

STAY

Good Nights

CROWNE JEWEL

The historic Union Station hotel is a hub for exploring downtown.

→ **IF YOU EXPECT** more than a place to lay your head after a day of sightseeing or meetings, Indy's **Crowne Plaza Indianapolis Downtown Union Station** is a winsome find. This architectural gem allows visitors to absorb the grandeur of America's first Union Station, an icon from the city's railroad era. Opened in 1853, the site marks the spot where late-19th and early-20th-century immigrants first set foot in Indianapolis.

Railroad travel became so prevalent that the original building had to be replaced in 1888. The result was a majestic headhouse that remains one of



America's best and Indiana's first examples of Romanesque Revival-style architecture. Union Station's train shed, completed in 1922, was converted into the Crowne Plaza in 1986.

Today's 273-room hotel uses most of the renovated headhouse as a conference and

event hall – the same space where passengers once bought tickets and sat beneath a long, sky-lit barrel vault, waiting to board. The Grand Hall's original terrazzo floors and wheel-shaped, stained-glass windows remain intact, reminders of a time when hundreds of trains passed through Indianapolis each day.

Immerse yourself in railroad ambience by staying in one of



13 authentic Pullman railcars, parked on the original tracks and converted into 26 guest rooms. The Grand Hall Bar, an ornate 100-year-old bar imported from Italy, is just one of the hotel's many historic charms. With connected walkways to Lucas Oil Stadium and the Indiana Convention Center, the Crowne Plaza is also a quick stroll to Indy's shopping and restaurant scene.

For a fun scavenger hunt, see how many of the hotel's

"ghost statues" you can spot. These whimsical, fiberglass sculptures, dressed in 1920s, '30s, and '40s attire, were brought over to the Crowne Plaza from Union Station, and were the brainchild of local architect Richard Rowland in collaboration with his wife, Sallie. "I remember them sitting around the dinner table, brainstorming and sketching their ideas," says their son Eric Rowland, principal architect for Rowland Design.

Casting the statues was a career win for artist Gary Rittenhouse, who later made dozens of similar figures for projects throughout the U.S. "I got the contract nine weeks before the grand opening," Rittenhouse says. "If you look at them closely, you'll see that they are kind of primitive. They were done in such haste that they don't have some of the details that my later work has." —*Crystal Hammon*



NOW BOARDING
Clockwise from top: The Crowne Plaza's Grand Hall; a Pullman railcar suite; a king room with a view of Lucas Oil Stadium; a conductor "ghost statue" outside a Pullman car

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