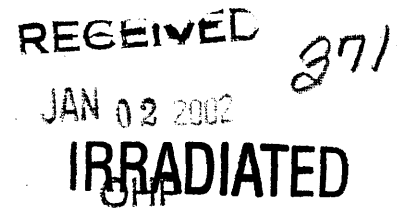
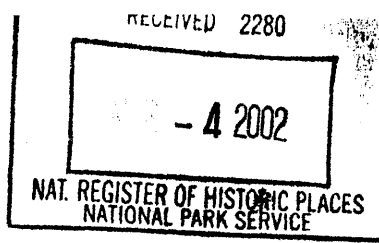


National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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 "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "NA" 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 San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) Engine Co. Number 2

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 460 Bush Street N/A not for publication

city or town San Francisco N/A vicinity

state California code CA county San Francisco code 075 Zip code 94108

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.)

J. L. McEllen 2/20/02
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or 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 of the Keeper

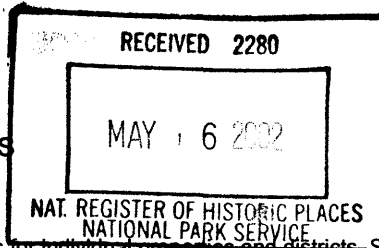
Date of Action

[Signature]

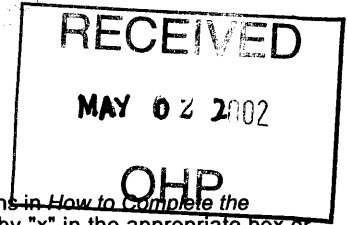
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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K. M. Ellen 2/20/02
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or 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

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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 of the Keeper

Date of Action

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)

COMMERCE/TRADE: professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Beaux

Arts

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

STONE: "Vancouver" Granite

roof OTHER: Built-up

other

Narrative Description

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

Summary

Engine Co. No. 2 was built in 1908, after the tragic 1906 earthquake and fire which destroyed downtown San Francisco. The building consists of a Beaux Arts "Vancouver Granite" front facade applied to a utilitarian structure of brick, steel, and heavy timber with wood and plaster interior finishes. It features wire-glazed steel windows and metal-clad doors and woodwork, leading city officials to tout it as "thoroughly fireproof." It is in good condition and with its location, setting, and feeling intact and much of its design, materials, and workmanship still extant, Engine Co. No. 2 has retained its historic integrity through a number of tenant types.

Continued.

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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1908

Significant Dates

December 1908

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Tharp, Newton J.

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:

San Francisco History Center

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco County, California

Narrative Description (continued)

Exterior

The three-bay-wide front facade consists of a rusticated base, a colonnaded 'piano nobile' second story, and a projecting entablature and raised parapet. It is entirely clad in a finely-grained, warm gray stone with few mica particles referred to as "Vancouver Granite" in early descriptions of the building. (1) In contrast to the more common brick facade, the use of this special stone provided an elegant facade design and emphasized Engine Co. No. 2's role as an important municipal building.

The facade is an extremely well-executed exercise in scale and proportion. To further communicate the building's importance, large scale elements, such as the doorway arch and 'piano nobile' columns, create a dramatic facade that appears more grandiose than its mere two stories would warrant. As a Beaux-Arts style design, inspiration for the facade organization may have come from such late Renaissance masters as Raphael and Palladio. Raphael's Palazzo Vidoni Caffarelli (Rome, c. 1520), similarly uses a rusticated base upon which a columned 'piano nobile' rests. Here, a relatively simple attic story replaces the raised parapet of Engine Co. No. 2. Palladio's possible influence is seen in the use of a large arch flanked by smaller openings.

The building's rusticated base features a pattern of alternating textured and smooth stones and is dominated by a grand, keystone-crowned arch. The fenestration within this arch originally consisted of a copper-clad lunette above a set of large copper-clad doors. Today, although the entry location is unchanged, the lunette survives, and the arch masonry is unaltered, a simple glass-and-metal commercial entry assembly replaces the original doors. As a result, the opening's current appearance is that of a void rather than a solid, partially impacting the design and materials of the facade. (2)

Smaller rectangular openings flank the arch; that to the east contains a copper-clad door, while that to the west holds a galvanized iron-clad wire-glazed window. Above each of these openings is a galvanized iron-clad transom and an extant pipe for a gas light fixture. A slightly-projecting belt course separates the base from the 'piano nobile.'

Compared to the heavy, rusticated base, the second level is light and open. The pilaster-enclosed second level features three original galvanized sheet metal nine-lite windows. Each contains one operable lite in the bottom row and fixed prismatic glass in the top row, with the remaining five lites consisting of fixed

Continued.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco County, California

Narrative Description (continued)

translucent glazing. Engaged Ionic columns resting on square bases flank the central window, above which is a blind transom with an emblematic cartouche reading "SF 2 FD." Blind transoms also top the windows to either side.

The projecting cornice, which steps out even further at the two ends, features a plain frieze topped by modillions. Set back above the entablature is an open parapet, consisting of square piers alternating with an open metal railing. A stone cap tops the parapet, with granite spheres marking the slightly wider end piers. A flagpole is visible behind.

Side and rear walls have always been unpainted brick, with galvanized metal-clad windows. The east currently abuts an adjacent building (constructed c. 1920) and is therefore not visible.

Interior

The interior consists of two stories, a mezzanine, and a full basement. A historic cast iron spiral staircase in the northwest corner begins at the basement level and rises up through building to the second floor. Circulation to all floors is also provided by a non-historic elevator near the entrance at the southeast corner. The building contains two separate non-historic staircases along the east wall; one leads from the ground floor to the basement and the other leads from the ground floor to the mezzanine and second floor.

Basement

The basement consists of a corridor-less series of rooms with regularly spaced original steel columns down the center of every space. Included in these rooms are a bank vault and a kitchenette. The floor's only windows are along its north exterior wall, which open into a narrow light well extending from the garden to the basement. A projection of the basement southward beneath the sidewalk in front of the building contains the major mechanical and electrical equipment as well as several treads of an iron stair leading from a sidewalk-level loading hatch toward the floor. According to scar trace and preliminary physical investigation, the basement is believed to have originally consisted of one large open space with the primary support for the first floor provided by the exterior brick walls, the regularly spaced steel columns, and timber floor joists.

Continued.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco County, California

Narrative Description (continued)

Ground floor

The ground floor features an entrance lobby, a series of open work spaces, a conference room, and a bathroom. Most of the ground floor contains double-height ceilings. The major exception to this is the open work space area, located beneath the mezzanine, where the lower ceiling height creates a more intimate, human-scale environment. Exposed metal wall hooks, originally used for tying up horses, indicate that this space may have been the location of the firehouse's horse stalls. Most interior walls are painted plaster above a wood wainscot. Scar trace and an original transverse partition wall with surviving V-groove paneling suggest the location, style, and color of the building's original wainscot scheme. An octagonal hole in the entrance lobby ceiling indicates the location of Engine Co. No. 2's firepole, approximately 20 feet north of the front facade; Carey & Co. discovered and installed a historic firepole in 2001. Wall-mounted pipes for gas lighting and some original Douglas-fir flooring remain.

Mezzanine

The mezzanine is located directly above the ground floor's central work area. It consists of one large open space with a partial height south wall and a historic, full-height plaster north wall containing two historic metal-clad wood openings. While not a historic mezzanine, extensive scar trace indicates the existence of a mezzanine located in approximately the same location dating to the building's construction. The original mezzanine was approximately ten feet deep and was supported by cast iron columns.

Second floor

The second floor currently consists of large open spaces at the south and north ends of the building with a corridor and offices between them. Renovation plans from 1982 indicate the presence of a room in the southwest corner, several smaller rooms at the north end, and cabinets that stood in the center of the space, all of which have since been removed. The floor also contains two rectangular skylights, featuring upward sloping hexagonal wire-glazed panels with steel mullions. The larger of the two has 20 lites while the smaller has 12.

Penthouse

The hose-drying penthouse extends above the roof along the east wall, near the rear of the building. This feature includes two metal-clad windows and a metal-clad door.

Continued.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco County, California

Narrative Description (continued)

Alterations and Integrity

The exterior facade sustained relatively few modifications. These include the replacement of the front doors, the removal of the cast metal light sconces, and glass replacement in the copper-clad lunette. Much of this is assumed to have occurred after the building was decommissioned and altered for new uses. The masonry, door and window openings, and glazing (other than the lunette) are unchanged.

The interior has sustained more alteration than the exterior. The first changes are assumed to have resulted from the firehouse's gradual conversion from horse-drawn to motor-driven equipment beginning in 1912.(3) It is likely that in the years that followed, the fire department removed the horse stalls and hay loft.(4) The building then remained substantially intact until it was decommissioned by the fire department on June 18, 1970.(5) Plans from 1982 for the alteration of the building to banking use show the removal of some original fabric such as the mezzanine, casework, and some room partitions as well as the addition of furred-out walls, interior partitions, a bank vault, stairs, and the elevator. The 2001 Carey & Co. renovation removed many of the non-historic features and, through the insertion of a mezzanine at the approximate original location and the installation of wainscot and windows following scar trace patterns, returned the firehouse to its approximate original configuration.

The building retains its overall historic integrity for two reasons. First, its original use required mostly large open spaces, as did its later uses, banking and art sales, and its current use as an architectural studio. As a result, interior partition walls were added or removed however the exterior walls and several major interior features remained undisturbed. Second, many of the original finishes and design elements restored by Carey & Co. in 2001 had been encased rather than replaced. These features survived behind furred-out walls or above drop ceilings and included scars from walls, wainscot and the mezzanine; the transverse wall at the north end of the original horse stalls; plaster wall and ceiling finishes; windows and window openings; chases; and miscellaneous metal elements. Although its historic association as a firehouse is no longer valid, Engine Co. No. 2 retains its location, setting, and feeling, and its primary workmanship, design, and materials.

Notes

(1) "Commodious New Building Constructed for Engine Company No. 2," *Municipal Record* 2, no. 5 (4 February 1909): 1.

Continued.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco County, California

Narrative Description (continued)

(2) The original copper-clad doors, discovered between the original building wall and the 1982 furring during the Carey & Co. building rehabilitation, are currently displayed in the building's lobby. The glass-and-metal commercial entry assembly complies with current building codes.

(3) Following contemporary national trends in fire department motorization, San Francisco began integrating motor-driven equipment into selected companies in early 1912. Engine Co. No. 2 received the city's first "auto-drive chemical engine," a machine that created pressure with soda acid and water to help extinguish fires. In announcing the introduction of the engine, *Municipal Record* declared, "[The chemical engine] is expected to prove invaluable as a first aid, as it easily takes the heavy grades in the district covered by Engine No. 2, and will hold ordinary fires in check until the arrival of the horse drawn apparatus." ("City Installs Auto-Drive Chemical Engine," *Municipal Record* 5, no. 8 [22 February 1912]: 61; Paul Barry, San Francisco Fire Department, telephone conversation with the author, 27 December 2001.)

(4) The removal of hay lofts as a result of motorization is particularly notable. Without these lofts, most often located across the interior rear of the city's firehouses, many buildings lost their primary lateral seismic strengthening. (San Francisco Department of City Planning, *Report on a Plan for the Location of Firehouses in San Francisco* [San Francisco, 1952]: 9.) Carey & Co. undertook a seismic upgrade as part of the 2001 renovation. This upgrade was additive in nature, consisting of the installation of two steel seismic braces and a masonry sheer wall into the building, and resulted in the removal of minimal historic fabric.

(5) Dick Schneider, *San Francisco Fire Department Company Locations* (n.p., [1982?]).

END

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco County, California

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

Engine Co. No. 2 is eligible for the National Register under criterion C, architecture, as “an excellent example civic architecture on a small scale.”(1) It was the first firehouse to be rebuilt in the downtown district after the tragic earthquake and fire of 1906 and is one of only three classically-inspired firehouses ever built in San Francisco. Engine Co. No. 2’s Beaux Arts design reflects the influence of the City Beautiful Movement on the post-1906 rebuilding campaign and communicates the importance of the firehouse as a symbol of the city’s commitment to fire prevention. The building was given a high ranking in the Department of City Planning (DCP) 1976 city-wide survey (2) and the highest ranking by the Foundation for San Francisco’s Architectural Heritage (Heritage) 1979 downtown survey.(3) Engine Co. No. 2 is listed in Article 11 of the San Francisco Planning Code as a “Significant Building—Category I” building within the Kearny-Market-Mason-Sutter Conservation District.(4) The building’s “prominent classical features” led to its designation on December 6, 1981 as City Landmark No. 143.(5)

The City Beautiful in San Francisco

At 5:12 am, April 18, 1906, San Francisco was shaken by a quake later estimated at 8.3 on the Richter scale. This event was to have far reaching effects on the city. The nearly one minute of shaking not only destroyed the newly erected City Hall (\$8 million and 29 years in construction) but also killed the city’s fire chief, Dennis T. Sullivan. Ironically, Sullivan was mortally injured when the firehouse in which he resided at Bush and Grant—the predecessor to Engine Co. No. 2—collapsed over head. As bad as the earthquake was, the ensuing fire had far greater consequences. By the time fires were extinguished three days later, fire had destroyed the entire downtown area as well as most of the surrounding neighborhoods. Thousands of buildings were lost, valued at many millions of dollars

In addition to the overwhelming scale and cost of the tragedy, the city’s rebuilding efforts were made more complex by an intense political debate over the appropriate direction of the campaign. Most of the discussion centered around a grand plan for San Francisco created by Chicago architect Daniel Burnham in 1905. Burnham had gained national attention in the early 1890s because of his design for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, in which wide boulevards and magnificent open spaces were created through the careful arrangement of elaborate, classically-inspired buildings. He and other supporters of this new mode of planning, called the City Beautiful Movement, believed that improving a city’s architectural beauty would increase civic pride, encourage political harmony, and promote economic prosperity. For San Francisco,

Continued.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco County, California

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Burnham created an ambitious plan of boulevards, open spaces, and classically-inspired buildings. Since the realization of the Burnham plan would have meant demolishing parts of the existing city, the plan's backers originally intended it to be a model for future development and as a tool for bringing business to the city. After the earthquake, however, the plan suddenly became a viable option and debate raged over the placement and style of new buildings. In the end, San Francisco's business leaders and outspoken property owners were unwilling to yield part of their control over the rebuilding process to a small group of city planners. Ironically, though a primary goal of the City Beautiful Movement was to promote democracy through good planning, it was the autocratic nature of its implementation which eventually led to its defeat.

While the Burnham plan was never fully realized, San Franciscans understood the opportunity presented to them by the 1906 tragedy and eventually accepted some of the plan's key features. The most notable example is the city's Civic Center, approved by voters in 1912 and constructed over the next several decades. The district, "regarded by many scholars as the finest and most complete manifestation of the City Beautiful Movement in the United States,"(6) consists of a set of Beaux Arts buildings located around a central plaza and other similar buildings placed along the main axis. The area's focus is an elaborate, columned City Hall building, designed by the nationally-known firm of Bakewell & Brown. Other buildings, such as a library, auditorium, and several theaters, also display lavish classically-inspired ornamentation and monumental scale, though their importance rests on their ability to contribute to the overall grand impression of the assemblage rather than on their individual architectural expression. The design of San Francisco's Civic Center can be said to have fulfilled some of the promise of the City Beautiful Movement; it was considered the appropriate location for the organization and ceremonial signing of the United Nations charter in 1945.

Utilitarian structures provided City Beautiful supporters with an opportunity to advance their cause in a smaller scale, without the approval on the entire plan. A notable example is the series of five Beaux Arts power substations built by Pacific Gas & Electric between 1907 and 1914. Carefully placed classical elements around entrances and at cornice level reduced the appearance of these buildings as windowless masonry boxes, giving texture to the streetscape and improving the citizens' urban experience. These buildings were considered important not because of their use but because they contributed to San

Continued.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco County, California

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

San Francisco's physical environment. The new, more democratic sensibility becoming popular at this time suggests a strong link between City Beautiful philosophy and turn-of-the-century social progressivism. The movement's supporters hoped that their example—both in practice and in physical form—would bring permanent social and economic benefits to San Francisco.

With the simultaneous occurrences of the 1906 tragedy and City Beautiful-related changes in design and architectural practice came renewed interest in firehouses. The three days of fire which followed the earthquake damaged nine and destroyed 22 of the city's 44 firehouses, giving San Franciscans a deep and emotional appreciation for the importance of fire readiness. By the middle of the following year, the city had already started constructing new, permanent firehouses—even while a scheme for the city-wide effort had not yet been fully established. It was at this time that Newton J. Tharp was appointed city architect, with firehouses figuring prominently in the "immense task" of rebuilding the city.⁽⁷⁾ Tharp himself is attributed as the designer for several of these early firehouses, including Engine Co. No. 2, which was the first firehouse rebuilt in San Francisco's downtown, a district virtually destroyed by the 1906 earthquake and fires.⁽⁸⁾

Tharp was born in Iowa and received his early architectural training in Chicago Institute of Art. He later traveled to Europe, studying briefly at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Returning to the United States, Tharp worked in architectural offices in New York and Chicago before coming to California. In San Francisco, Tharp was hired as a draftsman for Edward R. Swain, the successor to A. Page Brown as the architect of the Ferry Building. After Swain's death in 1902, Tharp took over his practice.⁽⁹⁾ Among his early projects are the Dewey Monument in Union Square (1902, with sculptor Robert Aiken), and the Grant Building, at the southeast corner of Seventh and Market Streets (1905-06).⁽¹⁰⁾

The city architect's position had been established c. 1900 to design and supervise the construction of all city buildings such as hospitals, libraries, and schools. After the earthquake and fire, however, the scope and scale of the job changed dramatically. Tharp's work while city architect included the Hall of Justice building, considered his most important building,⁽¹¹⁾ San Francisco General Hospital (in the schematic design phase at the time of his death) and a number of schools and firehouses, including Engine Companies 1, 2, and 31.⁽¹²⁾ In May 1909, he was in New York City inspecting major hospitals, gathering on information for a new San Francisco medical facility, when he died suddenly at age 42 of influenza and subsequent heart failure.

Continued.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 9 SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco County, California

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Approximately 12 new firehouses were built between the beginning of Tharp's tenure in 1907 until the invention of the motor-powered fire engine in 1912. Of these, the first seven are featured in the 1910 *Architect & Engineer* article highlighting the work of San Francisco's Office of the City Architect. While the power substations had been designed almost exclusively in a Beaux Arts manner, the wide range of firehouse facade types—including Chicago style, Sullivanesque, Mission Revival, Chinese Revival, Craftsman/Tudor Revival, as well as Beaux Arts(13)—follows a national trend identified by firehouse architectural historian Rebecca Zurier in which the nature of a new firehouse's immediate neighborhood heavily influenced the design process.(14) While archival research has not identified a specific reference to the relationship between the design of Engine Co. No. 2 and the conservative elegance of downtown San Francisco's architecture, Tharp's contemporaneous scheme for the Craftsman/Tudor Revival firehouse in San Francisco's Russian Hill district was meant "to conform with the architectural features of the private residences of the district."(15) In San Francisco, the range of styles employed for firehouse design also represented the city's diversity as well as its unwillingness to fully accept the City Beautiful Movement's tenets.

As a municipal building located in the newly reemerging downtown area, Engine Co. No. 2 needed to present an official yet restrained facade. For businessmen, property owners, and tourists, Engine Co. No. 2 represented the city's commitment to defending the cultural and economic heart of San Francisco against another catastrophe. However the design could not be overly ornamented for fear of being perceived as too expensive or too closely aligned with the Burnham plan. Tharp's solution to this dilemma was to provide a balanced Beaux Arts facade, whose rusticated base and columned second story communicate the building's utilitarian and symbolic functions. Complementing its surroundings, Tharp included all of the key architectural elements found on the facades of the firehouse's neighbors, such as tripartite design, columns, and an elaborate entrance, albeit at a smaller scale. After Engine Co. No. 2 was completed, a periodical published by the city described the successful design by stating, "while it is not a pretentious structure it is sufficient for the purposes intended and possesses architectural embellishments which make a pleasing appearance."(16) No known direct evidence links the building's Beaux Arts scheme with the City Beautiful Movement in San Francisco, however Zurier's monograph of American firehouse architecture identifies Engine Co. No. 2 as one of the nation's "few stations influenced by City Beautiful ideals."(17) Indeed, it does not appear coincidental that Tharp designed a Beaux Arts facade during a time when city officials hoped their City Beautiful-inspired urban plan would gain popularity. The inclusion of this and another downtown Beaux Arts

Continued.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco County, California

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

firehouse in the first group of municipal buildings shows Tharp's sensitivity to the needs of his constituents; he wanted to show San Franciscans that their government was rebuilding in an organized, thoughtful manner and that their new buildings were going to be useful, enduring structures.

Engine Co. No. 2 went into service in December 1908.(18) San Francisco-area contractors Lamont & Beyer built it at a total cost of \$25, 000, including \$20,000 for general construction, with \$5000 for "interior fittings and furnishings."(19) Constructed to replace a firehouse that had collapsed in the 1906 earthquake, the new building was a "hilltop house," positioned farther up the Bush Street incline so as to allow the horses to manage the topography more efficiently.(20)

When constructed, Engine Co. No. 2 was touted in *Municipal Record* as "the first thoroughly fire-proof structure erected by the city since the fire of April 1906...in keeping with the intention of the city authorities to provide this class of structures within the fire limits."(21) According to the article, this "fireproofing" was achieved by combining a number of materials and methods:

It is constructed of first-class materials in every respect, all walls being of brick with the exception of the front wall, which is faced with fine grain granite from Vancouver—the first of its kind to be used in the city. The floors are of heavy joists, wire lathed and plastered on the ceilings, all partitions are of steel studs, wire lathed and plastered, and all finishing wood-work is covered with Kalamein iron, thus making the building practically fire proof. All exterior window frames and sash are of metal, glazed with wire glass."(22)

In valuing this type of construction, Tharp and other city officials joined others nation-wide who believed that firehouses themselves should be made fireproof.(23) As a departure from San Francisco's 19th century tendency toward Victorian wood firehouses, this post-1906 "fireproofing" would have appeared impressive to local citizens. However, as the phrase "absolutely fireproof" rapidly gained popularity, contemporary architectural periodicals began questioning the validity of some claims and the motives of some claimants.(24) In the end, Engine Co. No. 2 was probably more fire-resistant instead of fireproof. The confidence of *Municipal Record's* statement originated less from actual fact than from the need to reassure San Franciscans that the city was doing everything it could to protect against another tragedy.

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San Francisco County, California

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Engine Co. No. 2 was similar to other firehouses built in San Francisco between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries in that its floor plan featured a first floor at street level, a doorway tall and wide enough for engines to pass, horse stalls and a hay loft on the ground floor, and a second floor used as a dormitory. Though many other firehouses featured prominent hose drying towers, Tharp may have pushed Engine Co. No. 2's tower toward the building rear so as not to upset the balanced classically-inspired facade design.

While the front facade communicated the importance of the firehouse as "a reflection of civic pride and self-interest,"(25) the interior design anticipated the importance that Engine Co. No. 2 would play in San Francisco's rapidly rebuilding downtown. In particular, Tharp included "space for [a] future high pressure hose wagon and stall room," allowing for an expansion of services when needed.(26) Two years later, the fire department began this process by transferring Chemical Co. No. 3's equipment and staff from their original location near the waterfront to the Engine Co. No. 2 building, in order "[t]o afford better protection in the retail shopping district."(27) In early 1912, as San Francisco began integrating motor-driven equipment into selected companies, Engine Co. No. 2 received the city's first "auto-drive chemical engine," a machine that created pressure with soda acid and water to help extinguish fires. In announcing the introduction of the engine, *Municipal Record* declared, "[The chemical engine] is expected to prove invaluable as a first aid, as it easily takes the heavy grades in the district covered by Engine No. 2, and will hold ordinary fires in check until the arrival of the horse drawn apparatus."(28) During these years the firehouse also became the residence of a sizeable number of horses, considered the "pick of the Department" because of their strength and loyalty, perhaps accounting for the additional horse stalls.(29)

The San Francisco Fire Department underwent a major re-evaluation of its facilities and procedures beginning in the early 1950s. As a result of the complete and permanent change from horse-drawn equipment to motorized vehicles as well as new mid-century development patterns, a key issue during this time was the relationship between response times and the location of firehouses. A 1951 study found many of the city's early firehouses to be in need of extensive upgrades or too out-dated to be useful. The document recommended demolition or sale for some while others, including Engine Co. No. 2, were to receive "emergency reconstruction" because their locations were desirable but their facilities were substandard.(30) Though a 1952 study reiterated these suggestions, indicating the department's willingness to act on them, the lack of details regarding the nature of the work provides difficulty in identifying whether the "emergency reconstruction" actually took place. Nonetheless, Engine Co. No. 2 was still in active duty as a

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San Francisco County, California

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

firehouse in 1969, when a third study recommended that the “property should be sold and the apparatus and equipment reallocated to other stations.”(31) Engine Co. No. 2 was de-commissioned on June 18, 1970.(32)

Between 1970 and 1999, when the current owner purchased the property, the former firehouse served as a bank and then as an art gallery. The most extensive known renovations during this period occurred in approximately 1982, when some original interior architectural features were removed, altered, or encased. The current owner, a historic preservation architecture studio, has reconstructed some of the building’s original features based on physical and documentary evidence and has renovated the remainder of the building for code compliance and compatible business uses. In recognition its architectural significance, Engine Co. No. 2 was designated City Landmark No. 143 on December 6, 1981.

Notes

- (1) Michael Corbett, *Splendid Survivors* (San Francisco: California Living Books, 1979): 123.
- (2) San Francisco Department of City Planning, *Survey of Architecturally Significant Buildings* (San Francisco, 1976).
- (3) Corbet 123.
- (4) San Francisco Planning Code, Section 11 Appendix A.
- (5) Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, *Final Case Report [Fire Department Old Station No. 2]* (San Francisco, 1981); San Francisco Planning Code, Section 10 Appendix A.
- (6) Michael Corbett, *National Register Nomination for San Francisco Civic Center* (San Francisco, 1974): Item 8 Sheet 3.
- (7) Ann Bloomfield, *National Register Nomination for Station 31* (San Francisco, 1987): Item 8 Sheet 3.

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SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

(8) The first three firehouses rebuilt after the earthquake were budgeted during the 1907-08 fiscal year and completed in 1908. This group included Engine Co. Nos. 7 and 31, completed during the first half of the year, and Engine Co. No. 2, completed in December. (City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors, *San Francisco Municipal Reports* [San Francisco: Neal Publishing Co., 1907-08]: 328; "Summary of Proceedings of Boards and Commissions: Fire Commission," *Municipal Record* 1, no. 13 [31 December 1908]: 3.)

(9) Henry Withey et. al., *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956): 593.

(10) Corbett, *Splendid Survivors* 98 & 238.

(11) Withey 593.

(12) Withey 593.

(13) Bloomfield Item 8 Sheet 3.

(14) Rebecca Zurier, *The Firehouse; An Architectural and Social History* (New York: Artabras, 1982): 135.

(15) "Russian Hill Section of City Given Better Fire Protection," *Municipal Record* 1, no. 9 (3 December 1908): 1.

(16) "Commodious New Building Constructed for Engine Company No. 2," *Municipal Record* 2, no. 5 (4 February 1909): 1.

(17) *The Firehouse* 127.

(18) "Summary of Proceedings" 3.

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San Francisco County, California

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

(19) "Commodious New Building" 1.

(20) San Francisco Department of City Planning, *Report on a Plan for the Location of Firehouses in San Francisco* (1952): 10; Frederick J. Bowlen, *Fire Horses: Farewell, Good and Faithful Servants!* (San Francisco: San Francisco Fire Department, 1938): 116.

(21) "Commodious New Building" 1.

(22) "Commodious New Building" 1; The "fireproof elements" described are largely intact. The brick masonry walls and heavy timber structure remain, as do many of the metal doors, wire-glazed windows, Kalamein iron-clad interior features and much of the plaster finish. The stone facade is completely intact.

(23) Zurier 147 & 183.

(24) "Once Again: Building Fire-Proof Buildings," *Architect & Engineer* 2, no. 11 (November 1909): 99.

(25) *Report on a Plan for the Location of Firehouses* 10.

(26) "Commodious New Building" 1.

(27) "Fire Commissioners," *Municipal Record* 3, no. 50 (15 December 1910): 446.

(28) "City Installs Auto-Drive Chemical Engine," *Municipal Record* 5, no. 8 [22 February 1912]: 61; Paul Barry, San Francisco Fire Department, telephone conversation with the author, 27 December 2001.

(29) *Fire Horses* 127.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

(30) San Francisco Public Library's only known copy of this document, entitled *Survey of the Fire Houses of San Francisco*, is missing as of this writing. The survey's findings are reprinted on page 14 of *Report on a Plan for the Location of Firehouses*.

(31) Gage-Babcock & Associates, Inc., *Study for Fire Department Needs for Fire Stations and Companies and Utilization of Manpower for the City and County of San Francisco* (San Francisco: City and County of San Francisco, 1969): 14.

(32) Dick Schneider, *San Francisco Fire Department Company Locations* (n.p., [1982?]).

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SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
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END.

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SFFD Engine Co. No. 2
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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

Block: 270, Lot: 41

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the post-1906 Engine Co. No. 2 building.

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Additional Documentation

A. USGS Map (San Francisco North Quadrangle, 7.5 Minute Series)

B. Historic Photographs (1-2)

C. Existing Conditions Photographs (3-5)

D. Index to Photographs:

1. Engine Co. No. 2
2. San Francisco, California
3. Unknown
4. c. 1920
5. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection, San Francisco, California
6. South (front) facade and west (side) elevation, looking northeast
7. Photograph #1

1. Engine Co. No. 2
2. San Francisco, California
3. Unknown
4. c. 1964
5. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection, San Francisco, California
6. South (front) facade, looking north
7. Photograph #2

1. Engine Co. No. 2
2. San Francisco, California
3. Alice R. Carey
4. 2 January 2002
5. Carey & Co., Inc, San Francisco, California
6. South (front) facade, looking north
7. Photograph #3

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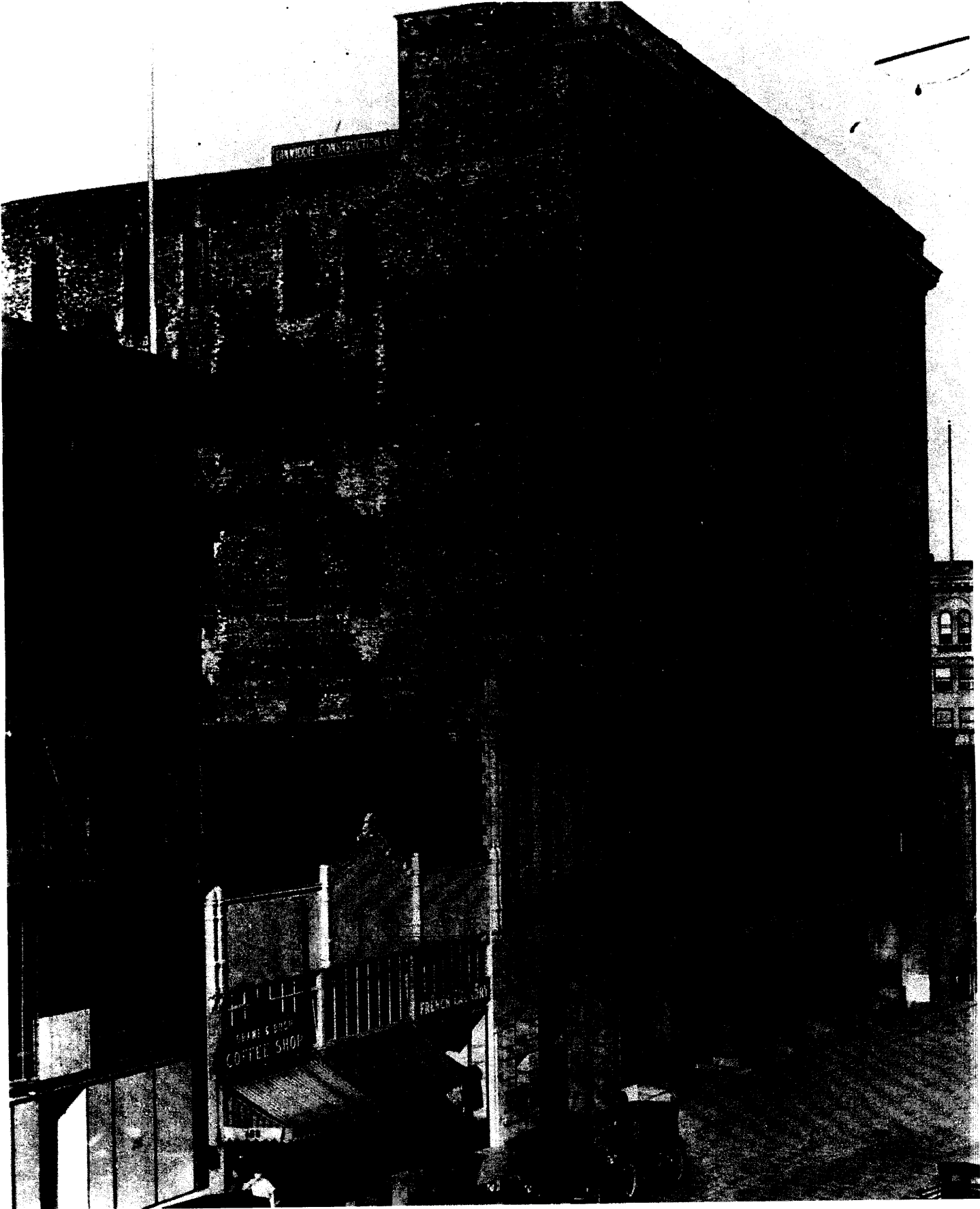
Additional Documentation (continued)

1. Engine Co. No. 2
2. San Francisco, California
3. Alice R. Carey
4. 2 January 2002
5. Carey & Co., Inc, San Francisco, California
6. North (rear) facade, looking south
7. Photograph #4

1. Engine Co. No. 2
2. San Francisco, California
3. Alice R. Carey
4. 2 January 2002
5. Carey & Co., Inc, San Francisco, California
6. Ground floor interior including original V-groove wainscot, restored window, and original mezzanine opening, looking south
7. Photograph #5

END.

Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco, California
Photograph # 1



Engine Co. No. 2
San Francisco, California
Photograph # 2

