

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0228900  
DATA SHEET

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

RECEIVED JUN 30 1975

DATE ENTERED SEP 5 1975

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Old Engine Company No. 6

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 438 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Washington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

Walter E. Fauntroy, Congressman

STATE District of Columbia

CODE 11

COUNTY District of Columbia

CODE 001

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY  | OWNERSHIP                                  | STATUS  | PRESENT USE                                    |                       |
|---|--|---|--|-----------------------|
| ___ DISTRICT                                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED        | ___ AGRICULTURE                                | ___ MUSEUM            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | ___ PRIVATE                                | ___ UNOCCUPIED                                      | ___ COMMERCIAL                                 | ___ PARK              |
| ___ STRUCTURE                                   | ___ BOTH                                   | ___ WORK IN PROGRESS                                | ___ EDUCATIONAL                                | ___ PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| ___ SITE  | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                  | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                                   | ___ ENTERTAINMENT                              | ___ RELIGIOUS         |
| ___ OBJECT                                      | ___ IN PROCESS                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT | ___ SCIENTIFIC        |
|   | ___ BEING CONSIDERED                       | ___ YES: UNRESTRICTED                               | ___ INDUSTRIAL                                 | ___ TRANSPORTATION    |
|   |  | ___ NO  | ___ MILITARY                                   | ___ OTHER:            |

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME District of Columbia Government (Fire Department)

STREET & NUMBER 614 H Street, N.W.

CITY, TOWN Washington

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE District of Columbia

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER 6th and D Streets, N.W.

CITY, TOWN Washington

STATE District of Columbia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites

DATE May 21, 1975

FEDERAL  STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Joint District of Columbia/National Capital Planning Commission  
Historic Preservation Office

CITY, TOWN Washington

STATE District of Columbia

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR  
 DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Engine Company No. 6 building (c. 1862) is designed in an atypical Italianate style related in detail to other major municipal construction of the 1860's. The architect is unknown. The building is located in a row of unpretentious late nineteenth, early twentieth century brick residences on the south side of Massachusetts Avenue between 4th and 5th Streets, N.W. These residences relate in scale, proportion and materials to the earlier fire house. There is a uniform 40' setback on Massachusetts Avenue between the building line and the sidewalk allowing parking space for the fire house and deep front yards for the residences.

The Old Engine Company No. 6 building faces north, entirely occupying a trapezoidal lot with 30' frontage and a depth of 66'-73'. Of brick masonry construction, the building is rectangular in shape, 30' x 60', with a twentieth century one-story trapezoidal brick and frame rear lean-to addition. It is two bays wide and two stories high.

Built on grade to accommodate horses and heavy equipment, there is a small cellar near the rear of the building. The metal roof is low-pitched, sloping toward the rear, and cannot be seen from the front. A skylight near the center of the roof, now sealed, originally provided supplementary light for the bunk room below. Five small chimneys are indicated on the plans for the 1879 remodeling. Some of these have been removed or altered. All have been sealed off. Two of those which remain appear to be original. They are square in section, tall and narrow in proportion and are capped with stone. Two rectangular vents occur in each side of the chimneys and outset brick detail suggests moulding. A twentieth century chimney at the rear of the building accommodates the present central heating system.

The facade is of pressed brick with simple linear polychromatic detail of blacked bricks. It has been painted red in the twentieth century. Old photographs indicate that a third color of brick may have been used decoratively near windows and doors. A light colored stone, probably limestone, was used in cornice, window and door detail, providing further polychromatic contrast.

Two rectangular equipment entrances separated by a central pedestrian entrance occur in the first story. Originally the equipment entrances were smaller with broad segmental arches sprung from the framing of the pedestrian entrance to impost blocks of stone at either side. A transom occurred over the pedestrian entrance and this, together with the slenderness of the vertical members, suggests the thrust of the arches was absorbed here by sheathed cast iron columns rather than by masonry piers. The pedestrian entrance was decorated with chamfering and simple incised geometric detail. The design of these entrances is identical to that of the Franklin Engine Co., 12th and D Streets, N.W., built in 1857 and now demolished.

The carved granite trophy of Metropolitan Hook and Ladder, consisting of helmet, speaking trumpets, national shield and firefighting tools carved in high relief was set in the wall directly above the pedestrian entrance. This sculpture is thoughtfully composed and finely detailed, an interesting example of mid-nineteenth century stonecutting. A granite water table extends from the equipment entrances to the ends of the facade. These entrances were enlarged in 1948 to accommodate

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD  | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC          | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION           | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS              | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION              | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-     | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY               | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)     |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |   |  |

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1862 - Present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Old Engine Company No. 6 building a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. Erected in the early 1860's, it is the oldest surviving firehouse in the District of Columbia still in its original use as a firehouse. Its history spans and uniquely reflects the development of the Fire Department of the District of Columbia from a volunteer force to the present modern professional force and the development of firefighting here from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. It was constructed as the house of Metropolitan Hook and Ladder, the first, and between 1864 and 1879, the only hook and ladder company in the District of Columbia, and, consequently, its force responded to every alarm in the city during this period--including such historic conflagrations as that of the Smithsonian Institution in 1865 and of the U.S. Patent Office in 1877. It was constructed at the beginning of that period of intensive municipal improvement which culminated in Alexander R. Shepherd's remarkable transformation of the city in the early 1870's. It is an architecturally distinctive mid-nineteenth century fire house related in design to such major municipal construction of the 1860's as the Wallach and Franklin Schools.

The Metropolitan Hook and Ladder Company was organized in April of 1855, the first hook and ladder company of the then completely volunteer fire department of the District of Columbia. On November 12, 1855, when the newly formed company's first hook and ladder truck arrived, representatives of the Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company of Baltimore and the Sun Fire Company of Alexandria joined District of Columbia firemen in a colorful parade celebrating the occasion. A second hook and ladder company, the American Hook and Ladder, was also formed in 1855. In addition to these hook and ladder companies there were at this time six engine companies in the city--Union, Franklin, Northern Liberties, Preserverance, Anacostia and Columbia.

Metropolitan Hook and Ladder was first housed at 505 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. On November 20, 1862, the volunteer fire department was reorganized by the Common Council and the Board of Aldermen. It was at about this time that the firehouse at 438 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. was constructed for the use of Metropolitan Hook and Ladder. Architectural detail such as acroteria, corbelled brick cornice, chimneys, polychromatic effects, window and door design in related to that of such buildings as Franklin and Wallach Schools and the U.S. Department of Agriculture designed by the Washington architectural firm of Cluss and Kammerhueber in the 1860's.

The Act of Organize a Paid Fire Department was enacted July 1, 1864. The part-paid, part volunteer force thus established consisted of three engine companies--Union,

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Breen, John P. "Notes on the History of No. 6 Engine House, Washington, D.C." Unpublished Monograph, 1957.

Cassedy, J. Albert. The Firmen's Record. Baltimore, 1893.

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .047 acre 2,085 square feet-- Square 517, Lot 856

UTM REFERENCES

A 

|      |   |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 8 | 3 | 2       | 5 | 0 | 4 | 0        | 4 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| ZONE |   |   | EASTING |   |   |   | NORTHING |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

B 

|      |  |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ZONE |  |  | EASTING |  |  |  | NORTHING |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

C 

|      |  |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ZONE |  |  | EASTING |  |  |  | NORTHING |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

D 

|      |  |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ZONE |  |  | EASTING |  |  |  | NORTHING |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

|       |      |        |      |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Tanya Beauchamp, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

National Capital Planning Commission

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

1325 G Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

District of Columbia

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE   X  

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

6-25-75

TITLE Acting Director, Office of Housing & Community

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

THEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

4/5/75

ATTEST:

DATE

SEP 5 1975

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| STATE            |            |
| COUNTY           |            |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |            |
| ENTRY NUMBER     | DATE       |
|                  | SEP 5 1975 |

(Number all entries)

7. Description - Continued

modern equipment. Though their design was greatly simplified, the old brick was reused and care taken to match the original brickwork as closely as possible. The trophy of Metropolitan Hook and Ladder, now polychromed, was reset in the wall in its old position.

Two large-scaled semicircular arched windows occur at the second story level, occupying nearly three-quarters of each bay above the equipment doors and dominating the facade composition. These windows are tripartite with 1/1 light double-hung sash of equal size. The mullions extend into fan detail in the arches. Boldly scaled, the wooden mullions, lintels and fan detail are decorated with chamfering and detail similar to that of the pedestrian entrance. Sills and impost blocks are of stone. The line of the sills is extended across the facade in a flush stone belt.

There is a restrained overhanging brick cornice, capped with limestone and supported by corbelled brick brackets. Doubled oversized brackets occur at either end of the facade, accented by semi-circular limestone acroteria with incised detail echoing the fans of the windows below. Similar smaller acroteria occur above oversized brackets at intermediate points of the cornice. Part of the cornice has been replaced with cinder blocks. "No. 6", in raised bronze letters, is enframed within a blind bulleye at the center of the facade above the windows. The rear facade of the building is thoughtfully developed with three round arched windows--one at the stair landing and the others at the second story level. The driveway, originally paved with cobblestone with tracks of a light colored stone to guide the equipment in and out, has now been repaved with asphalt.

The interiors consist essentially of two large spaces--an equipment room 57'-4" long, 29' wide and 12' high on the first floor and a bunk room 41'-6" long, 29' wide and 20' high on the second floor. A dog-leg stair at the center rear of the building gives access to the cellar and the second story. Poles for rapid descent from the bunk room to the equipment room are located near the front and rear of the building. The drawings for the remodelling of 1879 show a 12' x 12' sitting room to the left of the stairs and a 8' x 12' harness room with a cellar trap door to the right. Five stable horses were located at the rear of the equipment room behind the two engines. On the second floor a foreman's room, 12' x 16' is located to the left of the stairway and a wash room and hose rack to the right. Two rooms for the use of the fire chief are partitioned off at the front of the bunk room. The latter accommodated ten men.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| STATE            |            |
| COUNTY           |            |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |            |
| ENTRY NUMBER     | DATE       |
|                  | SEP 5 1975 |

(Number all entries)

8. Significance - Continued

Franklin and Columbia--in addition to Metropolitan Hook and Ladder..The latter was now known as the Metropolitan Truck Company or Hook and Ladder No. 1, while the former were known as Engine Company No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3. Phillip W. Nicholson, in his History of the Volunteer and Paid Fire Department of the District of Columbia, 1800-1936, notes "The engine companies had three paid men who remained in the engine houses at all times except meal hours, an engineer, fireman and hostler and six call men who were only to answer when they heard an alarm of fire. The Truck Company had only two paid men: a tillerman and hostler, and seven call men. "On January 19, 1870, the Mayor signed an ordinance making the fire department a fully paid professional force. Hook and Ladder No. 1 was redesignated Truck Company 'A'.

On February 16, 1879, a second hook and ladder company was organized and Truck Company 'A' was moved to a new building at North Capitol and C Streets, N.W. The fire house at 438 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., was remodelled by architect Peter J. Lauritzen to accommodate the newly formed Engine Company No. 6. Engine Company No. 6 occupied the building for 95 years, moving in July 1974 to a new building at 1300 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. The Old Engine Company No. 6 building now houses the Community Relations Division of the Fire Department of the District of Columbia and is being renovated for use as a fire safety education center and mini-museum of firefighting.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| STATE            |            |
| COUNTY           |            |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |            |
| ENTRY NUMBER     | DATE       |
|                  | SEP 5 1975 |

(Number all entries)

9. Bibliography - Continued

Glory, C.O. (pseudonym, Local 36, IAFF, Albert O. Raeder et al) 100 Years of Glory, Washington, D.C.; Mount Vernon Publishing Co., Inc., 1972.

Government of the District of Columbia. Archives and Plan File of the Department of General Services. Plan of 1879 remodelling of Old Engine No. 6 building.

Martin Luther King Memorial Library. Atlases, directories, newspaper clipping files, photographic collection.

Nicholson, Philip W. History of the Volunteer and Paid Fire Department of the District of Columbia. Washington, D.C.; 1936, Sponsored by the City Fire Fighters Association.

Old Engine Company No. 6 Building. Desk Journal of Engine Company No. 6, 1897-1898. Photographs and Correspondence.

"Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia". Washington: Government Printing Office, 1874-1903.

