

President Street Station Special Resource Study

August 2022

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Image credit: E. Sachse & Co. E. Sachse, & Co.'s bird's eye view of the city of Baltimore. 1870. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/75694535/>

The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to announce the launch of a special resource study of President Street Station located at 601 S President St, Baltimore, Maryland. By the mid-19th century, a growing network of rail lines supported Baltimore's vigorous commercial and manufacturing industries. Constructed between 1849 and 1850, the station is the second oldest train station building in Baltimore and the oldest surviving large city rail terminal in the United States.

The station was designed by Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad engineer, George A. Parker, in Italianate style with a curved arch roof using a unique trussing system patented in 1840 by William Howe. The station encompassed three city blocks and included the head house, a passenger station, freight station, and rail yard with carpenter and car shops. All that remains today is the head house, which offered the traveling public waiting rooms, ticket booth, telegraph office, and offices.

The John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019 (Public Law 116-9, Section 2003) directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of President Street Station. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the site resources' national significance and determine the suitability and feasibility of designating them as a unit of the national park system.

As we begin the special resource study, we would like to engage the public in discussions about President Street Station. The health and safety of our visitors, employees, volunteers, and partners is our priority. The National Park Service is working with the federal, state, and local authorities to closely monitor the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) situation. A public meeting will be held to receive the public's ideas and opinions about the site. Information about the public meeting will be posted on the NPS study website.

The National Park Service will evaluate the property using congressionally established criteria for national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for direct NPS management. Based on the analysis, the National Park Service will determine whether the site meets the criteria for inclusion in the national park system and will prepare the study for the secretary of interior. The secretary will then submit the findings and a recommendation to Congress.

We hope you will take time to let us know your thoughts and ideas through the NPS study website. More information and project updates can be found at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/PresidentStreet>.

Contents

This newsletter introduces the special resource study and includes:

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About the National Park Service



The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. The National Park Service is a bureau within the Department of the Interior and manages more than 400 park units that comprise the national park system. Administration of park units occurs in many ways, from traditional units that are federally managed to non-traditional units that rely on partnerships and may have little, if any, federal landownership.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Special Resource Study?

A special resource study evaluates the eligibility of an area to be designated as a national park or other special designation. The National Park Service collects information about the quality of resources in the study area. If the resources meet the criteria for national significance, the National Park Service evaluates the potential for visitor enjoyment and efficient management and analyzes the feasibility and appropriateness of different management options. The National Park Service provides its findings to the Secretary of the Interior who then presents a recommendation to Congress. Regardless of the outcome of the study, new units of the national park system can only be established by an act of Congress or by presidential proclamation.

How will the President Street Station and associated resources be evaluated?

The 1998 National Parks Omnibus Management Act (54 United States Code 100507) established the process for identifying and authorizing studies of new national park units. Under the law, a study area must meet all four of the following criteria to be recommended as an addition to the national park system:

- Contain nationally significant natural and/or cultural resources.
- Represent a natural or cultural resource that is not already adequately represented in the national park system or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another land-managing entity.
- Must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resources and visitor enjoyment, and (2) capable of efficient administration by the National Park Service at a reasonable cost; important feasibility factors include landownership, acquisition costs, life cycle maintenance costs, access, threats to the resource, and staff or development requirements.
- Require direct NPS management that is clearly superior to other management approaches.

NPS personnel will evaluate President Street Station according to the above criteria for national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS management. If at any point throughout the SRS process NPS staff determine the site does not meet one of the criteria, the study will terminate and a document with a negative finding will be prepared for Congress.

What are some of the possible outcomes of the study?

Over the last 20 years (2001-2021), approximately one in three completed special resource studies have resulted in a favorable recommendation by the National Park Service whereby the study area meets all of the criteria for inclusion in the national park system (National Significance, Suitability, Feasibility, and Need for Direct NPS Management). Many studies conclude that the study area resources do not meet all of the required criteria or find that existing management, technical or financial assistance, or local, state or private initiatives are preferable to the establishment of a new unit of the national park system.

Approximately one in four completed special resource studies resulted in both a favorable recommendation and a designation as a national park unit or other type of national designation (such as national heritage area).

If the special resource study results in a positive finding and a recommendation from the Secretary of the Interior that President Street Station warrants addition to the national park system, Congress may or may not act on or follow the recommendation. There is no timeframe for legislative action.

When will I learn the results of the study?

The National Park Service will publicly release a study report after it has been transmitted to Congress. The National Park Service generally does not release preliminary findings or drafts of the study or indicate whether the study is likely to recommend inclusion in the national park system before the study's transmittal to Congress.

About the Study Area



Original front of head house, facing west, in 2020.



Front of head house, facing west, c. 1916.

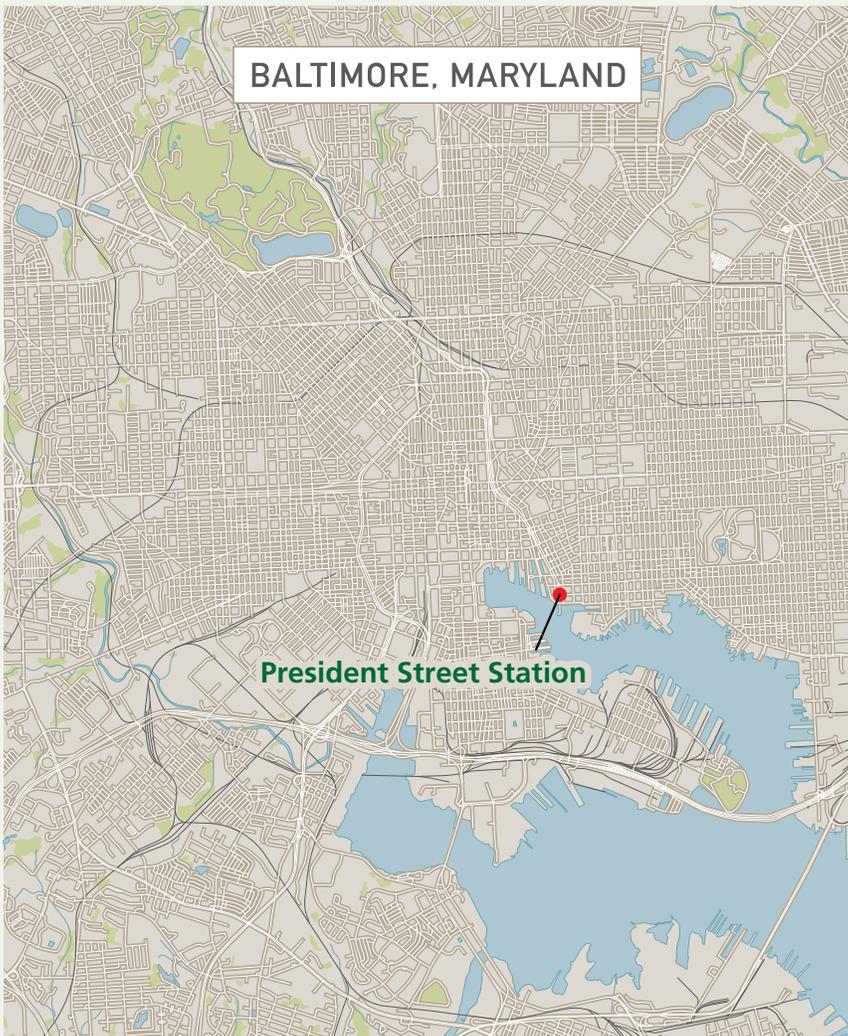
President Street Station is located near the Inner Harbor of downtown Baltimore, Maryland. The building was entered in the National Register of Historic Places in 1992. It was designated a Baltimore City Landmark in 2009.

The Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad built the station, which provided Baltimore with early railroad connections in Delaware; Philadelphia; coal mining areas of Pennsylvania; Washington, DC; and West Virginia.

President Street Station was one of the first large city stations in the country to incorporate a huge train shed into the traditional station design. The shed's size relied on engineer George Howe's recently patented and influential trussed arch system, and this was the first train station to employ it. Part of an original arch is on display inside the building today.

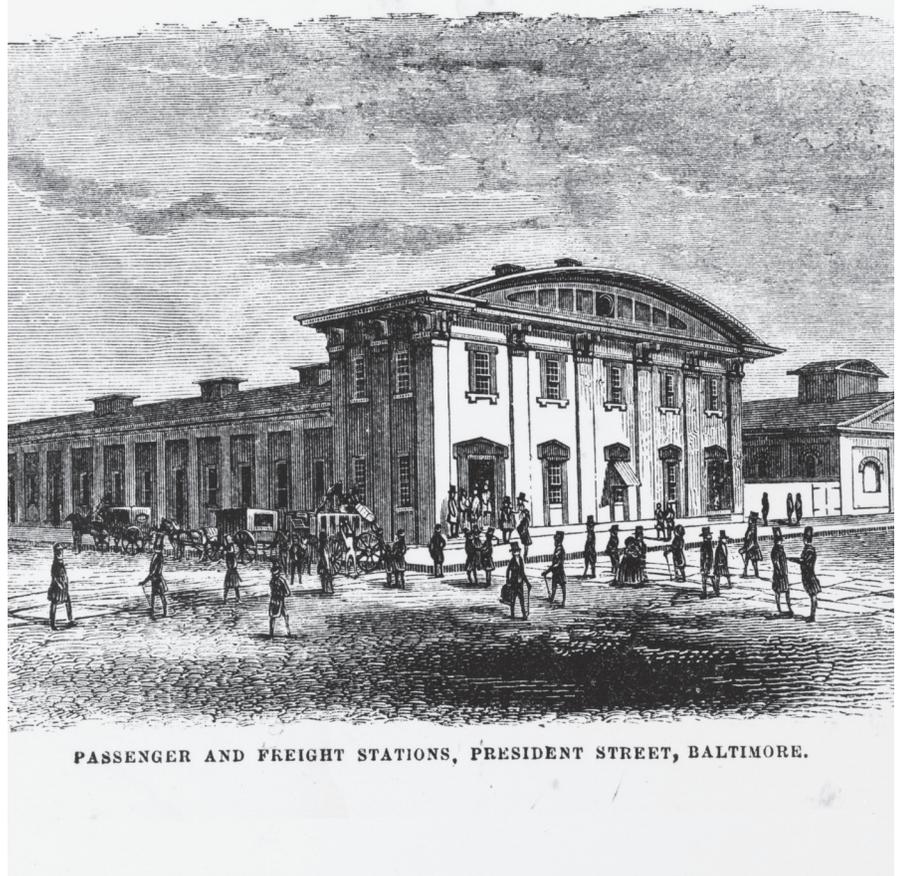
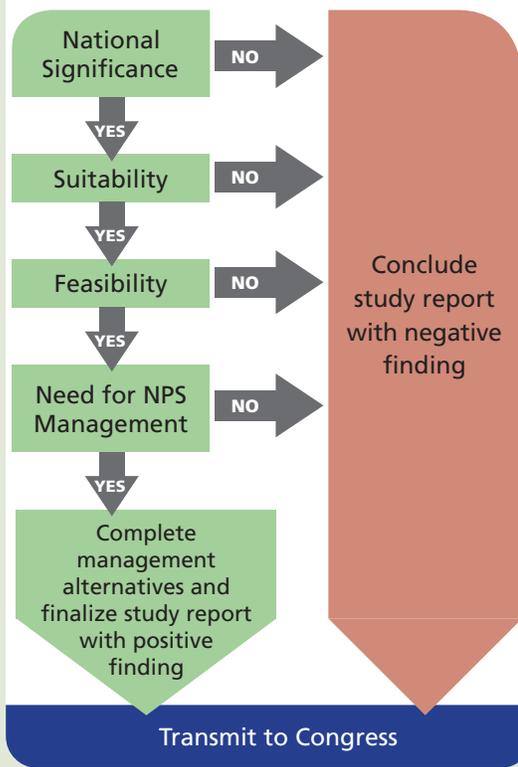
The President Street Station is associated with the history of slavery and the Civil War. The station is a documented site of the National Park Service's Underground Network to Freedom. Several people escaped from slavery on trains passing through President Street Station, including Frederick Douglass. On April 19th, 1861, the first casualties of the Civil War took place when a mob attacked the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment as they marched one mile west from President Street Station to Camden Station. The Baltimore Riot of 1861, also known as the Pratt Street Riots or Massacre, incurred the first deaths by hostile action in the Civil War.

Today, the building is owned by the City of Baltimore. It is managed as a museum by the Friends of President Street Station organization through a lease with the City.



The Study Process

Special Resource Study (SRS) Completion Pathways



PASSENGER AND FREIGHT STATIONS, PRESIDENT STREET, BALTIMORE.

President Street Station, c. 1856

How to Participate

We encourage you to learn more about the SRS process and share your ideas during the SRS process by any of the means listed below:

- For information and updates, visit the study site at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/PresidentStreet>
- Send us your thoughts, comments, and information.
 - » Online: Visit the web address above and click the “Open for Comment” link.
 - » By Mail: Send written comments to:

Martha Droge, Project Manager

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- Attend a public meeting to learn about the study process and discuss the study with NPS team members. Information about public meetings will be posted on the study website when available.

In your comments, we are particularly interested to hear your thoughts and ideas about the following:

1. How would you feel about the President Street Station building potentially becoming a national park unit?
2. Are there specific stories about or aspects of the President Street Station building and its history about which the NPS study team should know?
3. Are you aware of documents (letters, diary entries, photographs, newspaper articles, etc.) that are not publicly available that relate to President Street Station?
4. Do you have any other comments, concerns, and suggestions for this study?