

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCPS use only

received JUN 30 1983

date entered JUL 28 1983

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic ~~Unionville~~ Tunxis Hose Firehouse

and/or common The Old Firehouse

2. Location

street & number ~~East side Lovely St. at jet.~~ Farmington Ave. N/A not for publication

city, town ~~Farmington~~ (Unionville) N/A vicinity of congressional district 6th

state Connecticut code 09 county New Haven code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Farmington

street & number Town Hall, 1 Monteith Drive

city, town Farmington N/A vicinity of state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Unionville Village Hall

street & number Farmington Ave.

city, town Unionville state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 S. Prospect St.

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Unionville Tunxis Firehouse is a prominent landmark in the village of Unionville. Located on the east side of Lovely Street at the Junction of Farmington Avenue, the firehouse stands north of the Farmington River and is visible from even the south bank of the river on Rt. 177 as it enters the village. Opposite the site of the firehouse is the junction of Unionville's three major streets, Main Street, Ferry Street and Lovely Street. Lovely Street runs north from the firehouse and at the junction becomes South Main Street and runs south across the bridge over the Farmington River. Both Main and Ferry streets run northwest from the junction. At the junction Ferry Street becomes Farmington Avenue and runs southeast along the north bank of the river.

The firehouse stands on the west shoulder of a rather steep hill which is the site of the village cemetery. The main entrance to the firehouse is on Lovely Street, making for quick access to all parts of Unionville for the purposes of firefighting. The 1893 firehouse is a two-story red brick Queen Anne style building of modest proportions, but finely detailed. The firehouse is asymetrically massed with the main block set with its gable end to the street and a shallow cross-gable wing one bay deep on the south elevation. A handsome three-story square drying tower is situated against the hillside on the southeast corner of the building capped with a pyramidal roof. Although the body of the firehouse is executed in common bond the texture of the facade is much enhanced by elaborately patterned bands of brick between the floors and a handsome brick corbel table in the gable ends and below the cornice of the tower. The fenestration is regular and consists of segmental-arch windows with rusticated keystones and plain stone block sills. The one-over-two sash windows are distinguished by the use of small squares of stained glass edging the upper sash, a typical feature of the Queen Anne style. The main block is three bays wide and the two-story south wing is two bays wide. The main door is located in the south wing on the Lovely Street elevation. Squat segmental-arch windows with the stained glass edging lights are located in the gable ends. The only alteration in the fenestration has been the elimination of two windows and one garage bay on the first floor of the Lovely Street elevation in favor of one large garage bay in order to accommodate modern firefighting equipment (see the documentary photo c. 1900 for the original configuration). The entire building is roofed in slate tile.

The patterned brick bands are executed in both a cross and an "I" motif and delineate the floor levels. The cross pattern is used above the second floor and on all levels of the tower except between the first and second floors. The "I" pattern is used to indicate the second floor level throughout the building.

The interior plan is quite simple. The main door in the south wing leads directly to a flight of stairs to the second floor. The stairway is sheathed in beaded boards and a banister with turned ends is attached to the north wall. The garage bay leads to a large storage room and another storage room is located at the rear. The access to the drying tower and boiler room is off the rear storage room.

On the second floor are located both the parlor and the club room. Both rooms are inaccessible as they are used for storage and are full to capacity.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Criteria A and C

Specific dates 1893 **Builder/Architect** Joseph Jetner, builder

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Many firehouses were built in rural areas in Connecticut in the late nineteenth century and the Unionville-Tunxis Firehouse is a fine example of an 1890s rural firehouse (Criterion C). Built in 1893 and used as the village of Unionville's only firehouse until 1960, the Tunxis Hose Co. No. 1 Firehouse was the focus of the town's social and firefighting activities for nearly seventy years. The fire district commission, organized to oversee the firefighting company became by the turn of the century a major political force in the government of Unionville until it became a borough in 1921 (Criterion A).

Unionville grew into a town in the early 1830s following the opening of the Farmington Canal. Originally a predominantly agricultural settlement, by the mid-nineteenth century it was becoming known for its factories. By 1860 the three largest employers in Unionville had sixty workers. In the next twenty years the progress of industrialization was swift; by 1880 the number of workers employed in the three major Unionville factories had climbed to three hundred and eight and the value of manufactured goods had reached more than \$400,000. Unionville in 1880 housed fifteen shops, mills and factories.¹

The largest employers were three paper companies and a manufacturer of nuts and bolts. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century these factories formed the economic backbone of Unionville. The Cowles Paper Company, one of the town's major factories, was founded in 1866 and due to hard times was closed in 1888, to the consternation of the residents of Unionville. Through strenuous local efforts the factory was reopened in the same year, renovated and doubled in capacity. This wood frame building was destroyed by fire in 1893. The company eventually made a decision to stay in Unionville and the factory was rebuilt in brick.²

The economic well-being of the settlement was also brought into question when the Upson Nut Co., one of the major employers of Unionville, was devastated by fire in March, 1890. By 1880 the Upson Nut Co., then called the Union Nut Co., employed one hundred and twenty-eight workers and had an output valued at \$268,000. The Upson Nut Co. fire was a frightening experience for Unionville; within five minutes the whole factory was on fire and two adjacent factories were saved only through great efforts. The damage was assessed at \$150,000 and many residents were put out of work. Locally it was believed that had the adjacent factories caught fire the entire business section of Unionville would have been destroyed. The company considered relocating after the fire; it had already established a factory in Cleveland in 1872. A move to Cleveland would have put two hundred employees out of work. Within the week the Town of Farmington voted to exempt all manufacturing property from taxation for five years. On April 24, 1890, the company made the decision to rebuild the Unionville factory.³

Thus, by beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century it had become obvious that organized fire protection for the densely built and highly industrialized Unionville settlement was desirable, although it was still perceived by some members of the community as a luxury. In 1893 the Unionville Fire District was chartered by the legislature, largely due to the efforts of Samuel Frisbie.⁴ The organizational meeting of the fire district was held on June 2, 1893, for the purpose of providing some measure of protection to the shops,

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 10,000 sq. ft.

Quadrangle name Collinsville

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8	6	7	5	6	5	0	4	6	2	4	9	1	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the Unionville Tunxis Firehouse (tax parcel #210) is that shown on the attached map. The legal description of the property is located in the Farmington Land Records Volume 68, Page 681.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
N/A			

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kate Ohno, Preservation Consultant, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Connecticut Historical Commission date February 5, 1983

street & number 59 South Prospect Street telephone (203) 566-3005

city or town Hartford state Connecticut 06106

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date June 22, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 7/28/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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factories and homes of Unionville.⁵ According to the charter the fire district had the power to tax residents to build a firehouse, buy equipment and erect lamp posts to light the streets. The water was to be supplied by the newly formed Unionville Water Co. In October, 1893, the directors of the fire district were authorized to engage members for what was, and still remains, a volunteer fire company.⁶ Voters within the fire district approved a two-mill tax to finance the purchase of land for the firehouse and a hose cart and other supplies.⁷ The property on Lovely Street where the firehouse now stands was purchased from W. H. Sage for \$600.⁸ On November 14, 1893, the fire district voted to build a firehouse.⁹ This decision met at first with a great deal of opposition, mainly for economic reasons. 1893 was a year of economic depression for the whole nation, and the pinch was evident in Unionville. The construction of a firehouse was perceived as a costly undertaking at a time when the citizens of Unionville were already hard pressed.¹⁰ On November 20, 1893, the fire company was officially formed; it adopted the name Tunxis Hose Company No. 1 after the Indian tribe that had inhabited the area on a seasonal basis. Thirty men were appointed to the fire company headed by Captain Lucius C. Humphrey, First Assistant William W. Pinney and Second Assistant Michael J. Hogerty.¹¹ In contrast to the members of the fire district commission who were mill owners and prosperous businessmen the actual firefighting force was made up of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, many from Unionville's factories.¹²

The company began modestly with a hand-drawn jumper cart, 1,000 feet of hose, a crow bar and an axe.¹³ The firehouse was a sturdily built two-story brick structure. Unfortunately little is known about the construction of the firehouse. A committee was appointed to visit five fire stations in the vicinity of Unionville to research the best type of firehouse and equipment.¹⁴ This committee recommended building a thirty by forty-five foot firehouse two stories tall, with rooms on the first floor for the equipment, rooms on the second floor for meetings, and a drying tower for drying out the hose after use.¹⁵ Later, the plans for the firehouse were modified to stipulate a twenty-five by forty foot firehouse two stories tall with a slate roof. Joseph Jetner was awarded the contract to lay the brick.¹⁶ The architect of the handsome Queen Anne style building is unknown. In order to build the firehouse and upgrade the fire-fighting apparatus, the district voted to borrow \$4,000 and to purchase a hand-drawn hose reel with additional hose and nozzles.¹⁷

The early history of the Tunxis Hose Company No. 1 is a mixture of success and failure. The first call that the company took was at the home of Captain Nathaniel Hayden, who had been a staunch opponent of the chartering of the fire district. Captain Hayden was away from home when the fire broke out and the fire had made much headway by the time the fire company arrived, but they managed to extinguish it before Captain Hayden returned home. As a gesture of appreciation Hayden gave the company a clock which for many years adorned the parlor of the firehouse, and which now is located in a prominent place in the new firehouse. This early success was shadowed by the mishaps of another early fire in a carriage factory which resulted in a total loss due to a delayed alarm and the fact that the trolley crew inadvertently ran over the firemen's hose, cutting it in half.

Lack of funds also plagued the fire company. The furnishing of the interior of the firehouse was a case in point. Apparently, the local population resented the sum of money spent on building the structure and the company soon realized that if the interior was to be furnished it would have to be done by the company itself. Captain Humphrey, their aggressive leader, and his assistant, later fire chief himself, William Pinney, went to

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Hartford to buy furniture for the parlor and club room. A fair, the largest that Unionville had ever known, was held to pay for the furnishings and this strategy was so successful that other fairs were held over the years. Later fairs paid for gymnasium equipment, a player piano and a refurbishing of the parlor c. 1925.

Gradually the company's equipment was upgraded. The stables, located near the firehouse, housed the animals which replaced the man-power of the hand-drawn vehicles used to fight the early fires. Local tradition maintains that the horses were so well trained that at the signal of the fire bell that they would back into position of their own accord, ready to be harnessed to the equipment.¹⁸ A hook and ladder truck later replaced the cruder early equipment. During the tenure of Captain Pinney (1913-1921) the first mechanical firetruck was purchased. This one hundred and twenty-five horsepower truck, a Seagrave combination pumper, chemical and hose truck, carried two forty-gallon chemical tanks with a pumper capable of pumping five hundred gallons per minute. The pressure of the fire hydrants could not be relied upon during large fires, so the new firetruck was a vast improvement over the older system of fighting fires. The speed with which the new truck could reach its destination was yet another advantage. In May, 1921, the company was called to a fire seven miles away from the station house on the south end of Farmington. Because of the new truck and the quick actions of the company, they reached the fire eleven minutes after the alarm was given.¹⁹

The Tunxis Hose Company No. 1 has acquired not only a reputation for quick response time, efficient firefighting and keeping their equipment up-to-date, but also for their hospitality and competitive spirit. They have won many prizes in their competitions with other volunteer fire departments and in September, 1911, they played host to 5,000 visiting firemen. Bunting adorned all the buildings in town and the women of town labored long to provide delicious food for both the residents and the visitors. The fire company also supported the war effort during both world wars and marched in every local parade.

The fire district commission, designed to oversee the activities of the Tunxis Hose Co. No. 1, was the body that in essence governed Unionville from 1893 until its incorporation in 1921 as a borough. By the late nineteenth century there was little to link Unionville with Farmington or any other settlement in the township. The older town of Farmington was overshadowed by Unionville in the areas of population and industry and the rivalry of the two settlements was well established. Geographically, Unionville was too far away to be a part of the village of Farmington and although it remained under the jurisdiction of the Town of Farmington, all the important decisions governing Unionville were made by the fire district commission. When Fred J. Broadbent died in 1924 he was lauded as "an original member of the Fire District Commission that governed Unionville for over twenty years."²⁰ This unusual political development shows a shift away from the town meeting form of government toward a more flexible legislative system. By 1903 there were five hundred electors within the boundaries of the Unionville Fire District, a powerful political force to be reckoned with in the scope of the town government.

Unionville is said to have gotten its name because it is adjacent to the union of three townships; Farmington, Avon and Burlington. By 1831 the name Unionville had been introduced into popular usage by the Connecticut Courant.²¹ It was, however, the residents of Unionville, who acted in unity to create the beneficial social and political force of the fire district commission. This fire district commission provided not only the framework necessary

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to establish and regulate a much-needed fire-fighting force, but it also was the vehicle used to promote a nascent local government. The move to create the borough of Unionville in 1921 might never have come about without the defacto government of the fire district commission during the twenty-odd years preceding the creation of the borough.

Today the Unionville Tunxis Firehouse still stands much as it did when it was built in the mid 1890s. It was in continuous use between 1893 and 1960 as the only firehouse in Unionville, a place for storage of the valuable fire fighting equipment and a gathering place for many social events. Although a modern fire house was constructed in 1960 about one block away from the original firehouse, the Unionville Tunxis Firehouse continues to be used for storage of fire-fighting apparatus and it is well maintained.

The Unionville Tunxis Firehouse is a significant example of a late Victorian Queen Anne firehouse. The firehouse was not inspired by just one style, but rather by several nationally accepted styles arranged by the builder to suit the needs and tastes of Unionville residents. The presence of the tall slate roofed drying tower is typical of this period of firehouse construction and is a rare survival. The quality of the brick corbelling is also unusually fine for such a structure. Although the design of the building has been compromised by the insertion of a modern garage bay on the first floor, this modification represents the evolution of firefighting in Unionville and does not seriously effect the integrity of the building. The main importance of the firehouse lies not in its individual features but in the fact that it is a well-preserved example of a common type of late Victorian firehouse.

End Notes

¹Christopher P. Bickford, Farmington Connecticut, (Canaan, N.H.: Phoenix Publishing Co., for the Farmington Historical Society, 1982), pp. 241, 335, 337.

²Ibid, p. 337.

³Ibid, p. 337.

⁴Samuel Pepper, "History of Unionville," (written for the Chamber of Commerce in 1926; parts of the manuscript survive and are available at the Farmington Historical Society, Farmington).

⁵Bickford, Farmington, p. 319.

⁶Pepper, "Unionville."

⁷Bickford, Farmington, p. 319.

⁸Raymond K. Brooks, "Early Manufacturing in Unionville," (available at the Farmington Historical Society, Farmington), p. 3.

⁹Pepper, "Unionville."

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¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Twelfth United States Census; 1900, Town of Farmington, Hartford County, Connecticut, population schedule.

¹³Pepper, "Unionville."

¹⁴Brooks, "Unionville," p. 3.

¹⁵Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁶Ibid, pp. 3-4

¹⁷Ibid, p. 4.

¹⁸Author's interview with present fire chief, December 31, 1982.

¹⁹Pepper, "Unionville."

²⁰Bickford, Farmington, 320.

²¹Ibid, 241.

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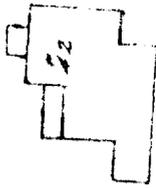
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Brooks, Raymond K., "Early Manufacturing in Unionville," unpublished manuscript available at the Farmington Historical Society, Farmington.
- Pepper, Samuel, "History of Unionville," unpublished manuscript written in 1926 by Pepper for the Chamber of Commerce. Parts of the manuscript survive and are available at the Farmington Historical Society, Farmington.

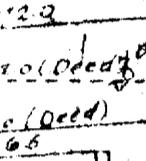
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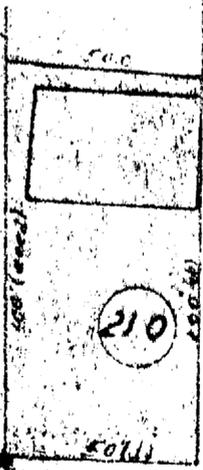
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UNIONVILLE-TUNXIS HOSE FIREHOUSE

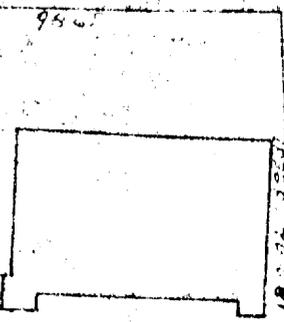
TOWN OF FARMINGTON
HILLSIDE GEMETARY

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CHRIST CHURCH 211

W. P. L. S. H.