



**WHITEHALL FIRE STATION**

Name of Property

**WASHINGTON CO., N.Y.**

County and State

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

|                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | private          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | public - Local   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - State   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Federal |

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

|                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | district    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | site        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | object      |

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

| Contributing | Noncontributing |              |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1            | 0               | buildings    |
| 0            | 0               | sites        |
| 0            | 0               | structures   |
| 0            | 0               | objects      |
| 1            | 0               | <b>Total</b> |

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
 in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: fire station, jail

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: fire station

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:

Classical Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: SYNTHETIC

other: METAL, GLASS

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**Narrative Description**

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**Summary Paragraph**

The Whitehall Fire Station, now the home of the Whitehall Volunteer Fire Company, is located on the east side of Main Street and immediately west of the New York State Barge Canal in the Village of Whitehall, Washington County, New York. The nominated building consists of two distinct sections, the original 1912-13 square-plan block and a ca. 1970 block of irregular five-sided plan which engages the south wall of the earlier section, and the construction of which expanded the station's functional capabilities; these combine to form a long irregular footprint of polygonal shape, as a portion of the façade is angled inwards and away from the street. Opened in 1913 as a state-of-the-art fire station conceived in part for housing motorized equipment, the introduction of which revolutionized American fire-fighting, the building was moved to its present location in 1932 due to the relocation of a railroad right-of-way that formerly aligned Broadway. At that time the building was moved by a team of horses and placed on a new poured concrete foundation, though at the time it was relocated the original hose-drying and bell tower was taken down but not replaced, in part due to the transition to the use of a siren for alarm calls. The original section survives largely as it was when moved to the nominated site in the early 1930s and retains many aspects of its historic-era configuration and finish, notwithstanding the replacement of doors and windows and the removal of a parapet that once terminated the façade elevation above cornice level. The original building's form can still largely be understood, notwithstanding the addition, and the interior retains its basic historic spatial configuration, vertical circulation and wood and pressed-metal finishes, notwithstanding minor changes.

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**Narrative Description**

*Location & Setting*

The nominated building occupies a position on the east side of Main Street (Skenesborough Drive variously) in the Village of Whitehall, with a street address of 161 Main Street. This places the building and its associated property south of Saunders Street and its corresponding bridge over the canal; east of Broadway (New York State Route 22) and the adjacent railroad right-of-way; immediately west of the New York State Barge Canal; and north of Poultney Street (U.S. Route 4). It is located outside and immediately south of the historic commercial core of the village and the Main Street Historic District (S/NRHP listed, 1980/1975 respectively). To the immediate south and also on the east side of Main Street is the Skenesborough Museum and heritage area visitor's center, located in Whitehall's 1917 Barge Canal terminal building, while directly across the street from the firehouse, to the west, is a three-story brick building that functioned at one time as a store. To the south of the latter, on the west side of Main Street, is a low slung single-story brick municipal building that includes space for the village's police department. The building is oriented with its principal elevation facing westwards, towards the street, and there is a noticeable different in grade

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between the earlier and later sections, as the large vehicle bays of the addition sit lower than those of the original section; a ramp situated in front of the earlier section makes up for this slight difference in grade.

*Construction Overview*

The original section is a two-story building of load-bearing brick masonry construction with a flat roof, which when moved to its present location was placed upon a poured concrete foundation, above a fully excavated basement which is accessible from grade on the rear elevation. Bay openings feature flat arches with corresponding skewbacks on the principal elevation and flat arches without skewbacks on the secondary north, south and east elevations (those on the south elevation have been obscured by the addition). This section was built in somewhat conventional terms with sawn hemlock framing components such as floor joists and studding; the brick walls at ground level were originally left exposed while studded partitions were finished with plaster on wood lath. Ceilings on both floors were fitted with ornamental pressed-metal. Woodwork consists of unpainted and varnished wood features such as paneled doors, trim and strip flooring. Windows were originally fitted with one-over-one plate glass sash and the two main vehicle bays were fitted with inward-swinging glazed and paneled doors, though these had been replaced with overhead doors by the late 1950s as evidenced in photographs; the human door between the larger bays was also originally of a glazed and paneled type. All these are now fitted with replacement material, save for perhaps the square-shaped transom over the center door at first-story level and a small two-over-two wood sash window on the rear elevation. As for the ca. 1970 section, it is a load-bearing concrete block and steel framed building the façade of which is faced with brick and stone so as to harmonize with the earlier historic section. Finishes inside are of a conventional nature and upstairs, where there is a large open gathering space, consist of linoleum flooring and sheetrock walls and ceilings.

*Exterior*

The façade of the building, which is oriented west towards Main Street, consists of the three bays corresponding with the original section and the five bays of the ca. 1970 section. Approximately one-half of the ca. 1970 section angles inward and away from the street, the result of its being situated in front of an angled drive that once provided communication with the Barge Canal terminal but which has long since been abandoned. The façade of the earlier section has two square-shaped vehicle bays which are fitted with overhead doors each of which has two rectangular-shaped glazed panels. The human door in between is of a glazed and paneled type and is spanned by a large glazed transom on which is painted in gold lettering "WHITEHALL FIRE DEPARTMENT- 1913." This door is flanked by two globe-type lighting sconces, similar to the original 1913 lights but nevertheless representative of a later period. The three windows at second-story level, arranged symmetrically in relation to the bays below, are fitted with replacement sash. Above the flat arches which span these upper bays is a deep frieze consisting of a brick architrave, a stylized triglyph-enriched frieze, and above that subtle corbelling terminated by a moulded ogee-form

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cornice. Above this feature are five courses of brick which represent the lower portions of a block parapet feature which was removed at an unknown time. The brick walls were laid up in a common bond pattern with reddish-brown common brick and lime-based mortar in a 5:1 header to stretcher ratio.

The north and east (rear) elevations are utilitarian in nature. The north elevation has four windows, one at first-story level and three above, all of which are spanned by flat arches. There is a small brick bump out on this elevation, it being laid up in stretcher bond and having a corrugated metal roof. As for the rear elevation, it has an at-grade bay which provides access to the basement and which is fitted with an overhead door; this opening appears original to the 1932 move. There are three windows at first-story level; however, it is clear that the northernmost of these three bays was reduced from a larger opening that once provided access to the interior from the rear, as the much longer flat arch that once spanned it remains as built. At second-story level there are three smaller and one larger window, one of which is fitted with two-over-two sash.

The ca. 1970 section has an angle façade, as noted, and is fitted with four large vehicle bays at first-story level which are spanned by steel which carries the brick above the openings. The two northernmost bays have overhead doors matching those on the original section while the other two have glazed and paneled overhead doors of a different type; there is additionally a glazed entrance door near the southwest corner. Five small windows punctuate the second-story; these have steel headers and cast-concrete sills and are flanked by shutters. The façade has a stone skirt suggestive of a masonry foundation, brick walls laid up in stretcher bond, and terra cotta coping. The south and east elevations are similar and were rendered in simple terms than the façade, consisting as they do of concrete block with bays defined by vertical buttressing. Windows are asymmetrically placed and a steel fire escape provides a mean of egress from the second floor.

*Interior*

The first-floor of the 1913 section consists of an open volume with medium-width wood flooring, exposed brick walls, and a pressed metal ceiling. Against the north wall is the station's original staircase, being of an open-stringer type with rectilinear balusters, below which is the staircase to the basement. Although the upper portion of the hose-drying tower was taken down when the building was moved, the brick base of it remains, and at first-story level it was retrofitted at one time to create a jail cell, the massive steel door of which remains in place. The original brass fireman's pole descends from second-floor level but is no longer used; it has a hammered metal surround which punctuates the otherwise coffered pattern of the metal ceiling. The metal ceiling also includes coved cornices at both first and second floor level.

The staircase from the first floor leads into the northeast corner of the second floor and an area now largely used for recreational purposes by the fireman. Finishes there include hardwood strip flooring, wood wainscot, plaster walls,

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and metal cornices and ceiling. Conspicuous is the upper section of the brass fireman's pole and associated protective railing, along with the original wall-mounted Gamewell fire alarm system and 1913 fire district map. Against the north wall is a room, probably the original chief's room, the south wall of which has been opened up to communicate with what is now a bar area. To the west, accessible through a pair of sliding pocket doors, is the room that presumably served at one time as dormitory space, and which now serves as a lounge area of sorts. Finishes there, among them hardwood strip flooring, wainscoting, plaster walls, and metal ceilings, remain intact. A door on the south wall, presumably reworked from an earlier window opening, provides access to the area above the ca. 1970 addition. This area is largely given over to an open volume spanned by expressed (but sheetrock-clad) framing with intermediate support columns, these being aligned on a north to south axis. Flooring is linoleum, walls are wood wainscot with sheetrock above, and ceilings are sheetrock from which are suspended lighting and fan fixtures. The first floor of the addition is given over to the storage of firefighting equipment and apparatus. The basement of the original section reveals the fire station's original framing system, consisting of a series of cross-bridged joists aligned front to back and corresponding heavier beams of laminate construction. At the time the building was moved the larger laminate beams were lowered onto short sections of steel I beams which bear on brick piers, and then further bolstered with steel columns. As such the building retains its original 1913 floor framing system for the first-floor equipment area.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

**ARCHITECTURE**

**Period of Significance**

ca. 1912-1932

**Significant Dates**

1912/1913; 1932

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Burdick, S.O.; architect, 1912-13

Acker, J. Fred; contractor 1912-13

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The cited period of significance for this NRHP nomination, ca. 1912 to 1932, encompasses the nominated building's original construction and further takes into account its relocation to its present location, this move being represented by the terminal date of 1932.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

Completed in 1913 to the designs of Vermont architect S.O. Burdick and moved to its present location in 1932, the Whitehall Fire Station provides a salient connection to the evolution and modernization of organized firefighting in the Village of Whitehall, Washington County, New York. This important regional transportation center, located at the head of navigation on the south end of Lake Champlain, was well acquainted with the dangers of large-scale fires, having suffered the effects of any number of devastating conflagrations in the second half of the nineteenth century. The nominated building's construction was occasioned by the village's purchase of a mechanized, gas-powered Webb fire engine, the procurement of which placed Whitehall on a par with much larger American cities, among them New York City and Boston, which first introduced motorized pumper trucks in 1909 and 1910, respectively. It was on this occasion that the village's fire department was reorganized and plans for the new station advanced. The arrival of the new Webb engine in Whitehall was widely noticed, given the considerable damage that fire had rendered to its commercial and industrial infrastructure on any number of occasions; it was noted at the time that "the people of the town are proud of the new machine." The station provided quarters for the new Webb truck and other firefighting apparatus along with accommodations for the firefighters and was linked to a series of Gamewell fire boxes distributed throughout the village; this unified alarm system, along with the new capabilities offered by the Webb engine, greatly improved firefighting capabilities in Whitehall by improving response time. The building originally occupied a position on Main Street (now Broadway), but was moved to its present location after its site was claimed for the relocation of railroad tracks on the east side of that thoroughfare from their original position in the center of the roadbed. The building has assumed significance in its new location where it has continually served the firefighting needs of the village, which were expanded with the addition of the newer south block ca. 1970; it presently serves as home for Whitehall's Volunteer Fire Company. The building is being nominated in association with Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, as an important local and regional example of fire station design conceived in part for the stationing of motorized firefighting equipment, which was only then coming into its first usage in the Northeast's largest metropolitan areas. It remains an important legacy of the village's early twentieth century efforts to offer improved fire protection to its residents and businesses.

**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

*Historic Overview of the Village of Whitehall*

The Village of Whitehall, located at the head of navigation on the southern end of Lake Champlain, and a key part of the series of interconnected waterways which linked Canada with New York at an early date, was first settled prior to the American Revolution under the auspices of Lord Philip Wharton Skene (1725-1810), a British military officer, from whom the place took its original name, *Skenesborough*. Skene, whose allegiance to the British Crown compelled him to leave America during the war, had seen to the establishment of a small



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manor there, the sporadic settlement of which formed a precursor to Whitehall's more intensive development in the nineteenth century. At the time that Charlotte County, the predecessor to Washington County, was being organized in the early 1770s, Skene petitioned unsuccessfully to have Skenesborough established as the new county's seat of government.<sup>1</sup> While his presence there was sporadic, and the complexion of the settlement was at times straggling, Skene did see to the construction of a road linking that place with Salem, located 30 miles to the south, and also introduced the first milling enterprises there. In 1786, by which time Skene had been divested of his Skenesborough land holdings due to his Loyalist sympathies and had resettled in England, that area was formed into a town and assumed the name Whitehall; the eponymously named village was incorporated in 1820. Whitehall's geographic position on Lake Champlain lent it great strategic significance which continued through the American Revolution to the War of 1812, at which time British military ambitions relative to that region were finally quashed.

The completion of the Champlain Canal between Whitehall and Fort Edward in 1822 and its completion to Waterford and the Hudson River shortly thereafter was a decisive moment in Whitehall's development, as was the advent of steamboat navigation on the lake, which was also initiated around this time. "Nearly the entire history of the town of Whitehall is comprehended in that of its village," wrote the nineteenth century historian Crisfield Johnson, "in which a prominent place should properly be given to the steamboat navigation upon Lake Champlain, which for more than sixty years centered here as a terminal point."<sup>2</sup> The village's importance as a major regional transportation hub was only increased with the arrival there, in 1848, of the Saratoga & Washington Railroad, chartered in 1834 and a precursor of the Saratoga & Whitehall Railroad. In later years the Delaware & Hudson Company came to dominate the transportation interests of the region that included Lake Champlain and Lake George. Whitehall's fortuitous situation as a regional transportation center encouraged the development of a variety of industries which capitalized on its location, among them saw and planing mills, sash and blind factories, textile mills, and flour and feed mills, which were first powered by waterpower and yet later by steam. These were augmented by facilities which specifically served transportation needs, such as machine and boiler shops.<sup>3</sup> By the third quarter of the nineteenth century Whitehall ranked among Washington County's foremost transportation and mercantile centers and a key point of communication between New York, adjacent Vermont, and Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> Crisfield Johnson, *History of Washington County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 476.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 478.

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*Historic Context: Firefighting in Whitehall & the 1913 Whitehall Fire Station*

In his 1878 history of Washington County, Johnson indicated that organized firefighting in Whitehall commenced in 1835, the year the fire department there purchased a Torrent No. 1 horse-drawn water pump, which replaced an earlier rotary hand-engine that had been given to the village by Col. John Williams, but which was sadly deemed “to be of little practical use.”<sup>4</sup> This new piece of equipment was procured of the Button Manufacturing Company of Waterford at a cost of \$1,350, a fair sum for that date but money well spent given the considerable danger which fire presented to the community’s densely built commercial core. The Torrent continued in active use into the 1870s, at the time of Johnson’s book: “Now, after more than forty years of service, it is still in use by *W.F. Bascom Company, No. 1*, as good as ever, and an object of pride among the firemen.” At that time, Whitehall boasted a number of fire companies—the Empire Hook and Ladder Company, the Whitehall Steamer Company, *W.F. Bascom Company No. 1*, the *W.H. Cooke Engine Company*, the *James Doren Hose Company*, the *George Brett Jr. Hose Company*, the *B.F. Lacca Hose Company*, the *A.C. Hopson Hose Company*, in addition to the *Independent Steamer and Niagara Engine companies*— under the overall charge of Charles Chapin, chief engineer, and T.A. Patterson, assistant engineer.<sup>5</sup>

As with many communities during the nineteenth century, major fires wreaked havoc on Whitehall, among them the disastrous conflagrations that occurred in April 1860, May 1864 and November 1875. These fires were considerable enough in scope and intensity that they destroyed frame and masonry buildings alike. In the first instance an entire row of brick commercial buildings on present-day Main Street, adjacent to the Champlain Canal, was destroyed, along with a number of adjacent houses, and the fire was considerable enough in scale to affect buildings located on the opposite side of the canal. The 1864 fire, which centered on the east side of Wood Creek, destroyed a large industrial area of the village and rendered \$100,000 in damage; it consumed Wait’s carpet factory, a grist and saw mill, a sash and door factory, a foundry and machine shop, in addition to a number of lesser buildings. The 1875 fire destroyed a hardware store, a large commercial block, and also the Lake House and stables.<sup>6</sup> The event was thus described in a period account:

Disastrous Fire at Whitehall

WHITEHALL, N.Y., Nov. 8—A very destructive fire broke out here last night, which at one time threatened the entire business portion of the town. It was fortunately, however, got under control about four o’clock this morning. It caught in the Yule House, which was soon enveloped in flames which rapidly extended on the north side to the Lake House, which was totally destroyed. The fire extended south of the Yule House to G. Dayton’s brick block occupied by George Yule for hotel purposes and George Delano’s

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 478-79.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 479.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

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billiard saloon and restaurant. The next building to take fire was Hall & Kitteredge's hardware store, which was nearly consumed, with a heavy stock of goods. The losses will probably exceed \$50,000... Chief Engineer N.B. Baker and several firemen were badly injured by a falling wall. The Montreal telegraph lines were destroyed, but the lines of the Western Union Company were uninjured. The fire was evidently the work of an incendiary.<sup>7</sup>

This series of fires was followed by yet another one, in March 1876: "A destructive fire broke out in Whitehall about 8 o'clock Sunday evening, over the bar-room of Hall's Hotel... it soon communicated with the main part, which was about totally destroyed. The losses will foot up near \$30,000..."<sup>8</sup>

Johnson also noted that the water which could be provided for fire-fighting purposes by the village's water works, which came into being with the 1828 construction of a public aqueduct, was grossly insufficient for that particular purpose. Although "fire wells" were maintained on two streets within the village, the fire companies relied largely on water drawn directly from the Champlain Canal, and it was for this reason that the canal was kept watered there during the winter.<sup>9</sup>

A transformative moment in the history of firefighting in Whitehall occurred in the second decade of the twentieth century, and it centered on the introduction there of a mechanized, gas-powered fire engine. In this regard Whitehall was on a par with much larger American cities, among them New York City and Boston; motorized pumpers were first introduced in those much larger urban centers in 1909 and 1910, respectively.<sup>10</sup> In 1905, the Knox Automobile Company of Springfield, Massachusetts, began manufacturing what some historians consider the first gas-fired modern American fire engines. The truck the company constructed the following year for a fire company located in Wayne, Pennsylvania was described as being able to accommodate six firemen along with 1,000 feet of hose, two 35-gallon tanks, 200 feet of chemical hose, in addition to two ladders, three extinguishers, and the typical assortment axes, pikes and crowbars.<sup>11</sup> Other manufacturers which followed suit included the Mack and Webb companies. A 1905 article published in *Popular Mechanics* indicated that the switchover to gas-powered mechanized equipment was already underway in England:

Motor fire engines are rapidly replacing the old horse-drawn machines wherever practicable in England. So far, in America motor cars are only used in this department for hauling chiefs and fire marshals to the scene of the fire, but in England the whole equipment is gradually being readapted to the new means of propulsion.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "A Fire Epidemic

<sup>8</sup> *Weekly Saratogian*, 23 March 1876.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, *Washington County*, 479.

<sup>10</sup> Information courtesy of Brian Brooks, Sr., Whitehall Volunteer Fire Company ("WVFC" hereafter), 29 September 2014.

<sup>11</sup> "Motor Fire Truck," *The Carriage Monthly*, (November 1906), 78.

<sup>12</sup> "Motor Fire Engines Popular in England," *Popular Mechanics*, vol. 7, no. 2 (February 1905), 202.

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The Whitehall Fire Company was reorganized in April 1913, following the purchase of a new Webb combination chemical and hose truck manufactured in Allentown, Pennsylvania. This purchase necessitated the construction of a new facility to house what was at that time a largely state-of-the-art piece of fire-fighting equipment which weighed five tons and boasted 60 horsepower. As noted at the time locally, this new machine was considered “ample to climb any of the hills in the village and has a record of one minute from time of alarm to the street.”<sup>13</sup> The new Webb truck was a subject of considerable curiosity, all the more so in a community which had become accustomed to traditional fire-fighting techniques inherited from the nineteenth century and which had seen its share of devastating fires:

The new auto fire truck and combination hose wagon for the Whitehall fire department arrived today and was given a thorough trial, both as to the auto and fire test, and proved that it was up to the contract. The machine was tested on hill climbing and speed and went up head-on and backed up the same hill as easy as if on the level. In the afternoon a trial of the engine was had and a stream equal to any steam fire engine was easily obtained in less than half a minute, and a special test demonstrated that when pressed it could exceed the steam fire engine in throwing water.

The machine can speed up to fifty miles an hour and on the main streets nearly equaled that. It is the latest make and everything that is used at a fire is carried on this auto. Ladders, chemicals, extinguishers, small hose for a small fire, axes, pikes, ropes and a number of other necessary articles besides on thousand feet of regulation hose.

The machine is a model for neatness and look and the people feel that the money expended for this latest fire-fighting apparatus is money well spent. The machine is a Webb and was made in Allentown, Pa.<sup>14</sup>

The arrival of the new machine in Whitehall was widely noticed as depicted in accounts such as that published in the *Plattsburgh Sentinel*, which as with other accounts noted that “the people of the town are proud of the new machine.”<sup>15</sup> In a larger sense, the introduction of the Webb fire engine was further indication that the age of the automobile was fully upon the region, as by the second decade of the twentieth century the age of horse-drawn transportation was largely drawing to a conclusion. It was soon after its arrival in Whitehall that the new truck saw its first real action when it was used to put down a fire at the brick house of David Minell; “The new auto truck proved its value by saving the rest of the house. It was the baptism of the apparatus.”<sup>16</sup>

Corresponding with the arrival of the new Webb truck was the construction of a suitable building to house it, clearly marking it as among the earliest in this region to be designed specifically to accommodate motorized equipment, as opposed to being an existing building which was suitably retrofitted. Plans and specifications for the new fire station were prepared by the Rutland, Vermont-based architect S.O. Burdick, who maintained

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<sup>13</sup>“Whitehall Fire Department,” ca. 1913; courtesy of WVFC.

<sup>14</sup>“Auto Fire Truck is Given Trial: New Fire-fighting Apparatus Arrives in Whitehall Village,” *Glens Falls Daily Times*, 22 April 1913.

<sup>15</sup>*Plattsburgh Sentinel*, 22 April 1913.

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offices in the Mead Building there; the project was noted in a contemporary trade journal as having an estimated cost of \$15,000.<sup>17</sup> Burdick's was one of six architectural offices noted in the *Walton's Vermont Register* of 1910, a state-wide business directory, along with four offices located in Burlington and one in Barre. Burdick was active in Rutland during this period, his work there including designs for a brick commercial block erected for C.W. Spencer in 1909. It appears Burdick learned the rudiments of architectural design after first working in the building trades as a carpenter, given his listing as such in Rutland city directories, among them the 1903 edition.<sup>18</sup> It is not presently known whether the Whitehall station was Burdick's first design for a building of this type.

The specifications for the Whitehall fire station were prepared in September 1912, along with 10 sheets of drawing including floor plans, elevations, and two sheets of exterior and interior details.<sup>19</sup> Burdick's contract specified the following:

The contract includes all labor and materials complete above basement the contractor is to furnish lally columns in basement and put them in place where shown on plans. To give separate figures for brick building 14" wall with 2" air space and tower 18' wall and no air space, and Natco Hollow Tile with 10" Tile first story and 8" tile second story, with veneer brick for front of building back up with hollow tiling. Two sides rear and tower stucco work; the heating and plumbing will be under separate contract. No bids will be accepted with Heating and Plumbing.<sup>20</sup>

J. Fred Acker, a contractor based out of Glens Falls, New York, secured the contract for the building's construction. A prominent builder in the Glens Falls area, in the early 1920s Acker was advertising his services in local newspapers, where he touted himself as an architect and builder "prepared to furnish estimates and skilled organization of all kinds of new buildings, alterations, and reconstruction of old buildings."<sup>21</sup> In addition to building the firehouse in Whitehall, he also built the new Y.M.C.A building there in 1913.<sup>22</sup> Acker was a sometime member of the Glens Falls Common Council and died in 1927.<sup>23</sup>

The Sanborn fire insurance mapping for Whitehall prepared in October 1915 depicts the building at its original, former location on Church Street. The map indicated that the building was equipped with "1 Webb Fire Eng., 2<sup>nd</sup> class, 1 Button Steam En., 2<sup>nd</sup> class," in addition to a hand-drawn hook and ladder truck, 135 feet of ladder and 3,700 feet of fire hose. It additionally indicated a crew of three paid firefighters augmented

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<sup>16</sup>"Fire at Whitehall," *The Troy Times*, 31 May 1913.

<sup>17</sup>"Fire House—Whitehall, N.Y.," *Engineering News*, 15 August 1912.

<sup>18</sup>In the 1891 Rutland directory S.O. Burdick is listed as a "mechanic," in 1894 as an "architect and builder," in 1903 as a "carpenter," and in 1907, 1914 and 1915 as an "architect." Information on Burdick's life and career has thus proved scarce.

<sup>19</sup>"Specifications for Fire Station, at Whitehall, N.Y., S.O. Burdick, Arch., Rutland, Vt.," courtesy of WVFC.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid

<sup>21</sup>Advertisement, *The Post-Star* (Glens Falls, NY), 10 July 1922; also advertisement of 13 July 1923.

<sup>22</sup>"Acker Will Build Whitehall Bldg.," *Glens Falls Daily Times*, 7 February 1913.

**WHITEHALL FIRE STATION**

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**WASHINGTON CO., N.Y.**

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by five call men. "The department occupies new quarters on canal street [Main Street]," it was noted at the time, "in a building erected for the purpose and is fully equipped with all modern appliances known to the firemaniac world." The interior was described as follows:

On the ground floor is space for the motor truck, steamer, ladder truck and hose wagon. On the second floor are the Chief's office, club rooms, dormitory, bath and store room with all modern equipment... The Gamewell fire alarm system, one of the best in the world, is in use.<sup>24</sup>

The alarm transmitter for the Gamewell Fire Alarm Telegraph Company system, which was linked to the fire call boxes on local streets, remains mounted on the wall adjacent to the pole that conveyed fireman from the second floor to the fire equipment below. Also mounted nearby is a 1913 map of Whitehall showing the village as divided into fire districts.

The station was not long in its new home, as in 1932 it was moved, an action necessitated by the repositioning of railroad tracks from Broadway to their present location. The move was effected by means of a building mover from Poultney, Vermont, under the direction of village engineer Harold Pray, who designed a new foundation for it. Prior to being moved, the hose-drying tower was removed. This and other details were conveyed in an April newspaper account, which indicated that "The tower became obsolete after the village board decided to replace the old bell with a siren. Timbers are now being placed under the station in preparation of the moving, expected to begin the latter part of next week."<sup>25</sup> The new site was originally within the old Champlain Canal prism, which had been infilled at the time the new state Barge Canal was completed in 1918.<sup>26</sup> It appears the village applied for federal PWA funds to restore the hose-drying tower later in the 1930s, perhaps in realization of its practical value, though this apparently did not come to pass.<sup>27</sup> In July 1932 work on the new foundation was approaching completion:

Concrete for the remaining piece of wall to be completed on which the Whitehall fire station will rest has been poured. When the foundation wall was built it was finished with the exception of two feet in height. The wall will be built up to the floor level. In order that the concrete wall can be completed the building still remains on blocking and jacks. When the concrete has set sufficiently long enough the jacks and blocking will be removed.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to its use as a fire station, the base of the station's former hose-drying tower was subsequently retrofitted as a jail cell for use by the local police department. During the Second World War, the building was also used as a

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<sup>23</sup>"J. Fred Acker Dead," *The Saratogian*, 1 November 1927.

<sup>24</sup>"Whitehall Fire Department."

<sup>25</sup>"Removal of Tower on Whitehall Fire Station Completed," *Post-Star* (Glens Falls, NY), 6 April 1932.

<sup>26</sup>Information courtesy of Brian Brooks Sr., WVFC.

<sup>27</sup>Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works application, ca. 1935, signed by B.H. Bascom Jr., Water Superintendent, Village of Whitehall.

<sup>28</sup>"Boiled Down News From Hereabouts," *Warrensburgh News*, 7 July 1932.

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base for aircraft spotters.<sup>29</sup> The construction of the new larger south block ca. 1970 allowed for the earlier block to eventually function in more of a storage capacity, and today the first floor equipment area houses, among other items, a historic Mack fire truck and fire rescue boats.

*Architectural Analysis*

The building which Burdick designed for Whitehall was executed in relatively straightforward terms with limited ornamental elaboration, save for the restrained Neoclassical enrichment of the façade. Although a practical feature, the no longer extant hose-drying tower and its hip-roofed belfry stage was nevertheless conspicuous, rising high above its surroundings at the building's original location as attested to in period photographs (hose-drying towers became largely obsolescent with the introduction of air sirens, which replaced bells, and with advances in hose design and once rubber hoses came into common usage). For the façade fenestration, inclusive of the two larger at-grade vehicle bays and smaller window and door openings, the splayed brick lintels were set off with dressed marble skewbacks which produced a polychrome effect, albeit subtle. For the terminal feature of the façade a severe Neoclassical treatment was employed, consisting of a deep frieze with stylized triglyphs, a cut-marble cornice with ogee profile, and tripartite parapet with paneled center section; all but the parapet survives, save for five courses of brick aligned above the cornice. The original fenestration pattern, inclusive of the two large vehicle bays, remains intact. The interior of the 1913 building retains its original spatial configuration and the bulk of its original finishes with minor exceptions. The open first-floor plan features exposed brick walls and ornamental pressed-metal ceilings, with communication to the upstairs being by means of the staircase against the north wall and the fireman's pole. Upstairs the station retains its basic spatial configuration, save for minor modifications, and original woodwork and pressed-metal ceilings.

The significance of the Whitehall Fire Station is in large measure derived from it being an early example, certainly among the first in a larger regional context, to have been designed following the introduction of motorized fire equipment, although it nevertheless also accommodated non-motorized equipment being that these older and newer technologies existed side-by-side for a time.<sup>30</sup> Although subsequently moved to its present location, many of the building's essential 1912-13 features remains intact, excepting the loss of the tower and parapet on the exterior and the replacement of original windows. The more elaborate and architecturally sophisticated fire station which architect Marcus T. Reynolds designed in a Flemish Revival idiom for Hook & Ladder No. 4 on Delaware Avenue in Albany, New York (S/NRHP listed, 2000/2001), which was designed and built at roughly the same time as the Whitehall station, included interior horse stalls and room for hay storage, features which were apparently included in

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<sup>29</sup>Whitehall news items, *The Times Record* (Troy, NY), 1 May 1942.

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Burdick's design. As with Whitehall, Albany would introduce its first motorized equipment in 1912, yet the transition to all motorized vehicles was by no means instantaneous. Like the Whitehall station, Reynolds's design at first-story level on the principal elevation included two large vehicle bays with a smaller human door between, a standard configuration used in countless stations of that time.

Looking backwards nearly a half-century prior to the construction of these buildings, the Troy, New York architect Marcus Cummings offered a design for a firehouse in his 1868 book *Modern American Architecture*, co-authored with C.C. Miller, which was built in 1866 for the Charles Eddy Steam Fire Engine Company No. 4 in Lansingburgh.<sup>31</sup> Rendered in an exuberant Italianate-style vein and constructed of brick with stone and wood trim, the two-story building was materially different from these later stations in its use of a single large central equipment bay, which was flanked by human doors to either side as part of a three-bay design, this being a fairly typical configuration at this date. As noted by Cummings, the building had an attached shed which accommodated "horses, hay, feed, and wagons," thereby removing this function from the principal brick block, and thus making it easier to navigate its subsequent reworking to accommodate motor vehicles. This was nevertheless deemed a problematic arrangement, given the necessity of bringing the animals from their external quarters to the equipment they drew, and as such was done away with by architects such as LeBrun & Sons, which designed 42 firehouses for New York City's fire department in the 1880s.<sup>32</sup> Inside, the first floor of the Lansingburgh station was given over to a single large volume, save for a corner water closet and staircase; upstairs, the plan included a common area, sleeping quarters, a bathroom and closets. Noticeably absent from the plan is a fireman's pole, an innovation that was first introduced in Chicago, Illinois by Capt. David B. Kenyon of Engine Co. 21. Although at first derided, the usefulness of this feature for multi-story buildings was quickly realized and by the 1880s it had been generally introduced in other cities, among them Boston. The fireman's pole, a once ubiquitous firehouse feature that has since fallen from favor, had been preceded by, among other means of vertical circulation, circular staircases.

The Whitehall building's design is decidedly non-domestic in nature, unlike other stations of the general period—among them two built in nearby Rutland, Vermont—which could easily be mistaken for dwellings. This lack of ornamental elaboration was undoubtedly a practical concern driven by pragmatism and the desire to avoid unnecessary cost. In this regard, Burdick's Neoclassical-inspired design was well suited, given its relatively severe and restrained treatments. A strong point of contrast is to be found in the stations built in the 1880s for the J.A.

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<sup>30</sup>This situation was not atypical; in New York City, where motorized vehicles were first introduced in 1910, horse-drawn equipment continued in use into the early 1920s.

<sup>31</sup>Marcus Cummings and C.C. Miller, *Modern American Architecture* (Toledo, OH: S. Bailey & Co., 1868), plate 44. This building remains extant, on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue north of its intersection with 112<sup>th</sup> Street, though it is no longer used in association with firefighting.

<sup>32</sup>See NYC LPC designation report for Fire Hook & Ladder Company No. 14, June 1997.



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Sheldon and Baxter Hose companies in Rutland, which were rendered in distinctive Second Empire and Queen Anne idioms and which in a glance might be mistaken as houses.<sup>33</sup>

*Conclusion*

The Whitehall Fire Station remains an important legacy of the village's attempt to improve its firefighting capabilities in the early twentieth century. This was in large measure effected with the purchase of a Webb motorized fire truck, which led to the reorganization of the local fire department and the construction of the nominated building. The station was clearly among the first in this region of eastern New York State to have been built with motor vehicles specifically in mind, marking it as an important architectural manifestation of the transition then occurring from animal-drawn to gas-fired equipment. Today it continues to function in the same capacity as the center of Whitehall's organized firefighting capabilities.

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<sup>33</sup>“The Rutland Volunteer Fire Department,” *Rutland Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. XXI, no. 3 (1991).

**WHITEHALL FIRE STATION**

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Cummings, Marcus and C.C. Miller. *Modern American Architecture* (Toledo, OH: S. Bailey & Co., 1868).

Johnson, Crisfield. *History of Washington County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878).

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** .12 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

|   |             |                |                 |   |       |         |          |
|---|-------------|----------------|-----------------|---|-------|---------|----------|
| 1 | <u>18</u>   | <u>629023</u>  | <u>4823612</u>  | 3 | _____ | _____   | _____    |
|   | <b>Zone</b> | <b>Easting</b> | <b>Northing</b> |   | Zone  | Easting | Northing |
| 2 | _____       | _____          | _____           | 4 | _____ | _____   | _____    |
|   | Zone        | Easting        | Northing        |   | Zone  | Easting | Northing |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for this NRHP nomination is depicted on three maps, all of which are entitled "Whitehall Fire Station, Whitehall, Washington Co., N.Y." These maps represent the boundary at a scale of 1: 24,000, 1: 12,000 and 1: 3,000.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated fire station is part of a larger municipally owned parcel which contains not only the nominated fire house but also an adjacent park which bears no relevance to the themes presented in this NRHP nomination. As such, a boundary specific to the footprint of the fire station, and excluding the adjacent park to the immediate north, has been drawn in order to separate these two non-historically related features.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title William E. Krattinger

organization NYS Division for Historic Preservation date November 2017

street & number PO Box 189 telephone (518) 268-2167

city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188

e-mail William.Krattinger@parks.ny.gov

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs:**

**Photographs by William E. Krattinger, September 2016**

**TIFF file format, original digital files at NYS Division for Historic Preservation, Waterford NY 12188**

- 001 EXTERIOR, principal elevation of historic section, view east
- 002 EXTERIOR, north elevation, view south
- 003 EXTERIOR, east elevation, view west
- 004 EXTERIOR, perspective view looking to northwest
- 005 EXTERIOR, view towards non-historic section
- 006 EXTERIOR, view of principal elevation showing junction of historic and non-historic sections
- 007 INTERIOR, view of first floor showing pressed-metal ceiling and expressed brick walls
- 008 INTERIOR, north wall showing original staircase
- 009 INTERIOR, fireman's pole as viewed from first floor
- 010 INTERIOR, jail cell, first floor
- 011 INTERIOR, fireman's pole as viewed from second floor
- 012 INTERIOR, second floor
- 013 INTERIOR, second floor showing sliding pocket doors
- 014 INTERIOR, second floor, detail of ornamental pressed-metal ceiling
- 015 INTERIOR, second floor, characteristic door and surround
- 016 INTERIOR, second floor hall, non-historic section

**Property Owner:**

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

name Whitehall Volunteer Fire Company  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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ABOVE & BELOW, images depicting the building at its original Church Street (Broadway) location; the image below shows the building during the course of construction

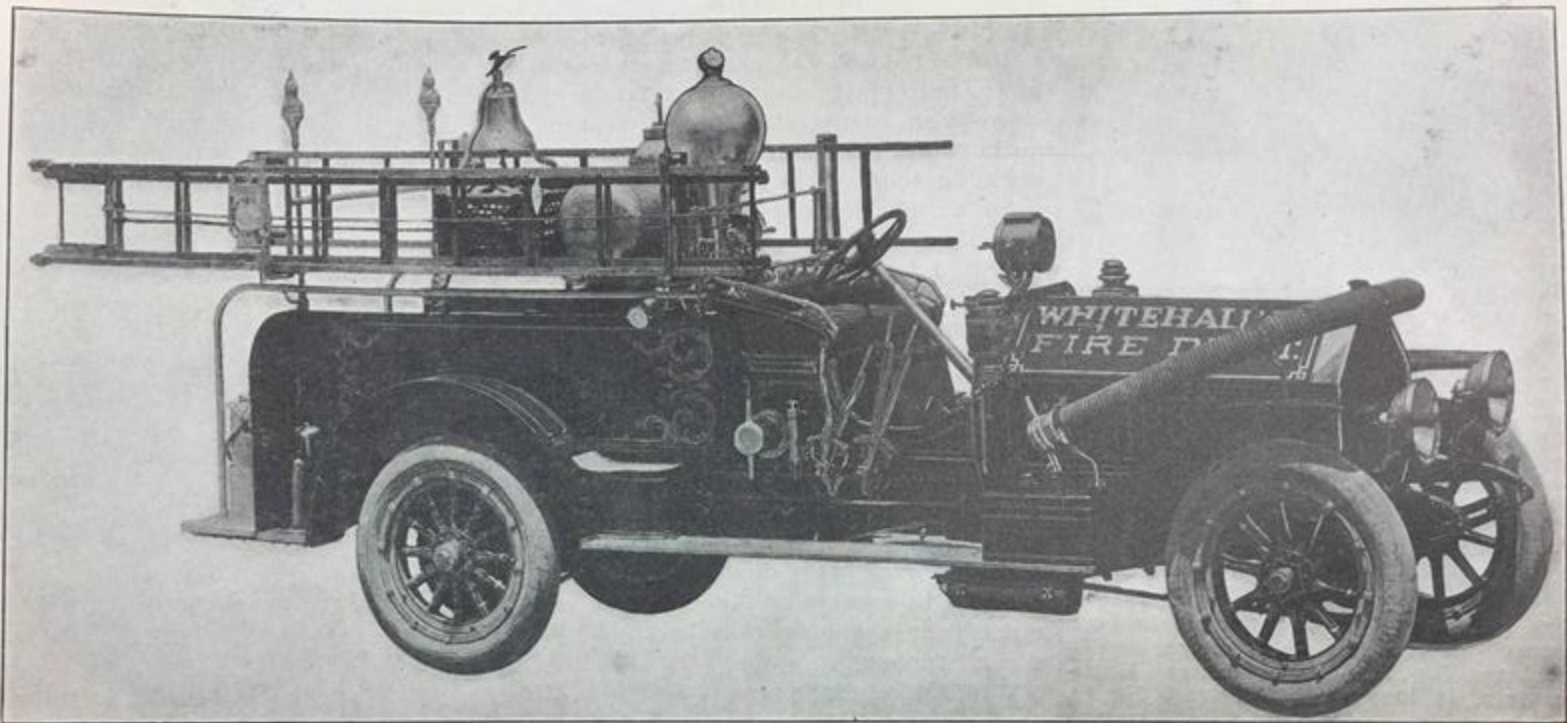


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**NEW TRIPLE COMBINATION CHEMICAL AND HOSE MOTOR FIRE ENGINE FOR WHITEHALL.**

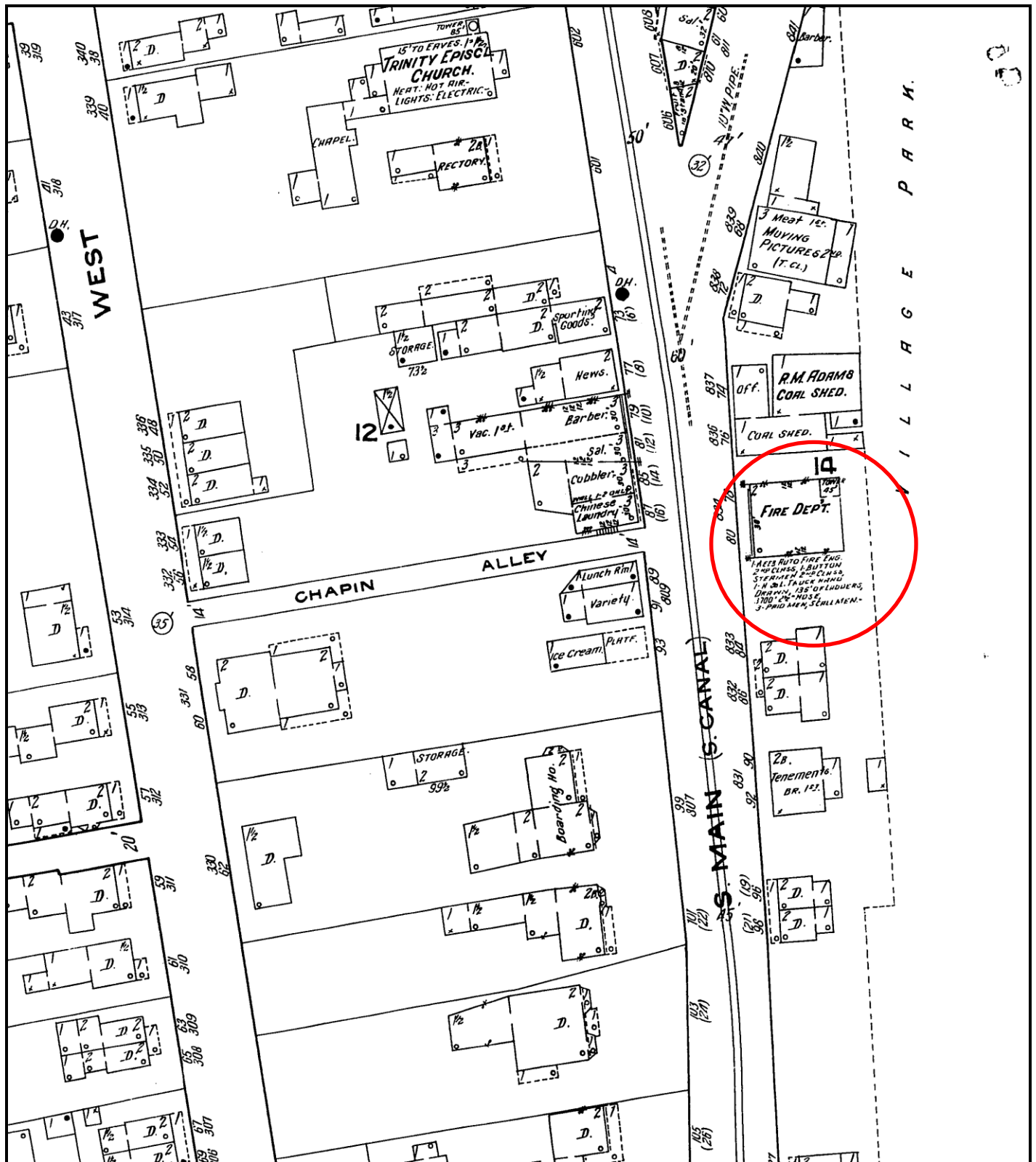
The new automobile fire truck, recently purchased by the Board of Trustees of the village of Whitehall and which is expected to arrive about April 1, is not only a radical departure in fire apparatus, evidencing the progressive spirit of the village, but will result in a practical reorganization of the Whitehall Fire Department. To accommodate the new motor engine and the other apparatus a new brick fire house on Canal Street, opposite the junction of Church Street, has been erected and is now nearly completed. A partially paid fire department is to be organized, the paid men, including the Chief Engineer, Assistant Chief and four firemen. The new motor fire engine, made by The Webb Company of Allentown, Penn., is provided with a seventy horse-power six-cylinder motor of a powerful type, capable of propelling the truck to the fire promptly and doing efficient service.

**WHITEHALL FIRE STATION**

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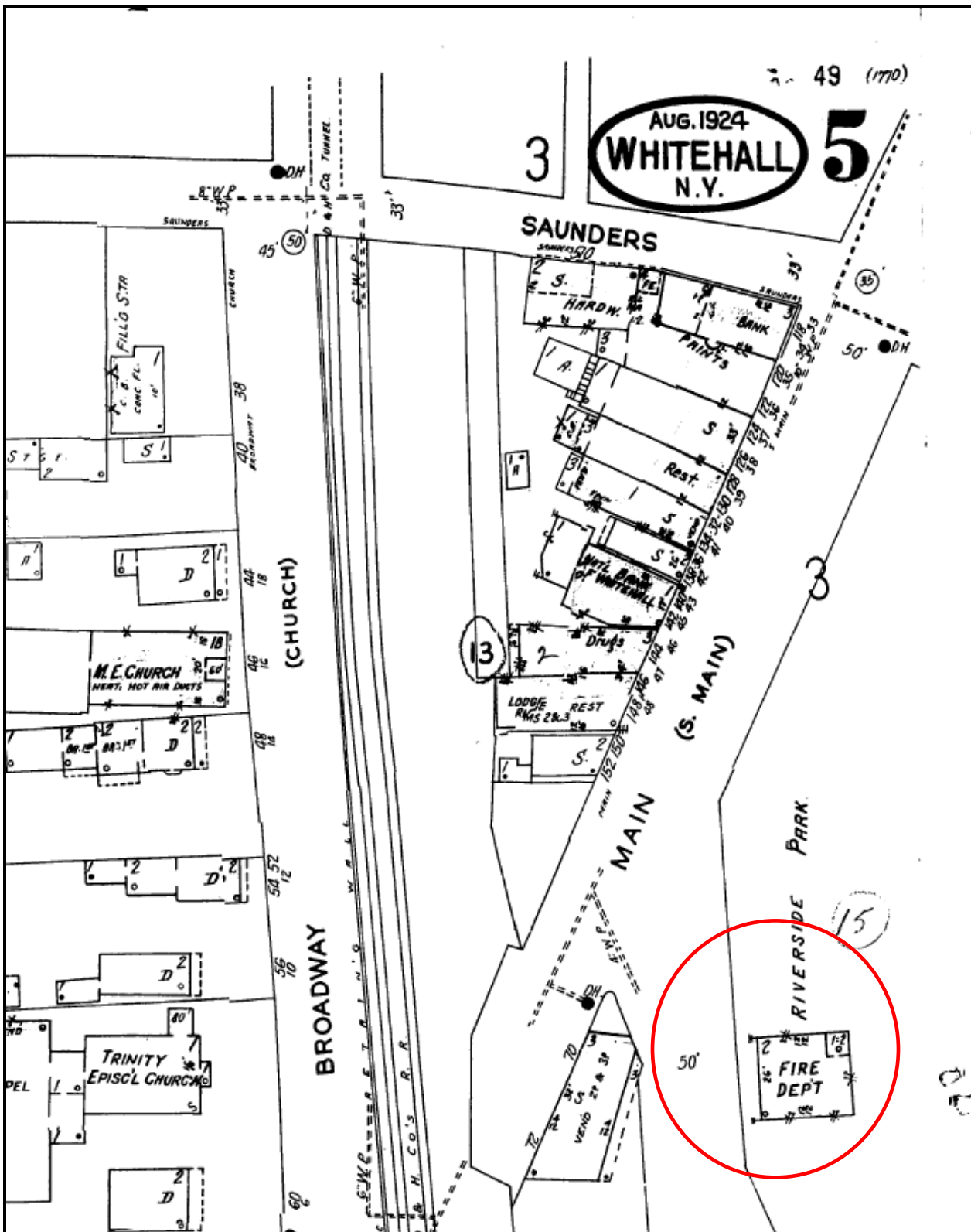
ABOVE, 1915 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing station's original location

**WHITEHALL FIRE STATION**

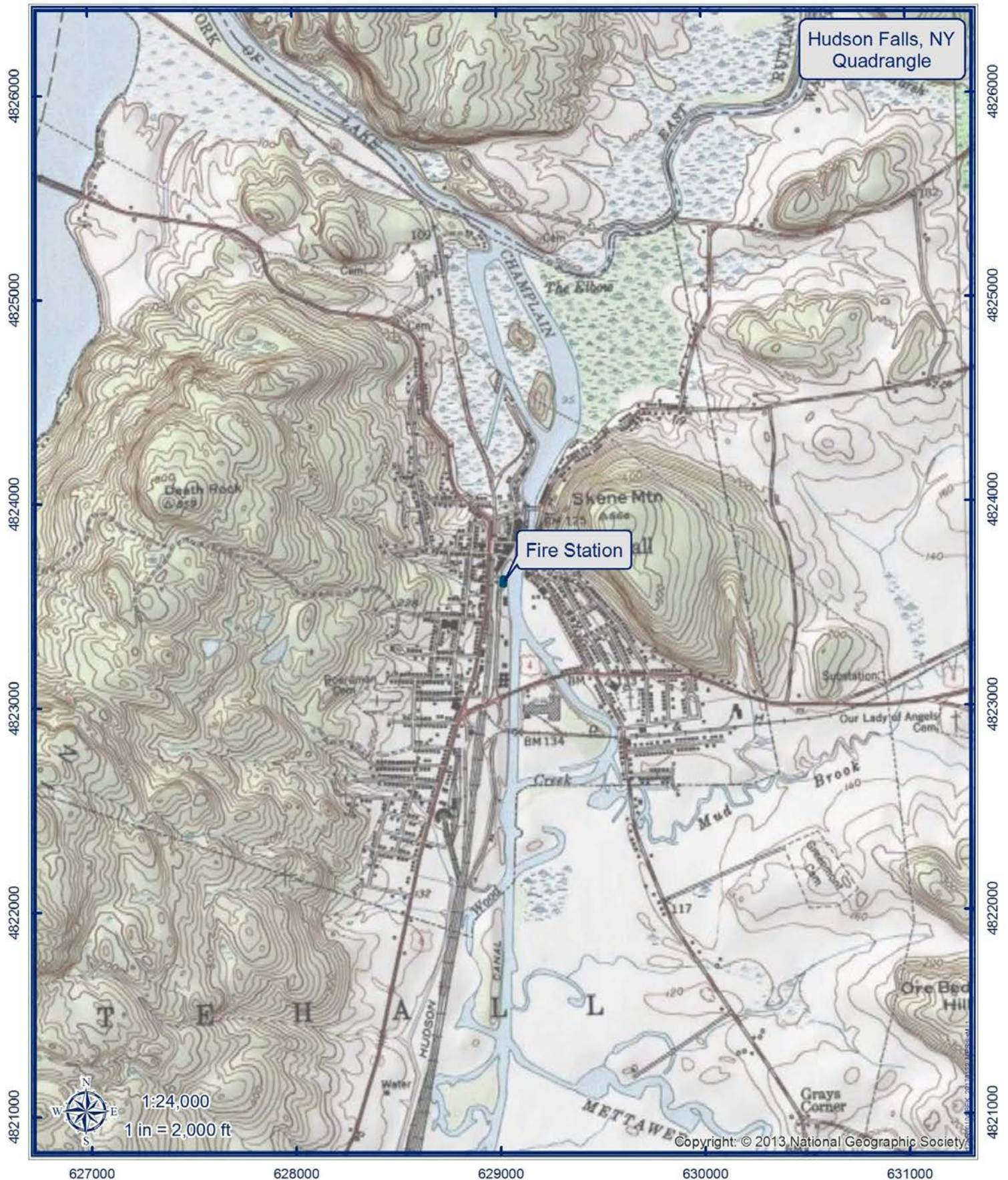
Name of Property

**WASHINGTON CO., N.Y.**

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ABOVE, 1948 updating of the 1924 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing station at its present location, prior to expansion



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation



4825000

4825000

4824000

4824000

4823000

4823000



Hudson Falls, NY  
Quadrangle

Fire Station

Skene Mtn  
Whitehall

Boardman  
Cem

BM 133

BM 134

Creek

Mud



1:12,000  
1 in = 1,000 ft

628000

629000

630000





Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N

Projection: Transverse Mercator

Datum: North American 1983

Units: Meter



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation











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**NO**  
**FIRE GEAR**  
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 3/14/2018      Date of Pending List: 4/11/2018      Date of 16th Day: 4/26/2018      Date of 45th Day: 4/30/2018      Date of Weekly List: 5/4/2018

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal           | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL            | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request     | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver           | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |   |

Accept       Return       Reject      4/30/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Recommendation/  
Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ROSE HARVEY  
Commissioner



9 March 2018

Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following five nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Mount Hope Cemetery, Monroe County  
Whitehall Fire Station, Washington County  
Vernooy-Bevier Stone House and Barns, Ulster County  
Dunix, Greene County  
Colonial Flats and Annex, Erie County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office