
Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 2675, Lot 33

On December 11, 2012, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Firehouses, Engine Company 73 and Hook & Ladder Company 42, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were two speakers in favor of designation: representatives of Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., and the Historic Districts Council. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. In addition, the Commission received a communication from the Fire Department of the City of New York in support of designation.

Summary

The two-story, Northern European Renaissance Revival style Firehouse, Engine Company 73, at the corner of Prospect Avenue and East 152nd Street in the Longwood neighborhood of the South Bronx, was constructed in 1900 during the period when an enormous number of public structures were being placed in neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs following the Consolidation of Greater New York in 1898. The architects of this firehouse were [Arthur J.] Horgan & [Vincent J.] Slattery, a firm politically well-connected during the administration of Mayor Robert Van Wyck. The main facade is clad in orangish ironspot brick, limestone, and terra cotta, features a second-story enframement with a scrolled pediment, and originally had a decorative cornice and balustrade (replaced by a concrete parapet). The adjacent Firehouse, Hook & Ladder Company 42, was built in 1912 to the design of [Frances L.V.] Hoppin & [Terence A.] Koen, partners who had worked in the firm of McKim, Mead & White, and whose most prominent commission was the New York City Police Headquarters (1905-09). This three-story, neo-Classical style structure was a standardized design intended for some 20 locations, “simple and dignified and without any unnecessary elaboration,” which was to be of fireproof concrete construction with a stucco finish. After bids for these firehouses overran appropriations, red brick, limestone, and cast-stone cladding was substituted. Engine Company 73 and Hook & Ladder Company 42 have continuously served the Longwood neighborhood to this day.
DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Firefighting in New York

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, operating 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 New York 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 destroyed 20 blocks containing between 600 and 700 buildings. 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. 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 established in other cities and to the professional police force that had been created in New York in 1845.

In May 1865, the State Legislature established the Metropolitan Fire District, comprising the cities of New York (south of 86th 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 86th Street and expanded still farther north after the annexation of part 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 FDNY to provide services, and in response the department undertook an ambitious building campaign. The area served by the FDNY nearly doubled after the Consolidation of Greater New York in 1898, when the departments in Brooklyn and numerous communities in Queens and Staten Island were incorporated into the city. After the turn of the century, the FDNY acquired more modern apparatus and motorized vehicles, reflecting the need for faster response to fires in taller buildings. Throughout the 20th century, the department endeavored to keep up with the evolving city and its firefighting needs.

Firehouse Design

By the early 20th century, the firehouse as a building type had evolved from the wooden storage shed used during the 17th 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, 153 Mercer Street, with its highly symbolic ornamentation, reflected this approach, using flambeaux, hooks, ladders, and trumpets for its ornament. Between 1880 and 1895, Napoleon LeBrun & Son served as the official architectural firm for New York’s
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. 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 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, Horgan & Slattery, and Robert D. Kohn created facades with bold Classical style designs.

Growth of the South Bronx and Longwood Neighborhood

In 1874, the townships of Morrisania, West Farms, and Kingsbridge split from Westchester County and became the 23rd and 24th Wards of the City of New York, this area of the Bronx becoming known as the Annexed District. One of the first neighborhoods to be developed in the South Bronx was Mott Haven, adjacent to the Mott Iron Works, which had been established in 1828 by Jordan L. Mott, inventor of the coal-burning stove, on the Harlem River at Third Avenue and 134th Street. First built up with houses for Mott’s workers, the area grew rapidly after expansion of the iron works and the advent of other industrial enterprises attracted by the Mott Haven Canal, which led from the Harlem River north to 138th Street, and the New York & Harlem Railroad (incorporated in 1831 and expanded over the Harlem River in 1840). As streetcars crossed the area beginning in the 1860s, new streets were laid out and land speculation began in earnest. Beginning in the early 1880s, booster organizations such as the North Side Association advocated for further infrastructure improvements: streets were paved, sewers dug, and mass transit lines brought the elevated trains to the Bronx. By 1897, just a decade after the El began operation, the once vacant blocks east of Third Avenue were almost completely built over with solid brick buildings -- single-family rowhouses in the late 1880s; multi-story tenements and apartment houses built with increasing frequency in the 1890s; and various industrial and manufacturing establishments located along the neighborhood’s southern fringe.

The site of the eventual Firehouses, Engine Company 73 and Hook & Ladder Company 42, is in the neighborhood that became known as Longwood, the area to the northeast of Mott Haven, and west of Hunts Point. Originally part of the town of West Farms, it remained undeveloped except for estates until the turn of the 20th century, when it became a target for real estate speculators and developers after plans were advanced via contracts in 1900 for a subway line connecting the borough with Manhattan (completed in 1904). This building boom lasted for nearly 30 years. Just east of Prospect Avenue, on land that was formerly the S.B. White estate known as “Longwood Park,” a primarily residential district was developed by George B. Johnson, with rowhouses built in 1897-1900 to the design of architect Warren C. Dickerson (now the Longwood Historic District). Most of the rest of the neighborhood was developed afterward with apartment buildings. The population remained largely Jewish until the 1950s, when demographic changes occurred and the newer residents were largely African-American and Puerto Rican. Throughout the years of rapid population growth of the 20th-century Bronx, as well as the decade of decline in the 1970s with the ever present danger of fires in abandoned buildings, the firefighters of Engine Company 73 and Hook & Ladder Company 42 played a vital role in the Longwood community.
Engine Company 73

In the 19th century, fire protection in the South Bronx became increasingly important, particularly in the Mott Haven neighborhood as the Mott Haven Iron Works and residential development expanded. A volunteer company, J. & L. Mott Ladder 2, was established at 2608 Third Avenue, but with the 1874 annexation of this section of the Bronx, this squad was disbanded and replaced at the same location with Hook & Ladder Company 17, which moved in 1877 to 589 (later 341) East 143rd Street. Following Consolidation in 1898, the Bronx benefitted, as did all five boroughs, from the construction of an enormous number of new public structures, placed in all neighborhoods. Mott Haven received a second firehouse for Engine Company 83 and Hook & Ladder Company 29 (1904-05, Robert D. Kohn) at 618 East 138th Street, and a new firehouse was built for Hook and Ladder Company 17 (1906-07, Michael J. Garvin). The Real Estate Record & Builders Guide noted of the former that “the site for the new building is in a district crowded with factories and tenements. At present there is no firehouse within a radius of half a mile.”

The newly developing neighborhood of Longwood also required a firehouse. The Firehouse, Engine Company 73, was constructed in 1900 at the corner of Prospect Avenue and East 152nd Street. The architects responsible for its design were [Arthur J.] Horgan & [Vincent J.] Slattery, a firm politically well-connected during the administration of Mayor Robert Van Wyck. The builder was the firm of Fountain & Choate, and the cost of construction was $26,668. The two-story, Northern European Renaissance Revival style building is clad in orangish ironspot brick and limestone and terra-cotta banding on the front portion, and features a limestone and terra-cotta ground-story vehicle bay enframement that supports a second-story terra-cotta enframement with Ionic columns, decorative entablature, and scrolled pediment embellished by a foliated torch. The second story is ornamented by two cartouches on the front and one on the side. The 152nd Street façade is clad in red brick laid in a diamond pattern and is pierced by windows with limestone trim. The building originally had a high cornice with a decorative frieze, modillions, and balustrade on the front portion (replaced post-1912 by a concrete parapet), and a corbelled brick cornice on the 152nd Street façade (replaced post-1912 by a red brick parapet). Engine Company 73 was officially organized in November 1900.


Arthur J. Horgan (1868-1911) came from a family active in the building trades in New York. He apprenticed for five years in the architectural office of his godfather, Col. Arthur Crooks, a prolific and well-regarded designer of churches, who was once an apprentice under Richard Upjohn. After Crooks’ death in 1888, the young Horgan established a partnership the following year with Vincent J. Slattery. A native of New York, Slattery (1867-1939) was in the coal business prior to this and was a Tammany Hall associate. Horgan & Slattery provided both architectural and building services until the firm dissolved in 1910, with Slattery handling business development and Horgan concentrating on technical and architectural matters.

Through its very close relationship with the Tammany administration of Mayor Van Wyck (1898-1902), known for his zeal in construction projects, Horgan & Slattery gained notoriety, and much negative press, as the “City Architects.” The firm received virtually all municipal commissions, particularly from the Board of Health, Tax Department, and Departments of Corrections and Charities, and designed many station houses for the Police Department, including the 40th Precinct Station House (1901-02), 3101 Kingsbridge Terrace, the Bronx, and firehouses for the FDNY. Despite contemporary criticisms of their buildings, Horgan & Slattery displayed skill in design, largely in the Classical vein, in Beaux-Arts principles of composition and planning, and in technical matters. Among the firm’s notable commissions were the completion of the Hall of Records (later Surrogate’s Court) (1899-1907, John R. Thomas), 31 Chambers Street, and First Battery Armory (1900-03), 56 West 66th Street. In 1902, Mayor Seth Low attempted to sever all
existing City contracts with Horgan & Slattery, declaring that all municipal work would be contracted through competition. Later buildings by the firm included the Fiss, Doer & Carroll Horse Co. Building (1906; demolished), 149 East 24th Street, and Abattoir of the New York Butchers’ Dressed Meat Co. (1906; demolished), 11th Avenue and West 39th Street.

Hook & Ladder Company 42

In 1910, the FDNY unveiled a new uniform type “Model Fire House,” plans and specifications for which were prepared by architects [Frances L.V.] Hoppin & [Terence A.] Koen, which was intended for construction in 1911 in 20 locations – 11 for new companies and nine to replace dilapidated buildings. These structures were to be absolutely fireproof, of reinforced concrete construction with a stucco finish, and with metal windows, doors, and trim (and no woodwork). Budgeting some $500,000 for the whole group, the FDNY anticipated significant cost advantages through building materials purchased at wholesale and builders bidding on one entire contract, and expected savings on building maintenance. This uniform concept would also provide flexibility, allowing for firehouses ranging from one to three bays. The Real Estate Record & Builders Guide called the neo-Classical style design “simple and dignified and without any unnecessary elaboration.” However, after bids for these firehouses overran appropriations, the Fire Commissioner substituted red brick and limestone cladding, saving an estimated $168,000, though the New York Times reported the bids at over one million dollars.

The three-story Firehouse, Hook & Ladder Company 42, was built in 1912 adjacent to the Firehouse, Engine Company 73. Hoppin & Koen filed this project, to their standardized design, at an estimated cost of $42,220, though the FDNY had authorized $35,500. The building firm of Cockerill & Little won the contract at the lowest bid of $33,333. The final cost reported in 1913 was $35,407. The building features a ground story clad in rusticated limestone with a segmental-arched vehicle bay, while the upper stories clad in red brick laid in Flemish bond are flanked by pilasters supporting a cast-stone entablature and brick parapet. The FDNY seal occurs in the spandrel panel above the second story.


Frances L.V. Hoppin & Terence A. Koen were partners who had worked in the preeminent New York City firm of McKim, Mead & White. Francis Laurens Vinton Hoppin (1866-1941), born in Providence, Rhode Island, attended the Trinity Military Institute in Tivoli-on-Hudson, New York, in preparation for an Army career, but instead attended Brown University, and later studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Upon his return to the United States, he worked with his brother in the Providence architectural firm of [Howard] Hoppin, [Spencer P.] Read & Hoppin in 1890-91, then entered McKim, Mead & White, where he became a leading draftsman. Terence A. Koen (1857-1923) had already been working as a draftsman in that firm since 1880. Hoppin & Koen formed a partnership in 1894, which became known for its commissions for public structures, stylish town houses, and country estate homes. It is probable that the socially-connected Hoppin generated much of the firm’s business. The firm was chosen by author Edith Wharton to replace Ogden Codman as architect for her house “The Mount” (1901-03) in the Berkshires. Examples of the firm’s work in New York City include the Firehouse, Engine Company 65 (1897-98), 33 West 43rd Street; James F.D. and Harriet Lanier House (1901-03), 123 East 35th Street; and Fourth Police Precinct Station House (1912), 18 Ericsson Place. Hoppin & Koen’s most prominent commission was the New York City Police Headquarters (1905-09), 240 Centre Street, in collaboration with Robert Palmer Huntington, with whom they worked from 1900 to 1908.
In 1898, at the start of the Spanish-American War, Hoppin enlisted in the 12th Regiment, New York National Guard, eventually rising to the rank of Colonel in 1918. The firm dissolved at Koen’s death in 1923, after which Hoppin became a painter.

Description

**Engine Company 73 -- Historic:** two-story, Northern European Renaissance Revival style building; granite watertable; orangish ironspot brick cladding with limestone and terra-cotta banding on front portion; limestone and terra-cotta ground-story vehicle bay enframement with “73 ENGINE 73” inscription; ground-story pedestrian entrance and window, with decorative metal grilles on window and transoms; second-story terra-cotta enframement with Ionic columns, decorative entablature, scrolled pediment embellished by foliated torch, and decorative metal mullions and transom bar; second-story bronze dedication plaque; two second-story cartouches on front and one on side; 152nd Street façade brick cladding laid in diamond pattern, with windows with limestone trim

**Alterations:** replacement vehicle door; paneled wood pedestrian door replaced with non-historic metal one; ground-story electrical conduits and lights on both facades; one-over-one, double-hung wood windows and transoms replaced (post-1980s) by anodized aluminum ones; original high cornice on front portion with decorative frieze, modillions, and balustrade replaced (post-1912) by concrete parapet, and corbelled brick cornice on 152nd Street façade replaced (post-1912) by red brick parapet laid in a diamond pattern

**Western façade:** brick cladding (now painted); windows covered by metal

**Hook & Ladder Company 42 -- Historic:** three-story neo-Classical style building; ground-story rusticated limestone cladding above granite watertable; segmental-arched vehicle bay; upper stories red brick cladding laid in Flemish bond; Fire Department seal in spandrel panel above second story; monumental pilasters supporting cast-stone entablature and brick parapet.

**Alterations:** replacement vehicle door; ground-story electrical conduits and lights; nine-over-nine double-hung metal windows replaced (post-1980s) by one-over-one, double-hung anodized aluminum windows with transoms; second-story flagpole; visible southern wall painted; rooftop satellite dish and ventilating stack above chimney

**Northern façade:** parged wall pierced by windows; ventilating stack; basketball hoop

Report researched and written by

JAY SHOCKLEY

Research Department

NOTES

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, and seven mayors elected after 1835 had initially served as firefighters.

This building, located within the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, no longer functions as a firehouse. 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.

LeBrun is also credited with the creation of vertical hose-drying towers to accommodate this necessary activity in a space-saving manner.

Both buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.

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The Firehouse and Lanier House are designated New York City Landmarks. The Police Station is within the Tribeca West Historic District.

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3 LPC, *Fire House, Hook & Ladder 17*.

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17 LPC, Architects files.

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FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Firehouses, Engine Company 73 and Hook & Ladder Company 42, have a special character, and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among their important qualities, the two-story, Northern European Renaissance Revival style Firehouse, Engine Company 73, at the corner of Prospect Avenue and East 152nd Street in the Longwood neighborhood of the South Bronx, was constructed in 1900 during the period when an enormous number of public structures were being placed in neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs following the Consolidation of Greater New York in 1898; that the architects of this firehouse were [Arthur J.] Horgan & [Vincent J.] Slattery, a firm politically well-connected during the administration of Mayor Robert Van Wyck; that the main façade is clad in orangish ironspot brick, limestone, and terra cotta, features a second-story enframement with a scrolled pediment, and originally had a decorative cornice and balustrade (replaced by a concrete parapet); that the adjacent Firehouse, Hook & Ladder Company 42, was built in 1912 to the design of [Frances L.V.] Hoppin & [Terence A.] Koen, partners who had worked in the firm of McKim, Mead & White, and whose most prominent commission was the New York City Police Headquarters (1905-09); that this three-story, neo-Classical style structure was a standardized design intended for some 20 locations, “simple and dignified and without any unnecessary elaboration,” which was to be of fireproof concrete construction with a stucco finish, but that after bids for these firehouses overran appropriations, red brick, limestone, and cast-stone cladding was substituted; and that Engine Company 73 and Hook & Ladder Company 42 have continuously served the Longwood neighborhood to this day.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 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 Firehouses, Engine Company 73 and Hook & Ladder Company 42, 655-659 and 661 Prospect Avenue (at East 152nd Street), the Bronx, and designates Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 2675, Lot 33 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Michael Devonshire, Joan Gerner,
Margery Perlmutter, Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners
Firehouses, Engine Company 73 and Hook & Ladder Company 42, 655-659 and 661 Prospect Avenue (at East 152nd Street), the Bronx

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2013)
Firehouses, Engine Company 73 and Hook & Ladder Company 42,
655-659 and 661 Prospect Avenue (at East 152nd Street), the Bronx

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2013)
Firehouses, Engine Company 73 and Hook & Ladder Company 42

Photo: Mand Library and Learning Center, Fire Dept., City of New York (1912)
Firehouse, Engine Company 73

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2013)
Firehouse, Engine Company 73, lower section

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2013)
Firehouse, Engine Company 73, upper section

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2013)
Firehouse, Engine Company 73,  East 152nd Street facade

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2013)
Firehouse, Hook & Ladder Company 42

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2013)
Firehouse, Hook & Ladder Company 42, lower section

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2013)
Firehouse, Hook & Ladder Company 42,  upper section

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2013)
FIREHOUSES, ENGINE COMPANY 73 AND HOOK & LADDER COMPANY 42 (LP-2524), 655-659 and 661 Prospect Avenue. Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx, Tax Map Block 2675, Lot 33

Designated: February 12, 2013