

**FIREHOUSE, ENGINE COMPANY 305, HOOK & LADDER COMPANY 151**, 111-02 Queens Boulevard (aka 111-02 to 111-04 Queens Boulevard; 111-50 75<sup>th</sup> Avenue), Queens  
Built: 1922-1924; John R. Sliney, architect (attributed)

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 3294, Lot 20

On May 15, 2012, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151 and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were five speakers in favor of designation including representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the Queens Preservation Council, the Central Queens Historical Association, the Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance, and the Bayside Historical Society. Correspondence in support of designation was received from the Fire Department of the City of New York and from the Queens Borough President, Helen M. Marshall. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

### Summary

The Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151, in Forest Hills, Queens, was constructed by the Fire Department of the City of New York in 1924. The firehouse was intended to serve the growing population of the Forest Hills neighborhood, which had seen a boom in residential construction following World War I. The large, two and two-and-a-half story Neo-Medieval style firehouse is clad in red brick laid in a Flemish bond and enlivened with decorative limestone details and subtle patterned brickwork. The

The asymmetrical massing of the building is accentuated by steep gables clad with copper standing-seam roofs, two prominent square towers (a stair tower and a hose-drying tower) featuring round-arched window openings, and a slender chimney rising nearly a story above the western elevation. The innovative design of this firehouse has been attributed to John R. Sliney, head building inspector for the fire department, during whose tenure approximately 70 firehouses were constructed throughout the five boroughs. The firehouse, which has experienced remarkably few changes in the 90 years since its construction, continues to serve the Forest Hills community today. It is at once a striking presence along the Queens Boulevard streetscape and a well-integrated constituent of this vibrant residential neighborhood.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Firefighting in New York<sup>1</sup>

Even in the colonial period, the government of New York took the possibility of fire very seriously. Under Dutch rule all men were expected to participate in firefighting activities. After the English took over, the Common Council organized a force of 30 volunteer firefighters in 1737. They operated two Newsham hand pumpers that had recently been imported from London. By 1798, the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY), under the supervision of a chief engineer and six subordinates, was officially established by an act of the state legislature.

As the city grew, this force was augmented by new volunteer companies. In spite of growing numbers of firefighters and improvements in hoses and water supplies, fire was a significant threat in an increasingly densely built up city. Of particular significance was the “Great Fire” of December 16-17, 1835, which caused more damage to property than any other event in New York City. The damages resulting from several major fires which occurred between 1800 and 1850 led to the establishment of a building code, and an increase in the number of firemen from 600 in 1800 to more than 4,000 in 1865. Despite rapid growth, the department was often criticized for poor performance.<sup>2</sup> Intense competition between companies began to hinder firefighting with frequent brawls and acts of sabotage, often at the scenes of fires. During the Civil War, when fire personnel became harder to retain, public support grew for the creation of a professional firefighting force, similar to that which had been established in other cities and to the professional police force that had been created in New York in 1845.

In May 1865, the New York State Legislature established the Metropolitan Fire District, comprising the cities of New York (south of 86<sup>th</sup> Street) and Brooklyn. The act abolished the volunteer system and created the Metropolitan Fire Department, a paid professional force under the jurisdiction of the state government. By the end of the year, the city’s 124 volunteer companies with more than 4,000 men had retired or disbanded, to be replaced by 33 engine companies and 12 ladder companies operated by a force of 500 men. Immediate improvements included the use of more steam engines, horses, and a somewhat reliable telegraph system. A military model was adopted for the firefighters, which involved the use of specialization, discipline, and merit. By 1870, regular service was extended to the “suburban districts” north of 86<sup>th</sup> Street and expanded still farther north after the annexation of parts of the Bronx in 1874. New techniques and equipment, including taller ladders and stronger steam engines, increased the department’s efficiency, as did the establishment, in 1883, of a training academy for personnel. The growth of the city during this period placed severe demands on the fire department to provide services, and in response the department undertook an ambitious building campaign.

The area served by the FDNY nearly doubled after consolidation in 1898, when the departments in Brooklyn and numerous communities in Queens and Staten Island were incorporated into the city. For several decades after consolidation, the independent volunteer fire companies already extant in these communities continued to serve in areas where there was insufficient population to justify the establishment of paid units.<sup>3</sup> The volunteer companies were systematically disbanded as the city’s population continued to grow, with paid departments taking their place. In the decades that ensued, the fire department acquired more modern apparatus and motorized vehicles, reflecting, among other demands, the need for faster response to fires in taller buildings. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the FDNY has continued endeavoring to keep up with the evolving city and its firefighting needs.

### Firehouse Design<sup>4</sup>

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the New York City firehouse as a building type had evolved from the wooden storage shed used during the 17<sup>th</sup> century to an imposing architectural expression of civic character. As early as 1853, Marriott Field had argued in his *City Architecture: Designs for Dwelling*

Houses, Stores, Hotels, etc. for symbolic architectural expression in municipal buildings, including firehouses. The 1854 Fireman's Hall,<sup>5</sup> with its highly symbolic ornamentation reflected this approach, using flambeaux, hooks, ladders, and trumpets for its ornament.<sup>6</sup>

Between 1880 and 1895, Napoleon LeBrun & Son served as the official architectural firm for the fire department, designing 42 firehouses in a massive effort to modernize the facilities and to accommodate the growing population of the city. Although the firm's earliest designs were relatively simple, later buildings were more distinguished and more clearly identifiable as firehouses.

While the basic function and requirements of the firehouse were established early in its history, LeBrun is credited with standardizing the program, and introducing some minor, but important, innovations in the plan. Placing the horse stalls in the main part of the ground floor to reduce the time needed for hitching horses to the apparatus was one such innovation. LeBrun is also credited with the creation of vertical hose-drying towers to accommodate this necessary activity in a space-saving manner. Firehouses were usually located on mid-block sites because these were less expensive than more prominent corner sites. Since the sites were narrow, firehouses tended to be three stories tall, with the apparatus on the ground story and rooms for the company, including dormitory, kitchen and captain's office, above.

After 1895, the fire department commissioned a number of well-known architects to design firehouses. Influenced by the classical revival which was highly popular throughout the country, New York firms such as Hoppin & Koen, Flagg & Chambers, and Horgan & Slatterly created facades with bold, classical style designs. After 1910 there was a Georgian revival in civic design, and red brick firehouses in that general style were built in large numbers throughout New York through at least 1930, with later firehouses incorporating elements of the Art Deco and Moderne styles through at least 1940.<sup>7</sup> During this era, the department appears to have transitioned away from the well-known architects of the previous decades towards utilization of in-house architects employed within the buildings division of the department, largely to lower expenses.<sup>8</sup>

### Growth of Queens and Forest Hills<sup>9</sup>

Much of the early development of Queens followed the patterns established in the rest of New York City. The first known European settlements were in the Astoria, Hunters Point, and Dutch Kills area of Long Island City. Queens remained rural and sparsely settled through the 1850s, when land speculation began in Maspeth, Corona, and Hunters Point. Still, development and urbanization of Queens progressed slowly in the ensuing decades. Near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, western Queens and the Rockaway beaches attracted people for their leisure-time activities, while manufacturers opened factories at Whitestone, Woodhaven, and College Point because of the cheaper land available there.

At the time of its consolidation with New York City, the area that became the Borough of Queens had a population of only 152,999 people – due in large part to the region's inaccessibility. Although the first train line between Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn and Jamaica, Queens began as early as 1836, and a few other routes were established through Queens to other parts of Long Island in the 1850s, 60s, and 70s, train travel was limited. The Pennsylvania Railroad purchased the Long Island Railroad in 1900 and electrified the trains through Queens in 1905-08. However, the trains all had to connect by ferry to Manhattan until 1909 when the Queensborough Bridge opened. In 1910, the Pennsylvania Railroad opened its tunnels under the East River, finally establishing Queens as an attractive location within easy commuting distance to Manhattan. Following this innovation, the population of the borough nearly doubled to 284,041. Other improvements soon followed, including a dramatically enlarged road system and the development of towns and buildings. St. Albans and Bellerose, followed closely by Auburndale, Beechhurst, and Forest Hills, were among the many residential areas developed during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1906, developer Cord Meyer who had previously been active in the Elmhurst section of Queens, purchased 600 acres (comprising the land of six farms) in the area known as the Hopedale section of Whitepot. Changing the name to Forest Hills because of its high ground and its proximity to the beautiful terrain of Forest Park, he began to lay out streets, install utilities, and construct the first houses. To encourage sales, Meyer's company ran horse-drawn stages to Forest Hills from the closest train station in Elmhurst. By 1908, the Long Island Railroad was running three steam-driven trains a day with a local stop at Austin Street and Roman Avenue.

In 1906, the Russell Sage Foundation purchased 160 acres of land south of the railroad line with the intent to develop a "modern suburban development" to contrast with the overcrowding, squalor and chaos of residential districts in Manhattan.<sup>10</sup> The proposed development, Forest Hills Gardens, was the collaborative creation of landscape architect and planner Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and the architect and housing reform activist Grosvenor Atterbury. Together they conceived of a picturesque enclave of homes, schools, churches, and businesses that would, upon completion in 1909-10, be widely publicized across the country as a modern Arcadia – a place where people of "moderate income and good taste... might find some country air and country life within striking distance of the active centers of New York."<sup>11</sup> The completed development consisted of a brick-paved square shaded by trees built in front of the train station, a clock tower, arched passageways, and garden apartments built to resemble a row of country inns along narrow, winding roads that discouraged through-traffic.<sup>12</sup>

The electrification of the Long Island Railroad in 1909 and the opening of the Queensborough Bridge that same year further advanced the development of the Forest Hills neighborhood. Queens Boulevard, the major thoroughfare that runs through the neighborhood, was widened in 1913, spurring Cord Meyer to improve his remaining acreage.<sup>13</sup> By 1921, Meyer's company had constructed some 200 homes, and several apartment buildings. Within Forest Hills Gardens, a number of brick houses of both modest and luxury scale were constructed between 1910 and 1917, followed by the first apartment building – the Forest Arms – in 1924. The world-famous West Side Tennis Club, home of the U. S. Open Tennis Tournament for many years, was constructed in Forest Hills in 1923. The small, inward-facing developments of Arbor Close and Forest Close, which aesthetically emulate the nearby Forest Hills Gardens and which abut the site of the Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151, were completed in 1925 and 1927, respectively. The IND Subway line, which opened with a stop at Queens Boulevard and Continental Avenue in 1936, was another major improvement that guaranteed the continued growth of the area.

#### Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151<sup>14</sup>

The Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151 was dedicated on November 15, 1924 in Forest Hills, Queens. The two companies that would occupy the building, Engine Company 305 and Hook & Ladder Company 151, were officially organized on the same day the firehouse opened, assigned to the 46<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 13<sup>th</sup> Division of the Fire Department of the City of New York. In contrast to statements made in the early part of the century, by the 1920s, the fire department found there to be a "great need" for new firehouses in this, and other growing Queens neighborhoods.<sup>15</sup> It announced intentions to extend the paid fire department into Forest Hills, and in 1923 it awarded a contract in the amount of \$77,713 for construction of a new firehouse on Queens Boulevard.<sup>16</sup> The site for the firehouse appears to have been acquired in 1922, along with sites for firehouses in several other Queens communities, including Bayside,<sup>17</sup> Queens Village, Jamaica, and Jackson Heights, as well as sites for firehouses in Brooklyn and "Westchester."<sup>18</sup> As noted in the 1924 Annual Report of the FDNY:

The development of certain sections of Brooklyn and Queens has made it imperative to extend the activities of this department. To keep abreast of times it has been necessary to have new firehouses constructed.<sup>19</sup>

Fire loss statistics during this era further underscore the increased need for fire protection throughout Queens, with losses doubling from \$1.372 million in 1921 to \$2.744 million in 1922.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to the preceding decades, by the 1920s, the FDNY had transitioned away from commissioning well-known architects to design its firehouses in favor of utilizing in-house staff. In the 1922 Annual Report of the FDNY, in which the approval for construction of several firehouses, including the one in Forest Hills, was discussed, it was noted that the “plans [for the firehouses] have been prepared by the Department and therefore there will be no architect employed in connection with the erection of these buildings.”<sup>21</sup> This was reiterated in the 1924 Annual Report, which announced the completion of several firehouses, including the Forest Hills structure, citing that “the plans and specifications for these buildings have been prepared by this bureau, as has been the practice since this administration came into power, and thus the fees of architects were saved.”<sup>22</sup>

By the 1920s, the Georgian Revival style had become popular for the design of firehouses throughout New York. Employing red brick facades with engaged pilasters, flat roofs, and limestone details, the firehouses of this type were typically compactly massed to conform to the rectangular tax lots of the city.<sup>23</sup> Unlike its contemporaries, Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151 was not constructed in the dominant firehouse style of the time. In this way, the design of the Forest Hills firehouse, with its large scale and near-ecclesiastical appearance, is remarkable. The building is designed in a Neo-Medieval style and is prominently located on a corner lot. It features asymmetrical massing accentuated by steep gables clad with copper standing-seam roofs, two prominent square towers (a stair tower and a hose-drying tower) featuring round-arched window openings, and a slender chimney rising nearly a story above the western elevation. The building is strongly suggestive of religious, not civic architecture, particularly in the steep pitch of its roofs and the height of the hose-drying tower, itself reminiscent of a church bell tower. The only aesthetic connection between the Forest Hills firehouse and its contemporaries appears to be the use of similar primary materials – namely red brick and limestone, utilized here to a very different effect.

One explanation for the very different appearance of Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151 might be attributed to an evolution in firehouse design that resulted from a shift in requirements. Over the decades, the height of firehouses has been subject to variation, with earlier buildings typically three, or even four, stories in height in order to address the needs of heavily developed areas where land prices made taller buildings more economically viable.<sup>24</sup> However, as fire protection was extended to lower density, suburban areas, such as Forest Hills, lower, less compact buildings became not only possible, but desirable. The taller firehouses meant more opportunities for firemen to be injured sliding on poles, while the shorter firehouses mean fewer flights of stairs to climb or to run.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, once firemen were no longer required to reside full time in the firehouses, different space configurations were required within the buildings.<sup>26</sup> To keep up with advancements in firehouse design, the Forest Hills firehouse was constructed to include a kitchen for the firemen and air-tight doors to “protect the firemen asleep in the dormitory from the danger of gasoline exhaust fumes and to confine the heat to the apparatus floor, so that the motors will always be warm and ready for instant use.”<sup>27</sup>

Changes in firehouse requirements alone, however, do not seem to account for the unusual appearance of Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151. It is far more likely that the design of the building was the result of efforts to contextualize the new firehouse within the growing residential community of Forest Hills and, in particular, the nearby, renowned planned development of Forest Hills Gardens. In Queens, the firehouses of the earlier century, constructed for the volunteer companies that once protected the borough, were often wood-sided structures with pitched roofs, similarly evocative of residential construction.<sup>28</sup> Thus, while Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151 exhibits an unusual appearance for a firehouse from this time period, it was apparently not unheard of for Queens firehouses to be designed in harmony with

their surrounding communities. Though the blocks immediately around the new firehouse were still undeveloped in 1924, nearby Forest Hills Gardens, universally praised for the high-quality of its design, had been completed more than a decade earlier. With the steady, continued development of the neighborhood throughout the 1910s and 20s, it is possible that there was pressure from the surrounding community that the firehouse be designed to the same high standards of the existing development. The small, inward-facing, Tudor Revival style developments of Arbor Close and Forest Close, which are adjacent to the firehouse and were completed shortly following its construction, aesthetically emulate Forest Hills Gardens and seem to similarly point to local pressure for carefully planned development in the Forest Hills neighborhood during this era.

Upon the November 1924 opening of Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151, Hubert J. Treacy, chief of the Bureau of Repairs and Supplies for the fire department noted it as “the most pretentious fire engine house in the Greater City.”<sup>29</sup> On the eve of its official dedication, the building was recognized in at least two local papers, the *Flushing Evening Journal* and the *Long Island Daily Star*, for having been “constructed to harmonize with the architecture of the surrounding community.”<sup>30</sup> The building was even mentioned several years later, in a 1931 local newspaper article reacting to a pair of apparently unattractive, recently-constructed firehouses which the author notes as “painful to the eye.”<sup>31</sup> The author of the article makes a call for more firehouses in Queens to harmonize with their environments, and mentions only one firehouse – Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151 – as an example of how a firehouse “can be good to look upon and in harmony with its surroundings, without the sacrifice of any considerations of usefulness.”<sup>32</sup>

Nearly 90 years after its construction, the Forest Hills firehouse continues to serve as the home of Engine Company 305 and Hook & Ladder Company 151, operating under the motto “Pride of the Hills.” Completed at a time when much of the surrounding area was still in the process of being developed, today the firehouse is at once a striking presence along the Queens Boulevard streetscape and a well-integrated constituent of this vibrant residential neighborhood. It is also an outstanding example of a functional structure whose design also enhances the character of its surroundings. Even as the Forest Hills neighborhood underwent some large-scale redevelopment during the mid-century, the firehouse has experienced very few changes in its appearance. Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151 remains a well-preserved, remarkable example of both innovative firehouse architecture, as well as a success story for carefully-considered, forward thinking contextual design.

#### John R. Sliney (c. 1873-1953)<sup>33</sup>

As a result of the fire department’s shift away from using well-known architects in the design of its firehouses towards utilization of in-house architects during the 1920s, many of the firehouses built during this era are not clearly attributed to specific architects. At the time of its construction, the design of Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151 was credited in local papers to John R. Sliney, head building inspector for the fire department. There is some confusion, however, as to whether Sliney, who was never a registered architect in New York, actually designed the firehouse himself, or whether it was designed by an architect employed within the buildings division of the FDNY.

Little is known about Sliney, his career, or education. It is known that Sliney began his career within the plumbing industry, and he is noted on the 1910 United States Census as a “plumber, inspector” for the fire department. His 1953 obituary in the *New York Times* notes that he became an inspector for the “Tenement House Department” in 1902 and that he joined the fire department four years later as an inspector in the “division of buildings.” It appears that he remained at the fire department for nearly three decades, retiring in 1933. Sliney’s obituary further notes that Sliney “headed the [building] division for many years, in which capacity he was in charge of the erection of 70 fire houses.”<sup>34</sup> In articles printed in the *Flushing Evening Journal* and in the *Long Island Daily Star* on

the eve of the opening of Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151, Sliney is specifically credited with having drawn the plans for the building. He is also noted as the building's architect on the docket record for the new building application filed with the New York City Department of Buildings (NB 11218-1922). Though Sliney was noted in several publications, including the *New York Times*, and on other new building applications filed with the Department of Buildings, as the architect responsible for several firehouses in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx during his term at the FDNY, the fact remains that he continues to be listed as a "building inspector" with the fire department as late as the 1930 United States Census, and not as an architect. There is also little evidence that Sliney had any architectural training. It is therefore unlikely that Sliney was the sole person responsible for the design of Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151, though he certainly played a role in its construction as head of the buildings division.<sup>35</sup>

### Description

The two and two-and-a-half story firehouse is an asymmetrically-massed red brick building with three visible and one partially visible elevation. The building is clad in red-brick laid in a Flemish bond and enlivened by decorative limestone details and subtle patterned brickwork. The massing of the building is accentuated by steep gables clad with copper standing-seam roofs, prominent square towers (a stair tower and a hose-drying tower) featuring round-arched window openings, and a slender chimney rising nearly a story above the western elevation. The firehouse's main vehicular bay is located along the north (Queens Boulevard) facade.

### *Historic:*

North (Queens Boulevard) Facade: Two-and-a-half stories; steeply pitched gable at main portion of building; hipped roofs at towers; large vehicular bay; limestone frieze at vehicular bay reading "305 Engine" and "H&L CO. 151"; modest limestone cornice above frieze supported on large scroll bracket at center; metal balconette with stylized fire department shield at railing above main vehicular bay, supported on paired, decorative metal brackets; limestone details throughout, including stringcourses, lintels, keystones, and coping; stylized brick pilasters with limestone capitals at hose-drying tower; masonry water table; rectangular window openings at main portion of building; round-arched vent at main portion of building; round-arched window openings at towers; four-over-one double-hung sashes at rectangular window openings; one-over-one double-hung sashes with round-arched upper sashes at remaining window openings; rectangular cast-iron plaque to right of main vehicular bay at first story.

West (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) Facade: Similar to north (Queens Boulevard) facade; hipped roof with brick corbelling at roofline of main portion of building; two-over-four-over-one triple-hung sashes at first-story paired window openings; four-over-one double-hung sashes at other rectangular window openings; multi-paned sashes and one-over-one double hung sashes at hose-drying tower; one-over-one double-hung sashes with round-arched upper sashes at stair tower.

South Facade: Similar to east (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) facade; no window or door openings at tower; braced canopy towards eastern end of facade at first story.

East Facade: Partially visible; similar to west (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) facade

### *Alterations:*

Repointed; painted water table; portions of metal balconette painted red; original wood windows appear to have been replaced after c. 1965 (new windows match historic sash configurations, see facade descriptions); panning at window openings (all facades); window-screen hinges at most window openings (one window screen at north (Queens Boulevard) facade and several at west (75<sup>th</sup>

Avenue) facade); filled-in upper sashes of first-story window openings at outer bays of main portion of building at west (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) facade; partially filled-in upper sash of westernmost first-story window opening at south facade (multi-paned upper sash lowered, not removed); metal air-conditioner brackets suspended from several window openings at west (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue), east and south facades; doors replaced at vehicular bay and at first-story entries at all facades; single steps at door openings painted at all facades; brass numbers “111-06” affixed to east of vehicular bay;<sup>36</sup> light fixtures flanking main vehicular bay replaced; other non-historic light fixtures affixed at all facades; metal boxes affixed at first story of west (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) facade; projecting metal enclosure at through-wall vent above door opening at south facade; metal armatures at first and second stories towards western end of south facade; metal bar affixed at first story of hose-drying tower at west (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) facade; large duct affixed towards eastern end of south facade; non-original pipe affixed at first story towards southern end of east facade; wiring and conduit at west (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) facade; wiring, conduit, electrical boxes and satellite dish at south facade; chain-link fence at entrance to alley alongside eastern facade

*Site:*

The firehouse is situated on a corner lot and is surrounded by minimal landscaping, consisting of planted shrubbery and a free-standing flagpole at the intersection of Queens Boulevard and 75<sup>th</sup> Avenue. There is a paved area for parking alongside the south facade of the firehouse, as well as a fence-enclosed portion of the tax lot presently used for recreation.

Report researched and written by  
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## **NOTES**

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<sup>1</sup> This section is adapted from New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Fire House, Hook and Ladder 17 (also now Engine Company 60) Designation Report* (LP-2046) (New York: City of New York, 2007), prepared by Virginia Kurshan, 2. The information contained is based on the following sources: Donald J. Cannon, “Firefighting,” *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth Jackson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); Augustine Costello, *Our firemen, A History of the New York Fire Departments, Volunteer and Paid* (New York: A.E. Costello, 1887); Kenneth Holcomb Dunshee, *As You Pass By* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1940); LPC, *Engine Company No. 7/ Ladder Company No.1* (LP-1719) (NY: City of NY, 1993), report prepared by Charles Savage; LPC, *Engine Company 47* (LP-1962) (NY: City of NY, 1997), report prepared by Laura Hansen; LPC, *Fire Engine Company No. 84 and Hook & Ladder Company No. 34* (LP-1863) (NY: City of NY, 1997), report prepared by Laura Hansen; LPC, *Fire Engine Company 55* (LP-1987) (NY: City of NY, 1998), report prepared by Matthew Postal; LPC, *Fire Engine Company 289, Ladder Company 138* (LP- 2035) (NY: City of NY, 1999), report prepared by Matthew Postal; Lowell M. Limpus, *History of the New York Fire Department* (New York, Dutton, 1940); “No Paid Fire Department for Queens,” *Queens Borough Reporter*, June 17, 1903.

<sup>2</sup> Firemen often served for various reasons in addition to their desire to help their city; participation in fire companies was seen as a starting point for political careers. Seven mayors elected after 1835 had initially served as firefighters.

<sup>3</sup> In 1903 it was reported in the *Queens Borough Reporter* that there would be no paid fire departments established in Queens, citing the expense of implementing the units. “No Paid Fire Department for Queens,” (1903).

<sup>4</sup> This section is adapted from LPC, *Fire House, Hook and Ladder 17 (also now Engine Company 60) Designation Report* (LP-2046) (NY: City of NY, 2007), prepared by Virginia Kurshan, 2. The information contained is based on the following sources: Fire Department, City of New York (FDNY), “Annual Report” (New York: FDNY, 1922), 6; FDNY, “Annual Report” (New York: FDNY, 1924), 34; LPC, *Fire Engine Company No. 84 and Hook & Ladder Company No. 34* (LP-1863); LPC, *Fire Engine Co. 55* (LP-1987); Robert A.M. Stern, et al, *New York 1900* (New



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York: Rizzoli, 1983); U.S. Department of the Interior: Heritage, Conservation, and Recreation Services, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, "New York City Firehouses: National Register Thematic Group" (Form prepared by Christopher Gray for the New York City Landmarks Conservancy, 1980); Rebecca Zurier, *The American Firehouse, An Architectural and Social History* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982).

<sup>5</sup> This building, located at 153-57 Mercer Street, within the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, no longer functions as a firehouse.

<sup>6</sup> In an attempt to remove the political influence of Tammany Hall on the fire department, the Common Council banned the construction of new buildings in the 1860s. It was not until after the professionalization of the fire department that money was again expended on the construction of these desperately-needed civic structures, with their appropriately impressive ornament.

<sup>7</sup> The 1910s and 1920s also saw the end of the "live-in" fireman, in favor of a system of alternating platoons who would work 12-hour shifts each. This led to further changes in the internal configuration of firehouses, such as the introduction of kitchens where meals could be prepared for large groups. U.S. Department of the Interior (1980) 1, 2.

<sup>8</sup> FDNY (1922), 6; FDNY (1924), 34.

<sup>9</sup> This section is adapted from LPC, *Ridgewood Savings Bank* (LP-2066) (NY: City of NY, 2000), prepared by Virginia Kurshan, 2. The information contained is based on the following sources: Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 426-428 and 966-969; Susan L. Klaus, *A Modern Arcadia: Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the Plan for Forest Hills Gardens* (University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst & Boston, 2002); Vincent Seyfried, "Forest Hills," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., ed. Kenneth Jackson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010) 469; Vincent Seyfried, "Forest Hills Gardens," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., ed. Kenneth Jackson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010) 470; Seyfried, *Queens, A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, VA: The Downing Co., 1982), 201-207; Franklin J. Sherman, *Building Up Greater Queen's Borough, An Estimate of Development and the Outlook* (NY: 1929), 64-67; and numerous clippings in the vertical file, "Forest Hills" at the Archives at the Queensborough Public Library (formerly the Long Island Division of the Queensborough Public Library).

<sup>10</sup> The Russell Sage Foundation is a philanthropic institution founded by the widow of Russell Sage, Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage, to improve social and living conditions in the United States. Though most of the foundation's other work was targeted to improving the lives of the poor, Forest Hills Gardens was meant to demonstrate both the practicality and the profitability of good design and comprehensive planning. Klaus, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Robert de Forest, "Forest Hills Gardens," *Survey*, January 25, 1911, 569 (as cited in Klaus, 3). The development was the first American residential experiment based on the principles of the English garden city. It was hoped that the project would "show that those who work in the big cities need not live in their ugliness and grime, but may secure beauty, fresh air and the healthful benefits of open spaces in the suburbs." Klaus, 9. The high price of land and construction, however, all but prohibited the development for even those with moderate incomes. Seyfried, "Forest Hills Gardens," (2010) 470.

<sup>12</sup> Seyfried, "Forest Hills Gardens," (2010), 470;

<sup>13</sup> Queens Boulevard, originally known as Hoffman Boulevard, was initially constructed to connect the towns of central Queens to the newly erected Queensborough Bridge (also known as the 59<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge, later known as the Ed Koch Queensborough Bridge). The roadway was widened in 1913 when a trolley line was constructed from 59<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan east along the new boulevard. Queens Boulevard was again widened in the 1920s and 30s in conjunction with construction of the IND Queens Boulevard subway line.

<sup>14</sup> Information in this section is based on the following sources: " 'Art' in Fire Houses: Well, Why Not?," (April 1931) within the "Fire Department" clippings files at the Archives at the Queensborough Public Library (formerly the Long Island Division of the Queensborough Public Library), 46; "Bayside Awaits Installation of Paid Fire Department by City Tomorrow; Equipment for Station Now in House," *Flushing Evening Journal* (November 14, 1924) 1; "BQLI Mailbag: The Firehouse," *New York Times* (February 20, 1972), A13; "City Opens Modern Fire Houses, Forest Hills and Bayside," *Long Island Daily Press* (November 14, 1924) 1; FDNY, "Annual Report" (NY: FDNY, 1922), 6; FDNY, "Annual Report" (NY: FDNY, 1923), 6, 25; FDNY, "Annual Report" (NY: FDNY, 1924), 11; "Forest Hills and Bayside Lose Volunteer Fire Forces," *New York Times* (November 14, 1924), 21; U.S. Department of the Interior (1980), 3; and numerous clippings in the vertical file, "Fire Department" at the Archives at Queensborough Public Library (formerly the Long Island Division of the Queensborough Public Library).

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<sup>15</sup> FDNY (1923), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. This extension of the paid fire department into Forest Hills resulted in disbandment of the existing volunteer company, Forest Hills Fire Co., Inc. The building was ultimately constructed by the George F. Driscoll Company.

<sup>17</sup> The extension of the paid fire department, disbandment of the volunteer fire department, and construction of a new firehouse in Forest Hills was concurrent with that of another Queens neighborhood, Bayside, located in the northeastern part of the borough.

<sup>18</sup> It has not been determined what was meant by “Westchester” in the FDNY Annual Report, as Westchester County was not under the purview of the FDNY in 1922. This could refer to an area of the northern Bronx.

<sup>19</sup> FDNY, (1922), 6

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> FDNY (1924), 34.

<sup>23</sup> Examples of Queens firehouses constructed in this style include Engine Company 307, Hook & Ladder Company 154 in Jackson Heights (81-17 Northern Boulevard; c. 1924-1925), Engine Company 304, Hook & Ladder Company 161 in Queens Village (219-44 97<sup>th</sup> Avenue; c. 1924), and Engine Company 306, Hook & Ladder Company 152 in Bayside (40-18 to 40-20 214<sup>th</sup> Street; November 15, 1924), all of which are still extant as of this designation report.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior (1980), 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “City Opens Modern Fire Houses....” (1924), 1.

<sup>28</sup> See “Fire Department” clippings file at the Archives at the Queensborough Public Library (formerly the Long Island Division of the Queensborough Public Library) for images of the old volunteer fire department structures, now demolished.

<sup>29</sup> “City Opens Modern Firehouses...” (1924), 1.

<sup>30</sup> “Bayside Awaits Installation of a Paid Fire Department...” (1924), 1; “City Opens Modern Fire Houses...” (1924), 1.

<sup>31</sup> “ ‘Art’ in Fire Houses: Well, Why Not?” (1931). The offending firehouses were apparently located on Union Turnpike, east of Parson Boulevard, and on the “Cross Island Boulevard” in Flushing. Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Information in this section is based on the following sources: “Bayside Awaits Installation of Paid Fire Department...” (1924), 1; “John R. Sliney,” *New York Times* (September 17, 1953), 29; U.S. Census 1910; U.S. Census 1930; U.S. Department of the Interior (1980), Vol. 2.

<sup>34</sup> “John R. Sliney,” (1953), 29.

<sup>35</sup> By the 1930s, several of the firehouses attributed to John R. Sliney in publications had plans signed by James T. Treacy, an architect registered in the state of New York who worked for the Fire Department for 24 years until his death in 1945. U.S. Department of the Interior (1980), Vol. 2. Although Treacy was not a registered architect in the State of New York until 1930, it is possible that he played a role in the design of Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151. While this firehouse does not directly resemble the other structures attributed to Treacy, he does appear to have been employed as an architect by the fire department at the time of construction of the Forest Hills firehouse. No specific documentation exists, however, to directly link the building to Treacy.

<sup>36</sup> The address number “111-06” is a display address only. The address range for tax map block 3294, lot 20 is 111-02 through 111-04 Queens Boulevard and 111-50 75<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

## **FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION**

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151 has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest, and value as part of the development, history, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that the Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151, in Forest Hills, Queens, is significant because it was constructed by the Fire Department of New York in 1924 and was intended to serve the growing population of the Forest Hills neighborhood, which had seen a boom in residential construction following World War I; that the large, two and two-and-a-half story Neo-Medieval style firehouse is clad in red brick laid in a Flemish bond and enlivened with decorative limestone details and subtle patterned brickwork; that the asymmetrical massing of the building is accentuated by steep gables clad with copper standing-seam roofs, two prominent square towers (a stair tower and a hose-drying tower) featuring round-arched window openings, and a slender chimney rising nearly a story above the western elevation; that the design of the firehouse has been attributed to John R. Sliney, head building inspector for the fire department, during whose tenure approximately 70 firehouses were constructed throughout the five boroughs; that the firehouse, which has experienced remarkably few changes in the 90 years since its construction, continues to serve the Forest Hills community today; that the unusual design of the firehouse is an outstanding example of a functional structure whose appearance also enhances the character of its surroundings; that firehouse is at once a striking presence along the Queens Boulevard streetscape and a well-integrated constituent of this vibrant residential neighborhood; and that the firehouse is a remarkable example of both innovative firehouse architecture and carefully-considered, forward thinking contextual design.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21) of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151 at 111-02 Queens Boulevard (aka 111-02 to 111-04 Queens Boulevard; 111-50 75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) and designates Borough of Queens, Tax Map 3294, Lot 20 as its Landmark site.

Pablo Vengoechera, Vice Chair

Frederick Bland, Michael Goldblum, Margery Perlmutter, Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington,  
Commissioners



**Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151**  
 111-02 Queens Boulevard (aka 111-02 to 111-04 Queens Boulevard; 111-50 75<sup>th</sup> Avenue)  
 Borough of Queens, Tax Map Block 3294, Lot 20  
 North (Queens Boulevard) and West (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) Facades  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, June 2012*



**Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151**  
 North (Queens Boulevard) Facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, June 2012*





Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151  
 East and North (Queens Boulevard) Facades  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, June 2012*



Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151  
 Vehicular Bay and Balcony Detail (North (Queens Boulevard) Facade)  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, June 2012*





Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151  
West (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) Facade

*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, June 2012*



Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151  
West (75<sup>th</sup> Avenue) and South Facades

*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, June 2012*





Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151  
 East Facade as seen from 75<sup>th</sup> Road  
*Photo: Jennifer L. Most, May 2012*



Firehouse, Engine Company 305,  
 Hook & Ladder Company 151  
 East Facade  
*Photo: Jennifer L. Most, May 2012*



Firehouse, Engine Company 305,  
 Hook & Ladder Company 151  
 South Facade Detail  
*Photo: Jennifer L. Most, May 2012*



Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151  
 Historic Photo of North (Queens Boulevard) and East Facades (c. 1965)

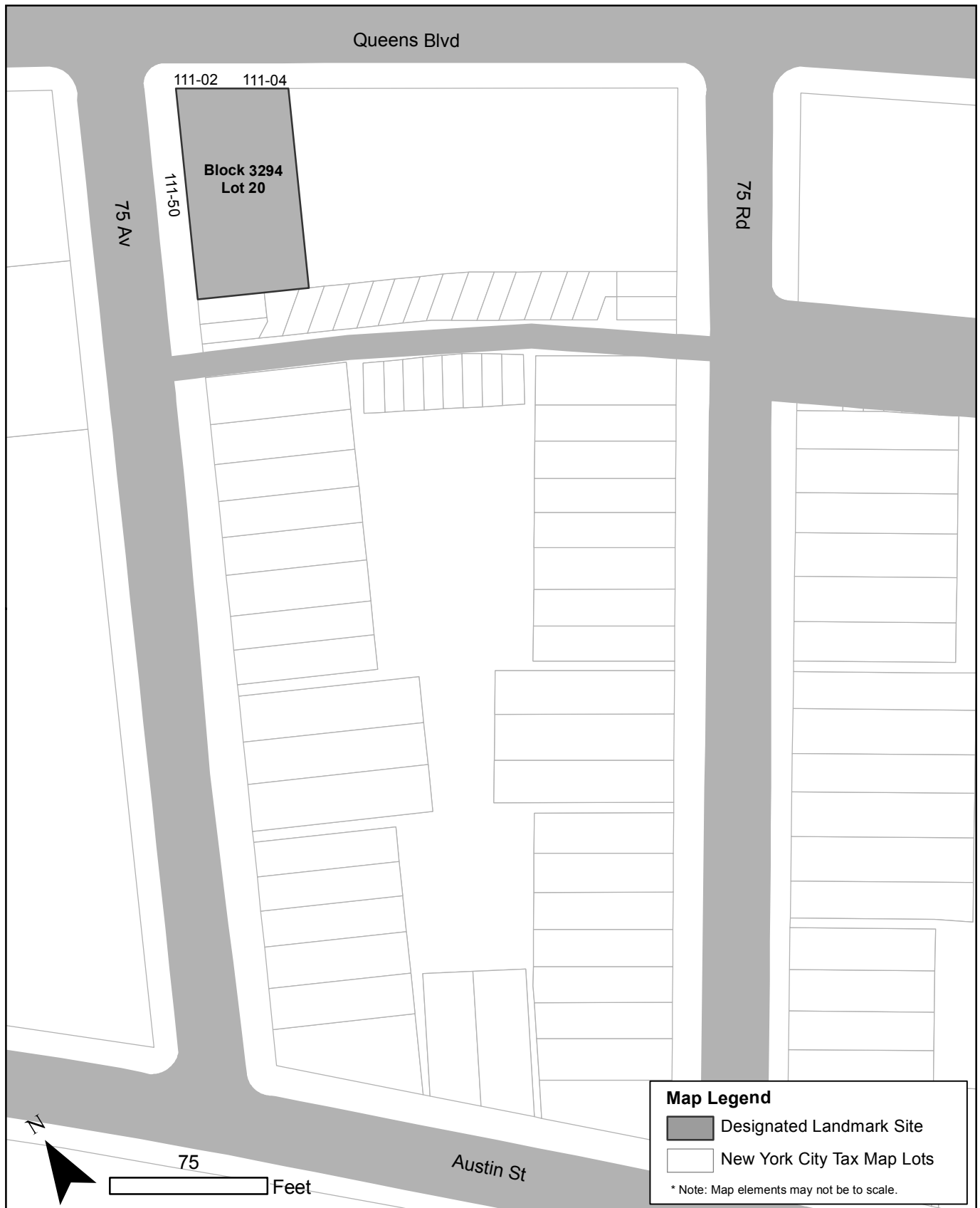
*Source: Mand Library and Learning Center, Fire Department, City of New York (FDNY)*



Firehouse, Engine Company 305, Hook & Ladder Company 151  
 Undated Historic Photo of Vehicular Bay and Fire Engine

*Source: Mand Library and Learning Center, Fire Department, City of New York (FDNY)*





FIREHOUSE, ENGINE COMPANY 305, HOOK & LADDER COMPANY 151 (LP-2522),  
111-02 Queens Boulevard (aka 111-02 to 111-04 Queens Boulevard; 111-50 75th Avenue)  
Landmark Site: Borough of the Queens, Tax Map Block 3294, Lot 20

Designated: June 12, 2012