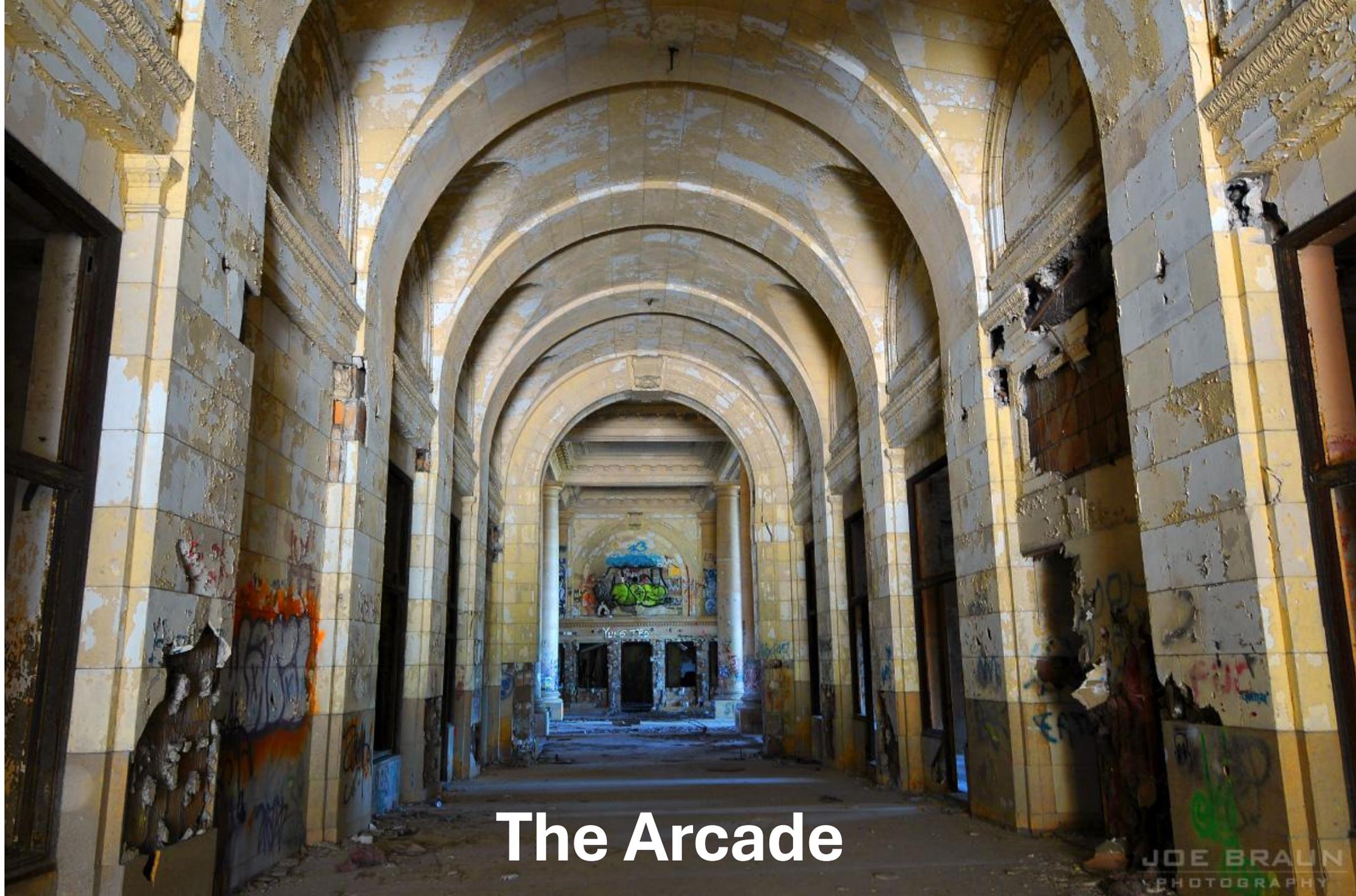
Photo courtesy of [www.oxford.com](#) by Eric W. C. Coates





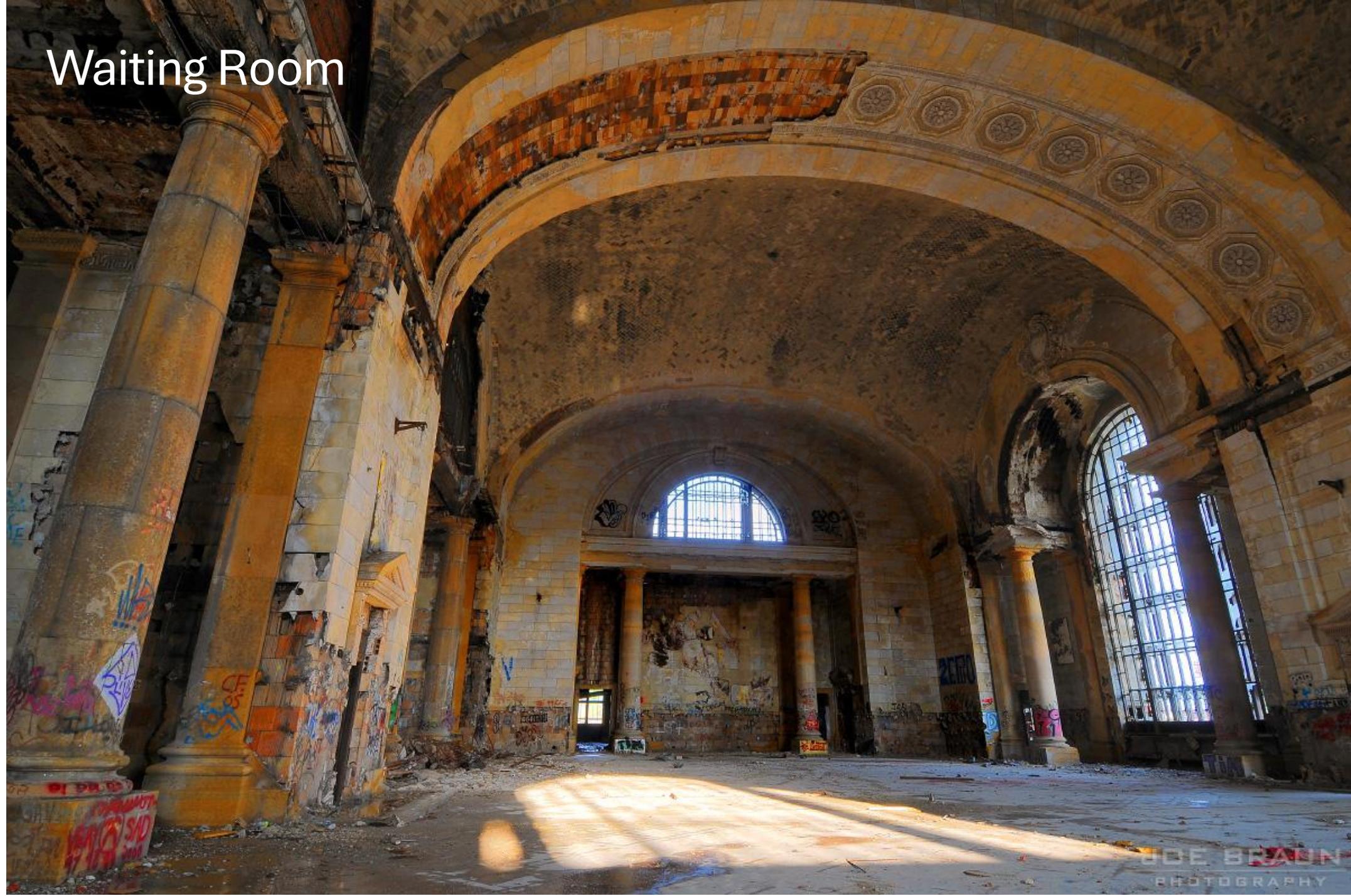
Concourse





The Arcade

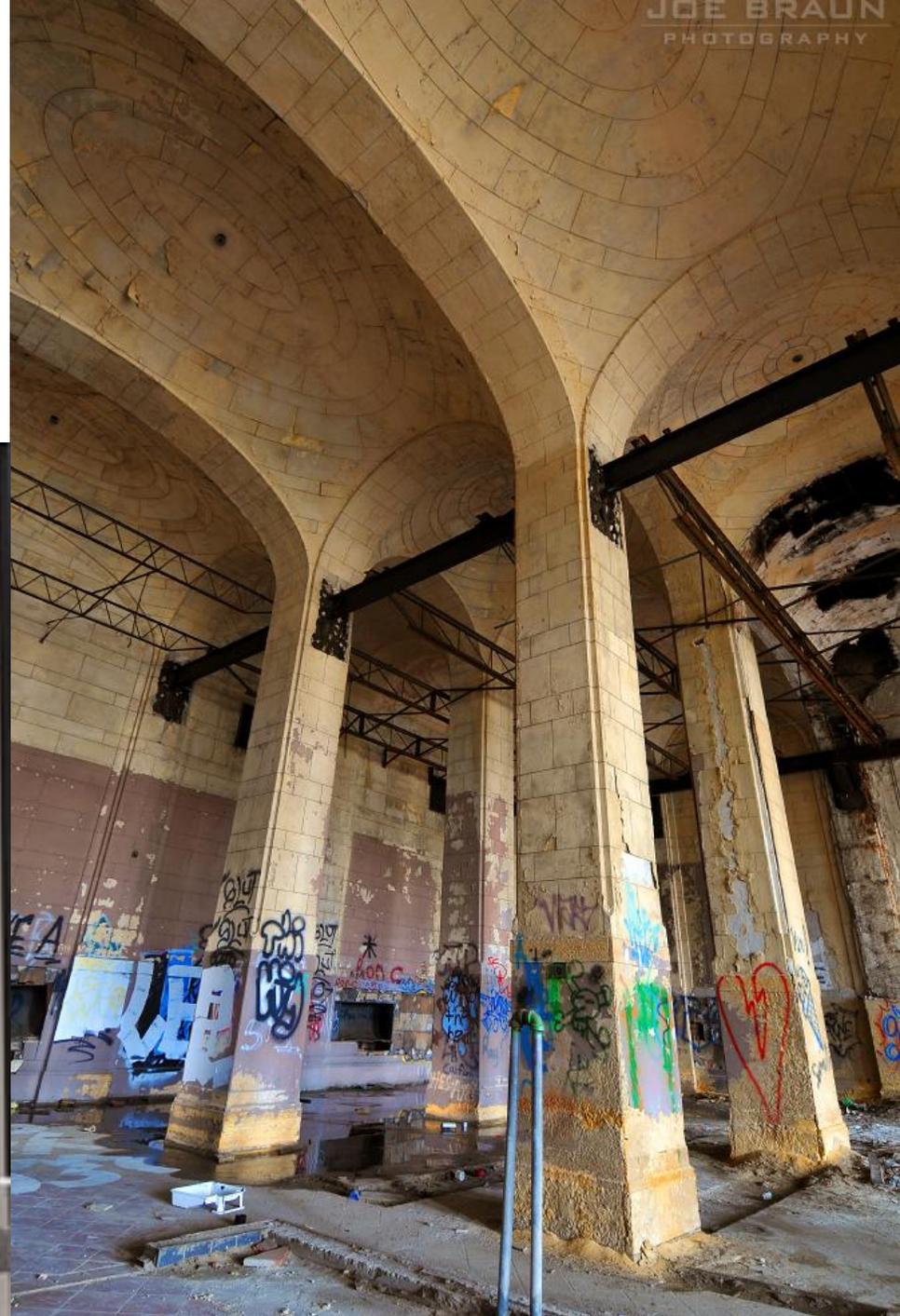
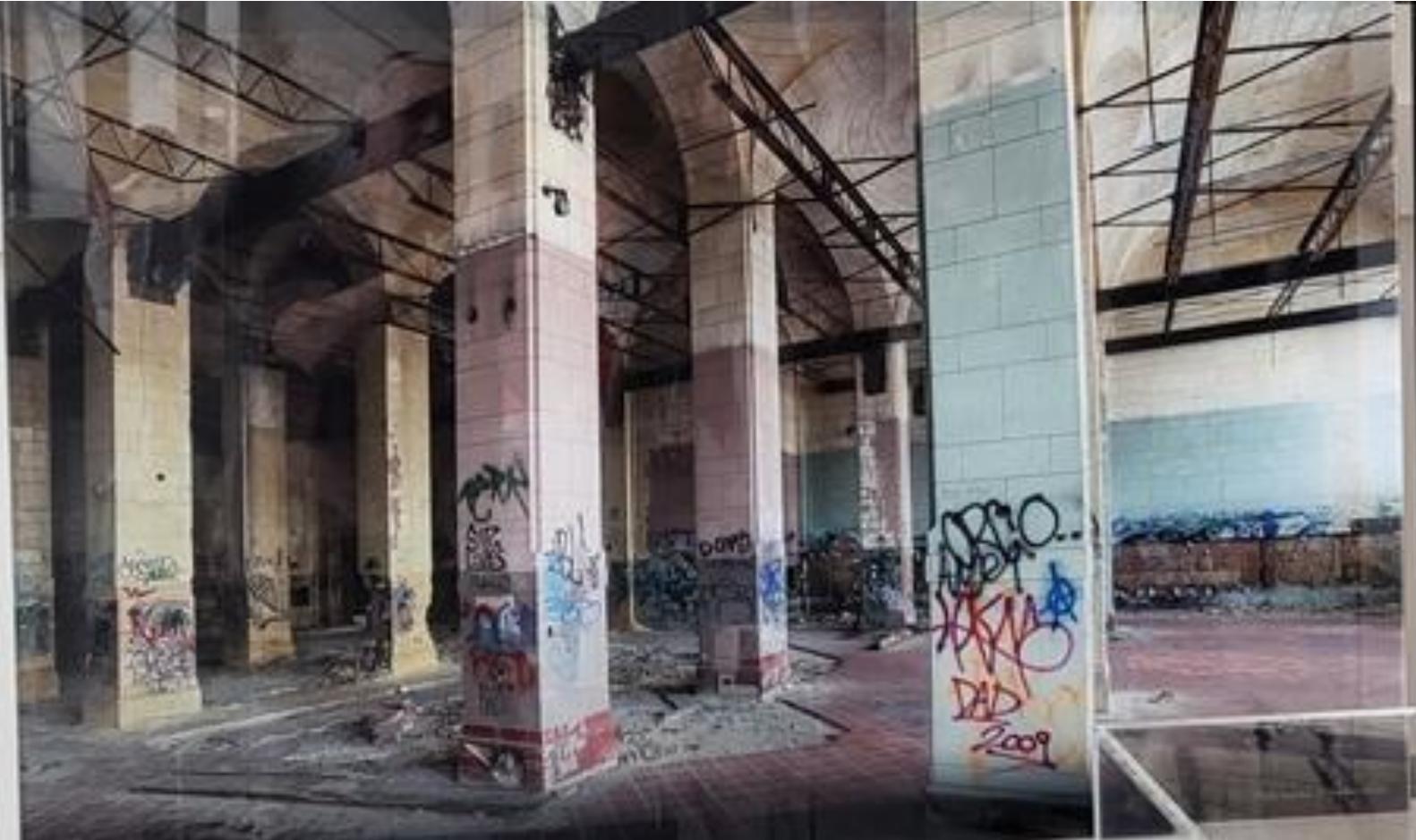
Waiting Room

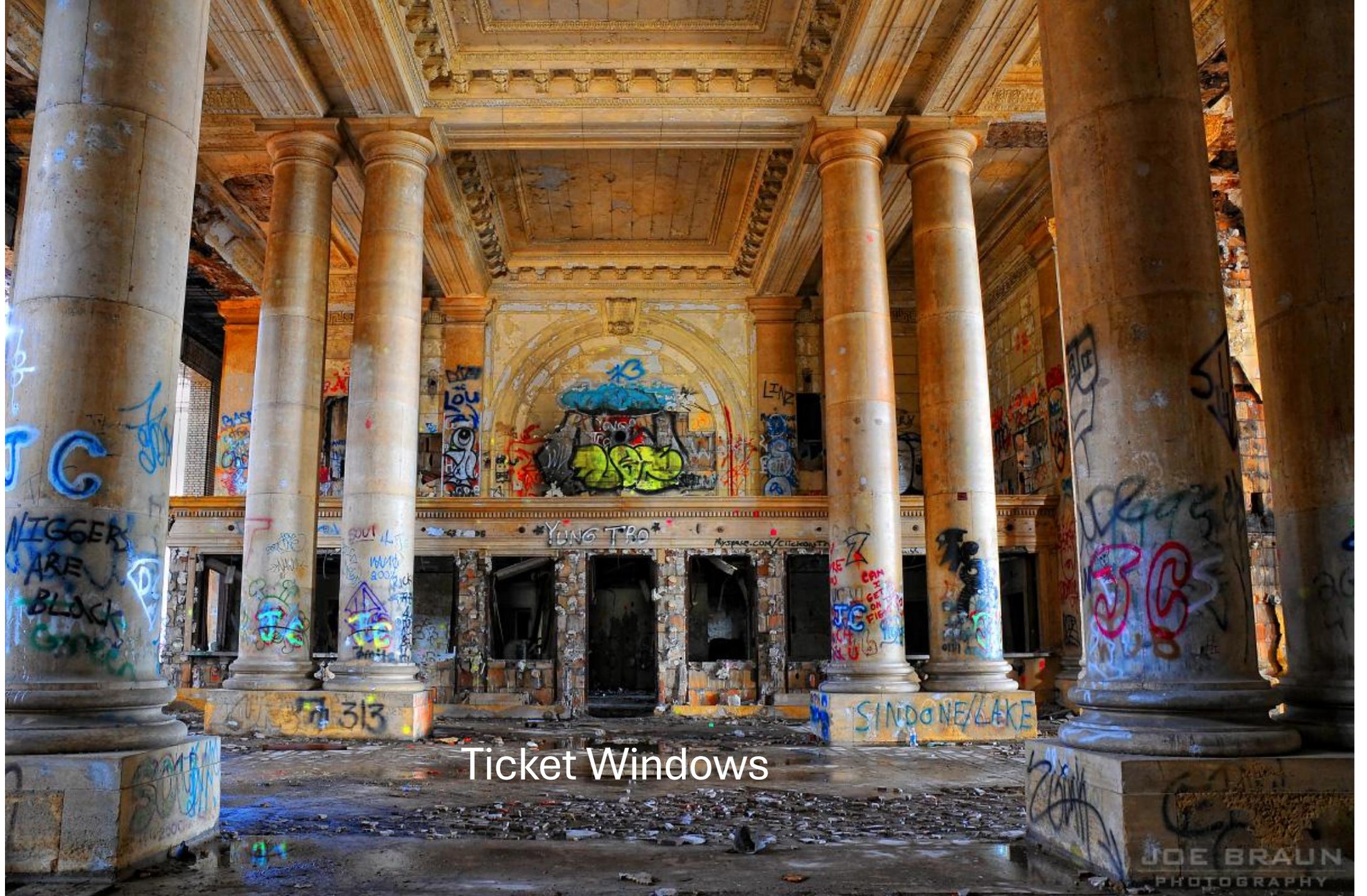


Dining Room

Known as the Mercury Room

Custom made furniture and fixtures filled the room





Ticket Windows

Typical Tower Hallway



Top Floor



Women's Waiting Room



Renovation by FORD

- Ford Motor Company, a major part of the Industry bringing down the railroad industry, has invested heavily in the resurgence of Detroit over the last decade.
- 2018 – Bill Ford, Executive Chair, Ford Motor Company, decided to restore the Station and create an innovative hub to invent the future of transportation. The Station was bought for \$90 million.
- The next 6 years, Ford hired 3000 tradespeople to bring the Station and surrounding area back to life.
- Ford put \$950 million into the renovation cost, exceeding the expected \$740 million cost.

2018



Renovation

- Parts of the building were unreachable because of flooding.
- It would stay damp 2 years until temporary roofs were installed and the water pumped out.
- It took a year and a half to pump 3.5 million gallons of water out of the basement.
- Complicating matters, the moisture was keeping some areas intact.
- 4000 cubic yards of debris were removed from the building, revealing 1000 holes in the flooring.
- Every single window had been shattered.

The Decay

- Hundreds of truckloads of concrete were needed to stabilize the foundation.
- Steel behind the walls was like swiss cheese, significant portions had to be replaced.
- Experts believed any more years of ongoing decay would have made the building unrestorable.

Crumbling capitals and pillars



Reopening the Quarry

- Dark Hollow Quarry of Indiana closed in 1988.
- The distinctly patterned limestone, went into the Station, the Empire State Building and the Pentagon.
- Ford re-opened the old Quarry, for the needed matching limestone, by carving out a new haul road and 30 years of trees to get there.
- Leftover precut blocks from 1913 were found in the quarry.



Site related to Dark Hollow Quarry in Indiana.

Photo courtesy of Stephen McGee for Michigan Central.

The team, wearing safety gear, stands in the quarry looking for the best quality limestone for the new capital.

Photo courtesy of Stephen McGee for Michigan Central.



Special vehicles are needed to move the 25,000-pound limestone blocks.

These courses of weathered Millard for Michigan's Carrara.

Capital Replacement

Decades of freezing and thawing without maintenance left all of the exterior capitals atop the columns, with Corinthian style scrolls, leaves and flowers crumbling like sand to the touch.



Capital Replacement

- None of the capitals remained intact
- Several damaged capitals were scanned by Capital Stoneworks
- The images were blended into a composite
- A Computer Numerical Control (CNC) router used to carve a restored duplicate, crashed trying to carve out restored duplicate.



Capital Replacement – Plan B

- Self taught & gifted Master Stone Cutter John Goodrow Sr. had to carve an original capital
- From a 21,000 lb block of limestone, Goodrow spent 428 hours in his Saginaw shop during 2020, chiseling, blasting, engraving and smoothing it into an 11,500 lb capital.
- The images were blended into a composite
- A Computer Numerical Control (CNC) router used to carve a restored duplicate, crashed trying to carve out restored duplicate.



Capital Replacement

The hand carved capital was CNC scanned to carve out the rest





A call for historic relics to the community turned up fountains, finials, mail chutes, and light fixtures to aid in fabricating faithful restorations.

All 29,000 ceiling tiles were checked, secured, cleaned and regouted with 8.7 miles of grout. Only 1300 had to be replaced.



Main Entrance



Dining Room – still being restored



Rams Head Finial

On loan from an anonymous loan, plaster casts were created for the finials that adorned the walls in the Men's lounge (smoking room)





Men's Smoking Room

None of the
finials remained



Men's Smoking Room



Men's Smoking Room



Message in a Bottle

May 21, 2021 – demolition workers found a bottle with a note in it, behind a cornice high up in the wall.

It read:

***“Dan Hogan and
Geo. Smith stuck this
Beerling of Chicago
July 1913”***





THE CARRIAGE HOUSE CLOCK

If you look out the windows to the right, you'll see the Carriage House. This was where travelers arriving by horse and buggy in 1852 would have been dropped off, making it somewhat of a "VIP" entrance. A clock cast of solid iron stood prominently atop the entry's main facade. But for decades, the clock was missing. At some point, someone had scaled the rusty Carriage House frame 45 feet above the ground, and cut down the hefty 700-pound clock. Somehow, it was lowered down unharmed and carted away.

As it turns out, the clock wasn't a thief at all. They had removed the clock in order to protect it from scrapers who were demolishing anything metal in The Station for scrap metal. On July 15, 2018, The Henry Ford Museum received an anonymous call. It turns out the clock still survived and the caller wanted it to "go home." They had messages that directed a Ford employee to where the clock would be returned.

Ford maintenance workers offered to make a detour to grab the clock. When they arrived at the specified location only two miles from The Station, they found it carefully wrapped in moving blankets and secured against a wall.

Using historical photographs and chemical analysis, the clock's authenticity was verified. We are proud to share it with you fully restored today. Soon, it will return its rightful place atop the Carriage House once again, thanks to the restoration team and the preservationist who saved it.



The Carriage House Clock



"I left it leaning against a burned-out building...between the train tracks and 4470 Lawton. Please send two men and a truck immediately. It has been missing for over 20 years and is ready to go home. Thank you so much."

- Anonymous

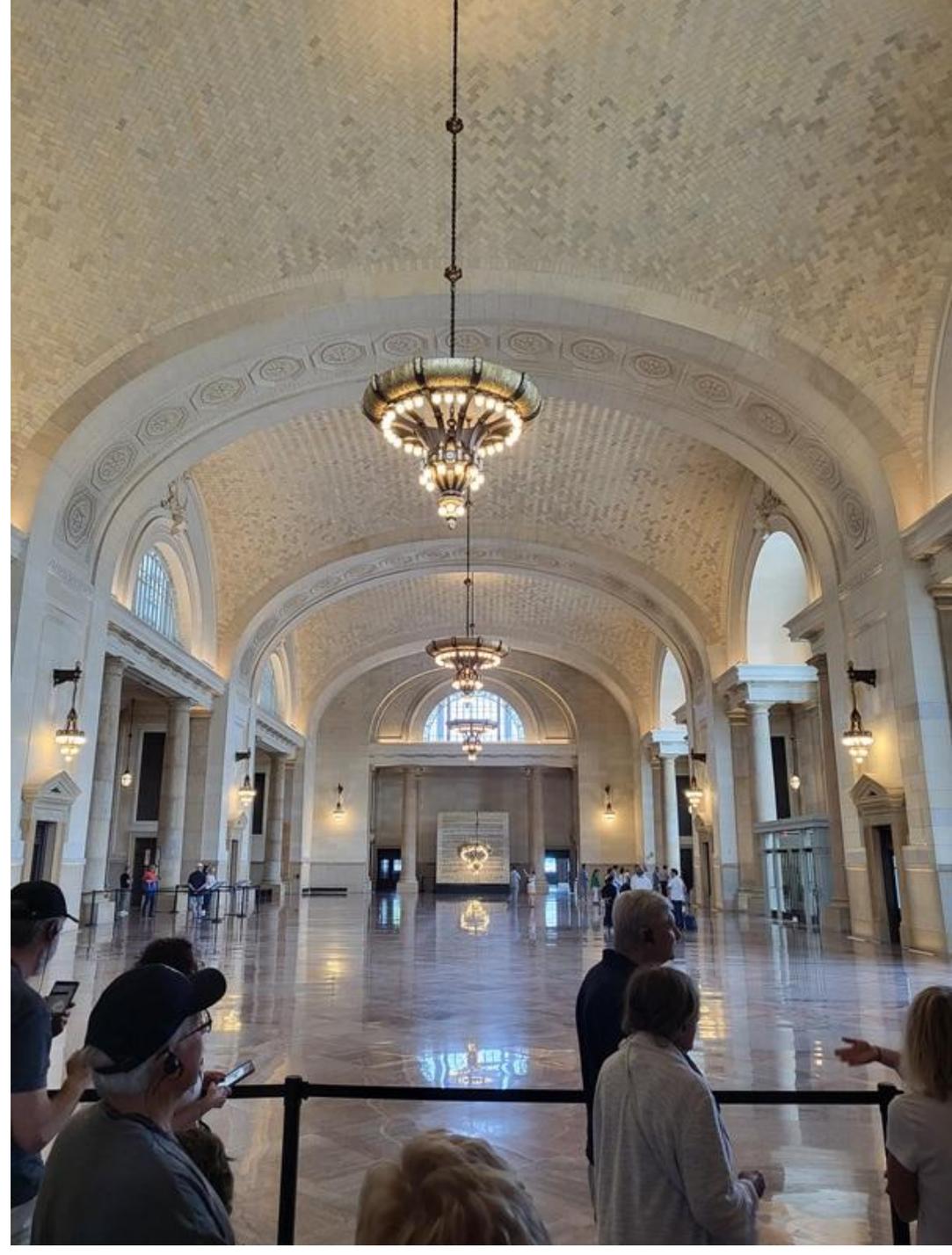




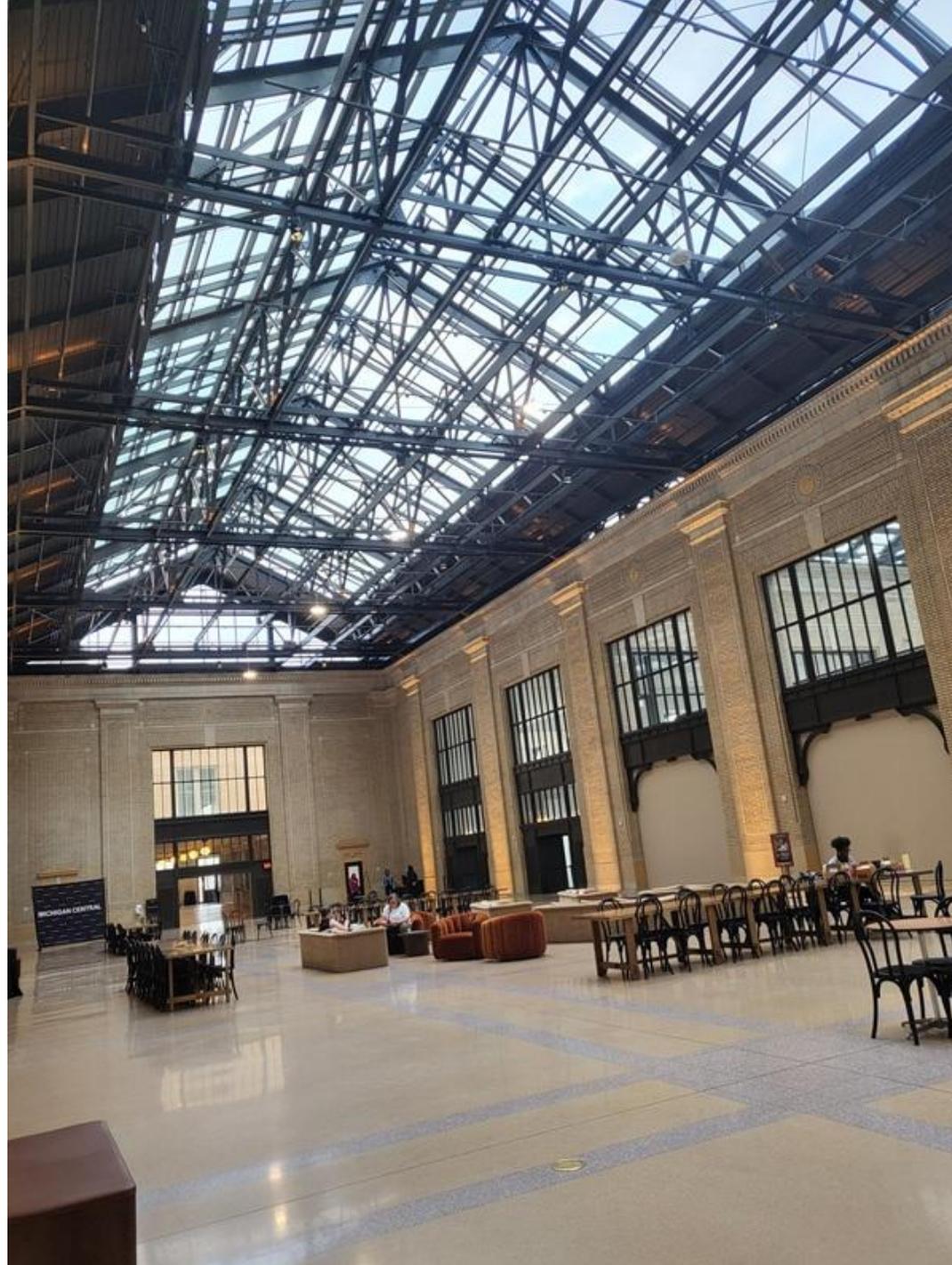
Main Hall

**Chandeliers
were created
from original
drawings**

**Original marble
floors were
recovered by
cleaning and
light sanding
with minimal
damage**



Concourse





Women's Waiting Room





Remaining structurally standing stairway





Ticket Window Clock

**recreated from
an iron fragment**





**One Original
Ticket
Window Left**

**Others
reconstructed**

**All Original
ironwork on
great
windows only
in fragments,**

**all windows
restored with
new ironwork**



Front Entrance





Public Reopening 6 June 2024

Today, the Station and surrounding buildings support offices for Ford Motor Co. and 120 businesses focused on mobility, energy, and multi modal logistics.

Restoration efforts continue on the Carriage House (which will become a restaurant) and some areas of the building, but the building has essentially been fully restored.

2025 Holidays:

[\(20+\) Facebook](#)

