

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY - BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Please send completed form to: National Register and State Register Coordinator,
State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development,
One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford CT 06103

* Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) Dixwell Fire Station: Rescue, Truck Co. 4, Engine Co. 6, Engine Co. 3

Building Name (Historic) Dixwell Fire Station aka Goffe Street Fire House

Street Address or Location 125 Goffe Street

Town/City New Haven Village _____ County New Haven

Owner(s) City of New Haven Fire Department, 952 Grand Avenue, New Haven CT Public Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: GOVERNMENT: Fire station

Historic Use: GOVERNMENT: Fire station

Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes No

Interior accessible? Yes No If yes, explain _____

Style of building MODERN MOVEMENT: Postmodern Date of Construction 1974

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brick | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone | <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type _____) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>Ceramic tile</u> | | |

Structural System

- Wood Frame Post & Beam Balloon Load bearing masonry Structural iron or steel
 Other _____

Roof (Type)

- Gable Flat Mansard Monitor Sawtooth
 Gambrel Shed Hip Round Other _____

(Material)

- Wood Shingle Roll Asphalt Tin Slate Asphalt Shingle
 Built up Tile Other _____

Number of Stories: 2 Approximate Dimensions 102' x 107'

Structural Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Exterior Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Location Integrity: On original site Moved When? _____

Alterations? Yes No If yes, explain: _____

FOR OFFICE USE: Town # _____ Site # _____ UTM _____

District: S NR If NR, Specify: Actual Potential

PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT'D)

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

- Barn Shed Garage Carriage House Shop Garden
- Other landscape features or buildings: Driveway paving, lawn, shade trees, flagpole, outdoor grill kitchen

Surrounding Environment:

- Open land Woodland Residential Commercial Industrial Rural
- High building density Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings: The site is located on the northeast corner of Goffe and Webster Streets. To the south at 106 Goffe St. is an historic building, the 1864 Goffe Street Special School (National Register listed). To the west is a residential neighborhood substantially rebuilt in the 1960s as a part of the Dixwell urban renewal project, with multi-family housing, churches, and the 1964 Helene Grant School (demolished in 2016). The street alignment of Sperry and Webster Streets, formerly offset, was reconfigured to form a sweeping curve onto which the fire station's wide driveway apron opens.

• Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*)

The building is a two-story flat-roofed roughly square brick structure with commercial-type metal windows and doors. The plan is set diagonal to the street grid, with the northwest facade facing the curve of the street line. A four-bay equipment garage is located at the northwest corner of the building, with glazed doors opening toward Webster Street. The southwest corner has a recessed entry, with full height glazing, a pair of glazed doors, and a marble-clad wall panel, under a cantilevered curved marquee-like wall. The upper level wall functions as a sign, projecting in a gentle curve that breaks away from the corner of the building. Oversized lettering displays "RESCUE - TRUCK CO. 4 - ENGINE CO. 6 - ENGINE CO. 3" in a horizontal band. The lower wall of the facade is clad in cream-colored glazed brick while the remainder of the exterior is red brick. A varied pattern of window openings with aluminum-framed sash occurs on the southwest and southeast sides, reflecting the building's functional layout within.

Architect Venturi & Rauch Builder _____

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources:

Brown, Elizabeth Mills; New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1976.
 Carley, Rachel D., Tomorrow is Here: New Haven and the Modern Movement (Privately printed by the New Haven Preservation Trust, New Haven CT) June, 2008.
 Haller, Peter. 1984. HRI 3409. New Haven Architectural Survey Phase IV. Map/block/lot: 296/0328/03000.
 See continuation sheet.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock Date 6/26/2009

View Multiple Views Negative on File NHPT

Name Charlotte Hitchcock Date 12/09/2016

Organization New Haven Preservation Trust

Address 922 State Street, P.O. Box 8968, New Haven, CT 06532

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Latitude, Longitude: 41.315722, -72.934366

Threats to the building or site:

- None known Highways Vandalism Developers Renewal Private
- Deterioration Zoning Other _____ Explanation _____

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Historical or Architectural importance (*continued*):

New Haven’s professional fire department dates from 1862. By the early twentieth century, the city had built a collection of Victorian and Colonial Revival fire stations for its horse-drawn fire-fighting equipment. These buildings were remodeled repeatedly as equipment changed from horse-drawn to motorized, and as new requirements arose, for emergency medical units and for dealing with industrial chemical fires. Over time and multiple remodeling, some of the more ornate buildings evolved into plainer examples. The extant 1959 East Battalion Headquarters on Lombard Street represents the ultimate evolution of the plain functional building, a brick box with square garage bay openings and a utilitarian second floor space for the firefighters.

During the Urban Renewal Era of the 1960s, New Haven undertook a campaign of replacing and consolidating its fire stations, hiring the architectural firm of Earl Carlin and Peter Millard for a series of buildings beginning with the new Fire Headquarters on Grand Avenue. This and four neighborhood stations were designed in the Modernist idiom, and the spaces in each were designed to explicitly express a detailed program of functional requirements (see inventory forms).

The last in the program was the Dixwell Fire Station, consolidating two earlier locations – on Dixwell Avenue and at Elm and Park Streets – into a new building on Goffe Street in the Dixwell Redevelopment Area. The architect selected was Robert Venturi and the firm then known as Venturi and Rauch.

Robert Venturi was both a practicing architect and a teacher and theorist. His book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* had been published in 1966. Mentored by Louis Kahn and based in Philadelphia, Venturi espoused ideas that were akin to those of Yale Architecture Department chair Charles Moore and New York writer Jane Jacobs. Venturi valued and embraced the complexity of the existing cityscape, in contrast with the simplifying efforts of earlier Modernists. He saw the commercial context buildings of both Main Street and of highway strip malls as valid cultural expressions. He viewed repeated remodeling as the expected norm in the life cycle of a building (Venturi 1966). Venturi came to New Haven to teach in the Yale Department of Architecture during the time that Charles Moore was its chair. Moore supported the Las Vegas studio class run by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, which led to a 1972 book *Learning from Las Vegas* which examined the commercial architecture of the automobile age.

Venturi was commissioned to design the last of the new fire stations in New Haven as the urban renewal period was coming to an end in the late 1960s. Venturi and his firm had only a few built projects completed at that time, including residential buildings and Fire Station No. 4 (1968) in Columbus, Indiana. They had received considerable publicity in the architectural community as a result of their dramatic challenges to the accepted principles of International Style modernism. Such phenomena as Pop Art and the historical layering of the Italian cityscape, informed their thinking about an inclusive approach to the built environment. Against this background, for the Columbus, Indiana project, the firm had promoted its practical ability to design “an ordinary building that was easy to maintain” (VSBA web site).

In fact, the Dixwell Fire Station can be seen as an ordinary box-like commercial or industrial building, rather akin to the Lombard Fire Station or the station at Elm and Park Streets after its last remodeling (Box 22 Associates 2005, 54) – plain industrial-style brick walls, flat roof, steel lintels framing garage doors - nothing requiring custom work or expensive ornament.

From another perspective, the design exemplifies several of the key characteristics of Venturi and Scott Brown’s approach, which soon came to be known as Postmodernist. The “decorated shed” (Venturi 1972, 90) is varied by the building corner curved to match the roadway, the entry recessed under a Pop-art type of

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cantilevered wall that turns the front facade into a giant signboard, with the over-sized lettering announcing the fire companies housed in the station. Contrasting tile on the front elevation articulates the facade as special and important, like the front facade of a shopping plaza. In the interior, an enormous mural painted by fire fighter Tony Falcone adds to the Pop Art dimension (Falcone web site). Falcone went on to become a successful artist and muralist, specializing in recreating historical scenes.

The Dixwell Fire Station is important architecturally as an early example of Venturi and Scott Brown's Postmodern work. The designers' intentions can be understood by reading their contemporary publications; concepts concerning the integration of complexity and layers of meaning, acceptance of the scale of rapid modern movement, and finding ornament in the technology of construction, have become buzzwords, like the "decorated shed" and "the duck." Meanwhile the practical functions of the firehouse continue to be housed at 125 Goffe Street.

Like the firm's previous Firehouse No. 4 in Columbus, Indiana, and like the nearby Dixwell Plaza redevelopment in New Haven, the project is modeled on an automobile-scaled land use, where boxy buildings with facades of bold signage, are accompanied by expanses of paving for vehicles. This model has been discredited as an urban planning tool with the arrival of New Urbanist thinking in the late twentieth century. However it has some functional validity for a fire station, with its need for truck clearances, and this site is located at the interface between a group of industrial land uses to the southeast and the residential neighborhood to the northwest, so it can be seen as consistent with the adjacent context.

Architects:

Robert Venturi (b. 1925) grew up in Philadelphia, son of a Quaker mother. He studied at Princeton University, earning a BA in 1947 and MFA in 1950. He worked for Eero Saarinen in Michigan and for Louis Kahn in Pennsylvania before opening his own firm and beginning a long career combining design work with teaching and theoretical writing. **Denise Scott Brown** (b. 1931 as Denise Lakofski) grew up in Northern Rhodesia, studied in South Africa, and moved to London to study architecture. She married a South African classmate, Robert Scott Brown, who died in 1955 while the pair were studying at the University of Pennsylvania. Denise Scott Brown went on to teach and practice in the Southern California until her marriage to Robert Venturi in 1967. She became a partner with Venturi. The firm VenturiScottBrown engaged in campus planning, building design, teaching, and writing over the subsequent decades. Their books and built projects were pivotal in the recognition of Postmodernism as an alternative to the Modernism of the post-World War II period. Robert Venturi was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1991, sparking controversy because of the refusal to award it to both partners. The two architects have jointly received numerous awards including National Design Mind Award, CooperHewitt, National Design Museum, New York, in 2007.

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Sources (continued):

AIA Historical Directory of American Architects,

<http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/What's%20here.aspx>.

Box 22 Associates. 2005. *New Haven Firefighters*. Images of America series. Charleston: Arcadia Publishing.

Huxtable, Ada Louise. 1/18/1970 “Architecture: Heroics Are Out, Ordinary Is In.” *New York Times*.

Maps and aerial views:

Bing Maps accessed at: <https://www.bing.com/mapspreview>

Google Maps accessed at: <https://www.google.com/maps/>

Kelly, Cassius W. 1911. *Atlas of New Haven Connecticut, Plate 2*. Boston: Oscar W. Walker & Bridgeport: Streulie & Puckhafer.

Fitch, James Marston. 1973. *American Building: the Historical Forces That Shaped It, Second Edition*. New York: Shoken Books.

Goldberger, Paul. 4/14/1991. “Architecture View: Robert Venturi, Gentle Subverter of Modernism.” *New York Times*.

Metz, Don and Yuji Noga. 1966. *New Architecture in New Haven*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

New Haven Modern web site. New Haven Preservation Trust. Accessed at: <http://newhavenmodern.org/>
Fire stations on Ellsworth Avenue, Grand Avenue, Howard Avenue, Lombard Street, Whitney Avenue, and Woodward Avenue.

Scott Brown, Denise, biography. Wikipedia, accessed 12/10/2016 at

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denise_Scott_Brown .

Scully, Vincent. 1969. *American Architecture and Urbanism*. New York: Praeger.

Scully, Vincent et al. 2004. *Yale in New Haven: Architecture & Urbanism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Venturi, Robert, biography.

Wikipedia. Accessed 12/10/2016 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Venturi .

Pritzker Architecture Prize web site. Accessed 12/10/2016 at <http://www.pritzkerprize.com/1991/bio> .

Venturi, Robert. 1966. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art and Graham Foundation.

Venturi, Robert, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour. 1972. *Learning from Las Vegas*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

VS: VenturiScottBrown. web site accessed 12/08/2016 at: <http://venturiscottbrown.org/>

List of projects, principal biographies, bibliography.

Whiffen, Marcus and Frederick Koeper. 1981. *American Architecture: 1607-1976*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

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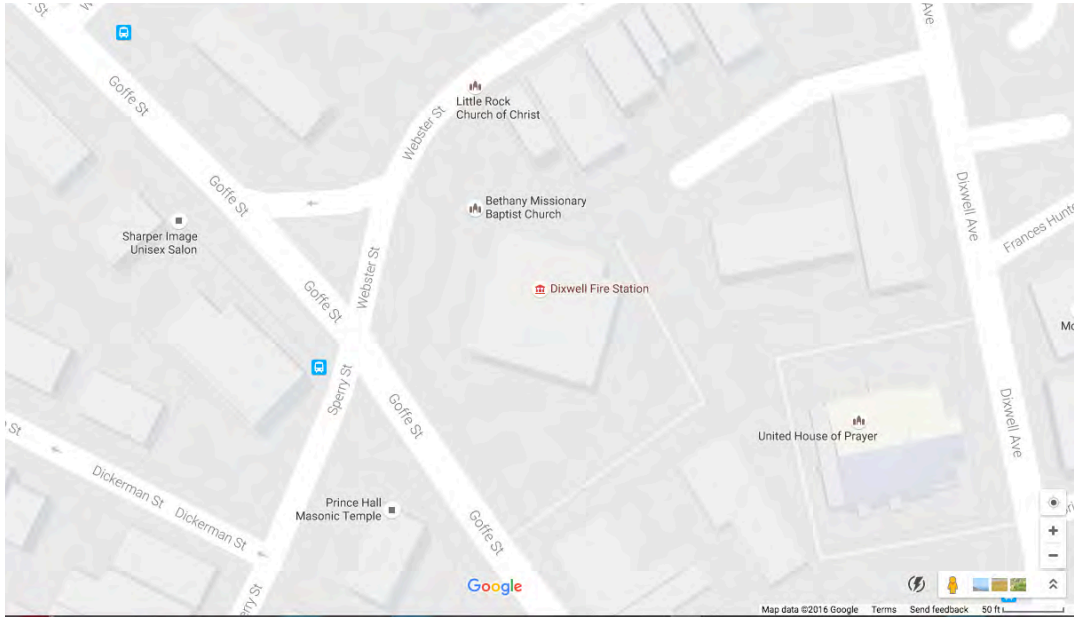


Figure 1. Location map of Dixwell Fire Station, 125 Goffe Street. Image from Google Maps accessed 12/09/2016.



Figure 2. West aerial view of 125 Goffe Street. Image from Bing Maps accessed 12/09/2016.

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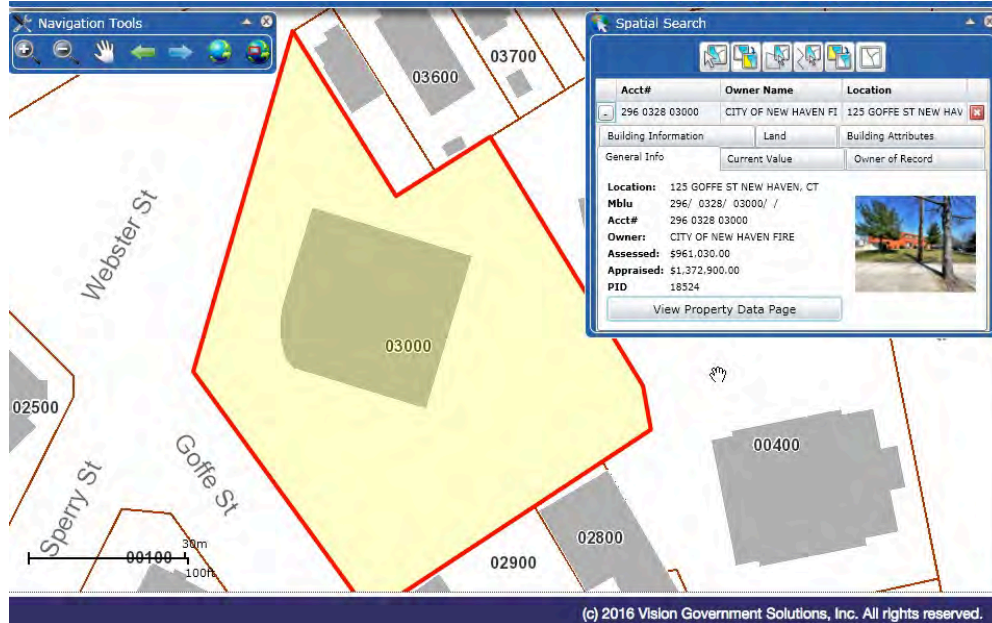


Figure 3. New Haven Assessor's GIS map for 125 Goffe Street, accessed 12/09/2016 at <http://gis.vgsi.com/newhavenct/Map.aspx?pid=18524>.



Photo 4. West view of 125 Goffe Street, camera facing east.

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Photo 5. West detail view of entrance, camera facing east.



Photo 6. Southwest view of façade with cantilevered wall; camera facing north.

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Photo 7. Southwest view; camera facing northeast.



Photo 8. Southeast view of the rear of the building; camera facing northwest. Note outdoor grill kitchen at left, rear overhead doorway to main garage at right.

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Photo 9. Interior view of the mural *Stepping in Time* by Tony Falcone. Photo courtesy of Falcone Art Studio web site <http://www.falconeartstudio.com/index.html> . The mural is based on a 1910 photograph by Charles Roos of Steamer Engine No. 2 on College Street. Tony Falcone painted the scene in 1982 for former Mayor Richard C. Lee (Box 22 Associates, p. 116) and the large version for the firehouse.



Photo 10. Interior view showing Falcone mural. Photo 12/20/1974, courtesy of <http://nhfdgear.com/> .