

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT**  
**PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 119 E. Gowen Ave

Postal code: 19119

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Mount Airy Train Station, Philadelphia and Reading Railroad

Current/Common Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building

Structure

Site

Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:  excellent  good  fair  poor  ruins

Occupancy:  occupied  vacant  under construction  unknown

Current use: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1883 to 1889

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1883

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Frank Furness

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Levi Focht

Original owner: Philadelphia and Reading Railroad

Other significant persons: Franklin Benjamin Gowen

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization Powers & Co., Inc. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name with Title Adrian Trevisan, Associate Email adrian@powersco.net

Street Address 1315 Walnut St. Suite 1717 Telephone 609-334-6143

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19107

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: February 13, 2026

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: February 17, 2026

Date of Notice Issuance: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority

Address: 1234 Market Street, 10th Floor

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19107

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: March 18, 2026

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: April 10, 2026

Date of Final Action: April 10, 2026

Designated  Rejected

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that certain lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected.

Beginning at the corner formed by the intersection of the Northeasterly side of Devon Street (50 feet wide) with the Northwesterly side of E. Gowen Avenue (60 feet wide) in the 9<sup>th</sup> Ward of the City of Philadelphia.

Thence extending Northeast along the Northwest side of E. Gowen Avenue approximately 57 feet to a point; thence Northwest approximately 260 feet along the Southwest side of the railroad right-of-way to a point; thence Southwest approximately 98 feet to a point on the Northeast side of said Devon Street; thence Southeast along the Northeast side of said Devon Street approximately 258 feet to the place of beginning.

Being known as 119 E. Gowen Avenue.

Being without a Registry No., OPA Account No. 875101280.



Figure 1: Property Boundary Map (Imagery from Pictometry, 2024)

## 6. DESCRIPTION



*Figure 2: 119 East Gowen Street looking east from Sprague St. (Elizabeth Silvers, Pintarest)*

The Mount Airy train station is a two-story, rectangular Stick Style building set at the north corner (the street grid is set at a 45-degree angle from north) of East Gowen Avenue and Devon Street. Designed in 1883 by Philadelphia architect Frank Furness for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad as one of a series of buildings across the railroad's network, it featured a waiting area with ticket window on the first floor, and office and residence for the stationmaster on the first and second floors. The building is in good condition and appears to be original except for a room added on the northwest end, and a modification to the sloped roof over the steps leading from the station to the platform, which has been angled upwards, probably to accommodate larger, modern trains.

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Figure 3: 119 East Gowen Street seen from the northwest, 1963. The roof over the stairs to the platform has been modified, the stairs by the street are still present. (PhillyHistory.org)



Photo 1: 119 East Gowen Street looking southeast from the platform. (Robert Powers, 2025)

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*Photo 2: 119 East Gowen Street, northeast elevation, showing the door to the waiting room, looking southwest from the platform. (Robert Powers, 2025)*

The northeast (principal) elevation (Figure 2, Photos 1, 2) faces the tracks and is divided into five bays. The leftmost bay is of wood, with wood boards attached in a rectangular fashion. Two infilled windows are centered on bay. Above them the wall extends forward slightly, supported by brackets. The pitched roof extends over the wall. The second bay from the left is of brick and is divided into three parts. To the left are twin, double-hung, one-over-one sashes. In the center is the entrance to the waiting room, with twin glass and wood doors. To the right is a rectangular “agent’s bay” protruding on to the platform. It has a single window containing a double-hung, one-over-one sash on either side, allowing the stationmaster to look up and down the track for arriving trains, and twin, double-hung, one-over-one sashes allowing him to monitor activity on the platform. A roof extends down to the platform, supported by wooden posts and large ornamental brackets. The roof extends upward to the peak, broken by a small dormer to the left and a tower to the right. The dormer has a peaked, hipped roof, and ventilation louvers. The tower has two small windows filled with one-over-one double-hung sashes at roof level, blank wall above, and ventilation louvers at the roof level. It has a hip roof.

The third bay from the left is of brick on the first floor, with twin windows filled with one-over-one, double-hung sashes. The second floor is of wood, and projects forward supported by wooden brackets. A shed roof, wall dormer is centered on the bay and contains twin windows filled with one-over-one, double-hung sashes. The fourth bay is of a

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similar brick below and wood above design, but has only one window centered on the ground floor. The second floor contains the northeastern part of a shed dormer that wraps around all three elevations. The fifth bay is a later addition. The wall is blank and the roof is almost flat.

The northwest elevation at ground level is the wall of the addition. It contains one window filled with a one-over-one, double-hung sash. The second floor is the northwest wall of the original building, containing the shed dormer. It contains two sets of inward opening, twelve light, casement windows.



*Photo 3: 119 East Gowen Ave, southwest elevation, looking north. (Robert Powers, 2025)*

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*Photo 4: 119 East Gowen Ave, southwest elevation, looking east. (Robert Powers, 2025)*

The southwest elevation has five bays. (Photos 3, 4) The leftmost bay is the wooden wall of the addition and is blank except for a door at its center. The second bay is of brick with a door at its center. The second floor is the remainder of the shed dormer. A flat awning extends across the two bays above the first floor. The third bay is of brick and has a single window at either side, each filled with a one-over-one, double-hung sash. The wall between them is of brick and is blank. The second floor has a wall dormer containing two small windows above the brick portion of the wall below. The fourth bay has the door to waiting room at the center, flanked by twin windows containing one-over-one, double hung sashes. The leftmost of these windows has been infilled. A roof spanning the door and two adjacent windows extends forward providing protection for arriving passengers. It has a small peaked, hipped roof, dormer containing ventilation louvers. The fifth bay is blank with wooden decoration.



*Photo 5: 119 East Gowen Ave, southeast elevation, looking northwest. The change in slope of the roof leading from the station to the platform is clearly visible. (Robert Powers, 2025)*

The southeast elevation is blank, with wooden decoration.

## **7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The train station on Gowen Avenue in Mount Airy is part of Franklin B. Gowen’s expansion of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad (“Reading Railroad”) from a small local carrier to a large regional one. In addition to expanding the network of tracks, Gowen hired Philadelphia architect Frank Furness to create branding for the railroad through the design and color scheme of new stations, and application of that color scheme to existing stations. As Philadelphia expanded in the 1870s and 1880s, the formerly rural area of Chestnut Hill, which had been a summer resort, became instead a commuter neighborhood. The presence of the Chestnut Hill railroad and later construction of a competing line to the west led to the development of the land between Germantown and Chestnut Hill, creating the neighborhood now known as Mount Airy—a name it took from the estate of Franklin Gowen’s father, James Gowen (see below).

The station is worthy of designation under Criterion A because of the part it played in the physical expansion of the city and its association with Franklin B. Gowen, “a person significant in the past.” It is worthy of designation under Criterion E because it was designed by Frank Furness, an “architect ... whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City.”

## Criterion A

**Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past.**

James Gowen emigrated to the United States from Ireland in 1802, and in succeeding years married a woman from Mount Airy and established a shop importing liquor from Europe. In the mid-1840s he retired and focused his efforts on breeding prize cattle on the 130-acre estate he had created in Mount Airy, east of the Germantown Turnpike. When Gowen died in 1873, the executors of his estate, his sons James E. Gowen and Franklin Benjamin Gowen, subdivided it and began selling residential lots. They laid out various streets, renamed Millers Lane Gowen Avenue, and extended it to the northeast. Over time they were joined by other real estate developers subdividing and selling lots in other estates between Germantown and Chestnut Hill.<sup>1</sup> (Figure 4)

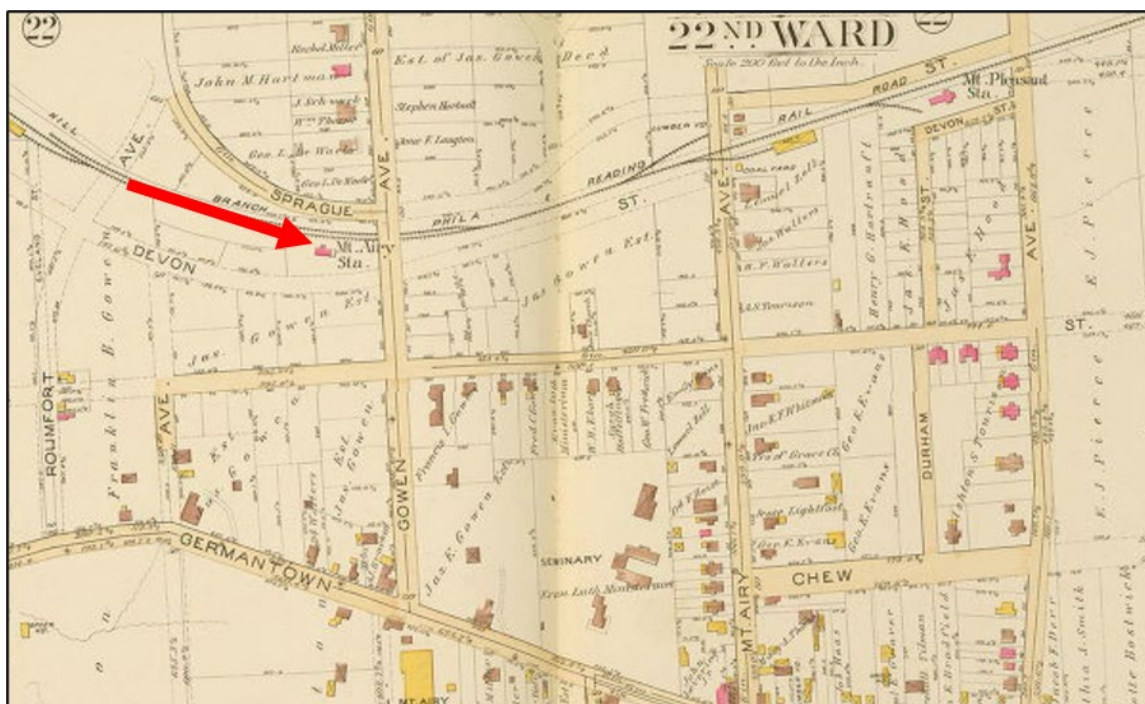


Figure 4: Detail from Plate 17 of Bromley's 1889 Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Vol 7, showing some property still labeled as "Jas E. Gowen Est," and some houses. The red arrow shows the Mt. Airy Station. (Greater PhilaGeoHistory)

<sup>1</sup> "James E. Gowen Started Giant Philadelphia Financial Dynasty," *Gowen Research Foundation Newsletter* (Lubbock, TX) vol 2, no. 8 (1991): 1; *Parish Register* (St. Luke's Church, 1827); "Raspberry Irish Whiskey," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), January 1, 1822, 3; Joel Levinson, *The 11th Annual Gowen Estate House Tour* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004), 1; "Thomas H. Jacobs," *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia, PA), September 13, 1847, 3; "State Agricultural Fair," *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia, PA), November 1, 1851, 3; Adrian Trevisan, *Central Mount Airy Commercial Historic District Nomination Form* (Philadelphia Historical Commission, 2019), 12–15; "Philadelphia and Suburbs - City Councils," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), December 10, 1875, 2.

Franklin Gowen, James Gowen's third son, began his career in the business of mining coal but quickly abandoned it to practice law. In 1860 he was admitted to the bar and in 1866 hired by the Reading Railroad to represent it in court in a case against the Pennsylvania Railroad. His brilliant performance led the Reading Railroad to hire him, first as regional council and then a year later as chief counsel. When, in 1870, the railroad's president resigned because of poor health, the board appointed the 33-year-old Gowen as president.<sup>2</sup>

Gowen's predecessors had focused on expanding the Reading Railroad throughout the Schuylkill coal fields. He continued this drive, circumventing state anti-monopoly laws and gaining control of the coal fields themselves. In addition, he sought to expand beyond Pennsylvania to New York, breaking the Pennsylvania Railroad's lucrative monopoly on railroad travel between the two cities. The jewel in the crown of this effort was the creation, in 1878, of a line running to the west of the Pennsylvania Railroad's, connecting the two cities by combining the track of the North Pennsylvania, Delaware and Bound Brook, and Jersey Central Railroad companies in a line that ran from Jenkintown to West Trenton, Bound Brook, and finally to Jersey City. This allowed the Reading Railroad to supply coal from the coal fields to New York City.<sup>3</sup>

Although president of the railroad, Gowen was not a railroad man. As one history of the Reading Railroad describes him, "Whether he paid any real attention to all of it—especially operational matters on the railroad—is another matter. The few scraps of letters and memoranda from Gowen ... seem to indicate that he was impatient, even bored, when details of real railroading practice came to his attention. It was corporate power and financial finagling that interested this complex man."<sup>4</sup>

Gowen's expansion of the Reading Railroad into coalfield ownership brought with it conflict with the Molly Maguires (also spelled Macguires), a secret organization of coalminers fighting exploitation by mine owners. As described by one study of the organization, miners led "a hard life of cave-ins, explosions, flooded mines, and long hours of back-breaking labor in the darkness, all for wages that were barely sufficient to support a family. The mine



Figure 5: Franklin B. Gowen (Holton, *The Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Age*)

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<sup>2</sup> *Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography*, vol 2 (D. Appleton and Company, 1887), 699; James L. Holton, *The Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Age Empire* (Garrigues House, 1989), 144–45; "James E. Gowen Started Giant Philadelphia Financial Dynasty," 2.

<sup>3</sup> Holton, *The Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Age Empire*, 171–75, 275–76.

<sup>4</sup> Holton, *The Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Age Empire*, 171.

workers even had to buy their own work tools and dynamite at the company store for elevated prices.”<sup>5</sup> Although the miners organized a trade union, the Workingmen’s Benevolent Association, which organized strikes and obtained an eight-hour workday from the legislature, conditions in the mine grew no easier. A group of miners resolved to improve working conditions through violence against mine management and organized the Molly Maguires in 1862. The following thirteen years saw 142 unsolved murders and 212 felonious assaults attributed to the organization.<sup>6</sup>

In 1873, Gowen decided that the Mollies posed a threat to the Reading Railroad’s new coal operations and engaged the Pinkerton detective agency to gather information on them. A Pinkerton operative went undercover, joined the Mollies, and rose to a position of leadership. Three years later the police arrested twenty miners. “Gowen played a prominent role throughout the series of trials,” writes one study, “often making the prosecution’s opening statement, frequently questioning witnesses and the accused, and in many cases summing up for the state.”<sup>7</sup> This, plus testimony from the Pinkerton operative, resulted in all twenty being convicted. Sixteen of them were hanged on June 21, 1877. Newspapers featured the trials, and Gowen’s role, prominently, leading to public association of the Reading Railroad and its president with the Maguires and the executions.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to his efforts to expand the Reading Railroad into coal mining and ensure the profitability of that effort, Gowen also had the Reading Railroad purchase and construct many smaller rail lines, among them the Colebrookdale Branch (Pottstown to Boyertown), the Pickering Valley Railroad (Phoenixville to Byers), the Philadelphia, Germantown and Norristown Railroad, and the Chestnut Hill Railroad. The last of these had been constructed in 1854 as a passenger line to provide a way for affluent businessmen to commute to their businesses in Center City from their summer residences in Chestnut Hill. Unlike the core of the Reading network, passenger trains on this line outnumbered freight trains by more than 10 to 1 in the 1860s.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Bloom, “Molly MacGuire in Pennsylvania Coal Regions,” *Stories*, *HistoryNet*, June 12, 2006, <https://www.historynet.com/molly-macguire-in-pennsylvania-coal-regions/>.

<sup>6</sup> Holton, *The Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Age Empire*, 151–56.

<sup>7</sup> Holton, *The Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Age Empire*, 166.

<sup>8</sup> Holton, *The Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Age Empire*, 166–68; Bloom, “Molly MacGuire in Pennsylvania Coal Regions.”

<sup>9</sup> Holton, *The Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Age Empire*, 257.

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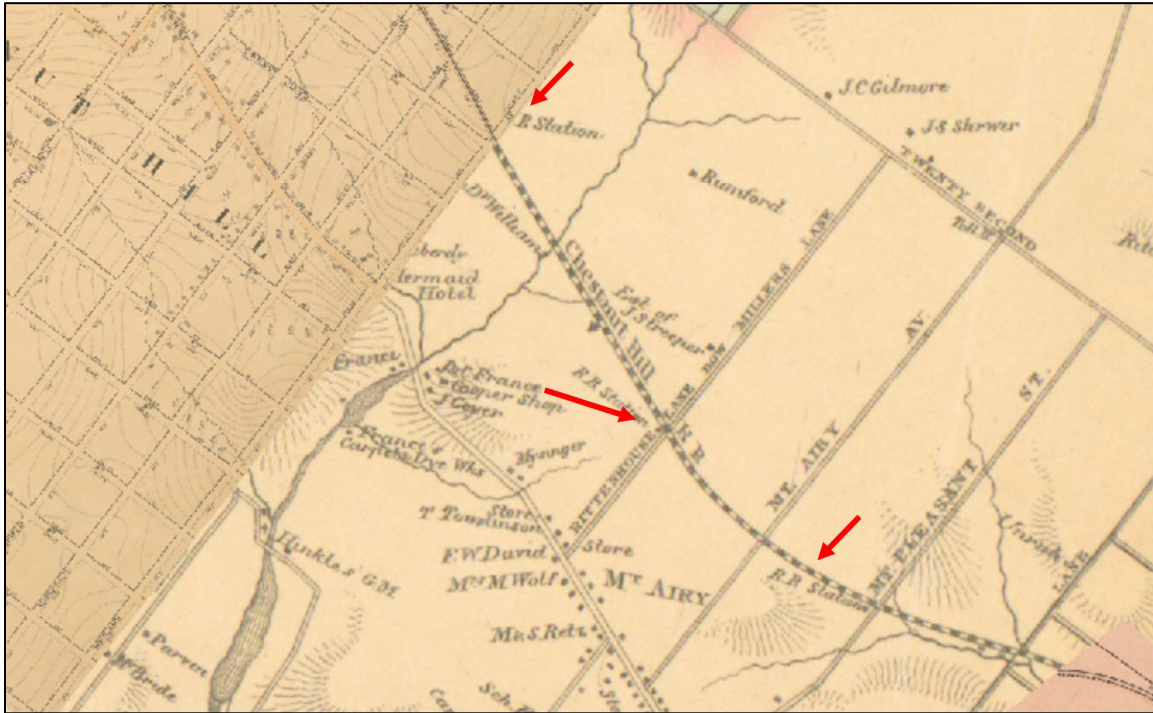


Figure 6: Detail from the 1862 Smedley's Atlas of Philadelphia, showing the location of three railroad stations with red arrows. The central one is the Mount Airy Station. (Greater PhilaGeoHistory)

An 1862 map of the region (Figure 6) shows four railroad stations along the line between Germantown and Chestnut Hill. The current Mount Airy Station appears on the map, although East Gowen Avenue is named “Rittenhouse Lane now Millers Lane.”<sup>10</sup> Recognizing the growing demand from buyers of the houses along the Chestnut Hill Line, Gowen had the Reading Railroad construct three additional stations and remodel or replace the four existing ones in the early 1880s. As described by George Thomas in his book, *Frank Furness – Architecture in the Age of Great Machines*, Gowen hired Philadelphia architect Frank Furness to do what today would be called branding. All of the Reading Railroad’s stations were to be of red brick with structural steel and cream yellow wood trim accents. To preserve the individuality of the buildings, Furness used “a wide array of boldly asymmetrical forms that made each station identifiable.”<sup>11</sup> In this way, Furness tied the stations together stylistically, but enabled the commuter to look up from his newspaper and see quickly where he was on the line.

Within the buildings, Furness retained a standard set of rooms tied to the station’s function. Gowen had the station masters live at their stations, enabling him to reduce their salaries and minimize vandalism by providing a constant presence. In addition to the passenger waiting room, the ground floor of each station had a station master’s office which included a ticket window and an “agent’s bay” protruding on to the platform that

<sup>10</sup> Samuel L. Smedley, *Smedley's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1862, Interactive Viewer, Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

<sup>11</sup> George Thomas, *Frank Furness - Architect in the Age of the Great Machines* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 128.

allowed him to monitor activity on the platform and look up and down the track for arriving trains. The kitchen and parlor were on the first floor, with bedrooms above—the station master’s bedroom above the office, so he could see the platform and track without going downstairs.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 7: Mount Airy Station, 1883. Note the sloped roofs on main station and staircase to the left resembling coal breakers. (Thomas, Frank Furness – *Architecture in the Age of the Great Machines*)

The Mount Airy stations (old and new) were in the middle of the late James Gowen’s estate, which ran approximately from Germantown Avenue to Mansfield Avenue at its west and east, between East Mermaid Lane and East Mount Airy Avenue at its north and south. Franklin Gowen lived in Mount Airy in a house designed for him by Furness on Gowen Avenue northeast of the station (since demolished) and commuted to the Reading offices in Philadelphia by train, using the Mount Airy station. Perhaps because of this, rather than using any of the fanciful elements found in other stations, in 1883 Furness designed the Mt. Airy station to resemble the coal breakers that were the origin of the Reading Railroad’s wealth (see above), with a long sloping roof leading from the peak down to the platform. A staircase adjacent to Gowen Avenue also used this theme.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Thomas, *Frank Furness - Architect in the Age of the Great Machines*, 127–28; Herbert H. Harwood, “Philadelphia’s Victorian Suburban Stations,” *The Railway History Monograph* (Crete, NE), July 1975, 7.

<sup>13</sup> George W. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia. Volume 7*, G. W. Bromley & Co., 1889, 17, 22; “The Last Scene of All,” *Philadelphia Times* (Philadelphia, PA), December 18, 1889, 1; Thomas, *Frank Furness - Architect in the Age of the Great Machines*, 129; *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880* (United States of America, Bureau of the Census, 1885), Ancestry.com, p. Philadelphia/457/6, National Archives and Records

The board of the Reading Railroad forced Benjamin Gowen out in 1886. He occupied himself by translating French and German poetry and occasional legal work. In December 1889 while in Washington, DC to testify before the Interstate Commerce Commission, Gowen committed suicide in his hotel room. In the absence of a suicide note, theories swirled circulated about the cause of including that he had actually been assassinated by remnants of the Molly Maguires. None were ever proven. He is buried in Ivy Hill Cemetery, a short walk from the Mount Airy train station.<sup>14</sup>

### **Criterion E**

**Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.**

The designer of the Mount Airy train station, Frank Furness, was one of Philadelphia's most prominent—and idiosyncratic—architects. Frank Heyling Furness was born in Philadelphia on November 12, 1839, son of a Unitarian minister. As a teenager he expressed an interest in architecture, and the family found him a position where he could “learn the use of the Instruments” from local architect John Fraser. With no school of architecture in the city, the family was saving money to send Furness to Paris to study when a young architect named Richard Morris Hunt stopped to visit Frank's older brother. Hunt, who was the first American to study architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, was returning to New York from Washington, DC after working in for Thomas Ustick Walter, then Architect of the Capitol. “When during this visit, and in talking to my brother,” Furness recalled many years later, “Mr. Hunt spoke of his profession, there at once fell upon me a fascinated administration, which is destined to end only with my life.” Three years later Furness' father asked Hunt to accept Frank as a student in his office in New York.<sup>15</sup>

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Administration; George E. Thomas et al., *Frank Furness: The Complete Works* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 218, 344D.

<sup>14</sup> Holton, *The Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Age Empire*, 245; “F. B. Gowen Is a Suicide,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), December 15, 1889, 1; “Franklin Benjamin Gowen,” Find a Grave, accessed February 12, 2026, <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60525/records/93765523>.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas et al., *Frank Furness: The Complete Works*, 13–15, 351.



Figure 8: Captain Frank Furness during the Civil War  
([www.rushlancers.com](http://www.rushlancers.com))

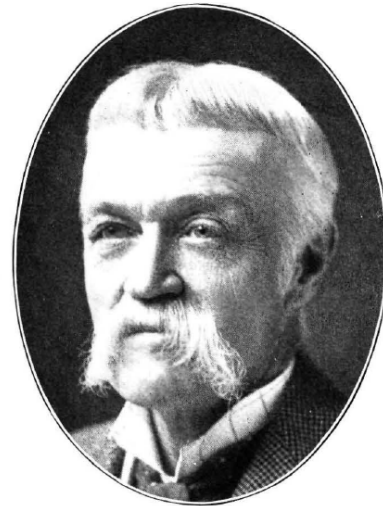


Figure 9: Frank Furness as an architect.  
(*King's Notable Philadelphians 1902*)

Furness' studies with Hunt were cut short by the outbreak of the Civil War. He returned to Philadelphia and enlisted in the Sixth Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment being organized by West Point graduate and Mexican War veteran Richard Henry Rush. At the suggestion of General George McClellan, Rush armed the unit with lances, leading to it being nicknamed "Rush's Lancers." Although the lances proved impracticable and were soon abandoned, the nickname remained. Furness was quickly commissioned as a lieutenant, alternating between staff and command positions. While in command of Company F, he took part in the Battle of Trevilian Station where, in the words of his 1899 citation for the Congressional Medal of Honor, he "voluntarily carried a box of ammunition across an open space swept by the enemy's fire to the relief of an outpost whose ammunition had become almost exhausted, but which was thus enabled to hold its important position."<sup>16</sup> After the war, Furness returned to Hunt's studio.<sup>17</sup>

After two years with Hunt, Furness married and returned to Philadelphia where in 1867 he joined his former employer, Fraser, and a second young architect, George Hewitt, in forming the firm of Fraser, Furness & Hewitt. The three received many commissions, with the older Fraser apparently doing most of the business development while the younger Furness and Hewitt did the designs. When, after a few years, Fraser visited Washington DC

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<sup>16</sup> "Frank Furness | U.S. Civil War | U.S. Army | Medal of Honor Recipient," Congressional Medal of Honor Society, accessed February 10, 2026, <https://www.cmohs.org/recipients/frank-furness>.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas et al., *Frank Furness: The Complete Works*, 75; George E. Thomas, "The Sixth Pennsylvania Cavalry 'Lancers' Monument," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (Philadelphia, PA), October 2011, 543–46.

seeking government commissions, Furness and Hewitt pushed him out of the firm. In the words of one study, “he left no discernable mark on the office’s early work.”<sup>18</sup>

Due to the partners very different architectural styles, they appear to have worked in parallel, with Hewitt’s use of “historical, English-based sources, each element grasped delicately with ‘pincers’ and placed in a drawing as one might put a butterfly in a collection”<sup>19</sup> contrasting strongly with Furness’s exuberant originality. Furness and Hewitt worked together, completing approximately forty commissions, until 1875 when they parted amicably, Hewitt going to work with his brothers, while Furness established his own studio.<sup>20</sup>

Although he hired a number of young architects as assistants, it appears that Furness drew the initial designs and then passed them to his juniors for later iteration and refinement. This period saw Furness move into a type of design idiosyncratically his, with a sculptural and abstract sensibility and frequent use of red brick. Surviving examples of this period of his career include the Centennial National Bank at 32nd and Market Streets, 125 buildings for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company, and the William H. Rhawn house, “Knowlton.”<sup>21</sup>

In 1878 the Reading Railroad put Furness on retainer with the task, as mentioned above, of creating a Reading brand. Over the next five years, Furness created 125 designs at a monthly rate that worked out to be about \$100 per building. One builder, Levi Focht, constructed most of them, and after a time Furness could give Focht a sketch of the design, providing detail only on unique aspects and leaving Focht to repeat elements from earlier designs for less unusual or public-facing portions of the building. Since the Mount Airy station was Gowen’s personal station, however, Furness appears to have given it particular attention, tying the design back to the coal fields that Gowen had gained control of at the beginning of his campaign to building the Reading Railroad into an important company.<sup>22</sup>

In 1881, with Furness continuing to grow in popularity and the number of projects increasing, he elevated junior architect Allen Evans to partner, changing the name of the firm to Furness & Evans. Furness died in 1912. A complete list of his designs can be found in Thomas, Cohen and Lewis’ book *Frank Furness: The Complete Works*.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas et al., *Frank Furness: The Complete Works*, 23–24, 42–43, 77; “Furness, Frank (1839-1912) -- Philadelphia Architects and Buildings,” accessed February 10, 2026, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/25653](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/25653).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas, *Frank Furness - Architect in the Age of the Great Machines*, 20.

<sup>20</sup> Sandra L. Tatman, “Furness, Frank (1839-1912),” Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, accessed February 10, 2026, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/25653](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/25653).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas et al., *Frank Furness: The Complete Works*, 83–84; Tatman, “Furness, Frank (1839-1912).”

<sup>22</sup> Thomas, *Frank Furness - Architect in the Age of the Great Machines*.

<sup>23</sup> Tatman, “Furness, Frank (1839-1912).”

Furness' work has been widely recognized, with more than twenty books devoted to his work or including it in a larger discussion. On May 4, 2009, then Vice President Biden recognized Furness in his remarks at the official kickoff event for the restoration and renovation of the Wilmington train station, designed by Furness in 1908.<sup>24</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad's Mount Airy Station is a tangible record of Philadelphia's expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the impact on that expansion by Franklin B. Gowen, President of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad (Criterion A). It is also the work of Frank Furness, an architect whose work has significantly influenced the architectural, social, and cultural development of the City (Criterion E). As such it is qualified to be placed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

## **8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

### **Books**

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