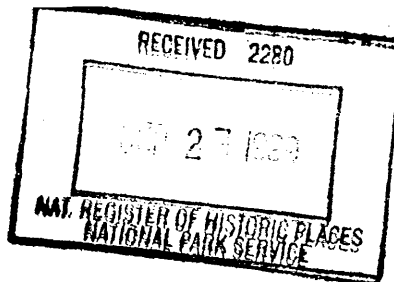


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



1295

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bradford, W. H., Hook and Ladder Fire House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 212 Safford Street N/A not for publication

city or town Bennington N/A vicinity

state Vermont code VT county Bennington code 003 zip code 05201

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.)

Elsa Gilbertson, National Register Specialist September 22, 1999
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Vermont State Historic Preservation Office
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 commenting 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): _____

Edson A. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

10/28/99
Date of Action

Bradford, W.H., Hook and Ladder Fire House
Name of Property

Bennington County, VT
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		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		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)

Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof metal

other wood

Narrative Description

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

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Bradford, W. H., Hook and Ladder Fire House
Bennington, Bennington Co., Vermont

Description

The W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House was constructed in 1893-1894. The building faces east on a square 1/3 acre lot on the southwest corner of Safford and Gage streets in Bennington, in a densely settled historic residential neighborhood. This fire station is a two story, two bay, L-shaped, flat-roofed brick block with four wood-framed attached sheds. The north bay is almost three times as deep as the south bay. A four bay wide, one story wood frame shed is attached to the rear wall of the north bay of the fire house and extends perpendicularly to the north. Three smaller sheds are attached to the rear and side of the south bay and the side (south) of the north bay. The open space bounded by the firehouse and Safford and Gage Streets is a paved yard. The Morgan Brook runs along the southern border of the property, and between the firehouse and the brook is a grassy yard. The fire house has a rubble stone foundation, brick walls laid in a seven-course American bond with an 18" high roof parapet, and a flat roof. It contains three truck bays and a hose incline on the first floor and recreational and meeting spaces on the second floor. The exterior of the fire house has High Victorian features such as paneled and beveled wood doors, multi-pane transoms, segmental and round arched window openings, lancet windows, and a brick corbeled cornice. Historic features on the interior include beaded board wainscoting, deeply profiled window and door trim, paneled ceilings and an ornamental stairway. The building has had some alterations to accommodate the requirements of a late twentieth-century fire station, but retains its historic integrity. The building is in good condition, although there is spalling brick and mortar missing in several areas.

Exterior

The principal facade (east) is symmetrical and contains two truck bay openings, a pair of triple window openings at the second story, and a 3' high corbeled cornice. The truck bay openings are headed by stepped-out, segmental arches and the windows are headed by round arches. In the south truck bay opening there is a column that separates the left two-thirds of the opening from the right third of the opening. On the left in this opening there is a double-width wood door with top-light windows and bottom panels with diagonal boards; in the middle there is a single metal door with a top-light window; on the right there is a double-leaf wood door with top-light windows and bottom panels with diagonal boards. Above each set of doors in this opening is a double height, twelve paned transom. This opening is trimmed out in wood, and has a flat panel in the arch with the lettering, "Chiefs Office." The door on the left is fixed shut, the middle door provides access to this bay, and the right pair of doors leads to a hose drying room. The north

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Bradford, W. H., Hook and Ladder Fire House
Bennington, Bennington Co., Vermont

truck bay opening has a full-width automatic overhead door. This opening is also trimmed out in wood, and has a flat panel in the arch with ghosts of the lettering, "W.H. Bradford H&L."

Above each truck bay on the second story are three single sash windows--each central window has a center muntin and is larger than its flanking single paned windows. Above each of the six windows is a round-headed transom; the larger central transoms have lancet tracery. Each set of windows is joined by a continuous wood sill. The cornice of the front facade has a 3' high corbeled cornice.

The south facade of the front block of the fire house is divided into three bays. At grade is a cellar window near the front corner, and an attached wood shed with vertical board siding near the rear corner. The shed is an enclosure for an exterior cellar stairway, which has a rubble stone retaining wall. Both stories of the south facade have two one-over-one wood double hung windows in the middle and east bays. In the west bay of the second story is a doorway leading to an exterior metal fire stair. Its wood door has a top-light window and bottom panel with diagonal boards. Centered in the parapet of this wall is a small brick chimney that lies flush with the wall. Along the rear (west) facade of the south truck bay there is an attached one story wood shed with vertical board siding. At the second story there is a tiny projecting wood framed shed abutting the north bay, and a one-over-one double hung window.

The first story of the south facade of the north truck bay has, from west to east, a small one-over-one double hung vinyl clad window, a metal door with top-light window, and an attached one-and one-half story wood shed that abuts the rear wall of the south bay and extends halfway back on the north bay. The second story of the south facade of the north truck bay has, from west to east, two squat one-over-one double hung wood windows, and two one-over-one double hung windows that match the height of the windows on the south facade of the south bay. The rear (west) facade of the north truck bay is mostly concealed by the attached rear shed; the flat roof projects slightly over this wall. Where the shed is attached to this wall, it has a single-slope roof; the freestanding part has a double-slope roof. The shed has a poured concrete foundation, clapboard walls and sheet metal roofs. The east facade of the shed is dominated by four metal overhead doors; the rest of the walls are blank.

The first story of the north facade of the fire house has, from east to west, a tiny cast iron metal door now partially obscured by pavement, a metal entrance door with a top-light window, a one-over-one wood double hung window, a four-paned wood casement window, a wood door and an unusual, tall, narrow opening containing a trellis. Near the rear shed is metal overhead door under a steel joist that partially conceals a timber frame header. Ghosts of lettering on the steel

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Bradford, W. H., Hook and Ladder Fire House
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header say, "W.H. Bradford H&L." Between the overhead door and wood shed is a bricked-up window opening. The second story of the north facade has, from east to west, two one-over-one wood double hung windows that match the windows on the south facade of the front block, two squat wood one-over-one double hung windows, a bricked-up window opening and another squat, one-over-one, double hung wood window. Centered on the parapet of the front block is a small chimney that lies flush with the wall.

Interior

The first floor of the fire house has two truck bays separated by a narrow hose drying room, a third truck bay behind (west of) the north truck bay, and the perpendicularly attached rear shed. A brick party wall separates the hose drying room and the north truck bay. The north truck bay is a long rectangular room extending about two-thirds the depth of the building; the truck bay behind it is square in plan and has truck access in the north facade. Centered on the north wall of the north truck bay is an open winder staircase to the second story. The stair begins as a straight run along the wall and turns south for a few steps. Under the staircase is an enclosed cellar stairway and a bathroom. The south bay contains the hose drying room along the north wall and two square rooms, a front room and a rear room, that most recently housed the Bennington Fire Chief's office. Off the rear room is a small bathroom. The hose drying room is open to the cellar below, and extends into the wood shed that lies along the south wall of the north bay.

The two rooms in the south bay have linoleum flooring and industrial carpeting, hollow-core wood doors, low-grade wood wainscoting, Formica countertops, wallboard, acoustical tile ceilings, electric heaters and a modern sink and toilet. The hose drying room has a poured concrete floor, concrete-finished walls, a wood paneled ceiling, and a 2x4 and plywood hose incline.

The front north truck bay has a poured concrete floor, painted beaded board wainscoting, an open winder staircase with unusual wood railings and a decorative newel post, four-panel doors, plaster walls, deeply profiled window and door trim with rosettes, and a sheetrock ceiling. The bathroom has vinyl flooring, false wood wainscoting, and modern plumbing fixtures. The rear truck bay has a poured concrete floor, and sheetrock walls and ceiling. The rear shed is unfinished; its wood structure, plywood sheathing, and sheet metal roof are exposed on the interior.

The south bay of the second floor has one square room at the front, most recently used as a lounge, and a narrow room across the rear most recently used as a kitchen. The north bay of the

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Bradford, W. H., Hook and Ladder Fire House
Bennington, Bennington Co., Vermont

second floor includes one square room at the front, most recently used as a game room, a square stairhall/trophy room behind it, and a large rectangular room in the rear most recently used for meetings. Between the stairhall and the meeting room is a small hallway leading to a bathroom.

The two front rooms on the second floor are connected by a large, square wall opening. They both have linoleum flooring, flocked wallpaper, false wood wainscoting, deeply profiled window trim, a varnished, beaded board paneled ceiling with deeply profiled cross beams, deeply profiled crown moldings, and profiled chair rails. There is another wall opening between the front room of the north bay and the stairhall, matching the opening between the front rooms. It has been filled in to house a regular door, but the original doorway trim is intact.

The dominant feature in the second floor stairhall/trophy room is the open stairwell in the northwest corner. Its unusual wood railings match the railings of the staircase. The stairhall also has linoleum flooring, false wood wainscoting, deeply profiled window and door trim with rosettes, a varnished beaded board paneled ceiling with profiled cross beams, deeply profiled crown moldings, plaster walls and profiled chair rails. The kitchen is accessed from the stairhall. It has vinyl flooring, false wood paneled walls, a hollow-core wood door, an acoustical tile ceiling, and deeply profiled window and door trim with rosettes.

The small hallway and bathroom have linoleum flooring, plaster walls, beveled door trim, and four-panel wood doors. The bathroom also has plain wood window trim and a sink and toilet. The meeting room has hardwood flooring, an archway with plain wood trim, sheetrock walls and ceilings, and plain wood window trim.

There is a full, unfinished basement under the south and north truck bays. The south bay and north bay are separated by a stone foundation wall. The north bay cellar has a poured concrete floor, mortared rubble stone walls and steel posts and girders supporting a metal subfloor. A small room to the rear (west) of the north cellar has an exposed timber frame structure supporting a wood plank subfloor. A mortared rubble stone bearing wall separates the rear room from the front room. The rear room has a large beaded board wood door with iron hardware that leads to the bottom of the hose drying room. (The south bay cellar was not accessible.)

Chronology of Construction

Originally, the north bay of the fire house was occupied by the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Company and the south bay was occupied by the F.M. Tiffany Hose Company. In 1909 the

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Hose Company disbanded and the south bay became the home of the Bennington Steamer Department and Bennington's Fire Alarm Headquarters, and then most recently, the Bennington Fire Chief's office.

The exterior of the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House has not changed dramatically since its construction. Originally, the north bay was not as deep as it is today, and there may not have been any attached sheds. The north truck bay is now almost three times the length of the south truck bay; originally, the north truck bay was 1 1/2 times the length of the south truck bay, with a one-story, fifteen foot extension beyond (west of) the rear wall of the south bay. A one-story, fifteen foot deep wood frame lean-to containing two horse stalls, and hay and feed bins, was originally attached to the rear of the north truck bay. Originally, a sixty foot high, High Victorian style, wood framed hose-drying tower was located behind the northwest corner of the south bay. It measured about ten feet on each side, and had a steep pyramidal overhanging roof with multiple alternating rows of square cut and scalloped slate shingles. Above the fire house roofline, the lower half of the tower was clapboard, and the upper half was paneled. Under the heavily profiled wood cornice on each side were four square, four-paned windows. The tower was of "sufficient height to hang up full lengths of hose."

By 1906, one story wood framed sheds were added to the south and west of the tower, and a one-story detached shed was constructed to the southwest of the fire house. This detached shed could have been the "Driver's House." In 1912 the hose drying tower was demolished and a shed containing the hose drying room replaced the shed attached to the south wall of the north bay. (Most hose towers have been replaced with horizontal drying racks in the basement or first floor.) The exterior of the hose drying shed appears to have been replaced at some point. Also in 1912, the wood frame stable was removed and a new two story brick stable was added to the rear of the north truck bay, completing the present configuration. Sometime between 1912 and 1921 the rear perpendicular shed was added, and the shed attached to the west wall of the south bay was removed. In 1921 the rear shed was labeled "Village Tool Shed." Sometime after 1921, the detached one story shed was removed. At some point a second attached shed was built on the west wall of the south bay.

With the exception of the truck bay openings, the front (east) facade has retained its original appearance. The double-width door in the south bay is the only surviving original door. Each truck bay opening originally had two pairs of these double-width doors, and one matching single-width door at the outer edge of the opening. The double-width and single-width doors were separated by a square column. Above each double-width door was a double-height, fourteen pane transom. Above each single width door was a double-height six pane transom.

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The panel in the arch of the south bay had the lettering, "F.M. Tiffany. Hose. 2." The panel in the arch of the north bay had the lettering, "W.H. Bradford. H&L.1." Originally, the double-width doors opened automatically when an alarm was sounded; after forty minutes the doors automatically closed and locked. The truck bay openings also originally had wood ramps and protective metal prongs at the bottoms of their jambs.

Sometime between 1923 and 1935 the south truck bay opening was altered: the column between the single-width door and double-width doors was moved to its present location and the doors and transoms were modified--the left double-width door became a double-leaf door, and a new pair of doors matching these doors was installed on the right. The middle double-width door remained intact. The fourteen pane transoms in the south bay were replaced with twelve pane transoms, and the six pane transom was replaced with a twelve pane transom. Also by 1935, the original lettering in the south truck bay was changed to "Fire Alarm H'dqr's." This lettering remained until at least 1957. In 1965, the original doors in the north truck bay were replaced with one large door, possibly an overhead door. In the early 1980's, this door was again replaced with the present overhead door, and the middle door in the south bay was replaced with the existing metal door. Also in the early 1980s, the lettering in the south arch had been removed (today the lettering says "Chief's Office"). At some point concrete ramps replaced the wooden ramps and the metal prongs were removed. The original windows on the second story of the front facade remain intact, although in the 1970s aluminum exterior storm windows were added.

On the side (north and south) facades of the fire house, there have only been alterations to a few of the original window and door openings, that appear to date to the mid to late twentieth century. In 1965 a "hatchway" door on the north side was filled in. Its exact location and appearance have not been determined; perhaps it mirrored the existing cellar stairway at the south facade. The original truck bay opening near the west end of the north facade appears to have been enlarged and a steel header has been installed. Also in this opening is a modern metal overhead door. The north facade also has two bricked up window openings, and a partially bricked up window opening where the metal door was installed. Changes to the south facade of the north bay include a replacement door and window at the first story that appear to date to the 1990's. The original corbeled, splayed chimney centered on the south wall of the front block has been reconstructed, and the north chimney added, at unknown dates. The perpendicularly attached shed was probably originally an open shed with no walls. In the late twentieth century it was enclosed with 2x4's, clapboard over plywood, and metal overhead doors. Aluminum exterior storm windows were added in the 1970s to the all the double hung windows.

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The historic interior floor plan has been somewhat modified but the principal spaces remain intact. The first floor of the north bay originally held the hook and ladder truck, and is intact. The first floor of the south bay originally held the hose truck; the hose drying room was constructed in 1912 and the two current rooms appear to have been created in the late twentieth century. The original interior stairway of the south bay has been removed; it possibly led to where the kitchen is now. The second floor plan is intact. Originally, the south front room served the F.M. Tiffany Hose Company and the two north rooms served the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Company. The two original north rooms were called the Meeting Room and the Parlor.

The opening between the two second story front rooms may not be original, as the rooms were used by different fire companies and separated by a brick party wall. However, the doorway trim matches the trim throughout the fire house, which appears to be original. If not original, the doorway could have been constructed as early as 1909, when the Tiffany Hose Company disbanded.

Some of the original interior finishes have been concealed. Originally, the first floor rooms had spruce wainscoting, five feet high and "finished in paint," with adamant plaster walls with a rough finish above. The ceilings were paneled and "finished natural." The stairways were of "Georgia pine." The second floor rooms had spruce, four foot high wainscoting "finished natural," with adamant plaster above, and more elaborate ceilings than the first floor, "finished in oil." The entire interior was originally "lighted with electricity," each of the first floor rooms originally had "bowls" (toilets). The existing door and window trim is also probably original.

Intact historic features in the north truck bay include the decorative staircase, the door and window trim, and the beaded board wainscoting. At the rear of the truck bay is the original wood flooring. The ceiling was sheetrocked at an unknown date; hopefully the paneling remains hidden underneath. The concrete floor appears to date to the late twentieth century. The bathroom has late twentieth-century fixtures and finishes. The rear north truck bay has recently been completed renovated and is devoid of any historic fabric. Unfortunately the historic finishes of the first floor of the south bay are completely concealed. The current fixtures and finishes appear to date to the late twentieth century. The concrete walls and wood ceiling of the hose drying room are probably original to its c.1912 construction, but the hose drying incline appears to be of recent construction, as it is built of 2x4's and plywood.

Intact historic features on the second floor include the paneled wood ceilings (which have escaped a paint job and maintain their original finish), the decorative stairway railing, beaded

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Bradford, W. H., Hook and Ladder Fire House
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wainscoting, and door and window trim. Mid and late twentieth-century fixtures and finishes on the second floor include the linoleum flooring, false wood wainscoting, wallpaper, and bathroom and kitchen fixtures. It is possible that some historic finishes remain hidden under these layers.

The full basement, with stone foundation walls and timber frame first floor structure, is original. The stone wall that divides the rooms in the north bay was possibly the foundation of the original rear brick wall of the fire house; the rear room was possibly the basement of the first stable. The massive wood door on the south wall of the rear room is probably original and would have led to the original hose tower pit, which accessed a sewer leading to the Morgan Brook. The pit also originally contained a "washing machine" to clean the hose. A furnace originally occupied each basement of the south and north bays, and supplied heat with "six and eight" radiators through the side walls of both the first and second floors. These radiators do not survive. Presumably when the concrete floor was poured in the north truck bay, the first floor timber frame structure was superceded by the current steel structure. It is likely that the original structure remains hidden above the metal ceiling.

The W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House was the home of the "Bradford Hooks" until August 1997. It is currently (1998) vacant but in 1999 will be rehabilitated as artists' apartments and gallery space.

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)

- Social History
- Architecture

Period of Significance

1893-1949

Significant Dates

1893-94

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Russell and March, builders

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:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.32 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	118	647940	4748980
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

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 Paula Sagerman, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization N/A date December 14, 1998

street & number 16 Merrill Mundell Road telephone (802) 348-9371

city or town South Newfane state VT zip code 05351

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 Housing Vermont, Inc.

street & number 131 Main Street telephone (802) 863-8424

city or town Burlington state VT zip code 05401

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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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Bradford, W. H., Hook and Ladder Fire House
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Section number 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance

The W. H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House was constructed in Bennington, Vermont, in 1893-1894 for the F.M Tiffany Hose Company and the W. H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire Company. It is an outstanding example of a late 19th century Vermont fire house, and for over one hundred years it played an important role in Bennington's history of community service and public safety. Its significant late 19th century architectural features include solid brick walls with arched openings and a corbeled brick cornice, Eastlake-style exterior doors, multi-paned transoms, round headed windows with gothic tracery, varnished beaded board and paneled ceilings, finely detailed interior wood moldings with rosettes, beaded board wainscoting, and a large winder staircase with decorative railings. It also reflects several design changes to fire stations during the last half of the nineteenth century, including the transition from wood frame to masonry construction. The period of significance of the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House is 1893-1949, during which it served as the home of the "Bradford Hooks" and provided a crucial community service.

Bennington, Vermont, is the regional center of southwestern Vermont, located on the Walloomsac River at the crossroads of U.S. Route 7 (western Vermont's major north-south route) and U.S. Route 9 (southern Vermont's major east-west route). It was chartered in 1749 and settled in 1761. By the mid-19th century, Bennington had numerous industrial and commercial interests. Mills lined the Walloomsac River, Main Street businesses were thriving, and residential neighborhoods were expanding. By the turn of the century, Bennington was a major manufacturing and commercial center with a population of over 6,500. Products made in Bennington included paper, grist, pottery, cotton, knitted goods, knitting machines, wrought iron, harnesses, gunpowder, soaps, window sash, doors, books, stationery, shoes, clocks, furniture, hardware, sewing machines, tobacco, and guns. During these booming times large fires became more common as additional structures, particularly industrial, were erected. In response to this, the Bennington Fire Department was founded in 1850. By 1851 two fire companies had been organized and by the turn of the century there were five fire companies.

The first two volunteer engine companies were the Spartan Engine Company No. 1, located on Pleasant Street, and the Protection Engine Company No. 2, located on East Main Street. In 1864 the Protection Company moved to the Bradford knitting mills on East Main Street, opposite Bradford Street. The Bradford mill was destroyed by fire in 1874, and the Protection Company moved to another location on East Main Street. At this time, fire apparatus included hand pulled and hand or steam pumped engines that carried large tubs of water, and hose carts.

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Continuation Sheet**

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Water mains were installed in Bennington in 1885-1886. This eliminated the need for the water engines. The fire department required only hose and hook and ladder companies, and so the Protection Company No. 2 disbanded. On October 28, 1886, the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 organized and took over the Protection Company's house, a two story frame building with a room for a truck and apparatus and a meeting room and parlor above. In 1887, three hose companies were organized: the Stark Hose Company No. 1 (formerly the Stark Steamer Company), the F.M. Tiffany Hose Company No. 2 (organized June 20, 1887), located on the corner of Union and Main streets, and the Henry W. Putnam Hose Company No. 3, located on River Street. A town-wide fire alarm system was installed in 1891, thanks to F.M. Tiffany.

In February of 1894 the fire house for the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire Company and the F.M. Tiffany Hose Company was completed. It was constructed on a vacant parcel at the corner of Gage and Safford streets. Eli J. Tiffany, F.M. Tiffany's father, owned the site and sponsored the \$4,000 undertaking. The general contractors of the fire house were Russell & March, and the plumbing contractors were Winslow & Meredith. Eli leased the fire house to the Village of Bennington for \$450 per year. During its construction, one newspaper reporter considered the fire house "second to none in Vermont," showing that Bennington "appreciates its fire department."

The W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House reflects the degree of changes to fire stations during the last half of the nineteenth century. Mid nineteenth-century fire stations were modest wood frame structures that served primarily as a shelter for fire apparatus and often occupied a section of a multi-use building rather than a separate structure. By the late 19th century, fire stations were of masonry construction and had increased in size to accommodate larger equipment, multiple functions, and more than one fire company. Ladders were made longer as buildings grew taller, and hand-drawn and hand-pumped engines were replaced with larger horse-drawn steam and chemical engines. Stations now housed fire apparatus and stables on the first floor, and meeting, social, and sleeping functions on the second floor. Separate hose, and hook and ladder companies were now often housed under one roof. A typical feature of most fire houses of the last half of the nineteenth century was the hose tower, which was tall enough to accommodate fifty foot lengths of hose. Without the drying tower, the hose would rot. The W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House incorporates all of the above elements and was a typical turn-of-the-century Vermont fire station--a two story rectangular masonry block, two bays wide, with a hose tower, and situated perpendicular to the street. Similar turn-of-the-century Vermont fire houses were built in such towns as Brandon, Burlington (Mansfield Avenue and Church Street), Barre, and Richford.

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The original fire apparatus in the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House included a horse-drawn hose wagon and horse-drawn hook and ladder wagon, hoses, hooks (for tearing down parts of burning structures), ladders, ropes, plus harnesses, etc., for the horses. The hose was made of rubber-lined cotton or linen. In 1917 Bennington purchased its first motorized hose wagons and in 1928 a motorized hook and ladder truck.

Shortly after the completion of the Bradford Fire House, the Eagle Hose Company No. 4 was organized. This was the last fire company to be organized in Bennington. The Eagles took over the former quarters of the Bradford Hooks, which is no longer standing. The F.M. Tiffany Hose Company disbanded in 1909. This was possibly due to the advent of the steam engine, which could carry all fire apparatus including hose. Perhaps the Bradford Hooks no longer needed a redundant hose company. In 1911, Eli J. Tiffany sold the fire house to the village for \$5,000. In 1914, the Bennington Steamer Department was moved from the Starks' fire house to the south bay of the Bradford fire house. At unknown dates, the Steamer Department closed (perhaps around 1928 when the fire department was fully motorized) and the south bay became the Bennington Fire Chief's office. The south bay also housed Bennington's fire alarm headquarters from no later than 1913 to at least 1957. In recent times, the fire station housed the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire Company and the office of the Bennington Fire Chief. In August 1997, because Bennington's four existing fire houses are not of sufficient size to hold the large fire trucks of today, the fire companies were consolidated at one new fire station. However, the four companies were retained, and maintain their autonomy.

Bennington's largest industries at the end of the 19th century were knitting mills and machine shops. Therefore, it is not surprising that the founders of the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Company and F.M. Tiffany Hose Company, William H. Bradford and Frank M. Tiffany, and the sponsor of the fire house, Eli J. Tiffany, were leaders in these fields. Because of their influence, it is also no coincidence that the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House was situated near their mills and homes. Unlike F.M. Tiffany, William Bradford (1854-1929) was not a fireman. He was the son and employee of H.E. Bradford, the owner of H.E. Bradford & Company, a large knitting operation founded in 1853 located on Main Street across from Bradford Street. (Some of these nineteenth-century mill buildings are still standing and remain in industrial use). William and his two brothers joined the company in 1874, and in 1878 the three were given control of the company. In 1918, William was named the president of the company. In 1928 he turned the business over to his son and became chairman of the board of directors. In 1929 the company boasted of being "the oldest operating knitting mill in America making wool and wool mixed underwear." H.E. Bradford has been called "the pioneer of the knit goods industry" in Bennington, and William has been described as "an important figure in the life of Bennington,"

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since he made his father's company grow and prosper. William was also a trustee of the Bennington County Savings Bank, director of the First National Bank of Bennington, a village trustee, and a trustee of the local library. His home was an Italianate mansion on Main Street across from the Bradford Mills. (This impressive house is still standing.) William has also been immortalized in the Bennington Museum, which has an 1894 painting of him riding his horse Trotter.

Frank M. Tiffany (1864-194_) was the son and employee of Eli J. Tiffany (1830-1920). Eli owned Tiffany Brothers, manufacturers of knitted wool clothing, from 1879-1913, and Eli Tiffany & Sons, manufacturers of knitting machines, from 1886-1913, which from 1870-1886 was known as Tiffany and Cooper. The Tiffany mills were located in a large complex (no longer standing) on the corner of Scott and Park Streets, just to the southwest of the Bradford Hooks. Eli invented a variety of "Automatic Knitting Machinery," and Eli Tiffany & Sons was called in 1893 "the largest and most important concern of the kind in the country." F.M. Tiffany was chief engineer of the Bennington Fire Department from 1891-1898 and a charter member of the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Company. He presented the F.M. Tiffany Hose Company its first hose cart, which carried 700 feet of hose. He was also a lessee and manager of the Bennington Opera House. He moved to Boston around 1909--perhaps this move was related to the disbanding of the hose company.

Today the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House is the second oldest remaining fire station, and the largest and most stately historic fire station in Bennington. The Starks' c.1851 fire house (with late 19th century alterations) is still standing (it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Downtown Bennington Historic District, listed April 1, 1980). In 1903 the original Putnam house burned down and was rebuilt in the same location. Like the Bradford fire house, it is a two story brick structure but is smaller and plainer. The Eagles were most recently located at a c.1956 station on East Main Street.

Despite some alterations to the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House, which were undertaken to accommodate the ever changing needs of firefighters and their equipment, it has retained its historic appearance. Significant remaining original features include the open winder staircase, the north truck bay, the varnished beaded board and paneled ceilings, the beaded board wainscoting, the interior millwork, the second story floor plan, the truck bay and window openings, one original truck bay door, the windows, and the corbeled cornice.

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The Bradford Hooks have served Bennington for over one hundred years. Since its inception the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Company has not only served as a fire-fighting entity, but also as a sponsor of company and community events such as dances, clambakes, Ladies Nights, school plays, and July 4th, Bennington Battle Day, and Christmas celebrations. More recently, it had also held first aid and fire safety classes. This historic fire house was not only a shelter for firefighters and their equipment, but also an important source of pride for Bennington. In 1999 this fire house will be sensitively rehabilitated as artists' housing and gallery space.

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the W.H. Bradford Hook and Ladder Fire House parcel are the legal boundaries for Bennington Tax Parcel #51-53-1.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the .32 acre lot that the fire house occupies. The size of this lot has not changed since the construction of the fire house. It is sufficient to convey the significance of the property.

Bennington, Vermont Tax Map #51
 W.H. Hook and Ladder Fire House is on Parcel #7
 at corner of Gage and Safford Streets

Approx scale 1" = 150'

