

VOLUME XXIV, NUMBER 1, WINTER 2023/24

# CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

*A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship*

Joseph M.  
Bessette

Bradley C.S.  
Watson:  
**Old Right &  
New Right**

Michael  
Knowles:  
**Christopher  
Rufo**

Allen C.  
Guelzo:  
**Lincoln &  
Majority Rule**

Brian Patrick  
Eha:  
**Cormac  
McCarthy**

Martha  
Bayles:  
**Truly Strange  
Science Fiction**

John J.  
DiIulio, Jr.

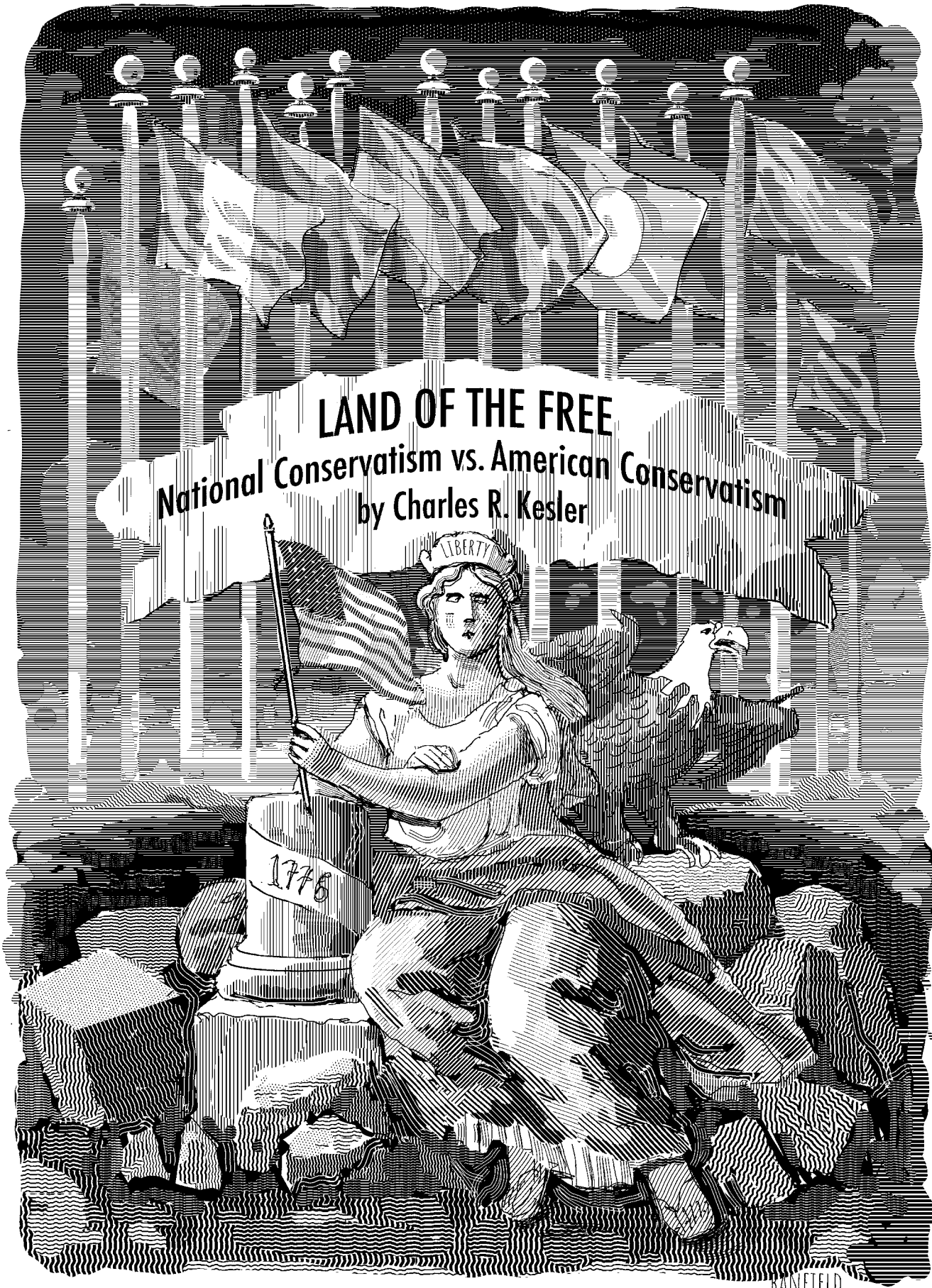
William  
Voegeli:  
**A Second  
New Deal?**

Helen  
Andrews:  
**Elon  
Musk**

Catesby  
Leigh:  
**Rebuild  
Penn Station**

Christopher  
Caldwell:  
**Geert  
Wilders**

Spencer A.  
Klavan:  
**Emily Wilson's  
Iliad**



A Publication of the Claremont Institute

PRICE: \$9.95

IN CANADA: \$14.95



0 74470 57768 3

Essay by Catesby Leigh

# REBUILD PENN STATION

*And revive classical architecture in New York.*



OUR NATION FACES A DAUNTING cultural challenge: to enhance the architectural value of the world we build. In recent decades the American city, where our civilization symbolizes itself in the highest degree, has been steadily degraded by cultural and educational institutions, government agencies, and real estate developers, all determined to erect “iconic” fashion statements. They do so by hiring self-regarding, theory-addled architects, who see their brief as reifying an ever-mutating *Zeitgeist*. These unholy allies combine their economic, political, and cultural power to build for now, not for the generations to come. Developers, in particular, seek short-term returns, not long-term appreciation.

Increasingly deprived of enduring architecture that embodies an ideal “ought,” we’re stuck instead with ephemeral architecture intended to evoke a phenomenological “is.” One historical event crystallizes this shift: the destruction during the 1960s of Pennsylvania Station in New York City. Its Roman grandeur cut to the core of the national aspiration to forge a great civilization that would build on the past’s monumental artistic achievements, an aspiration nurtured by the American Founders. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson would have rejoiced to see Penn Station. Alexander Hamilton would

have regarded its advent, made possible by new electric railway traction technology, as a happy alliance of modern enterprise with the artistic wisdom of the ages.

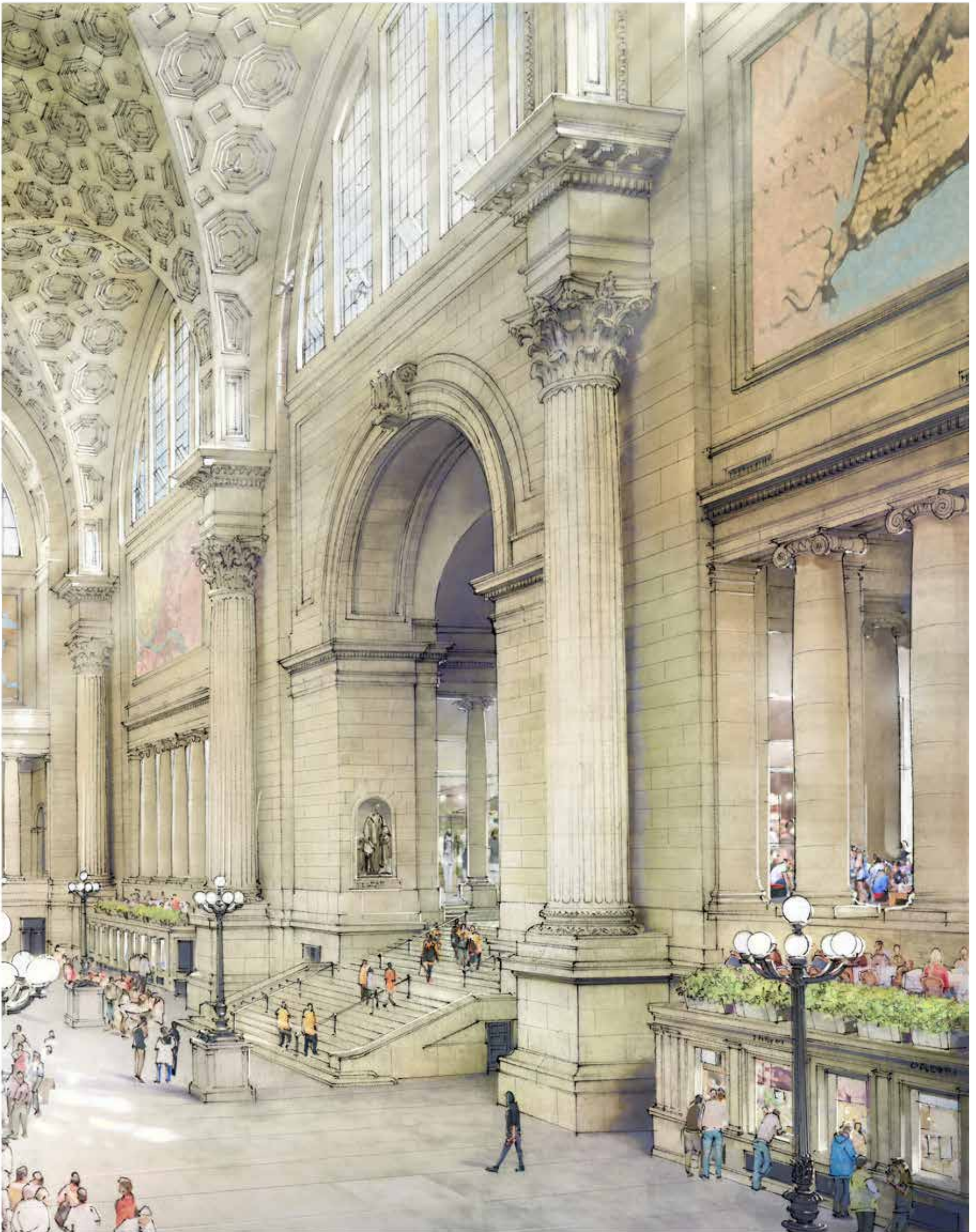
The cataclysmic, urban-renewal-style redevelopment that took place at the site of the demolished station testified as eloquently as any such project could to the postwar collapse of the architectural art in the United States. The results are still with us: the dismal cylindrical hulk that is Madison Square Garden and the 2 Penn Plaza office tower-slab constitute the now unsightly, disorienting subterranean station’s suffocating incubus. The original station had appeared in Hollywood movies and fired the imaginations of such writers as Thomas Wolfe and Langston Hughes. Its destruction, a disaster of national import, helped bring about the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Expensive work will likely be done at Penn during this decade and the next—a hefty portion of it on Uncle Sam’s dime. Left to their own devices, the assorted corporate honchos, politicians, bureaucrats, railroad executives, architects, and engineers looking to capitalize on the opportunity will make an intersectional hash of it. By far the best solution to the station’s problems would also be the simplest: rebuild the old Penn Station while reconfiguring its obsolete track layout. Track

reconfiguration would mainly benefit New York City’s metropolitan region. But a rebuilt station would be a boon to the nation, attracting an enormous public—not just commuters and travelers, and certainly not just New Yorkers—with its combination of civic grandeur and refined settings for shopping, dining, and cultural events.

Writing in the aftermath of the Penn site’s calamitous redevelopment, future New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan observed that “[t]wentieth-century America has seen a steady, persistent decline in the visual and emotional power of its public buildings, and this has been accompanied by a not less persistent decline in the authority of the public order.” Republicans in both houses of Congress are starting to get the message. Last year Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and Representative Jim Banks of Indiana introduced legislation that prescribes classical and traditional idioms for new U.S. courthouses and important federal agency buildings, as opposed to the often banal, and sometimes atrocious, modernist structures commissioned by the federal government’s property developer, the General Services Administration.

Civically engaged Americans, and conservative legislators in particular, need to pay serious attention to developments at Penn Station.



*Charles McKim's rebuilt Pennsylvania Station waiting room, as envisioned by Richard Cameron and ReThinkNYC; rendering by Jeff Stikeman.*

---

## Preventing Another Debacle

COMPLETED IN 1910, THE STATION was the *chef d'oeuvre* of Charles Folien McKim, one of the greatest architects this country ever produced and founding partner of the preeminent American architectural firm of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, McKim, Mead & White. McKim's sources of inspiration for the station included the *frigidarium*, or cold-water bathing hall, of the Baths of Caracalla in Rome, which date to the early 3rd century A.D. McKim employed this hall as a prototype, which he inventively adapted and expanded for his waiting room. The room's coffered groin vaults, springing from titanic Corinthian columns, soared to a height of 150 feet. Three hundred feet long and 110 feet wide, the waiting room featured eight semi-circular Roman windows beneath its ceiling. Their 72-foot diameters allowed natural light to stream into the room. Beneath the windows, elegant maps of the mighty Pennsylvania Railroad's far-flung domains served as mural decoration.

Garbed in a mantle of pink granite, the steel-framed building's exterior featured beautifully modulated arrays of Tuscan columns, modeled on those deployed by Bernini in his colonnades in St. Peter's Square. Above them, draped female figures of Night and Day framed the large clocks at the center of each elevation. Lithic eagles flanked these centerpieces. From Seventh Avenue, which runs along the east side of the station, an elegant shopping and dining arcade led to a broad staircase down to the waiting room, and from that majestic enclosure travelers continued to the concourse, elaborately vaulted in steel, glass, and Guastavino tile. From there, stairways led down to the train platforms.

Today, little more is left of McKim's station than its foundations, 21 tracks, and their 11 platforms. Numerous old wrought-iron stairways with brass rails lead down to the platforms: puny vestiges of the grandeur that once was. Several such stairways descend from the sunken station's north concourse, newly heightened, brightened, widened, and now lined with retail frontage on one side so as to resemble a shopping mall. But even here, testaments to catastrophe are not far to seek. Postmodern mural reliefs depict broken columns and a teetering Mercury. Stabs at visual amenity have been taken elsewhere in the station along the line, but it remains a place where you go only because you have to. Prior to COVID, weekdays saw over 600,000 people scuttling in and out of the station like rats, to paraphrase the late architectural historian

Vincent Scully. It is the busiest transportation facility in the Western Hemisphere.

The main obstacle to regaining an architecturally appropriate station is Madison Square Garden. Many New Yorkers have long been convinced that the Garden needs to move so a decent Penn Station can rise again. Not the old Penn Station, necessarily—the common but mistaken assumption being that we can't build 'em like we used to so there's no point in trying—but a building that provides some uplift, one that is not the abject disgrace to New York City that the Penn catacombs are.

In September, New York's city council extended the Garden's operating permit for just five years, instead of granting the Garden's powerful, vindictive boss, James L. Dolan, the permanent extension he was seeking for a second time. An enormous pile of federal cash set aside for the nation's railroads in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has added new urgency to the long-standing question of how to fix Penn Station. The Biden

### Its inventive reconstruction would yield a multifaceted civic monument, erected for the ages instead of a depreciation cycle.

Administration has committed \$11 billion to the \$17 billion cost of constructing, over the next twelve to 15 years, a new two-tube tunnel under the Hudson River. It will duplicate the existing North River Tunnel the Pennsylvania Railroad Company (known in its day as "the Pennsy") built more than a century ago to serve its new Manhattan station. New York State and New Jersey are expected to split the \$6 billion balance. The project also includes renovation of the old tunnel—not only time-worn but also corroded by saltwater thanks to 2012's Hurricane Sandy, and traversed by hundreds of trains daily.

There are several proposals for a multi-billion-dollar architectural overhaul of Penn Station as part of this Amtrak-led Gateway Program. By far the best and most comprehensive comes from an outstanding urban planning think tank, ReThinkNYC, and its advising architect, the veteran classicist Richard Cameron. The ReThink plan involves demolishing the Garden and 2 Penn Plaza and rebuilding McKim's station but

with significant modifications, including its transformation from the log-jammed commuter-rail terminal it now is into a far more efficient through-running station.

A through-running Penn would remain a major trunk-line stop, but it would form part of a better-integrated regional transit network less focused on getting white-collar workers—the people most likely to be working from home these days—into and out of Manhattan at rush hour. It would be more attuned to service employees working irregular hours whose commutes don't take them to—or, in many cases, even through—Manhattan. Instead of their routes terminating at Penn, under the ReThink plan commuter trains would continue on to New Jersey or through Queens and the Bronx to their final suburban destinations. Through-running would slash trains' dwell times, allowing the number of Penn's tracks to be reduced from 21 to twelve.

The Gateway Program for the Hudson tunnels and additional infrastructure improvements as well as a Penn Station upgrade is budgeted at over \$50 billion—a staggering sum even for a metropolitan region with a \$2 trillion economy. The new tunnel is needed, but Gateway includes a thoroughly unnecessary southward extension of Penn Station, dubbed Penn South, that could easily wind up costing as much as the tunnel work. Penn South would be a deep-cavern engineering project providing, according to the *New York Post*, up to twelve new stub tracks, while conversion to through-running would save billions of dollars by *reducing* the number of *existing* tracks. This is particularly noteworthy given COVID's devastating impact on commuter rail ridership in the New York region. Having fallen by two-thirds, it is gradually recovering, but no one knows when or if it will reach pre-pandemic levels. And Amtrak has yet to demonstrate that Penn South would increase the station's capacity more than conversion to through-running. So far, the Biden Administration has not signed off on the extension boondoggle, which would result in the demolition of an entire city block and then some—as well as another mis-conceived urban renewal scheme.

Absent scrupulous congressional oversight in the years ahead, Gateway could turn out badly. Conservatives can be forgiven for assuming it will. Gotham can already claim credit for the world's most expensive railway tunnels, constructed in connection with a \$12.7 billion commuter station beneath Grand Central Terminal. It opened last year—over a decade late and several times over budget. Then there's the stupendous budgetary fiasco that is California's planned high-speed rail line, which is supposed to connect Los

---

Angeles and San Francisco and whose price tag has soared nearly fourfold over a 15-year period. Despite a recent \$3.1 billion federal commitment, it faces a very uncertain future.

But Gateway looks sure to happen. In the years ahead, Republicans could play an important role in preventing another Penn debacle. They should make sure Penn South is killed and push for reconstruction of McKim's station through a public-private venture, while backing a transit model for the station that benefits riders living and working outside of Manhattan.

### For the Ages

PENN STATION WAS BUILT MAINLY FOR travelers, not commuters. Along with the heavy, long-term toll taken by federal regulation, it was the decline of long-distance rail travel—abetted by the advent of the Interstate Highway System, the inroads made by truck-based freight transportation (vastly increased by the Interstates), and the rise of commercial aviation—that ultimately sealed the old station's fate. In 1961, the moribund Pennsy cut a deal with Gotham developer Irving Felt to demolish McKim's building and replace it at one end with a new Madison Square Garden, and what were originally projected to be hotel and office towers at the other. Instead of the two towers, just the 2 Penn Plaza slab got built. Felt's catastrophic exercise in redevelopment was completed in 1968.

If the public had had an inkling of Penn's future as a hugely important commuter-rail station, there might have been an even louder clamor for the preservation of McKim's masterwork, and a stronger incentive for movers and shakers to cobble together some sort of rescue package. Despite its leading Gateway role, and despite the fact that it owns the station, Amtrak accounts for only about 7% of the passenger traffic at Penn these days, not including the subways stopping there. The Long Island Rail Road and New Jersey Transit account for the rest. In the event, Robert Wagner, New York mayor from 1953 to 1965, said he was powerless to save the station. In New York as in the nation, historic preservation became a crusade and a constraint only after, and largely as a result of, Penn's destruction.

Interestingly, a significant contingent of modernist architects, including that wily chameleon Philip Johnson, were among those demonstrating against the wrecking ball. So was Jane Jacobs, distinguished author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). Felt, however, was unperturbed. "Fifty years

from now, when it's time for [Madison Square Garden] to be torn down, there will be a new group of architects who will protest," he declared. Fat chance.

The Madison Square Garden cylinder is decked out with ugly rectangular panels of concrete with a brownish pebbly stubble punctuated by window walls, digital billboards and a hideous boxy appendage facing Eighth Avenue—the butt end of a theater squeezed under the Garden's 20,000-seat main arena. Thin cantilevered slabs at the corners of 31st and 33rd Streets mark squat, undignified entrances to the station below. Felt and his architect, Charles Luckman, produced not an artifact, let alone a civic monument, but a commodity with an *avowedly* limited shelf life—in other words, a depressing specimen of modernist architecture as capitalist tool.

But as those postmodern murals in the station's north concourse might suggest, memories of old Penn still resonate. Its inventive reconstruction—in the nation's epicenter of high-end cultural dysfunction—would yield a multifaceted civic monument, erected for the ages instead of a depreciation cycle. Cameron proposes opening up what was originally the back of the station along Eighth Avenue, converting McKim's tiers of offices with small windows into generously fenestrated, high-ceilinged galleries suitable for art exhibits, cultural performances, gala celebrations, and so on. The roofed and colonnaded but open-air carriage-ways that sloped down the old station's northern and southern flanks and accommodated taxis and other automobiles would be modified so as to provide street-level loggias that could serve as superb café venues. Maximum efficiency and amenity would be achieved through removal of hundreds of structural columns supporting the Garden and 2 Penn Plaza, but the through-running conversion does not depend on that. Platforms would be expanded so as to be wide enough for two or three escalators instead of one, helping make the station—whose catacomb version was intended to accommodate 200,000 passengers daily—far more spacious, capacious, and passenger friendly.

The demolition of McKim's building and the construction of the Garden and 2 Penn were accomplished over five years without closing the station. Converting Penn to through-running and rebuilding the McKim edifice would also be done piecemeal—in sync with the Gateway tunnel project and without halting railway operations.

Replicating the success of Gotham's superb Grand Central, which dates to 1913, as an edifying public resort, a new-old Penn Station would cause an international sensation while teaching our nation's architects

and developers, along with the general public, that real grandeur can still be achieved in new work—and that it pays.

### Supertalls, and Other Plans

TOGETHER WITH 2 PENN, WHICH FACES Seventh Avenue, Madison Square Garden now sets the tone for the visual disorder in its vicinity: a plethora of digital billboards and a generous smattering of low-grade retail outlets that amplify the Garden's own seediness. The socially dysfunctional figure prominently in this tableau, so "the authority of the public order," to quote Moynihan, indeed feels precarious. Some of the homeless and destitute manage to find nooks to take their rest in the station's entrails. Others settle for the sidewalks, weather permitting.

The fact remains that this motley neighborhood is ripe for targeted redevelopment, not an urban-renewal tabula rasa. Which is pretty much what a major developer, Vornado Realty Trust, and its friends at the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) have in mind. But Vornado and the ESDC, a government agency, have their wires crossed. The targeted neighborhood is not the problem. The problem is the Garden and 2 Penn, which are slated to stay right where they are in the ESDC's misconceived plan "to transform a substandard and insanitary area."

The Garden, which attracts several million event attendees annually, is admittedly a big deal: a sports arena where the NBA Knicks and NHL Rangers play home games, a cherished venue for rockers like Elton John and Billy Joel, and the site of several presidential conventions. Its boss, the aforementioned James Dolan, spent a billion dollars on a major interior overhaul a decade ago. Still, the place has problems, such as the disruption its loading operations cause on adjacent streets. A few years before the big-ticket renovation, Dolan seriously considered moving the Garden across Eighth Avenue to the Farley Post Office Building, another McKim, Mead & White landmark that opened three years after Penn.

Dolan—whose family controls several entertainment venues, including the new Sphere arena in Las Vegas—is deservedly unpopular with New Yorkers. But he's well positioned to demand two things in exchange for a move: billions in public subsidies, which might well require a bond issue, and a site well served by mass transit, as the present Garden most assuredly is. A logical site for a new Garden, however, lies a short distance to the east, at Herald Square, where Broadway and Sixth



Avenue cross paths. This too is a major transit node, and the site is just across the street from Macy's historic emporium and a block away from the Empire State Building. The southern half of this site is already slated for demolition by 83-year-old Steven Roth, Vornado's Bronx-born, Dartmouth-educated chairman, who since the 1990s has acquired a great deal of property in what ubiquitous Vornado posters brand as The PENN District. Vornado owns 2 Penn Plaza, where it is wrapping up a strikingly ill-conceived renovation.

2 Penn is now uglier than ever, though escalator access to the station below from Seventh Avenue has been much improved. A large new glass-walled box with two tiers of double-height spaces juts out above the 2 Penn slab's entrance and mezzanine levels for the entire breadth of the original building, and even a ways beyond. The protruding box, which Vornado calls Bustle, is propped up on white steel struts and its faceted underside is clad in triangular LED panels where selected artists can do their thing. A bizarre glass canopy has been snuggled under Bustle to signal the Penn entrance on the central, historic 32nd Street axis. Above the canopy there's a digital billboard (for ads, of course) inscribed with the name and logo of Chase Bank. Were he with us today, Moynihan would shake his head in disbelief at this wretched spectacle.

Roth wants to clear the way for a gaggle of supertall, ultra-modern office towers. He has demolished McKim, Mead & White's 22-story Hotel Pennsylvania, built in 1919, which faced the station from across Seventh Avenue, having commissioned a design by top-drawer British modernist Norman Foster for an obnoxiously disjointed 1,200-foot tower, dubbed PENN 15. Aside from supplanting the hotel, which had good bones and should have been renovated, Foster's much taller tower would obscure sightlines to the Empire State Building. The hotel's loss is the more grating because construction of PENN 15 has been on hold for years. And now the commercial property market has been seriously weakened by telecommuting, higher interest rates, and a superabundance of glitzy new high-rise construction west of the Farley Building. The supertall complex Roth envisions would offer more of the same.

The new high-rise work includes the utterly dystopian Hudson Yards and the marginally less repellent Manhattan West—both mixed-use megaprojects decked over the railyard used by the Long Island Rail Road. They cater to deep-pocketed, culturally deracinated corporations, property-buyers, and consumers. Supertalls at these superblocks offer a wilderness of gridded expanses of

dark glass and its jangled play of reflections. Hudson Yards' two signature towers tilt, perversely, in divergent directions and their tops are shaved off at divergent angles. The development's main claim to fame is Vessel (2019)—a strangely skeletal, 150-foot-tall openwork structure clad in shiny copper that was intended to serve as a scenic lookout as well as a Hudson Yards "icon." A stairway to heaven it isn't. Four people have leapt off its summit to their deaths, so there's no climbing up there these days. Hudson Yards and Manhattan West offer visual disorder of a higher-end, more "contemporary" stripe than we encounter at the Garden.

Vornado shares have been in the cellar since the pandemic and Roth acknowledged last year that his PENN project had hit a financial roadblock. But he's not about to give up on this *grand projet*, which forms a large part of the ESDC's General Project Plan (GPP)—though not all of it. The GPP aims at redevelopment that would help bankroll Penn's renovation and the possible Penn South extension with developers' "payments in lieu of taxes." Aside from a number of Vornado properties, the GPP entails demolition of a full city block and portions of two others to accommodate the Penn South boondoggle, should it materialize. This would lead to construction of three supertalls, in addition to the four to be built on Vornado turf. The end result could be ten new buildings with over 18 million square feet of new floor space, exceeding Rockefeller Center's 17 million. Most of it would be for corporate offices.

Execution of the GPP would involve demolition of dozens of buildings, resulting in the loss or removal of many hundreds of apartments and businesses. And it would almost certainly entail resort to eminent domain. Some of the threatened businesses are located in pre-war office buildings that are definitely not Class A. Any city needs buildings like these to serve as incubators of new enterprises. The neighborhood includes historically significant architecture, and only one lot out of the 61 evaluated for the GPP was deemed to be in "critical" condition: McKim's handsome, granite-clad Pennsylvania Station Service Building, located across 31st Street from Penn. It is owned by Amtrak, once housed a power plant, and might be a good candidate for adaptive reuse.

Though it doesn't own the station, New York's Metropolitan Transit Authority, whose fiefdom includes the Long Island Rail Road, is looking to handle the Penn renovation. The esthetically anemic design currently posted on its website involves getting some daylight into the station, most notably by running a

skylit hall between the Garden and 2 Penn Plaza, while offering more of the shopping mall treatment already given the north concourse. The MTA plan would make for a less cramped Penn Station, but it would scarcely make a dent in the Garden-2 Penn eyesore.

New York's business-as-usual governor, Kathy Hochul, inherited the GPP from her predecessor Andrew Cuomo, whom she served as lieutenant governor. Like her predecessor, Hochul has benefited from Roth's campaign largesse. She unwisely settled for trimming the plan at the margins after a sexual harassment scandal forced Cuomo's resignation in August 2021. But the GPP proved so unworkable, for the time being at least, that last June she announced the "decoupling" of the Penn Station upgrade from the plan, and even opened the door to design alternatives to the MTA scheme. Not that she parted ways with the ESDC and Vornado. "We'll get [the plan] done over time," she said.

Even so, the General Project Plan would appear to be in serious trouble. There is little market demand or political support for its supertalls. The "substandard and insanitary" designation of Penn's neighborhood is a red herring. And sanity may prevail at the Federal Railway Administration—which recommends the through-running template as "almost always preferable to stub-end terminals" and has yet to provide funds for either Penn's renovation or extension. But the GPP has so far withstood challenges in court. And Gotham's planners have long fantasized about a midtown business district with office towers running from Hudson Yards clear across Manhattan to the East River.

What Hochul really ought to do is decouple *herself* from Vornado and the GPP and energetically promote reconstruction of McKim's building. Gotham's cultural elites might never forgive her, but millions of Empire State voters, Democrats and Republicans alike, would be thrilled by the idea, and perhaps more inclined to support a bond issue for a new Garden.

### An Inspiring Alternative

**A**T LEAST THE EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT Corporation—along with Vornado and The Related Companies, the even bigger real estate outfit that is the main Hudson Yards culprit—can claim credit for the ballyhooed installation of the Moynihan Train Hall, which opened in 2021 on the east side of the Farley Building, across Eighth Avenue from the Garden and Penn Station. Like Penn, Farley occupies an eight-acre, two-block



site. It was for decades the city's main post office and was served by the same underground tracks that ascend on a gentle incline from the North River Tunnel. Railway electrification's advent made it possible for trains to pull into Penn's and Farley's lower reaches without emitting blinding effusions of steam.

The Moynihan Train Hall mainly serves Amtrak passengers. Its signature element is four new vaulted skylights, arrayed in a humpbacked configuration, that run alongside the three 150-foot-long, chevron-shaped trusses that once spanned Farley's also skylit mail-sorting room. Many travelers will be found sitting on the train hall's floor; there is no seating because it would attract bums. *The New Yorker* reported last year that Moynihan reduces the flow of passengers through Penn Station by less than 10%. It is named for Senator Moynihan, who shined shoes at the old Penn as a boy, bewailed its destruction, and advocated Farley's conversion into a train station as an act of civic atonement. The train hall doesn't come close to filling that bill, and it's a shame Moynihan did not live to see the ReThinkNYC-Cameron plan.

There are a couple of other major Penn plans aside from the MTA upgrade and the ReThink rebuild. They could potentially entail ReThink's elimination of narrow platforms in the existing station, where a rush-hour bomb panic remains a dreadful pros-

pect, and accommodate through-running. The Grand Penn Community Alliance, a non-profit headed by architect-planner Alexandros Washburn, proposes to reconstruct McKim's Seventh Avenue colonnade below 2 Penn Plaza's protruding Bustle. The colonnade might be crowned by a preserved Night and Day statuary group, rising immediately in front of Bustle's glass wall. A modified version of the historic station's steel-and-glass concourse would be situated behind 2 Penn, its western window wall facing the spacious park that would supplant Madison Square Garden. A subterranean concourse would run under the park. One problem with the GPCA plan is that its station-front solution amounts to pastiche. The costly acquisition and demolition of 2 Penn should occur in the late stages of the original station's reconstruction. Vorado's mutant tower-slab can be left to strut its stuff in the meantime.

The other proposal has been put forth by ASTM North America, a branch of an Italian civil engineering multinational and its high-profile architectural team. Like the MTA scheme, it assumes the Garden remaining in place. The ASTM design includes much for Dolan to like. It girds the cylinder with a square multi-level podium and clads the entire ensemble in stone and glass. Access to the station from Eighth Avenue would be enhanced through elimina-

tion of the theater under the Garden's main arena. The architects' hopelessly reductionist attempt at a modernist classicism would at least curtail the Garden's ugliness. The proposal also includes improved loading facilities. Significantly, ASTM has offered to put up some of the money for the upgrade and reimburse the Garden for the loss of the theater if the railroads agree to pay it to operate the station. ReThinkNYC could really use a partner like ASTM North America.

Rebuilding McKim's station would be more expensive than the \$7 billion the MTA says its uninspired Penn upgrade will cost. But when you take the savings from Penn South's cancellation into account, the overall cost of the rebuild and conversion to through-running is competitive with what the railroads have proposed, especially considering that the ReThink option would create far more long-term value than any of the other Penn proposals. ReThinkNYC needs to build a team of enlightened venture capitalists to realize its vision. For Republicans and conservatives, supporting that vision boils down to excellent cultural politics as well as fiscal prudence. It means going to bat for an inspiring alternative to the plague of ugly, nihilistic buildings that titillate elite sensibilities while leaving the rest of us cold.

*Catesby Leigh is a senior fellow of Common Sense Society.*

The CLAREMONT REVIEW OF BOOKS is a publication of the CLAREMONT INSTITUTE  
FOR THE STUDY OF STATESMANSHIP AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

Subscribe to  
the *Claremont Review of Books*

*“The Claremont Review of Books is full of splendid essays and reviews—well written, based on deep scholarly knowledge, raising issues of lasting importance. I read it cover to cover, which takes some time, because there’s a lot of thought-provoking content.”*

—Michael Barone

Subscribe to the *CRB* today and save 25%  
off the newstand price. A one-year  
subscription is only \$19.95.

To begin receiving America’s premier  
conservative book review, visit  
[claremontreviewofbooks.com](http://claremontreviewofbooks.com)  
or call (909) 981-2200.

CLAREMONT  
REVIEW OF BOOKS

P.O. Box 39,  
Claremont, CA  
91711

NON PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT No. 504  
UPLAND, CA