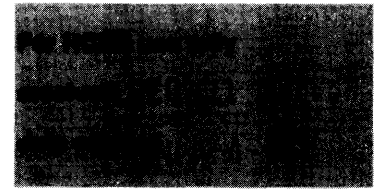


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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



1. Name

historic Hose & Hook & Ladder Truck Building

and/or common Thomaston Firehouse

2. Location

street & number Main Street

___ not for publication

city, town Thomaston

___ vicinity of

congressional district

Sixth

state Connecticut

code 09

county Litchfield

code 05

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Thomaston

street & number 158 Main Street

city, town Thomaston

___ vicinity of

state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Thomaston Land Records, Town Hall

street & number 158 Main Street

city, town Thomaston

state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date 1975

___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

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

Over View

The Thomaston Firehouse faces southeast toward Main Street in the center of Thomaston, Connecticut. (Photograph 1.) It is the central member of a group of three distinguished buildings. To its left is Trinity Church (1871) designed by Richard M. Upjohn, and to its right is the Thomaston Town Hall and Opera House² (1885) designed by Robert W. Hill of Waterbury, Connecticut, who also was the architect for the Firehouse. (Photograph 2.)

The Firehouse is a 2½-story brick building with granite trim constructed in 1882-83 in a late-Victorian, eclectic version of the Queen Anne style. The multiple ridge lines of the roof and the varied brick and shingled wall textures establish the Queen Anne style, but the symmetrical plan of the building and the classical detail of the gables, treated as pediments, reflect the advent of the Colonial Revival. The fine Venetian tower is an important Italianate feature.

Exterior

The facade of the Firehouse is a symmetrical three-part composition of brick laid up in common bond without headers on granite foundations, with the tower an added feature to the left. On the first floor the central entrance porch is flanked by the large doors for the fire trucks. In the second floor clusters of tall windows are above these three elements, while at attic level there are three gables projecting from the high, slate-covered, hipped roof.

The central wooden porch has three square posts with molded capitals that support a frieze divided into two segmental arches. Similar arches on the sides connect the front corner posts with engaged half-columns at the building wall. The spandrels of the arches are filled with recessed panels under incised ornament and a cornice with dentil course. The recessed tympanum of the gable above is decorated with a row of spindles under a field of shingles with coved corners. The raking cornices of the gable are cyma recta moldings.

The porch has a granite floor leading to two front doors with granite lintels. Each door has nine-pane glazing over vertical recessed panels. The door transoms are boarded up.

The large doors to the left and right of the porch are now modern overhead garage doors. The doorways have stilted segmental arches of granite voussoirs springing from a granite string course. The keystone of the arch to the right carries the raised numeral 1 and that to the left the numeral 2, designating the identifying numbers of the fire companies.

In the second floor above each of the large doors there are four pilasters corbeled out on granite consoles that are connected by a granite string course. Tripartite 1-over-1 windows fill the space between the central two pilasters, under a broad granite lintel. Three courses of square terra cotta rosettes fill the space immediately above the lintels while a single row of the rosettes over terra cotta beads continues around the rest of the building. The central wall between the tripartite windows, over the porch, is

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Inventory—Nomination Form**

Thomaston Firehouse, Thomaston, CT

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 1

recessed and has a pair of 1-over-1 windows. (Photograph 3.)

Each group of four pilasters supports an entablature that is part of the pedimental treatment of the gable above. The molded cornice with dentil course breaks out over the pilasters, and the raking cornices have dentil courses. The tympanum has a round arch formed by two moldings separated by a dentil course, surrounded by shingles. Within the arch are paired 10-over-2 windows flanked by foliate scroll-saw work and surmounted by a sun-burst pattern.

The central gable is smaller and set up higher in the roof slope. There are two louvers beneath its pediment while its tympanum is filled with horizontal boards and decorated with a Stick Style brace.

The 4-story, 70-foot-high tower at the left front corner continues the granite string course and the row of terra cotta rosettes from the principal section of the building. There is a narrow, 1-over-1 window in each face of the tower at the second, third and fourth floors. In the fourth floor the windows have round arches springing from a string course. The fourth floor is corbeled out with a granite course at the top and bottom of the brick corbeling. The pyramidal roof, supported by small brackets, projects and thereby accentuates the effect of increasing mass at the top of the tower. An elaborate copper weathervane rises from the tip of the pyramidal roof. As the tower was used for drying fire hose it had an important functional role in addition to being an essential component of the architectural design.

The southwest elevation of the main block continues the granite foundations, string course and terra cotta rosettes of the facade. This elevation is laid up in common bond with the usual headers, using a brick with a rougher finish than on the facade. There are two 4-over-4 windows with granite lintels and sills in each floor. To the rear of the main block there is a 20' x 28', early (but undated), 1-story, flat-roofed addition on granite foundations. (See Building Plan.) Its southwest face has two 4-over-4 windows with concrete sills and granite lintels. A further addition to the rear is a 30' x 40' modern garage for an ambulance service. (Photograph 4.)

The northeast elevation includes both the main block (with a ramp for the handicapped) and an original, hipped roof, 2-story wing to the rear. The brick on this wall again are laid up in common bond without headers and the elevation repeats other architectural details from the facade, including the granite foundations, sills, lintels, second-floor string course and cornice treatment of terra cotta bead molding, rosettes and dentil course. There are two windows at each floor on the main block and in the wing, those in the wing being closer together. The rear elevation of the wing has all these same elements except that the brick bond has headers, with two 4-over-4 windows at each floor.

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The building has two chimneys that rise from the northeast and southwest slopes of the hipped, slate roof of the main block. The chimneys are corbeled out at the top and are covered by stone slabs. A small gable on the northeast slope is a duplicate of the small central facade gable.

Interior

The two front doors, side by side, open to parallel stairways that rise in single runs to the second floor. The two principal first-floor spaces, formerly occupied by fire-fighting equipment (hook and ladder to the right and hose truck to the left), are now used as a senior citizen center and a community room. Plywood has been applied to the walls and dropped ceilings have been installed, but the overhead doors are still in place and functional. (Photograph 5.)

The second floor has two large rooms over the principal first-floor spaces. These were the meeting and social rooms for the volunteer fire companies and are now exhibition rooms for the Thomaston Historical Society. The second floor has undergone far fewer alterations than the first floor. Each room still has its slate fireplace surround with incised, gilt, stylized pattern and cast-iron firebox grate. (Photograph 6.) Original paneled doors and dados of narrow, vertical, beaded boards are still in place. There is a cedar closet in which the firemen stored their uniforms on this floor, and an office formerly used by the fire commissioners.

The attic is roomy under the high roof. The brick walls extend up two feet above the attic floor. The roof framing is exposed and includes heavy purlins and several vertical iron tie rods. There is access from the attic to the tower, for hose drying purposes. Window valances removed from a second-floor social room are stored in the attic. They are elaborate plaster compositions of foliate patterns with central shields. The shields are emblazoned with crossed ladders and the lettering "Thomaston H L 1" for Thomaston Hook & Ladder, Company 1. (Photograph 7.)

1. Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places pending.
2. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places April 26, 1972.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Specific dates 1882-83 **Builder/Architect** Robert W. Hill

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Firehouse is a fine example of late-Victorian-era architecture influenced by the Queen Anne style. The exterior, but for the overhead doors from the late Victorian era. The exterior, except for the overhead doors and a rear addition, has complete architectural integrity while the interior, particularly on the second floor, retains many of its original decorative details. (Criterion C.) Both the fire-fighting and the social functions fulfilled by the volunteer fire companies headquartered in the building were important to the life and welfare of the community for almost a century. (Criterion A.)

History

The minutes of a Special Town Meeting held by Thomaston on May 6, 1882 record the following resolution:

"It was moved and voted that the Fire Commissioners and Selectmen are hereby instructed and empowered to erect a building with suitable accommodations for the Fire Department at such cost as to them shall seem best, upon the premises now occupied as a cemetery on Main Street opposite the residence of Dr. Wm. Woodruff...after the monuments and remains have been removed therefrom.... Said building to be erected...as will not interfere with a suitable site for a Town Hall."

Work was put in hand promptly, as itemized by the Selectmen's report of October 1, 1883. (See copy attached.) On October 5, 1882 John N. Merrill received his first payment of \$200 for work on the foundations. In November Chatfield and Chatfield began the masonry work and in January 1883 W.M. Hurlbut started the carpenter and joiner work. The final payment listed was to R.W. Hill of Waterbury, the architect, on August 14, 1883 in the amount of \$374.29. Total cost of the building was \$12,243.94.

While the source of the granite is not known, the brick was manufactured in a local brickyard situated on the hill northwest of Main Street that was operated by the Seth Thomas family, who, through the Seth Thomas Clock Co., dominated the town.

The new building was constructed for Hook & Ladder Company No. 1 and Hose Company No. 2. Two important aspects of the organizational structure of these companies were reflected in the building plan. First, they were separate companies, and, second, they were volunteer companies.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Biographical sketch of Robert W. Hill prepared by the Mattatuck Museum.
Minutes of Town Meetings and Selectmen's report, Thomaston town records.

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property Less than one
Quadrangle name Thomaston

UTM NOT VERIFIED
Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8	6	6	0	1	8	0	4	6	1	5	0	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

See Continuation Sheet.

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom, Consultant

organization Connecticut Historical Commission date August 2, 1981

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

city or town Hartford state Connecticut

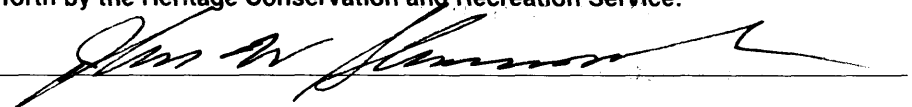
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 November 23, 1981

For HCERS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register date 1/4/82


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Thomaston Firehouse, Thomaston, CT

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It was the custom to organize separate fire companies for the different pieces of equipment. Thomaston's two pieces of equipment, the hook and ladder and the hose truck, called for two companies. As they were separate companies, separate facilities had to be provided, even though the companies responded to fire alarms together. Older residents of Thomaston recall that each company guarded its independence with due sense of rivalry toward the other company. Accordingly, the building was designed with two front doors, two stairways and two social rooms. The identifying number of each company was chiseled in granite over its equipment door.

It is traditional with volunteer fire companies that social activities play an important part in the overall program. For this reason the social rooms on the second floor, one for each company, were essential to the building plan. The social rooms are reached by parallel stairways that rise from inside the front doors, side by side and separated only by a wall. The fireplaces and window valances indicate that the social rooms were fitted out to be comfortable and attractive. Dances and other parties held in these premises are fondly recalled by local citizens.

The dual functions of the fire companies received equal space in the building and both functions were of considerable importance to the town. The importance of the fire-fighting function is self-evident. A key to the perhaps equal importance of the social function is suggested by the architectural importance of the building and the willingness of the town to provide the funds required to build the spacious social rooms.

The Firehouse continued in use for its original purposes until 1979. At that time a new firehouse was built in which the two companies now are installed, with some reluctance, on a consolidated and integrated basis.

Architecture

Robert Wakeman Hill (1828-1909), the architect chosen to design the Firehouse in 1882, conducted an extensive practice. Born in Waterbury, he worked as a young man for Henry Austin in New Haven and then for A.C. Nash in Milwaukee before returning to Waterbury at the age of 30 to open his own office. Notable among the many buildings he designed in Waterbury and surrounding towns were the state armories in Waterbury, New London, Bridgeport, Norwalk and New Britain, old Waterbury City Hall, the Litchfield Courthouse and the Taft School at Watertown. He was the architect for two schools in Thomaston in addition to the Firehouse and Opera House.

The Thomaston Special Town Meeting resolution to proceed with the Firehouse indicates that the Town Hall and Opera House already was contemplated. The design of the two buildings suggests that Hill already had the second in mind when he drew plans for the first. The Opera House is larger than the Firehouse and more ambitious in terms of embellishment, but is built of the same materials as in compatible style.

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**National Register of Historic Places
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received

date entered

Thomaston Firehouse, Thomaston, CT

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The use of components from several architectural styles in the Firehouse was not atypical of late Victorian eclecticism. The dominant influence probably is the Queen Anne, expressed in variation in wall textures of brick, shingles and terra cotta, the jagged roof line and the turned woodwork of the porch. The spindles there and the cove corners of the shingles are shapes associated with the Queen Anne style.

The Venetian tower, in addition to establishing the unmistakable presence of the Italianate style, was functionally important for drying the firehose; the Hose Company therefore occupied that half of the building next to the tower. Other Italianate features are seen in the molded capitals of the square wooden porch columns, the tall paired and tripartite windows, the stilted arches of the windows, and the granite string courses.

The Italianate style had peaked in popularity at about the time of the Civil War while the Queen Anne style, though later, was already well into its period of decline nationally by the time the Firehouse was built. In these respects Hill was behind the times in his design. With the Colonial Revival features, however, Hill was up to date, for interest in the Colonial Revival and classical principles was on the ascendancy in the 1880s in a movement culminating in the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago that set the tone of American architectural style for several decades. The symmetrical facade and plan, the gable ends treated prominently as pediments, the cornices with dentil courses and the round arches in the attic gables all reflect the on-coming surge of the Colonial Revival style.

Architect Hill provided for the functional requirements of the fire fighters both on and off duty in a building that despite the use of components from several architectural styles nonetheless has unity and cohesion. The Firehouse as it stands today is an informative statement of the architectural and social forces that prevailed in Thomaston a century ago.

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Thomaston Firehouse, Thomaston, CT

Continuation sheet Geographical Data

Item number 10

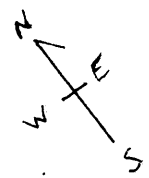
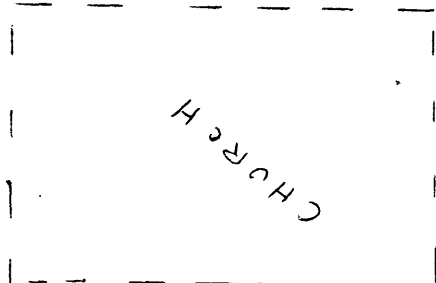
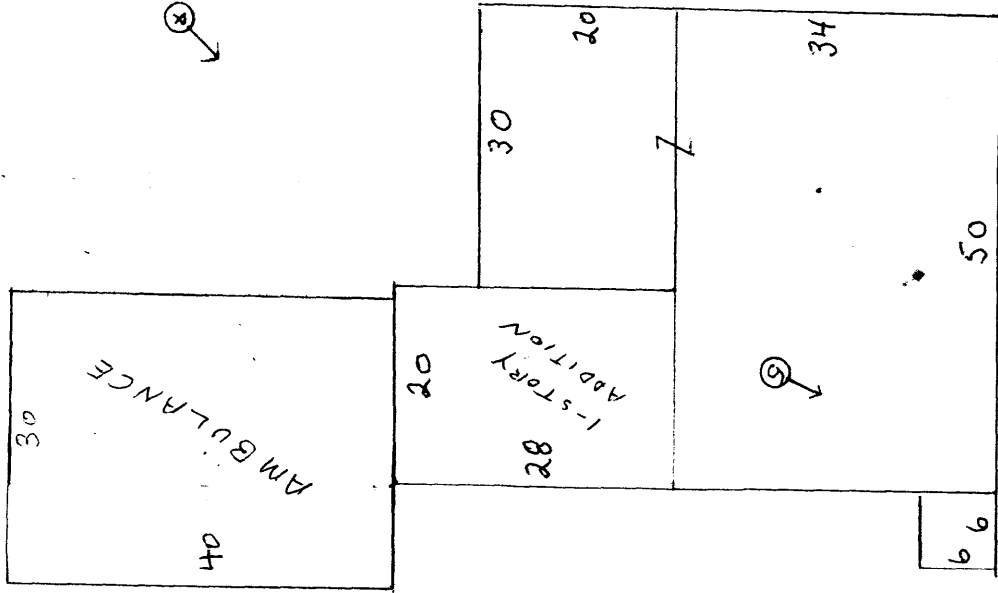
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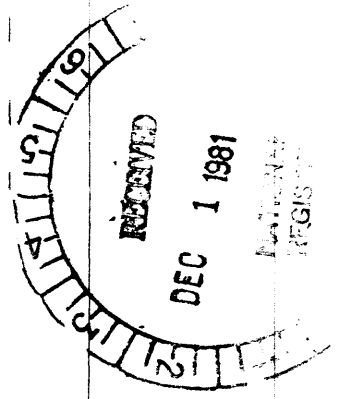
Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the plot occupied jointly by the Firehouse and the Town Hall and Opera House is shown on Thomaston assessor's map 40, block 19, lot 7. This is the old burying ground deeded by the Town of Waterbury to the Town of Thomaston as shown by Thomaston Land Records, volume 2, page 561, December 2, 1881.

Thomaston Firehouse
 Thomaston, CT
 Building Plan
 Scale: 1" = 20'
 Photo Key



TOWN &
 OPERA HOUSE
 HALL



MAIN STREET



New Hose & Hook & Ladder Truck Building

1882

Oct	5	J. A. Merrill for work on foundation	B1	202 00
"	10	John A. Merrill payment on Contract for Cellars	B36	600 00
Nov	16	John A. Merrill for balance on Horse building	B34	75 00
"	28	Chatfield and Chatfield 1 st Payment on Masons	B43	1200 00
Dec	12	Chatfield and Chatfield 2 nd Payment on Mason work	B50	1000 00
Jan	14	A. W. Humbert 1 st Payment on Carpenter & Joiner work	B61	1200 00
"	11	Chatfield & Chatfield 3 rd Payment on Mason work	B64	1000 00
March	14	A. W. Humbert 2 nd Payment on Carpenter & Joiner work	B86	46 06
April	4	W. H. Thomas Clock Co. Sundry bills for Sundry	B86	46 06
"	9	Chatfield & Chatfield 4 th Payment on Mason work	B94	200 00
May	23	Chatfield & Chatfield 5 th Payment on Mason work	B105	1317 00
"	26	J. H. Spaulding 1 st Payment on Plumbing	B109	250 00
June	15	W. W. Humbert 3 rd Payment on Joiner work	B112	1000 00
"	30	David Sundry bills for cleaning Horse House	B122	9 80
July	14	Chatfield & Chatfield Balance on Contract	B126	325 00
"	20	Chatfield & Chatfield Curing Coal Cellars	B127	21 00
"	27	J. W. Spaulding balance on Plumbing	B113	113 00
Aug	6	A. W. Humbert 4 th Payment on Carpenter & Joiner work	B133	1329 79
"	14	R. H. Hill services as Architect	B137	374 29
				12,243 94

