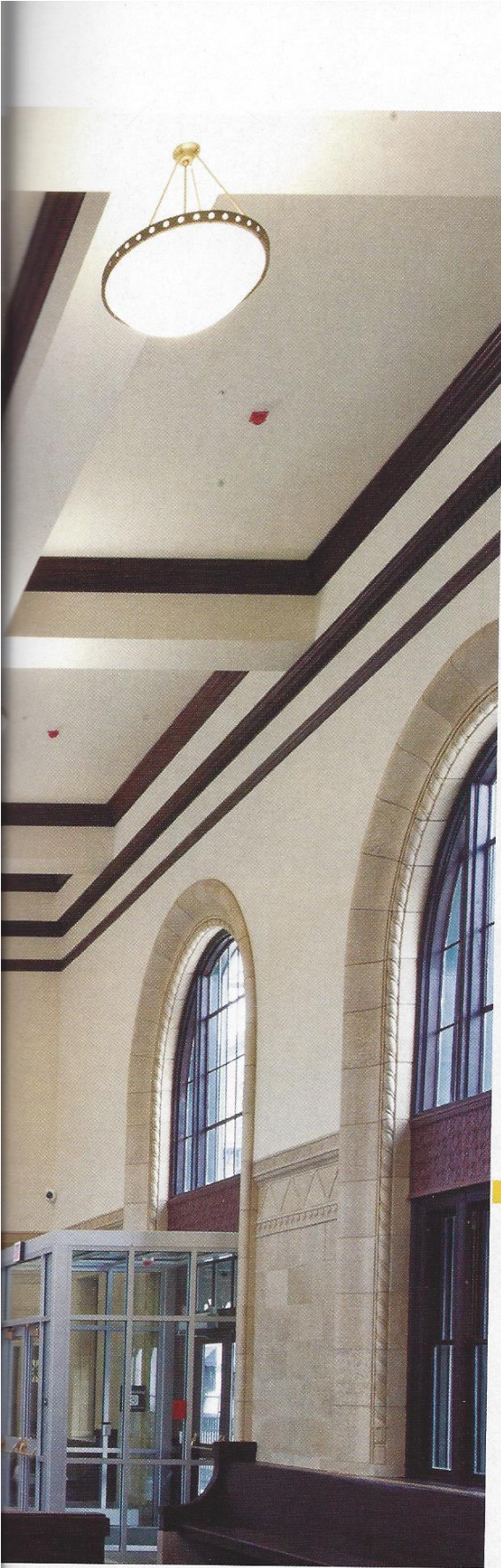


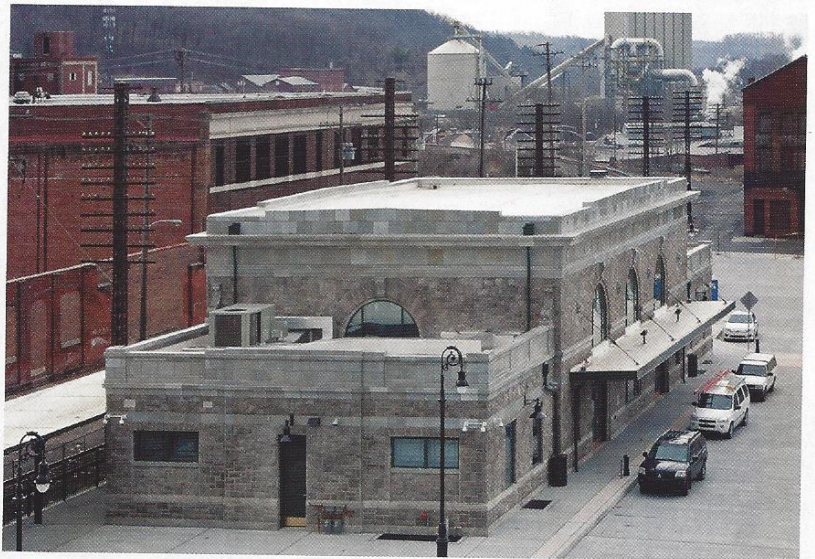


The beautifully restored coffered ceiling presented a millwork challenge.



Restored Pennsylvania Train Station  
Transports You to Another Time.

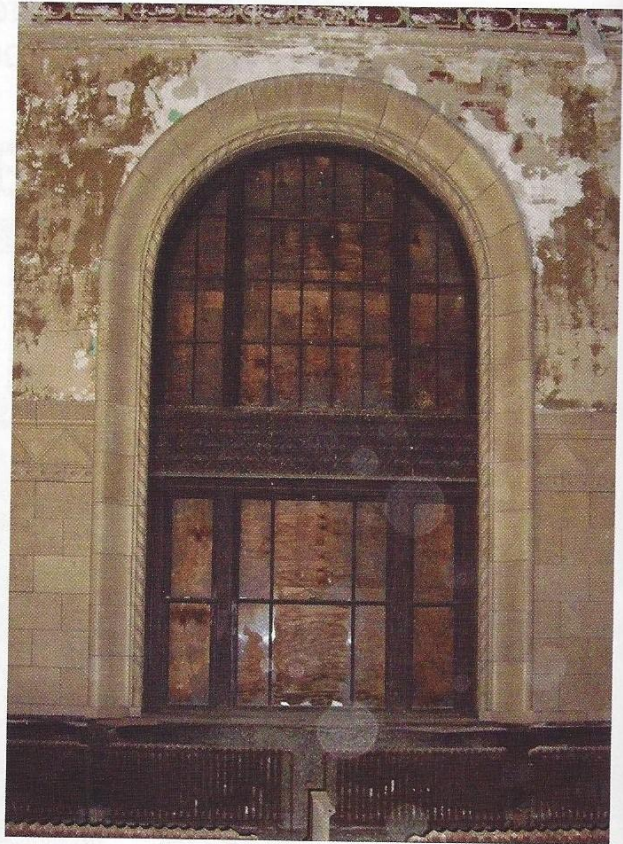
# Station On Track.



The Franklin Street Train Station in Reading, Pennsylvania, was constructed as a terminal for the Reading Railroad in 1928. Many people may have traveled through the famous terminal, but most people are familiar with the Reading Railroad from the game of Monopoly – it is one of the four railroads on the board.

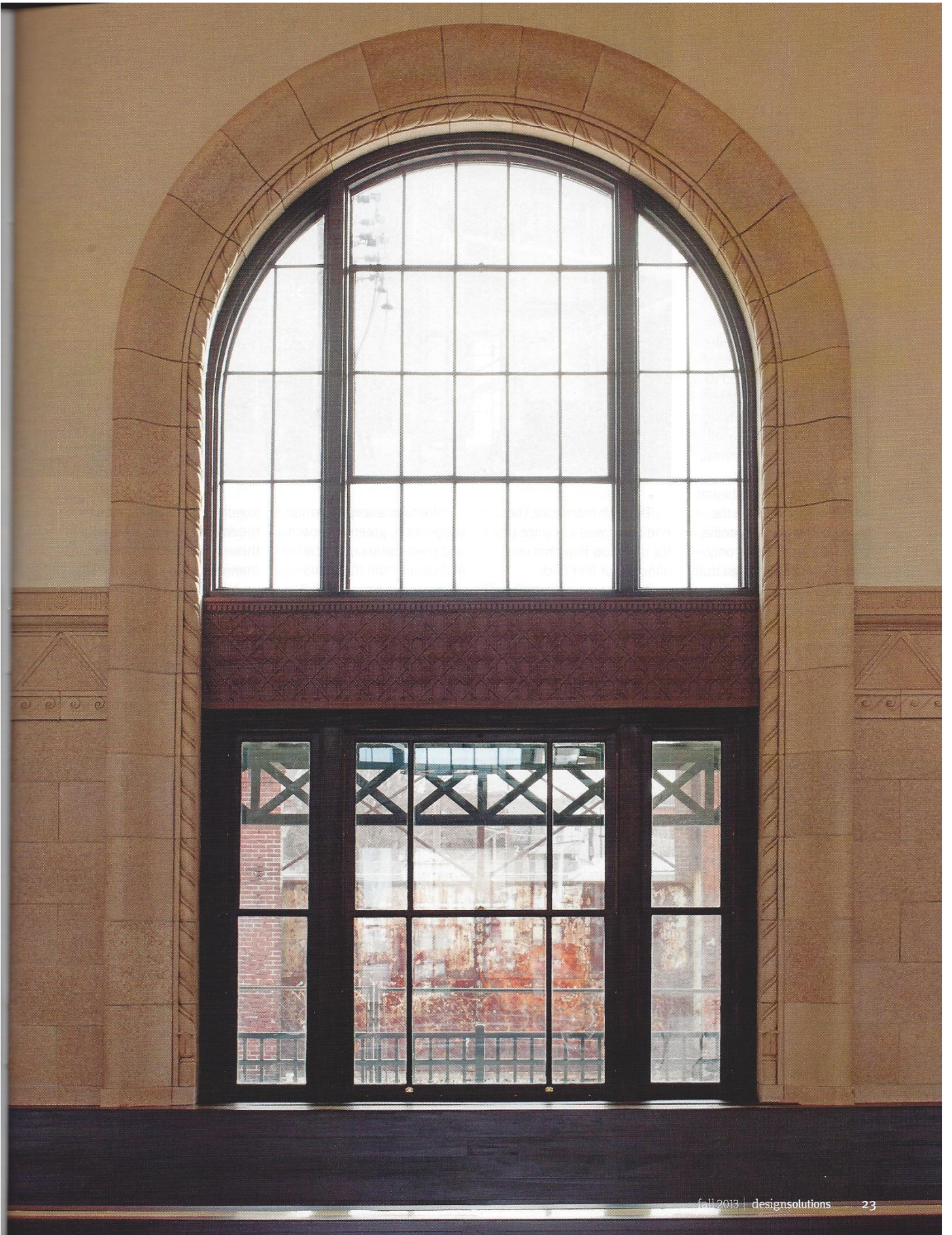
The 6,470 square foot station was in service until Hurricane Agnes hit the region in 1972. Devastated by the flood that occurred, the station was then abandoned and left to sit decaying for the next 40 years. During that time there were multiple fires in the building and more destruction caused by vagrants and squatters.

When the Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority made the decision to restore the building and use it as a bus terminal as part of its transportation center, the building was truly in terrible shape. So the team of Sowinski Sullivan Architects, Sparta New Jersey, and Historic Restorations, an AWI member firm located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, were commissioned to restore the building.



The first time the team viewed the station they found architectural features missing or heavily damaged, woodwork destroyed by moisture or rot, windows, doors and the traditional railroad benches gone, poor interior and exterior masonry, broken glass and just about any type of damage you can imagine.

“The design effort was multifaceted; where extant fabric was able to be salvaged and used for its original purpose, it was salvaged,” explains architect Richard Sullivan. “Where fabric was missing, but photos were available, some recreating was undertaken, with modification to the underlying structure and detailing in order to create a modern adaptation of the original



element. In areas where extant fabric existed and was salvageable, but the purpose no longer was appropriate or desired, we found new uses for the elements and restored them.”

### The Elements

Chuck Groshong of Historic Restorations reports one of the biggest architectural woodwork features on the project was the coffered ceiling the firm recreated to match what had been there originally. “Thirty feet above eye level, the ceiling wasn’t just decayed beyond revival, it had been completely removed. The process began with extensive work on the design of the cornice profile. The challenge was not only coming up with a design that was historically accurate, we also needed to proportionally enlarge the profile so it could be seen from below.”



Through teamwork, the end result was a cornice profile of Yellow Pine that was almost four feet thick.

Another major feature was fabricating ten traditional railway benches ten to 30 feet in length. The original benches were no longer in the building so they had to be reproduced from scratch based on historic photographs.

“We took a very utilitarian, economical, green approach and used the scrap African Mahogany from the doors to create the bench ends,” Groshong explains. “We determined the traditional joinery techniques that would be best for the benches and how the pieces would fit

together. Once we planned the assembly, we provided the architect with shop drawings.”

Also restored was a 20-foot-long cabinet from the dining area. “We turned it into a museum piece,” says Groshong, “complete with new compartments, shelves and glass sliding doors that



“The historic structures that define our built environment are important to us. They are the homes that sheltered us in our childhood innocence as we grew up. They are the gathering places and community halls that contain the laughter, companionship, and camaraderie that knit a community together in a strong sense of place. We aren't just preserving buildings, we're preserving our places.”

-- Johnathan Keperling, Production Manager

lock. We fashioned a White Oak countertop for the cabinet and used butterfly dovetails tying the laminate seam together as an accent.”

“We also made mouldings to match the originals,” he continues. “We chose Black Walnut for the spines as an accent to the White Oak top and polished the

bottom of the cabinet with a hand-rubbed clear coat finish that is subtle and satiny in appearance.”

Historic Restorations fabricated 28 solid wood doors for the station that were actually an upgrade from the original doors which had a veneer over an inferior wood core. The doors each had

two to four windows in them with a wagon-wheel muntin design configuration.

#### The Crew

The woodwork in the original station experienced excessive water damage but 40% of the wood was salvaged and reused. Wood species were selected based on

the area of intended use, but was required to be FSC certified, notes architect Sullivan. “Historic Restorations determined that the original species was African Mahogany but suggested substituting Sapele due to the cost, availability and FSC certification.”

## at a glance

AWI MANUFACTURING MEMBER:

**Historic Restorations**

LOCATION:

**Lancaster, Pennsylvania**

ESTABLISHED:

**1974**

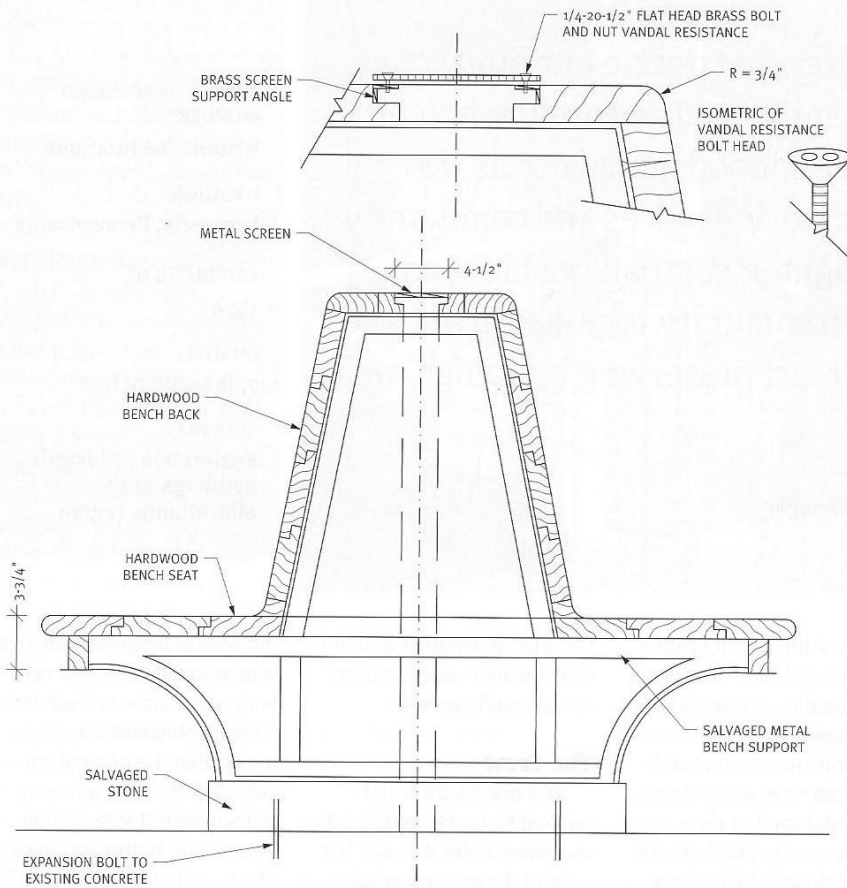
FACILITY:

**7,000 square feet**

SPECIALTY:

**Restoration of historic buildings in the Mid-Atlantic region**

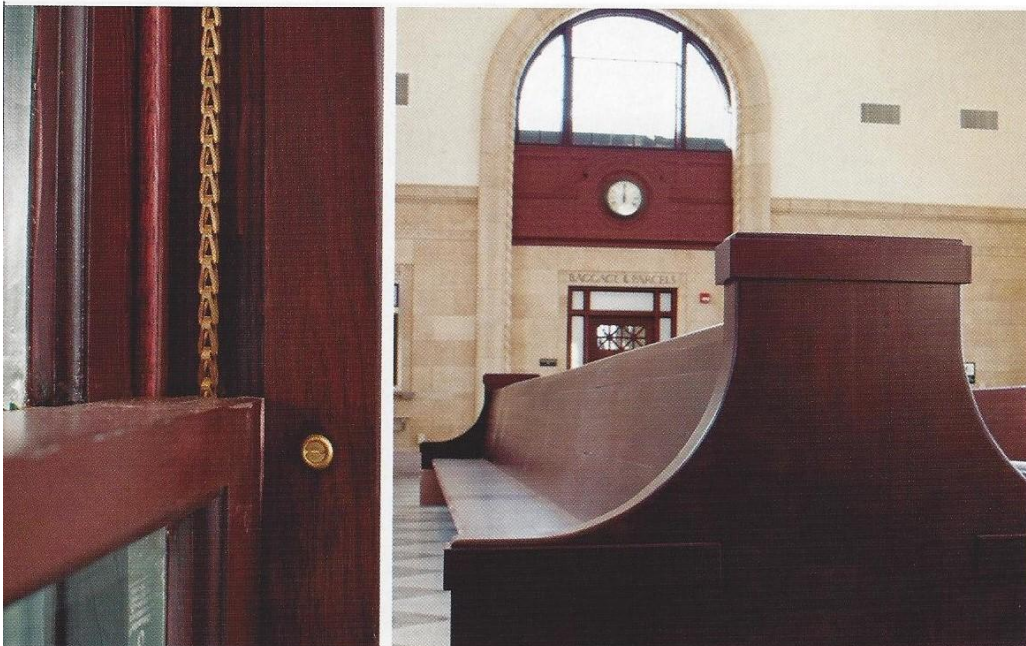




SECTION  
@ Bench

The adaptive reuse and relocation of the original luncheonette candy cabinets as display cabinets, which were to be used by the local historical society to display items from the Reading Railroad, were the most impressive part of the project, Sullivan continues. "I could not believe they could be salvaged but the woodworking firm was able to do so, showing an incredible amount of talent to adapt them."

Robert Rimby from the transportation authority agrees. "The display cabinet looks beautiful. The interior doors were removed and restored to a like-new condition with new window panes and hand-fitted lattice mouldings framing the windows. The doors provide a wow factor to everyone who sees them."



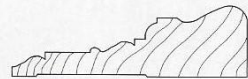
CROWN PROFILE  
3/4" x 7"



COVE PROFILE  
3/4" x 4-1/4"



CROWN PROFILE  
3/4" x 4-1/4"



CASING PROFILE  
3/4" x 6"

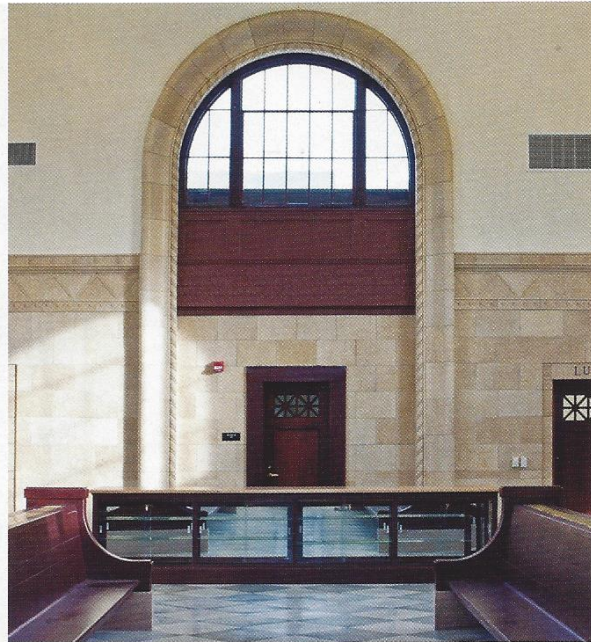
MOULDING  
DETAILS  
@ Ceiling

Historical Restorations brought “a thorough knowledge of woodworking to the project and were very helpful picking wood species and exploring many options with the goal of achieving form and function,” he adds.

The woodworking firm contributed a lot of assistance in helping the crew meet scheduling and budget objectives. “We employed an out-of-the-box approach to installation of the coffered ceiling that saved time and money,” points out Groshong. “By installing scaffolding that covered the entire inside of the building, we were able to install the ceiling in a little over a week.”

“We also sped up the process of the cornice design approval,” he continues. “But perhaps the biggest way we maximized efficiency was by fabricating the woodwork in our shop using a production-line style that focused on each craftsman specializing in a certain aspect of the fabrication to speed up production.”

The renovated train station is now a part of the Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority’s Transportation Center and provides the final piece in its downtown complex. The history and look of the building have been beautifully recaptured while maintaining its functionality for current and future operations.



**PROJECT:**  
**Franklin Street  
Train Station  
Restoration**  
Reading, PA

**PROJECT OWNER:**  
**Berks Area  
Regional  
Transportation  
Authority**  
Reading, PA

**WOODWORKER:**  
**Historic  
Restorations**  
Lancaster, PA

**ARCHITECT:**  
**Sowinski Sullivan  
Architects**  
Sparta, NJ

**GENERAL  
CONTRACTOR:**  
**Perrotto Builders**  
Reading, PA

**PHOTOGRAPHER:**  
**Ole Horgvanthong**  
Lancaster, PA

