STOP, DROP, AND PRESERVE: THE IMPACT OF MATERIAL CULTURE ON FIRE STATION DESIGN IN ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY, GEORGIA

by

NICHOLAS LEE DIETZ

(Under the Direction of Scott Nesbit)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the intersection of firefighting technology and architectural form through the lens of eight historic fire stations in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. Using the National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation (Bulletin 15), it investigates how changes in fire apparatus, departmental needs, and urban expansion shaped character-defining features of fire stations (1902-1982). The study situates local developments within a national context of fire service modernization, drawing on precedent studies in Saint Paul and Los Angeles. Through archival research, field surveys, and architectural analysis, the project assesses each station's eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Findings reveal that shifts in station layout, apparatus bay size, and construction material mirror the evolving material culture of firefighting. This thesis contributes to broader preservation discourse by demonstrating that fire stations are not merely utilitarian structures, but architecturally expressive civic landmarks rooted in municipal growth and technological change.

INDEX WORDS: Fire Station, Fire Station Architecture, Fire Apparatus, Historic Preservation, Architectural History, Cultural Resource Survey, Character-Defining Features, National Register of Historic Places, Significance, Integrity.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my grandparents, Ken and Diane Christensen. They have always taught me that if you sit around too long, you'll end up collecting dust.

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There are numerous people that have helped me piece together this project. The achievement of this thesis is just as much theirs as it is my own. First, I would like to thank Seargent Emily Alger and the Athens-Clarke County Fire Department for their support and access to a treasure trove of materials locked away filing cabinets. I am also grateful to the Athens-Clarke County Library Heritage Room for their direction and suggestions on resources. I am forever grateful to my fellow MHP classmates William Godat (also my roommate) for walking around Five Points aimlessly trying to locate Old Station No. 3 with me, and to Haylee Rose for her keen eye in proofreading this thesis. To the FindIt team and its fearless leader Jennifer Lewis, it was a great pleasure having my graduate assistantship with you all. To David, Paul, and the staff of UGA Special Collections, I am forever debt for the opportunities I had to work in the library during the years of my undergrad. I am also thankful to Aryn Wright for driving me around to all the fire stations so that I could take photos and complete my survey. I would be remiss if I did not thank my parents, Todd and Carol Harris, for their unconditional love and support throughout my life and academic career. Additional thanks go out to the Willson Center at the University of Georgia for providing grant funding for this project. Lastly, I am grateful for the advice and guidance of my advisor, Dr. Scott Nesbit, for his unwavering patience throughout this process, as well as the rest of my thesis committee. A special thanks to Athens, Georgia, the Classic City nestled in the hills of Northeast Georgia, not just my college town but also my hometown for as long as I can remember. No matter where I go, you will always be the special place I call home.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Of all the influences that impact the built environment, fire reigns supreme. Its destructive forces have left their imprint on the American city, not just because of what was destroyed, but also because of what was rebuilt. The United States has a long and extensive lineage of great urban fires that begins in the first British settlement at Jamestown in 1608. From there, major cities experienced large conflagrations sometimes even more than once throughout the next two centuries; Boston in 1653, 1673, 1676, 1711, 1760; New Orleans in 1788 and 1794, Detroit in 1806, Savannah in 1820, New York in 1835, San Francisco in 1851, Sacramento in 1852, St. Louis in 1859, Charleston in 1861.[1] Consistently and repeatedly, fire has threatened the urban landscape.

After major fires cities rebuild, erecting new structures out of the ashes of the old. What also are built are fire stations. They are vital to the American city, an essential part of every community. These are cultural resources that tell the tale of growth and development, standing as reminders of the prior catastrophes that necessitate their existence. Fire stations are not placed at random, but rather strategically. Planners draw up fire districts to ensure that every address in their jurisdictions is in close proximity to a station. A new neighborhood, commercial center, or manufacturing development can cause the re-drawing or creation of a new district as a city gets more stations. This is a symbiotic relationship, the number of fire stations in a given place is

[1] Fred S. McChesney, "Government Prohibitions on Volunteer Firefighting in Nineteenth Century America: A Property Rights Perspective", *Journal of Legal Studies,* vol. 15, no. 1 (1986): 71.

often related to increased, thicker populations and concentration of buildings- especially as cities expand outwards from their historic core.

Such is the case in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. When the Athens Fire Department was incorporated in 1891, there was only one fire station. Because of increased development and a population boom, the city got a second fire hall by 1912. A third fire station would not open until 1950, reflecting the growing post-World War II baby boom and rise of mass-produced housing outside of the downtown grid that constitutes Athens' commercial core.

However, simply building a station is only half the battle of fire prevention. The stations themselves have little to do with boots-on-the-ground firefighting. The main purpose of a fire station is to house firefighting tools such as fire trucks, water pumps, ladders, hoses, extinguishers, oxygen tanks, helmets, and masks. All these objects are examples of firefighting material culture. While material culture can be generally understood as a study of the physical materials that humans create, firefighting material culture for the purposes of this thesis refers to the tools, methods, practices, and equipment employed to fight fires across history. It is in this material culture that the tangible science of firefighting happens through. Thus, the way fire stations are designed in different architectural styles develops as a reaction to changing technology of firefighting throughout different time periods.

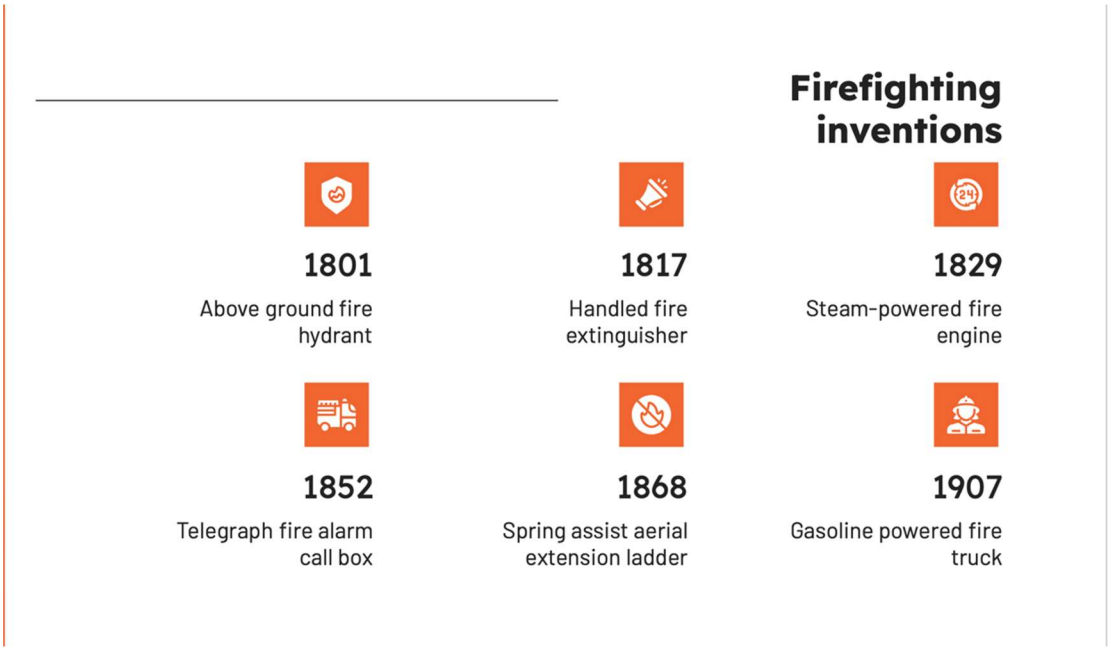

Figure 1- Examples of firefighting material culture (Author photo).

The material culture of firefighting is not just seen in the tools that firemen use but is also inherent modern building systems and codes. All streets that are newly paved must be a certain width to accommodate fire trucks. All buildings now must have some form of smoke alarm, fire annunciator, sprinkler system, ventilation methods, and fire escape contingency plan. Fire extinguishers must be publicly accessible and checked every few months. Suffice it to say that contemporary building code is obsessed with fireproofing measures. The installation of these features was notably absent in 1946 when the so-called "fireproof" Winecoff Hotel in Atlanta burned in 1946, resulting in the death of 119 people and led to a national revision of construction standards.[2]

There is an important link between this material culture of firefighting and fire station architecture that this thesis explores. As the fire apparatus became larger and longer, stations

[2] Bruce Hensler, *Crucible of Fire: Nineteenth Century Urban Fires and the Making of the Modern Fire Service* (Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 2011), 144.

responded with larger equipment bays to accommodate them. As departments took on more firemen and began to fulfill administrative functions, stations came to have larger barracks, kitchens, bathrooms, and office space. In Athens, the fire department has moved the locations of Old Fire Halls Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 from their original locations to modern facilities and are currently in the process of doing the same to Station 5. When stations are moved, they leave behind historic buildings that still contain their character-defining features that identify them as fire stations. On a deeper level, the stations themselves still are physical reminders of Athens fire history.

The National Park Service's *Preservation Brief 17* defines a character-defining feature as something that conveys overall building shape, materials, craftsmanship, decorative elements, interior contents, and surrounding environment.[3] In other words, a character-defining feature is part of a building that makes it associated with a particular function or architectural type and style. A character-defining feature is what makes a fire station look like a fire station. This thesis asks the extent to which the material culture of firefighting influences these character-defining features in eight historic fire stations in Athens-Clarke County.

To answer this question, this thesis is laid out in three parts. My project is organized into three sections. The first provides a historical overview of the evolution of firefighting technology, with a particular focus on the fire apparatus; a broad term encompassing all equipment used to deliver water or chemical agents to suppress fires, including hand-drawn, horse-drawn, steam-powered, and motorized systems. The second section presents the development of the Athens Fire Department, which transitioned from a volunteer force

[3] Lee H. Nelson, *Preservation Brief 17: Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1982).

established in 1858 to a professionalized organization in 1891. The third section offers an architectural survey of Athens' historic fire stations, documenting their origins through newspaper research, identifying their character-defining features, and evaluating their historical significance and integrity for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). None of the eight stations are currently listed or have been previously nominated individually. Old Fire Hall No. 2 is included in the Cobbham Historic District as a contributing resource. One goal of this thesis is to explore the extent to which these stations individually meet the NRHP eligibility criteria.

It is crucial to bear in mind that Athens is the county seat of Clarke County, and until 1991, there was a separation between the governments. The City of Athens council had jurisdiction over the city limits, including downtown, while the Clarke County commission ruled over unincorporated county land outside the city. However, the Athens Fire Department was paid by the county commission to provide service to the rest of Clarke County until 1982 when two new stations opened on unincorporated land. Additionally, much of Athens constitutes the campus of the University of Georgia, who do not have their own fire department but relies on the city.

Literature Review

A review of the current fire scholarship reveals large gaps in the story of firefighting, with a strong emphasis placed on economic conditions precipitated by fire insurance that dictates station design. The material culture of firefighting has not been extensively studied by academic institutions, nor its influence on station design, but instead persevered in the echelons of online databases and local fire museums. A sub-culture of fire buffs, many of whom are retired firefighters, revolves around restoring antique fire apparatuses, hydrants, and alarms, that

constitutes much of the technical ins and outs of various firefighting methods. As such, there is a considerable lack of recent research on fire station architecture. The pivotal text on the topic was written by Rebecca Zurier in 1982. Her work, *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History*, argues that to be a modern city is a to have a fire station. For Zurier, it is not the architecture that makes a station modern, but instead the technology within them that and the methods used by the firemen that staff them. Because these are civic institutions built and designed by local governments they are designed to be seen for their social commitment to safety, protection, and progress.

Zurier explores the evolution of firehouse architecture across different time periods, highlighting key architectural features and providing examples of fire stations that embody these characteristics. Early firehouses, built before the 19th century, were simple, utilitarian structures with minimal ornamentation. These buildings were often small, single-story, and constructed from basic materials like wood or brick, reflecting the practical needs of early firefighting and the volunteer fire service model. An example of this early design is the Old State House in Boston, which housed firefighting equipment but lacked the decorative elements seen in later firehouses. During the mid-19th century, firehouses began adopting more ornamental styles, notably the Romanesque Revival and Victorian styles, which featured rounded arches, towers, and decorative stonework. These designs signified the increasing civic pride and professionalism of fire departments. Engine Company No. 1 in New York City, built in 1865, is a prime example, with its Romanesque arches and towering presence, illustrating a monumental shift in firehouse design. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Beaux-Arts and Classical Revival styles became dominant. These styles emphasized symmetry, grand entrances, and clock towers, symbolizing authority and civic duty. Engine Company No. 1 in Philadelphia, built in 1901, showcases

Beaux-Arts design with its classical columns and prominent clock tower, reflecting the firehouse's elevated status as a public institution. In the mid-20th century, firehouses embraced streamlined modernism, focusing on efficiency and functionality. With the advent of motorized fire trucks, firehouses were designed with larger vehicle bays and more simplified architectural forms, minimizing ornamentation. Fire Station No. 8 in Los Angeles, built in 1955, exemplifies modernism with its clean geometric lines and functional layout.[4]

The American Firehouse is the marquee publication that provides guidance on fire station architecture. At the time of this writing, there are no Preservation Briefs, NPS Bulletins, or state historic preservation contexts studies that deal with fire stations as a typology in a broad context like Zurier. Fire stations are typically only written about in single-location reports that discuss historic designation or impacts of station relocation. These reports, such as one evaluating the relocation of Portland, Oregon's 1950s Station Number 1, push the idea that updated facilities are not only necessary for the department, but reap numerous economic benefits for the residential and business districts that surround it. There is sparse attention given in the current body of literature toward historic fire stations.

Only beginning in 2017 did this gap began to fill with more serious work regarding fire stations as a historic resource. In St. Paul, Minnesota and Los Angeles, California, the first moves were taken that led to inventoried historic fire stations with an emphasis placed on architectural design and evolution of form. Their application of the National Register eligibility criteria laid out in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,* published by the National Park Service (NPS), is a critical step for more responsible fire station preservation.

[4] Rebecca Zurier, *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982).

The *Saint Paul Fire Department Engine Houses: 1869 to 1930 Historic Context* establishes NRHP Criteria A and C as the primary bases for evaluating historic fire stations. Criterion A is applied to firehouses that illustrate the evolution of municipal fire protection services from volunteer to professionalized forces, while Criterion C applies to those that embody the distinctive characteristics of a building type, period, or method of construction.[5] Stations must retain integrity in design, materials, setting, and association, particularly in relation to their original form, façade organization, and stylistic features. [6]Architecturally, early Saint Paul stations like Engine House No. 3, built 1871–72, exhibit the Italianate style, characterized by symmetrical three-bay brick façades, arched fenestration, brick pilasters, and a central cupola.[7] Later examples, such as Engine House No. 5 from 1882, reflect Victorian and Romanesque Revival influences that incorporating rusticated stone bases, asymmetrical massing, and more ornate details.[8] As motorization replaced horse-drawn apparatus after 1910, fire station design shifted toward simpler forms, eliminating stables and haylofts and incorporating features such as front-facing hose towers and integrated living quarters.[9] These typological and stylistic shifts are essential for understanding a station's eligibility under Criterion C, especially if it reflects broader national patterns in fire service modernization.

In comparison, the *Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Post World War II Fire Stations, 1947–1963* also applies NRHP Criteria A and C, but within the mid-20th-century paradigms of suburban expansion, municipal planning, and architectural modernism.[10] Criterion

[5] Erin Que, *The Saint Paul Fire Department Engine Houses – 1869 to 1930 Historic Context* (Saint Paul: City of Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development, 2017), 37.
[6] Ibid, 37-38.
[7] Ibid, 15.
[8] Ibid, 24-26.
[9] Ibid, 25.
[10] Daniel Prosser and Mary Ringhoff, *Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Municipal Fire Stations / Post World War II Fire Stations, 1947–1963* (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources, 2017), 43.

A is used to assess the significance of stations as part of a citywide program funded by bond measures passed in 1947 and 1955 that rapidly expanded fire service coverage into newly developed areas of Los Angeles.[11] Criterion C applies to stations that embody Late Moderne and Mid-Century Modern design, particularly those that exhibit distinctive architectural features such as rectilinear volumes, asymmetrical façades, overhanging eaves, integrated hose towers, and metal bezels framing windows and doors.[12] For example, the 1950 Station 14 is cited for its two-story, two-bay Late Moderne form and integration into a historically African American neighborhood, with reinforced concrete construction and a one-story office appendage.[13] Station 71 from 1948 in the Westwood neighborhood exemplifies Mid-Century Modern styling, with a low-slung massing, horizontal emphasis, and a composition of subordinate volumes around the apparatus bay.[14] The context also emphasizes technological advances, such as the use of two-way radios and telephone alarm systems, as crucial in shaping new fire station layouts, particularly in suburban areas where box alarm systems were no longer practical[15] Eligibility under Criterion C requires retention of original massing, fenestration, materials, and relationship to streetscapes or suburban settings.[16]

The two studies are among the bourgeoning movement to consider fire stations not only as a central cultural resource to urban planning and city development, but they also consider all stations in a city together as a whole instead of individually. This holistic approach can reveal patterns and trends in local history, especially across stations that share the same features or were built at the same time.

[11] Ibid, 2-3, 6-7.
[12] Ibid, 8-10, 43.
[13] Ibid, 9.
[14] Ibid, 13-14.
[15] Ibid, 6-7.
[16] Ibid, 43-44.

Methodology

The methodology for this thesis sought to identify the locations and character-defining features of all extant historic fire stations in Clarke County, Georgia. Armed with knowledge about specific fire station types and styles from Zurier, I set out to do a fire station inventory like the St. Paul and Los Angeles contexts. One key miss, perhaps due to the sheer number of stations surveyed, both documents lack discussion of how each station was convinced through local happenings and politics. My method aimed to unite the two for Athens by unraveling the steps the city council took for each station to go from idea to reality Much of these details are buried away in the back pages of newspapers like *The Red & Black, The Southern Watchman,* and *The Banner-Herald.*

My survey of the eight stations, built between 1902-1982, was conducted within a few parameters. First, the station must be forty years of age or older. Second, the station must have been used by the Athens Fire Department after its professionalization in 1891. While fire service in Athens was the responsibility of at least seven volunteer companies up until this time, their stations are not extant. In Athens, applying the forty-year rule provides a more comprehensive view of the evolution of local fire station design and more accurately captures the shifting priorities within the Athens Fire Department. This is particularly important because it allows for the inclusion of two key stations constructed in 1982. Without the forty-year threshold, these stations would fall outside the typical fifty-year National Register guideline, despite their significance in reflecting late 20th-century trends in fire service planning, architecture, and departmental modernization.

Before any survey work could take place, the first step was to locate the stations. I began with a simple Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing the ten current fire stations in Clarke

County, using qPublic to record an estimated build date. This yielded only three stations forty years of age or older: Stations Nos. 1, 5, and 6. Then, I added Old Fire Halls Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4 after looking through city directories and newspapers to refine dates of construction, addresses, and any information I could fine about each station. During this search, I rounded out my list with Former Station No. 2, which now lies vacant relocation to a modern facility.

Of these eight, three are currently used as a fire station (No. 5 is currently slated for relocation), four have been adapted for a modern use, and one lies vacant.

During the background research phase, I pieced together a site background for each station, combining historic newspaper articles with aerial photos, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, and topographic maps. This allowed me to see how each site was used before the fire station was built, and more importantly how the environment around the stations changed after they were built. This led to some interesting revelations about the construction of the stations, which sometimes involved new water pipes laid, and roads extended. The newspapers in Athens cover fire stations well, complete with construction costs, floor plans, equipment and personal loadouts, generally positive local sentiment about department operations, and call statistics. When pieced together, this wealth of information provides a wholly complete story of each station that goes beyond their physical presence, showing how deeply endemic stations are to the fabric of Athens.

The field work portion of my survey called for a visit to all eight sites in person. With an iPhone camera, I photographed from the public right-of-way while making quick notes about each building's notable features. I denoted type and style, exterior cladding material, overall massing and symmetry, roof shape and material, window patterns and configurations, decorative features, and overall landscape. The feature that I was interested in the most was the apparatus

bays not only because they are the most recognizable feature of fire stations, but their size is the exterior feature that changes the most as the material culture of firefighting advances. While I did not create a specific form for the purpose of surveying, my process was based upon the historic resource form used by the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (GA SHPO).

For the sake of time and a wish not to arouse suspicion from property owners, the survey was conducted entirely from the right of way. While fire stations are publicly accessible places, I did not wish to disturb ongoing fire operations. In some photos, firemen can be seen at work with apparatus bay doors open. The former stations that have been converted into a new use are privately held, and thus any entry upon them would be considered trespassing.

With my field work completed, I wrote a detailed description for each station. Following the descriptions for each station is an evaluation of NRHP significance and integrity per the guidelines set out by *Bulletin 15.* Both the St. Paul and Los Angeles contexts apply only two of the four significance criteria to fire stations. For Athens, all eight fire stations are eligible under Criterion A for association with the Athens Fire Department, each one demonstrating the continuing expansion and innovation of local firefighting service. Only a handful of the stations are eligible under Criterion B for association with person of local significance and Criterion C for notable construction or architectural features indicative of a historic type and style. Criterion D, the potential to yield information does not apply to any station.

Integrity of Athens' historic fire stations is a wide variation from site to site. *Bulletin 15* suggests that while all seven aspects do not need to be met for a property to be considered eligible because some might be relevant. It points to the most crucial ones under both Criteria A and C. For A, location, setting, feeling, and for C, design, materials, workmanship are given the

most weight. A more in-depth discussion of each stations significance and integrity will be dispersed in Chapter 3.

The following table and map denote the location and address of each station surveyed. Notice that all but two of the stations are located at intersections, a methodical placement allowing fire apparatus egress in multiple directions.

Table #1: List of Historic Fire Station Build Year and Location

Old Fire Hall No. 1	1902	Washington and Thomas Streets
Old Fire Hall No. 2	1913	Hill Street and Prince Avenue
Old Station No. 3	1950	1744 South Lumpkin Street
Old Station No. 4	1965	Oglethorpe and Hawthorne Avenues
Station No. 5	1974	Whit Davis Road and Cedar Shoals Drive
Station No. 1	1979	700 College Avenue
Station No. 6	1982	Athena and Olympic Drives
Former Station No. 2	1982	Atlanta Highway and Mitchell Bridge Road

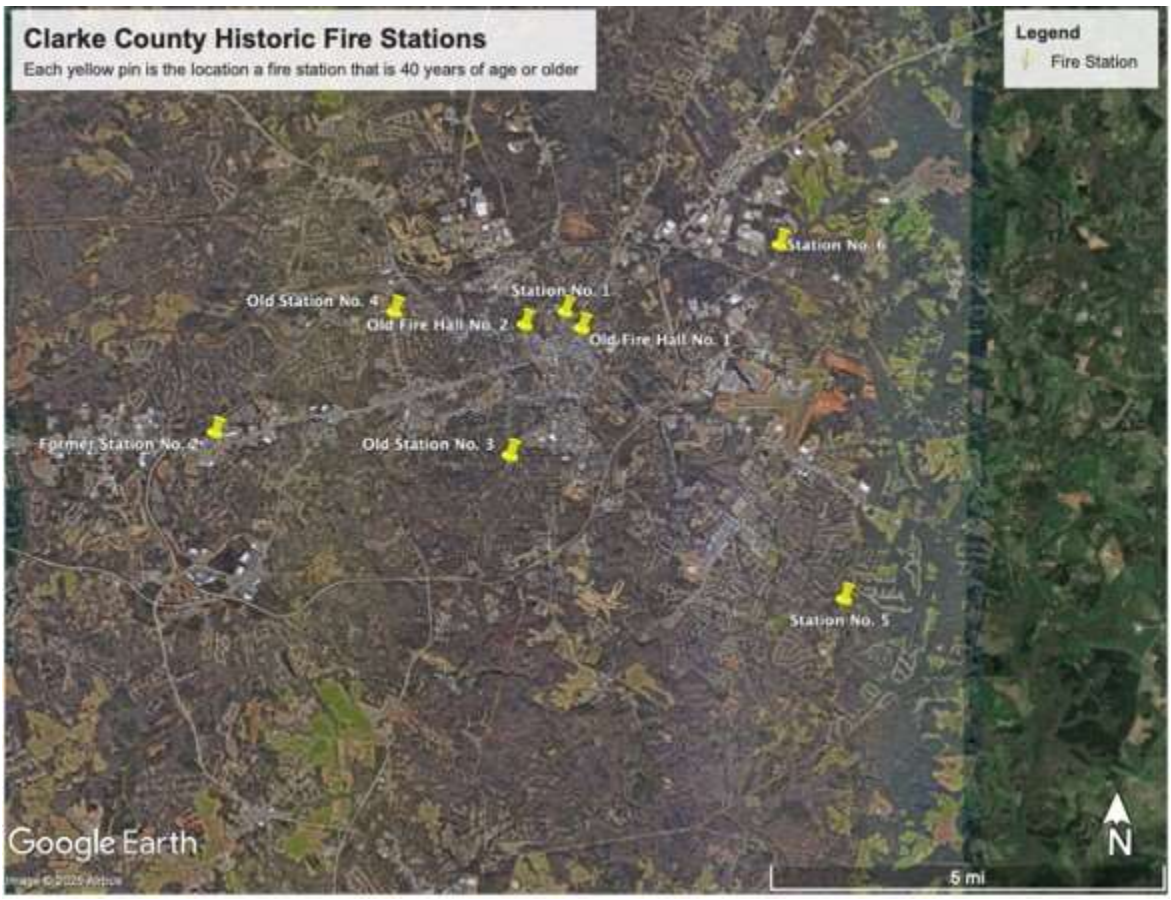

Figure 2- A map with pins showing the locations of the eight extant historic fire stations in Athens Clarke County, Georgia (Author photo).

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORY OF THE FIRE APPRATUS IN THE UNITED STATES

As with any recorded history, events are only written or passed down via word of mouth if they are notable. In the case of fires, there is undoubtably an infinite number of blazes throughout the history of the United States that did not make newspapers. Only those fires that caused considerable damage or posed a significant threat to a community are the ones that work their way into the local, and even sometimes the national, memory. From the founding of the country, fires have continually threatened the very principles upon which America was founded on: life, liberty, property. This chapter seeks to consider the ways in which humans have gone about mitigating those threats through the practice of firefighting. Firefighting is not just preventative measures taken to prevent fires from occurring or even the initial immediate response to one. Included in that definition is a much more dynamic practice that takes place after fires are put out. Major fire events necessitate a need for reform to ensure that they do not happen again. That reform, seen time and time again after fires, have everything to do with the evolution of the fire apparatus from hand-operated to motor-powered. Equally, the shift nationally from bucket bridges to professional municipal departments maps itself onto how new fire apparatus technology is received. The ideas for change that emerge after a fire serves as the catalyst for evolving firefighting techniques, driven by a need to continually improve devices like the fire engine, municipal water works, and fire administration.

Fire in Colonial Times

The first recorded fire in America wiped out most of the newly established Jamestown Colony in 1608. Captain John Smith, the leader of the settlers, recounted the scene in his journal.

> I begin to think that it is safer for me to dwell in the wild Indian county than in this stockade, where fools accidentally discharge their muskets and others burn down their homes at night[17]

Faced with considerable fire threat, Smith dealt with a blaze that consumed homes and important supplies for the upcoming winter like food and medicine. He makes a daring comparison that it would be safer to live among the Native Americans, still a largely unknown people and culture to the colonists, than to live among his own who exhibit such carelessness and put the colony's wellbeing at risk. The entry points to the idea that living in the colonies was unlike the England Jamestown residents were used to, and mistakes with ignitable material often could be deadly. Other explorers and settlers faced fire problems, such as the Dutch in 1613 when the ship *Tyger* caught on fire and was forced to and on Manhattan Island or in the Plymouth Colony when settlers sought refuge aboard the famed *Mayflower* after their meeting house burned.[18]

Firefighting in colonial America was a largely informal and unregulated practice. All able-bodied males of a community would form bucket brigades, which involved passing a leather bucket down a line of people from a water source to a fire. Colonists saw first-hand the destructive power of fire time and time again and responded with legally codified regulatory ways to mitigate fire risk. For example, in 1631, Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop banned wood chimneys and thatch roofs. In 1648, New Netherlands Governor General Peter Stuyvesant appointed four fire wardens who inspected houses and could charge fines for failure to follow

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[17] Craig Collins, "The Heritage and Evolution of America's Volunteer Fire Service", *275 Years of the American Volunteer Fire Service* (Greenbelt, MD: National Volunteer Fire Council, 2011), https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Anniversary_Publication.pdf.
[18] Ibid, page 10.

their fire code. In 1696, Philadelphia followed suit, passing a chimney ordinance that required regular cleaning of soot and ash build up. In 1740, Charlestown, South Carolina implemented their own building regulations after a major fire.[19] These fire laws were early stabs at creating a legal vessel by which local governments could regulate building code, seen as benefit to the whole community. In Boston, every home was required to have ladders to reach the roof and poles to stomp out sparks gone awry after a 1653 blaze. For the first time, public utility authorities could enter private homes and implement rules that bound all residents to keep the city from burning down. In all these various instances, a response was undertaken only after the threat of fire was realized.

Bucket brigades remained the standard for fighting fires through much of the colonial period. However, in the latter part of the 17th and into the early 18th Century, several key firefighting equipment inventions proved to be integral. In 1672, Dutch painter Jan van der Heyden created the first modern fire hose by fitting each end of a fifty foot leather hose with brass rings in 1672.[20] These hoses, although prone to rip and leak, effectively ended bucket brigades as the preferred way of fighting fires because they could be laid from water source to fire location, greatly increasing the speed at which colonists could supply water to the flames.

[19] Ibid, page 12

[20] Bruce Hensler, *Crucible of Fire: Nineteenth-Century Urban Fires and the Making of the Modern Fire Service* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2011), 2.

However, bucket brigades were not wholly eliminated and remained important for operating early manual fire pumps like the one shown below (See Figure 3).

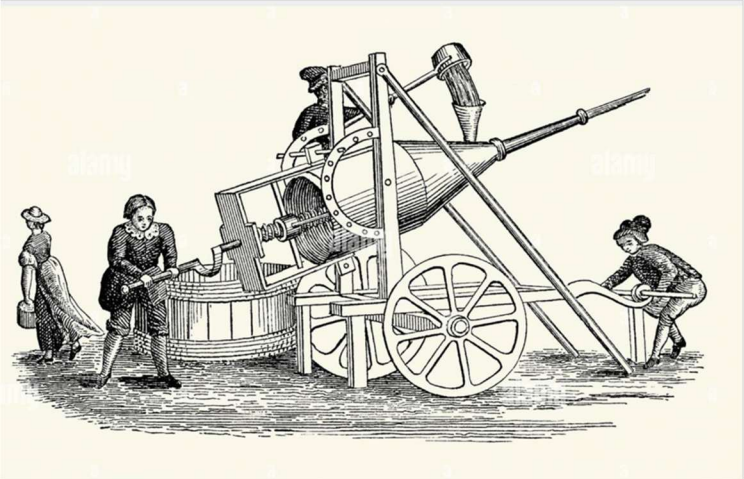

Figure 3- An 1880s engraving of a syringe fire apparatus (Courtesy of Getty Images).

Called a syringe pump for their oblong shape, a local ironworker in Boston named Joseph Jencks built one for the city after a 1653 fire, but it proved ineffective as another blaze blew through in 1676. The syringes were inefficient as they could not apply a pressurized and continual stream of water, only able to operate in short spurts. In the aftermath of the fire, Boston enacted sweeping reforms that included an ordinance mandating tile or slate roofs with brick walls. The city also imported a new fire apparatus from London, housed it on town land, and set up the first iteration of a paid municipal fire department when the General Court paid twelve men under the command of Thomas Atkins to operate it.

What arrived in Boston was an early model of the Newsham Engine, the namesake of English inventor Richard Newsham (see Figures 4 and 5). It had a three-foot long, 18-inch wooden box connected to a hand-operated pump that expelled water through a leather hose or metal pipe. It required 10-12 men to operate at a maximum efficiency of 80 gallons of water at 60 strokes per minute. Unlike the short squirts of the older syringe models, the Newsham could

pump water continuously and at pressure. Later models came equipped with a wheel and axle system, meaning the engine could be pushed or drawn by horse to a fire and could be maneuvered into close proximity with burning buildings.[21]

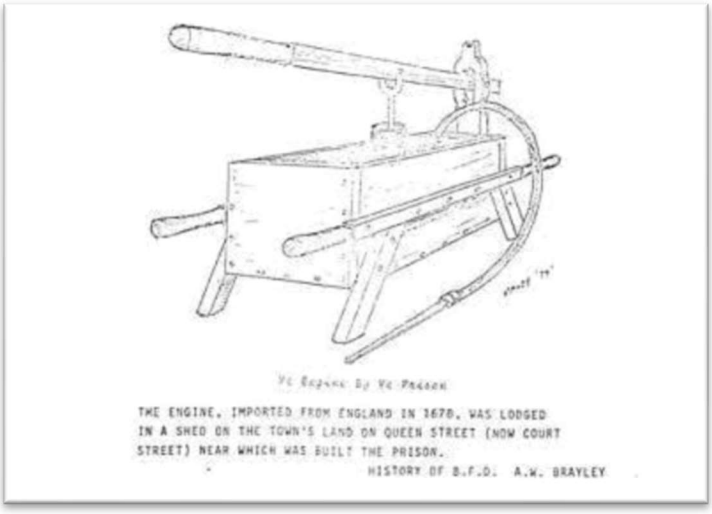

Figure 4- A drawing of the first Newsham Engine used in Boston purchased in 1676 (Courtesy of the Boston Fire Historical Society).

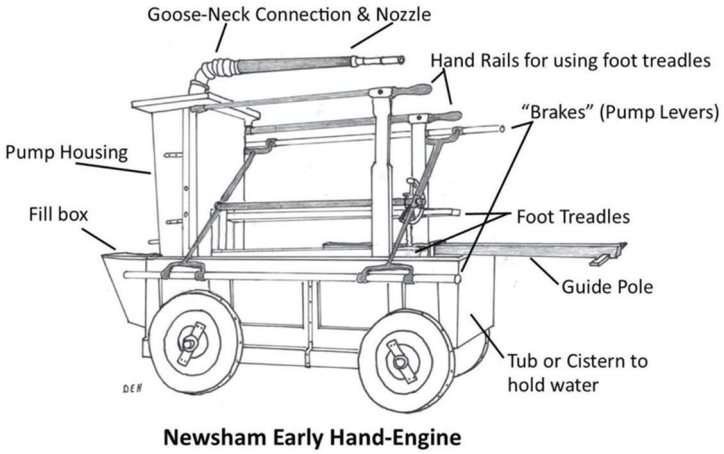

Figure 5- A later model of the Newsham Fire Engine, like the model purchased by New York City in 1731 (Courtesy of the Fire Fighters Association of Missouri).

[21] David Hendrick, "Handtubs and Hand Pumped Fire Engines," *Fire Fighters Association of Missouri*, accessed April 6, 2025, https://www.ffam.org/handtubs-and-hand-pumped-fire-engines/.

Perhaps the most effective aspect of the Newsham model was its suction-driven pump.[22] A simple flip of a lever would allow the pump to draft water from a cistern or fire hydrant. The engine's enduring popularity was a direct result of its practicality. In places that did not have municipal water works, engine tubs could be filled by hand. The Newsman engine helped firemen improve the efficiency of firefighting, making significant leaps in the speed and pressure at which water was sprayed onto a fire. No longer did Bostonians, and other cities like New York when two Newshams arrived there in 1731, fought fires by haphazardly pouring buckets with no clear suppression goal. The onset of the Newsham allowed for a more methodological approach to fire containment. There would not be another monumental improvement of the fire apparatus until the arrival of the steam-powered engine.

Volunteer Companies

With more manual apparatuses in use by the end of the Revolutionary War, volunteer fire companies became more common throughout the young United States. Scholar Annelise Graebner Andersen states that in 1852 no city in America had a paid fire department.[23] By 1880, however, most cities with more than 10,000 people had professionalized their fire service into municipal fire departments. Her article "The Development of Municipal Fire Departments in the United States", published in 1979 in the *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, tracks this change. She points to Benjamin Franklin, who set up the first major volunteer fire company, the Union Fire Company, in Philadelphia in 1736. Coverage was exclusive to dues-paying members of the company. The idea caught on in other places across the American colonies, building upon Franklin's idea but with service provided to all residents. There were two specific functions in

[22] "Hand and Horse Drawn Apparatus," *Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting*, accessed April 6, 2025, https://hallofflame.org/hand-and-horse-drawn-apparatus/.
[23] Annelise Graebner Anderson, "The Development of Municipal Fire Departments in the United States," *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 3, no. 3 (1979): 287–300, https://cdn.mises.org/3_3_6_0.pdf.

these companies: hose and reel companies were tasked with operating a fire apparatus and responsible for the water supply, while the main job of a hook and reel company was to salvage what was left a burning building and preventing the fire from spreading. Many companies, though usually working in unison, had units designated to both tasks.

While Anderson points out many benefits of volunteer companies like engaging in fundraisers for victims of fires, the cons heavily outweigh the positives. David Hendrick, who has written extensive articles on the history of firefighting for the Firefighters Association of Missouri, writes that volunteer companies went from pillars of community excellence to social clubs that attracted "rowdies, brawlers, drunks, and troublemakers."[24] Volunteers were opposed to adopting technological change, such as the introduction of the steam-powered fire engine. Companies in New York City lamented the invention as dangerous to the entire volunteer system. Although fire insurance conglomerates had commissioned a steam engine in 1840, the volunteers in New York would pettily bring it to the scene of a fire but would not use it.

Certainly, the volunteers saw advents like the steam engine, intended to help their capacity to fight fires, as a threat to the massive political power they had amassed. Companies in New York fell under the influence of Tammany Hall political leader William Meager Tweed, engaging in a special relationship in which firemen would vote for Tweed and his allies in exchange for funds appropriated from the government. In Philadelphia and San Francisco, volunteer political influences flat out prevented establishment of paid departments.

Thirdly, fire reformers who supported paid departments wanted to cut volunteers' rowdiness from the fire service. Volunteer fire halls became local hangouts for banquets and dances, often arousing drunkenness and violence. This tempestuousness was not limited inside

[24] David Hendrick, "The Age of Steam Fire Engines," *Fire Fighters Association of Missouri*, November 12, 2022, accessed April 7, 2025, https://www.ffam.org/the-age-of-steam-fire-engines/.

the fire hall but extended far beyond its walls. Rival volunteers took on more of a gang-like quality, racing to alarms and in some cases setting false alarms to incite street fights and riots. The unruliness of volunteer companies was a major factor that led city authorities to establish paid departments in Cincinnati, St. Louis, Louisville, and Pittsburgh in 1853, 1857, 1858, and 1870, respectively.[25]

The legacy of volunteer companies remains a hotly debated topic. While Anderson offers great evidence that seems to implicate volunteers in a state of disgracefulness for their gang-like behavior that did worse things for fire protection than good, it was these same volunteers that risked their lives providing early fire protection in America's city both big and small. Mark Tebeau, a scholar at Cleavland State University, highlights this danger in his essay "Fires and Firefighting,"

> During the first five decades of the nineteenth century, volunteer firefighters relied on physical labor and technical competence with tools. On hearing a fire alarm, typically rung by church bells, firefighters rushed to neighborhood engine houses. Their teams of horses pulled hose carriages or engines, which sometimes weighed as much as two tons, through crowded, narrow, and unpaved streets. Hose companies then located hydrants, used spanner wrenches to open them, and connected their engines to cities' burgeoning networks of water pipes. The firefighters then stroked levers attached to the sides of the hand- pumped engines to create enough pressure to spread water on the blaze. No firefighter could pump for longer than ten minutes, and company members rotated frequently, sometimes for hours.[26]

Tebeau's description summarizes not only the life threating work that volunteer firefighting posed but also the gruesome and laborious nature of it. Without modern or proper equipment, volunteers relied on simple tools like pickaxes to cut through debris or cloths to prevent breathing in smoke. These early volunteers also made contributions to personal protection

[25] Ibid, p. 342-347.
[26] Mark Tebeau "Fires and Firefighting," *Gale Digital Collections,* accessed April 7, 2025.

equipment. For example, New York volunteer Jacob Turk created the first fire helmet, a leather cap, in the 1730s.[27]

While rivalries in the streets and corrupt parties tarnished them, volunteers still served as the first line of defense in urban America before professionalization in the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, as is the case in Athens, many career volunteers made their way into professional ranks of new fire departments. However, not all cities and counties in America went to a paid service. Even today, some localities still rely on volunteer service, but they are included under the jurisdiction of the local government unlike these early companies who operated on their own unregulated volition.

Steam-Power and Professionalization

As more and more cities began to professionalize their fire services in hopes of a higher quality of fire protection, the arrival of the steam engine proved instrumental in getting these new departments off the ground. While the primitive workings of steam power were first conceived by Heron of Alexandria in the 1st century, it was not until 1712 that Thomas Newcomen created the first successfully viable steam engine for pumping water through mines. James Watt created further improvements in Scotland by 1769, pioneering the piston drive mechanism that creates mechanical energy. While many early steam engine models attempted to unite both the water pumping and propulsion system under steam power, the most effective "steamers" started out as hand-drawn or horse-drawn with steam pumps, and only later became steam-propelled. Even so, inventors still relentlessly sought to unite both systems under steam from the beginning.

[27] Paul Hasenmeier, "The History of Firefighter Personal Protective Equipment," *Fire Engineering*, June 16, 2008, https://www.fireengineering.com/firefighting-equipment/the-history-of-firefighter-personal-protective-equipment/.

With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, steam power was applied quickly and widely to various processes across the manufacturing and transportation realms. Trains began to dot landscapes from coast to coast as America expanded westward. John Braithwaite and John Ericsson, two engineers in London, first harnessed steam power for use on fire apparatuses. Their design (See Figure 6) proved to be a pivotal step like the Newsham engine before it, capable of a top speed of ten horsepower. While not very fast compared to modern standards, later models built for use in Prussia were capable of an output of 40 tons of water per hour at a maximum height of 90 feet. This was considerably faster than any hand apparatus in London at the time, with the added effect of being self-propelled. Yet the London fire brigades resisted, preferring to stick to their manual methods that eventually led to Braithwaite and Ericsson pursuing other inventions.

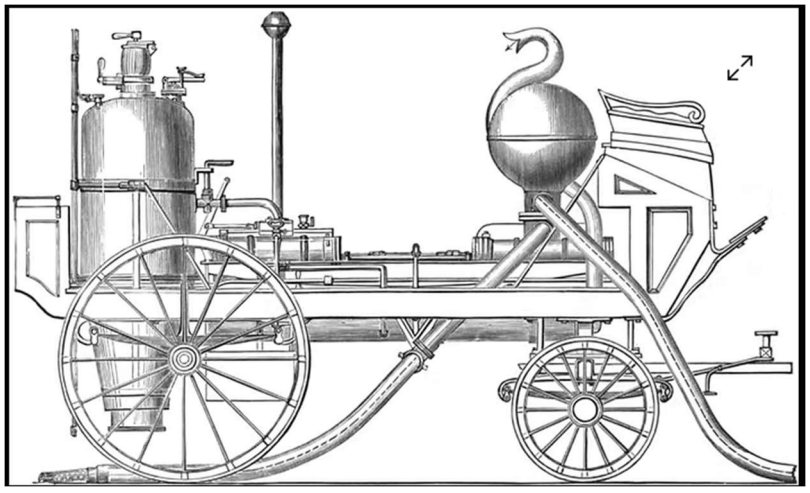

Figure 6- A drawing of the first steam-powered fire engine, designed by John Braithwaite and John Ericsson in 1829 (Courtesy of the Fire Museum of Maryland).

The same resistance to steam-powered fire engines that existed in England would also be present in the United States. Yet another English inventor, Paul Rapsey Hodge, was commissioned by insurance companies in New York City to build a steam engine in response to

an uptick in fire outbreaks. His design (see Figure 7), the first steam fire engine in the United States, came nearly a decade after Braithwaite and Ericsson's device. It weighed lighter and could pump nearly 625 percent more water per hour, expelling 290 tons of water per hour through a 1.5-inch nozzle that could reach 166 feet in the air.[28] Better than ever before, New York firemen could get water to flames on high multi-story buildings. In theory, the Hodge apparatus poised to make steam power commonplace in American firefighting, but the volunteers of the Pearl Hose Company No. 28 to which it was assigned resisted just as Londoners blocked the adoption of the Erickson and Braithwaite model.

While these early models offered improvements in firefighting in the speed, pressure, and height at which water could be pumped, the self-propulsion technology was still rudimentary. Precious minutes ticked by while engines took as long as twenty minutes to get up to steam and drive. In many cities, streets were still unpaved in the early days before the automobile, providing an additional degree of difficulty just navigating to a fire. The first fire hydrants and did not appear until after 1801, when Philadelphia city engineer Frederick Graff devised the concept of a post hydrant.

[28] "First Steam Engine Used In The United States" *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City, Utah), Saturday, July 19, 1902.

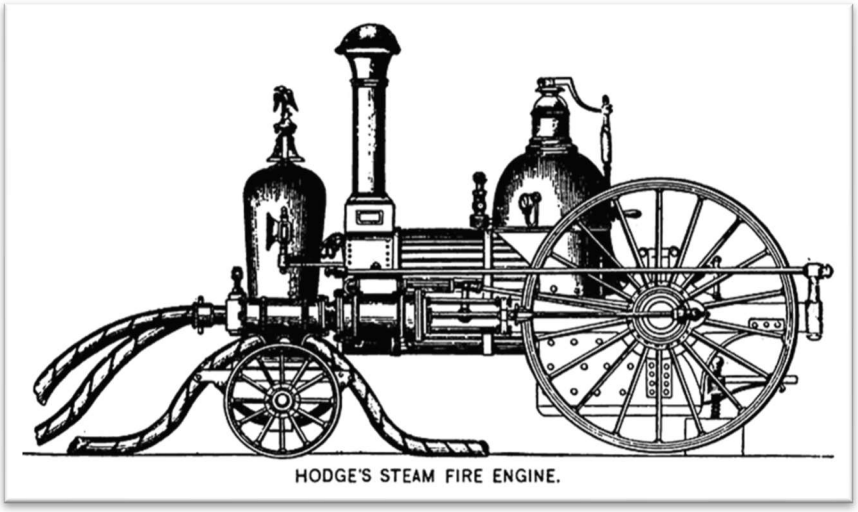

Figure 7- A drawing of the Hodge steam-powered fire engine built for New York City in 1840s (Courtesy of the Fire Museum of Maryland).

When volunteers finally gave way for professionalized departments, those departments became "steamerized." By 1880, paid fire departments in almost every urban center in America had adopted steam power within two years of professionalizing. The benefits of steam became fully realized as the mechanization of both the engine pump and propulsion helped significantly reduce the labor involved with operating one. Volunteer companies in Boston, for example, had over 1,200 members altogether; after the city subsidized fire service that number was reduced to just 58 full-time and 300 part-time firemen.[29]

The quality of the steamers became more refined into the 19th Century when streets became paved and technological advancements continued. There had been no successful model of the steam-powered fire apparatus that had long term success, either due to volunteer resistance or technological failure, by the time a fire broke out at Miles Greenwoods' Cincinnati, Ohio based Eagle Ironworks in 1852. With much of his business laid to ruin, he teamed up with steam

[29] Andersen, "Municipal Fire Departments," page 350.

engine locomotive designer Alexander Bonner “Moses” Latta and local locksmith Abel Shawk to build a steam engine called “Uncle Joe Ross” (See Figure 8).

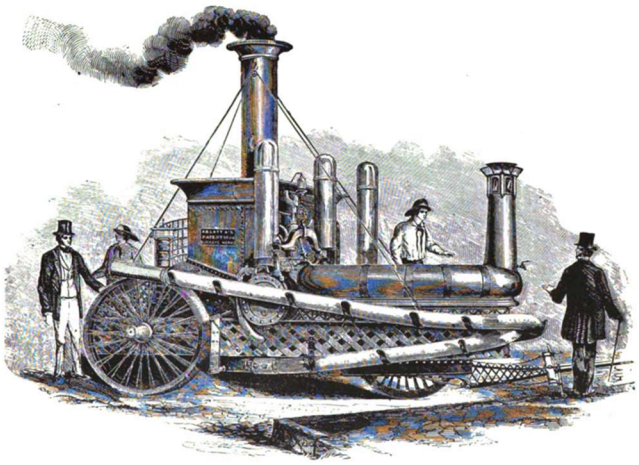

Figure 8- A drawing of "Uncle Joe Ross"- regarded as the first practical steam fire engine built by Greenwood, Latta, and Shawk in Cincinnati in 1853 (Courtesy of the Fire Museum of Maryland).

This massive engine weighed a staggering 22,000 pounds and was self-propelled, appearing more like a train than earlier steam engine models. It only took four minutes to warm up and could spray water to heights of 130 feet. Equipped with three hoses, the engine could easily combat fires in buildings up to four stories.[30] The model came at a pivotal time for fire service in Cincinnati as the success of the engine was instrumental in the establishment of their paid service, reducing from 22 volunteer companies to just nine paid ones. In 1854, the department purchased a second Latta engine called “Citizens Gift.”[31] While its service time only lasted until 1855, Uncle Joe Ross was the first steam engine to clearly demonstrate the propensity of steam power, leaving no doubt as the superior way to fight fires. The Latta engines became a clear

[30] Hendrick, “Age of Steam Engines.”
[31] History, Cincinnati Fire Department,” *City of Cincinnati*, accessed April 9, 2025, https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/fire/about-fire/history/.

favorite of new departments in places such as Baltimore who acquired three in 1859.[32] At last, the age of steam stood upon fertile ground.

With increased interest by professional departments in steam engines, the market became saturated with manufacturers, each with their own unique contribution to the evolution of the fire apparatus. While some companies quickly folded, eighty percent of post-1850s steam apparatuses were built by eight manufacturers.[33] With Latta finally having proved that a decent steamer could be built, fire chiefs had a plethora of innovative models to choose from.

Figure 9- An advertainment for a Latta Engine, popularized by the success of the engine "Uncle Joe Ross" (Courtesy of the Cincinnati Fire Department).

Latta sold his business in the early 1860s to Lane & Bodley, a sawmill company. Chris Ahrens, a member of the Cincinnati Fire Department, was hired to oversee engine-building operations. Ahrens began to build steamers with a steel frame rather than iron, greatly reducing their weight. He also sought more stable steamers, incorporating a fourth wheel at a time when many models had three (usually a single wheel in the front). Ahrens acquired the factory for

[32] Hand and Horse Drawn Apparatus," *Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting*
[33] Hendrick, "Age of Steam"

himself and established his own company. While his business was a direct descendant of the Latta original, many other manufacturers entered the fray.

The Silsby Manufacturing Company, located in Seneca Falls, New York, began building hand pumpers in 1845 and introduced steam engines into their lineup in 1856. With over 1,000 engines built, their designs used a rotary style pump conceived by Birdsill Holly and were advertised as having no vibrations when driven. The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company based in Manchester, New Hampshire proved incredibly innovative by pioneering the "crane neck" frame in 1870, which allowed the front wheels on the axel to pivot. This mechanism allowed for engine drivers to take sharp turns more easily, improving maneuverability in tight and narrow streets. Clapp & Jones, founded by a former Silsby employee in Hudson, New York in 1862, put out over 600 engines with efficient new designs for boilers and pumps. The LaFrance Manufacturing Company went into business in 1873, primarily focused on steam locomotives. Truckson LaFrance, its founder, further refined the rotary pump and began to implement the piston pump in his steamers by the turn of the century. However, it was the Button Fire Engine Company, based in Waterford, New York, that made the most significant strides in piston engine design, having them mounted vertically or horizontally.[34] With each variation to the steam fire apparatus, firefighting became much more efficient.

The innovations by each company did not go unnoticed by the competition. In 1891, Ahrens, Silsby, Clapp & Jones, and Button merged to form the American Fire Engine Company with Ahrens in charge. In 1903, American merged with LaFrance to form American-LaFrance, which would go on to become one of the most prolific fire engine builders in the motorized fire apparatus industry.[35]

[34] Hendrick, "Age of Steam."
[35] Ibid.

While the steam engine continually improved in the late 1800s, so did other pieces of fire infrastructure. In 1852, Bostonian William Channing invented the Gamewell telegraphic street box alarm system, which was installed in 500 cities by 1890. This superseded the ringing of church bells or passing alarm via word of mouth when alerting of a fire, allowing for a quicker and better coordinated response effort than seen previously. Later, Birdsill Holly patented improvements to the Graff fire hydrant. In 1868, San Francisco firefighter named Daniel Hays devised the first spring assist extension ladder that which granted firefighters safer access to higher story windows for rescue or interior fire attack. In 1873, Boston created the first fire boat, an effort to reduce ship fires in Boston Harbor.[36] These safety improvements in the material culture of firefighting show a continual and steadfast need for constant innovation as fire become more dangerous.

Chemical Fire Engines

Bridging the gap between steam powered engines and motorized engines are chemical engines. These apparatuses were much simpler and smaller in design, reserved for an immediate response capacity. They were devised to act quickly to suppress fires within the first few minutes of combustion by applying a chemical agent. In stark contrast to the steamers that required trained firemen and took lengthy swaths of time to warm up, chemical engines could be operate by a single person without formal instruction. Steamers also only held an initial supply of water in their boilers, perhaps their most useful benefit was that they provided adequate suppression for rural towns with smaller departments that did not have a municipal water works or the threat of large urban fires.

[36] Collins, "Heritage of America's Volunteer Fire Service," p. 13-15.

While it may be logical to assume that chemical engines preceded the fire extinguisher, the opposite is true. The first stab at a workable handheld extinguisher protype came from Captain George Manby in 1817.[37] Dubbed the "Exctincteur," Manby's design used a combination of pearl ash and water expelled out of a three-gallon cylinder by compressed air. The yield product was a soap-like solution. French inventor Phillipe Francois Carlier made the next major improvement by using a solution of baking soda tartaric acid, and water, which did not require compressed air to be expelled as the force of the chemical reaction would generate enough energy. When Carlier added carbon dioxide to the mix, a soda-ash agent was produced. Soda ash fire extinguishers became incredibly effective at initial fire containment, so much so that the Boston Fire Department christened a fire extinguisher wagon in 1871.[38] The technological underpinnings of these early fire extinguishers helped usher in the larger chemical engine. It is important to note that these chemical engines were not necessarily steam-powered themselves but designed to work alongside steamers. By the turn of the century, however, standalone chemical engines fell out of favor. Manufacturers began to simply put a chemical tank system on the larger steam engine chassis (see Figure 10).

The first American chemical engines were manufactured in 1872 by the Babcock Manufacturing Company. Jerome B. Stillson and John A. Kley patented 4 feet long by 9 feet wide four-wheeled crane neck chassis equipped with two vertical tanks and a hose reel. A second design came off the heels of the first, this time with a horizontal tank that was rotated upside down to mix chemicals. Another major manufacturer of chemical engines was the Holloway Company. Founded in 1879 by Charles Holloway, his engines copied Babcock's horizontal tanks but eliminated rotation.

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[37] "Miscellanea". *Manchester Mercury* (Manchester, United Kingdom), 26 March 1816. p. 3.
[38] Boston Fire Historical Society, "Chronology 1870–1879," *Boston Fire History*, accessed April 10, 2025.

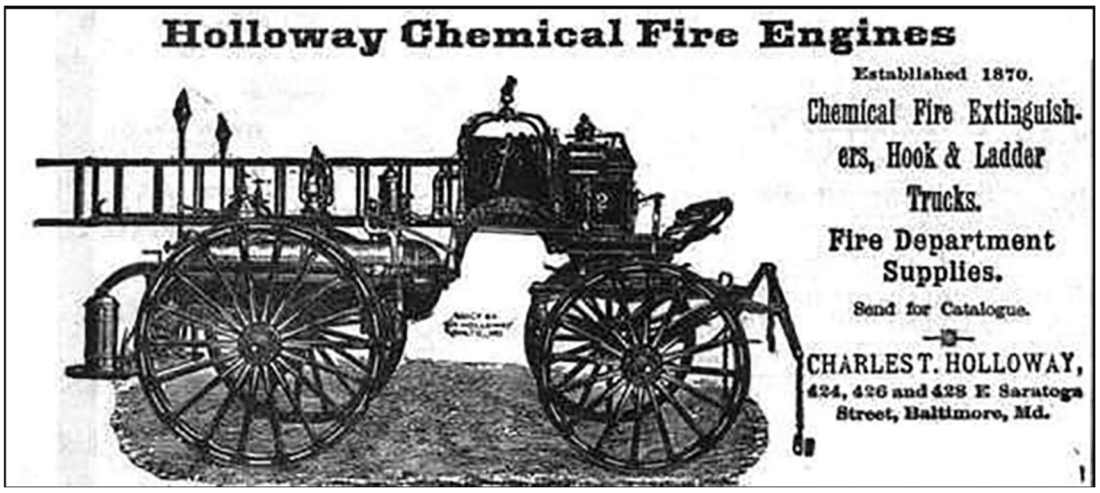

Figure 10- An advertisement for Holloway chemical fire engines (Courtesy of the Fire Fighters Association of Missouri).

Holloway also was the first manufacturer to advertise "combination engines," which came equipped with any combination of fire equipment. These were larger carts but offered a one stop shop with all equipment necessary to respond to a fire such as ladders and hoses in addition to a chemical and water tank. Ironically, this went against the original concept of the chemical engine acting as a separate engine for immediate suppression work, but even still they sold well and became the precursor to the modern combination motorized fire truck. In fact, many chemical engine producers seamlessly transitioned into the gasoline fire truck business.

The resulting legacy of chemical engines is one of a bridge linking the steam power era to the gasoline power era. While many solutions and chemicals were mixed and tested against fire during this time that advanced the field of chemistry, chemical engines were never designed to be the next major apparatus that would fireproof a city. It remains clear, however, that without the advent of chemical engines, the modern fire truck could not have come to fruition.

Motorized Fire Truck

With the creation of the internal combustion engine, gasoline, hydraulic water pump, and electric motor at the beginning of the 1900s, the fire apparatus would be forever changed. While some steam pumpers and chemical engines had started to be self-propelled by steam, the motorized apparatus at last united both the pumping of water and power train under one reliable method.

As with most fire inventions that had occurred up to this point, motor apparatuses first were pioneered in England ahead of widespread adoption in the United States. A 1905 edition of *Popular Mechanics* magazines reports that in America, motorcars were only used to transport fire officials to the scene of the fire rather than equipment (see Figure 11). However, in England, fire apparatus designers began to utilize the gasoline engine to propel fire apparatuses.

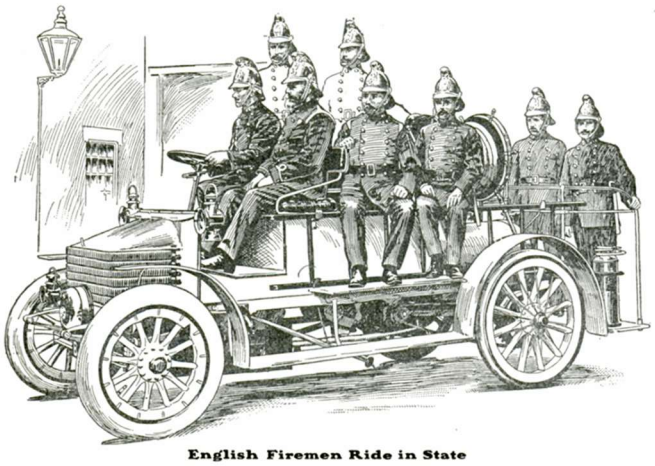

Figure 11- An illustration of an early motorized fire apparatus in England, as shown in a 1905 publication of Popular Mechanics magazine (Courtesy of Popular Mechanics Magazine, February 1905).

The above figure shows a fire apparatus powered by a 24-horsepower 4-cylinder gasoline engine with a top speed of 25 miles an hour. The rear wheels were slightly thicker and half an inch larger than the front wheels, critical for the car have even weight distribution and balance when

going over bumps. The gasoline tank sat beneath the driver's seat, water tank placed between the dashboard, and chemical tanks mounted on the rear bumper. While English firemen led the charge for designing a practical motor apparatus, ones like the illustration were a continuation of the Holloway idea of a combination pumper- equipped with both water, chemicals, and up to 2,500 pounds of fire equipment.

It was not until 1907 that a motorized fire apparatus not just reserved for the presiding fire officer would appear in the United States. The credit goes to the Knox Automobile Company in Springfield, Massachusetts, and the Waterous Pump Company in St. Paul, Minnesota. Together, they delivered the first motorized fire truck to the fire department in Wayne, Pennsylvania. The vehicle had two gasoline-powered engines, one for propulsion and one that ran the water pump, a breakaway from the long-standing practice of having different methods for each.

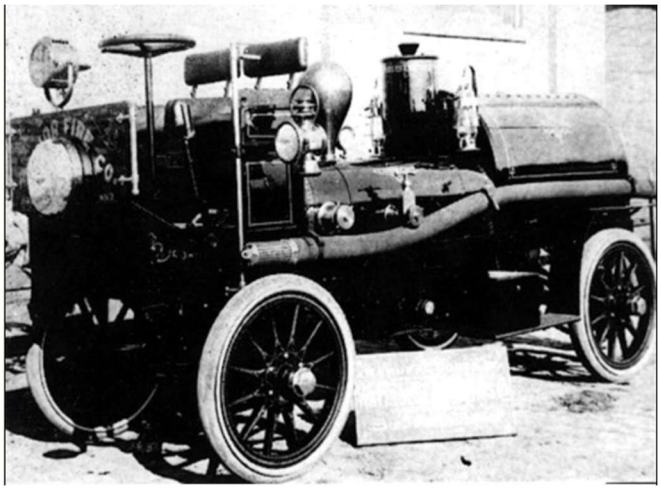

Figure 12- A photograph of the 1907 Knox motorized fire apparatus, the first one to be referred to as a fire truck (Courtesy of the Radnor Fire Company).

The success of the engine, clearly outperforming steam-powered engines in both ease and speed of transporting equipment, ushered in a third revolution in firefighting. Steam and

chemical engine manufacturers soon made the switch to the exclusive production of motorized models and became household names in the industries, such as American LaFrance and Pirsch.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY OF THE ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Volunteer Era

Much of the information known about the Athens-Clarke County Fire Department is adapted from two documents written by past Athens firefighters: A 2004 publication in the *Athens Historian* by Fire Chief Wendell Faulkner entitled "The Fire Companies of Athens" and the internal manuscript "Athens-Clarke County Fire Department: A History" written by Sergeant Eric T. Frey in 2013. Up until 1982, the department operated as the Athens Fire Department. Many of the key reformations and improvements to firefighting outlined in the previous chapter occur locally in Athens but happen at a much slower pace than what is seen nationally. As a small southern city, the need to adapt to greater fire risk is not as prevalent here than in other cities because, while Athens does have significant fire events, they burn at a much smaller and contained scale. Put together with the efficacy of their volunteer fire service, which lasts longer than most, Athens is not threatened by fire in the same way as places that are on the cutting edge of the fire apparatus.

Prior to the 1840s, fires in the city of Athens were put out by civilian bucket brigades. One of the earliest examples of this practice occurs in 1830, when severe drought engulfed Athens. The second building to be completed on UGA's campus, New College, caught fire allegedly started in the attic.[39] Burning debris fell downward, spreading the blaze throughout the building. Because of the drought, there was little water available, and without a pump or even a

[39] Wendell Faulkner, "The Fire Companies of Athens, *Athens Historian,* vol. 9 (2004): 1

central water system, the building was destroyed within three hours. All the university's mathematics and astronomy equipment fell victim to the blaze. Witnesses said that a man named John Talmadge, along with students at the university, saved the neighboring Phi Kappa Hall by placing cut down tree trunks against its exterior walls. Only one month after the fire, rains broke the drought at the cost of fourteen bridges washing out in the city.[40] Another major fire occurred in Athens shortly after in 1834 at the Athens Factory, a cotton mill situated on the Oconee River. Due to the cotton lint that results as a by-product of the milling process, opportunities for fire inside the stiff air of the factory were ample. While sources of the fire are disputed, either an open flame from a candle or a machine spark gone awry imploded the whole and caused $40,000 in damages. The Athens Factory made a nice recovery, though uninsured, and was up and running again by 1837. Dangerous as these two fire events might have been, they were not convincing enough for Athens to adopt a designated fire company. Professionalized services were still years away, and volunteer companies were slowly starting to catch on across America.

It took a major fire event in Augusta, Georgia that would inspire Athenians to take their fire protection more seriously. On Christmas Eve in 1836, a massive fire swept through three city blocks. The fire was only stopped by preemptively burning structures in the fire's path. Word of the event spread throughout the state, and when it hit Athens, many citizens felt it was time to establish a purpose-built fire company. In 1839, Athens' first volunteer company, the Independence Fire Company, was formed. Despite this development, the city still had no cisterns or pumping system. As with many volunteer companies in cities like New York, Independence was not under the jurisdiction of the city government and operated as its own entity. With no oversight by city officials, the quality of fire service provided by Independence proved to be sub-

[40] Eric T. Frey, "The Athens-Clarke County Fire Department: A History, (unpublished manuscript, Athens, GA, October 2013), 15-16.

par. When the Athens Factory burnt to the ground for a second time in 1849, owner William Dearing was among many Athenians petitioning for the city to offer improved fire protection. Later that year, the Hope and Steamer Fire Company Number One was officially incorporated and chartered under the leadership of Captain Reuben Nickerson. The company converted an old east-facing stable in the middle of Market Street (modern day Washington Street) as their headquarters. Unlike the previous Independence company that ceased existence in February 1850, Hope was funded by city taxes though firemen were not paid. As soon as the Hope Company began operations, only then did Athens city officials begin to evaluate their water infrastructure. In the early 1850s, most of the structures in the city were constructed out of wood and very prone to fires. In 1853, the problem of Athens not having a reliable water supply or pumping system was high on the city council's list of priorities when a cistern system was approved. Chief Wendell Faulkner wrote:

> In 1853, construction began on three underground cisterns into which rainwater from the roofs of downtown buildings was channeled and stored. The cisterns measured twelve feet square and fifteen feet deep, providing a capacity of about 16,000 gallons per cistern. Their interior walls and floors were bricked and plastered with hydraulic cement, and accessed through cast iron doors measuring two feet square. There were two cisterns under Front (Broad) Street, one at College Avenue and one at Jackson Street, and one under College Avenue at Clayton Street.[41]

This new system brought to Athens a stored water supply on standby in case of fire emergency, but when the cisterns were finished in 1857, there was still no fire engine. While steam power was catching on in larger cities up north, Athens councilmen were rumored to have feared purchasing one because of residents intentionally starting fires just to see the machine in use.[42]

[41] Faulkner, "The Fire Companies of Athens," 3.
[42] Frey, "ACCFD: A History," 21.

Athens experienced another major fire in September 1857. A furniture shop owned by William Wood in an area of town called Granite Row went up in flames at one o'clock in the morning. Captain W.H Dorsey, a marshal of the Hope Company, displayed admirable courage in what the *Southern Watchman* called a Herculean effort.[43] Unfortunately, the shop and some surrounding buildings were lost.

At this point in history, structure fires proved difficult to fight and contain. The problem was that many of these early Athens conflagrations, and indeed, others elsewhere in America, saw poorly equipped firefighters in both skills and equipment. Although the Hope Company was funded by city taxes, the firemen were not paid and the whole organization hinged upon available volunteers, each with varying levels of skill. There were no standardized practices or techniques. The Hope Company, like other volunteer fire services of the 19th century, were limited to rendering first aid to victims, extracting property that could be salvaged, and with no fire engine, throwing buckets of water onto a burning building.

As fate would have it, the Athens Factory burnt for a third time in winter of 1857. By November, the city council undertook some sweeping advances to fire mitigation. They appointed engineers (Principal A.K. Childs, First Assistant R.L. Bloomfield, and Second Assistant, Dr. R.M. Smith). At last, the city finally purchased their first fire engine from Augusta. The hand-operated steam pumper was named Independence, a homage to the original volunteer company that had disbanded seven years earlier.

The following year of 1858 saw two more volunteer companies formed. In January, the Relief Fire Company organized under Captain A.A Franklin Hill. Hill had previously worked as an editor of the *Southern Banner* newspaper. In June, the future first-ever mayor of Athens

[43] "Another Warning," *Southern Watchman* (Athens, GA), Sept. 3, 1857, vol. 4, no. 23, page 2.

Henry Beusse was chosen to spearhead the Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company Number One. The Pioneer Company was housed in a building that was Athens's first permanent fire station (see Figure 13) on the corner of Market (modern day Washington) and Jackson Street.[44]

Figure 13- The Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company Station House on Jackson and Washington Street (Courtesy of Athens-Clarke County Fire Department).

The three volunteer companies, Hope, Relief, and Pioneer, all coordinated together to respond to fire events. The Pioneer Company continued to grow, and a Hose and Reel Company Number Five was established as a sub-company. The "Pioneers," as they were colloquially referred to, were indeed pioneers in the firefighting field and brought advances to techniques and equipment in Athens' volunteer companies. Fire Chief Wendell Faulkner describes these new advents,

> The Hook and Ladder Company manned a horse-drawn ladder wagon that was fitted with a manually-operated aerial ladder of about sixty feet. The Hose Reel Company manned a hand-drawn, two-wheeled cart fitted with a few hundred feet of leather fire hose wound around a reel. In the event of a fire, the cart was pulled to the fire engine and the hose was

[44] Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Athens, Georgia* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, June 1893), sheet 5, University of Georgia Libraries Map Collection, Athens, GA, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia, https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_sanb_athens-1893?canvas=4&x=3283&y=526&w=4893.

> unwound from the reel, advancing toward the fire. The required length of hose was disconnected from the reel, then connected to the engine, ready for action.[45]

Before, firefighters would connect each individual section of the hose once on the scene. The Pioneers began looking for ways to save time setting up equipment.

In 1859, there was no centralized fire alarm system. The Athens city council mandated in 1857 that the three downtown churches use their bells to alert for fire. The fire companies would award a silver dollar to the person responsible for sounding the bell and directing firemen to the flames. In a way, civilians became the first fire dispatchers. A silver dollar was also bestowed to the person responsible for getting a team of horses to a fire station to pull fire apparatuses to respond to an alarm before the department stabled their own.[46] In the late 19th century, fire equipment was slowly being phased from hand pull carts to horse drawn engines. All three fire companies began saving time by stabling their own horses, easily able to lower harnesses suspended from the ceiling once the church bells were heard. A five-dollar fine was levied against anyone that would sound a false alarm.[47]

Fire service in Athens became disrupted by the onset of the Civil War. Twelve days after Fort Sumter was surrendered by the Union, the Troup Artillery left Athens for active duty under the command of Confederate Captains Marcellus Stanley and Henry Hull Carlton. At least thirty-four of the men in the Artillery were students at the University of Georgia.[48] Several members of the Athens' volunteer fire companies enlisted, leaving behind only a handful of older fighters in the ranks to oversee fires.

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[45] Faulkner, "The Fire Companies of Athens," 4-5.
[46] Faulkner, 7.
[47] Frey, "ACCFD: A History," 26.
[48] William S. Smedlund, "The Troup Artillery's 'Sallie Craig,'" *The Athens Historian,* vol. 4 (1999).

It is worth mentioning here that fire played a crucial role in the war for both sides. It was thought that burning towns, bridges, and railroads would halt progress on the opposing side. Citizens were often caught in the crosshairs, watching helplessly as their homesteads and farms were reduced to flames. The scorched earth strategy proved to be the winning one. William Tecumseh Sherman, commander of the Union army, embarked on his famous March to the Sea through the heart of Dixie, destroying everything in his path by means of fire. Many of these fires burned uncontrolled for days, spreading quickly and decimating several southern cities. Luckily for Athens, the city sat slightly northeast of Sherman's path.

In the aftermath of the Confederate surrender at Appomattox, Virginia in 1865, Union soldiers were sent across the South to begin the reconciliation process between North and South. Returning firefighters to Athens were confronted with a fire at Town Hall on November 18, 1865. The building was saved, with much help from a bucket brigade formed by the 13th Connecticut Volunteers who were stationed in Athens to facilitate post-war procedures. The city awarded the Union soldiers a cash reward for their bravery, and the men undoubtedly earned respect and good will from Athenians still sour after the conflict.[49]

Up until this point in time, all the volunteer fire companies in Athens were composed of White men. The Hope, Relief, and Pioneer companies now had the responsibility to provide fire service for the newly emancipated Black population in Athens. By 1866, Black Athenians formed the Relief Company Number 2 under the command of Captain Madison Davis. Born a slave, he was owned by a carriage maker but was freed at age 31 at the end of the Civil War. Relief No. 2 built a station on Hill Street close to the present-day location of Old Fire Hall Number 2. In 1886, their hand-operated pumper and hose carriage was called into action in

[49] Faulkner, "The Fire Companies of Athens," 8.

response to a fire on Broad Street. Three stores were consumed, but the flames posed a threat to spread to the rest of downtown Athens. Under the leadership of Captain Davis, the fire was quickly extinguished, and the Relief No. 2 was recognized by the city council.[50] Madison Davis led the Relief No. 2 for two more years until he was elected to the Georgia State Legislature in 1868 and again in 1871. Davis returned to Athens in 1882 to become the city's first postmaster, appointed by President Benjamin Harrison, and served until 1893.[51]

The end of the volunteer era in Athens occurred in 1891, when the active volunteer companies were morphed into one single paid fire department. Most major American cities had already abandoned the volunteer model years before. This fact speaks to the quality of Athens' volunteer companies that lasted much longer than the national norm. Unlike the violent, corrupt, and ineffective volunteers of cities like Cincinnati, St. Louis, and New York that led to their demise, the Athens volunteers took a deep sense of civic pride in the opportunity to serve their community, a tradition that Athens Fire Department would be built upon.

Professional Era

The newly christened Athens Fire Department was put under the command of Pioneer Company veteran Geroge McDorman. Volunteer firemen from the old companies were offered a tryout to compete for a place in the ranks of paid men. Only the best of the best made the cut, and from its first days in service, the Athens Fire Department showed a serious commitment to superior fire protection.

The new department operated out of the old Hope fire station on Washington Street and the old Pioneer station close by on the corner of Jackson and Washington that became the

[50] Frey, "ACCFD: A History," 30.

[51] Athens-Clarke County Heritage Room, "27 September 1833, Legislator Madison Davis Is Born," *This Day in Athens (*blog), Monday, September 27, 2010, https://accheritage.blogspot.com/2010/09/27-september-1833-legislator-madison.html?m=1.

headquarters. There were fifteen firemen between the two stations. The shed that housed Captain Davis's Relief No. 2 company was used to store the old steam engine Independence, which was replaced by a new ladder steamer purchased in 1887 that Pioneer operated. Ironically, the shed and engine were lost in an 1893 fire.

The Old Hope Station sat on the centerline of Washington Street, which disrupted the flow of traffic and caused considerable issues when an apparatus was deployed. Additionally, the simple shed was near the headquarters, which left the west side of downtown more vulnerable to fire. This gap was resolved in 1901, when Old Fire Hall Number 2 was erected on the intersection of Prince Avenue and Hill Street. Its engine room doubled as a kitchen and dayroom, with the second floor providing bunked barracks. The firemen could easily slide down the brass pole to the engine room from the second floor in case of alarm.

1912 was a year that saw major developments for the young fire service. Athens' first motorized fire engine was manufactured by American LaFrance. It offered a step up from the old horse drawn carriages that were retired by 1918, capable of speed up to 60 miles per hour powered by a four cylinder engine and fitted with rubber tires for extra traction on the majority cobblestone streets in the city.[52] It arrived in Athens on Christmas Eve, just days before Old Fire Hall No. 1 opened on New Years Day 1913. By 1930, the department used seven fire trucks.[53]

[52] "Athens Volunteer Firemen of 45 Years Ago Recognized as Fastest Department in Entire Southland," *The Banner-Herald,* Athens, GA, June 20, 1930, vol. 98, no. 173, page 6.
[53] Ibid.

Figure 14- The first motorized fire apparatus in Athens in front of Old Fire Hall No. 1 in 1912 (Courtesy of Athens-Clarke Fire Department).

Although it was the second station to be built in the professional era, it was numbered No.1 because it replaced the old headquarters. It was designed by city engineer J.W Barnett, who also helped improve the water infrastructure in Athens. Station No. 2 on Price Avenue received a 1915 American LaFrance model shortly thereafter, helping improve firefighters' capacity to carry equipment, pump water, and quicken response time to incidents. While the old church bell fire alarm ordinance was still in effect, in 1909 a Gamewell system was set up with 30 boxes around Athens that would ring into an annunciator box that told firemen the excat spot of an alarm. Chief McDorman received his own personalized fire car in 1921, a four-cylinder Dodge with room for five passengers. The first time he drove it was in response to an event that would be Athens' largest fire since 1836.

At 2:25 am on January 25, 1921, Athens policeman Ed Poss was doing his nightly rounds when he activated fire alarm call box 22 located at the intersection of Clayton and Thomas Streets. Seconds after, someone else rang box 26 at the intersection of Broad and Jackson Streets. Although commonly referred to as the Michael Brothers fire, the blaze originated in the Max

Joseph building at the southeast corner of Clayton and Wall Streets. The Denny Motor Company, an automobile dealership, occupied the basement and first floor, where numerous vehicles were stored. As the fire spread, gasoline tanks in the vehicles ruptured, allowing burning fuel to flow through the lower areas of the building. The resulting intense heat and flames quickly ignited the adjacent Michael Brothers store across Wall Street. Due to the store's age and presence of flammable dry goods, the fire rapidly consumed the structure and extended westward across Jackson Street to the Citizens Pharmacy. At approximately 3:00 a.m., the fire reached its peak intensity. The heat was so extreme that it shattered plate glass windows across Clayton Street, and runoff water became hot enough to damage firefighters' boots. The blaze was visible from as far away as Monroe. In response, Athens Mayor Andrew C. Erwin requested assistance from the Atlanta Fire Department. The Seaboard Railroad facilitated the emergency transport of two fire engines, 22 firefighters, Fire Chief William Cody, and Chief Mechanic Tom Medlin via a special train. The Atlanta fire crews arrived in Athens at approximately 8:00 a.m.; however, by that time, local firefighters had largely contained the fire. While the Atlanta personnel provided additional support, their fire trucks remained unloaded. A thick brick wall and a well-coordinated defensive effort prevented the fire from spreading to College Avenue. The only reported injury was to Chief McDorman, who fell from a ladder and sustained fractures in both wrists. He was subsequently relieved by Chief Cody. By the evening, only a few smoldering areas remained. The city of Athens later attempted to reimburse the Seaboard Railroad and the City of Atlanta for their assistance, but both entities declined payment. The Michael Brothers department store was rebuilt in 1922 and remained operational until 1953, when it was acquired by Davison's, which continued there until relocating to Georgia Square Mall in 1980.[54]

[54] Frey, "ACCPD: A History," 35-37.

Although no deaths were recorded in the blaze, it underscored both the brilliant training and instinct of the Athens Fire Department to contain a fire that large as well as the dangers that firemen face when combating a blaze. While Chief McDorman was lucky to only escape with injured wrists, those who came after him would not be so lucky.

Between 1928 and 1944, the Athens Fire Department suffered the tragic losses of three veteran firefighters in the line of duty. On February 22, 1928, Captain Hiram H. Peeler of Station Two sustained fatal injuries after falling down an open elevator shaft while responding to a small fire at McDorman-Bridges Mortuary on Dougherty Street. Despite being rushed to St. Mary's Hospital, he succumbed to his injuries two days later. Peeler had served in the department since its transition to a paid force in 1891 and was Athens' longest-serving firefighter at the time of his death. On December 20, 1937, Assistant Chief J.B. Farr was killed instantly when a 1921 Seagrave fire engine skidded on a dislodged oil tank, spun out of control, and crashed into a tree while responding to a grass fire on Lumpkin Street. Three other firefighters sustained injuries, though the tree likely prevented further casualties. Farr's brother, an ambulance service employee, assisted in recovering his body from the wreckage. On January 31, 1944, Captain Henry S. Vandiver was critically injured when an eastbound car struck the right side of his fire engine as it crossed Broad Street en route to a grass fire on Milledge Avenue. The impact ejected Vandiver from the vehicle, and he succumbed to his injuries three weeks later. Each of these men dedicated years of service to the Athens Fire Department, highlighting the dangers that firemen faced even after the adoption of modern gasoline-powered firetrucks.[55]

[55] Faulkner, "The Fire Companies of Athens," 19-20.

Post World War II

Following the end of the Second World War in 1945, the United States entered an era of growth and prosperity. Men returned from the war to buy houses, raise families, and start their own businesses, all which contributed to America's ascent as a major economic and social world power during this period. The automobile industry also boomed after the war, with more Americans owning a vehicle than ever before. The ability to provide one's transportation led to the creation of suburbs outside traditional city centers. In the case of Athens, this meant more expansion into unincorporated Clarke County. The two downtown fire stations would no longer provide adequate coverage.

Station No. 3, originally built in 1950, underwent modifications to accommodate a 1949 Pirsch ladder truck, and its original stone façade was later replaced with a more industrial brick design. In 1965, Station No. 4 was constructed, mirroring Station 3's original layout but also undergoing later changes for larger trucks. By 1956, the fire department operated three stations with 43 personnel, one ladder truck, and six pumpers. In 1968, staffing expanded, and shifts transitioned from two to three, implementing a 24-hour on, 48-hour off schedule still used today.

On July 1, 1968, the Athens Fire Department was integrated by Louis Ford, the first African American Athenian to serve as a professional firefighter for the city. An Athens native, he graduated from Athens High and Industrial School and the Northeast Georgia Police Academy. Ford served in the Army from 1962-1964 in addition to his twenty-year career as a sergeant in the Army Reserve and fifteen years as a volunteer football coach for the Athens Youth Association. He retired from the fire department in December 1992 after holding the titles of Assistant Chief of Communications and Fire Prevention Officer. He was known for always

looking out for newer and younger firemen. Ford passed away in 2009 after a losing battle with cancer.[56]

The beginning of the 1970s would test the department's ability to respond to a major disaster in what became known as the Boothy Incident. On the night of July 17, 1970, a massive explosion occurred at the Texaco petroleum compound on North Hull Street. Truck driver Bob Boothy, while unloading gasoline into a storage tank, inadvertently triggered an explosion when gasoline vapors met an unknown ignition source. The blast engulfed three of the facility's five storage tanks, producing a 500-foot fireball visible from 15 miles away. The explosion shattered windows across Athens, including those at the University of Georgia President's Home over six blocks away. Firefighters from Athens and surrounding areas, including Oconee and Hall Counties and several cities in Georgia including Bogart, Colbert, Commerce, Atlanta, and Toccoa, as well as Anderson, South Carolina, battled the inferno for six hours. Although the fire was contained within 30 minutes, it required significant resources including multiple 55-gallon barrels of foam concentrate to fully extinguish. The Bethel Church Homes, an apartment complex across the street, sustained severe damage, necessitating the evacuation of approximately 200 families. Relief efforts were coordinated by the Red Cross, local churches, and the University of Georgia. Despite the extensive destruction and nearly fifty reported injuries, there were no fatalities. Boothy survived but suffered severe burns and was hospitalized at St. Mary's Hospital.[57]

A few years later in 1974, Clarke County briefly established its own fire department, constructing Clarke County Fire Station Number One. However, the county soon sold the station

[56] "Louis Ford Jr," Obituary, *Athens Banner-Herald*, https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/onlineathens/name/louis-ford-obituary?id=28563770), died May 23, 2009.
[57] Faulkner, "The Fire Companies of Athens," 17-18.

to Athens, renaming it Athens Fire Station Number Five. By 1979, the closure of Old Stations One and Two led to their repurposing, with Station Two becoming the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation's headquarters and Station One later integrated into the Classic Center. In 1982, the Athens Fire Department officially merged with the Clarke County Fire Department, leading to the construction of new stations and an expanded fleet almost a decade before the city and county governments united.

Further expansion of the fire department continued through the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In 1991, the department was renamed following the unification of Athens and Clarke County. A Fire Training Center was completed in 1999, featuring classrooms, a drill facility, and a high-rise rescue tower. Station Number Seven opened in 2000, while a 1999 referendum funded additional stations like No. 8 on Jefferson Road, vehicle procurement, and the relocation of Stations Three and Four, both reopening in 2003 in new buildings. The new Station 3 at the Five Points intersection of Lumpkin Street and Milledge Avenue proved to be controversial as the famous Downtowner Hotel was demolished in its place. In 2010, Station No. 9 was built on Danielsville Road.

Throughout its history, the Athens-Clarke County Fire Department has maintained its mission to protect lives and property, with ongoing public support contributing to its continued development. The following chapter will delve into the eight historic fire stations that are forty years of age or older, discussing their historic contexts and key architectural features.

CHAPTER 4

SURVEY OF EXTANT HISTORIC FIRE STATIONS IN ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY

First Fire Stations (1891-1920)

As seen in the previous chapters, developments in the material culture of firefighting revolve around the speed and pressure at which water or chemicals can be applied to a fire and the speed and efficacy at which a fire engine can travel. These two measures play a significant role in Athens fire history as well. The first period of significance for Athens' historic fire stations runs from 1891-1920. 1891 is the year that Athens professionalized its fire service, the sole body that erected and used all the stations in this survey. 1920 was chosen as the end of this period because by this time the city water works became fully electrified, marking an end to continual improvements throughout the 1910s. The two stations included in this period are the first two permanent purpose-built fire stations used by the new professional fire department, Old Fire Hall No. 1 and Old Fire Hall No. 2, built in 1912 and 1901, respectively. These stations are characterized by their two-story size, placement on the downtown grid, and functional elements for watching fires; a tower on the left corner of Old No. 1 and an iron balcony above the apparatus bay on Old No. 2. Both stations share the same architect, John William (J.W.) Barnett and were both decommissioned in 1979 when their operations were consolidated into New Station No. 1 headquarters located more centrally downtown. Both stations share the same post-station fate, having been adaptively reused into a new function. Old Station No. 1 was turned into the ticket office for the Classic Center entertainment space in the 1990s after serving as

office space for the Athens-Clarke County Chamber of Commerce for several years. Old Station No. 2 now serves as the headquarters of historic preservation non-profit advocacy group Historic Athens.

The Water Works

Even with their new stations, however, the young professional department could not fight fires without access to a steady supply of water. The old cisterns completed in 1857 had fallen into disrepair, and the privately-run water works were lacking. Instrumental to the function and operations of Old Nos. 1 and 2 were the significant improvements made to the Athens Water Works after it was taken over by the city in 1893.

At the Athens Water Works pumping station on the Oconee River, two Worthington steam-powered water pumps that ran both day and night were responsible for pumping 1,500,000 gallons of water apiece from the river into a 13.5-million-gallon reservoir. Because water had to be cleansed before use by residents, it would flow by gravity through a system of sand filters into a smaller 138,000-gallon clear water basin. From there, water flowed by gravity to a 280,000-gallon standpipe located on Washington Street by the city prison and later city hall. The standpipe connected water into an underground system of water pipes that provided flow to 130 fire hydrants across the city. Water pressure in 1893 was 60 pounds per square inch, a measure of how much force is pushing against water.[58]

By 1898, the water main connecting the pumping station to the standpipe was expanded from 14 inches in diameter to 18 inches, and seven more fire hydrants were added to the city

[58] Sanborn Map Company, *Athens, Georgia*, 1893, sheets 1 and 7, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Georgia Towns and Cities, 1884–1922*, Digital Library of Georgia, https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_sanb_athens-1893?canvas=6&x=1558&y=2560&w=6427.

grid.[59] By 1903, the water pressure had risen to 80 pounds per square inch. The city installed a Worthington electric pump that could output 1090 gallons of water a minute, significantly increasing the speed and pressure of water output.[60]

In 1908, the capacity of the standpipe was reduced to 176,000 gallons and the clear water basin increased to 178,000 gallons. The city made more improvements to the pumping infrastructure, replacing the gravity flow system from pump station to standpipe with a Worthington electric centrifugal pump. This move automated the standpipe fill, which ensured it never was more than three-fourths empty at any given time. If it did fall below required levels, a telegraphic alarm alerted the fire department headquarters. The total mileage of underground water pipes grew to 20 miles, servicing 165 fire hydrants.

The 18,000 Athens residents in 1908 consumed an estimated 750,000 gallons of water a day. This number shot up to 1 million gallons a day by 1913 as the population eclipsed 20,000. To deal with added water demand, a second electric pump was installed at the water works that could output 2,300 gallons a minute. The clear water basin now held 186,000 gallons, which necessitated the adding of more sand filters. The two steam pumps were kept but only used in emergencies when water demand spiked. Ten more miles of underground piping was added to service 261 hydrants.[61] In 1918, the system had been completely electrified, with 272 hydrants and 14 sand filters to keep pace with 1.2 million gallons of daily water consumption. To help their efforts, Athens began drawing an additional water supply from Sandy Creek in 1916, one

[59] Sanborn Map Company, *Athens, Georgia*, 1898, sheets 1, 7, and 12, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Georgia Towns and Cities, 1884–1922*, Digital Library of Georgia, https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_sanb_athens-1898?canvas=11&x=2056&y=3026&w=13248.
[60] Sanborn Map Company, *Athens, Georgia*, 1903, sheets 1, 7, and 12, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Georgia Towns and Cities, 1884–1922*, Digital Library of Georgia, https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_sanb_athens-1903?canvas=11&x=2338&y=2764&w=15999.
[61] Sanborn Map Company, *Athens, Georgia*, 1913, sheets 1 and 12, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Georgia Towns and Cities, 1884–1922*, Digital Library of Georgia, https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_sanb_athens-1913?canvas=0&x=2326&y=2759&w=15967.

mile east of the water works pumping station. This was powered by a Worthington electric centrifugal pump that led water to an 8-million-gallon reservoir, at which point water flowed by gravity to the main pumphouse.[62]

Increased population meant higher water demand and drove the expansion and gradual improvements the water works. The changes to Athens's pumping infrastructure are also reflected in the equipment loadouts at the fire department. With each new year of Sanborn Fire Insurance map, an increase in hose footage, paid personnel, and number of apparatuses in service is reflected. By 1918, the department had one chief, two assistant chiefs, and sixteen men on their payroll. The city had a Gamewell telegraphic alarm system with 41 boxes, principal streets in the city were paved and all public streetlights were electric. Over the 30-year span the Sanborn maps cover, increased number of fire hydrants are seen with each new issue. In the same way that the water works adopted electricity, the fire department adopted motorized apparatuses. The fleet consisted of two American Lafrance motorcars and a Seagrave fire truck, each equipped extension ladders, water tanks, and chemical tanks all powered by gasoline.

Old Fire Hall No. 1 Background

Old Fire Hall No. 1 was not the first No. 1 fire station in Athens. When the Athens Fire Department was professionalized in 1891, its first headquarters was in the old Pioneer volunteer building on the southwest corner of Jackson and Market (present-day Washington) streets. Interestingly, there is no extensive coverage in local newspapers as is the case with all the other stations to follow in this survey. The only sufficient article that covers the relocation to the new building comes from a 1912 edition of the *Weekly Banner,* which reports that the old Pioneer

[62] Sanborn Map Company, *Athens, Georgia*, 1918, sheets 1 and 3, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Georgia Towns and Cities, 1884–1922*, Digital Library of Georgia, https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_sanb_athens-1918?canvas=1&x=2950&y=2384&w=2584.

station would be up for sale by the city council and a new station would be erected on the city hall lot across the street in place of the jailhouse.[63] As it turned out, these plans never came to fruition, and by 1913, Old Fire Hall No. 1 was built where Washington Street intersects with Thomas Street. The station had a permanent impact on the throughfare of Washington. Before the station, it was possible to travel along Washington across Thomas to Foundry Street to access the Athens Foundry and Machine Works after a significant drop in elevation. After the station was built, Washington became cut off from Foundry and ended at Thomas.[64]

The reason for the relocation was because the department had outgrown the confines of the old building. With the arrival of a motorized fire truck in 1912, the department needed something better equipped than a horse and wagon stable to house it. At the Pioneer building, the station had three horses, one hook and ladder truck with a chemical tank, a horse-drawn chief buggy, and a horse hose wagon.[65] After relocation, the new station provided space for two motorized apparatuses both with chemical tanks, the hose wagon, chief's buggy, 5 horses and 26 fire extinguishers.[66] It was clear that the increase in size and space allowed for more quantity and quality of firefighting equipment.

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[63] "New Fire Hall," *The Weekly Banner,* Athens, GA, May 10, 1912, page 5.
[64] Sanborn Map Company, *Athens, Georgia*, 1908, sheet 13-14, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Georgia Towns and Cities, 1884–1922*, Digital Library of Georgia, https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_sanb_athens-1908?canvas=12&x=489&y=2106&w=4883.
[65] Sanborn Map Company, *Athens, Georgia*, 1908, sheet 13, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Georgia Towns and Cities, 1884–1922*, Digital Library of Georgia, https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_sanb_athens-1908?canvas=6&x=2327&y=2750&w=15918.
[66] Sanborn Map Company, *Athens, Georgia*, 1913, sheet 13, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Georgia Towns and Cities, 1884–1922*, Digital Library of Georgia, https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_sanb_athens-1913?canvas=12&x=2336&y=2775&w=16060.

Old Fire Hall No. 2 Background

Old Fire Hall Number 2 was the first fire station erected by the Athens Fire Department in 1901. Prior to its construction, the department operated a second company out of the old Hope volunteer hall in the middle of Washington Street.

The first mention of a proposed new station came in 1897, when the *Weekly Banner* published an article pushing for a new city hall, paved roads, and an uptown fire station.[67] The city council voted on the creation of a new city hall, which to the newspaper felt "should not be pushed along" at the expanse of a second fire station and road improvements. Later that year in April, the *Athens-Banner* again commented on the absence of a second fire station, reporting that the "uptown fire station movement is progressing nicely' and there was "every reason to hope that the station soon would be installed."[68] Finally in 1899, the newspaper reported that the council had not elected to spend any more funds to repair the dilapidated Hope hall.[69] However, there was no timetable in place and the question was pushed to 1901 as the *Banner* reported again that the "question may again be agitated" as to whether Athens would get a second station.[70]

At last city engineer J.W Barnett, responsible for the upgrades to the water works and paving Athens' principal streets, designed Old Fire Hall No 2. The first engine housed by the station was horse-drawn steam-powered pumper. Whitey and Blackie, the horses that pulled the apparatus, were housed in a stable outbuilding nearby. In 1914, the apparatus and horses were retired in favor of an American LaFrance Truck, the second motorized apparatus to come to

[67] "Should Not Be Pushed Along," *The Weekly Banner,* Athens, GA, January 29, 1897, page 4.
[68] *The Weekly Banner,* Athens, GA, April 23, 1897, page 4
[69] "Up Town Fire Hall Will be Erected," *The Weekly Banner,* Athens, GA, October 4, 1899, page 6
[70] "Fire Station Up Town," *Athens Daily Banner,* Athens, GA, February 9, 1901, page 4

Athens. Across Prince Avenue, there were rose bushes that are still being cared for by firemen today at New Station No. 1[71]

[71] Eric Frey, "History of the Athens-Clarke County Fire Department," *Athens-Clarke County Fire and Emergency Services 2007* (Athens, GA: Athens Clarke County Fire Department, 2007), 127-128.

OLD FIRE STATION NO. 1

Figure 15- A historic photo of Old Fire Hall No. 1 (Courtesy of Athens-Clarke County Fire Department).

Figure 16- The facade of Old Fire Hall No. 1 as it appears today (Photo by author).

Old Fire Hall No. 1 Architectural Description

Old Fire Hall No. 1 is located at the intersection of Washington and Thomas Streets in Downtown Athens. Built in 1912, it was the second fire station for the City of Athens and served as a fire station until 1979, when the current No. 1 was built at 700 College Avenue at a more centralized downtown location. It is a two-story brick building in the Italianate Style. It features square massing and an asymmetrical facade. The exterior is clad in Flemish bond brick exterior,

with five courses of stretcher bricks beginning the pattern from the ground level before the sixth alternates bricks in the header and stretcher configurations. Brick courses are offset, signaling multiple wythes of the wall. String courses can be seen through the exterior wall. The facade fenestration remains original despite changes in functionality. The station retains the three entryways that made up the garage area of the fire station and their doors, although now decorative. Each door is wood and contains three panels and a grid of nine lights. The entryways, however, have been filled in with plate glass fixed windows. Additionally, the second story windows remain in the original historic pattern of three sets of paired 6-over-1 hung sash. The station has a replacement hipped standing seam metal roof. According to a previous survey done by the Athens-Clarke City Planning Division in October 1989, the station had an asphalt shingle roof, while early post cards show standing seam metal (See Figure 15 above). Original roof elements such as overhanging eaves and brackets supporting the soffit all remain. The single-most character-defining feature of Old Fire Hall No. 1 is the watch tower that protrudes from the left-hand side of the facade. Towers such as these are seen in other Italianate firehouses, such as Wollaston Station in Quincy, Massachusetts. The tower continues patterns seen in the main massing, also clad in brick exterior. The tower roof is also hipped standing seam metal and matches the main roof color. The bracket motif also continues in the tower soffit with two on each corner. The original wood balustrade remains on all four sides of the tower. The current use of the station is the ticketing office for the Classic Center, a large civic complex adjoining the property built in the early 1990s which ended up saving the Fire Hall from demolition at the request of voters. After 1950 when No.1 moved to 700 College Avenue, the Chamber of Commerce used the building as their headquarters.

Old Fire Hall No. 1 NRHP Evaluation (A, B, and C)

Old Firehall No. 1 is eligible for listing on the National Register under Criteria A, B, and C. Constructed in 1912, it is significant for its contributions in broad areas of urban planning, fire protection, and fire technology. The station is indicative of the continual growth and evolution of the fire service in Athens as the city limits expanded and the population increased. Designed specifically to house the headquarters of the department, it replaced the two-story building that housed the Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company No.1 and Hose and Reel Company No. 5 from the volunteer days pre-1891. After professionalization, the department used it as its first headquarters before they sought out a new one to house growing ranks of firemen and Athens' first motorized fire apparatus. The station retains the relevant aspects of integrity for Criteria A as it remains in its original location, setting, and can still be associated with its original use as a fire station.

Under Criterion B, Old No. 1 is eligible for its association with city architect and engineer J.W Barnett. It remains a stellar example of his large and vast footprint on the urban landscape and public utilities of Athens. Barnett was responsible for designing City Hall and Old Firehall No. 2, in addition to his work improving the water and sewage systems for the city. Under Criterion B, Old No. 1 retains integrity of location because it still sits where Barnett originally designed it and therefore retains integrity of feeling and association as a Barnett building. However, it does not retain integrity of setting under Criterion B because its surroundings are not resemblant of the space that Barnett originally designed it in. This is because Old No. 1 was converted into a ticket office for the large Classic Center event hall and auditorium built adjacent to it in the 1990s. However, its reuse is the only reason that the station was not torn down. A referendum resulted in Athens residents voting to incorporate it into the

design of the Classic Center, which will likely achieve its own significance in the next twenty years when it surpasses the fifty-year eligibility guideline.

Under Criterion C, Old No.1 is eligible for its stately and civic Italianate design. The style was popular in urban areas where volunteer sheds were replaced, exactly the case here. It has distinctive Italianate features such as a watchtower, low-pitched roof, tall vertical windows, and brackets in the soffit. It retains relevant integrity aspects of Criterion C, such as design, materials, and workmanship. It is still clad in its original exterior, retains its original standing seam metal roof, original wood railing in the watchtower, original wood apparatus bay doors, and original metal awning over the bay doors.

It is recommended that Old Station No. 1 be nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places for association with broad patterns of firefighting in Athens, association with prominent city engineer and architect J.W. Barnett and presents an intact example of an Italianate fire station.

OLD FIRE STATION NO. 2

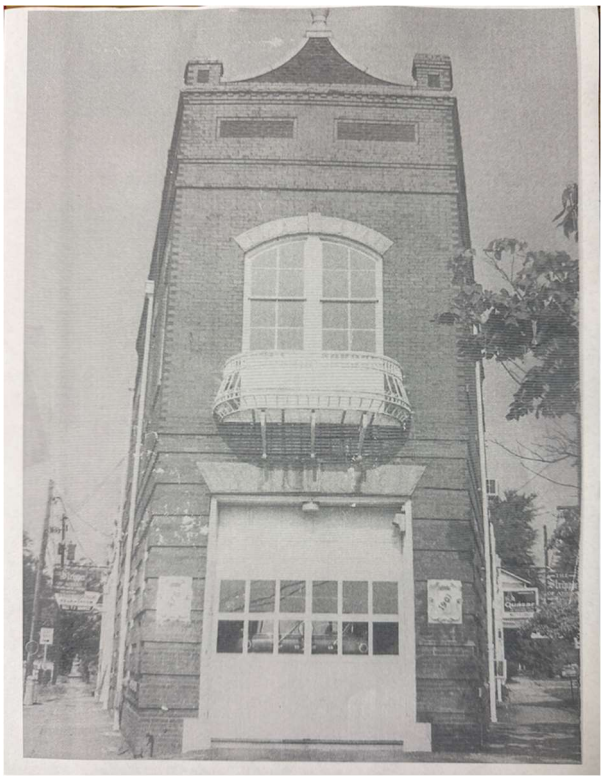

Figure 17- The facade of Old No. 2 in the 1970s 9 (Courtesy of Athens-Clarke County Fire Department).

Figure 18- The facade of Old No. 2 as it appears today (Photo by author).

Old Fire Hall No. 2 Architectural Description

Old Fire Hall No. 2 is unique due to its truncated triangle shape and triangular massing. It is a two-story structure with elements of both Romanesque and Queen Ann styles. The station is characterized by its cut brick detailing, granite arches and sills, and the spire-like feature pointing to the sky. The exterior is clad in running bond brick masonry. The facade of the fire station is pointed east, oriented to the intersection of Prince Avenue and Hill Street and includes a distinctive iron balcony above the apparatus bay opening that was first a horse stable, then a garage. Along the sides of the building are 4-over-4 iron windows with granite sills, the first floor with flat arches and the second-floor windows with rounded arches with an arched rectangular pane in the top sashes. On both sides of the building are recessed iron doorways with single light doors, each with a transom light and stone masonry flat arch above. The second-floor housed firefighter barracks while equipment was kept in the first-floor bay. A fire pole connects the two floors together.

In 1908, seven years after Old Fire Hall No. 2 was built, the population of Athens ballooned to 18,000 people. Stationed at Old No. 2 were 6 men, 2 horses, and 2 Babcock three-gallon fire extinguishers. This equipment loadout remained the same through 1913 as Athens' population hit 20,000. 1918, horse-drawn fire apparatus had vanished from No. 2, replaced with the latest model of American LaFrance combustion engine fire truck. The Type 90 came equipped with a 12' and 24’ extension ladder, a forty-gallon chemical tank, and 1200 feet of hose that improved the speed and efficacy firemen stationed at Old No. 2 could put out fires.

Old Fire Hall No. 2 NRHP Evaluation (A, B, and C)

Old Fire Hall No. 2 is eligible for listing on the National Register Historic Places under Criteria A, B, and C of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. It has contributed significantly to

the broad patterns of fire protection history and the development of firefighting technology in Athens. As the first station that was built under the professional department, its creation and long-term service represents a growing Athens and the fire department responding to the needs of the population. Old No. 2 corrected a large gap in early fire coverage. The old Hope volunteer hall that was being used as a second fire station was on the same side of town as the headquarters. Its placement on Prince Avenue close to Emmanuel Church, the county jail, and the Clarke County Courthouse stands as a deliberate decision to bring a variety of civic intuitions together in one area. Under Criterion A, Old No. 2 retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. It has not been moved or altered in any way and retains its original 1901 configuration.

Under Criterion B, its association with city engineer and architect John William (J.W Barnett remains one of the few tangible reminders, along with Old No.1 and the 1916 Sandy Creek pumping station, of his contributions to the city's public utilities and street grid. Old No. 2 is one of at least 74 buildings he designed in Athens. The station retains relevant integrity aspects crucial to conveying to Criterion B. It retains its original location and setting that Barnett designed it in. The building can still be read as a fire station and thus retains its association with its original use.

Under Criterion C, Old No. 2 is eligible because of its unique triangular shape, unlike any other building in Athens. Its eclectic architectural feel has elements of a variety of styles such as Victorian and Romanesque. It is one of the few truncated triangular-shaped buildings in Athens, the other prime example being the Farmers Exchange building that sits at the intersection of Broad and Jackson Streets. Several design features remain, such as the original stable doors in the apparatus bay opening, the fire pole, and bell. Under Criterion C, the building demonstrates

integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. It has not been re-clad in non-historic materials and there have been no non-historic additions that obscure its original shape for form.

It is recommended that Old Station No. 2 be nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as an individual property. It is currently included as a contributing resource in the listed Cobbham Historic District.

Suburban Stations (1940-1970)

The second period of significance crucial to understanding Athens's fire stations runs from 1940-1974. The gap between the preceding period is the start of this one because between 1920 and 1940 no new fire stations were built in the city. 1940 begins this second period because it was around this time when conversations about a third fire station began to disseminate throughout the community. The period ends in 1970, the year that marked the infamous Boothy Incident that saw Athens' most dangerous fire event and largest emergency mobilization to date (see Chapter 3). Two stations, Old No. 3 and Old No. 4, were constructed in 1950 and 1965, respectively, and were both decommissioned in 2003 when larger modern facilities replaced them. During this time, the Athens Fire Department faced new challenges as the population of Athens continued to grow after the Second World War. New subdivisions began to pop up in new suburban developments in the Five Points neighborhood and in the Normaltown neighborhood in the western corridor of Athens. It became increasingly evident that the two downtown fire stations were not adequate to provide quality fire coverage because they were placed too far away from these new concentrated developments.

Both Old No. 3 and 4 were open to be smaller sub-stations. They are characterized by their one-story form and two apparatus bays. Unlike the stations in the previous period, they

were designed specially to store motorized apparatuses. Both stations were originally clad in brick exterior and featured two apparatus bay doors. Today, their facades have been significantly altered.

Old No. 3 Background

Station No. 3 was designed by city engineer Jack Garlington (J.G) Beecham, who directed the construction process through the Mathis Construction Company.[72] When Beecham undertook the project, Athens had not had a new fire station constructed since 1912, a time of nearly four decades elapsed. Beecham, a graduate of the University of Georgia, came into his city engineer role in 1930 and already accomplished significant strides in local water treatment. His efforts helped Athens to become one of the first cities in Georgia to mitigate water pollution.

The need for a third fire station, especially in the Five Points neighborhood, became an important piece of Jack R. Wells' candidacy for the Athens mayorship. One estimate in 1947 found that total property values from Broad Street to Five Points via Lumpkin Street was $1,000,000. In 1950, the Athens Fire Department provided fire service inside and outside the city limits. Inside the limits calls were free because they were covered by tax, but outside the city limits, calls in unincorporated Clarke County would cost $225 to the property owner.

In 1947, Wells gave a radio speech over the WGUA radio station that highlighted the importance of public utilities including fire protection, no matter the cost. Wells advocated for the procurement of state aid to secure funds for a Five Points station and the equipment to staff it, citing that in every election cycle for "a period of eight years or more", a Five Points station

[72] Eric T. Frey, "The Athens-Clarke County Fire Department: A History," (unpublished manuscript, Athens, GA, October 2013), 15-16.

was brought up only then for Athens to never deliver it. The cost of construction, maintenance, and added salaries of fire to the budget defeated the bid each time it came before the Planning Commission.

In September 1948, concrete steps were taken toward the Five Points Station when Wells, who ended up winning the mayoral election, appointed a committee to study suitable locations in Five Points. This led to a purchase of 75 by 200-foot lot in August of 1949 for $1,000. At this point no plans had been created, but the station was planned to house up to two trucks and accommodate four to five firemen per shift.

On Monday. July 15, 1950, the one story “modern station’’ held an open house where the community could tour the long-awaited station. Fire Chief W.C Thompson, with Mayor Wells and members of the city council present, remarked at the dedication that Station No. 3 would be fit to serve the Five Points neighborhood for a period of at least fifty years and is “workable, serviceable, and practical” in virtually every aspect. Even the five beds in the barracks of the station were built by the firemen themselves from poplar wood. Only being a one-story building, it was the first station in Athens to lack a fire pole. The station's floor plan included the equipment bay, captain's office, lounge for firemen, and a small kitchen area.

The new station made an immediate impact upon opening, with 1950 fire losses in Athens totaling $9,480.16, a sizeable decrease from $11,272.56 with just two fire stations operating in 1949. Per capita fire losses hit an all-time low at 27 cents, well below the national average of $5.00. There were only three fire losses of more than $1,000 in 1950, all prior to the station opening.

After Station No. 3 opened, Fire Chief Thompson began the meticulous process of purchasing new equipment. For Station 3, he purchased a 1937 Seagrave pumper that could

pump 750 gallons of water per minute and assigned a 1947 Pirsch Ladder Truck. For other locations, he secured a 500-gallon pumper to replace a 1913 truck and oversaw the installation of a department-wide radio dispatch system.

Old Station No. 3 was operational until it was replaced with a larger, modern station moved directly on the Five Point convergence of Milledge Avenue, Lumpkin Street, and Milledge Circle at the beginning of the 21st Century. Previously, the Downtowner Motor Inn occupied the site. Part of a 2000 funding package via the Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) program, four new fire stations were planned with the immediate goal of replacing Old Stations Nos. 3 and No. 4. Fire Chief Wendell Faulkner and SPLOST Program Manager Jeff Prine alleged that the two firehouses had become too small to house modern fire trucks and equipment, as well as expanded staff. Any new No. 3 would have to be multiple stories, a considerable expansion on the single-story five-bed Old No. 3. The site that would eventually win out in the end was the three-pronged intersection at the convergence of the "Five Points" (five directions created by three intersecting roads) from which the neighborhood gets its name). Not only was it the only proposed location that would not displace residents, but it also sat less than a mile northeast from the current station. In July 2001, the site was purchased for $1,900,000 and the new Station No. 3 opened in 2003.

Old No. 4 Background

Old Fire Station No. 4, sometimes referred to as Old Firehall No. 4 due to its current iteration as a veterinary hospital, opened on January 6, 1965 at the intersection of Oglethorpe Avenue and Hawthorne Avenue. It served as a substation until 2003 when Clarke County replaced it with a larger facility on adjacent property at 900 Oglethorpe Avenue. Upon opening the station was staffed by a company of eight men, a 1953 GMC engine, and one rescue truck. A

1960 Sanborn Map, the last one published for Athens, describes the department as having 6 paid lieutenants and 41 firemen on staff. At this point in time, the water system could pump 23,620,000 gallons per day from Sandy Creek.

On January 1, 1963, the City of Athens annexed eight square miles of land from Clarke County on the western side.[73] Discussion, and even approval for a new station in the area of Oglethorpe Avenue were well underway a month prior. On December 5, 1962, the Athens city council and mayor Jack R. Wells unanimously approved a new station around Oglethorpe and Sunset Drive, the second fire station created under his leadership.[74] By September 1963, land had been purchased for the station in its eventual location.[75] In the early 1960s, only three cities in the United States had better fire insurance rates than Athens. Sixty firemen, split into four companies, provided coverage for the 125 square miles of Clarke County. To contrast, the largest city in Georgia at that time used 33 companies with 800 firemen to cover 128 square miles. From 1933 to 1963, Athens experienced a mere $1.00 per capital loss compared with the national average of $8.00.[76] The opening of Station 4 certainly helped to keep efficiency high and the rates down.

[73] "Fire Department New Equipment Serves Growing Athens," *The Athens Banner-Hereld,* Athens, GA, September 22, 1963, page 5.
[74] "New Fire Station," *The Athens Banner-Hereld,* Athens, GA, December 5, 1962, page 2.
[75] "Fire Department New Equipment Serves Growing Athens," *The Athens Banner-Hereld,* Athens, GA, September 22, 1963, page 5.
[76] Ibid.

OLD FIRE STATION NO. 3

Figure 19- The original facade of Old No. 3 with stone accents (Courtesy of Athens-Clarke County Fire Department).

Figure 20- The facade of Old No.3 after enlargements in the 1970s (Courtesy of Athens-Clarke County Fire Department).

Figure 21- The facade of Old Fire Hall No. 3 as it appears today (Photo by author).

Old Station No. 3 Architectural Description

Old Station No. 3 sits on a 0.66-acre lot along South Lumpkin Street. It has rectangular massing and an asymmetrical facade that is now asymmetrical due to a left side and rear non-historic additions. In the 1970s, the equipment bays were enlarged twenty feet toward Lumpkin Street and the roof raised 8 feet to accommodate a 100-foot 1949 Pirsch ladder truck. The exterior of the station was clad originally in lightly colored stone, but in the 1970s it was changed to red brick. Today, the exterior is more resemblant of the original stone in a cream brick color. The two large rounded fixed plate glass windows on the front facade indicate where the equipment bays sat, contained within an infilled square of the original bay door hole. Flanking these infilled squares are non-original cast iron lighting fixtures. Along the front and

the sides of the original station and its historic 1970s bay enlargement is a cornice with dentils. The 8-foot roof raise can clearly be seen as it rises above the cornice.

The original rectangular floor plan included office and a kitchen space on the south side of the building and firemen barracks located on the back elevation. During the 1970s addition, interior walls were removed between the lounge area and kitchen, while an additional restroom and shower was added to the bathroom. Only one floor, the station had no fire pole.

Old Station No. 3 NRHP Evaluation (A, B, and C)

Old Fire Station No. 3 is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its contributions to the post-war fire service in Clarke County. It was just the third station to be built in the city and the first in early 40 years after the budling of Old Fire Hall No. 1 in 1912. It is also the first station to be built outside of the downtown grid, reflecting the denser growth that pushed the outward expansion of Athens. The location of Old No. 3 in Five Points, a historic neighborhood south of downtown, was strategic in two-fold way in that it was both close to southwest Athens and the University of Georgia campus to the north. The firefighting contributions of Old Station 3 are numerous. Under Criterion A, the stations retain its original location and setting. Even though the façade has been altered heavily, a plaque denoting it as a fire station allows for integrity of feeling and association with its original use.

Old Station 3 is not eligible under Criterion B. Although associated with city engineer and architect J.G Beecham, in addition to Mayor Jack R. Wells and Fire Chief W.C Thompson, the station has been altered in such a way that it is completely unrecognizable from the original building Beecham designed. Under Criterion B, it exhibits integrity of location and setting but not feeling and association.

Old Station 3 is also not eligible under Criterion C. The simple, one-story brick building has been changed into a new-age faux-Italianate feel. The original square openings where the apparatus bay doors once sat are now filled with rounded plate glass windows. While the original square bay door outline remains, a non-historic cornice with dentils in the soffit has been added. The historic red brick exterior has been painted white, and several non-historic additions have been added to the sides and top that undermine the original rectangular footprint and massing of the fire station. Under Criterion C, Old No. 3 retains integrity of location and setting as it has not been moved since being built in 1950. However, it lacks integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The building contributes to the false sense of history by presenting itself in a style that was not originally designed in. Old No. 3 as it stands today cannot be associated with its original use as a fire station under Criterion C.

It is recommended that Station No. 3 not be nominated for listing on the National Register. While it is eligible under Criterion A, it is not eligible under Criterion B or C. The modern renovations and additions to the building mask its historic use and association as a fire station.

OLD FIRE STATION NO. 4

Figure 22- Old No. 4, date unknown (Courtesy of Athens Clarke-County Fire Department).

Figure 23- The facade of Old No.4 as it appears today (Photo by author).

Old Station No. 4 Architectural Description

Old Station No. 4 has been converted into a veterinary hospital with substantial additions. The original footprint, as shown in a *Flagpole* article from January 2001, shows the front facade. A small, rectangular structure is clad in brick veneer exterior with two aluminum apparatus bay doors each with a grid of sixteen lights. To the left of the bay doors was a 1-over-1 window and a front door. Today, the original station is contained in the larger and expanded envelope that houses the animal hospital. The bay doors have been replaced with 9-pane fixed windows. The entrance to the building has shifted to the left front corner under a brick tower feature with vents and a standings seam metal roof. Expansions have been placed on all sides of the building except for the historic facade. The left and rear lined with 2-by-2 fixed aluminum windows of various sizes, all with brick sills and some with aluminum awnings above. Visible from the rear is a half-story dormer addition clad in vinyl siding, lined with single and paired horizontal rectangular fixed pane windows. Also located on the rear facade is a standard aluminum door serving as a back entrance. To the left of the back door is a series of tall rectangular fixed pane windows with brick sills. A long addition to the right of the historic front facade has a standing seam metal roof lined with four glass block windows. These additions have swallowed the original footprint of the station.

Old Station No. 4 NRHP Evaluation (A and C)

Old Fire Station No. 4 is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its broad contributions to the growth and expansion of municipal fire services in Clarke County. This is reflective in the increasing population and development that took place west of downtown in the Normaltown and Beechwood neighborhoods. One of the most necessitating factors that created the station was that the New Beechwood Shopping Center,

which opened in 1964, posed a significant fire risk. Also, there was no Station prior to Old No. 4 that could service the newly axed land Athens had acquired from Clarke County in 1963. The construction of Old No. 4 demonstrates a continued commitment of the fire department to address gaps and shortfalls in protection. Under Criterion A. Old No. 4 possess integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. It has not been moved since it opened in 1965 and maintains the historic metal letter sign that spells out Station No. 4.

Old No. 4 is not eligible under Criterion C. Like Old No. 3, the station has fallen victim to non-historic design changes that mask its ability to convey its significance and integrity. Now the home of a veterinarian hospital, there are non-historic additions on the sides and top that encapsulate the original one-story footprint. The station does retain original signage and the shape of the two rectangular bay doors now filled in with windows. However, a non-historic mini-tower feature was added over the new entryway on the left corner of the façade. While this addition does promote feeling and association of the prior use of the building as a fire station, it invokes a false sense of history because it appears as if it was originally there. Under Criterion C, Old No. 4 retains integrity of materials because the original brick façade remains discernable but does not retain integrity of design or workmanship. Modern association with the building's prior use as a fire station comes from features that were not there originally and overt fire-themed branding inside the hospital rather than by historic features.

Old No. 4 should not be nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. While it is eligible under Criterion A, it is not eligible under Criteria C. The station has been altered past the threshold at which historic features are longer evident.

Stations on the Outskirts (1974-1982)

The final period of significance in Athens' historic fire station design encompasses the third wave of stations built in the city. The dates of this period, unlike the previous two, are tied to the date at which the first and last stations were built. With modern technology at their side, the Athens Fire Department by this time boiled down station constriction to a repeatable formula. This third wave includes Station No. 5 (1974), Station No. 1 (1979), Station No. 6 (1982), and Former Station No. 2 (1982). There is greater variance between them, however, they are all characterized by their drive-through apparatus bays that open onto multiple roads and purpose-built to house of modern firefighting equipment. Additionally, stations in this period were designed to house community spaces and administrative office space, something noticeably absent from stations in the preceding periods. While before the design focus was on simply providing space for barracks and equipment, each of the stations designed in this period reflects the evolving role of the Athens Fire Department in the modern age of firefighting.

Station No. 5 Background

Station No. 5, on the corner of Whit Davis and Cedar Shoals Drive, has been in service since 1974. It originally was built by the Clarke County Fire Department, a separate short-lived venture by the Clarke County Commission to have their own fire department before county and fire services became unified in 1982. Before it responded to a single call, the county sold it to the Athens Fire Department. Fire risk was not large enough in unincorporated Clarke County to require the County Commission to run and fund its own department. This kept fire coverage under the same jurisdiction inside and outside the city limits.

No. 5 sits on a 1.2-acre lot acquired from realtor C.P Shaw.[77] It was built in 1974 for $240,000. Prior to construction, development on the east side of Athens had not been substantial. However, the opening of Cedar Shoals High School in 1972 less than a mile away from the site of the fire station shed more light on the area as Athenians began to move outside the city center, reflecting a boom in housing demand. The school became the second high school in Athens and arrived during the period of desegregation in public education. Clarke Central, the other high school in Athens, had been opened as the new integrated school in 1970. A new road, Cedar Shoals Drive, provided access to Gaines School Road from Whit Davis, whereas before drivers had to travel south and around via Old Lexington Road. Small subdivisions such as Green Acres and Cedar Creek were developed. Before No. 5 was built, the closet fire station to this newly developed area was Old Fire Hall No. 1 a little over about five miles away.

The building of Station No. 5 in its present location on the corner of Whit Davis Road and Cedar Shoals Drive proved to be controversial for a variety of reasons. First, Cedar Shoals Drive had to be extended from Cedar Shoals High School to Whit Davis. A topographic map dated 1975 shows that Cedar Shoals Drive at first did not extend down past the high school. However, a series of news articles from the University of Georgia's school newspaper, *The Red & Black,* confirms that the extension was planned for summer of 1974. Although a water main had already existed across the street from the site of No.5, the city approved the installation of a new $42,000 water line and 7,100 feet of lines for the station.[78] Clarke County officials claimed that there were issues in obtaining right of way for extending the main cross the street and continued talks would delay opening of the station. Athens Fire Marshall William Condon

[77] "Commissioners Try to get Deed to Land," *The Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Tuesday, February 11, 1975, page 3.
[78] "Site of Fire Station to be Reconsidered," *The Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Thursday, February 21, 1974, page 1.

heavily objected to the location of No. 5, as it would violate the National Board of Fire Underwriters standard for a station to be no more than one and one fourth miles away from high-value centers in a fire service district. In this case, No. 5 would be placed two and nine-tenths and three and one-tenths miles away from the two high-risk areas in its service area, the shopping centers at Wildwood Square and East Plaza, respectively. Condon was quoted as saying, "the first four to eight minutes are the most crucial in firefighting," expressing disdain for another violation of the National Board rule that a station should not exceed more than three miles from residential areas.[79] No. 5 would exceed this limit from neighborhoods off Gaines School Road. Furthermore, many residents voiced opposition due to traffic concerns, especially doubting a speedy response time if a fire truck had to contend with rush hour and end of school day traffic.

As it turned out, No. 5 was originally recommended to be built next to Hilsman Middle School on Gaines School Road northwest of the current location. The National Board Standards would be met, but the Clarke County School District was slow to act in giving up land to the country on grounds that a fire station in the immediate vicinity of the school would diminish school grounds footage and present complicated traffic and circulation issues. By the end of 1974, No. 5 was fully operational and staffed 24/7 but the county commission did not own the land the station was built on. It remains unclear why Shaw did not grant the deed to the county before or during the construction process.

Station No. 1 Background

Station No. 1, which serves as both an on-call station and the headquarters of the Athens Fire Department, is the third location in the lineage of No. 1. It succeeds the Old Pioneer

[79] "County Fire Station Site Shift Causes Controversy," *The Red and Black,* Tuesday, February 19, 1974, page 1.

Volunteer Station on the corner of Washington and Jackson Streets that became the headquarters of the new paid force in 1891, and Old Fire Hall No. 1 that served from 1912 to 1979 upon completion of this new Station No. 1. It sits on a 1.8-acre lot in East Downtown bounded by College Avenue to the west, Hoyt Street to the north, North Jackson Street to the east, and Madison Avenue to the south. These roads combine to form a square lot and is right on the northern edge of Downtown Athens. In relation to the Old Fire Hall No. 1 that it replaced, it is 0.4 miles away.

Former Station No .2 Background

Now vacant, the Former Station No. 2 was in service from 1982 -2019 when a larger modern facility was built on Cleavland Road. It is the sister station to No. 6 and was built on one of Athens most trafficked and commercial strips along Atlanta Highway. The location was strategic, situated only 0.8 miles away from Georgia Square Mall. Before the mall opened with 100 stores in 1981, Athens Fire Chief Tom Eberhart claimed that Clarke County was "six years behind in fire preparedness" in its unincorporated areas and that crews could not stage an adequate response in the event of a large fire in the mall. In 1978, 39 percent of fire calls came from this unincorporated area, which cost the county $409,380 to have serviced by the Athens Fire Department. This problem facilitated the full reorganization of the Athens Fire Department into a joint effort which the county government, creating the current Athens-Clarke County Fire Department that covers all of Clarke County.

Costs for Former Station 2 were estimated to be around $1,000,000. That equipped it with 45 men, a rescue truck, a 100,000 gallons per minute pumper, and a truck with an aerial ladder for second and third floor buildings. By the time Former Station 2 and its No. 6

counterpart were completed, the six Athens stations altogether had a loadout of seven total pumpers, two aerial trucks, one rescue unit, and a tanker.

Station No. 6 Background

Station No. 6 was constructed in 1982 to address fire coverage concerns in the at the Athena Industrial Park and campus of Athens Technical College in the northeastern part of Clarke County. The industrial park was conceived beginning in 1962 in what planners called a "carefully planned park that would attract industry on a competitive basis", facilitated by the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce. It would be one of the first planned industrial parks in Georgia, consolidating most of the manufacturing activity in one area. Originally the site contained 1,500 acres, and in 1964 an extra 450 acres were added. Even before construction of the park finished, tenancy was almost at full capacity. The park was close to the Athens Bypass, three interchanges, and was serviced by railroad tracks. The Chromalloy Corporation, Dye Sheet Metal Works, the Overhead Door Company, and Fowler Products were among the first tenants to open plants in the park.

Another 17 acres were added in 1965 to house the Athens Area Vocational Technical School, known today as Athens Technical College. The site in the industrial park provided a consolidated, permanent campus for the school and put it in close proximity with manufacturing businesses that could offer students apprenticeships. Athens Tech had been established in 1956, but a school bond referendum in Clarke County allowed for the new campus to combine locations on Pope Street and in Winterville. With the opening of both the Athena Industrial Park and Athens Tech, the fire risk for northeast Athens was substantial. However, because the park was in unincorporated Clarke County land, the Athens Fire Department did not have a station in the area. The closet station was Station No. 1 in downtown Athens, 4 miles away, and the second

closest being Station No. 5, a whole 15 minutes away from where the eventual Station No. 6 would be bult.

STATION NO. 5

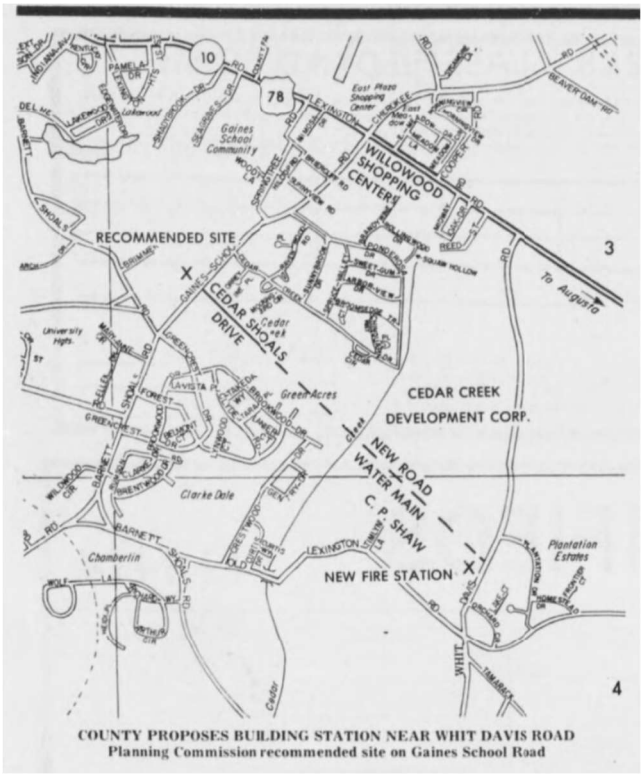

Figure 24- A map showing over where to build Station No. 5. While the Planning Commission recommended Gaines School Road, County officials installed a new road and water main to build at Whit Davis Road and Cedar Shoals Drive (Courtesy of The Red & Black, Tuesday, February 19th, 1974).

Figure 25- No. 5 as it appears today (Photo by Author).

Station No. 5 Architectural Description

Fire Station No. 5 dates to 1974 and exhibits a Plain Style look similar to a residential split-level home. It has characteristics that other fire stations lack, such as a variation of exterior materials, a second-floor jetty, and a rear courtyard. No. 5 is a two-story structure clad in a running bond brick exterior and a wood material on the second floor. It has rectangular massing but is stoutly L-shaped. The main facade is oriented to Cedar Shoals Drive, while the rear is oriented toward Whit Davis Road. The equipment bay lies on the left of the facade, with two 24-light aluminum doors on each side, large enough for two fire trucks. The building splits into two floors on the right of the equipment bay, the second-story jettying out from the first to provide more space for private functions. Barracks and kitchen area are likely contained on the upper floors, while reception areas and offices are housed on the first. Because the station is caddy-cornered at an intersection and is L-shaped, there are aluminum-framed entrances on both the front and right elevations. The back of the equipment bay forms an L with the rear facade of the station, the space in between enclosed in a brick courtyard. Windows on the second floor are all paired, single pane sliding windows that are small and skinny in shape. First floor windows are vertically rectangular, single panes with decorative brick surrounds and spandrels in-between. On the facade remains the original name plaque.

Station No. 5 NRHP Evaluation (A and C)

Station No. 5 is eligible for listing under the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines under Criterion A. It was the first station on the east side, and until the 1980s remained the furthest outward station. No. 5 also was the first station in Athens to be in an exclusively residential neighborhood. It was originally owned and constructed not by the Athens Fire Department but by the Clarke County Fire Department, representing a schism between the then separate county

and city governments. Under Criteria A, Station No. 5 has contributed to patterns of Athens fire infrastructure, urban planning, and local politics. Because Cedar Shoals Drive was extended to connect to Whit Davis Road to create the intersection the station sits at, No. 5 has left a distinct permanent mark on the landscape is directly tied to its creation. For Criterion A, No. 5 retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association because it has not been moved, and the surrounding character remains residential. Because it retains the original Clarke County Station No. 5 sign, an association and feeling can be made to its prior use.

Under Criterion C, Station No. 5 is eligible because of its uniquely residential appearance, defined by the small jetty between floors and very steeply pitched hip roof. It could easily be mistaken for a Plain Style Split Level home, of which many examples occur in the surrounding subdivisions. The design is one of a kind among Athens Fire Stations, and reflective of a period in which fire stations designers began to be cognizant of matching stations to their surrounding character. Under Criteria C, the station retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The façade remains exactly in the same configuration as the day the station opened and there have been no non-historic add-ons. It appears unchanged from its original design.

Old Station No. 5 is eligible for nomination to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. No. 5 is both the most unique fire station in Athens and has a rather fascinating story that is seeping with local politics and critical to reading that urban space today. It has stood virtually unchanged from its original orientation.

However, the future of Station No. 5 hangs in the balance as it is the next station slated for replacement through a Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) project. Approved in 2020, and sites being looked at in December 2024, a new No. 5 is on the horizon. The current fire

station has been noted by the fire department in having several deficiencies: inadequate location for eastside coverage, insufficient space for personnel, exercise, and gear, lack of male/female living accommodations, and ADA compliance. The facility is outdated, with no fire sprinkler systems or bay door safety sensors, and features hazards such as an opening in the slide pole. Additionally, the HVAC, electrical systems, and appliances are inefficient due to age, and the two-story design and an abandoned fueling on the site requires special remediation. No. 5 retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association. Once the station is replaced, there are no plans for what will become of the site.

STATION NO. 1

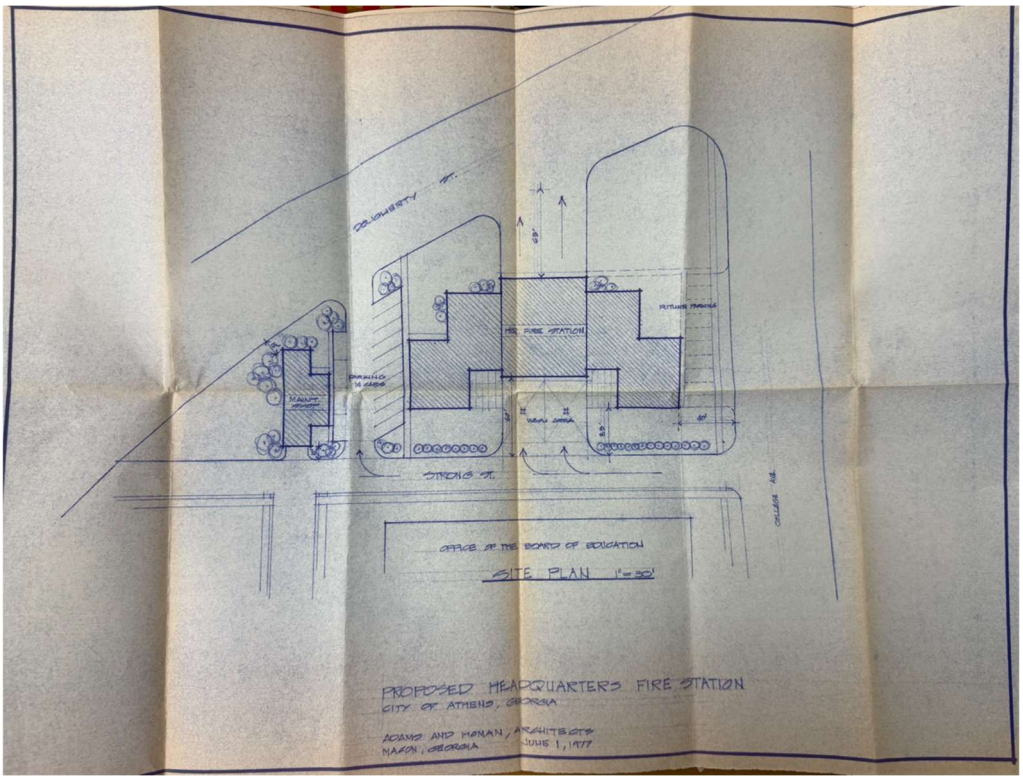

Figure 26- A 1977 blueprint for No. 1 (Courtesy of Athens-Clarke County Fire Department).

Figure 27- The main facade of No.1 as it appears today (Photo by author).

Station No. 1 Architectural Description

700 College Avenue is the site of the current Fire Station No. 1 and houses the department's headquarters, built in 1979. This Mid-Century fire station is a one-story brick structure that closely resembles a blocky U-shape. An overhead satellite view shows that the station can be divided into three parts. In the middle is a congruent square that comprises the garage and equipment bay. On both sides of the bay are identical side wings that contain two offset rectangles that curve outwards to adjoining rectilinear portions. These side wings are where offices and barracks reside. The facade of No. 1 has long and tall massing, featuring a large 4-door equipment bay parsed by brick posts. Each bay door is aluminum with a grid of 28 lights in each. These doors occur on both the front and back ends of the bay, accentuated by a continuous concrete driveway that runs through that provides access to Madison Avenue to the south and Hoyt Street to the north. The exterior of the station lacks any sort of exterior ornamentation and contains few windows with none on the facade.

The station's location is strategic, being accessed by four roads that allow for a fire truck to dispatch in all four directions, mainly the residential neighborhoods to the north, university to the south, and commercial areas of downtown to the east and west. The station was state of the art when it opened in Spring 1979, complete with ample office space for the fire protection bureau, fire chief, fire marshal, two fire inspectors, and the community education specialist. The $715,000 price tag added on an interview room, evidence room, conference room, reception areas.

Station No. 1- NRHP Evaluation (A and C)

Station No. 1 is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A due to its contributions to local firefighting, representing a wholly new type of station that Athens

had not seen before. While included in this outskirts period of significance by date of construction, it is an outlier because it is located in the center of downtown Athens. New No. 1 was the largest station in Athens when it opened, consolidating the operations of both Old Fire Hall Nos. 1 and 2 in a single space. The new headquarters represents the diversifying and changing roles of the fire department. By 1979, the department was no longer used in a simple firefighting capacity but carried within it a variety of functions. The station became home to the offices of the fire protection bureau, fire chief, fire marshal, two fire inspectors, and the community education specialist. The building also included an interview room, evidence room, conference room, and reception areas, highlighting the role of fire investigation in addition to traditional firefighting duties. Station No. 1 retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. It has not been moved nor has its urban downtown setting changed since opening. The original fire station sign remains, and the four large bay doors allow for association with its use as a station. It still stands today as a unmistakable landmark in downtown Athens.

Station No.1 is eligible under Criteria C. It represents a larger movement in which Athens began shutting down its two-story stations. The floor plan of No. 1 unionizes all functions-public, private, administrative, technical. In a modern context where six of the current ten are standardized in design, Station No. 1 is a hallmark of a by-gone era. It retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. It remains clad in its original exterior, remains in its original orientation, and still exhibits overall massing and footprint that make it recognizable as a fire station.

Station No. 1 should be nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

FORMER STATION NO. 2

Figure 28- The vacant Former Station No. 2 as seen today. It was in service from 1982 to 2019 and is the sister to Station No. 6, built at the same time (Photo by author).

Former Station No. 2 Architectural Description

Former Station No. 2 sits at the intersection of Mitchell Bridge Road and Atlanta Highway; the facade oriented to the former. It is a one-story building that has a steel frame. With rectangular massing, clad in corrugated sheet metal aluminum exterior and running bond brick veneer exterior. It features a three-door drive-through apparatus bay, each door with a grid of eight horizontal rectangular glass lights. The rightmost bay door opens to a smaller door on the rear facade, indicating that the station housed a smaller fire vehicle. Former Station 2 has a flat metal roof, contained by corrugated aluminum pieces of a darker color that wrap around the entirety of the building. On the right of the facade is a smaller brick-clad portion of the station where offices, kitchen, and barracks are housed, lined with standard aluminum 1-over-1 windows all with brick sills. There is only one entrance located on the facade. The site features a parking lot situated to the right of the building.

Former Station No. 2 NRHP Evaluation (A and C)

Former Station No. 2 is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places Criteria A for its contributions to the expansion and unification of Athens and Clarke County Emergency Services. Although the site remains vacant and is a few years less than 50 years old, its creation was a critical step when the Athens Fire Department rebranded as the Athens-Clarke County Fire Department in 1982, unifying fire coverage in both city limits and unincorporated county land. This switch occurred ten years before the other government function unified in 1991. The station was built in direct response to the newly opened Georgia Square Mall amid heavy commercial development along Atlanta Highway. Former Station No. 2 retains integrity of location and setting under Criterion A. It has not been moved or re-oriented outside of its historic context. The station also retains feeling and association. Although it now lies vacant, its character-defining apparatus bays once filled with fire trucks remain intact.

Former Station 2 is eligible under Criteria C. It is a relatively simple, small, non-ornate design that prioritizes function over looks. The three large apparatus bays are indicative of the fire department purchasing more trucks for their fleet as they dealt with more ground to cover. Its placement on the intersection allowed trucks to egress into all four directions when called into action. The side parking lot allows visitors to access both the Atlanta Highway side and Mitchell Bridge Road side. Under Criterion C, the stations retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. It still reads as a fire station, clad in the same corrugated sheet metal and brick that divide public visiting space and private space reserved for on-duty firemen.

The Former Station No. 2 now lies vacant and serves as a reminder that smaller historic stations must be replaced to keep firefighting operations attuned to the current needs of the

community. Despite not having any plans for its future use at this time of writing, the Former Station No. 2 should be nominated for the National Register for demonstrating Criteria A and C.

STATION NO. 6

Figure 29- A 2008 Google Street View screenshot of the original appearance of Station No. 6 (Courtesy of Google Street View, image capture date June 2008).

Figure 30- The current facade of No. 6 after exterior renovations between 2008 and 2012 (Photo by author).

Station No. 6 Architectural Description

Up until renovations in 2010, Station No. 6 was a mirror image of the former Station No. 2. What was on the right of Former No. 2 is on the left and vice versa. Clad in the same materials and featuring the same apparatus bay pattern, the only difference between the two stations is that the facades are reversed. Station No. 6 is clad in corrugated sheet metal aluminum exterior and running bond brick veneer exterior. It features a three-door drive-through apparatus bay, each door with a grid of eight horizontal rectangular glass lights. The leftmost bay door opens to a smaller door on the rear facade, indicating that the station housed a smaller fire vehicle. A flat metal roof features a cornice element clad in a darker color of corrugated aluminum sheet metal. The left of the facade is lower in height, houses reception, offices, and barracks. The station is shielded on both streets by dense trees. In 2010, exterior changes were made to the station. The massing and footprint remained largely the same, but changes to the bay doors brought the station a similar look to other new stations constructed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Over the apparatus bay is now a large Flemish gable parapet element clad in brick with a large number 6 sign in the peak. The apparatus doors have been replaced and enlarged, now with a 7-by-7 grid of glass lights. Surrounding the doors are concrete outlined arches with key stones.

Station No. 6 NRHP Evaluation (A and C)

Station No. 6 is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A for its contributions to the reorganization of the Athens Fire Department into the Athens-Clarke County Fire Department 1982, ten years before the governments of the two officially merged. Station No. 6 has also contributed to patterns of local firefighting because its main purpose is to safeguard the industrial and manufacturing core of Athens. In this area, there is sparse residential development, meaning that firefighters stationed there are responding to a

different type of fire risk. Under Criterion A, the station retains integrity of location and setting. It has not bene moved since opening and surrounding character has remained largely industrial. It also retains integrity of feeling and association, with the modern non-historic renovations rendering it an even closer look to a fire station than it had previously.

Station No. 6 is not eligible under Criterion C. Station 6 is reminiscent of an era when fire station construction was first beginning to be standardized in Athens, but through the recent renovations, it can no longer convey this look. Station 6 lacks integrity of design, materials, and workmanship because the original corrugated metal portion has been replaced with brick. The addition of the numbered Flemish gable was not there historically. Despite still operating as a fire station and unoriented in its historic setting, historic character-defining features have bene removed.

Station No. 6 should not be nominated for listing on the National Register. Although it is eligible under Criterion A, it is not eligible under Criterion C.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this thesis demonstrate that fire station architecture in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia, directly reflects the material culture of firefighting, embodying both technological advancement and civic growth. Through an examination of eight extant historic fire stations, it becomes clear that as firefighting apparatus and operational practices evolved, so too did the architecture of the buildings designed to support them. This correlation is evident in shifts in apparatus bay size, building massing, decorative treatments, and the integration of new functions such as living quarters and administrative offices.

Each station, from the Old Fire Hall No. 1 to Station No. 6, captures a moment in time in the technological and civic history of Athens. The oldest stations exhibit features common to early 20th-century civic buildings, such as symmetrical façades, decorative brickwork, and compact forms suited for smaller apparatus. In contrast, later buildings reflect Modernist tendencies toward simplicity, horizontal massing, and increased scale necessitated by larger motorized apparatus and expanded departmental roles. Notably, the size and number of apparatus bays increase over time, mirroring advancements in vehicle design and the growing demands placed on the department.

All eight stations qualify under National Register Criterion A for their association with the historical development of firefighting in Athens, with most constructed as a direct response to urban growth and shifting population centers. Some stations, such as Old Fire Hall No. 2 and

Old Station No. 3, may also qualify under Criterion C for their architectural significance, especially in relation to broader regional and national patterns identified in studies from Saint Paul and Los Angeles. Only limited potential was found for Criterion B, and none meet Criterion D.

Integrity among the stations varies. While some retain strong integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, those others heavily modified or converted to private use, have experienced partial loss of historic fabric. Nevertheless, many key character-defining features remain intact, such as apparatus bay doors, traditional rooflines, and massing strategies. The use of the forty-year rule proved critical in capturing the evolution of station form, allowing the inclusion of later 20th-century buildings that otherwise would be excluded under the traditional fifty-year benchmark.

However, this study of fire stations is not the only subject or goal of this thesis. A local fire history of Athens is crucial to understanding the conditions that precipitated each station. The firefighting heritage of Athens reveals that the city echoed national advancements in firefighting material culture but did so on a much slower timeline than the national standard. This could be due to the relatively small size of Athens compared to cities like Boston, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia where the cutting edge of fire technology is invented, or equally because Athens throughout its history has not decimated repeatedly by large urban fires. The city was not forced to adopt the latest and greatest fire apparatus or tools but did so only after trial and error by others. The citizens of Athens have always viewed fire protection as a serious responsibility. This is the reason why Athens' volunteer fire companies stayed in businesses so much longer than most American cities, having zero tolerance for the corruption and violence that derailed them in other places. On a regional scale, Athens in its early history was late to the advent of

organized fire protection. It was only after a major fire burned Augusta that a volunteer service caught on in Athens, and the city purchased its first steam fire engine from there as well. However, once the professional department got off the ground, Athens became leaders in fire prevention among southern cities, eclipsing the efficiency of Atlanta.

In conclusion, this thesis affirms that fire stations are not only utilitarian structures but also architectural reflections of the technological, institutional, and social dimensions of firefighting. The eight historic stations in Athens-Clarke County stand as physical markers of this progression and merit further recognition and potential nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Future preservation efforts should consider the collective value of these buildings as a historic typology, rather than solely as individual resources. Their continued documentation, stewardship, and interpretation will enrich the understanding of both local and national firefighting heritage.

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