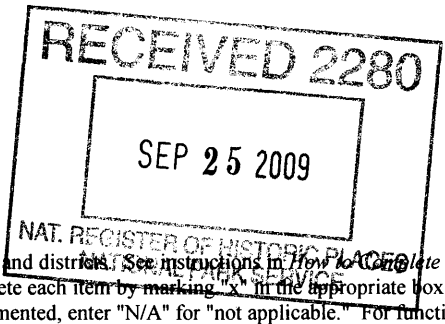


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**United States Department of Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Port Washington Fire Engine House
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 102 East Pier Street N/A not for publication
city or town Port Washington N/A vicinity
state Wisconsin code WI county Ozaukee code 089 zip code 53074

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets _ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _ nationally _ statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date 9/21/09

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _ meets _ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title _____ Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Port Washington Fire Engine House

Ozaukee

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall

11.5.09

[Signature]

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- structure
- site
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

contributing	noncontributing
1	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	0 total

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/fire station

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/civic

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Ceramic Tile

other Limestone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Port Washington Fire Engine House
Name of Property

Ozaukee
County and State

Wisconsin

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Politics / Government

Period of Significance

1929-1959

Significant Dates

1929

1938

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Topzant, John

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Port Washington Fire Engine House
Name of Property

Ozaukee
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less Than One Acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 429500 4804300
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Timothy F. Heggland / Consultant for the Port Washington Historical Society			Date	November 24, 2008
organization				Telephone	(608) 795-2650
street & number	6391 Hillsandwood Rd.			zip code	53560
city or town	Mazomanie	state	WI		

Port Washington Fire Engine House

Ozaukee

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Mayor	date	November 24, 2008	
organization	City of Port Washington	telephone	(414) 284-5585	
Street & number	100 West Grand Avenue / PO Box 307		zip code	53074
city or town	Port Washington	state	WI	

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation Sheet

Port Washington Fire Engine House
Port Washington, Ozaukee Co., WI

Section 7 Page 1

Description

The Port Washington Fire Engine House is a fine and largely intact, one-and-one-half-story-tall, irregular plan, Mediterranean Revival style fire station that is set on a steeply sloping corner lot located at the north edge of the city of Port Washington's historic downtown.¹ The 48-foot-wide by 60-foot-deep Engine House was built in 1929 next door to the site that had previously been occupied by Port Washington's first engine house. This was a Front Gable vernacular form, wood frame, clapboard-clad building constructed in 1884 that was demolished shortly after the current building was completed. The architect John Topzant of Milwaukee designed the Engine House. The building has a poured concrete basement walls that enclose a full basement story, exterior walls that are clad in tan brick, and a tile-covered combination gable-and-hip roof whose wide overhanging open eaves are supported by extended and shaped rafter ends. A particularly fine feature of the building is the drying tower for fire hoses that is located on the north-facing rear elevation, which Topzant fashioned into a campanile-like tower. The slope of the site also meant that Topzant was able to fully expose the basement story of the building's east-facing side elevation, and both this story and part of the first story were originally used as garages that housed fire department apparatus and other city vehicles. The building served as Port Washington's fire engine house until 1975, when a new and much larger fire engine house was built across Wisconsin St. The 1929 Engine House was then converted into a senior citizens center, and it is believed to be eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion C (Architecture) as an excellent, largely intact example of Mediterranean Revival Style design as it was applied to a fire station and under Criterion A (Politics / Government) for its association with the important government service provided by the fire department.²

The Engine House parcel slopes downhill rather steeply from west to east and it is bounded on the south by Pier St., on the west by N. Wisconsin St., on the north by E. Jackson St., and on the east by a concrete parking lot whose eastern edge is bordered by a retaining wall. The north, west, and south edges of this parcel are edged with concrete sidewalks, mown grass terraces, and concrete curbs and gutters. Historic photos show that most of the south side of the parcel that lies between the Engine House and Pier St. was originally paved with concrete and that this served as a fore court for the garage door openings that were set into the Engine House's south-facing main elevation. Once the use of the building changed in 1975, this portion of the parcel was landscaped with shrubs, ornamental trees and mown lawn and most of the concrete was removed, save for a portion that is located immediately in front of the building. The portion of the parcel that is located between the east elevation of the Engine

¹ The population of Port Washington was 10,467 in 2000. The city is located approximately thirteen miles north of the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin's largest city.

² *Port Washington Herald*, October 3, 1928, p. 1; October 10, 1928, p. 3. See also: *Ozaukee Press*, September 5, 1985, Part 7, p. 8, 16 (photos). Sesquicentennial Issue.

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Port Washington Fire Engine House
Port Washington, Ozaukee Co., WI

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House and the retaining wall that forms the eastern edge of the parcel is now, and was historically, paved with concrete and it originally served as a side court for three garage door openings located in the basement story of the building. This court is still extant and it is accessed from Pier St. via a short downward-sloping driveway.

The Engine House parcel occupies the west end of its block. The east end of the block contains several historic commercial buildings that are part of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-listed Port Washington Downtown Historic District.³ The block's middle portion is given over to a large hard surfaced municipal parking lot. The blocks to the east, west and south of the Engine House's block have historically been occupied by commercial and institutional buildings and although some of these buildings have now been demolished and replaced, either with newer buildings or with parking lots, many others still remain, including the NRHP-listed Ozaukee County Courthouse. This area is still the institutional and commercial core of Port Washington today.

Exterior

The Engine House is irregular in plan, it is one-and-one-half stories in height, and it has poured concrete foundation walls that enclose a full basement story whose east-facing side is fully exposed. The exterior walls that rest on this foundation are clad in tan brick that is laid over building tile, and these walls are sheltered by the wide overhanging eaves of the building's combination gable-and-hip main roof. These eaves are supported by shaped, extended rafter ends and the roof itself is covered in Spanish type ceramic tiles and it is drained by copper gutters and downspouts. In addition, all the window openings in the Engine House retain their original multi-light double hung wood sash windows, and although their shapes and sizes vary, each window opening has a dressed limestone sill.

The asymmetrically designed main façade of the Engine House faces south on to Pier Street and it is 48.5-feet-wide and it is divided into two unequal-width portions. The wider left-hand portion is two-bays-wide and it is also taller than the right-hand portion, its extra height being accounted for by the fact that it contains two large elliptical-arched garage door openings that originally served the Engine House's fire engines. Historic photos show that these openings each originally contained a pair of side-hinged three-light over three panel wood doors. Each door was crowned by the seven-light half of a fourteen-light transom that was divided in the center to allow it to be opened in tandem with the doors below.⁴ Today, these doors have been replaced with modern windows (three per opening) that serve the needs of the senior center that now occupies the building. The narrower and shorter right-hand

³ Port Washington Downtown Historic District. Listed in the NRHP on September 8, 2000.

⁴ Annual Report of the City of Port Washington for the Year 1949. Port Washington: 1949, p. 4 (illustrated).

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Port Washington Fire Engine House
Port Washington, Ozaukee Co., WI

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portion of the façade is also two-bays-wide and it contains an entrance door in its left-hand bay. The opening still contains its original paneled nine-light over three-panel wood door, while the right-hand bay consists of a window opening that still contains a pair of original six-over-one-light double hung wood sash windows. Unless noted, the doors and windows are rectilinear in form.

The asymmetrical west-facing side elevation of the Engine House faces on to N. Wisconsin Street, it is 60-feet-wide, and it is also divided into two unequal-width portions. The 45-foot-wide right-hand portion is the side elevation of the Engine House as it was originally built in 1929 and it is three-bays-wide. The left-hand bay consists of a door opening that still contains its original nine-light over three-panel wood entrance door, the middle bay contains a single window opening that contains an original six-over-one-light double hung wood sash window, and the right-hand bay contains a window opening that contains a pair of original six-over-one-light double hung wood sash windows. Placed in the center of this portion of the elevation and in between the two window openings is a tall, thin brick chimney mass that pierces the eave of the main roof and which is partially supported by a tile-roofed cricket whose west face is clad in clapboards. The most distinctive feature of this portion of the west-facing elevation is the very tall hose tower that is located at its far left (north) end. This brick-clad, square plan tower rises well above the roof peak of the main block of the Engine House and it is crowned with a tile-covered hip roof of its own that has open eaves supported by extended and shaped rafter ends, these being identical in design to the larger ones that are employed to support the eaves of the main roof. In addition, the topmost portion of the tower is treated as a lantern and each of the four identical faces of this lantern contains three tall, thin, semi-circular-arched openings, each of which contains a fixed eight-light window, and a wrought iron balconet is placed across the base of each of these triple groups.

The 15-foot-wide left-hand portion of the west-facing side elevation is actually the west-facing elevation of the addition that was added to the rear of the Engine House between 1929 and 1938. It is set 14.5-feet back from the 1929 portion of this elevation. This left-hand portion is two-bays-wide, with the left-hand bay consisting of a door opening that contains a one-light over three-panel wood entrance door. The right-hand bay, however, is one-and-one-half-stories tall and it has a single window opening that is placed at a level that corresponds to a position that is halfway between the first and basement stories, while a second semi-circular-arched window opening is located directly above it and is placed at a level that corresponds to a position that is halfway between the first and the attic stories. The lower one of these two openings contains an original six-light single hung wood sash window and the upper opening, a three-over-one-light window. The position of these openings reflects the location of an interior stairway that both openings serve.

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The asymmetrical rear elevation of the Engine House faces north on to E. Jackson Street and it is 48.5-foot-wide and it is divided into two unequal-width portions. The narrower 14.5-foot-wide right-hand portion is set back 15 feet from the left-hand portion, it is part of the original 1929 rear elevation of the Engine House, and it is one-bay-wide. This bay consists of a single window opening that contains an original six-over-one-light double hung wood sash window, and this opening is positioned at the left-hand (east) side of the wall. The right-hand portion is dominated by the hose tower described above, the north side of which is actually a continuation of the main wall surface of this portion of the elevation. The 34-foot-wide left-hand portion of the Engine House's rear elevation is actually the north-facing elevation of the addition that was added to the rear of the Engine House between 1929 and 1938. This left-hand portion has a tile-covered gable roof whose ridgeline runs from north to south and it is three-bays-wide and one-and-one-half-stories tall. The left-hand bay consists of a window opening that contains a pair of nine-light wood sash windows while the right-hand bay contains a wider opening that contains three of the same windows.⁵ Placed in the gable end above and centered in the gable end is a group of three tall, thin, semi-circular-arched window openings. Each contains a fixed eight-light window; this group is identical in design to the window groups that are located in the lantern of the hose tower.

The asymmetrical 60-foot-wide east-facing side elevation of the Engine House is comprised of the combined east-facing elevations of the 1929 Engine House and the 1929-1938 addition and it is four-bays-wide. The slope of the site means that the entire basement story of this elevation is exposed to view and its wall surface is comprised of the poured concrete that was used to fashion the building's basement story walls. The basement story's three left-hand (south) bays are identical and are part of the 1929 Engine House. Each of these bays contains a ten-foot-wide opening. These openings originally contained garage doors that served the Engine House's fire-fighting apparatus and other city vehicles. When the building was converted into a senior center, these openings were closed with wood board and batten, smaller entrance doors were placed in the right and left openings, and a triple window group was placed in the center opening. The basement story's right-hand bay is part of the 1929-1938 addition and it contains two window openings that are placed towards the top of the bay, each of which contains a pair of original four-light wood sash windows.

The first story of the east-facing side elevation is clad in tan brick, it is four-bays-wide, and like the basement story below, the three left-hand bays are identical and are part of the 1929 Engine House. Each of these bays has an opening that contains a pair of original six-over-one-light double hung wood sash windows while the right-hand bay, which is part of the 1929-1938 addition, also contains an

⁵ The placement of these window openings is staggered, the one on the left is placed lower on the elevation than the one on the right. This reflects the fact that the one on the right provides light to a rear staircase that descends down to the left (east) and to the first story level, while the opening on the left provides light to a first story office.

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opening with a pair of original six-over-one-light double hung wood sash windows, the difference being that this pair is noticeably taller than the three earlier pairs to its left. There are also two hip-roofed dormers placed on the slope of the main roof above that are located in positions that correspond to the two right-hand bays of the stories below. These dormers each contain an east-facing window opening that contains three six-light wood sash windows. The right-hand dormer (and possibly both) was added when the 1929-1938 addition was built.

A final feature of the exterior is a small cupola-like octagonal plan ventilator that is placed on a deck portion of the roof above the 1929 portion of the Engine House. It has louvered wood sides and a flared copper roof.

Interior

As originally designed, the western two-thirds of the first story of the Engine House was devoted primarily to the equipment associated with fire-fighting. The south end of this portion consisted of a large room that acted as a garage for fire-fighting apparatus and behind this were storage rooms for gear and a bathroom for the firemen. The eastern one third of this story, meanwhile, was given over to the needs of the firemen themselves. A meeting room for the firemen was located in the front (south), a kitchen was placed behind this room, and when the 1929-1938 addition was built, an office was added at the north end behind the kitchen. The basement story contained another garage for fire-fighting apparatus and for other city vehicles, as well as a repair room and utility rooms. In addition, the space devoted to the three-story-tall hose-drying tower rose up through the entire building.

Originally, the floors of both stories were poured concrete, rooms in the first story had plastered walls and plastered ceilings, and the meeting room and kitchen had four-panel varnished wood doors that opened out both into the garage space and into each other. Doors and windows had simple varnished wood casings, the meeting room also had narrow varnished wood crown molding and chair rails, and the kitchen had floor-to-ceiling varnished wood kitchen cabinets.

Surprisingly, when this building was converted into a senior citizens center, the original layout of the Engine House's rooms survived and it is still largely intact today. The first story garage room, which is the first story's largest room, was converted into a large social room. The original meeting room is still used as an informal lounge and game room, the kitchen is also still in use as such, and so is the office. Most of the interior finishes and detailing have survived. Most of the windows and doors and their casings are still intact, most of the wood molding and the kitchen's cabinets have survived, plastered walls are still in place, and most of the plastered ceilings are intact as well. The only

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Port Washington Fire Engine House
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exception is the office, which now has an acoustic tile ceiling. The other notable change has been to the building's floors, most of which are now covered either with linoleum or carpeting.

The biggest interior changes have taken place in the basement, where almost all traces of its original, probably largely unfinished interior have been removed and the former garage space has been converted into a multi-purpose games and crafts room.

Overall, the Port Washington Fire Engine House retains a high degree of integrity. The principal change that has affected the exterior has been the removal of all the original garage doors and their replacement with smaller modern windows or entrance doors. Otherwise, all of the building's other original exterior features appear to be intact. Likewise, the original interior is still largely intact and retains both its original layout and most of its interior details.

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Significance

The Port Washington Fire Engine House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its local significance under National Register (NR) criterion C. More specifically, the Engine House is being nominated because of its associations with the area of Architecture; a theme which is also identified in the State of Wisconsin's Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP). Research was undertaken to assess the NRHP potential of the Engine House utilizing the Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival Style subsection of the Period Revival Styles section of the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP.⁶ The results of this research are detailed below and confirm that the Port Washington Fire Engine House is locally significant under NR Criterion C as a fine and largely intact example of the Mediterranean Revival style as it was applied to a small Wisconsin city's fire engine house.

The *City of Port Washington Intensive Survey Report* also identifies the Fire Engine House as potentially eligible under criterion A as one of the few surviving pre-World War II buildings associated with city government in Port Washington and for its association with the City's fire prevention efforts. The Port Washington Fire Engine House is one of 21 resources identified by the survey as having potential individual eligibility.

The Port Washington Fire Engine House was designed by Milwaukee architect John Topzant. It was completed in 1929 and was a replacement for the City of Port Washington's earlier fire engine house/city hall, which had been built on the lot next door in 1884. The 1929 Engine House was operated as such until 1975, by which time the expanded needs of the growing city made it necessary to build a much larger Contemporary Style fire station on a multi-lot hillside parcel located across Wisconsin Street just to the west of the 1929 Engine House. Subsequently, the 1929 engine house was converted into a city-operated senior citizens center and it is still in use as such today. Fortunately, most of the exterior and much of the interior of the 1929 Engine House is still intact today and is in very good condition.

⁶ Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.) *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Vol. 2, 2-32 (Architecture).

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Port Washington Fire Engine House
Port Washington, Ozaukee Co., WI

Historic Context

A detailed history of the city and its built resources is embodied in the *City of Port Washington Intensive Survey Report*, which was printed in 1998.⁷ Consequently, the historic context that follows deals primarily with the history of the Fire Engine House itself and with the fire department that it housed.

Today, Port Washington is the county seat of Ozaukee County and had a population of 10,467 in 2000. In 1835, though, when Wooster Harrison, the first settler of the land that was to become the city of Port Washington, arrived, all this land was included within the boundaries of the larger and as yet undivided Washington County and it was then without formal governmental organization. Harrison arrived on the site with several other land speculators and traders. The site they chose was a beautiful one whose natural beauty was still apparent when it was described in the 1881 history of the county:

The natural beauties of Port Washington, the county seat of Ozaukee County, are unsurpassed by any of the lake-shore towns. The village is built in a recess formed by nature, in the shape of as U. Two bluffs, three quarters of a mile apart from north to south, with an elevation of a hundred feet at the lake, recede westward a distance of half a mile, where they are joined by a bluff, running north and south, forming walls on three sides, from the base of which the land takes a gradual slope to the lake, leaving a natural basin. Through the west bluff is an aperture, by which Sauk Creek finds its way to Lake Michigan. Back of this hill are a number of smaller elevations, extending along the banks of Sauk Creek; resting on these knolls are handsome residences, many of them having terraces fringed with shade trees and flower beds.⁸

Harrison and his company arrived on this site on September 7, 1835 and during the fall, laid out a town on 16 acres of gently sloping land at the mouth of Sauk Creek where it emptied into Lake Michigan. Harrison, like so many other town founders of that time, settled along a river or stream because it provided both a reliable source of water and the only readily available means of generating power for industrial purposes. He also settled on the shore of the Lake for a similar reason; the ships that sailed it provided the only reliable means of transporting large numbers of people and goods in the days before roads and railroads had been developed. After creating lots to sell, Harrison and his fellows next set about building six or seven modest new buildings for their own use and to impress visitors. These were built out of milled lumber that had arrived by ship rather than use the logs that were everywhere in evidence on

⁷ Heggland, Timothy F. *City of Port Washington, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin: Intensive Survey Report*. Port Washington, Wis.: [Port Washington Historical Society?], 1998.

⁸ *History of Washington & Ozaukee Counties, Wisconsin*. Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1881, p. 507.

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Port Washington Fire Engine House
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the site. The first name of the new community was Wisconsin City, but, finding that there was already a city of that name in the territory, they then renamed it Washington City.

Harrison and perhaps a few others resided in the new village until 1837, when the speculative bubble that had brought them there in the first place burst. As a result, interest in the village disappeared and all involved left the buildings and the village and went their different ways. Harrison did not return until 1843, by which time a squatter named Aurora Case had turned one of the 1835 buildings into a kind of hotel for travelers using the old Indian trail that linked the city of Milwaukee thirty miles to the south with Sheboygan thirty miles to the north.

In 1843, Wooster Harrison returned in company with Orman Coe, Ira C. Loomis, Solon Johnson, O. A. Watrous, Col. Teall and others, and began to make permanent improvements. As there was no pier built at that time, they were compelled to wade quite a distance before they could effect a landing, and when on shore, rough crafts were built on which to convey the women and children. Houses were speedily erected, and the establishing of a town began in earnest. A pier was built out to a point in the lake where boats could land their passengers and cargoes, after which the vessels touched regularly.⁹

Harrison reclaimed his house (where he was later to entertain Abraham Lincoln for a night) and he and his fellow townspeople were soon joined by a sizable number of people from the eastern states who were primarily of Yankee and English stock. In that first year, the first religious service in the community was held in a private home by members of the Methodist faith followed in 1845 by the Presbyterians and in 1847 by the Catholics. In 1844, the first schoolhouse in the village was built and the name of the community was changed from Washington City to Port Washington. The first town meeting was held in April 1846 and a slate of officers was elected. In the same year, Woodruff & Richards began the first brick yard in the village, which was followed in 1847 by the development of the first saw mill in the area by Harvey and S. A. Moore, who dammed Sauk Creek and erected a mill on the west bank. They were followed in 1848 by George and Julius Tomlinson, who erected the first grist mill, which was also run by water power from Sauk Creek.¹⁰ Building such a mill was usually a crucial step in building up a town in the days before the coming of the railroads because the locale surrounding a mill was a natural gathering place for area farmers and was thus a logical place around which to build a trading center. This held true in this place as well. With the Tomlinson's mill in place, the rich gently rolling prairie that surrounded the village became more attractive to settlers wishing to engage in agricultural pursuits.

⁹ *History of Washington & Ozaukee Counties, Wisconsin*. Op. Cit., p. 508.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 513.

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Another much more controversial event that occurred in 1847 was the naming of Port Washington as the county seat of what was then still Washington County. This led to a battle royal between Port Washington and other area communities for the honor of being the county seat. The issue was not resolved until 1852, when an exasperated state legislature finally divided the county in two and made Port Washington the seat of the newly created Ozaukee County.

In 1848, the same year that Wisconsin became a state, Port Washington received its village charter and became officially the Village of Port Washington. Most of the village's earliest settlers were transplanted Yankees and persons of English descent, but by 1848, the first members of what would prove soon to be the dominant ethnic group arrived in the village in large numbers from Germany and also from Luxembourg. The coming of the latter two groups was also accompanied by the creation of the Port Washington congregations of both the German Lutheran and the German Methodist churches in 1853.

Water commerce was brisk. Steamers sailed into the harbor with increasing frequency using the new [first] lighthouse built in 1849, as a navigational aid. In 1849, 414 ships docked at the commercial piers; by 1851 the number climbed to 740. The population of Port Washington reached 1500 by 1853, and the town consisted of 300 dwellings, 10 stores, five hotels, three mills, two breweries, a foundry, five blacksmiths, four wagon shops, six shoe shops and five tailor shops as well as the two commercial piers.

Eventually, three commercial piers were built off the shore at Port Washington to serve the settlement's thriving shipping interests. The first pier, located at the foot of Jackson Street, was built by either Wooster Harrison or Solon Johnson around 1843, and was known as the North Pier or Old Pier. Blake's Pier was constructed sometime between 1848 and 1856 at the foot of Pier Street by Barnum Blake, a lumberman. The third, the South Pier, was located at the site of the present south breakwater, and was owned by Lyon Silverman, who also served as an early sheriff.¹¹

Not surprisingly, the citizens of the village soon realized that a community of this size also needed some type of fire-fighting organization. This resulted in the establishment of the Port Washington Fire Department in 1852.

The fire department was organized in July 1852 when the village board decided to form a hook and ladder company following a series of fires, particularly a flour mill blaze in 1851. Two trustees were authorized to buy three ladders. One of the ladders was to be 20 feet long, one 30 feet and one 40

¹¹ *Port Washington: 1835 to 1985*. Port Washington: s.n., 1985, p. 7.

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feet. The cost of the three was not to exceed \$10. Today [1985] a 40 foot ladder costs more than \$1000.

By 1855, there were three volunteer units, manning three hand drawn pieces of equipment. The use of horses to pull the fire fighting equipment came later. At that time, the livery stable that got its horses to the firehouse first was paid \$1. Fifty cents was paid to the person who rang the fire bell first. Other records show that the firemen used four wells, strategically placed, to fill the leather buckets that were used to fight the fires.¹²

By 1855, Port Washington had a well-established business core centered on the intersection of Grand Ave. and Franklin Street, and residential plats were beginning to be established to the north and west of it. Most of this development was concentrated within the area bounded by Sauk Creek to the south, Milwaukee St. to the west, Jackson St. to the north, and the Lake to the east, which amounted to land at the base of the north bluff that sloped very gradually down towards the creek and the lake, an area that corresponded to the original plat of the village. Some of the businesses in this core also marked the beginnings of the industrial base in the village, these being ones that were not associated with the various types of milling that were practical necessities in that day.

By the beginning of the Civil War, Port Washington had begun to grow outside of the boundaries of the original plat. The government lighthouse that had been built in 1849 on the top of the bluff overlooking the city had been joined in that same year by the first St. Mary's R. C. Church. Both buildings were replaced in 1860, the church with a new and larger stone building (non-extant) and the lighthouse with a new brick Greek Revival Style building that is still a local landmark and a museum today. In the opposite direction, the new South Addition to the original plat that was located on the south side of Sauk Creek was at first known locally as "Canada" because of the population of immigrants of Irish origin who had come there by way of Canada and Newfoundland.

The Civil War slowed the growth of the village, but by end of the War, immigrants of German origin were the most numerous of the newcomers to the village. The advent of the 1870s saw the village caught up in both governmental and private efforts to improve transportation in the area.

The community was a bustling lake port from the mid-nineteenth century until the early twentieth century. Many of the early settlers of the area disembarked from schooners which docked at the piers, where the ships were loaded with local produce for delivery elsewhere. Logs of ships'

¹² *Ozaukee Press*. September 5, 1985. Sesquicentennial Issue, Section 7, p. 14.

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arrivals and departures were not kept until 1876, but in that year, 350 steamers and 450 sailing vessels were recorded as frequenters of the Port Washington harbor. Passenger ships docked on a regular schedule. The ships were one of the primary means of transportation until the arrival of the railroad and the electric railway. For many years the lake was the town's main link with the outside world.

Efforts to create a protected harbor were begun when the Federal Government, concerned about the sixty miles separating the deep water ports of Milwaukee and Sheboygan, authorized funds for the development of an artificial harbor at Port Washington in 1870. Upon the completion of the dredging of what is now [1985] the west slip, residents were hopeful of creating even greater water born commerce. However, it soon became apparent that the harbor was not safe from the roiling torrents of water every time Lake Michigan was overtaken by a storm.

Attempting to correct the problem, the Federal Government agreed to finance the construction of the north slip, designed to dispel damaging wave action. But this effort also failed. Many times after serious storms, the harbor had to be rebuilt, dismaying both the designers and the townspeople.¹³

Only slightly less difficult, but ultimately more successful, were local efforts to secure a railroad for the village. Recounting the whole story is beyond the scope of this nomination, but the effort was ultimately successful and by 1873 the newly created Milwaukee, Lakeshore and Western Railroad had been built north from Milwaukee to Port Washington and on north to Sheboygan and Manitowoc. Soon thereafter, growth started to move out into the vicinity of the depot. In October 1881, for instance, Messrs. Dix and Kemp founded the Port Washington Malt Co. and built a new brick two-story, 100 x 120-foot malt house near the railroad depot (non-extant) at a cost of \$16,000.

By 1882, the village had reached a point where another advance in its governmental status was deemed necessary, so in that year application was made and permission was given to reincorporate Port Washington as a city, which it has remained to this day. Two years later, the city's first firehouse was built. This was a Front Gable vernacular form, clapboard-clad, two-story building (non-extant) that was located on Pier Street on part of the same lot that is now the site of the 1929 Engine House. The new building's first story housed the city's fire department while its second story housed the City's offices and its police department.¹⁴

¹³ *Port Washington: 1835 to 1985*. Op. Cit., pp. 8-9.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 29 (illustrated).

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One of the most important events in the history of Port Washington occurred at the end of the decade in 1889, when a group of local men formed the Wisconsin Chair Co. and erected the first portions of their factory just to the east of N. Franklin St. flanking the inner harbor. The creation of the Wisconsin Chair Co. was an event of special importance because this locally owned company was to become the principal employer in Port Washington for the next sixty years. Beginning in 1889, the company eventually became one of the nation's largest producers of school furniture and at one time employed a sixth of the population of Ozaukee County. Not surprisingly, this company was also of enormous economic importance to the city of Port Washington up until the mid-1950s. Some idea of the impact of this company can be judged from population figures. In 1885, before the factory was begun, the population of the city had been 1500, but by 1892 this had climbed to 1800, by 1893 it had reached 2500, and by 1898, 3450. This doubling of the population was in large part due to the spectacular growth of the Chair Co. and this growth was naturally reflected in the city's built environment.

The effect of this new industry on Port Washington was profound and can be seen in every part of the older portions of the city. Within two years of its opening, new cream brick hotels and commercial buildings began appearing on both West and East Grand Ave. and on N. Franklin St. and the city's brickyards, which were already being kept busy supplying hundreds of thousands of their well known cream bricks for the Chair Company's new buildings, apparently had plenty more left over to satisfy the sudden demand within the city for new residential construction as well.

An admittedly biased but nonetheless accurate account of the difference this company made to Port Washington was printed in the Semi-Centennial Issue of the *Port Washington Star* in 1898.

No city in Wisconsin has equaled Port Washington during the last ten years in growth and importance. This is a big claim but it is susceptible of proof. In 1890 the city had a population of 1659 which grew to 2661 by 1895 and 3450 in 1898. Up to 1888 Port Washington was a sleepy country village of about 1300 inhabitants, depending largely upon the surrounding farming community for support. In that year, through the efforts of leading citizens, a contract was signed between the city and certain owners of an abandoned planing mill on one side and Mr. F. A. Dennett of Sheboygan on the other whereby the gentleman obtained possession of the mill and converted the same into a chair factory. The terms of the agreement entered into at that time have been faithfully carried out and the result has been in excess of what the projectors expected to see realized. In fact, the establishment of Mr. Dennett's enterprise here, known as the Wisconsin Chair Co., seemed to bring new life to the city. Possessing ample capital and seemingly exhaustless energy and business capacity, he has not only built up for himself within a decade an immense industry, but he has encouraged by his example the development of other industries so that today

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for brains and business capacity the manufacturers of Port Washington will compare favorably with any in the country. Each year has witnessed an increase in their output, more hands are employed at better wages than are paid in similar institutions anywhere in the state, and as a consequence the general prosperity of the city has been such as to bring forth from every visitor the remark: "You have the best city of its size in the state."¹⁵

Ironically, it was less than a year later that a disastrous fire would totally destroy the Chair Co. factory, which by 1899 all but ringed the inner harbor. Fortunately for the city, Dennett was persuaded to rebuild the factory in Port Washington, and by the first year of the new century, the company's new and enlarged factory was again working to full capacity.

Some of the other manufacturers that the author of the above alluded to are discussed in the Industry section of the intensive survey report, chief among them being J. Gilson, the founder of the Gilson Manufacturing Co. in 1894, makers of gasoline engines and chair irons (this company is today's Bolens Manufacturing Co.), whose S. Park St. factory was established in 1894 and soon became Port Washington's second largest industry. As for the large chair factory itself, it is now completely gone, having been totally destroyed twice, the first time by fire in 1899, the second time by demolition, in 1959, after the plant had closed.

By 1908, a pictorial booklet on Port Washington contained the following overview of the city's assets.

Port Washington is located on the west shore of Lake Michigan, 25 miles north of Milwaukee and 110 miles north of Chicago. The population is 5000. Port Washington has twenty factories, including a large chair factory, three foundries, two gasoline engine works, plow works, table factory, flour mill, three first class hotels, numerous hotels and boarding houses, two public parks, several private parks including Columbia Park, a favorite resort, one bank, two brick yards, five churches, excellent public and parochial schools, a brewery, a malt house, five newspapers, — and a few saloons. The Chicago and Northwestern Railway passes through Port Washington, and the Milwaukee & Northern Railway, an electric interurban line, connects with the metropolis of the state [Milwaukee] and Sheboygan and Fond du Lac. The latter company has the largest power house operated by gas producer engines in the United States located at Port Washington. Port Washington has municipal waterworks and electric lights, low taxes, and is an attractive point for manufacturing and residence.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Port Washington Star*, July 4, 1898, p. 1 (Semi-Centennial issue).

¹⁶ Business Men's Club (Port Washington, Wis.). *Port Washington: A Beauty Spot of Wisconsin, The Little City of Seven Hills*. [Port Washington, Wis.: Business Men's Club] Home Coming Committee, Burdick & Allen, 1908, rear cover.

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The prosperity of the city gradually leveled off in the 1910s, and most of the building activity that took place during this decade was in residential construction. The 1920s were also relatively quiet years insofar as the building of large scale projects was concerned. Most of the construction in the 1920s was again residential in character and, for the most part, consisted of Period Revival Style single family homes built in newly developed areas of the city. The absence of any big new projects on the civic horizon did not mean that the city was content to rest on its laurels. In 1923, a front page article in the January 17, 1923 issue of the *Port Washington Herald* contained the following boosterish inventory of the city:

This little "city of seven hills" is the home of the Wisconsin Chair Co., makers of the biggest and best line of school seats and chairs, the famous Bolens Power Hoe for gardeners, florists, and similar activities, the "Simplicity" gasoline engine, the "Simplicity" reboring and regrinding machine, the J. E. Gilson garden tools, the Badger raincoats, the Schwengel lighting system for poultrymen, the East Valley brick, metal pouring devices, and other special products that have "put Port Washington on the world map!"

Port Washington has more than two miles of concrete paved streets, natural drainage unsurpassed, a complete new sewerage system, a \$250,000 electric light, power and water plant, a well-equipped high school, a fine graded school, the biggest parochial school outside of Milwaukee in Wisconsin, a motorized fire department, two banks, three foundries, a big raincoat factory, the largest chair rocker factory in the world, a quality brick yard known in all western metropolitan cities, pea cannery, six garages, four hotels, four general merchandise stores, a modern movie house, tire shop, two exclusive groceries, four meat markets, three hardware stores, two drug stores, two exclusive shoe stores, a bakery, three jewelers, a leather heel factory, an opera house, two furniture stores, two city parks, a community beach, a two-basin harbor with 14-ft. clearance for vessels, a good dockage, one railway, one inter-urban line, a government light house, seven complete fishing outfits with an annual business of more than a quarter of a million of dollars, a fish products packing concern, three cigar factories, a two-hundred barrel flour mill, a grist mill and flour and feed store, two undertaking establishments, two interurban truck lines, a large lime kiln, four printing offices, a K. C. [Knights of Columbus] club house, a Masonic Temple, two coal yards, a pattern works, a florist with modern greenhouse, three electrical shops, a plumber, a marble works, and the usual complement of business and professional men. Population, 1920 census, 3450. A good place to locate factories and homes.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Port Washington Herald*. January 17, 1923, p. 1.

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As the above passage shows, the city of Port Washington in 1923 had come a long way since it was first incorporated as a city in 1882 and this difference was also being expressed in the expansion of City services. In 1923, the city's municipal offices and its police department moved into new quarters in the former Opera House building (non-extant), which had been remodeled for the purpose, and in 1924, the city also began to make preparations for the construction of a new fire house.

A plan is now being prepared for a new fire house to be built by the city. Whether the building will be constructed this fall yet depends on whether the local contractors will be able to erect the same at this time. As it is there are several buildings in the course of construction and there are several others on which work is about to be started. It is believed that this will be all that the local contractors will be able to take care of this fall.

The plans, however, will be prepared and if the building is not constructed this fall it will be done next spring. The building is to be located on the site immediately west of the present fire house on the corner of Wisconsin and Pier streets. It is to be 44x48 feet in size, is to be a basement and one story and is to be of brick veneer. The building will face Pier street. It will be built back far enough to provide a convenient driveway to the street. The basement will be arranged for the storage of the fire apparatus and for a garage, and the upper story will be arranged for a meeting place for the members of the fire department, etc. The present fire house is to be razed and an entrance provided to the garage from the east side.¹⁸

These plans had to be put on hold, however, because a proposal that was put to the voters to bond the city to the amount of \$30,000 for the purpose of building the new fire house failed to pass. Nothing further was done to give the fire department a new home until 1928. In that year the city finally found the money necessary to build a new engine house and it chose John Topzant, an architect practicing in Milwaukee who had previously designed Port Washington's Masonic Lodge (extant) in 1923, to design the new building. Whether or not Topzant was also involved with the earlier 1924 plan is not known, but his 1928 design scheme corresponded closely to what is known of the scheme of the 1924 plan.

A new fire department building for the city of Port Washington will be built on the lot next to the present building. Work on the new building may be started soon with the basement and foundation to be constructed this fall. If this is done, the city will undertake the construction of that part of the job itself, and advertise bids later for the construction of the building proper.

¹⁸ "May Build New Fire House." *Port Washington Herald*. 1924.

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Under present plans, the new building will be built on the lot west of the present building, and will be located on Wisconsin street between Jackson and Pier streets. The building will be 48 feet long by 45 feet wide. The basement will be built to serve as a garage for city trucks and cars. The main floor will be used for the fire department.¹⁹

The new plans were put out for bid the following week, but the initial bids were rejected as being too high.²⁰ Slightly revised plans were then put out for bids once again in December and the winners were revealed in late January and early February of 1929.²¹ Work on the new building continued throughout the summer of 1929 and by September plans were being made for a dedication ceremony.

Dedication plans for the new \$18,000 fire house on Pier street of this city are being formulated at the present time by members of the local department. ... Tentative provisions for the dedication consist in music by the Port Washington band and an open house throughout the day for all visitors.²²

In October of 1929 the old firehouse/city hall that was located next door to the new engine house was demolished, which finally gave the fire department access to the basement level garage of its new building.

Work was begun Monday afternoon by the Port Washington city crew to dismantle the old fire department house at the corner of Pier and Washington streets. Most of the building has been ripped apart and it is expected that by Saturday it will be entirely gone.

Lumber salvaged from the old structure will be deposited in the gravel pit on Moore road where, according to the Common Council, it will be placed in the hands of the local Boy Scouts for building a club house.

Plans are still being formulated by members of the fire department for the official opening of the new Fire House. All equipment was moved into the structure Monday afternoon and as

¹⁹ "City to Build New Fire Department Building." *Port Washington Herald*. October 3, 1928, p. 1.

²⁰ "City Rejects Bids For The New Fire Station." *Port Washington Herald*. October 24, 1928, p. 8.

²¹ "Adopt Fire House Plans; Bids Open." *Port Washington Herald*. December 5, 1928, pp. 1, 2. See also: *Port Washington Herald*. January, 23, 1929, p. 7 and February 13, 1929, p. 3.

²² "Dedication of Fire House Is Being Planned." *Port Washington Herald*. September 11, 1929, p. 1.

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soon as the old structure is removed a driveway will be paved to the east basement entrance from Pier street.²³

Port Washington's new fire engine house was finally dedicated in November of 1929 and it remained in service until 1975, by which time, the city was once again in need of a new fire station.

When the size and the amount of firefighting equipment needed for the city became more than the firehouse could handle, the city built a new headquarters across Wisconsin St.²⁴

Once the new station had been completed, the 1929 Engine House was remodeled and became the Port Washington Senior Center and it still continues to serve the needs of the city's senior citizens today.

Architecture

The Port Washington Fire Engine House is believed to eligible for listing in the NRHP because it is an excellent representative example of the kind of fire stations that were built in Wisconsin's smaller cities and suburbs in the 1920s. It is also an excellent example of the way in which Period Revival styles, in this case, the Mediterranean Revival style, were adapted to suit the needs of building types for which there were no historic precedents. The designer of the engine house was Milwaukee architect John Topzant and his design makes good use of stylistic features such as "brick walls," "arcading," and "red tile roofs with heavy brackets," that are mentioned in the Mediterranean Revival style portion of the Period Revival Styles subsection of the CRMP's Architectural Styles study unit.²⁵

The Mediterranean Revival style reflects the heritage of the historic architecture of southern Europe and takes as its inspiration the vernacular architecture of this region as it was modified by successive periods of high style designs. This resulted in an architecture which clearly expresses volume by the use of flat surfaces that are often relieved by the use of arcaded design elements such as doors, windows, and repeated decorative motifs, and which also, occasionally, display terra cotta, plaster, and tile ornamentation. The style can be identified by these and other frequently used elements such as tile-covered hipped roofs, which often are supported by heavy brackets under the eaves, and round-arched elements such as door and window openings. The style also invariably utilizes some type of masonry material for the exterior walls.

²³ "Dismantle Fire House; To Give Lumber To Boy Scouts." *Port Washington Herald*. October 16, 1929, p. 4.

²⁴ "1851 fire, three ladders start of Port Washington fire department." *Ozaukee Press*. September 5, 1985. Sesquicentennial Issue, Section 7, p. 14 (illustrated).

²⁵ Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*. Op. Cit. Vol. 2, p. 2-32 (Architecture).

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Mediterranean Revival style buildings are generally formal in plan and appearance and the highest style examples have a pronounced classical feeling and typically utilize symmetrical elevations and plans, brick and/or stone wall cladding, and wrought iron elements such as balconets and window grills. The Port Washington Fire Engine House, however, is a more informal example of the style whose design is based on vernacular examples. In addition, Topzant's design is also illustrative of changes that were affecting the designs of fire engine houses across the country during the 1920s, changes that were being driven in part by the advent of gasoline-powered fire engines and by the growth of suburban living. Rebecca Zurier, in her important work, *The American Firehouse*, noted that the firefighting profession itself was gradually becoming more aware of the need to build aesthetically satisfying new engine houses at this time, as can be seen in the following quote that she included that was taken from one of the firefighting profession's trade journals of the day.

The average American fire station is not a thing of beauty ... the reason probably is that in the larger cities such buildings are erected under the influence of individuals and boards who are familiar with the regulation type of public building which ... was conceived by stodgy gentlemen after a very heavy meal ... with the construction of fire houses intended to be equipped with motor apparatus exclusively, a change for the better seems to be taking place...

The evidence accumulates that the typical fire station of the future will not be the unlovely and usually unsanitary sort of building with which the present generation is most familiar ... It has dawned on the municipal mind that there is no imperative necessity for such structures to be so designed and built that it is not possible to occupy them without danger to health and that, moreover, there is nothing to compel a city or town to erect for the fire department buildings which cause the beholder pain....

Providing a building design to harmonize with the surrounding neighborhood merits special commendation. In departing from the conventional brick building with flat roof, erected regardless of its environment, recognition is given to the growing demand for something that shall promote the development of beautiful suburbs instead of interposing structures that mar or clash with that purpose.²⁶

²⁶ Zurier, Rebecca. *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1982, p. 166.

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One result of this growing contextual sensitivity was that many of the new engine houses that were built in the 1920s had an almost domestic appearance and they also had a size and overall form that were increasingly in keeping with their surroundings.

Architects of firehouses in the 1920s and '30s adapted the forms of single-family housing to fit two-story as well as single-level stations. Since motorized equipment took up so much less space than had the old steamers, new two and two-and-a-half-story fire stations could be as small as a modest house.²⁷

Topzant's design for Port Washington's new engine house is a good example of this trend. The steep slope of this hillside site allowed him to insert a fully functioning second story into the building's basement level, thereby diminishing the apparent size of the building, and by designing the building in the Mediterranean Revival style he was also able to give the building an appealing, irregular appearance. That Topzant's design met with local approval is clear from contemporary accounts.

A general idea of the new firehouse at the corner of Pier and Wisconsin streets, as it will look when completed, can be gained since much of the stone and cement work is finished. The tall arched doorways facing Pier street and the general lines of the structure will be a pride of the city when completed. Now that the building has progressed this far, it is believed by those in charge of construction, the work will proceed swiftly. Considerable admiration is being shown by residents who daily watch the progress with which the building is rearing upward.²⁸

Topzant was also able to make a design virtue out of necessity by providing the station with a tall hose drying tower that he modeled after the bell towers that are occasionally found on actual buildings in many Mediterranean region villages and cities. Such towers were features that many other architects of the period incorporated into the designs of their various Period Revival style firehouse designs as well in order to produce a more picturesque effect.

While some architects continued to disguise fire stations as houses, others sought to make them into quaint ornaments to the community. A few even emphasized the towers as decorative elements. When asked to design five fire stations for residential neighborhoods in Los Angeles in 1930, County Architect Karl Muck chose five different European models, from "French Provincial" to "Spanish Farmhouse," and explained: "[These stations were] so designed that

²⁷ Zurier, Rebecca. Op. Cit., p. 168.

²⁸ "New Firehouse Takes Shape; Will Be Pride Of Entire City." *Port Washington Herald*. June 5, 1929, p. 1.

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they lent an added element of interest and a definite note of the picturesque to the general landscape.²⁹

By September of 1929, the new building was all but completed, plans were being made for a dedication ceremony, and a newspaper article written at the time also noted the arrangements that the new station provided for the city fire department.

With the destruction of the old fire house, access will be given to the basement of the new building. The first floor will house all fire fighting apparatus and provide a meeting room as well as a kitchen for the crew. The basement will be devoted to city trucks and a repair room.³⁰

Sometime between 1929 and 1938 and probably just a few years after 1929, it was found necessary to add a 16-foot-deep by 34-foot-wide, one-and-one-half story addition to the rear of the Engine House.³¹ This addition gave the Engine House additional rooms on all three levels and it also provided a new rear entrance and a stairway that accessed the building's upper two stories. Because this addition exactly matches the style and the materials of the original building, it is likely that it was also designed by Topzant, although documentation to this effect has not yet been found.

The Port Washington intensive survey identified the Fire House as one of the best examples of the Mediterranean Revival in the city. The only other non-residential example is the very plain Hoffman-Adam Building at 116 W Grand Avenue. This example lacks the decorative features of the Fire House, and its first floor has been substantially altered.

John Topzant

John Topzant (1890-1962) was born in Milwaukee on October 28, 1890 and he was educated in the public schools of that city. From 1908-1910, Topzant worked as a draughtsman in the office of Milwaukee architect Fred Graf and then, from 1910-1912, he worked in the office of Milwaukee architect Henry Rotier. In 1912, Topzant returned to Graf's office, where he continued to work until 1919, when he opened his own office in Milwaukee.³² During this time, Topzant designed buildings of many different types in many different styles, including two examples in Port Washington. The first was the excellent, still extant Neoclassical Revival style Masonic Temple building (504 W. Grand

²⁹ Zurier, Rebecca. Op. Cit., p. 168.

³⁰ "Dedication of Fire House Is Being Planned." *Port Washington Herald*. September 11, 1929, p. 1.

³¹ Fire Insurance Maps of Port Washington, WI. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1922, 1938.

³² *American Architects Directory*. New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1955, p. 562.

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Ave.), built in 1923-24. It may have been the success of this project that led to his subsequently being chosen as the architect for the Port Washington Fire Engine House, which was completed in 1929.³³

Topzant would remain active as an architect until at least 1955, by which time he was a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Other Wisconsin buildings that he is known to have designed include: the Wauwatosa City Hall, Fire & Police Station, built in 1944; and the Wauwatosa Presbyterian Church, built in 1952 and of which he was a member. Besides his activities as an architect, Topzant also served as the chairman of the Wauwatosa Plan Commission and Board of Appeals from 1925 until 1950, the Milwaukee suburb of Wauwatosa being his place of residence from 1920 until his death in 1962.³⁴

Politics / Government

The Port Washington Fire Engine House is the oldest extant building associated with local government in the city of Port Washington. This fire station replaced an 1884 clapboard building that served multiple municipal functions. In anticipation of the new fire engine house, city hall moved to the former Port Washington Gesang Verin concert hall. A new municipal building constructed in 1958 replaced the old hall.

As noted in the history portion above, Port Washington expanded rapidly in the late nineteenth century with the founding and growth of local industries. With industrial growth came expansion of the commercial core and of the housing areas. All of this new construction necessitated the expansion of city services, including fire protection.

The 1881 *History of Washington & Ozaukee Counties, Wisconsin* reported on the history of the community's early fire fighting efforts. August Meyer proposed the formation of the first hook and ladder company, which came into existence in 1864 with Mr. Meyer as the chief. In 1876, an engine and hose company was added. The 1881 history reported that the all volunteer corps had 50 members, all "thoroughly equipped with the regular fireman's paraphernalia, caps, rubber coats and boots." The formation of the company came as the result of several serious fires in the 1840s and 1850s. The city's largest fire came in February 1899, when the entire Wisconsin Chair Factory was destroyed, the flames engulfing a large part of the city.

³³ *Port Washington Herald*: June 20, 1923, p. 1. *Port Washington Herald*: October 3, 1928, p. 1; October 10, 1928, p. 3.

³⁴ *Wauwatosa News-Times*. March 22, 1962, p. 10 (obituary of John Topzant). See also: *Milwaukee Sentinel*. March 20, 1962, part 1, p. 5.

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Port Washington Fire Engine House
Port Washington, Ozaukee Co., WI

The *Port Washington Star* of July 4, 1898 presented a "pen picture" of the city, including the fire department in its overview. At the time, the equipment consisted of one steamer, one hand fire engine, and one hook and ladder truck. The department consisted of the Pioneer Engine Company of 40 members, the Rescue Hook and Ladder Company of 16 members, and the Hose Company of 16 members. In addition to the municipal force, the Wisconsin Chair Company and the Gilson Manufacturing Company maintained their own private forces and equipment, which were available to assist with fires in the business section and on the western side of town.³⁵

By the time of the construction of the new fire house, the city had a modern fire department. An article on the new fire engine house noted the progress that the local fire department had made over the years:

Twenty-five men comprise the current fire department, which is headed by Frank Kaiser, the chief. The first department in the city, he says, was founded forty-five years ago with a hand pump, hose cart, and ladder truck. Ten years later a steam pumper was purchased which served the needs of the city until eight years ago when a motorized truck was bought. This truck is of the most modern type and includes a thirty-gallon chemical tank, operated from the engineer's position at the front. A pullmotor and smaller chemical tanks are included in the department's apparatus.³⁶

Conclusion

Topzant's design for the Port Washington Fire Engine house has served the city well, both as a fire engine house and afterwards as a senior citizens center. Consequently, the Port Washington Fire Engine House is believed to be locally significant under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture as an excellent example of the way in which the Mediterranean Revival style was adapted to a twentieth century need for which there was no direct historic precedent. The Engine House possesses many of the hallmark features that are typically associated with the Mediterranean Revival style and its significance is further enhanced by the building's largely intact state. The building is also significant under Criterion A in the area of Politics / Government for its association with an important municipal service. The current firehouse is now the only extant historic resource associated with city's municipal fire-fighting activities.

³⁵ "A Pen Picture of One of the Most Thriving Cities in the State." *Port Washington Star*, July 4, 1898.

³⁶ "Dedication of Fire House Is Being Planned." *Port Washington Herald*. September 11, 1929, p. 1.

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Port Washington Fire Engine House
Port Washington, Ozaukee Co., WI

Verbal Boundary Description:

Original Plat of Port Washington: Block 11, W 4½ feet of Lot 3 and All of Lots, 4, 5, and 6.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries enclose all the land that has historically been associated with this resource.

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Section photos Page 1

Items a - d are the same for photos 1 - 6.

Photo 1

- a) Port Washington Fire Engine House
- b) Port Washington, Ozaukee County, WI
- c) Timothy F. Heggland, March 2008
- d) Wisconsin Historical Society
- e) General View, View looking NE
- f) Photo 1 of 6

Photo 2

- e) Main Façade, View looking N
- f) Photo 2 of 6

Photo 3

- e) West Elevation, View looking E
- f) Photo 3 of 6

Photo 4

- e) Rear Elevation, View looking S
- f) Photo 4 of 6

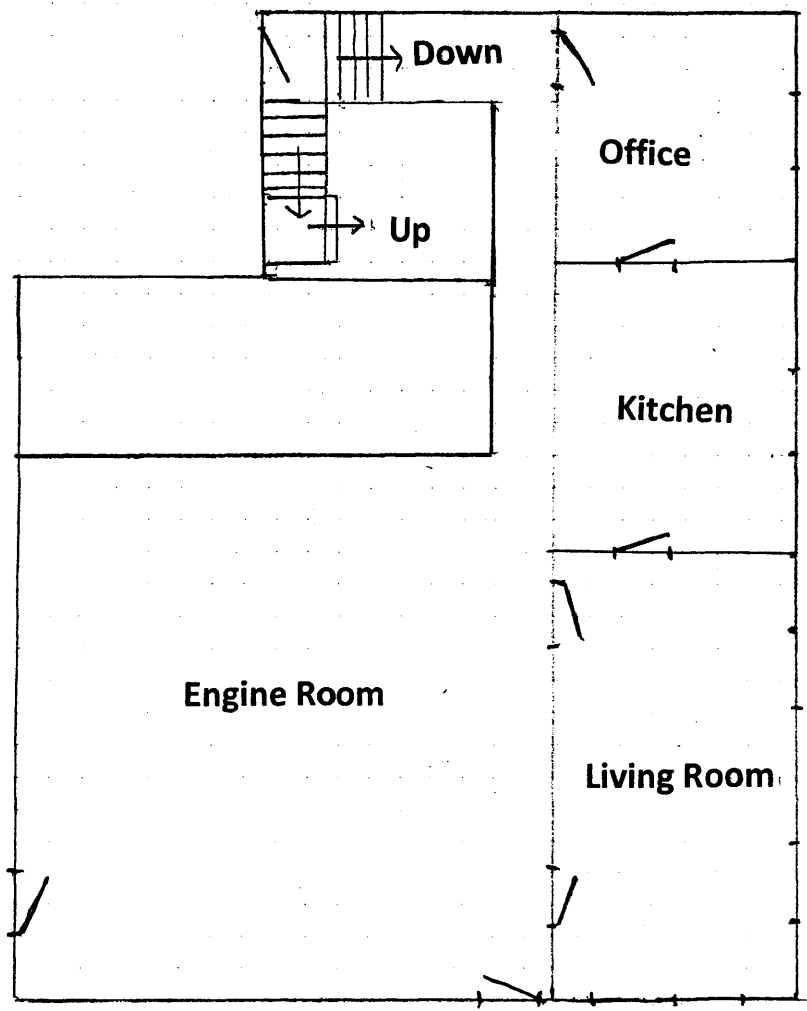
Photo 5

- e) East Elevation, View looking W
- f) Photo 5 of 6

Photo 6

- e) General View, View looking NW
- f) Photo 6 of 6

FIGURE #1:
Port Washington Fire Engine House
102 East Pier Street
Port Washington, Ozaukee County, WI



Not to Scale