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## 01 The West Chester Railroad's Gay Street Station

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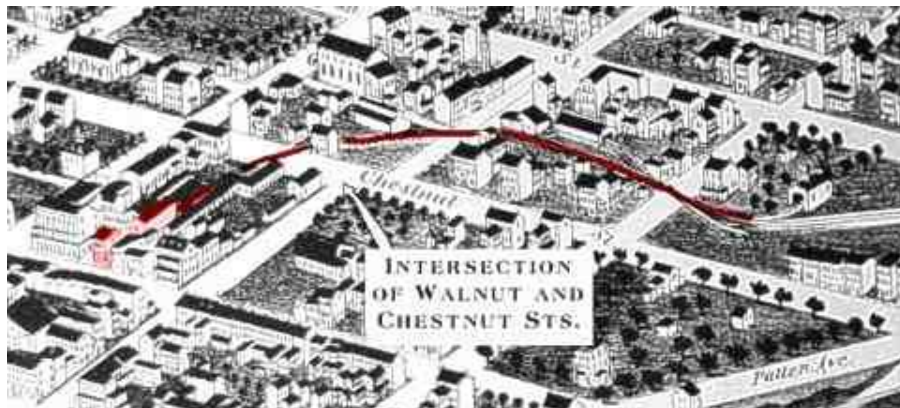


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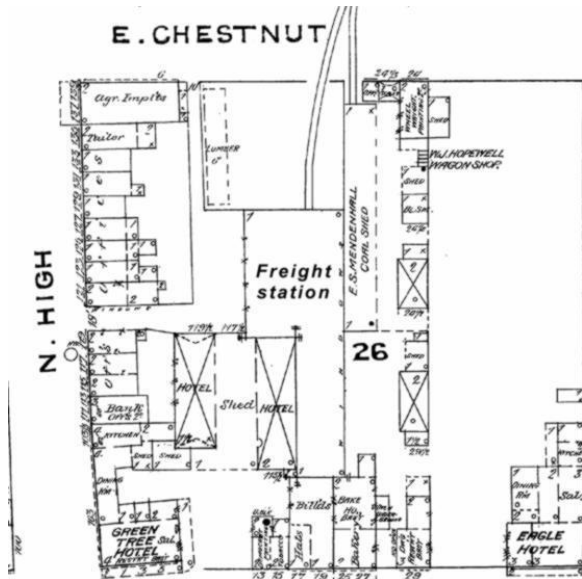
From 1836 to 1903, a train station stood on E. Gay Street at the present site of the Susquehanna Bank, just east of the Greentree Building. No photographs of the building are known to exist, but details are available from the 1874 "Bird's Eye View of West Chester," Sanborn fire insurance maps of the late 19th century, and accounts of fires and demolition.

In 1836, the board voted to extend the WCRR tracks into the center of town and build a frame railroad station on Gay Street. They chose a 32' wide lot donated by local businessmen and a design by Thomas U. Walter, architect of First Presbyterian Church on W. Miner Street, the Chester County Courthouse, several other buildings in downtown West Chester, and parts of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington DC.

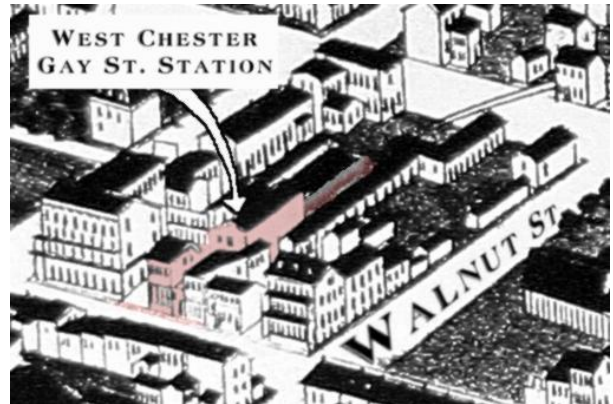


1836 extension of the West Chester Railroad (from 1874 Bird's Eye View of West Chester)

The station was completed in less than a year for about \$31,500. After almost going bankrupt in the early 1840s, the WCRR began to lease land around the station in 1847. In 1857, they expanded the station in an effort to compete with the new WC&PRR by constructing a new frame building with a brick facade at the end nearest Gay Street.



Detail from an 1886 fire insurance map



1874 "Bird's Eye View" (detail)

A second proposal to expand the station was shelved at the outbreak of the Civil War. Instead, the two railroads were consolidated and the new management shifted all passenger operations to Market Street in 1864. Downtown merchants continued to rely on the Gay Street station for freight deliveries until the PRR took it over in 1879.

In 1880, Uriah Painter, owner of a nearby lumber and ice business, purchased the station. Although he publicized several plans to develop the property, the station was used mostly as a warehouse and to receive occasional shipments for Painter's business. Neglect, accidents and fires gradually reduced the station to ruins and at the end of 1903, the Chester County Trust Company bought the property. In 1904 they demolished the station and built the structure that stands there today.