



HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY - BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, 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) New Haven Fire Headquarters (Central Station), Engine 4, Hook & Ladder 1, Car 32
 Building Name (Historic) New Haven Fire Headquarters (Central Station), Engine 4, Hook & Ladder 1, Car 32
 Street Address or Location 952-960 Grand Avenue
 Town/City New Haven Village _____ County New Haven
 Owner(s) City of New Haven Public Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Fire Station and Department Administrative Offices
 Historic Use: Fire Station and Department Administrative Offices

Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes No
 Interior accessible? Yes No If yes, explain Some areas during limited hours
 Style of building Modernist - Brutalist - Wrightian Date of Construction 1961

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

- | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type <u>Cast-in-place</u>) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | |

Structural System

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

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 Rubber

Number of Stories: 3 **Approximate Dimensions** 90' x 150'

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: Concrete walls screening parking areas from sidewalk; asphalt paving.

Surrounding Environment:

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

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

Sited at the edge of the downtown and a gateway to eastern neighborhoods; high visibility due to an exposed location on the bank of a railroad cut, with a backdrop of 2- to 3-story residential neighborhood scale. The building was designed to be a symbol of modern government and public safety, to be monumental and yet not out of scale with its surroundings.

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

See continuation sheet.

Architect Earl P. Carlin, Peter Millard Builder W.J. Megin Inc., Naugatuck, CT

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources:

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.
 New Haven Assessor's Record: Map/Block/Parcel: 224/ 0559/ 00600, Building Department permit files.
 See continuation sheet.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock Date 11/12/2009

View Multiple views Negative on File NHPT

Name Charlotte Hitchcock Date 11/12/2009

Organization The New Haven Preservation Trust

Address 934 State Street, P.O. Box 1671, New Haven, CT 06507

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Threats to the building or site:

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

- Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and exterior*):

The building is a fortress-like monument built of exposed cast-in-place concrete. A geometric scheme based on hexagonal forms animates the plan. Four skewed corner towers, kite-shaped in plan, anchor the main block. The towers vary in height, but all are taller than the roofline of the central section; the tallest is the iconic 65' high hose drying tower, while the others contain stairs or other service functions. The central portion consists of six engine bays facing north toward Grand Avenue, a second floor for the fire fighters' quarters, and a partial third floor providing administrative offices for the fire department. The transparent glass overhead doors of the engine bays contrast with the solid weightiness of the abstract geometry forming the towers and the second floor walls. Slot openings between the concrete masses are glazed as vertical strip windows that read as abstract openings between the solid volumes, very much in the modernist idiom that was becoming current at the time of design. Columns and beams in the interior have diagonal forms, tapered from bottom to top.

The south elevation reverses the pattern, with nearly solid walls at ground level, (animated by two overhead door openings to the rear of the engine bays) and lighter, more open banks of aluminum-framed windows on the upper floors. The top floors are corbeled out on diagonal braces that echo similar brackets on the north facade between the engine bay doors and in the interior. Access to the office spaces is via a single exterior door in the southeast tower, leading into a triangular stair with a small elevator, designed as the private entrance to the administrative spaces above, not as a public facility. Originally, an open porch extended across the south face of the third floor, acting as a sun baffle; this has been glassed in, increasing the floor area of the office suite.

The use of structural concrete as an exposed finish throughout, gives the building its stylistic label, Brutalist (for the French "beton brut"). The geometry of the plan suggests a possible Wrightian inspiration as well. A very high level of refined detail is exhibited throughout. In this building the surface finish is very smooth, unlike some Brutalist designs. Patterns of incised lines, created by attaching raised spacer strips to the formwork, animate the surfaces, providing whimsical indications of the locations of stairs, landings, and floor levels behind the massive concrete bearing walls. The signage on the north front spelling out "Fire Headquarters" is similarly incised into the concrete surface, and then repeated as applied letters (note the missing "T").

- Historical or Architectural importance:

Urban Renewal in New Haven:

The Wooster Square Redevelopment Project Area encompassed widely-publicized programs of slum clearance, highway construction, and industrial relocation, and also pioneering efforts to rehabilitate historic structures. The site for the fire headquarters building was created by clearing buildings from a trapezoidal block between Olive Street, Grand Avenue, St. John Street and the railroad cut. The old fire headquarters was located adjacent on the south side of St. John St. and became the rear parking area of the new facility, while one block of St. John Street was abandoned and absorbed into the building site. At the point where Elm Street ended and became Grand Avenue, a major neighborhood commercial street, the site for the new fire headquarters had great visibility. Constructing a fireproof concrete structure of monumental proportions signified the best aspects of the redevelopment process: modernity, efficiency, good government, and public safety.

Pioneering Use of Concrete Technology:

This building was the second of five firehouses designed by Carlin's firm, following the 1960 construction of the Woodward Avenue Fire Station, in which he pioneered the use of concrete with similarly massive and geometrical column designs. Earl P. Carlin had worked as an assistant to Architects Louis Kahn and Douglas Orr on the Yale Art Gallery, and later as an assistant and office manager to Paul Schweiker while he was Dean of the Yale Architecture Department (Stern, p. 183).

The architectural firm of Earl P. Carlin, with associates Peter Millard, and Paul Pozzi, did not attain the national fame of other designers who were producing high-profile projects in New Haven at the same time. Eero Saarinen's Morse and Stiles Colleges and Ingalls Rink, Paul Rudolph's Art and Architecture Building, Temple Street Garage, and projects for a new city hall, Louis Kahn's Yale Art Gallery, Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill (SOM)'s Conte School, all were buildings designed or under construction just before the Fire Headquarters building, and receiving publicity in the architectural press. All were pioneering the use of exposed concrete as both structure and finished surface. The mid-twentieth century was a time of experimentation by engineers and architects into the potential of reinforced concrete as a building material and as artistic expression. Testing of concrete mixes, formwork techniques, steel reinforcing, thin shell designs, prestressing and precasting, were going on in design offices and field trials.

The design is a skillful example of these trends in design and technology. Neither as aggressive as Rudolph's work nor as lyrical as Saarinen's, nevertheless, the fire headquarters building has stood as a monument, symbol, and functional fire station for almost 50 years. A building designed sculpturally as a monumental statement may be difficult to adapt to changing needs – the second floor windows appear to have been partially covered on the interior to block excessive light, while the tower stair and tiny elevator to the offices would be difficult to adapt to current accessibility standards. However, changes have been minimal, and the excellent condition of the exterior is testament to both quality control during construction and the stewardship by the Fire Department over the decades.

• Sources (*continuation*):

Brown, Elizabeth Mills; *New Haven: A Guide to Architecture & Urban Design*; Yale U. Press, New Haven, 1976, p.117.

Hommann, Mary; *Wooster Square Design*, New Haven Redevelopment Authority, 1965, p. 94 ff.

"In Memoriam: Architect Peter Millard," Yale University Office of Public Affairs, 2009,

<http://opa.yale.edu/news/article.aspx?id=6583>.

Metz, Don, and Noga, Yuji; *New Architecture in New Haven*; MIT Press, 1966, pp. 48-49.

New Haven Redevelopment Authority, *Redevelopment Plan for the Wooster Square Project Area*, 1958-1967.

New Haven Register, June 10, 1962, Fire Department 100th Anniversary Special Section.

Progressive Architecture, September 1962, "Foreground Firehouse," p. 119ff.

Spring, Bernard P. and Canty, Donald, *Architectural Forum*, September 1962, "Concrete: the Material that can do almost anything," p.78ff.

Stern, Robert A. M., *The Office of Earl P. Carlin*, *Perspecta* 9/10, 1965, New Haven, Conn. : Schools of Architecture & Design, Yale University, p. 183ff.

City of New Haven Building Department, Permit No. 63022.

Online visual resources:

Milner Hotel and old fire station, looking west up Olive Street, Wooster Square project area, New Haven, before redevelopment

http://www.cthistoryonline.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/cho&CISOPTR=13496&REC=8

Old central fire headquarters, Wooster Square project area, New Haven, before redevelopment.

http://www.cthistoryonline.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/cho&CISOPTR=13485&REC=11

Aerial of State Street project area and the fire station, New Haven. Old fire station visible at right of construction site.

http://www.cthistoryonline.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/cho&CISOPTR=14483&CISOBX=1&REC=17

Aerial view of new central fire station, looking east, Wooster Square project area, New Haven.

http://www.cthistoryonline.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/cho&CISOPTR=14126&CISOBX=1&REC=14

Walker Lithograph & Publishing Co., *Atlas of New Haven Connecticut 1911*, <http://www.wardmaps.com>



1. North elevation from the corner of Grand Avenue and Olive Street, camera facing south.



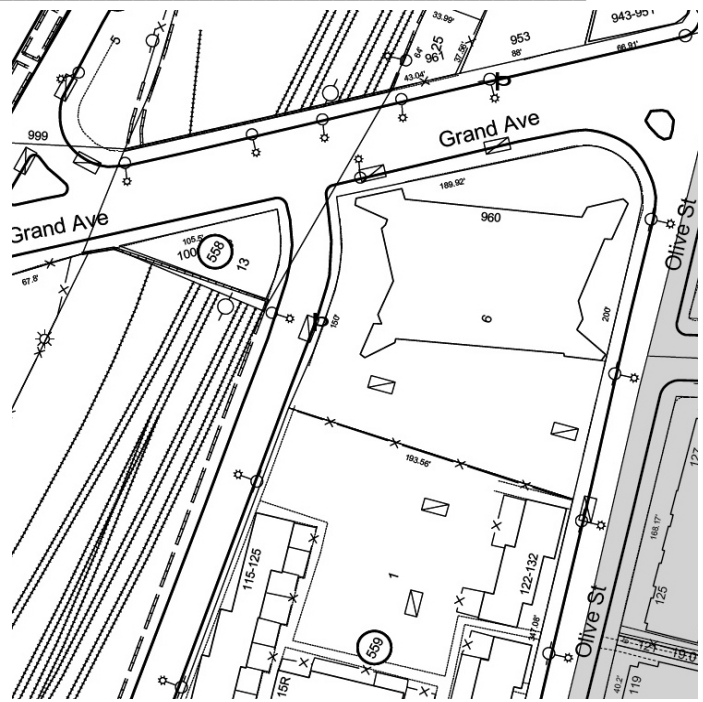
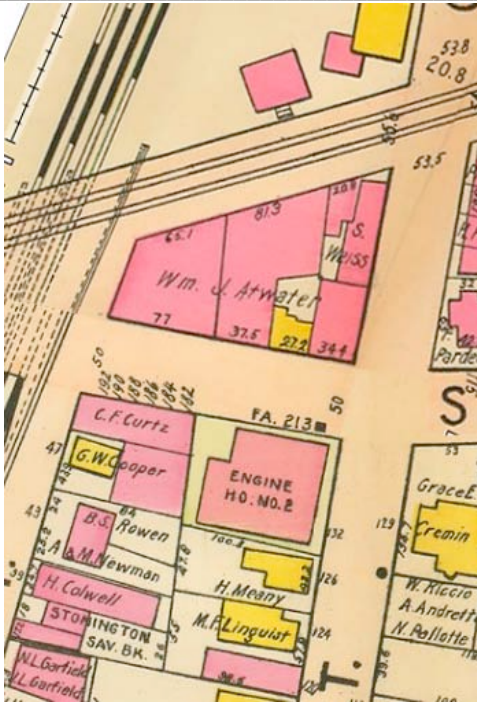
2. South elevation from rear parking area, camera facing north.



3. North elevation detail showing glazing, concrete detailing, signage.



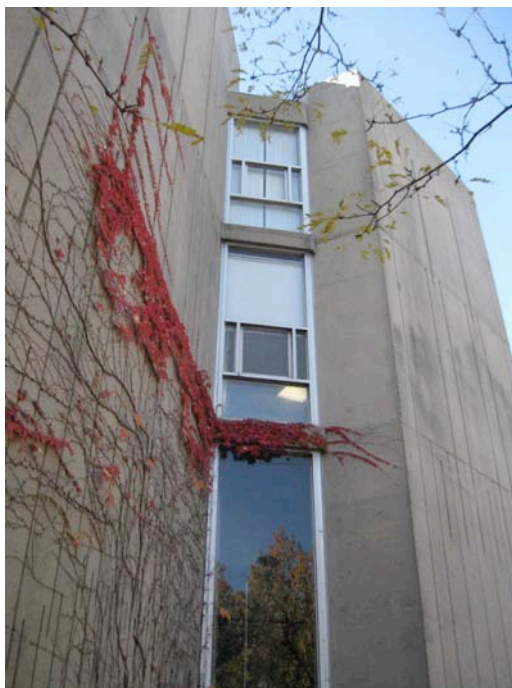
4. Aerial View — neighborhood context, from Google Maps, <http://maps.google.com/> accessed 11/13/2009.



5. Maps

Left: Walker Lithograph & Publishing Co., Atlas of New Haven Connecticut 1911, (from <http://www.wardmaps.com>) showing old Firehouse Engine No.2

Right: City of New Haven Tax Map 224/559/06



6. Concrete and Strip Window detail
East elevation



7. Detail of Northeast tower with
Concrete Details



8. North Elevation Door details showing how doors as functional openings are suppressed in favor of the sculptural treatment as glazed infill between solid masses,.



9. Southeast perimeter wall - screening parking area from pedestrian walk — continuation of concrete vocabulary.