

ADDRESS: 4027-31 HAVERFORD AVE

Name of Resource: Engine House of Truck Company F

Review: Designate

Property Owner: Frankie Francis

Nominator: University City Historical Society

Staff Contact: Ted Maust, theodore.maust@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 4027-31 Haverford Avenue and add it to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The building was constructed in 1884 as the Engine House of Truck Company F, one of the earliest firehouses built in West Philadelphia by the Fire Department. The nomination argues that the former firehouse exemplifies the rapid development of residential neighborhoods in West Philadelphia in the late nineteenth century and the City of Philadelphia's efforts to provide services throughout its borders. The nomination contends that the building's importance to the history of neighborhood and the City of Philadelphia satisfies Criteria for Designation A and J.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 4027-31 Haverford Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation A and J.

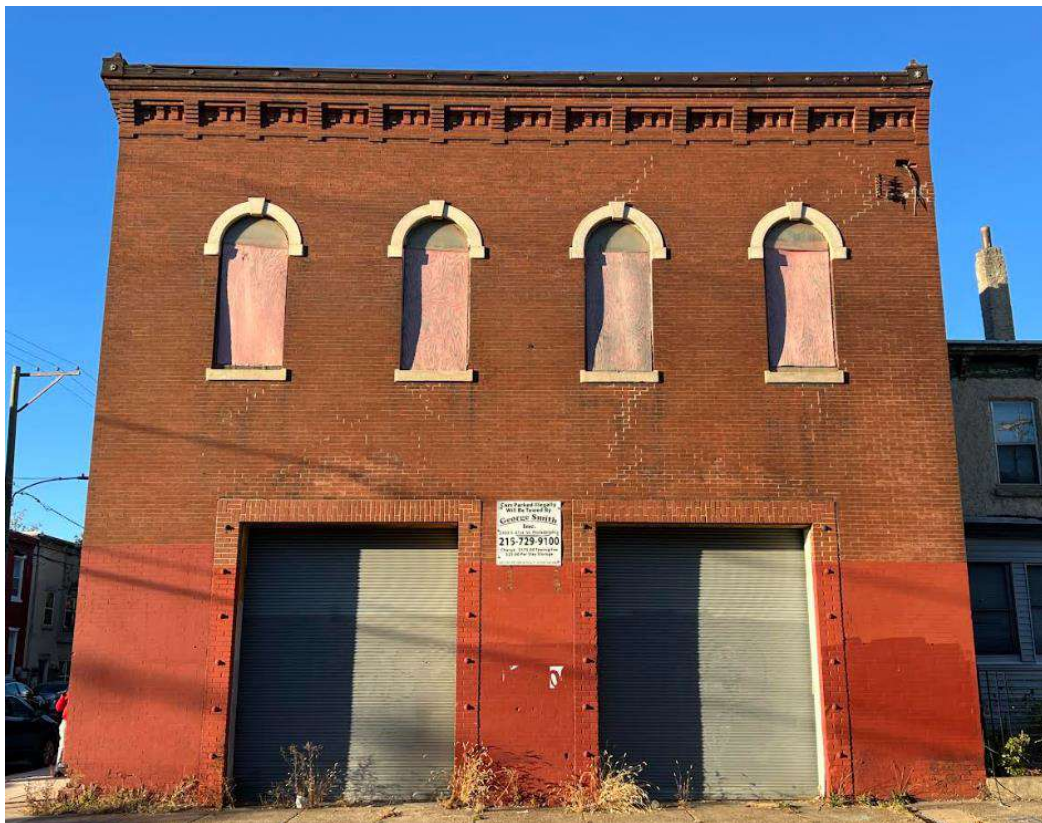


Figure 1: Photo of the subject property from the nomination.



Figure 2: Photo of subject property in 1934, included in the nomination.

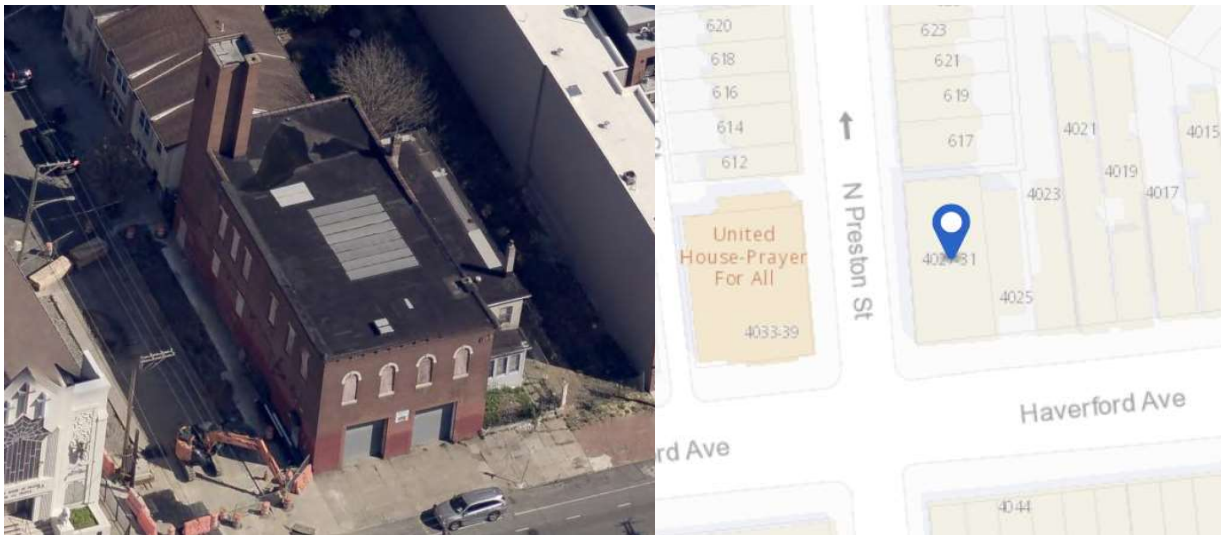


Figure 3: The property sits at the corner of N Preston St and Haverford Ave.

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: **4027-31 Haverford Avenue**

Postal code: **19104**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Name: **Engine House of Truck Company F**

Current Name: **Unknown**

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: **Unknown**

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): **1884 - 1934**

Date(s) of construction: **1884**

Architects: **Unknown**

Builders: **William H. Kerr**

Original owner: **William H. Kerr**

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: **University City Historical Society**

Author: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian**

Date: **6 November 2024**

Email: **Keeper@KeepingPhiladelphia.org**

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: April 1, 2025

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: April 14, 2025

Date of Notice Issuance: April 17, 2025

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Frankie Francis

Address: 5201 WHITBY AVE

City: Philadelphia

State: PA

Postal Code: 19143

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated

☐ Rejected

12/7/18

NOMINATION
FOR THE
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

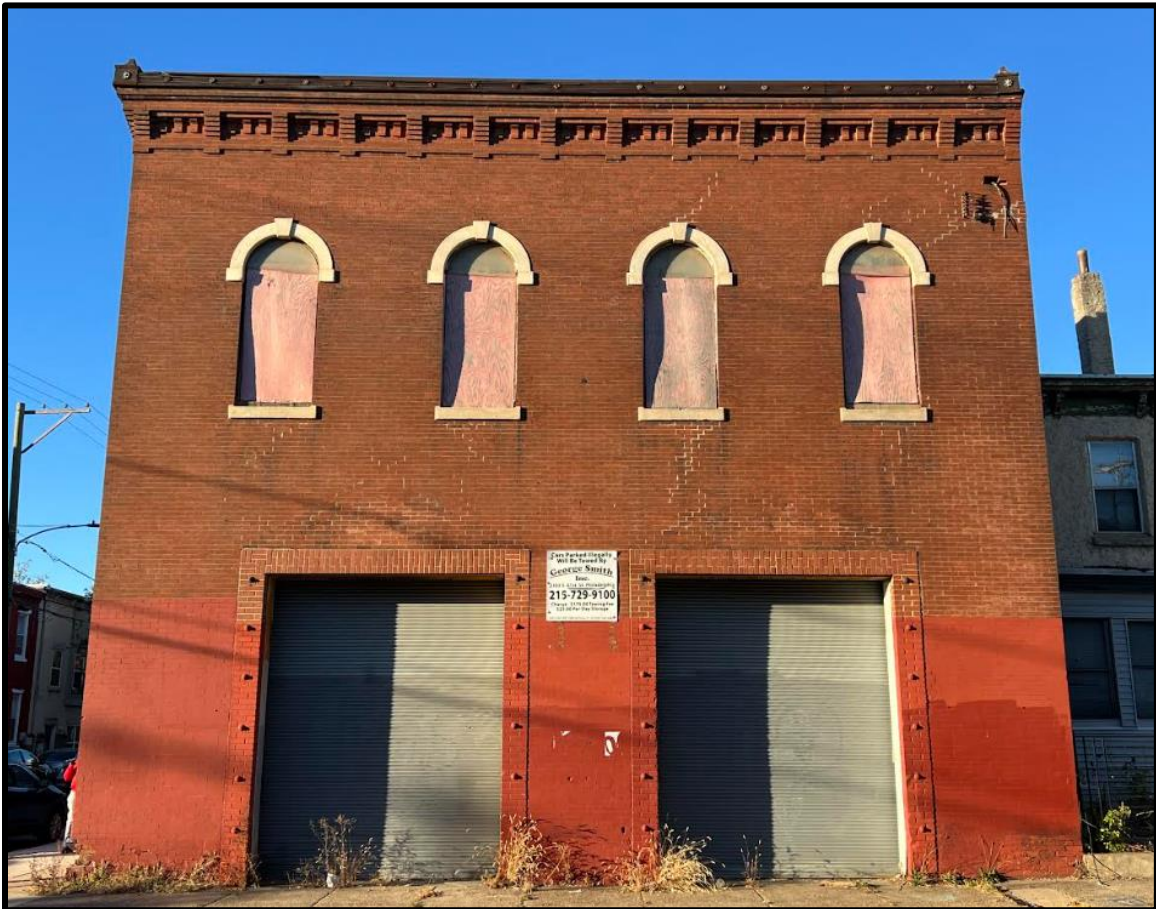


Figure 1. Truck Company F, Primary (South) Elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2024.

ENGINE HOUSE OF TRUCK COMPANY F

—
AKA TRUCK COMPANY 6 AND ENGINE 67
ERECTED IN 1884
—

4027-31 HAVERFORD AVENUE
WEST PHILADELPHIA
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

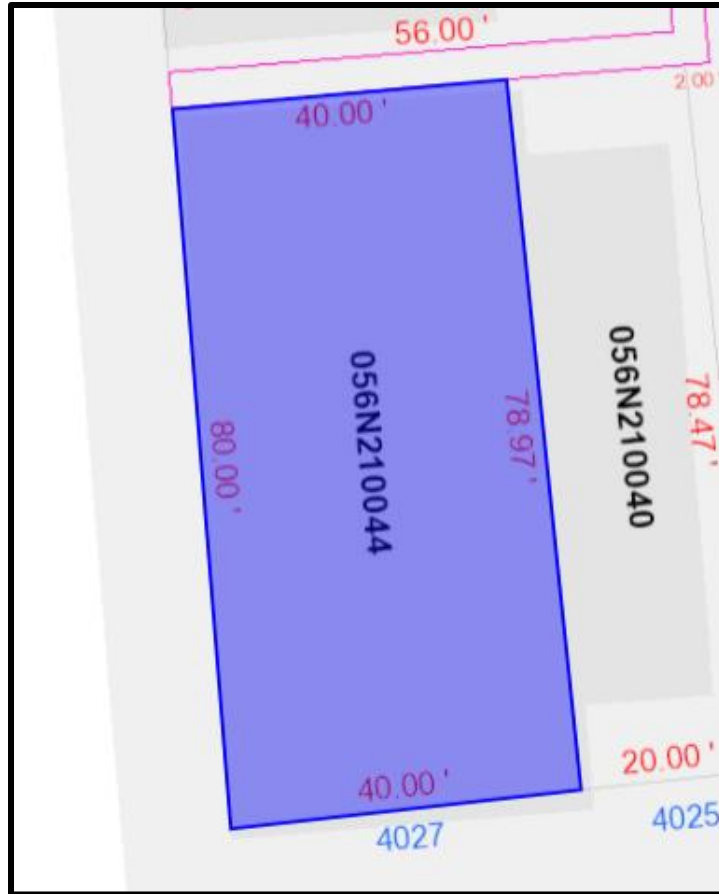


Figure 2. The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the proposed designation is as follows:

4027-31 Haverford Avenue

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, SITUATE on the North side of Haverford Avenue. BEGINNING at the northeast corner of Haverford Avenue and Preston Street, thence extending along the east side of Preston Street, the western boundary of the subject property, northward eighty (80) feet. Turning ninety degrees to the east, thence extending eastwardly forty (40) feet along the northern boundary of the subject property. Turning ninety degrees to the south, thence extending southwardly approximately seventy-nine (79) feet along the eastern boundary of the subject property. Turning ninety degrees to the west, thence extending westwardly forty (40) feet along the southern boundary of the subject property along the north side of Haverford Avenue to the point and place of beginning.



Figure 3. Top: Looking north at the Primary (South) Elevation of the subject building. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2024. Figure 4. Bottom: Looking south at the Rear (North) Elevation of the subject building. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2024.



Figure 5. Truck Company F, Side (West) and Primary (South) Elevations. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2024.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Constructed in 1884, Engine House of Truck Company F is a two-story masonry firehouse that stands at the northeast corner of Haverford Avenue and Preston Street in West Philadelphia.¹ Set within a dense context of rowhouses, the former municipal building has long been a landmark in the community even after a century since it was decommissioned as a firehouse. Constructed of load-bearing masonry, the red brick structure includes a primary (south) elevation of two vehicle bays at the ground level with four symmetrically placed windows on the floor above. Originally round arch openings, the vehicle bays were altered historically to accommodate a larger vehicle type, resulting in the present rectangular openings that are defined by soldier brick surrounds. The second floor features four symmetrically placed windows that are defined by round-arched tops with decorative headers. Central keystones and matching keyblocks characterize the stone headers. The arches relate to the corbeled cornice that serves the second floor, speaking to the Italianate taste that influenced the subject building and many of its neighbors. These openings are sheathed in plywood; however, the nine-over-nine wooden sash windows appear to be extant. Serving the primary (south) and side (west) elevations, the cornice is formed by corbeled brackets and moldings with pressed tin trim along the top, where the cornice meets the roofline.

¹ The adjacent cross street, known as Wyoming Avenue, was changed to Preston Street in 1897.



Figure 6a. Left: Window header and cornice detail, Primary (South) Elevation. Figure 6b. Right: An original window, Side (West) Elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2024.

The side (west) elevation features a pedestrian doorway near the southwest corner, which has been altered to include a rolltop security door. Additionally, the first floor features two windows, which are sheathed in plywood. Six windows serve the second floor, all but one of which is sheathed in plywood. The southernmost opening features an original nine-over-nine wooden sash window. Additional original windows may be present under the plywood sheathing. Stone headers and sills define the semi-symmetrical fenestration. A three-story tower appends the rear wall of the building and is served by a single pedestrian door on the ground floor. The building features a flat roof. The side (east) elevation is a blind brick party wall shared with an attached row house. The rear (north) elevation features an original fenestration, including three nine-over-nine wooden sash windows on the second floor. Otherwise, this façade is largely hidden from the public right-of-way.



Figure 7a. Top: Truck Company F, Primary (South) and Side (East) Elevations. Figure 7b. Bottom: Rear (North) Elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2024.



Figure 8. Truck Company F, Side (West) and Primary (South) Elevations. Source: City Abandoning Old Fire House, 1934.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Truck Company F at 4027-31 Haverford Avenue in West Philadelphia is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- 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 a person significant in the past; and*
- j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, and historical heritage of the community.*

The period of significance for the subject property dates to the time the building was constructed in 1884 until the company moved to a new facility in 1934.



Figure 9. Left: 1872 Hopkins Atlas of West Philadelphia. Source: West Philadelphia Community History Center. Figure 10. Middle: 1878 Scott Atlas of West Philadelphia. Source: West Philadelphia Community History Center. Figure 11. Right: 1886 Baist Atlas of West Philadelphia. Please note that Wyoming Street has been renamed Preston Street. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

CRITERIA A AND J

The Engine House of Truck Company F (Truck Company F), also known as Hook and Ladder F, Truck Company 6, and Engine 67, is a former municipal firehouse that was built in 1884 at 4027-31 Haverford Avenue in West Philadelphia. Under Criteria A and J, Truck Company F represents a period of great development in Philadelphia, when in the 1870s and 1880s dramatic commercial, industrial, and residential expansion led to the need for increased fire protection infrastructure. The local prosperity manifested in an ever-growing labyrinth of attached and semi-detached masonry factories, rowhouses, and stores that define the larger built environment of the Quaker City. The increased density meant increased hazards—with fire as a primary threat. While off to a slow start in the 1870s, the Fire Department, established between 1870 and 1871, eventually “made great strides in its expansion effort” in the early 1880s. Truck Company F was officially chartered on March 1, 1884, representing the “first attempt to increase fire protection in West Philadelphia” by the municipal government.² While several firehouses were in West Philadelphia before the creation of the Fire Department, the earlier facilities appear to have been commissioned by private fire companies. The subject building was one of the earliest firehouses to be constructed in West Philadelphia under the auspices of the Fire Department. It is an especially compelling specimen due to its construction period, representing the establishment and enlargement of the Fire Department city-wide, as well as the city’s interest in increasing fire protection infrastructure in underserved sections of Philadelphia. Over time, West Philadelphia would see dozens of firehouses constructed by the Fire Department. Being one of the first to be constructed in the neighborhood at the direction of the city, the subject building appears to be one of the oldest municipal firehouses in West Philadelphia.³

² *Hike Out: The History of the Philadelphia Fire Department*. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Fire Department Historical Corporation, 1999), 2.

³ *Hike Out: The History of the Philadelphia Fire Department*. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Fire Department Historical Corporation, 1999), 2.



Figure 12. The ordinance that authorized the initial lease for the subject property in June 1883. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 10, 1883, 7.

The process of developing new fire protection resources, especially a new company and an associated building, was a convoluted governmental ordeal, which involved the Board of Fire Commissioners, City Council, the Councils Committee on the Fire Department, the Philadelphia Fire Department, and various private parties. The legislative birth of Truck Company F began on Wednesday, March 28, 1883, when the Councils Committee on the Fire Department met in the Common Council chamber. It was in that room that the Board of Fire Commissioners passed a resolution to authorize the Fire Department to lease a privately-owned “lot of ground at Wyoming avenue and Haverford road” for a period of ten years. The lease on the subject property was stipulated on the property owner’s commitment to erect “a steam fire engine” house, which would ultimately become the subject building.⁴ This required “an ordinance to approve the lease of the premises...for a truck station, at an annual rental of \$1400.”⁵ The city did not initially purchase this land nor did they finance the construction of the new building. William H. Kerr owned the subject property and erected the subject building, which was authorized and conditioned in the aforementioned ordinance.⁶

After the lease was authorized by law, the Board of Fire Commissioners reviewed the “plans and specifications” for the subject building. Upon approval, the Fire Department’s Committee on Real

⁴ “Councils Committees,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 29 March 1883, 2.

⁵ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 June 1883, 2.

⁶ “Common Council,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 June 1883, 2.

Estate ordered that the plans be carried out.⁷ Construction appears to have commenced soon after the plans were approved. The design was in line with many red brick Italianate buildings of the era with eclectic detailing. On February 26, 1884, the Board of Fire Commissioners was informed that the “new house at Wyoming street and Haverford road was ready for occupancy.” Additionally, it was noted that a new “Hayes ladder” had been purchased to serve the company.⁸ When the subject building was complete, the Fire Commission was led by President Jacob Laudenslager, a prominent carriage manufacturer.

Speaking to the building’s significance under Criterion J, Truck Company F served the community as an engine or firehouse from 1884 to 1934, embodying the local economic, political, and historical heritage of West Philadelphia. During this period, firehouses were especially important within the densely built urban communities that were often threatened by fire hazards. Celebrated for their service, many firemen were well-known citizens. When firemen were injured or died in service, they were honored as heroes. Buildings and/or structures related to fire protection in Philadelphia spanned the centuries, some being built by private fire companies, as well as landlords, and others by city itself. Firehouses were occupied by companies of various nomenclature, including chemical, ladder, and engine companies. Additional designations were assigned to fire companies over time, depending on the importance of their location and political clout.

As previously mentioned, Truck Company F was organized on March 1, 1884, upon completion of the subject building. The original company roster included the following individuals, many of whom lived nearby, speaking to the community-centered purpose of a local firehouse:

| Name | Age | Position | Address | Occupation |
|--------------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| William Eagan | 30 | Foreman | 10 Laurel St. | Iron-worker |
| William Sargeant | 36 | Tillerman | 3925 Melon St. | Roofer |
| Joseph Blackburn | 34 | Driver | 634 Cinnamon St. | Painter |
| Hugh McGranaghan | 38 | Ladderman | 33 rd and Girard | Engineer |
| Joseph Timlin | 29 | Ladderman | 3622 Vine St. | Brickmaker |
| William B. Cline | 39 | Ladderman | 1502 Winter St. | Baker |
| Michael Carroll | 39 | Ladderman | 832 Morris St. | Driver |
| William Boyd | 30 | Ladderman | 4637 Seneca St. | Butcher |
| George F. Jennings | 29 | Ladderman | 4233 McFarland St. | Stonemason |
| John H. Murray | 39 | Ladderman | 4937 Kershaw Ave. | Brickmaker |
| Thomas Markward | 25 | Ladderman | 4X79 Market St. | Roofer |
| Frank Dehaven | 34 | Ladderman | 145 S. Twenty-fourth | Butcher |
| Harry Hogg | 32 | Ladderman | 2217 Catharine St. | Driver ⁹ |

⁷ “The Fire Commissioners.,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 July 1883, 3.

⁸ “Fire Commissioners.,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 27 February 1884, 3.

⁹ This information was provided in the summary of Truck Company F by the Fireman’s Hall Museum.

(1884) 1

Truck Co March 1st

Foreman
Wm Eagan

Tillerman Driver
Wm Sergeant Joseph Blackburn

Ladderman

Hugh M. Granighan Geo F Jennings
Joseph Timlin John Colflish
Wm B Cline Thos Markward
Michael Carroll
Wm Boyd

March 1st

Members in attendance

Wm Sergeant Wm B Cline
Joseph Blackburn Michael Carroll
Hugh M. Granighan Wm Boyd
Joseph Timlin

March 2nd

Members in attendance

Wm Sergeant Wm B Cline
Joseph Blackburn Michael Carroll
Hugh M. Granighan Wm Boyd
Joseph Timlin Geo F Jennings

March 3rd

Members in attendance

Wm Sergeant Michael Carroll
Joseph Blackburn Wm Boyd
Hugh M. Granighan Geo F Jennings
Joseph Timlin John Colflish
Wm B Cline

Figure 13. The initial entry in the Log of Truck Company F in March 1884. Source: HSP.

Truck Company F immediately went to work providing fire protection for the local community. In those days emergency services were alerted largely by call boxes that were installed throughout the city. These calls were meticulously recorded in an official log by each company, which was certainly the case at Truck Company F. A day's work might include incidents like the "fire in M.

F. McGhan's Kindling Wood Factory," a one-story frame building near 3848 Lancaster Avenue, on September 16, 1884, which required nine members of the company for eight hours.¹⁰ During the first year, Truck Company F had 39 box runs and 4 local alarms. These numbers increased to 74 box runs and 13 local alarms the following year. On August 26, 1885, the company provided services related to at least three fires. The first call was in response to a "fire explosion of a gasoline stove" in the three-story brick hotel of John Hyde at 2200 Callowhill Street. The second call was regarding a fire at Stokes & Parrish's "Elevator & Machine Works" caused by "sparks from the iron foundry next door." The third and final call of the day was for a fire caused by a stove in a "one-story frame kitchen" that was owned by a Mrs. Cassler. The loss was a trifling \$100.¹¹

In 1887 Assistant Engineer 7 was organized in this station, at which time the company employed thirteen men.¹² Assistant Engineer 7 was eventually moved to Truck Company 13 when it opened in 1904.



Figure 14. Assistant Foreman John Murray, Truck Company F. Source: *Hike Out: The History of the Philadelphia Fire Department*. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Fire Department Historical Corporation, 1999), 41.

Naturally, firefighting was always a dangerous profession, as is any industry that safeguards citizens from hazards. As a result, most fire companies were well-acquainted with death, often celebrating the loss of a fireman with great ceremony. Given that many firemen were members of the surrounding community, the celebration of firemen as heroes was part of urban culture, especially at the time of death. On December 19, 1891, Truck Company F was responding to a call from Box 595, located at 53rd Street and Haverford Avenue, when the apparatus flipped during transport. Assistant Foreman John Murray was critically injured during the accident, sustaining fatal wound on the way to the Presbyterian Hospital.¹³ Even though he was not killed while fighting the fire, Murray was celebrated for his service to the community. On the day of his funeral, a "large ladder of flowers" was provided as a memorial by the members of Truck Company F, standing "at one side of the casket."¹⁴

¹⁰ Log Book, Truck Company F, 1 March 1884 to 31 December 1886. Source: HSP.

¹¹ Log Book, Truck Company F, 1 March 1884 to 31 December 1886. Source: HSP.

¹² *The Philadelphia Times*, 16 September 1887, 2.

¹³ "A Fireman Killed," *The Philadelphia Times*, 20 December 1891.

¹⁴ "Brave Fireman Murray," *The Philadelphia Times*, 24 December 1891, 3.

Truck Company F was one of many firehouses that prepared for “the celebration of” our “great national holiday” on the Fourth of July, “requiring...all the energy and untiring vigilance of the Fire Department.” A plan for the day was recorded in the records of Truck Company F on July 1, 1893, by James C. Baxter, Jr., Chief Engineer.¹⁵ This is just one example of how the fire companies throughout city were part and parcel to local culture.

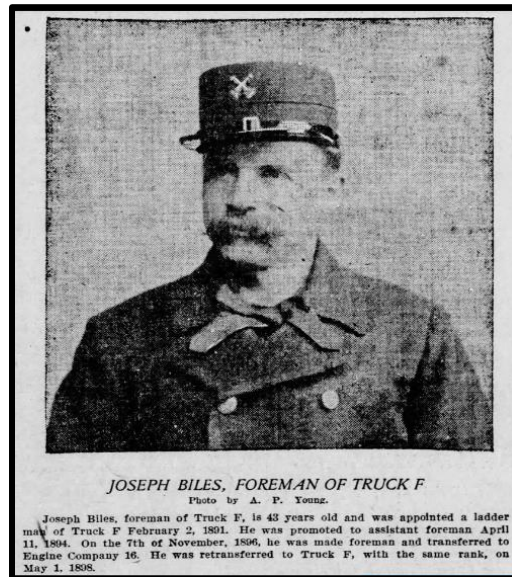


Figure 15. A portrait of Joseph Biles, Foreman of Truck F. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 January 1900, 5.

In 1896, Chemical Company 1, another designation, was moved from Engine Company 32 to Truck Company F. The following year, in late December, Truck Company F lost “one of the oldest and best” in the death of Foreman James McGaughy, who died of valvular disease of the heart. He served as foreman from 1887 until the time of his death.¹⁶



Figure 16. Firefighters pose upon an old fire engine in the westerly vehicle bay in the ca.1920-34 period. Source: Fireman’s Hall Museum.

¹⁵ Log Book, Truck Company F, 25 May 1892 to 9 August 1894, 81. Source: HSP.

¹⁶ “Foreman M’Gaughy Dead,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 31 December 1897, 5.

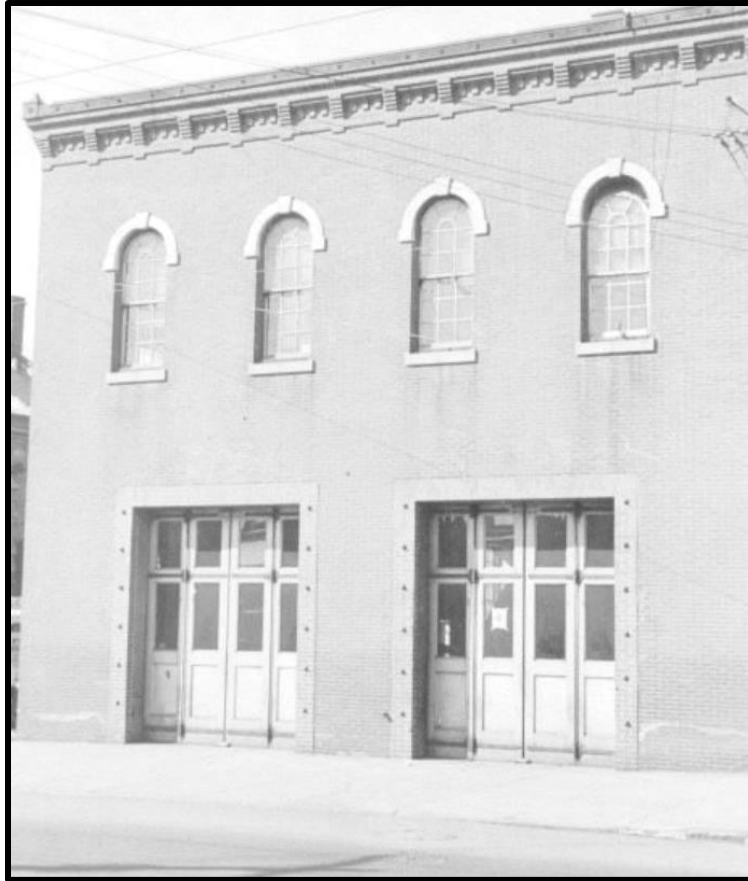


Figure 17. Truck Company F in the 20th Century, after the alteration of the original vehicle bays. Source: Fireman's Hall Museum.

Truck Company F became Truck Company 6 on July 11, 1900, when the letter designations for the truck companies were changed to numbers. Joseph Biles was appointed foreman around this time.¹⁷ Battalion 11 was organized in this firehouse in 1912. While many companies were upgrading their apparatus to modern vehicles, the subject company continued to employ two horses. In fact, it was one of the last companies in Philadelphia to use a horse-drawn conveyance. Truck Company F, then known as Truck Company 6, was disbanded on December 27, 1927, which led to the organization of Engine 67 at the subject property. The subject building continued in use as a firehouse until 1934, when it was condemned by Charles A. Flanagan, Chief of the Bureau of Building Inspection.¹⁸ While the future use of the site was debated for some months, Truck Company F would ultimately move to the headquarters of No. 54 at 63rd Street and Lancaster Avenue.¹⁹ The building was afterward repurposed for commercial use.

¹⁷ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 January 1900, 5.

¹⁸ "City Abandons Old Fire House," Unknown Publication, 1934. Source: Fireman's Hall Museum.

¹⁹ "Firemen's Moving Day," Unknown Publication, 1934. Source: Fireman's Hall Museum.



Figure 18. Early American Fire Buckets. Source: Google.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF FIRE PROTECTION IN PHILADELPHIA

As has been the case since its discovery by man, fire has been an enduring threat to urban environments and citizens. That same threat has been present in the dense, built environment of Philadelphia since its foundational period. Naturally, the early settlers connected with William Penn began building a city with the Great Fire of London 1666 lingering in the back of their minds.²⁰ As a result of that famous disaster, it has long been stated as fact that William Penn outlawed wooden buildings, requiring that brick be employed in the construction of all structures in his Quaker City. It is well known that this is essentially a legend perpetuated by a preference for brick buildings and later requirements by fire insurance companies and municipal regulations on frame construction. The fact is that Philadelphia was largely a city of brick buildings; however, there were always wooden structures interspersed in great numbers.²¹

While fire protection was always a concern in Philadelphia, it would remain a private matter until the mid-nineteenth century. In the 1730s Founding Father Benjamin Franklin started an educational campaign on fire prevention. This led to the establishment of the Union Fire Company in 1736. Members of this private fire company purchased their own leather buckets, which they used to put out fires. In a period without municipal fire and police protection services, these private fire companies served numerous purposes, including protection against theft and looting.²² Union's establishment led to numerous other private fire companies, including one founded by Andrew Bradford, a rival of Franklin in printing business. By the mid-eighteenth century, six fire companies stood ready to respond to an alarm, which was sounded by a night watchman when required. Other famous companies were founded in the 1750s, including the Britanna and the

²⁰ *Philadelphia, Three Centuries of American Art*. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1976), 121.

²¹ John Ramsay McCulloch, and Daniel Haskel. *M'Culloch's Universal Gazetteer: A Dictionary, Geographical, Statistical, and Historical, of the Various Countries, Places, and Principal Natural Objects in the World*. (Harper & Brothers, 1844), 451 and 599.

²² *The City Government of Philadelphia: A Study in Municipal Administration*. (Philadelphia: Wharton School, 1893), 171.

Hibernia. Not only did these organizations fill a role that would later be a staple of municipal services, but many also provided a social and often political element.²³



Figure 19. An illustration of early firefighting in Philadelphia. Source: Google.

With the advent of the fire company in Philadelphia as the primary mechanism for firefighting came the need for equipment and technology. As the individual buckets proved to be insufficient, manually operated pumping engines were invented, manufactured, and purchased by fire companies. In fact, most of these machines were procured from Richard Newsam of London, who advertised his apparatus throughout the American Colonies. In 1752, Franklin's Union Fire Company and the Hand-in-Hand jointly purchased a large fire bell, which was installed in a belfry atop its academy building on Fourth Street.²⁴ It is said that the bell could be heard throughout the city. The need for these services increased along with the city's population. For example, the infamous bell came as the city grew from 1,500 dwellings and 10,000 inhabitants in 1746 to 5,000 dwellings and 25,000 inhabitants in 1765.²⁵



Figure 20. A Philadelphia-style fire apparatus. Source: Museum of the American Revolution.

While many of the fire companies dissipated during the American Revolution, there was certainly a resurgence of these services as the new nation was established. It has been said that “the tradition of voluntary association was strong in Philadelphia.” As a result, the duty of fire protection, as well

²³ *The City Government of Philadelphia: A Study in Municipal Administration*. (Philadelphia: Wharton School, 1893), 171-73.

²⁴ J. Albert Cassedy. *The Firemen's Record*. (Philadelphia: 1911), 11.

²⁵ Russell Frank Weigley, Nicholas B. Wainwright, and Edwin Wolf. *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*. (Philadelphia: 1982), 79.

as prevention, was the work of volunteer and private fire companies for much of the city's early history. Even though the "flexible fire hose" was invented by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, it was not introduced in Philadelphia until numerous disastrous fires occurred in 1803. At that time a group of men in connection with the Philadelphia Hose Company met at the home of Reuben Haines in Bank Street, where they elected to purchase a hose and carriage. The company also erected a modern firehouse for its apparatus at 17 North Fourth Street. When the apparatus successfully fought a stable fire in Whalebone Alley in March 1804, two other hose companies were soon organized to conduct similar equipment.²⁶

In 1811, the City of Philadelphia appears to have made its first appropriation for fire protection, which occurred when the city Councils appropriated \$1,000 to support the fire and hose companies. Even with this advancement in municipal services, Philadelphia's fire protection continued to be conducted by volunteers and private fire companies. In the 1820s, Samuel V. Merrick, an engineer and industrialist, and his partner John Agnew invented and built an improved type of fire engine. This led Merrick, along with another partner John H. Towne, to establish the Southwark Foundry, which manufactured heavy machinery and boilers. The manufacture of fire engines emerged as a separate line of business, making Philadelphia a primary supplier of fire apparatus to southern and western communities during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. John Agnew, formerly of Merrick & Agnew, became a principal manufacturer in the industry, as was George Jefferies. In 1839, the City of Mobile in Alabama commissioned Agnew to build one of the largest steam engines that had ever been seen in Philadelphia.²⁷

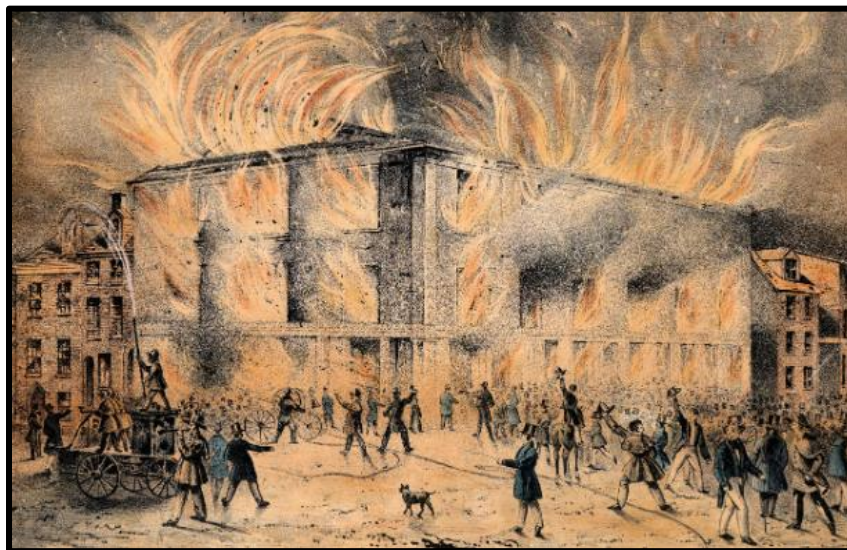


Figure 21. The destruction of Pennsylvania Hall on the night of May 17, 1838. Source: Library of Congress.

With the riots that occurred during this period came the involvement of firemen in the increasing violence. This led the City of Philadelphia to appoint a joint special committee of the city Councils to legislate fire companies and their protection services. The committee's efforts resulted in an ordinance of January 4, 1844, dividing the city and its districts into three distinct fire districts, a system that came with regulation on the movement of fire companies outside of their own districts.

²⁶ Russell Frank Weigley, Nicholas B. Wainwright, and Edwin Wolf. *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*. (Philadelphia: 1982), 223.

²⁷ Russell Frank Weigley, Nicholas B. Wainwright, and Edwin Wolf. *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*. (Philadelphia: 1982), 277.

Additional regulations on the use of fire plugs and qualifications for active company members were also legislated as part of the reform efforts. The 1844 ordinance also required fire companies to produce annual reports of their activities, including the number of fires attended and the nature of their membership. Penalties for violating the new regulations were also put in place.²⁸



Figure 22. A nineteenth-century fire apparatus in Philadelphia. Source: Fireman's Hall Museum.

As the city underwent a significant population boom in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the threat of riots and rising crime rates, among other issues, including fire hazards, led to the outmoding of the old fire companies. Issues surrounding the need for standardized municipal services led, in part, to the Consolidation of the City and County of Philadelphia in 1854. During the administration of Mayor Robert T. Conrad, an ordinance was passed by city Councils that worked to take control of the increasingly corrupt and unruly volunteer fire companies. Passed on January 30, 1855, the new law established the first central municipal force in the form of a fire department headed by a chief engineer, who was equipped with seven other engineers, and a board of directors representing the volunteer fire companies.²⁹ These companies were afterwards required to register with the fire department, which led to an official status designation and municipal appropriations. During Mayor Conrad's term "a police-and-fire-alarm telegraph system" was also installed in 1855, "connecting 163 outlying stations with the central police office at City Hall." This led to improved communications in providing fire protection services.³⁰

Exploiting this advancement, Mayor Richard Vaux, who served from 1856 to 1857, created "a fire detective bureau under a fire marshal," which led arson investigations, "a crime often committed

²⁸ John Fanning Watson, and Willis Pope Hazard. *Annals of Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time: Being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes, and Incidents of the City and Its Inhabitants, and of the Earliest Settlements of the Inland Part of Pennsylvania*. (Philadelphia: E. S. Stuart, 1884), 412.

²⁹ Russell Frank Weigley, Nicholas B. Wainwright, and Edwin Wolf. *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*. (Philadelphia: 1982), 375-76.

³⁰ Russell Frank Weigley, Nicholas B. Wainwright, and Edwin Wolf. *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*. (Philadelphia: 1982), 372.

by volunteer fire companies.”³¹ It is no surprise that Mayor Vaux only served one term, as the creation of the bureau reduced arson by fifty percent.

Consolidation, along with new regulations, did not resolve the ongoing corruption among the private, volunteer fire companies. As a result, the city continued to be deficient in fire protection, as well as prevention. This came to a head after the American Civil War. On December 29, 1870, the city Councils passed an ordinance dissolving the volunteer fire companies, creating a paid fire department. On Wednesday, March 25, 1871, the newly organized, paid fire department went into service for the City of Philadelphia.³² This was the beginning of the fire department that we know today.

Station No. *F*

PHILADELPHIA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Philadelphia, *Fire 1888*

| | Box | Local | Total |
|--------------|-----------|----------|------------|
| <i>Jan</i> | 5 | | 45 |
| <i>Feb</i> | 1 | 1 | 47 |
| <i>Mar</i> | 7 | 1 | 48 |
| <i>April</i> | 4 | 2 | 34 |
| <i>May</i> | 7 | | 60 |
| <i>June</i> | 6 | 2 | 51 |
| <i>July</i> | 6 | | 54 |
| <i>Aug</i> | 1 | | 31 |
| <i>Sept</i> | 4 | 3 | 26 |
| <i>Oct</i> | 2 | | 35 |
| <i>Nov</i> | 2 | | 29 |
| <i>Dec</i> | 9 | | 58 |
| | <u>54</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>518</u> |

Figure 23. Annual Report on Fire Box and Local Calls in 1888. Source: HSP.

CONCLUSION

Truck Company F is an early example of the firehouses commissioned by the newly established municipal Fire Department, representing the early history and development of what became one of the strongest organizations in Philadelphia. Additionally, the subject building represents the heritage of West Philadelphia, which was served by this building from 1884 to 1934.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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³¹ Russell Frank Weigley, Nicholas B. Wainwright, and Edwin Wolf. *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*. (Philadelphia: 1982), 372.

³² *Journal of the Common Council, of the City of Philadelphia, for* (Philadelphia: J. Van Court, 1871).

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