

D.C. HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
APPLICATION FOR  
HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

APPLICATION TO:

Designate  
 Rescind  
 Amend

PROPERTY NAME: Old Engine Company 12

ADDRESS: 1626 North Capitol Street, NW Washington, DC 20002

SQUARE AND LOT NUMBER(S): Square 3101 Lot 1

PRESENT OWNER: District of Columbia

OWNER ADDRESS: 441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW Washington, DC 20001

ORIGINAL USE: Firehouse

PRESENT USE: Vacant

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1897

DATE OF MAJOR ALTERATION(S): N/A

ARCHITECT(S): Snowden Ashford

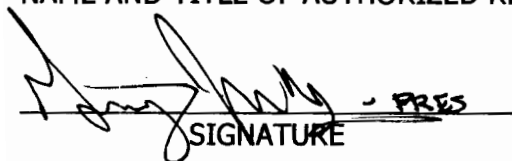
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE/PERIOD: Late Victorian; Queen Anne Revival

NAME OF APPLICANT: The Capitol Fire Museum

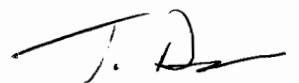
ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE OF APPLICANT:

PO Box 21129  
Washington, DC 20009  
202-974-4504

NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

  
SIGNATURE

10 Jun 01  
DATE

  
10/19/2001

### 310.21 A STATEMENT OF THE PREHISTORIC, HISTORIC, ARCHITECTURAL, AND/OR CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION.

Old Engine Company 12 qualifies for landmark status in the District of Columbia by meeting the following criteria as established in the final rules of the DC Historic Preservation Review Board as published in the DC Register in 1995:

- 1) It is the site of significant events and is associated with persons, groups, and institutions that contributed significantly to the heritage, culture, and development of the National Capital and the Nation;
- 2) It exemplifies significant political, economic, social, scientific, technical, educational, historical, and architectural heritage of the National Capital and the Nation;
- 3) It embodies the distinguishing characteristics of architectural style, a building type, and urban design significant to the appearance and development of the National Capital and the Nation;
- 4) It has been identified as the notable work of an architect and urban planner whose works have influenced the development of the National Capital and the Nation;
- 5) It contains information about and evidence of historic events, institutions, design, construction, and settlement patterns that is known to be important to understanding our culture.

The context and significance for this firehouse is described in the Washington, DC Firehouse Multiple Property Documentation form.

In response to its location on one of the city's most prestigious streets, Old Engine Company 12 is a highly articulated, picturesque firehouse. The area on both sides of North Capitol Street north of Florida Avenue was in rapid development at the time the firehouse was constructed.<sup>1</sup> The city was outgrowing its original boundaries at this time and developing was occurring mostly north of Florida Avenue. There, large tracts of land were purchased by single developers and improved with block upon block of, primarily, middle-income Queen Anne Revival rowhouses.<sup>2</sup> Old Engine Company 12, built contemporaneously with neighboring rowhouses, is sympathetic in design.

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<sup>1</sup> G.M. Hopkins. Atlas of Washington, D.C., Philadelphia: Hopkins Publishing Company, 1887; and Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D.C. Philadelphia: G.W. Baist, (Vol. 3) 1903.

<sup>2</sup> Berk.

## 310.21 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Old Engine Company 12 - con't.)

The architect, Snowden Ashford, is credited with the design of at least two other firehouses: Engine Company 25, constructed in 1902 at 3202 Martin Luther King Boulevard, SE, and Engine Company 28, constructed in 1916 at 3522 Connecticut Avenue, NW (a contributing building in the Cleveland Park Historic District).

Ashford was born in Washington in 1866 and received his education at Lehigh University and Lafayette College. After graduation, he worked briefly as City Surveyor in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. He worked on federal projects under Alfred B. Mullett as Supervising Architect of the Treasury and with John L. Smithmeyer of Smithmeyer and Pelz, the firm that designed the Library of Congress. In 1892 he helped found the Washington Architectural Club and was an early member of the Washington Chapter of the AIA.

In 1895, Ashford became the assistant in the city's Office of Building Inspector, the municipal agency entrusted with the administration of building laws and the design of city government buildings. In 1901, Ashford was promoted to head this office and eventually became the city's first Municipal Architect when that post was created by Congress in 1910. He held the position until his replacement in 1921 by Albert L. Harris. During his term, Ashford designed or superintended more than 150 city buildings including the hospital at 19th Street and Massachusetts Avenue, SE, constructed 1920-1922.

Ashford's specialty was school design and, in 1906, he studied the building type in major cities across the country.<sup>3</sup> Among the schools with which he is credited are Jesse Lee Reno School (1903); John H. Ketcham Elementary School (1908); Randle Highlands Elementary School (1911); Crummell School (1911), Cleveland Elementary School (1911), Wisconsin Avenue Vocational School (1911), Military Road School (1912); Margaret Murray Washington Career Development Center (not original name), (1912); Park View Elementary School (1916), and Eastern Senior High School (1921-23).<sup>4 5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Antoinette J. Lee. "Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1804-1930," D.C. Division of Historic Preservation, September 1989, p.33.

<sup>4</sup> Traceries Master Database

<sup>5</sup> Lee, p.33.

### 310.21 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Old Engine Company 12 - con't.)

In 1921, Ashford left government service and practiced architecture in the city independently. He was the supervisor responsible for employing the newly developed concrete prefab construction used at the Meridian Hill Studio Apartments designed by George Oakely Totten, Jr in 1922.<sup>6</sup> He died in 1927.<sup>7</sup>

Old Engine Company 12, vacated by the Fire Department in 1987, was rented for several years by the Salvation Army, but is now vacant city-owned property.<sup>8</sup> Only the first floor has been accessible for inspection. It appears to be in sound condition. The exterior composition of the facades suggests that the interior plan is similar to that of contemporaneous firehouses. Despite the current deterioration of the building, it remains a familiar and well-loved landmark along North Capitol Street.

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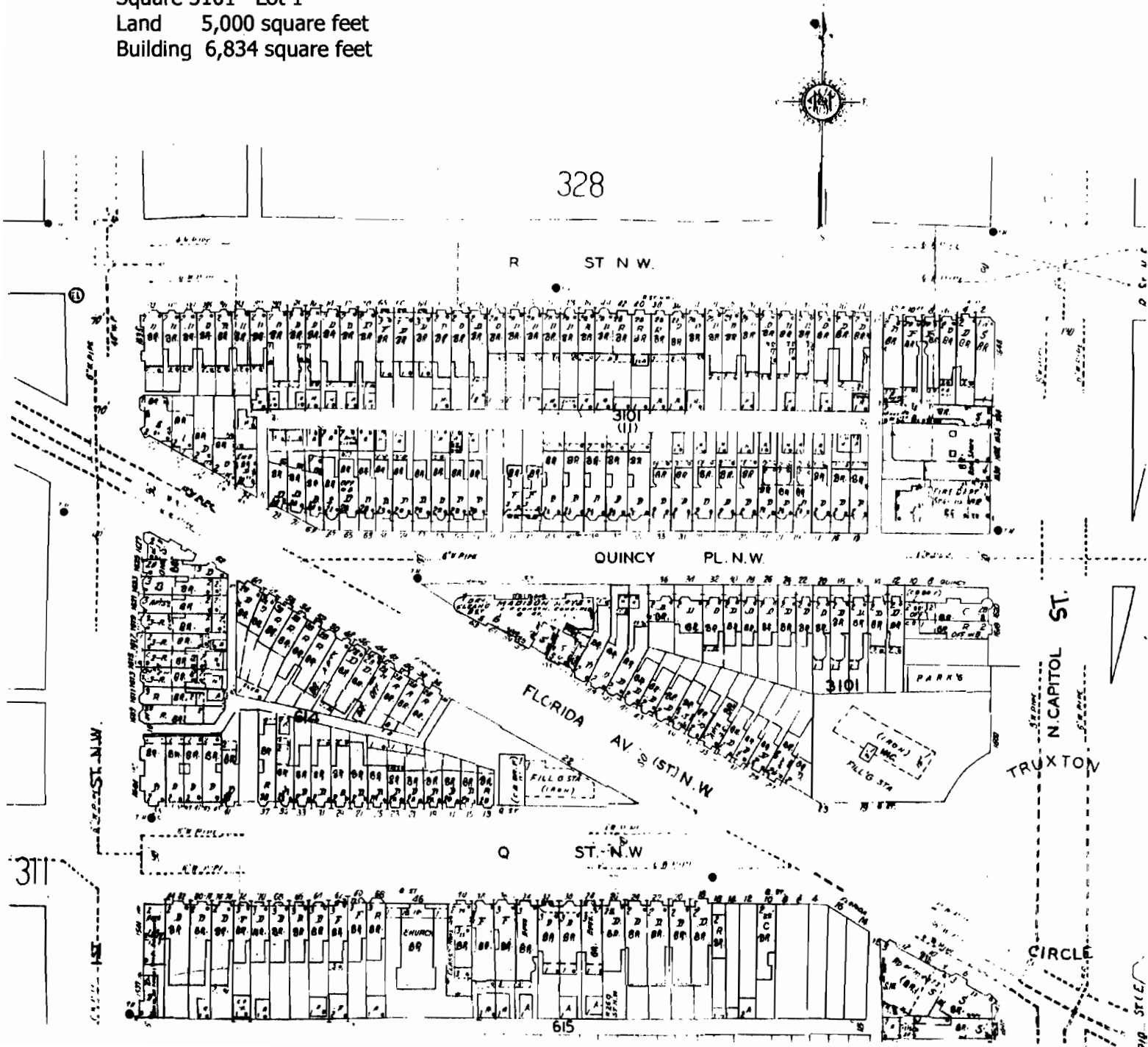
<sup>6</sup> James M. Goode. Best Addresses: A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988, p.213.

<sup>7</sup> National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. "Gallinger Municipal Hospital Psychopathic Ward," William B. Bushong, 1988, section 8, pp. 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> This date supplied by Firefighter Jackson Gerhart.

310.24 A MAP SHOWING THE EXACT BOUNDARIES OF THE PROPERTY PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION; THE SQUARE AND LOT NUMBER(S) OR PARCEL NUMBER; SQUARE FOOTAGE OF PROPERTY PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION; NORTH ARROW; AND CONTIGUOUS STREETS, IF ANY.

Old Engine Company 12, 1626 North Capitol Street, NW  
Square 3101 Lot 1  
Land 5,000 square feet  
Building 6,834 square feet



**310.25 CONTEMPORARY GOOD QUALITY PHOTOGRAPH(S) OF THE PROPERTY PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION WHICH PROVIDE A CLEAR AND ACCURATE VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PROPERTY AND ITS SETTING; SPECIFY VIEW, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH AND LIST CREDITS, IF ANY. 8" X 10" GLOSSY PHOTOGRAPHS ARE PREFERRED. IN ADDITION, APPLICANT MAY SUPPLY SLIDES. (TWO COPIES OF EACH PHOTOGRAPH AND SLIDE)**

All photographs are of Old Engine Company 12, 1626 North Capitol Street, NW

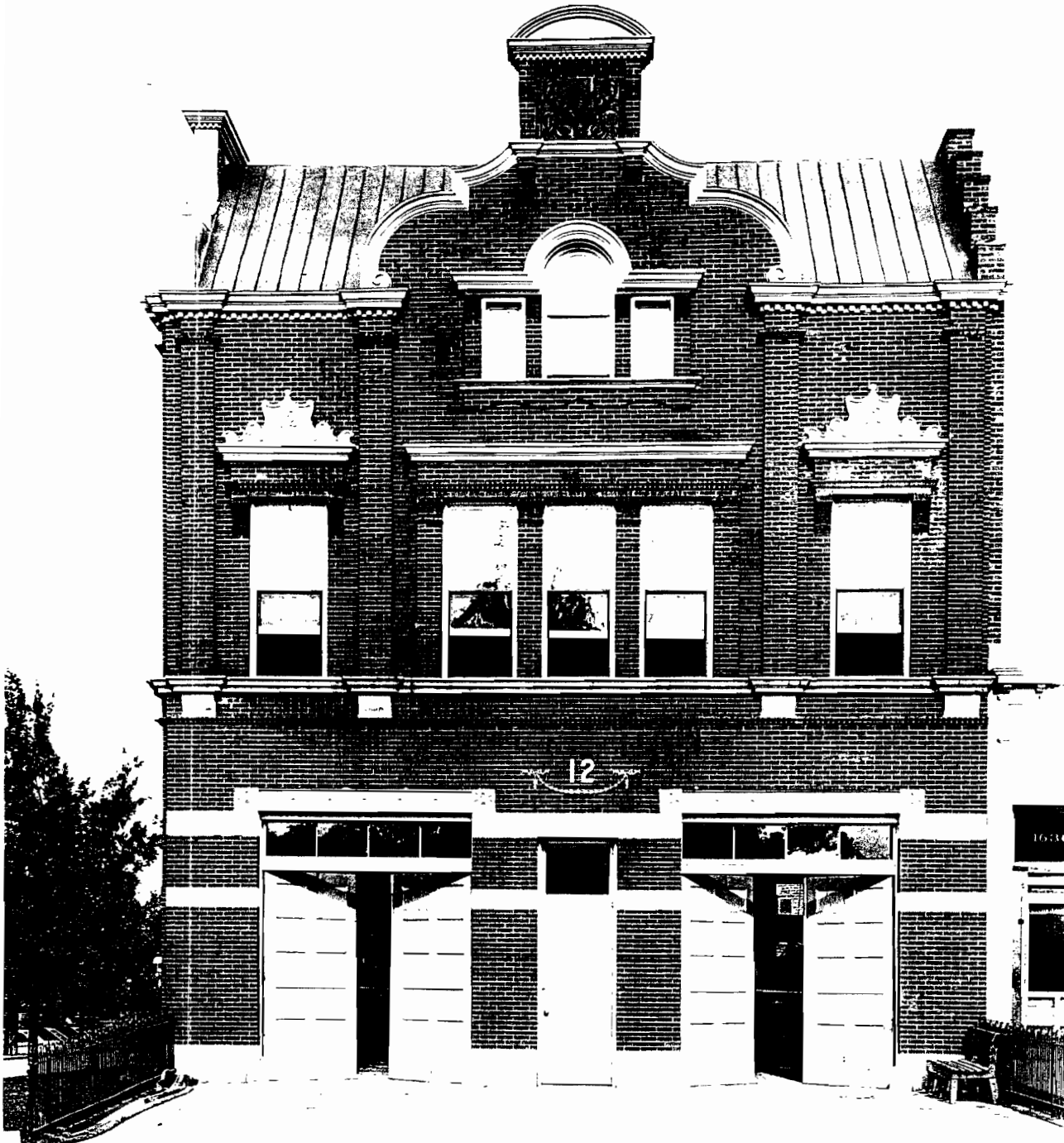
1. East facade from the south, 2001  
Sally Berk, photographer
2. East facade, c. 1904  
From the collection of Retired DC Firefighter Jackson Gearhart
3. East facade from the south, n.d.  
From the collection of Retired DC Firefighter Jackson Gearhart
4. Interior with staircase, n.d.  
From the collection of Retired DC Firefighter Jackson Gearhart



No. 12 Engine House, Fire Department,

District of Columbia.

North Capitol and Quincey streets, northwest.







310.26 A LIST OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC AND OTHER SOURCES USED TO PREPARE THE APPLICATION; INDICATE WHERE THE REFERENCE MATERIAL IS ARCHIVED.

Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, DC. Philadelphia: GW Baist, (Vol. 3) 1896, 1903, 1919, 1925, 1931, 1937, 1945, 1954, 1960, 1968, (Vol. 4) 1927, 1936, 1943, 1959.

Baldwin Memorial Archives, American Institute of Architects Library.

Berk, Sally L. Environmental Impact Statement for the Mid-City Sector of the Green Line of the Washington METRO. October 1989.

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Commission of Fine Arts Minutes. Record Group 66, National Archives.

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Gerhart, Jackson H., Firefighter. Interview, August 19, 1991.

Glass, Darlene and Claude. Video, "History of Engine Company No. 21," n.d.

## 310.26 BIBLIOGRAPHY (page 2)

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Peterson, Anne E. Hornblower and Marshall, Architects. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1978.

Scott, Pamela and Antoinette J. Lee. Buildings of the District of Columbia. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.

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Withey, Henry R. and Elsie Rathburn. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970.

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