

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 93000133 Date Listed: 3/11/93

Firehouse No. 4 Union NEW JERSEY
Property Name: County: State:

Multiple Name _____

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for *Antoinette J. Coe*
Signature of the Keeper

3/10/93
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

In the description section, stucco and brick were listed as wall materials. The text indicates stucco covers brick, therefore brick has been deleted as a building material. Georgian Revival was listed as the architectural style, but the text and photos indicate Mission/Craftsman. Georgian Revival has been deleted and Mission Craftsman has been added as the architectural style. These changes were confirmed by phone with Bob Craig of the New Jersey SHPO.

The nomination is officially amended to include this information.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

RECEIVED

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NATIONAL
REGISTER

United States Department of the 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 Firehouse Number 4

other names/site number Netherwood Fire Station

2. Location

street & number 1015 South Avenue Not for publication

city or town Plainfield vicinity

state New Jersey code 034 county Union code 039 zip code 07061

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.)

Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO

Signature of certifying official [Signature] Date 1/25/93

State of 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 certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	Signature of the Keeper <u>Patrick W. Andrews</u>	Date of Action <u>3/11/93</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain.) _____	_____	_____

Firehouse Number 4
Name of Property

NJ Union County
County and State

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
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/fire station

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/fire station

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS:
-Georgian Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
walls stucco
brick
roof ceramic tile
other wood

Narrative Description

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

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.)

- [x] 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.
[x] 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 N/A
(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)

Community Development

Architecture

Period of Significance

1910-1926

Significant Dates

1910

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- [] 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
[x] Other

Name of repository:

Plainfield Public Library

Firehouse Number 4
Name of Property

NJ Union County
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.3 acres Plainfield, NJ Quad

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

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4

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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 Robert P. Guter, Director

organization Acroterion date September 1992

street & number 161 West 73rd Street telephone (212) 799-0156

city or town New York state NJ zip code 10023

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 City of Plainfield

street & number 515 Watchung Avenue telephone (908)753-3000

city or town Plainfield state NJ zip code 07061

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Firehouse No. 4, Plainfield, Union County,
New Jersey

Fire Station No. 4 is situated in the northeast section of the City of Plainfield, on South Avenue (see Map A). To its north is the Romanesque-style Netherwood train station, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. To its south is a one-story laundromat of recent date. South Avenue supports light industrial used south of the firehouse, and retail function to its north, some in converted houses.

East of South Avenue is a residential neighborhood of small to medium-size houses, mostly frame, called Netherwood. They range in date from the turn of the nineteenth century to approximately World War I. The surrounding topography is flat.

Exterior

The firehouse is a blocky two-story building (photo #1). The projecting eaves of its clay-tile hipped roof are supported by shaped rafters. At the rear is a small, rectangular one-story wing with a flat roof (#2). Appended to the south elevation is a 55' hose-drying tower, rectangular in section, with a tiled hipped roof (#3).

The firehouse is built of concrete block and brick, pargeted with cement stucco of a golden-tan color. Fenestration is composed of wooden multipaned sash and casement windows, arranged singly and in groups. Most of the ground floor front elevation is taken up by two apparatus openings. The replacement doors to these openings are the only significant alteration.

Interior

The high-ceilinged first-floor has a concrete floor that slopes to the rear, where a drainage trough is the single memento of the building's horse-drawn fire apparatus days (#4). In one corner is a small raised platform that serves as the watch station (#5). Just large enough for a desk and chair, it still serves its intended purpose, the original "ticker tape" alarm machine has been replaced with electronic equipment. In the rear wing is a small kitchen and lounge.

A narrow, U-shaped boxed stair with tongue-and-groove walls leads to the second floor, where four rooms of almost equal size surround a tiny landing. The spaces are domestic in scale and feeling, baldly utilitarian without features or finishes of special note. Walls are plastered, floors are soft pine. One door gives access to the middle level of the hose-drying tower.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES/CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 1 of 5

Plainfield Firehouse No. 4

City of Plainfield Union County, New Jersey

Firehouse No. 4 is significant under National Register Criterion A because it reflects a point in the suburbanization of New Jersey when municipal fire protection was replacing the old volunteer system, an important change that bridged 19th- and 20th-century needs and capabilities. It meets Criterion C because its design illustrates the desire to make neighborhood firehouses visually compatible with the new residential areas they were designed to serve, while marking a transition point between horsedrawn and mechanized equipment

From Volunteer to Professional

With few exceptions, fire protection in New Jersey during the first half of the 19th century was the province of sporadic and sometimes rag-tag assemblages of volunteer companies. These doubled as fraternal lodges whose rivalries--and consumption of alcohol--earned them reputations for rowdiness. In Plainfield the modern history of firefighting dates to 1858, when a group of citizens met to discuss the rapidly growing city's lack of adequate fire protection under the volunteer system. The following year the city passed a law creating a fire district and providing for election of commissioners empowered to levy a special fire tax. The first significant commitment to the new system was construction of a brick engine house on Park Avenue. Subsequently, several fire companies were formed to serve the district, which embraced present-day Plainfield and part of what is now North Plainfield. These companies functioned with a combination of volunteer manpower and equipment furnished by the commissioners.

A substantial improvement over the old system, this arrangement served until 1887, when a citizen challenged the legality of the fire tax, in effect challenging the semi-autonomous power of the fire commissioners. When the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in favor of the complainant, the City of Plainfield took possession of all property and debts of the fire commissioners, preparatory to creating a city fire department in 1888.

In 1890 the city initiated a campaign of important improvements. It installed thirteen telegraph alarm boxes, bought six horses, and hired the first full-time drivers. In 1892 201 hydrants were put into service throughout the city.

In 1893 a reassessment of firehouses began with the sale of

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Plainfield Firehouse No. 4

City of Plainfield Union County, New Jersey

the antiquated Engine House No. 3 and the erection on East Second Street of the first headquarters building. As the city spread out more and more from its old center, more engine houses were needed. The first was built in 1898 on East Fourth Street in the west end, the second in 1901 on West Second Street. By the time the Second Street house was completed horsepower had grown to twelve and hydrants numbered 296. (1)

The Netherwood Station and Decentralization

The need for new firehouses was a direct result of Plainfield's suburbanization. Between 1880 and 1900 the population had nearly doubled, and from 1900 to 1910 it increased from 15,369 to 22,550. One commentator wrote a description of the city's residential prosperity that characterizes this era of expansion: "The streets run in broad avenues, shaded by superb trees, with lines of fine residences and ample, well-kept grounds on either side. Closely trimmed lawns, flower-beds and shrubs vary the level expanse. This part of the city seems to have been developed as a whole, and with the one purpose of making it unsurpassed for spaciousness and beauty." (2) The very spaciousness that Gustav Kobbe admired was a challenge to fire protection, and was one factor that had prompted the construction campaign of dispersed stations begun in 1893.

By the teens of the twentieth century New Jersey was poised between the era of the railroad suburbs and the Automobile Age. Writing about Plainfield's housing problems in 1914, Udetta D. Brown was a careful observer of social flux:

"The building of the railroad has brought rapid changes. From the small pre-Revolutionary hamlet, with busy mills and out-lying farms, Plainfield has grown to be a city of varied interests. . . . This combination of old town, suburban community, and manufacturing centre shows in the population. There are still many representatives of the old families engaged in business in the city, there are sections of fine residences, such as the Netherwood development, given up to the homes of commuters." (3)

Netherwood was the site of the city's latest firehouse, Station No. 4, built in 1910 (4) Miss Brown's use of the word "development" rather than "neighborhood" suggests her view of the scale and speed of construction that characterized the growth of this section. The lot chosen for Station No. 4 was telling. The firehouse was built immediately west of the Netherwood Station of the Central Railroad of New Jersey, the efficient cause of

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Plainfield Firehouse No. 4

City of Plainfield Union County, New Jersey

Netherwood's new commuter homes. Located on South Avenue, a major east-west thoroughfare, the firehouse had easy access to the new suburban development via Belvidere and Woodland avenues to the south (see Map B).

On January 1, 1915, just five years after the Netherwood Station was dedicated, the city inaugurated a fully-paid fire department. (5) Soon afterward Plainfield saw the passing of the horse-drawn fire wagon, a milestone memorialized by a photograph of Station No. 4 with both horse-drawn and gasoline-powered equipment drawn up before the facade (see historic photo). In a span of only five years, Station No. 4 became the last representative of the old-style fire system and a harbinger of more modern firefighting methods.

Fire Protection and Compatible Design

As the wholly volunteer fire company was becoming a thing of the past at the turn of the century, so was the reputation of the fireman as a scapegrace. Instead, the revised perception was of fireman as hero, an image attested to by countless mawkish monuments raised by public subscription that depicted firefighters rescuing women and children from conflagration. The popular press of the period had its say in the matter, too. The fireman, it claimed, "is naturally brave, loyal and progressive, thoroughly self-reliant, and too often, as tender-hearted as a child. He is a public servant of the highest order who cannot be too highly prized." (6) If that description made the fireman sound more like boy scout than hero, it was in keeping with the taste for gentility of precisely the kind that was coloring Plainfield's residential neighborhoods around 1910.

Netherwood is characterized by moderate-sized houses typical of the eclectic modes popular in New Jersey railroad suburbs at the turn of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Unlike some of Plainfield's grander neighborhoods, such as the Crescent Avenue Historic District, where houses are typically expansive in size and sited on large lots, the much smaller Netherwood houses are sited in close proximity to one another. The dominant architectural impression made by the neighborhood is one of solid middle-class respectability. The house types and sizes are typical of those built for the era's professionals and small business owners. Udetta Brown's reference to commuters proves that Netherwood's development adjacent to a station of the Central Railroad of New Jersey was

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Plainfield Firehouse No. 4

City of Plainfield Union County, New Jersey

not accidental. Although Plainfield had been a railroad suburb since the middle of the nineteenth century, its growth continued to depend on efficient rail connections during the period in question.

Because the new neighborhood was situated at a distance from the city's existing fire stations, reliable fire protection must have been a paramount concern for Netherwood home buyers. Although Netherwood commuters must certainly have wanted the best fire protection available, their neat, new neighborhood and their individual investments in home ownership would have been compromised by the barns or "little brick breweries" that had housed so many small-town fire companies of their parents' generation.

The municipal or neighborhood process which resulted in Netherwood's new firehouse has been lost to us. What the residents got, however, is abundantly clear--a firehouse that illustrates the transitional period from which it emerged. As if prefiguring the needs of the internal combustion fire trucks soon to occupy it, rather than the more cumbersome requirements of the horses and horse-drawn rigs that were on their way out, Firehouse No. 4 is small in size and light in scale, even for a substation.

Equally important, its design is far more domestic in feeling than Plainfield's earlier, public-visaged firehouses. The Netherwood station has a twenty-six-foot facade and a low hip roof shielding its two-story height. Its stuccoed walls, tile roof, and grouped multipaned windows reflect the Mission-Craftsman mode compatible with the bungalow, the foursquare, and similar "utilitarian" modes that preceded the more romantic Period Revival dwellings of the 1920s. During the same era small-town firehouses in a similar Mission-Craftsman mode were built in a number of places in New Jersey. Basking Ridge and Westfield are two examples.

The historic photograph referred to earlier reinforces the domestic-looking intent of Firehouse No. 4: Flower boxes overflow with greenery, potted shrubs and a topiary tree flank the doors, and a residential scale Craftsman-style lantern hangs between the equipment bays. Only the slim hose-drying tower, looking like a miniature campanile, points to the building's public role.

Unlike the institutional and even monumental stations suitable for large cities or the more urbanized centers of older suburbs, Fire Station No. 4 was the perfect good neighbor for

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Plainfield Firehouse No. 4

City of Plainfield Union County, New Jersey

Netherwood's small-scale houses. It was the logical transition to the one-story firehouses that gradually became typical of suburban fire companies once mechanized equipment was taken for granted by the middle of the 20th century.

In the local context of Plainfield's development, Firehouse No. 4 and Central Fire Headquarters (nominated separately) illustrate how radically firehouse design changed in a span of only sixteen years in order to accommodate technological advances in firefighting methods. Just as Central Fire Headquarters symbolizes the improvement of Plainfield's municipal services to meet essentially modern expectations, Firehouse No. 4 is part of the transition that was necessary in order to reach that civic goal.

References

1. An account of Plainfield's changing attitudes toward fire protection is found in Eugene Peltier and G. B. Elmhurst's History of the Plainfield Fire Department, 1827-1901. Plainfield, N.J.: Titsworth Press, n.d.
2. Gustav Kobbe. The Central Railroad of New Jersey. New York, Gustav Kobbe: 1890. 56.
3. Udetta D. Brown. "Housing Conditions in Plainfield and North Plainfield." The Charity Organization Society and the Anti-Tuberculosis League: 1914. 1.
4. National Board of Fire Underwriters. "Report on Plainfield, New Jersey." New York: 1956. 11.
5. Peltier and Elmhurst, 15.
6. Rebecca Zurier. The American Firehouse. New York, Abbeville Press: 1978. 120.

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Plainfield Firehouse No. 4

City of Plainfield Union County, New Jersey

Sources Consulted

Brown, Udetta D. "Housing Conditions in Plainfield and North Plainfield," Plainfield, NJ: The Charity Organization and the Anti-Tuberculosis League. 1914.

Kobbe, Gustav. The Central Railroad of New Jersey. New York: Gustav Kobbe. 1890.

National Board of Fire Underwriters. "Report on Plainfield, NJ." New York: 1956.

Peltier, Eugene, and Elmhurst, G.B. History of the Plainfield Fire Department, 1827-1901. Plainfield, NJ: Titsworth Press. n.d.

Plainfield, New Jersey, Fire Department. Archive and clipping files. Fire Headquarters.

Sanborn Map Company. Fire Insurance Maps for the City of Plainfield, NJ. Updated through 1955.

Zurier, Rebecca. The American Firehouse. New York: Abbeville Press. 1978.

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Plainfield Firehouse No. 4
City of Plainfield Union County, New Jersey

Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated property are the lot lines of Lot 27, Block 645 as established by the Tax Map of the City of Plainfield, 1987 (see Map A).

Boundary Justification

The boundaries are the same as those established when the building was constructed. They remained constant during the period of significance.

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**National Register of Historic Places
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Section number Photos Page 1

Firehouse No. 4, Plainfield, Union County,
New Jersey

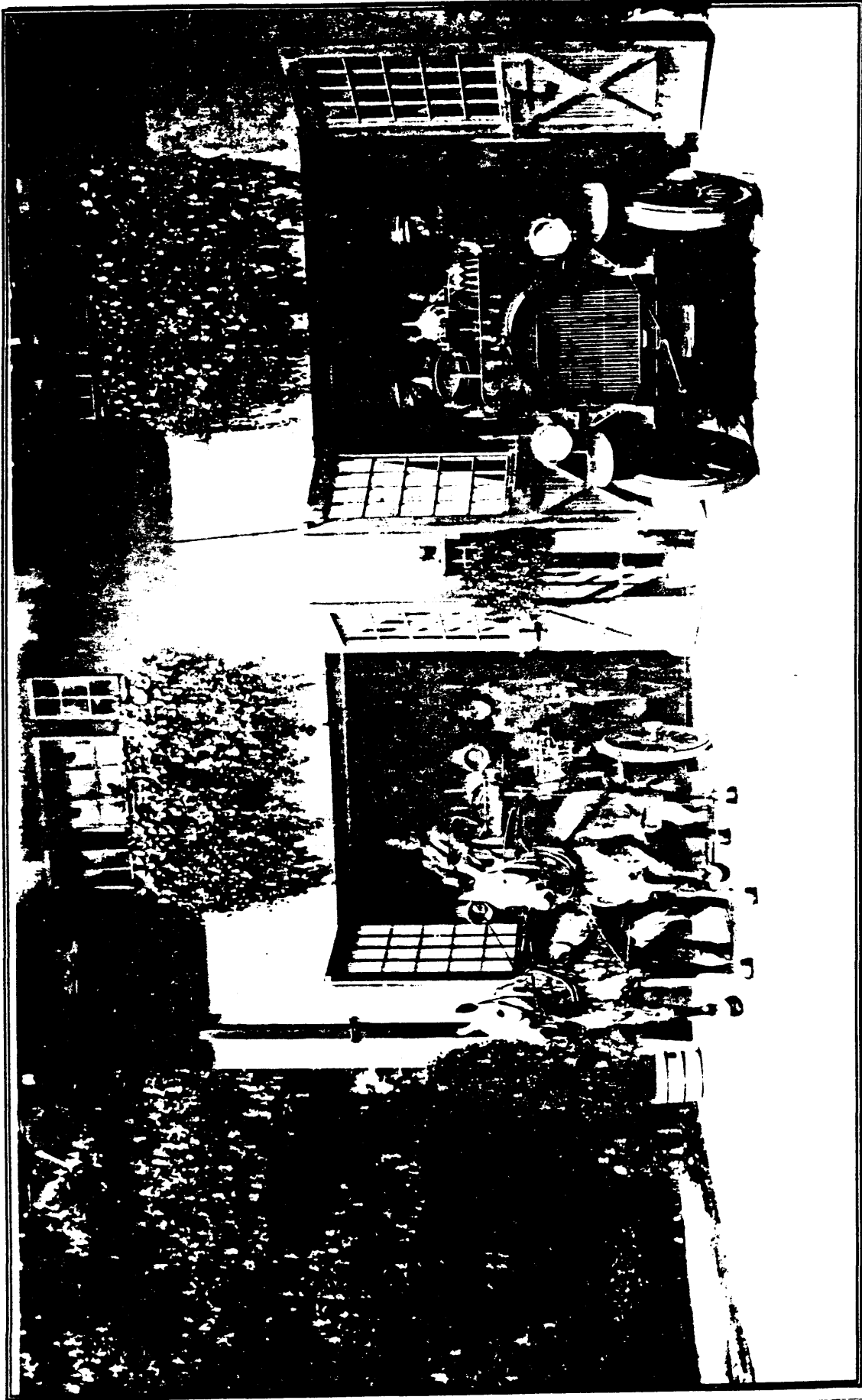
PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographer: Acroterion

Date: July 1992

Location of negatives: City of Plainfield
Planning & Community Development
515 Watchung Avenue
Plainfield, New Jersey 07061

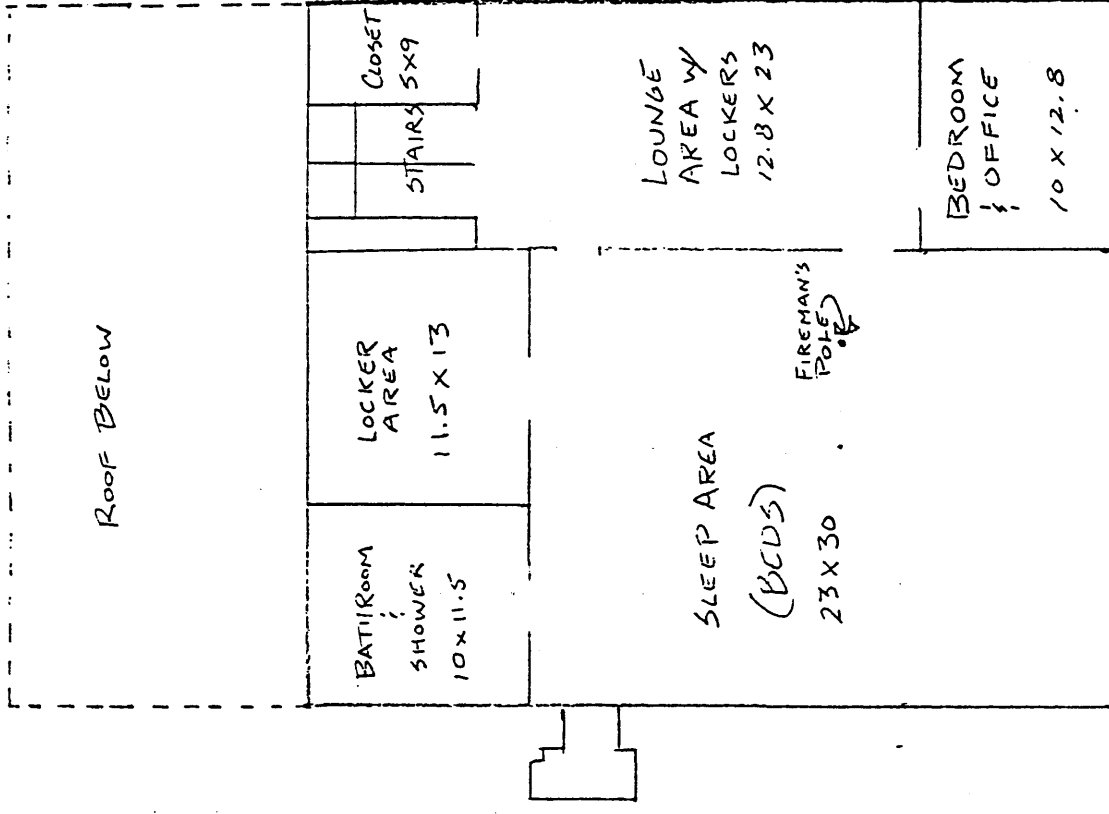
1. Exterior view looking west.
2. Exterior view looking east.
3. Exterior view looking north.
4. Interior view of first floor looking west.
5. Interior view of first floor looking northeast.



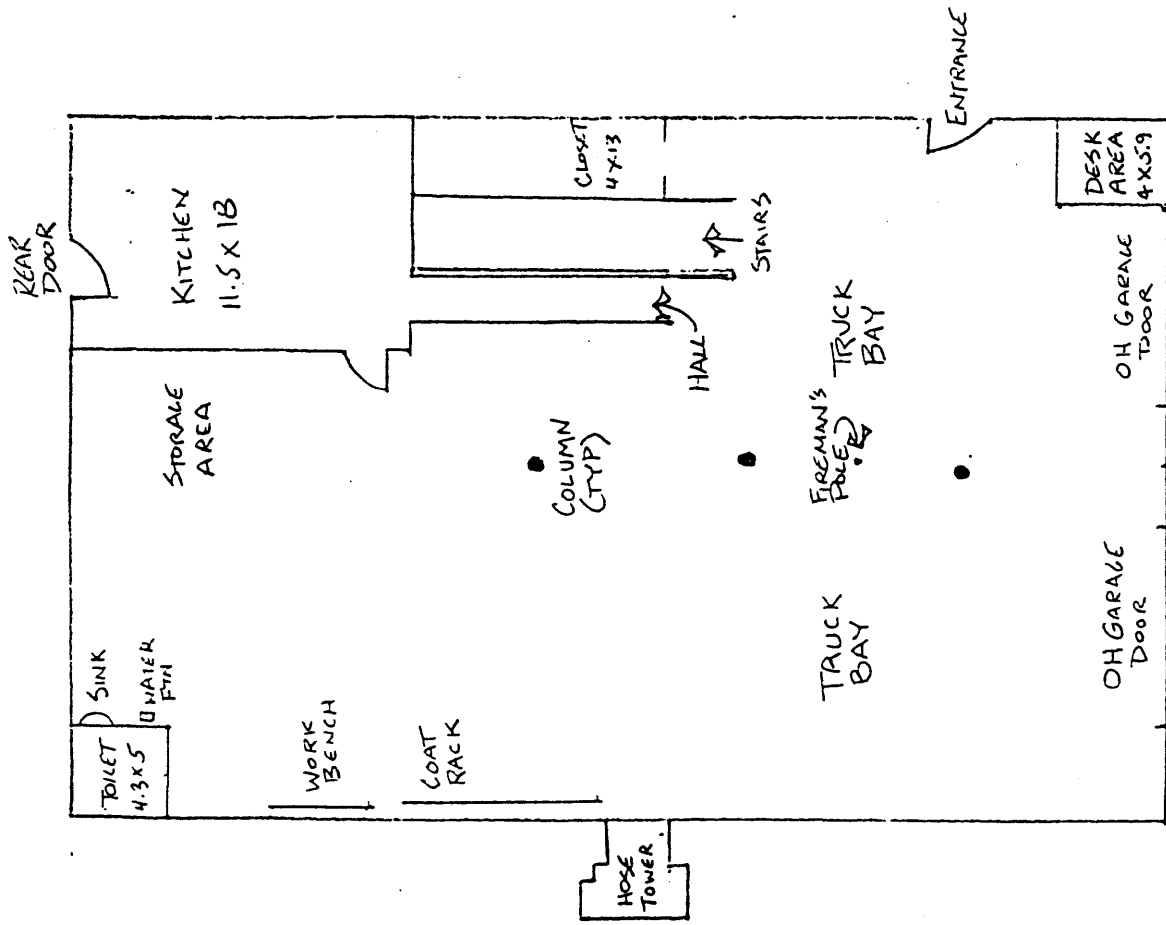
Firehouse No. 4, Plainfield, ca. 1915. Note window boxes, topiary trees, and Craftsman-style lantern.

Firehouse #4
Plainfield
Union County, NJ

Firehouse #4
 City of Plainfield
 Union County, NJ



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

EXISTING FLOOR PLAN
 FIREHOUSE NO. 4
 PREPARED BY:
 DIVISION OF PLANNING
 CITY OF PLAINFIELD
 DATE: 9-18-92
 SCALE: 1" = 10'