

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (1)

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common
Fire Station #4

(2) Historic (if applicable)
Fire Station #4

II. Location

(1) Street Address
129 N. Randall, aka
1329 W. Dayton Street

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)
Fifth District

III. Classification

(1) Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.)
Building

(2) Zoning District
R6

(3) Present Use
Vacant, to be converted to housing

IV. Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Name(s)
City of Madison - Fire Stations

(2) Street Address
210 Monona Avenue, 53709

(3) Telephone Number
266-4420

V. Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Parcel Number
0709-221-1105-3

(2) Legal Description
Brooks Addition,
N99 feet of Lot 1, Block 12

VI. Condition of Property

(1) Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins)
Good

(2) Altered or Unaltered?
Altered

(3) Moved or Original Site?
Original Site

(4) Wall Construction
Brick load bearing

(5) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the present and original physical construction and appearance (limit 500 words).

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

VI.(5) Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

Fire Station #4 is a two-story building with 14" brick load-bearing walls and original concrete floors. The 42' x 83' structure was built during the winter of 1904-1905 on a 56' x 85' corner lot in a developing residential area near the rapidly expanding western and southern suburbs. Today, University of Wisconsin buildings are encroaching into the residential neighborhood and most area housing is rented to students.

Exterior walls of Fire Station #4 are cream brick. Every sixth brick row on the first floor is indented to create a horizontally striped pattern. A slightly projecting row of headers separates the first and second stories. A beltcourse of molded bricks encircles the building at the level of the springing of the arches on the second floor windows. The asphalt shingled roof is a bell-cast hip with similar roofs over the original small, clapboard sided dormers on the main (north) and east facades. Originally, the roof projected farther over the walls to create eaves, but the eaves were removed sometime in the distant past. The high, slightly battered basement walls are of concrete.

The main (Dayton Street) facade is symmetrical. Two large fire engine doorways under flat arches have ca. 1920 mechanically operated bifold doors of paneled wood with tall, narrow, ten-light windows in each of the eight sections. The original swing-out double doors were similar in appearance but had smaller windows at the tops of the doors only.

Centered above each doorway is a set of twin, round-arched windows with the original wood sash and more recent aluminum storms. The arches are shaped of slightly projecting bricks.

The Randall Street facade on the west is basically symmetrical also. A large projecting central pavilion has a square tower at each end. The north tower rises just a foot or so above the roofline of the fire house. Its roof is now flat, but was originally capped by a triangular parapet on each side. The south (hose) tower rises several feet to be capped by a watch platform. Originally, this tower was corbelled at the top and was capped by a cupola with a witch's-cap roof. Each tower has a passage door at the bottom and a flat-arched double hung window with a transom at the second-story level. The north tower is trimmed at the top by a brick-filled bull's-eye, whereas the south tower has a double-arched window on each side which has been filled in with brick. In the center of the pavilion, a double window under a segmental arch lights the stairway. Two small double-hung windows light the first floor and basement. To the north of the pavilion, a small, one-story brick watch room with a slightly sloping shed roof was added ca. 1962. The top of an old, segmentally arched opening that originally contained three double-hung windows remains just above the roof of the addition. Above that is a set of two round-arched double-hung windows. To the south of the central pavilion, an original opening to the haymow at the second-story level was replaced by a smaller window and the old entrance to the stable was replaced by a modern overhead garage door. The roof above this rear stable section rises to a secondary hip, crowned by a small wooden cupola.

Description: (continued)

The east side of the building is pierced by double, double-hung windows under segmental arches on the first level, and round-arched double-hung windows above. A plain, attached chimney rises to a few feet above the ridgeline of the roof.

The interior is plain and functional. On the first floor, the painted brick walls of the rear stable area are exposed above wainscotting. The walls are plastered above the wainscotting in the front apparatus room. Floors are concrete with a grid pattern for drainage in the rear where the horses used to be kept. A line of four supporting metal posts runs down the middle of the building. A small toilet room with wood partitions was added at a later date near the hose tower. The original vertically sliding wood door to the hose tower remains. The dropped ceiling is made of acoustical tiles.

The upstairs sleeping quarters have been altered many times and now have linoleum tile floors, plaster walls and acoustical tile ceilings. The old hay mow over the stable was converted into a bedroom for the station commander and a day room. Three brass poles allow for instant access to the first floor and the stairway is in the center of the west side.

The partial basement is located under the north half of the apparatus room.

The developer who has been selected to purchase Fire Station #4 intends to convert it to housing. The ca. 1962 watch tower will be removed and the original window behind it restored. In addition, the rear garage door will be replaced by a door similar to the existing or original front doors, the hose tower roof will be replaced and the bricked-in windows will be restored.

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner

City of Madison

(2) Original Use

Fire Station

(3) Architect or Builder

Lew F. Porter, Architect

(4) Architectural Style

Eclectic

(5) Date of Construction

1904-5

(6) Indigenous Materials Used

None

(7) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the significance of the nominated property and its conformance to the designation criteria of the Landmarks Commission Ordinance (33.01), limit of 500 words.

VIII. List of Bibliographical References Used

1. "Building Notes", Wisconsin State Journal, October 7, 1904.
Common Council Proceedings, City of Madison, February 12, 1904 to July 14, 1905.
2. "Fire Station No. Four: An Architectural Feasibility Study", HSR Architects,
August 15, 1981.
3. Interview with retired Chief Wilcox by Katherine H. Rankin, January 21, 1983.
"Lew F. Porter Dies, Age 55", Madison Democrat, April 17, 1918.
4. Madison Past and Present, Madison: Wisconsin State Journal, 1902.
5. Mollenhoff, David, Madison: A History of the Formative Years, Dubuque,
Kendall-Hunt, 1981.
6. Zurier, Rebecca, The American Firehouse, New York: Abbeville Press, 1982.
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title

Katherine H. Rankin, Preservation Planner

(2) Organization Represented (if any)

City of Madison Dept. of Planning & Development

(3) Address

215 Monona Avenue, 53710

(4) Telephone Number

266-6552

(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

August, 1983

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

VII.(7) Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

Fire Station #4 is historically significant as a representative example of a type of building that technology has rendered obsolete: the combination fire engine house and stable. Built in the winter of 1904-5, it is the only fire station remaining in Madison from the days when horses pulled the fire rigs. In addition, it is the oldest intact fire station remaining in Madison and is a visual landmark in its near west side neighborhood.

History

Fire Station #4 was the first fire station built outside of the central city isthmus and as such is a symbol of the suburban expansion of Madison in the beginning years of the 20th century. In 1901, the City purchased a parcel of land on Frances Street, six blocks from the Square, for the erection of a new west side fire station. But within the next three years, the boundaries of the western suburbs had expanded dramatically. Not only did many Madisonians in that period elect to relocate from the downtown to the very desirable western suburbs of Wingra Park, University Heights, etc., but a whole new influx of people to Madison in those years contributed to a rapid expansion of the metropolitan area (the population between 1900 and 1905 increased by a brisk 27%).

In 1904, Fire Captain Bernard believed that a run from Frances Street to a house in the suburbs would overly tax his horses and cause potentially destructive delays. Therefore, he asked the Common Council to sell the Frances Street site and to purchase the current site of Fire Station #4 instead. The following summer, the Common Council adopted Captain Bernard's recommendation and within the year, a new fire station was built and equipped with two horses and a combination chemical and hose wagon.

The Architect, Lew F. Porter, was born in LaSalle County, Illinois in 1862. After attending the University of Wisconsin, he began work in 1884 for A. D. Conover on the Dane County Courthouse project. In 1887, Conover and Porter established a partnership, and designed many buildings, especially in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, in Madison and in northern Wisconsin, where they had a branch office. In 1899, the partnership dissolved. Porter practiced alone, with offices in the Ellsworth Block. Little is known of his work as an independent practitioner. Of the eleven buildings known to be designed by him in that period, only three houses and the fire house remain. In 1906, Porter became the supervising architect for the new State Capitol, a position which he held until his death in 1918.

The national trend in firehouse design in the early years of the 20th century was to construct expensive monuments to civic pride, an outgrowth of the "City Beautiful" movement that began in the 1890s. Madison never really embraced the "City Beautiful" ethic wholeheartedly because of a long-standing tradition of frugality in the erection of buildings at taxpayers' expense. Between 1900 and 1904, the City erected a new central police station and a new central fire station in high quality designs by the local architectural firm of Claude and Starck (demolished in the 1950s). But even before the downtown fire station was completed, Mayor William D. Curtis chided the Council for spending in excess of \$5,000 for its construction (a modest sum even in 1904). The Council decided to limit spending on Fire Station #4 to \$5,000, but when Porter's initial design was let out for bids, the lowest bid was \$4,000 over budget, forcing Porter to redesign the project.

Significance (continued)

Despite its low cost, the design of Fire Station #4 does exemplify some of the general characteristics of fire house design of the period. As new suburbs began to flourish around larger cities, architects were faced with a new design challenge: to design a firehouse that would blend in with the suburban landscape. An aerial photo of the neighborhood around Fire Station #4 taken shortly after it was built shows that the massing, scale and general effect of the firehouse was compatible with the simple boxy massing of the large frame and brick residences being constructed near-by. Earlier firehouses located downtown were of a commercial storefront type in keeping with their locality. Fire Station #4, on the other hand, was the first Madison firehouse constructed for the suburbs and its design is a physical embodiment of that fact.

Other pre-1940 firehouses remaining in Madison are:

1. Fire Station #2, built in 1856 at 125 State Street. This brick, load-bearing structure has been drastically altered to house commercial uses. The front was redesigned in 1922 for its occupant, Castle and Doyle. Virtually nothing remains to show that this building was once a fire station.
2. Second Fire Station #2, built in 1921 at 301 N. Broom Street. This cream brick structure was sensitively altered and enlarged to house offices for Urban Land Investments. Of the interior features, only the fire tower remains intact.
3. Fire Station #6, built in 1929 at the corner of Park Street and Parr to the designs of Claude and Starck. This is a simplified Prairie School style building still used as a fire station.
4. Fire Station #7, 2410 Monroe Street built in 1938 to the designs of Philip M. Homer. This red brick Colonial Revival building is now a theater.