

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

received **APR 4 1986**
date entered

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

MAY 2 1986

1. Name 11 IND. PROPS.

historic N.A.

and/or common Historic Fire Stations of Tacoma, Washington Thematic Group

2. Location

street & number (See individual inventory forms) _____ not for publication

city, town _____ vicinity of _____

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership (See individual inventory forms)

street & number _____

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pierce County Auditor's Office

Room 142, Pierce County Annex Building
street & number 2401 South 35th Street

city, town Tacoma state WA 984 19

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title (See continuation sheet) * _____ (see continuation sheet)
has this property been determined eligible? * yes no

date _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local _____

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Fire protection is one of the most valuable services a government can provide its citizens. Throughout American history, firefighting facilities have been a necessary and specialized component of the landscapes of cities and towns. The properties included in this nomination are the thirteen intact historic fire stations remaining in the City of Tacoma, Washington. The buildings were constructed between 1907 and 1935, and all reflect important national trends in firefighting technology and fire station design. These stations helped to provide the fire protection that facilitated the growth and stability of the community and insured the safety of its residents.

Similarities and Variations Within the Thematic Group

Tacoma's historic fire stations represent local adaptations of important national developments in firefighting technology and fire station design. The architectural and historical evolution of the Tacoma fire stations is thoroughly developed in Section 8 of this nomination. However, several broad patterns regarding siting, materials and style are presented here.

All of the fire stations are located at intersections, which allows a more efficient deployment of fire crews. Several of the oldest surviving engine houses are built on a slope, which permits vehicular access to a basement that is largely above grade. Most of the stations are located in neighborhoods that were developed in the same general period as the stations themselves. Nearly all of the stations located in residential areas imitate the scale and detailing of their domestic neighbors. This sensitivity to the character of the environment became evident in station design following the growth of streetcar systems and the development of exclusively residential neighborhoods. The earliest of these "residential" type stations in Tacoma were built between 1907 and 1911, and they display an eclectic use of materials and detailing. These older stations were one and one-half or two stories in height to allow a separation of fire crews and horses. With the advent of motorized equipment, such measures became unnecessary and most later stations are a single story. The stations built in 1928-1929 continue the tradition of domestic scale and detailing and fall within the "bungalow" category of station design. The buildings were all designed by Morton Nicholson and exhibit a number of similar features. Two stations were erected during the Depression and both demonstrate a use of materials and style that is typical of the period, though their design rejects the residential image maintained by most of the earlier stations.

With the exception of Fire Station No. 1, all of the properties included in this nomination are of brick or concrete masonry construction. This follows the national trend that promoted the erection of non-flammable fire stations.

Most of Tacoma's historic fire stations are in a good or excellent state of preservation. Only one station has been excluded from this nomination due to a loss of integrity (see Methodology). However, innovations in firefighting technology have, over time, required some alterations to the buildings. All of the original apparatus (fire truck) doors have been replaced since larger equipment required larger openings. Mechanization of the doors also necessitated the removal of the

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6. Representation in Existing Surveys

1. Washington State Inventory of Cultural Resources -(1981-1985)
2. Tacoma Cultural Resources Survey, 1980 - 1981.

Depositories:

2. City of Tacoma
Community Development Department
747 Market Street, Suite 1036
Tacoma, WA 98402

1. Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
111 West 21 Avenue, KL-11
Olympia, WA 98504

Engine House No. 4 was listed on the National Register in 1984, and Engine House No. 9 was listed in 1975. No other properties in the thematic group have been determined eligible.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Decker, Ralph, 4918 North 24th Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98406. Telephone interview by Mark Brack, August 1985.

Hansen, David, National Register nomination for Engine House No. 9, 1975.

Mauck, Lynn, 402 North "I" Street, Tacoma, WA 98403. Interview by Mark Brack, July 1985.

Nelsen, Silas, 9025 Harborview Drive North, Gig Harbor, WA 98335. Telephone interviews by Mark Brack, July, August 1985.

Stevenson, Jim, Seattle Firehouses of the Horse Drawn and Early Motor Era, n.p., 1972. (Available at the Washington State Historical Society Museum, Tacoma, Washington)

Tacoma Christian Endeavor Souvenir, Tacoma: Bell Press, July 1, 1907.
(Available at the Washington State Historical Museum, Tacoma, Washington)

Tacoma City Ordinances: No. 3105 (September 1, 1907); No. 3656 (April 14, 1909); No. 3727 (June 2, 1909); No. 4521 (August 6, 1911); No. 4625 (June 29, 1911); No. 7060 (August 14, 1919).

Tacoma Daily Ledger, May 12, 1907; May 19, 1907, p. 17; June 9, 1907, p. 17; October 27, 1907, p. 38; December 29, 1907, p.72; July 9, 1911, p.34; July 16, 1911, p. 32; December 31, 1911, p. 19; March 14, 1928, p.1; December 28, 1929, p.12; February 2, 1930, p.4-A.

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more weighty and cumbersome originals. Few historic fire stations that are still in operation in the United States retain their original doors. The other ubiquitous alterations involve the periodic remodeling of kitchen and bathroom facilities. However, several stations have preserved original plumbing fixtures and dining nooks. The cumulative impact of these alterations is very small, and Tacoma's historic fire stations continue to contribute to the rich architectural and historic legacy of the city.

Methodology

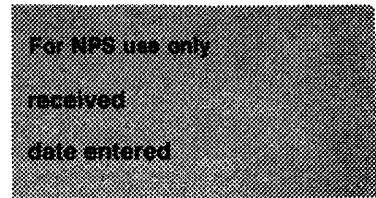
Between 1979 and 1981, the City of Tacoma undertook a comprehensive survey of historic resources within the municipality. Most of the fire stations described in this nomination were identified during this survey. In 1985, the city's Community Development Department hired Mark L. Brack, an architectural historian, to study Tacoma's historic fire stations and nominate those eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. Brack analyzed the information contained in the initial survey, and also examined Fire Department and newspaper records. These materials were cross-referenced with Talbot and Decker's 100 Years of Fire Fighting in the City of Destiny, Tacoma, Washington, and all historic fire station sites listed in these sources were examined by Brack in the field. Fourteen firefighting facilities over fifty years of age were identified. One property, Engine House No. 3 (1907), located at 923 North 13th Street, was determined to have lost its historic integrity according to the standards established by the National Register. This station was radically remodeled in the last twenty years. The only original elements remaining in the structure are the exterior brick and stone walls of the first one and one-half stories. These surviving portions along with early photographs and original plans for the building reveal that No. 3 was very similar in materials and design to Nos. 8, 11 and 13, which all display an eclectic styling and domestic scale that complements their respective neighborhoods.

Although No. 3 was recently renovated and a number of original features partially recreated, it still fails to adequately resemble its historic appearance.

After the identification of the surviving fire stations, historic documentation on each building was uncovered through the use of various resources. Period newspapers, city directories, and books and pamphlets on Tacoma history were quite valuable and were most often accessed through the Northwest Room of the Tacoma Public Library. City records on the construction of the oldest fire stations have almost completely disappeared; consequently, this nomination has been unable to identify the specific architects of several of the fire stations. City records did include original blueprints for some of the stations and copies of ordinances that authorized fire station construction. Fire department records were similarly inadequate concerning the designers of the stations, although their files did provide information on other aspects of fire station history.

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List of Contributing and Noncontributing Properties:

Engine House # 8 (4301 S. L Street, Tacoma): 1 contributing building
Engine House #11 (3802 McKinley Ave, Tacoma): 1 contributing building
Engine House #13 (3825 N. 25th St., Tacoma): 1 contributing building
Fire Station # 1 (425 Tacoma Ave., Tacoma): 1 contributing building
Fire Station #10 (7247 S. Park Ave, Tacoma): 1 contributing building
Fire Station #14 (4701 N. 41st St., Tacoma): 2 contributing buildings (see survey form)
Fire Station #15 (3510 E. 11th St., Tacoma): 1 contributing building
Fireboat Station (302 E. 11th St., Tacoma): 1 contributing building
Fire Alarm Station(415 S. Tacoma Ave., Tacoma):1 contributing building
Fire Station #2 (2701 So. Tacoma Ave., Tacoma): 1 contributing building
Fire Station #5 (1453 S. 12th St., Tacoma): 2 contributing buildings (see survey form)

Total number of contributing properties: 13

Total number of noncontributing properties: 0

053
04D

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1907-1935 **Builder/Architect** Various (See individual inventory forms)

(See individual inventory forms)
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The fire stations of Tacoma are the most prominent and enduring symbols of municipal government to be found in the city's neighborhoods. These buildings reflect the long heritage of the fire department, and the development of the community's fire fighting system parallels the growth of the city itself. Tacoma's fire stations also constitute an important architectural legacy, for the buildings represent local adaptations of important national developments in fire fighting technology and station design.

The Development of the Tacoma Fire Department, 1880-1906

Tacoma's first volunteer fire department was founded in 1880, four years before the city was incorporated. During the 1880's and early 1890's, Tacoma experienced a phenomenal rate of growth that was partially precipitated by its selection as the western terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Furthermore, a deep harbor, plentiful natural resources and a favorable national economic climate also helped turn Tacoma into a "boom" town.

Much of the early building activity in the city relied on local lumber products for construction. Inevitably, this predisposed Tacoma towards disastrous fires. Arson also played a significant role in the conflagrations that plagued the city through the 1890's. The creation of volunteer fire departments was viewed as a necessity if the city were to grow at the rate its boosters envisioned.

Although professional fire departments existed in the United States as early as 1853, volunteer fire departments were still operating in many cities in the late nineteenth century. Tacoma actually created the first professional fire department in the state when it began to pay its firemen in 1889. This decision followed the great Seattle fire, in which the entire business district was destroyed. Tacoma crews were dispatched to Seattle, and their performance (along with the evidence of Seattle's tremendous loss) helped convince the city government that a full-time paid fire department was worth the expense.

Most of the fire stations erected in Tacoma in the nineteenth century were of the "storefront" type as described by Rebecca Zurier in her book The American Firehouse. Set flush with the sidewalk, these structures were often narrow, one or two bays wide and two stories high. What frequently distinguished them from their commercial neighbors was an open bell tower above the top floor. All of these early fire stations (or "engine houses" as they were called then) were built of wood. The one exception was the department's 1891 red brick headquarters. Constructed in the Romanesque Revival style with stone and terra cotta details, this building reflected a national trend toward the design of larger stations that was popular in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, all of the fire stations from the earliest period of the city's development have been destroyed. The headquarters station was demolished in 1974 to make way for a parkway extension.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property each property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Tacoma North, Washington
Tacoma South, Washington

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References
(See individual inventory forms)

A

Zone	Easting	Northing

B

Zone	Easting	Northing

C

--	--	--

D

--	--	--

E

--	--	--

F

--	--	--

G

--	--	--

H

--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

(See individual inventory forms)

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark L. Brack

City of Tacoma

organization Community Development Department

date August 1985

street & number 747 Market Street, Suite 1036

telephone (206) 591-5220

city or town Tacoma,

state WA 98402

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title DSUPO

date 3.24.86

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Expansion of the Fire Department, 1907-1916

By 1905, the city had begun to recover from an economic depression that had started with the Panic of 1893. The arrival in Tacoma of additional railroad lines and the formation of the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company helped to fuel the city's economic recovery. Building activities once again boomed, and in 1907 alone over 1,100 homes were erected in the city. Tacoma and other cities utilized this prosperity to increase spending on municipal improvements such as sewers, utility systems, street lighting, libraries, fire stations and schools. The construction of these various public works was often promoted by political "progressives" who sought to improve the quality of urban life. Progressive movements throughout the country were notably successful in the first decade of the century, and their efforts in favor of civic improvements radically altered the public's perception of the responsibilities of municipal government. Most voters came to believe that local governments should play an expanded and active role in providing for the health, safety and well-being of its citizenry. During this era of progressive political attitudes and economic prosperity, nine fire stations were erected in Tacoma. All were built between 1907 and 1911, and they represented the most dramatic expansion in the fire department's history.

All of these stations continued certain traditions begun in earlier periods. Horses were stabled on the ground floor with the steam engines. Feed and manure were stored in the basement, and the firemen's dormitory and day (sitting and recreation) room were on the second floor. Brass sliding poles connected the dormitory with the ground floor.

Seven of these stations were constructed of brick masonry, which corresponded with a nationwide movement for the erection of fireproof stations. More significantly, all of the stations were built in areas that were experiencing rapid growth. Consequently, the surviving stations are located in districts still characterized by their early twentieth century building stock.

Of the seven Tacoma stations that remain from this period, five have maintained their historic integrity. Engine House No. 1 was remodeled into an Art Deco style fire station in 1934-35 and will be evaluated under that period. Station No. 3 has suffered from numerous alterations and cannot be considered as a contributing element of this nomination. Yet, Engine House No. 3 remains interesting for establishing a "domestic" pattern or style that was soon imitated by Stations Nos. 8, 11 and 13.

The development of streetcar systems in the late nineteenth century led to the widespread construction of exclusively residential suburbs and subdivisions. Prior to this time, most cities were a heterogeneous mix where commercial, industrial and residential properties could all be found in close proximity to one another. Streetcars allowed workers to be further removed from their places of employment, and, as a result, residential neighborhoods experienced tremendous growth. In response, fire station architects began to design, for the first time, different types of stations for different parts of the city. Those that were developed in residential districts naturally began to imitate the form and scale of homes.

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Sometimes these designs were less than successful, for the space requirements of the horse-drawn fire systems often led to the creation of what some derisively called "fire barns." The architects of Tacoma's fire stations must have been aware of such criticism, for they designed stations that purposefully attempted to blend in with their modest neighborhoods. All of these stations were set back on their lots in keeping with the rhythm established by the surrounding single family houses. The stations also have basements whose dimensions, if transferred to an upper story, would have elevated the station's roof line far above that of the nearby houses. Two of the stations take advantage of slopes to provide basements that are partially above grade. Four of the five "residential" fire stations feature a full-size second story that is "camouflaged" by a low, sweeping roof and high belt courses that give the impression that the upper story is much smaller than it is. Squat hose towers also reduced the appearance of height.

More significantly, the architectural detailing of the buildings is self-consciously domestic. The blocky mass of the station, together with its flared gable roof, wide eaves and knee braces, imitates the form of the Craftsman style "chalets" that were a popular residential type in Tacoma at this time. Other details of the building differ in their stylistic derivations. The combination of stucco and brick, rough-faced ashlar belt courses, and brick quoins and lintels may reflect the influence of the Jacobethan Revival. But the total impression of all of these stations was of a restrained, yet picturesque and eclectic assemblage that beautifully combined a variety of building materials within a format that is decidedly domestic. While the neighboring homes were most often smaller Craftsman style frame structures, they too exhibit modest but artful motifs and a mixture of materials not dissimilar to the masonry fire stations. Together, the stations and the surrounding houses create neighborhoods that are typical of post-Victorian building in the Northwest.

Engine House No. 9 offers a variation on this theme. While its oriel or bay windows and bracketed cornice seem to reflect the earlier Italianate style, the massing and roof detailing of the station are typical of residential "Classic-Box" or "American Four-Square" designs that were very popular in this period. Again, the attempt to harmonize with the neighborhood is obvious.

Engine House No. 4 totally rejects the residential image, for it was built in a growing industrial area where large buildings frequently exhibited Neo-Classical detailing. Its classically-inspired terra cotta ornament and smooth red brick walls create a business-like image that complements the neighborhood. As is typical of fire stations of this period, the interiors of all of these stations are simply detailed with plain durable materials. Stairways and pressed metal ceilings were the most decorative interior features.

The fire departments of this era witnessed the dramatic transition from horse power to motorized equipment. The stalls, hay lofts and manure cellars that were features of all of these buildings soon became obsolete. The city purchased its first motorized equipment in 1910, and by 1919 the shift away from horses was complete.

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Again, Tacoma's efforts in this direction echoed national trends. Sadly, all of the horse stalls in the surviving stations have been altered, and only a few doors and posts retain the kick marks of the horses' hooves.

Another revolution in fire fighting occurred when the two-platoon system was adopted in 1916. Previously, a fireman was on duty almost 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for nearly the entire year. A fireman would only be granted leave several times a day to go home and eat. Socializing with one's family and friends would necessarily take place in the fire station. Indeed, fire stations functioned as a kind of community center where friends and neighbors would gather. When the two platoon system was inaugurated, firemen were able to spend more time at home, but the twelve hour shift (with no home meal breaks) required that the stations be fitted with kitchens.

Fire Stations of the Post-War Period and the 1920's

The next period of expansion for the fire department occurred after World War I. Two fire stations were constructed in 1919, one of which survives. Station No. 1 replaced an earlier station that was located nearby. Architecturally, this station is a bit of an anomaly. It is a wood frame building and is sheathed in clapboards and shingles. The choice of such flammable materials appears to be rather anachronistic. The style and scale of the station give it the most domestic appearance of all the stations in Tacoma. Its Craftsman style characteristics would make it nearly indistinguishable from any number of houses found throughout the city. However, it was erected in an area which contains few such Craftsman buildings, and is dominated instead by early twentieth century multi-story brick apartment houses and other larger structures. The rationale for the choice of materials and motifs for No. 1 remains a mystery.

The origins of the next five fire station designs are not so obscure. Station Nos. 10, 14, 15, the fireboat station and the fire alarm station were all authorized by a twelve million dollar bond issue passed by the voters on March 13, 1928. This program contained a number of different public works, but the new fire stations were no doubt one of the most popular elements, for 1927 had been the most costly year for fire damage in the city's history. Of course, the economic prosperity of the times also allowed such growth in city services.

Once again, the new stations were placed in areas experiencing increased development. All these facilities were designed by Morton J. Nicholson, the Assistant City Building Inspector, and each reflects enormous changes in fire fighting technology. New motorized equipment meant that firemen no longer had to be separated from the more noxious consequences of horse power, and all stations were reduced to one story in height. This allowed for swifter deployment of firefighters and also enabled the stations to be even closer in scale to their residential neighbors. Stations 10 and 14 are virtually twins and are located in neighborhoods of primarily one-story homes. They are perfect examples of what Zurier calls "bungalow" fire stations. Their scale and late Craftsman/Tudor styling create structures that can only be described as quaint. The domesticity of the design is

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barely interrupted by the small hose towers and apparatus doors, which are slightly larger than normal garage doors. The fireboat station carries the miniaturization process even further. Stylistically similar to 10 and 14, the station is dwarfed by the neighboring warehouses and the Eleventh Street Bridge. This fire station was built to serve the new fireboat. Terrible blazes were a common occurrence in the city's port areas. For many years, fire fighting on the water was carried out by converted tugboats. The 1928 bond issue finally allowed the department to purchase a real fireboat. This craft, Fireboat No. 1, was itself listed on the National Register in 1983.

Station No. 15 was also erected in the port/industrial area. It utilizes an enlarged version of the floor plan of Nos. 10 and 14, yet stylistically it is articulated quite differently. The station's Hispanic design reflects popular Period Revival tendencies of the 1920's, which were shared by fire stations around the country.

The fire alarm station is technically not a fire station, for it houses no fire engines. Yet it performed a function that was vital to the operations of the fire department. Its new equipment allowed the rapid transmission of fire and emergency calls all over the city. The cost of the new facility was substantial, but considered necessary if the city was to respond adequately to its fire fighting needs. The fire alarm center does not imitate a domestic style; rather its clear, vaguely classical lines insinuate the efficient technological operations of the interior.

The Fire Department During the Depression

The Great Depression brought enormous hardships to the United States, and Tacoma certainly did not escape the effects of this national tragedy. Indeed, Pierce County was listed as one of the most hard-pressed counties in the state. As during World War I, the fire department provided volunteer assistance on a variety of projects. Some firemen operated as case workers, coordinating relief efforts for the poor and unemployed. Fire crews operated wood lots, aided in food distribution and began Christmas-time toy drives.

The state and federal governments initiated building programs aimed at reducing unemployment and stimulating the economy. In 1933, the State Emergency Relief Administration gave a number of grants to Tacoma and Pierce County for various public works. One of the largest amounts of money was allotted for the construction of two fire stations. However, a decision was soon made to remodel Station No. 2 (1907) rather than replace it with something completely new. The second floor was removed and surviving brick walls were resurfaced in cement stucco. New elements were built of reinforced concrete and the building was refinished in the Art Deco style, the same chosen for the completely new Station No. 5. As is typical of such relief projects, cost constraints prevented the fire stations from incorporating the more exuberant Art Deco detailing found in private buildings.

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Concrete construction and Art Deco/Moderne designs were frequent choices of depression relief projects, and Zurier believes that this style projected the message that fire fighting was a technical, modern profession. This is further emphasized by the practice tower that was erected at the rear of Station No. 5. In the language of the period, No. 5's facilities were to serve as a "fire college" in the training of fire crews.

Fire Stations 2 and 5 were the last stations built in the city until 1948. Economic growth led to the erection of a number of new stations in the 1950's and 1960's, and some of the older stations were demolished or sold. Nevertheless, the city is fortunate that the surviving stations display such a variety of architectural styles and innovations in fire fighting technology. Additionally, the stations themselves accurately chart the physical and economic expansion of the city. Spanning the Progressive Movement and the Great Depression, Tacoma's historic fire stations are a reflection of America's evolving political attitudes regarding the proper role of government in the lives of its people.

ARCHITECTS OF THE FIRE STATIONS

Paul Bergfeld

Paul Bergfeld is responsible for the design of Engine House No. 3 (1907), No. 9 (1907), and the original design for Engine House No. 2 (1907). Unfortunately, two of these buildings have been substantially altered. The remodeling of No. 2 in 1934-5 created the Art Deco design visible today. The more recent alterations to No. 3 have significantly impaired its historic integrity according to National Register standards. However, the surviving design elements of No. 3 are very similar to those found on the fire stations erected in 1909 and 1911. Engine House Nos. 8, 11 and 13 are particularly close in their use of materials, motifs and scale. While there is no surviving evidence that Bergfeld himself was responsible for the designs of these other stations, it is not unreasonable to assume that his Engine House No. 3 at least influenced the design of the later buildings.

Spike's Illustrated Description of the City of Tacoma provides most of the biographical information available on Bergfeld. He was born in Saxony and graduated from "scientific schools" in that country. He immigrated to New York City where he was employed by "prominent" architects, and apparently received design experience in other cities as well. Bergfeld arrived in Tacoma in the 1880's, and by 1891 he had designed St. Joseph's Hospital, the Ouimette Block, Tacoma Business College and several important residences. At this time, Spike refers to Bergfeld as being "in the front row of successful practical architects." The architect C. A. Darmer made a similar appraisal of Bergfeld in his memoirs. Bergfeld had a long career in Tacoma, and he designed a number of commercial and residential properties. During 1907 Bergfeld was employed in the City Engineer's office where he designed the three fire stations. In 1908, he entered a brief partnership with Drack, and they erected several homes and apartments. From 1911 through 1917, he was listed in the city directory as the Assistant City Building Inspector. From 1922 through 1931, he was

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listed as a cashier for the Tacoma Railway and Power Company. He returned to architecture in 1932 and evidently practiced until 1941, when his name no longer appears in the city directories.

Morton J. Nicholson

While employed as Assistant City Building Inspector, Morton J. Nicholson designed Fire Station Nos. 10, 14, 15, the fireboat station and the fire alarm station. Nicholson was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1891, and at the age of four moved with his family to Tacoma. He later graduated from Tacoma's Stadium High School and studied architecture in the offices of his father, I. A. Nicholson, who was the City Engineer. The younger Nicholson designed a number of homes and small theaters, including the Paramount at 26th Street and Proctor and the Community at 56th and M Streets. He was also responsible for theaters in the nearby communities of Sumner and Puyallup. Nicholson died on December 27, 1929, not long after the completion of his fire stations.

Silas Nelsen

Silas Nelsen designed the only fire stations built in Tacoma during the Great Depression. Station Nos. 2 and 5 were built with funds allocated by the federal and state governments to relieve unemployment. Nelsen was born in Stoughton, Wisconsin in 1894. He received his architectural training in the office of Heath, Gove and Bell beginning in 1912. At this time, Frederick Heath was the most prominent and successful architect in Tacoma. By 1918, Nelsen had begun his own independent practice, and he continued to design until his retirement in 1971.

In addition to the two fire stations, Nelsen designed over 150 houses, fifteen churches, the city utility building, four branch libraries, the enlargement of the main city library, and many of the buildings on the campus of the University of Puget Sound. Nelsen's designs reflect many diverse influences, including the Gothic Revival, Art Deco and the International Style. At age 91, he resides with his son in Gig Harbor, Washington.

Frederick Shaw

Frederick Shaw was born in Sturgis, Michigan in 1884. His family moved west in 1895, and by 1904 he was working as a draftsman for Frederick Heath. He later worked for D. H. White, C. A. Darmer, George Gove, the partnership of Heath and Gove, and the City Engineer's Office. While employed by this city agency, Shaw supervised the design and construction of Engine House No. 4. He opened his own architectural practice in 1915. After World War I, he initiated a partnership with his brother Stanley that lasted until 1929. The Shaw brothers designed several of Tacoma's commercial buildings, including the Pacific Savings Bank, two garage structures and the Exeter Apartments. In the 1930's Shaw moved to California, finally settling in Sausalito. He became chief architect for Henry Doelger Builders, but little is known of his designs for this company. In the 1950's Shaw published two books on railroad history entitled Oil Lamps and Iron Ponies and Casey Jones' Locker. The date of Shaw's death is not known.

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Tacoma Fire Department Annual, 1907, 1910, 1911, 1929 (available at the Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library).

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Talbot, Clyde and Decker, Ralph, 100 Years of Firefighting in the City of Destiny, Tacoma, Washington, Tacoma: Pyro Press, 1981.

Wakefield, Wayne, National Register nomination for Engine House No. 4, 1984.

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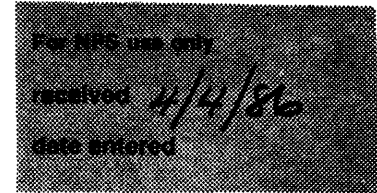
Zurier, Rebecca, The American Firehouse, an Architectural and Social History, New York: Abbeville Press, 1982.

Historic photographs in the collection of the Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library.

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Historic Fire Station of Tacoma, Washington TR
State WASHINGTON

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | Fire Alarm Station | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper
Attest | <u>Jayne M. McPherson</u>
5/2/86 |
| 2. | Fireboat Station | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper
Attest | <u>Jayne M. McPherson</u>
5/2/86 |
| 3. | Fire Station No. 1 | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper
Attest | <u>Jayne M. McPherson</u>
5/2/86 |
| 4. | Fire Station No. 2 | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper
Attest | <u>Jayne M. McPherson</u>
5/2/86 |
| 5. | Fire Station No. 5 | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper
Attest | <u>Jayne M. McPherson</u>
5/2/86 |
| 6. | Engine House No. 8 | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper
Attest | <u>Jayne M. McPherson</u>
5/2/86 |
| 7. | Fire Station No. 10 | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper
Attest | <u>Jayne M. McPherson</u>
5/2/86 |
| 8. | Engine House No. 11 | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper
Attest | <u>Jayne M. McPherson</u>
5/2/86 |
| 9. | Engine House No. 13 | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper
Attest | <u>Jayne M. McPherson</u>
5/2/86 |
| 10. | Fire Station No. 14 | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper
Attest | <u>Jayne M. McPherson</u>
5/2/86 |

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National Park Service

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Historic Fire Station of Tacoma, Washington TR
State WASHINGTON

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

11. Fire Station No. 15

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Jayne M. Pulcherson
5/2/86

Attest

12.

Keeper

Attest

13.

Keeper

Attest

14.

Keeper

Attest

15.

Keeper

Attest

16.

Keeper

Attest

17.

Keeper

Attest

18.

Keeper

Attest

19.

Keeper

Attest

20.

Keeper

Attest