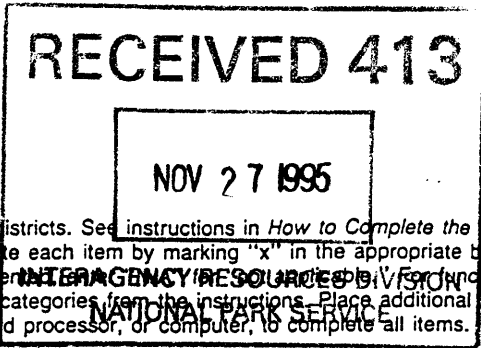


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 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 Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 17 West Sixth Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Oshkosh N/A vicinity

state Wisconsin code WI county Winnebago code 139 zip code 54901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

[Signature] - 7 NOV. 1995
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

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:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

Entered in the
National Register

Date of Action

1.11.96

Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House
Name of Property

Winnebago Co., Wisconsin
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
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	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)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls BRICK

STONE

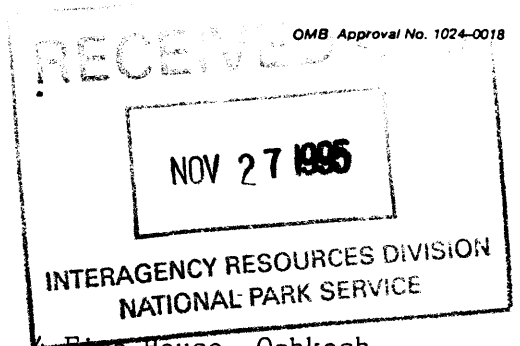
roof ASPHALT

other N/A

N/A

Narrative Description

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

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Winnebago County, Wisconsin

Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House is centrally located in downtown Oshkosh. It sits on the south side of West Sixth Street, the first street south of the Fox River. To its east are the rear elevations of the row of mostly cream brick Italianate commercial blocks that line South Main Street. To its northeast is the Main Street bridge, which allowed quick access to the north half of downtown Oshkosh. Lining the river directly across Sixth Street to the north was a flour mill, some of the lumberyards, sawmills and sash, door and blind factories that were Oshkosh's life blood in the 19th century. Today, these sites have been converted to other industrial and commercial uses.

Exterior - Front

The western two-bay section of the fire station was erected in 1868. It is a two-story brick load-bearing structure of Italianate design. The main bay consists of a wide multi-centered arched door. The door itself is an overhead garage door of relatively recent date. The space above the arch is decorated with shallowly-recessed panels of brick. The arch springs from low fat pilasters trimmed with bands of moulded brick and plain stone caps. To either side of the main door are taller pilasters in an unusual design. The inside edges of the pilasters are vertical, but the outside edges are battered. Also, at every few rows of brick, the brick course projects slightly over the row below. This occurs at slightly wider intervals near the base than near the "capitals" of the pilasters. This and the battered outside edges lends a sophisticated sense of solidity not often seen on small town Italianate design. The "capitals" of the pilasters consist of a rectangular panel of inset brick framed by projecting mouldings; above this is a panel trimmed with two lower inset panels and three narrow brick dentils. Two more rows of brick moulding are topped by plain stone caps.

On the second floor, brick pilasters spring from these capitals and rise to the building's cornice. Small decorative cut brick brackets merge these pilasters with the plain brick cornice panel at the top of the building. Originally an elaborate wooden bracketed cornice with a segmentally-arched pediment and panels marked "4" and "Brooklyn" crowned this central bay of the building. This cornice was removed, probably in the 1930s.

The second story of the main bay features a grouping of three stilted round-arched windows with the center window taller and wider than the flanking ones. The arches are brick, have stone keystones and spring from carved stone impost blocks. While the center window is covered on the outside with plywood, the original round-headed sash remains, and consists of a two-light top sash

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over a six-light bottom sash. The side windows are too narrow for a vertical center mullion and consist of two-light top and bottom sash. Historic photographs show that the center window once opened onto a heavy wooden balconet on large wooden brackets. The low balconet railing had five quatrefoils carved into it; urns graced the corner posts. Sometime prior to 1902 the original balconet was replaced with one of delicate wrought iron.² The wrought iron balconet, in turn, was removed before the fire house was decommissioned in 1947-1948.³

The bay to the right (west) of the main bay contains the passage door used originally to reach the meeting room on the second floor. This door has a multi-centered arched opening, with a brick arch trimmed with carved stone impost blocks and a keystone. The entrance door was originally inset a foot or two behind the arch, but sometime prior to 1902 it was brought out almost flush with the facade. The door currently located here is a modern replacement. Directly above is a bull's-eye window with stone voussoirs. Directly above the bull's-eye window is a stringcourse of stone supported by narrow brick courses and brick dentils.

The second floor of this bay features a tall round-arched window supported by a stone sill on two stone corbels. The window arch is brick, laid flush with the facade. The window sash is the original four-over-four, double-hung unit with a round-arched top. The window was originally crowned with a bracketed wooden hood in the shape of a segmental pediment, which was removed prior to 1947.⁴ The roofline of the western bay is now plain but was originally graced by a bracketed cornice and a fancy wooden bell tower. This tower, which had lost some of its gingerbread by 1902, was removed probably in the 1930s.⁵

In the 1880s the eastern bay was added to the fire house.⁶ This is another fire truck bay with a wide multi-centered arched doorway. The bay was designed to harmonize with the design of the original fire house. The fire truck door has been infilled with wooden panels and a small passage door. The pilasters to either side mimic those that immediately flank the center door, with two bands of brick and stone caps. Above is a wide brick stringcourse imitating the design of the capitals of the battered pilasters, with a band of small inset panels at the bottom and brick dentils above. A stone stringcourse serves as the sill of a wide double window on the second floor. This window has a segmental arch with pilasters of stone and moulded brick. A moulded brick band and a stone keystone decorate the arch. The two double-hung windows have four-over-four sash. The narrow tympanum above is trimmed with thin, incised scrollwork.

The wide brick cornice of the eastern bay is now plain, but was originally

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finished in a wide wooden frieze emblazoned with the words "Hook and Ladder" and a bracketed cornice above.

Across the front of the building is a low rusticated limestone sill.

Exterior - Side and Rear Facades

The west side of the building is plain and functional. When the fire house was built, a one-story frame building sat within inches of it to the west. The fire house parapet slopes downward toward the back of the building in five shallow steps. Two segmentally-arched windows on the rear half of the second floor were added sometime in the late 19th or early 20th century, and have two-over-two flat-topped double-hung sash. One tall four-over-four window on the first floor appears to be original, but a tiny, one-over-one double-hung unit behind it is clearly 20th century.

A two-story addition was added across the back of the building prior to 1890. It projects to the west about two feet. Just in front of the addition was a short, hipped-roofed tower with a bracketed cornice, used as a lookout and for hose drying. This wooden tower is now gone. The west side of the rear has a diagonal-board passage door; above is a similar haymow opening, with a boarded-up segmentally-arched opening just below it.

The eastern side of the building is also plain. Three evenly-spaced windows with plain lintels and sills light each of the two floors in the front section. The windows retain their original four-over-four double-hung sash. The stub of a chimney, which originally had a corbelled cap, rises above the roof between the second and third set of windows. The rest of the east facade is unfenestrated except for one blocked-up window near the back corner.

The rear facade has five segmentally-arched openings on the first floor and three above. The two outermost first floor windows are small windows of the size often used to light horses' stalls. A wide center door had a haymow door immediately above. These openings have been blocked up with wood (the westernmost window is bricked up). The original sash and doors have been removed, except for the center door, which remains behind the plywood. From the 1890s to after 1932 a small one-story wood shed was attached to the stable's southeast corner.

Sometime prior to 1902 the entire exterior of the building was painted or stained a dark color, probably to meet the fashion of the time for more colorful buildings and perhaps the nationwide preference for red brick firehouses.⁷ The building is now painted a dark green. The grade at the rear has also

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been raised about three feet.

Interior - First Floor

The first floor is divided into three spaces: the main 1868 apparatus floor, the ca. 1880s side truck bay and the ca. 1880s rear stable (please see enclosed floor plans). The main apparatus floor is a large rectangular space. The ceiling and the walls are covered in narrow beaded tongue-in-groove boards with an approximately 40" chair rail. The floor is poured concrete, replacing the original Nicholson pavement. Windows are trimmed with decorative mouldings. A stairway originally rose from the main passage door, but only the floor-to-ceiling posts and the lines of the treads and risers remain on the side wall. Two hatches for firepoles are located in the ceiling near the two front corners of the room. Tucked in the back (southwestern) corner of the room is a small bathroom with a lower wood ceiling. The bathroom was added probably in the 1920s judging from the vintage of the plain wall-hung sink and watercloset. Two boxed, square openings of turn-of-the-century design lead to the side bay and the stable. The stable opening has been filled in with a partition.

The side truck bay is finished in a fashion similar to the main apparatus floor, except that the front wall is now covered in drywall. The window trim in this section is plain with a raised fillet moulding at the edges. Two hatches near the front indicate where the firepoles were located.

The stable extends across the back of the building. The stable is unfinished, with exposed brick walls. The space is now two stories high, but the western end has a loft area with a board ceiling and a boxed-in stairway leading to the second floor. Holes on the southern (rear) wall show where floor joists used to be located between the first floor and the haymow. Second-story windows in the 1880s truck bay wall and differences in brick color seem to suggest that at least for a few years after the truck bay was built the stable was only one-story high. The hinged haymow door with diagonal boards remains on the inside. Passage doors between the stable and the front of the building are heavily gouged by years of harnessed horses passing through them.

Interior - Second Floor

The rear stairway leads up to a large rear corner room in the 1868 section. This room was altered in the 20th century with linoleum over the narrow board floors. It retains its beaded board wall and ceiling, but its eastern wall is a drywall partition. A door leads from this room to the main meeting room over the apparatus floor. This room has its original pine board floor, a varnished

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wainscot of two inch wide beaded boards, with plaster above and a tongue-in-groove varnished board ceiling. In the middle of the ceiling is a large Neo-classical plaster medallion, grained to match the ceiling, from which hangs a plain electric light fixture. The medallion is encircled with moulding and has carved foliage around its central boss. The pole brackets are still in place above the two firepole hatches in the floor.

A door near the southwest corner of the room leads to a room constructed where the staircase used to be. This small room has wainscotting of horizontal beaded boards. A door near the northwest corner of the meeting room leads to a plain room with plaster walls, a six inch wide plank floor and plain window trim. Holes in the ceiling and floor show the old locations of the bell pulls from the bell tower. An original window in the rear (south) of this room overlooks the old stairwell area.

A four-over-four window and a panelled door with a two-light transom lead to the 1880s sleeping room above the truck bay. The sleeping room has a five-inch wide board floor, beaded board wainscotting and plaster walls and ceiling. The window trim is of plain boards. At the rear of this room is a vertical board wall pierced by a center door, side windows and a center window directly above the door. This door leads to a small simple room with plaster walls and ceiling. At the southwest corner of the sleeping room is a door leading to a windowless center room. Trimmed with beaded board walls and ceiling, a chair rail and narrow-gauge wooden floor, this room was probably a hose-drying room.

A Note on Integrity

In discussing context considerations for municipal buildings, the Cultural Resources Management Manual states that "generally, the historic building should not be overshadowed by later additions and most of the historic fabric on the exterior should remain intact."⁸ Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House received no additions after its 1880s truck bay and rear stable. All of the brick and stonework of the exterior remain. The wood balconet was removed prior to 1902. The tower and bell tower were removed, probably in the 1930s, no doubt victims of the expense of maintenance and functional obsolescence. The date that the wooden cornice and window hood were removed is unknown.

Unlike most historic buildings, Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House retains almost all of its original sash and some of its stable doors. The interior is remarkably intact from the days of its use as a fire station. Particularly unusual is the intact meeting room on the second floor, with its wainscotting, board ceiling, panelled doors, window trim, ceiling medallion and firepole hatches

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and wall pole brackets. The rear stable also still remains, with door frames which still show the gouges created by the harnessed horses rushing through as the alarms sounded.

Most importantly, nearly all of the alterations that have occurred to the Brooklyn Fire House were undertaken during its use as a fire station, as the practice and technology of fire fighting changed from a volunteer organization with clubrooms and a steam engine house, to a professional service with a hook and ladder truck and quarters for men and horses, to a twentieth century fire station with motorized vehicles.

¹Sanborn maps, 1903 and 1932 updated to 1946 and recollections of Harry Gauger and Bernard Geffers, retired firefighters.

²Souvenir: Oshkosh Fire and Police Department, 1902.

³Gauger and Geffers.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid. and Sanborn maps.

⁶Photograph dated 1879 in possession of Oshkosh Public Museum and 1890 Sanborn map.

⁷Souvenir, 1902 and Rebecca Zurier, The American Firehouse, pp. 89 ff.

⁸Barbara Wyatt, ed., Cultural Resources Management in Wisconsin, v. I, p. 9-14.

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1868-1945¹

Significant Dates

1868; 1880s²

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Waters, William

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):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Historic Preservation Division, State
Historical Society of Wisconsin
Oshkosh City Planning Department

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Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House, Oshkosh
Winnebago County, Wisconsin

Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House is eligible for the National Register on a local level for Criterion A, because it is one of only two buildings remaining that are associated with the fire fighting history of Oshkosh, a city in which the fire service was probably its most important municipal function. The building is the physical embodiment of the history of fire fighting in Oshkosh, having itself evolved over time. It retains elements from the 1860s and 1870s when it served as a steam engine house, with clubrooms for a volunteer fire company and municipal meeting rooms; from the 1880s through 1920s when it was used for the professional fire service, with its 1880s additions for a hook and ladder truck, sleeping quarters for men and a stable for horses; and from the 1920s through 1940s with the modern technology and motorized apparatus of the twentieth century.

The existing stable makes the building a representative example of a technology that has been rendered obsolete: the combination fire engine house and stable. Brooklyn No. 4 is the only fire station remaining in Oshkosh from the days of the horse-drawn steam engines and trucks. It is also the only known non-residential building of any type remaining in the City that is associated with the horse.³ The building clearly symbolizes local government by conveying the history and authority of that government, as stipulated in the Cultural Resources Management Manual.⁴

Finally, the Brooklyn Fire House is one of the landmarks of the south side of Oshkosh. The Oshkosh Intensive Survey identified the fire house and three large mills as the four most important historic resources in this large section of Oshkosh.⁵

The Oshkosh Intensive Survey noted that "perhaps the most important municipal service [in Oshkosh] was the fire department."⁶ In the mid-19th century, the majority of Oshkosh buildings were constructed of wood. The city's major industry was lumber products. Oshkosh was filled with highly resinous softwoods in various states of manufacture, from raw logs, to sawn, stacked and drying timber, manufactured sash, doors and blinds and substantial piles of waste in the form of slabwood and sawdust. The risk of fire and substantial fire damage was high.

The City of Oshkosh was incorporated in 1853, which by that year had grown to 2787 people. The editor of the local True Democrat had campaigned for incorporation in his paper, noting that "under a municipal government, fire engines can be procured and manned...."⁷ In the same week that the state legislature passed the incorporation, a fire frightened the True Democrat's editor:

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The almost miraculous escape of a large portion of the city, has made me think of our weak defences against fire. We have no fire engine, no city-owned fire buckets, nothing but our bare hands. Now that we have a city charter, we hope that measures will be taken by the city government to organize our defenses against fire at an early moment.⁸

The first fire protection equipment purchased was a 700 pound fire bell. The bell tolled often from its installation in 1853. The city was divided into three wards and fire wardens were appointed. In 1854 several substantial hooks and ladders were purchased. At this time, fires were fought by bucket brigades of citizens rallied by the bell. The citizens used the hooks to knock burning pieces of building away and the ladders to reach the fire and rescue people from upper stories. The City also purchased a shed to house the equipment. In February of 1855 the City bought a wagon and other fixtures.

The first volunteer fire company was organized on October 26, 1856. At first known as the Pioneer Engine Company No. 1, it soon changed its name to the Niagara Engine Co. No. 1. The City supplied the group with a hand-operated wagon-borne pump in the winter of 1857. Engine Co. No. 1 was composed predominantly of Yankee men. On February 26, 1857 a second volunteer company of German men, the Germania Engine Co. No. 2, made its first public appearance.

These two early fire companies, with their hand-operated engines, proved unable to contain the first major fire in Oshkosh, which occurred on May 10, 1859. In that fire, about six blocks of commercial buildings (essentially the whole business sector) in the heart of the downtown was destroyed. The fire bell also succumbed to the conflagration. Political pressure grew for more companies and more advanced equipment. Only two months after the 1859 fire, on July 9, a third company, the Union Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1, was established. Also in that year the three fire companies were incorporated so that they could receive income from insurance companies.

The Civil War delayed substantial additional improvements in Oshkosh's fire fighting capacity. The entire Niagara Co. enlisted en masse in 1861. The company continued with some new recruits but only two years later, in July of 1863, it disbanded over a dispute about a fire fighting contest. The city's business community formed a new company to take over the responsibility for the Niagara Co.'s hand pump. Known optimistically as the Phoenix Steam Engine Co. No. 1, its formation was intended in part to spur the City to purchase a steam engine. The acquisition of the city's first steam engine

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on June 21, 1866 was no doubt a great welcome addition to the city's fire fighting arsenal, since Oshkosh's second major fire had occurred only one month previously. That fire again destroyed the heart of the downtown, causing \$100,000 in damage and destroying, along with many commercial blocks, the post office and two public halls. The early steam engines were usually too heavy for a company of men to pull quickly through the streets. On April 11, 1867 the first team of horses was purchased to pull the new steam engine.

These three early volunteer companies were housed in simple frame buildings purchased or erected for them. These early frame firehouses have all since disappeared.

On October 3, 1867 the fourth volunteer company, the Brooklyn Steam Fire Engine Co. No. 4, was organized. At that time, Brooklyn was the nickname for the section of Oshkosh south of the river. It included mills and residences for mill workers and other working class families, many of whom were German immigrants. Brooklyn had its own commercial district along Kansas Street (now South Main). The fire committee of the Common Council authorized construction of an engine house one door away from this commercial district. It also authorized the purchase of a second steam engine. The Brooklyn Fire House was the first planned for the area south of the river, but its central location, just a few feet from the Main Street bridge, enabled the engine to be available for north side fires as well.

The City commissioned a young local architect who had recently moved to town, William Waters, to design an impressive brick building to house the new steam engine. Waters was born in upstate New York in 1843 and was trained at the predecessor to the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where he graduated in 1867. After working for a short while on the railroads, Waters moved to Oshkosh. The fire station and the Oshkosh Normal School may well have been Waters' first major commissions. The Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House is the earliest known remaining example of his work. Waters' practice lasted for another fifty years, and he designed numerous residential, commercial and civic buildings in Oshkosh and the surrounding Fox River valley. Waters is recognized by the Cultural Resources Management Manual as a master Wisconsin architect and many of his buildings are listed on the National Register.⁹

The 1868 Oshkosh city directory reported the construction of the Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House as a major event:

This [the new steam fire engine acquired on January 2, 1868] is

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undoubtedly the best fire engine in the State. A large and commodious building is now nearly completed, and when done, will not only be an ornament to the City, but as evidence of the prudent forethought of the people of Oshkosh.¹⁰

The Oshkosh Journal of August 8, 1868 stated that the fire house design was "well harmonized and is a specimen of fine taste and good workmanship." The Oshkosh Journal article also described the functions of the building then under construction. The first floor was to house the engine, a capacious cistern and the engineer's quarters. The second floor was to be an "assembly room for firemen's meetings and for election and ward purposes." This assembly room remains virtually intact. The fire house is the only 19th century building remaining in Oshkosh used for City government functions.

The importance of the Brooklyn Fire House in Oshkosh's early government history is indicated by the fact that on an 1873 bird's-eye map of the city, the Brooklyn Fire House is the only municipal building featured among 11 separately illustrated buildings.¹¹

On May 9, 1874 fire swept an area north of the river and just west of the downtown. Thirty structures were damaged or destroyed. Two months later, on July 14, 1874, fire broke out in a commercial block on North Main Street. "The fire laid waste all of the closely built section of Main Street" north of Algoma Boulevard and then spread for a mile to the northeast, consuming scores of commercial buildings and several hundred residences.¹² Less than a year later, on April 28, 1875, another huge conflagration occurred north of the river. This fire was the worst of them all.¹³ "Practically the whole business and manufacturing section of Oshkosh was destroyed by this fire, including 70 stores, 40 factories, 500 homes, 4 churches, 4 schools and 3 parsonages."¹⁴ Despite city regulations that the mills shut down on days of high fire risk, one mill was operating on that dry, windy day and sparks from its boiler ignited the mill building next door and thence a large part of the city.

The major fires of 1874 and 1875 resulted in the dissolution of the volunteer companies and their recreation as a full-time municipal fire service in 1877. Only the paid steamer engineers and hose cart drivers were kept on from the earlier companies. Four professionals were hired to be on continuous duty at each of the fire stations. Brooklyn No. 4 became the new municipal fire department's headquarters. It was probably the creation of the professional department that spurred the east and stable additions to the Brooklyn Fire House. The east bay contained the firemen's quarters upstairs. It also

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created a bay on the first floor for a hook and ladder truck that no doubt needed more space than the main steamer bay could provide.

In 1879 a street box alarm system was installed, connecting three boxes and firehouse gongs on both sides of the river via an under-river cable. The installation of the street box alarm system, which was augmented by additional boxes as years went by, was a technological advance that reduced the importance of the firehouse bell and lookout towers. In 1883 a public water system was begun, with the first construction being a sub-street water system and hydrants for fire fighting purposes. This system eventually led to the abandonment of the heavy steam engines.

By 1902 six fire stations were in place in Oshkosh. Engine Companies No. 2 and No. 6 were housed in simple frame buildings. Engine Company No. 3 was a Victorian Italianate structure. The State Street Truck House and Engine Co. No. 1, both downtown near the new City Hall, were impressive late Victorian buildings of brick and stone. All of these 19th century buildings, including the city hall, have since been torn down.

At the turn-of-the-century, hose wagons were the new improvement in fire fighting. In 1903, the Brooklyn station housed five men, two horses, and one hose cart carrying 2000 feet of hose. The old steamer was still kept there, but was now only a reserve piece of equipment used for emergencies.¹⁵

Spring of 1913 marked the beginning of the conversion from oats to gasoline, when the City purchased its first motor-driven apparatus. By 1914 one of the companies had already become known as a "motorcar company," and further advances were signalled by the renaming of one company as a "chemical and hose company." The total number of fire companies in Oshkosh had by then risen to eight, the same number of units that serves Oshkosh today. By that time, also, the fire department headquarters had been moved to Fire Station #5, which was a hook and ladder company located close to City Hall downtown.

The exact date of the end of the horse era has not been recorded, but the heralded purchase of three trucks in 1923, one in 1928, three in the 1930s and the hiring of a full-time mechanic make it clear that the horses were put to pasture by the late 1930s. In the 20th century technological changes in fire fighting created changes in the fabric of Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House. A concrete floor was poured in the apparatus bays for the motorized equipment. Improvements in hose materials permitted them to be stored horizontally in a drying rack room rather than in a tower. The main staircase to the

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old meeting room was removed, perhaps to give the firemen more privacy in their quarters. The bell tower, rendered obsolete as early as the 1880s when the call box system was adopted, succumbed to decay and was removed.¹⁶ But the firehouse continued in active use as the science of fire fighting evolved through World War II.

In the late 1940s the City began a campaign to decommission or renovate its older firehouses. Brooklyn No. 4 was decommissioned in 1946 and declared surplus in 1947-1948. From 1948 until recently it was used for a sign company. Of the two pre-World War II firehouses in Oshkosh, only two remain in relatively intact condition: Fire Station No. 2, which was built in the motorcar era in 1927 in a curiously old-fashioned Italianate design (1717 Congress Ave.)¹⁷ and Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House.

The Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House is locally significant under criterion A for its important role in the history of governmental efforts at fire suppression. It is especially significant in that it embodies the local evolution of fire fighting in Oshkosh from volunteer steam engine companies to mid-20th century motorized professional fire companies.

¹The period of significance begins in 1868 when the fire house was built and ends in 1945, which is fifty years ago. The building was decommissioned in 1946, but this last year of service is not considered significant enough to warrant breaking the 50-year rule for significance.

²1868 is the date of construction (Oshkosh Journal, August 8, 1868); 1880s is the date of construction of the east bay and stable (these sections of the building are not shown on an 1879 plat map and are shown on the 1890 Sanborn map).

³Oshkosh Intensive Survey.

⁴p. 9-14.

⁵Oshkosh Intensive Survey, p. 63.

⁶Ibid., p. 50.

⁷James I. Metz, ed., Prairie, Pines and People, p. 145.

⁸Ibid., p. 146.

⁹Because of its exterior alterations, Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House is not being nominated as a representative example of Waters' work.

¹⁰City directory, 1868, p. 58.

¹¹Clinton F. Karstaedt, Oshkosh: One Hundred Years a City, 1853-1953, p. 204.

¹²Ibid., p. 17.

¹³Elizabeth Miller, "North Main Street Historic District," NRHP nomination, p. 8-4.

¹⁴Karstaedt, p. 141.

¹⁵1903 Sanborn map and Karstaedt, p. 78.

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Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House, Oshkosh
Winnebago County, Wisconsin

¹⁶Rebecca Zurier, in The American Firehouse, states that "towers, often topped with delicate woodwork, proved vulnerable to attack from lightning, termites, rot and even fire. Today very few [in the United States] survive intact" (p.¹⁷117).

¹⁷listed in the National Register as part of the Paine Lumber Co. Historic District.

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Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House, Oshkosh
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Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House, Oshkosh
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot Seven (7) and Lot Eight (8) of Block Six (6) in the Plat of the Original Third Ward, in the Third Ward, City of Oshkosh, Winnebago County, Wisconsin, per Leach's Map of 1894.

Tax parcel #903-0039

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries consist of the city parcel upon which the building is located. The building covers most of the site.

Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House
Name of Property

Winnebago Co., Wisconsin
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	6	3	7	6	6	7	0	4	8	7	4	1	7	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

2

Zone		Easting				Northing								

3

Zone		Easting				Northing								

4

Zone		Easting				Northing								

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Katherine Hundt Rankin, Consultant

organization N/A date November 1, 1994

street & number 2818 Ridge Road telephone 608-231-1618

city or town Madison state WI zip code 53705

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 Joyce Fritz & Germaine Beck

street & number 17 West Sixth Avenue telephone _____

city or town Oshkosh state WI zip code 54901

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

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

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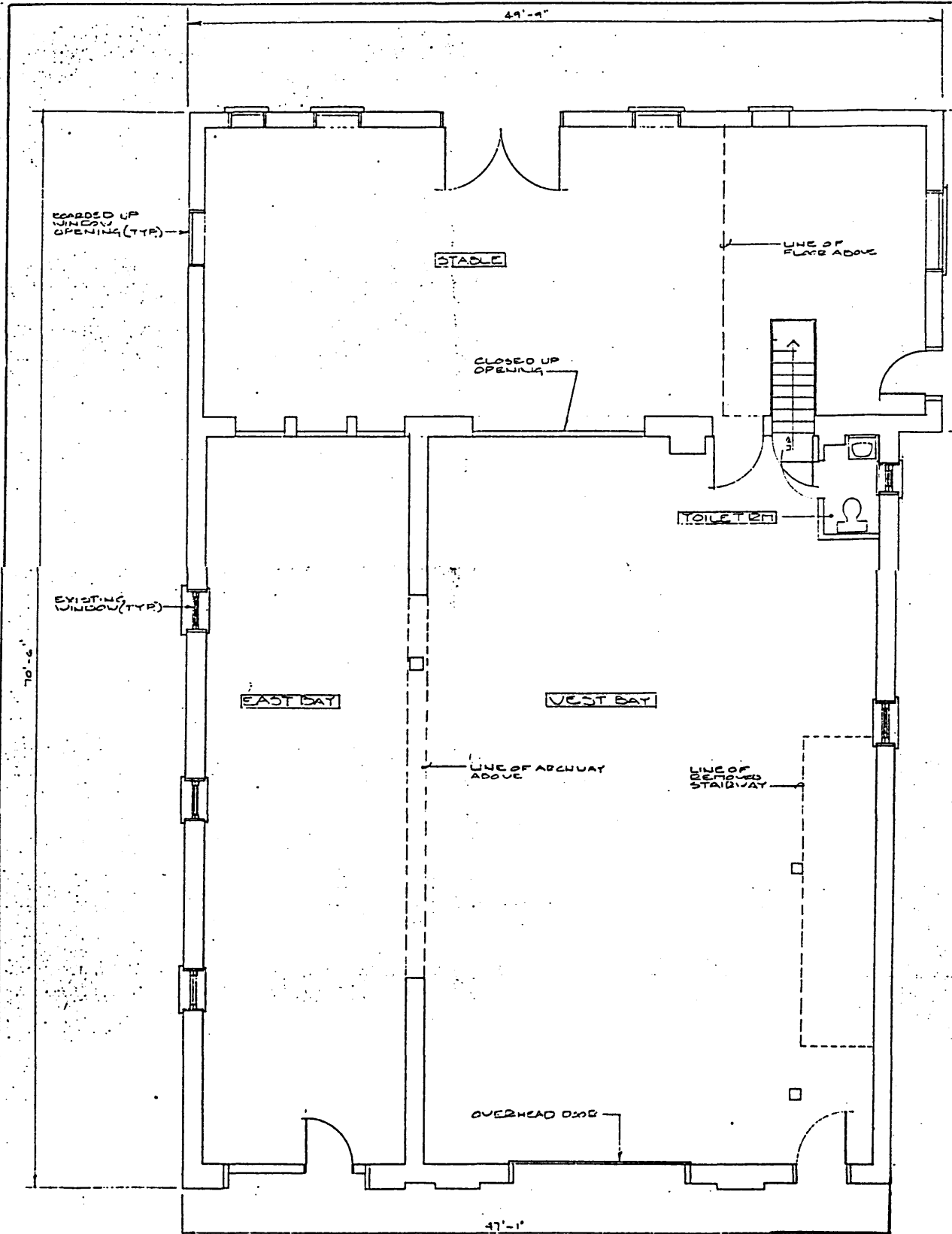
Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House, Oshkosh
Winnebago County, Wisconsin

PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs taken by Katherine H. Rankin, June, 1994
Negatives in possession of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin

- Photograph #1: Front (north) facade, from north
- Photograph #2: Front (north) and west facades, from westnorthwest
- Photograph #3: Rear (south) and east facades, from southsoutheast
- Photograph #4: Meeting room on second floor, from northwest corner
- Photograph #5: Sleeping room on second floor in east bay, from south
- Photograph #6: Rear (south) wall of rear stable, view of southeast corner

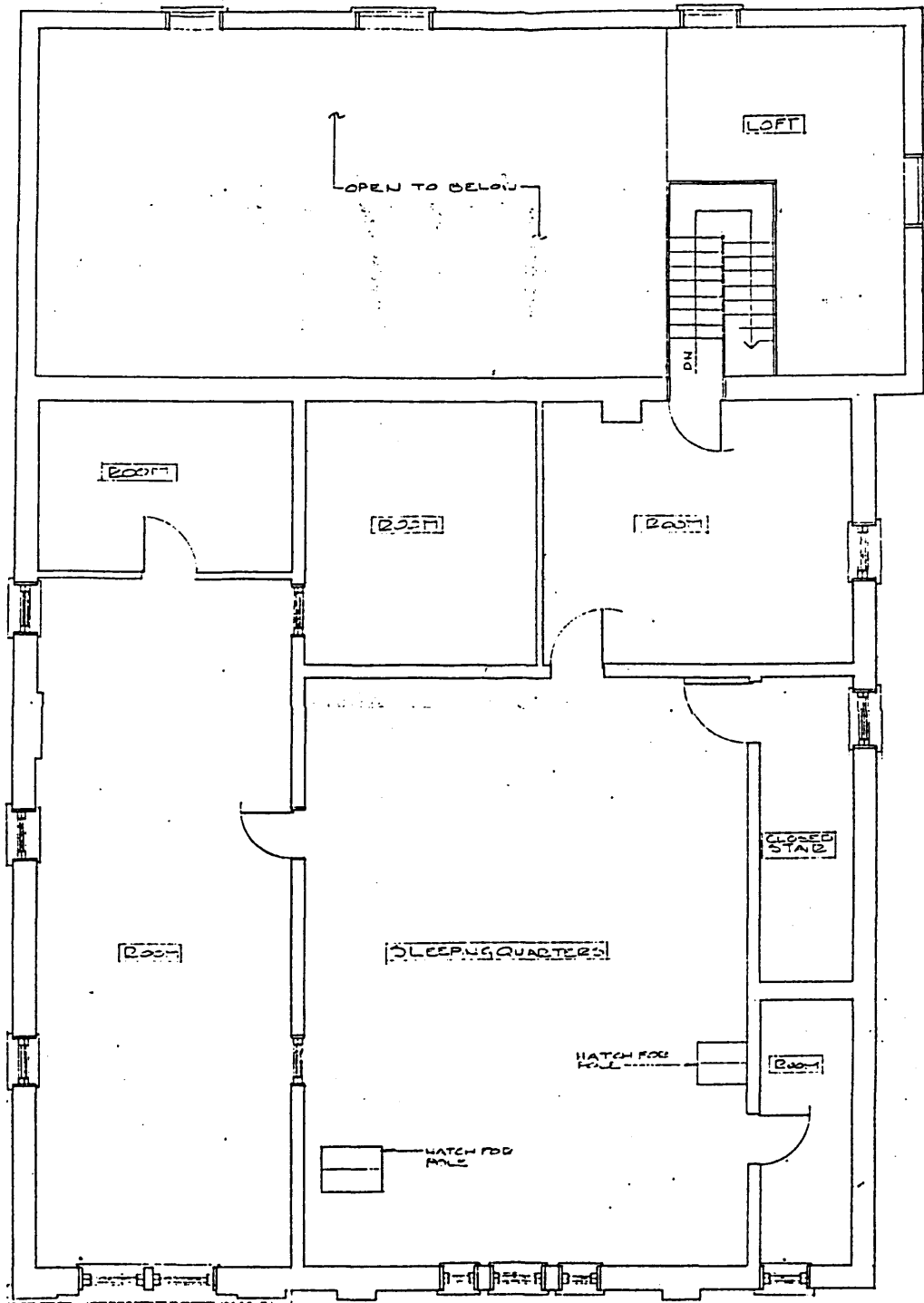
Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House, Oshkosh, Winnebago Co., Wisconsin



EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN



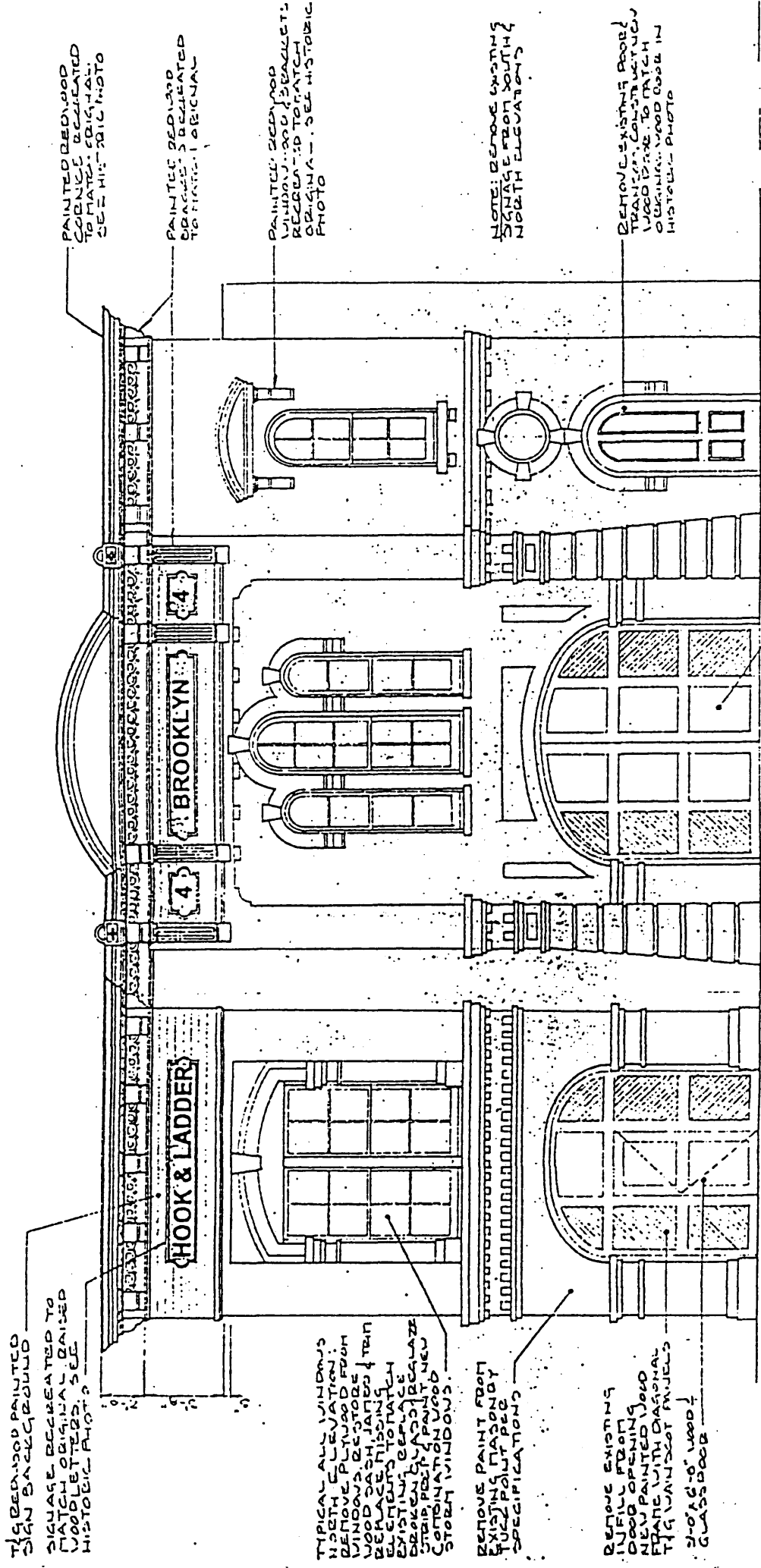
Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House, Oshkosh, Winnebago Co., Wisconsin



EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN



Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House, Oshkosh, Winnebago Co., Wisconsin



TTC BEEN PAINTED SIGN BACKGROUNDED BRASS BECREATED TO MATCH ORIGINAL PAINTED WOOD LETTERS SEE HISTORICAL PHOTO

PAINTED RED WOOD BRASS BECREATED TO MATCH ORIGINAL SEE HISTORICAL PHOTO

PAINTED RED WOOD BRASS BECREATED TO MATCH ORIGINAL

PAINTED RED WOOD WINDOWS AND BRACKETS RECREATED TO MATCH ORIGINAL - SEE HISTORICAL PHOTO

TYPICAL ALL WINDOWS NORTH ELEVATION: REMOVE PUT LOGS FROM WINDOVS. BRACKETS & TRIM WERE DASHING. JAMES & TRIM BECREATED TO MATCH EXISTING. BRACKETS BECREATED TO MATCH EXISTING. STAIR POST & PAINT NEW COMBINATION WOOD STORM WINDOWS.

REMOVE PAINT FROM EXISTING MASONRY TUEZ PAINT PER SPECIFICATIONS

REMOVE EXISTING TRAIL FROM DOOR OPENING NEW PAINTED WOOD FRAME WITH DIAGONAL TTC WAINSCOT PANELS 2'-0" x 6'-0" WOOD / GLASS DOOR

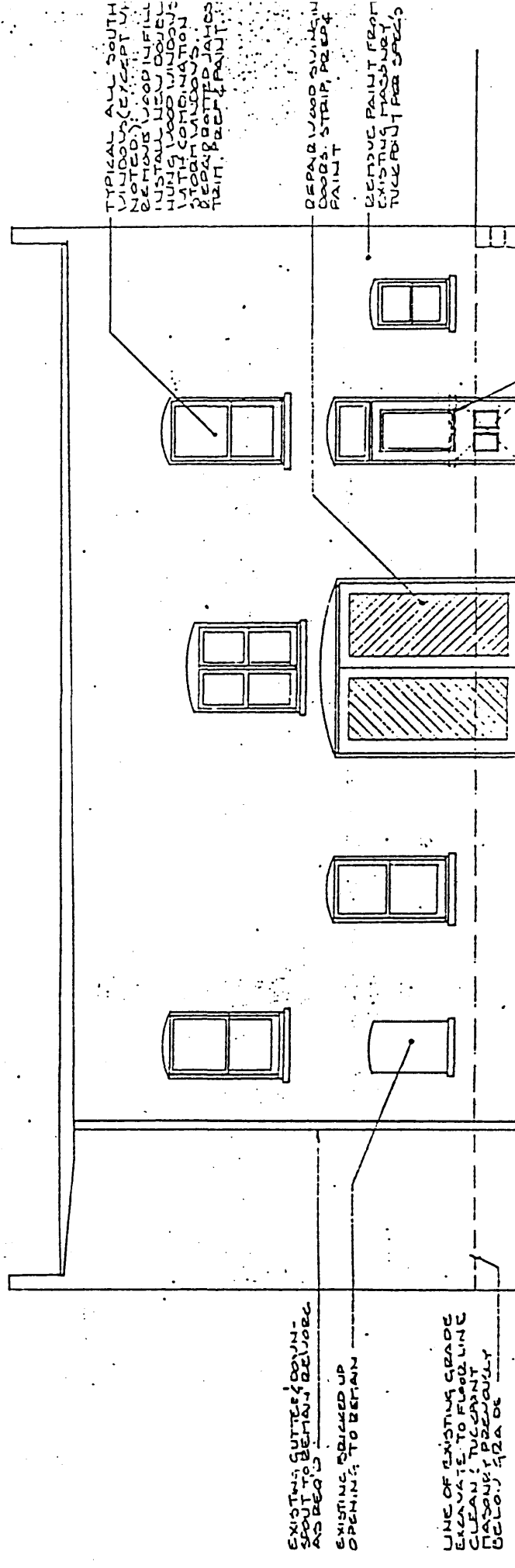
NOTE: REMOVE WAINSCOT SIGNAGE FROM SOUTH & NORTH ELEVATIONS

REMOVE EXISTING DOOR TRAIL FROM DOOR OPENING USED WAINSCOT PANELS TO MATCH EXISTING DOOR ROSE IN HISTORICAL PHOTO

REMOVE EXISTING OVERHUNG DOOR FROM OPENING. PAINTED WOOD FRAME W/ GLASS & DIAGONAL TTC WAINSCOT PANELS.

NORTH ELEVATION

Brooklyn No. 4 Fire House, Oshkosh, Winnebago Co., Wisconsin



TYPICAL ALL SOUTH WINDOWS (EXCEPT VENTED) TO BE REPAIRED. INSTALL NEW DOUBLE HUNG WINDOWS WITH TYPICAL WINDOW TRIM. REPAIR PAINT.

REPAIR WOOD SURFACING DOORS. STAIR, REPAIR PAINT

REMOVE PAINT FROM EXISTING MASSIVE TUCKER PAINT FOR SPEC.

PAINT FACE VERTICALLY RETAINING WALL

REMOVE STONE ON CUT OPENING FOR CORNER. INSTALL SALVAGED WOOD FOR GLASS DOOR, WITH GLASS TO MATCH.

EXISTING GUTTER, DOWN-SPOUT TO BE REPAIRED AS REQ'D

EXISTING BRICKED UP OPENING TO REMAIN

LINE OF EXISTING GRADE EXCAVATE TO FLOOR LINE CLEAN, TUCKER PAINT MASSIVE PREVIOUSLY BELOW GRADE

SOUTH ELEVATION