

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

other names/site number 5DV.9361

street & number 2500 Washington Street

city or town Denver

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state CO          county Denver          zip code 80205
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not for publication

vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national **statewide** ☒ **local**

Signature of certifying official/Title

State Historic Preservation Officer

Date _____

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date _____

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

____ removed from the National Register

____ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| ☐ | private |
| ☒ | public - Local |
| ☐ | public - State |
| ☐ | public - Federal |

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| ☒ | building(s) |
| ☐ | district |
| ☐ | site |
| ☐ | structure |
| ☐ | object |

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FIRE STATION (DENVER FIRE DEPARTMENT)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FIRE STATION (DENVER FIRE DEPARTMENT)

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SPANISH BUNGALOW

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: _____

walls: BRICK

roof: TERRA COTTA TILE

other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Fire Station No. 3 is a 1931 Spanish Bungalow-style, one-story fire house continuously owned and operated by the Denver Fire Department (DFD). The Spanish Bungalow was a popular style during the 1920s and 1930s when the building was constructed. This building includes a terra cotta clay tile roof, a pitched roof in front, gabled parapets to represent low-pitched clay tiled roofs, and window pairings with brick arch details.

Most firehouses from the early 20th-century in large cities such as Denver were built as two-story buildings. During the design and construction of Fire Station No. 3, efforts were made to connect firehouse architecture with the surrounding structures and the community at large. While there are no other Spanish Bungalows around the firehouse, the one-story bungalow-style fits in with the smaller brick homes originally surrounding it. This would have been more so during the period of construction and use as an all-Black fire house, as some of the block has been rebuilt in recent years.

Narrative Description

General Features

The Spanish Bungalow firehouse was built in 1931. The single-story building features one engine room, an office, a bunk room, restrooms, and storage areas. The rectangular building is located on the northeast corner of Washington Street and 25th Avenue. The west façade, the front part of the building with the engine bay doors, faces Washington Street, with the south along 26th Street, and the eastern, the rear, facing the alley. The building is varying hues of red and brown brick in a running bond with some decorative elements throughout. A white stone belt course, at a height equal to the top of the windows and doors, wraps around the entire building.

Setting

Fire Station No. 3 is set back and has a front yard, similar to the residential properties in the neighborhood. A grass median is located between the sidewalk and Washington Street. A concrete walk connects the front door on the west faced to the sidewalk and the street. The building is located directly against the concrete sidewalk on the south side. A grass median with one tree is located between the sidewalk and 25th Avenue. A concrete driveway connects the road with the engine room. The rear of the property, along the alley, is a large concrete pad surrounded by a chained-link fence. The north side of the property is narrow, with concrete slabs and gravel. A wooden fence with a concrete foundation lines the northern property line and is maintained by the neighboring property.

Along Washington Street is some new construction. A four-story apartment building, built in 2008, is located on the corner of 26th Avenue and Washington Street, on the northern part of the fire station's block. Directly to the north of the fire station is a three-story slot-housing-style condominium building constructed in 2008. Located on the corner of Welton and Washington Streets, north of the firehouse, is the three-story Rossonian Hotel (site #5DV.65, NRIS# 95001009).

To the east and west are late 19th-century and early 20th-century residential properties. The original No. 3 firehouse, built in 1888, is located across the street at 2563 Glenarm Place. The Stile African-American Heritage Center, located in two Victorian-style homes, is also across the street. A pocket park is located to the southwest.

South of the fire station on Washington Street are two-story, early 20th-century-style commercial buildings. A newly constructed three-story condominium building, built in 2015, is located on the southeast corner of 24th Street and Washington.

There is some new construction nearby on Welton Street that is much larger in scale than the rest of the Five Points neighborhood, particularly to the southwest approaching downtown Denver. Next to the Rossonian and to the rear of the Stile African American Heritage Center, is a newly constructed eight-story condominium building. A seven-story condominium building is located at the rear of the original No. 3 fire station at 2563 Glenarm Place. While neither of these buildings are adjacent to the firehouse, their scale does change the historic forms in the neighborhood.

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Despite some new construction, the neighborhood retains its original setting and feel. Washington Street, where the firehouse is located, mainly retains the late 19th- and early-20th-century residential and commercial properties. The neighborhood includes tree-lined streets and sidewalks. The commercial businesses are up against the sidewalks, and small residential properties are set back with small front yards.

West Façade

The main entrance to the fire station and the engine room is on the west side of the building, facing Washington Street. Across the entire western façade is a white stone belt course.

Located at the northern end of the western façade the garage doors for the single-engine room include two wooden bi-fold garage doors. Each section of the door has one row of three vertical glass panes on the top section, a vertical boarding lower section, and a metal kick plate. There is decorative white stonework above and around the top edge of the doors. Above the door, etched into the stone, reads "D.F.D. No. 3," and on the two tiles on either side of the top edge read "19" on the left side and "31" on the right side to indicate that the building was constructed and completed in 1931.

Around the bay doors and above the "D.F.D. No. 3" sign is a decorative brick projection with a stepped cross gable. In the middle of this projection, above the sign, are three sequenced blind arcades with a white stone shell motif and white stone sills. A prominent parapet creates a side-gabled roof line with accented terra cotta tile to match the roof.

To the south of the garage doors is a connected side gabled section with a terra cotta tile roof. Two six-over-six double-hung wooden windows are painted white with a white tile windowsill. Both windows are aligned at their tops with the white stone belt course. To the south of these windows is a Black metal security door over a red door, not original to the building. On either side of the door are red lanterns with red lightbulbs, a traditional firehouse feature. Three blinded header brick-bonded arches are just above the white stone belt course and above each window and the door. There are two decorative downspouts at the gabled section roofline.

South Elevation

The south elevation of the firehouse faces 25th Avenue. There are no doors on this side of the building. There are nine windows in total. The top of each window is aligned with the white stone belt course that wraps the building. The south elevation includes four decorative downspouts below rectangular projections in the parapet. The parapet is an undulating stepped style topped with white stone across the center between the two gabled.

The west section of the southern elevation includes the side gable of the western elevation's pitched terra cotta roof. In the central part of this section, aligned with the side-gabled roof, is a decorative brick projection with a stepped cross gable with blind arcade arches with header bonded brick above each window. White stone tops the decorative brick. In the center is an eight-over-eight double-hung wooden window painted white with a white tile windowsill. On either side of this central window are two four-by-four double-hung wooden windows painted white with the same height and dimensions as the central window. Below the central window is a louvered grate.

The central section of the south elevation includes five six-over-six double-hung wooden windows painted white with a white stone sill. Five white diamond-shaped stones are centered a couple of feet above each window and the belt course. This section also includes three of the four downspouts. In the center, not aligned with any windows or features, is a louvered grate.

The east section of the south elevation, near the rear side of the building, features decorative brick projection with a stepped cross gable with blind arcade arches with header bonded brick above the window. White stone tops the decorative brick. The one ten-over-ten double-hung wooden window is central in the decorative projection and is painted white with a white stone windowsill. A prominent parapet creates a side-gabled roof line with accented terra cotta tile to match the roof. Below the window is a metal grate projected slightly up from the sidewalk. This metal grate is above a small, glass basement window.

To the east of the decorative brick is a small area with a two-section rectangular blinded arcade, the tops of which are aligned with the tile belt course with the white tile windowsills. A single diamond tile is centered a couple of feet above the two indentations. One of the four downspouts is located next to these features.

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East Elevation

The eastern elevation is on the backside of the firehouse, facing the alleyway that connects 26th and 25th Avenues. There are four windows and one door on this elevation. The top of each window and the door are aligned with the white stone belt course that wraps the building.

Utility pipes are present along the south side of the east elevation and are affixed to the brick. Utility wires run along the bottom side of the parapet edge. There is one small one-by-three window with frosted glass. The white stone along the parapet edge ends about one-third from south to north. From here, the roof edge is metal.

Near the center of the east elevation is an eight-by-eight double-hung wood window painted white with a white tile windowsill. An electrical box and meter with pipe extend vertically.

A black metal security door covers a red door at the north side of the east façade. Small floodlights and metal piping for the wiring system are attached to the left and above the back door. On either side of the rear door are two white nine-pane windows with a white stone windowsill.

North Elevation

The north elevation faces residential units. There are five windows, with one window completely covered by a recently added wooden storage shed. New construction occupies the side just to the north of the firehouse, but historic photographs show continued uses as residential structures also occupied this lot. A metal radio tower, used by the fire department for emergency services, is adjacent to the northeast corner of the building.

Interior

The building is a one-bay engine house. There is an office near the front of the building, to the side of the engine room. The firehouse also includes living quarters, beds, bathrooms, and a kitchen for the firefighters. Although the style of the rooms has changed over the years and the modern equipment has required some changes, the spaces are used the same as when the building was designed in 1931.

Alterations

The original structure is intact, and minor alterations have occurred. A metal stack was added on the northern elevation sometime prior to 1994 when the building was locally landmarked. A small black, wooden addition (attached, but inaccessible from the firehouse interior) used for storage was built at an unknown time. A metal communications tower was added to the northeast corner, rear of the building, at an unknown date but prior to the 1994 local designation. Black metal security doors were added to the west (front) and east (rear) entrances sometime after the 1994 local designation.

Integrity

With only minimal changes to the design and the largest area impacted being the setting, the integrity of Fire Station No. 3 is excellent. The building maintains its original location, materials, and craftsmanship. While the neighborhood and setting have changed over time, the building's association and relationship to surrounding buildings remains intact. The building's continued use as a fire station maintains its association with the No. 3 fire crew, the Denver Fire Department, and its community engagement with the Fire Points neighborhood.

Location: Fire Station No. 3 remains in the location that it was historically constructed and, therefore, retains excellent integrity of location.

Setting: Fire Station No. 3's setting is good. It is located one block south of the Five Points intersection, which is the convergence of Welton Street, 26th Avenue, 27th Street, and North Washington Street. New structures directly north, including slot condominiums and an apartment building, are taller than previous buildings and change the block slightly. However, the neighborhood retains its residential and commercial setting. This intersection and surrounding neighborhood served and continues to serve as a central location for Black/African American commerce, culture, and arts in Denver.

Design: The design of the 1931 firehouse is in good condition. The character defining features that demarcated the building as a part of the Spanish Bungalow style remains intact with minor alterations. Those alterations have not detracted

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from the overall architectural style of the building and the historic design is readily apparent. It retains excellent historic integrity with regard to the aspect of design.

Materials: The building has good integrity of materials. The original red and brown brick is intact and the clay tile, wood, doors, and features all appear original to the building.

Workmanship: The building is intact and retains the original workmanship, including brick masonry, woodwork, and the tile roof. No major alterations have changed the building's workmanship as a Spanish Bungalow style building and as an example of a 20th-century fire station.

Feeling: The one-story brick firehouse is located on a quiet intersection one block south of Denver's Five Points. The building fits nicely into the brick one- or two-story commercial buildings along Washington Street and the neighborhood's historic brick and wood houses. It retains the integrity of feeling.

Association: Fire Station No. 3's history as an all-Black company is associated with the historically Black Five Points Neighborhood surrounding it. The building's association with the city's first and only all-Black fire crew makes it a significant part of the city's story.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE - BLACK

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1931-1957

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Charles Francis Pillsbury

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, areas of significance, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Fire Station No. 3 is a 1931 Spanish Bungalow-styled one-story fire house. From 1931 to 1957, it was the only all-Black firehouse in the City and County of Denver. The fire station is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under two criteria.¹ Fire Station No. 3 is significant at the local level under Criteria A in the area of Black Ethnic Heritage as the City and County of Denver's only all-Black employed fire station due to segregation policies in the fire department. The period of significance is from 1931, when the fire station was built, to 1957, when the DFD ended segregation policies, and the fire station became integrated.

Fire Station No. 3 is significant at the local level under Criteria C in the area of Architecture. It is a good example of a Spanish Bungalow-style firehouse design. It is also the work of Denver-based architect Charles Francis Pillsbury. The period of significance is 1931 when the station was built.

The firehouse served the multicultural Five Points neighborhood and community. Over the years, No. 3 became known for its devoted crew. The station is a uniquely designed one-story, one-engine firehouse, unique for Denver. The Denver Fire Department has used the firehouse as Station No. 3 since 1931, when the station moved from its previous building across the street, to the present. Although attempts have been made over the years to close the station, the Five Points neighborhood has continuously rallied around it as an important fixture in the community.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criteria A – Black Ethnic History

Fire Station No. 3 is significant at the local level under Criteria A in the area of Black Ethnic Heritage. Fire Station No. 3 was the first and only all-Black fire company in the City and County of Denver. The period of significance is from 1931, when the firehouse was built and served an all-Black company, to 1957, when the Denver Fire Department (DFD) was desegregated.

In 1888, Fire Station No. 3 opened at 2563 Glenarm Place with an all-White crew. At the time, the DFD barred Black men from working as firemen. Some efforts were made to establish an all-Black company, but nothing changed until 1893. Populist Governor David H. Waite won the 1892 election with support from the African American community. He supported and promoted the creation of a Black fire station in the Five Points area of Denver. The DFD chose Fire Station No. 3, and the all-White company soon included newly recruited Black firefighters. The Captain of No. 3 was White, but the rest of the crew, including the Lieutenant, were African American.

A fire broke out on March 23, 1895, at the St. James Hotel in downtown Denver. Several crews responded to the emergency, including Fire Station No. 3. The No. 3 crew entered the building to extinguish the fires. Unknown to them, the fire had deteriorated the support beams below the main lobby. The floor eventually gave out beneath the men. All four No. 3 crew members perished. DFD hired a new No. 3 crew within days. J.E. Troy, a White man, served as the Captain. The other hires were all Black. Silas Johnson served as the new Lieutenant, becoming the first Black officer in the Denver Fire Department. In 1897, after the departure of Troy, Johnson was named the new Captain. This made Johnson the first Black Captain in the DFD and officially made No. 3 an all-Black fire crew.

In 1931, DFD decommissioned the original No. 3 firehouse, and the new No. 3 station at 2500 Washington Street opened. The company remained all-Black until 1957, when the Denver Fire Department became desegregated.

Since No. 3 was the only fire station in Denver that employed Black men, positions and opportunities for advancement were limited. Positions opened at the station only when another No. 3 firefighter resigned or retired. Likewise, officer positions only became available after the existing officer left the station, severely limiting the opportunities and advancement of Denver firefighters at other stations. "Just the indignity of knowing that no matter how hard you worked or

¹ I will use "Fire Station No. 3" to describe the building for this section and the developmental history section. Throughout the firehouse's history, different equipment has facilitated different names. For example, Hose No. 3 and Engine No. 3 were used to relate to the type of machines and equipment used. Fire Station No. 3, which is the current name of the building as used by the Denver Fire Department (DFD), will be used universally to avoid any confusion or mistakes.

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what you did, you were not allowed to advance. So, it's a bittersweet story," said the granddaughter of Glen Davis, a Denver firefighter who served at No. 3 before being transferred to No. 4 as part of the Denver Fire Department's integration process.²

The firehouse is located in the Five Points neighborhood, an important area for Black history in Denver. The firehouse became a fixture of the community and helped serve as an essential oasis for the multicultural community in the surrounding neighborhood. "No. 3 is part of the community. The firehouse crew repaired cars, cut hair, anything to assist," said Chief Juniel.³ The motto of the fire station is "The Pride of the Points," reflecting this long history and association with the Five Points neighborhood. "No. 3 was an important anchor in early Denver," said Dr. Renee Cousins King.⁴ It inspired not only the neighborhood, but the larger Denver community. No. 3 is Denver's oldest, continually used firehouse and the only single-engine firehouse in the DFD.

The legacy of the all-Black fire crew has had a lasting impression on individuals and the community. In 2001, 26-year DFD veteran Roderick "Rod" Juniel became the city's first African American Fire Chief. "I'm standing on the shoulder of people who have given me the opportunity," he said at the time. "I look at this as an opportunity to send a message that the fire service is open."⁵ DFD's journey of diversity began with a segregated firehouse at 25th Avenue and Washington Street. The No. 3 firehouse remains a working fire station for DFD and reminds us of the bittersweet past. It is also a continuous source of pride for a historically diverse neighborhood.

Fire Station No. 3 is significant for its history as the only all-Black fire station in Denver during a period of de facto segregation. The fire station became an important community symbol for the multi-cultural neighbor in the Five Points neighborhood. Its legacy of community engagement and representation continues to this day.

Criteria C – Architectural Significance

The firehouse is also eligible under Criteria C for its Spanish Bungalow design and association with architect Charles F. Pillsbury (Figure 1), a prolific and well known architect in Denver. The period of significance is the date the firehouse was constructed, 1931.

Built in 1931, Fire Station No. 3 is a one-story and one-engine room firehouse. The station is constructed in a Spanish-Bungalow style, which was popular during the 1920s and 1930s, although not a typical style for firehouse design. The Spanish-Bungalow style is seen in Fire Station No. 3's terra cotta clay tile roof, a pitched roof in front, gabled parapets to represent low-pitched clay tiled roofs, and window pairings with brick arch details. All these features, and the uniqueness of the style in Denver as applied to a firehouse, makes Fire Station No. 3 a well-preserved example of the Spanish-Bungalow Style.

Most firehouses from the time in large cities such as Denver were built as two-story buildings. Pillsbury's other firehouses in Denver are two-story designs. When the firehouse was designed and constructed, efforts were made to connect firehouse architecture with the surrounding structures and the community at large. In 1931, the neighborhood was largely bungalow houses and one- or two-story commercial buildings. While there are no other Spanish bungalows around the firehouse, the one-story building fits in with the smaller brick homes that originally surrounded it during this period.

Charles Francis Pillsbury was born in Denver in 1896. He served as a drafter for the first part of his career. He became an architect in 1927 and practiced through 1960. Pillsbury died in 1979. The 1931 firehouse is an early example of his architectural work. After completing Denver Station No. 3, Pillsbury designed two other Denver Fire Department firehouses. Denver Fire Station #11, built in 1936, is a two-story Art-Deco-styled firehouse in the Baker neighborhood.⁶ Denver Fire Station #14, built in 1937, is a two-story Tudor-style firehouse in the Montclair neighborhood built as a Works Progress Administration project.⁷ Both stations are local landmarks in the City and County of Denver.⁸

² "Denver's Fire Station No. 3 housed the city's first all-Black fire unit." 9news. March 4, 2021.

³ Juniel, Roderick. Interview. December 2023.

⁴ Cousins King, Dr. Renee. Interview. December 2023.

⁵ Juniel, Interview. 2023.

⁶ Genealogy, African American and Western History Resources. "Baker Neighborhood History." Denver Public Library.

⁷ Denver Architecture Foundation. Denver Fire Station #14.

⁸ Landmark Preservation. Historic Landmarks and Districts. Community Planning and Development. City and County of Denver.

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Pillsbury designed or contributed to several projects around Colorado. In 1932, Pillsbury designed the Eagle County Courthouse in Eagle, Colorado, a three-story Art-Deco style building. The building is now part of the County's government buildings complex.⁹ Pillsbury worked as a member of the Association Architects under George Meredith Musick, which served as a collaborative architecture group responsible for designing the Colorado State Capitol Annex Building and the Capitol Complex Boiler Plant.¹⁰ The Colorado State Capitol Annex and Boiler Plant was added to the National Register on June 24, 1991 (5DV.3844, NRIS# 91000824). The two buildings, completed between 1939 and 1941, are important Denver examples of Art-Deco architecture.¹¹ In 1939, in association with Musick and E. O. Morris, Pillsbury designed the City and County of Denver's Police Administration Building in the Central Business District. The four-story Art Moderne-style building was a Public Work Association project, which later served as theater offices and now operates as the Commons on Champa Street.¹² Pillsbury also designed schools. Specifically, Pillsbury is listed as the architect for four schools in the Multiple Property Documentation Form on Mid-Century education and schools throughout Colorado: Gust Elementary (5DV.9271) in Denver, constructed in 1955; Ellis Elementary (5DV.8050) in Denver, constructed in 1956; McMeen Elementary (5DV.10480) in Denver constructed in 1958; and Hi-Plains High School in Seibert constructed in 1960.¹³

Fire Station No. 3's architecture is significant as a good representation of a Spanish-Bungalow style building and working firehouse. It is also significant for its association with Charles F. Pillsbury, a well-known and prolific architect in Colorado. The architectural integrity is good and maintains the character, materials, and overall style of the 1931 building.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Denver Five Points Neighborhood

The creation of the railroad in Denver promised growth. In preparation, areas to the north and east were platted along the new railroad tracks to prepare for more manufacturing and residential opportunities. In 1868, the Case and Ebert Addition (platted by local civic leaders Frederick Ebert and Francis Case) was created south of the South Platte River in what later became the Five Points neighborhood. Case built one of the first homes in the area in 1870. The railroad's arrival in 1870 led to the expansion of the neighborhood, including business and residential opportunities. The railroad and river proximity were attractive for manufacturers.¹⁴

In 1868, Curtis Park, located in the Five Points neighborhood, became the city's first public park. The park continued to develop over the next several years as the neighborhood grew. Additions increased the area's size, residential units, and commercial opportunities. Horner's Addition, a small tract created in 1876, was one of many new subdivisions to the Five Points neighborhood platted and built out during the 1870s.¹⁵ This is the area where the Denver Fire Station No. 3 was later built. At its original conception, Horner's Addition featured smaller wood-frame dwellings.¹⁶ The neighborhood continued to grow and receive services, including transportation links from the Denver Horse Railroad Company, throughout the 1870s and 1880s. Because of the neighborhood's location near the railroad and manufacturing centers, a diverse population called Five Points home. The "Five Points" name came in 1881 when the streetcar line could not fit the street names at the intersection's terminus. From there, the neighborhood became known as Five Points.¹⁷ The area became both a desirable and diverse neighborhood, with early residents from German, Irish, and Jewish backgrounds.¹⁸ In 1871, the Denver Horse Railroad Company opened a streetcar line connecting the downtown district with the emerging neighborhood. Over the next decade, more streetcar lines were added.¹⁹ This greatly influenced the area's development, enhanced real estate values, and enabled access to myriad communities with the city's commercial and industrial center.

⁹ County Courthouse Building: 551 Broadway. Honoring Historical Eagle. Eagle County Historical Society.

¹⁰ Wheaton, Rodd; Paglia, Michael; and Wray, Diane. Colorado State Capitol Annex & Boiler Plant. Site #: 5DV.3844. 1991.

¹¹ History Colorado. Colorado State Capitol Annex & Boiler Plant. Site #: 5DV.3844. National and State Register.

¹² Noel, Thomas. "City and County of Denver Police Administration Building currently the City and County of Denver Theatres and Arenas Administrative Offices." Denver Public Library. ca. 1980.

¹³ Christman, Abigail. Colorado's Mid-Century Schools, 1945-1970. Multiple Property Documentation Form. 2017.

¹⁴ Genealogy, African American and Western History Resources. "Five Points-Whittier Neighborhood History." Denver Public Library.

¹⁵ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis*. University Press of Colorado. 1990. Page 14.

¹⁶ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 22.

¹⁷ Encyclopedia Staff. "Five Points."

¹⁸ Encyclopedia Staff. "Five Points." History Colorado. Colorado Encyclopedia.

¹⁹ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 18.

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Due to red-lining policies and de facto segregation practices in Denver, many neighborhoods and areas of the city were closed off to ethnic and religious groups. Five Points was one of the few areas open to all in the early parts of the city's history. The neighborhood's proximity to downtown Denver, the railyards, and factories meant that many found it a viable place to live. The neighborhood is known for its historic association with African Americans, Chicano and Latino Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Jewish Americans, and many others. The area is also known for its diverse businesses and services, particularly along Welton Street. Since its creation at the end of the 19th century, the Five Points neighborhood has been ethnically, socially, and economically diverse. The neighborhood is most closely associated with the African American/Black community because of the segregation housing policies that limited opportunities in the Five Points area. Beatrice Frelow Griffin recalled, "Even amid segregation and adversity, Five Points was a place you could hold your head up. Perfect, no, but it was good."²⁰

African American History in Five Points

As the city continued to grow, demographic and neighborhood shifts occurred. Early studies found that the African American population in Denver was dispersed across different neighborhoods throughout the 1870s and 1880s.²¹ Many African American individuals and families settled along Larimer and Blake Streets downtown throughout the 1880s and 1890s.²² At the same time, the white upper class moved to areas like Capitol Hill. Five Points neighborhood's proximity to the rail lines and manufacturers made it desirable for the working class, including Black individuals and families. By 1893, the year the Denver Fire Department hired Black firefighters at Station No. 3, more African Americans lived in the Five Points neighborhood than in any other area of Denver.²³ Occupations varied at this time, but over three-quarters, according to the city directory, were employed as either porters, laborers, waitpersons, or janitors. By the late 19th century, segregation policies limited African American citizens to areas near lower downtown and the Five Points neighborhood.²⁴ Beginning in 1904, the more prosperous members of the Black community began moving away from the crowded areas near downtown and the railroad to the Five Points intersection. At this time, the Shorter Community African Methodist Episcopal Church and Zion Baptist, two leading Black churches in Denver, moved from downtown to the Five Points neighborhood.

The more prosperous individuals and families moved from the downtown Larimer/Blake area to the Five Points neighborhood.²⁵ A prosperous African American middle class emerged in Denver in the 1890s because of business and professional opportunities.²⁶ Joseph D.D. River was the editor of the Colorado Statesman. He: "applauded the drift of Blacks into Five Points, and he used the editorial pages of his newspaper to encourage them to invest in real estate, establish their businesses, and make their community as clean and as attractive as possible."²⁷ In addition, Five Points had churches, physicians, dentists, cafes, a pool hall, saloons, a funeral home, cleaning and tailoring businesses, real estate agencies, a millinery, wig shops, and a lawyer."²⁸ The Five Points neighborhood was a family-oriented area for African Americans from the start. Throughout the 1870s, many families that moved from Georgia to Denver for railway work moved to houses along 22nd Street, an area that became known as the "Deep South."²⁹ By 1900, Black women outnumbered Black men, and families were the "rule, not the exception."³⁰

The Five Points neighborhood and the Welton Street corridor, in particular, became an attractive area for Black-owned and operated businesses. Over the next few decades, many Black-owned businesses operated in the area, including Mallard's Grocery and Confectionery, Melvina's Beauty Shop, and the Rhythm Records and Sporting Goods store. Dentists Dr. Ernest McClain and Dr. Clarence F. Holmes, and Dr. Justina Ford provided varying healthcare services. Social and civic opportunities included the Phyllis Wheatley Colorado YMCA, the Glenarm YMCA, and Denver's branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Jazz and blues clubs along Welton Street and throughout

²⁰ Frelow Griffin, Beatrice. Interview. December 2023.

²¹ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 24.

²² Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 193.

²³ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 24.

²⁴ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 35.

²⁵ Dorsett, Lyle; McCarthy, Michael. *The Queen City: A History of Denver*. Second Edition. Pruett Publishing Company. 1986. Page 104.

²⁶ Dorsett, Lyle; McCarthy, Michael. Page 105.

²⁷ Dorsett, Lyle; McCarthy, Michael. Page 172.

²⁸ Dorsett, Lyle; McCarthy, Michael. Page 173.

²⁹ Genealogy, African American and Western History Resources. "Five Points-Whittier Neighborhood History."

³⁰ Dorsett, Lyle; McCarthy, Michael. Page 104.

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the neighborhood, like Rice's Tap Room, the Casino Cabaret, the Ex-Serviceman's Club, and the Rossonian Lounge, helped build the reputation of Five Points as an entertainment district throughout the 1920s and 1930s.³¹ With the outbreak of World War II in 1941, Black service members from across the United States were arriving at Denver's many military and wartime facilities. They flocked to Five Points for entertainment and fun, spurring the growth of the neighborhood's businesses, restaurants, bars, and clubs.³²

In the 1920s, a housing boom allowed many to leave downtown crowded neighborhoods for newly affordable and desirable areas. However, discriminatory housing policies limited these availabilities to Black residents. The Great Migration brought an influx of Black residents to Denver. Five Points, one of the few city areas open to Black residents, saw crowded conditions in older houses. The expansion of Broadway made the overcrowded situation worse. Originally, Broadway ended at 20th Avenue, but in 1921, Broadway was extended to Blake Street, and a viaduct was created over the railroad tracks to connect the railyards with the city. The project was heralded at the time as "good planning" and cutting through a blighted area" of the city. However, the project displaced several low-income families and individuals, including African Americans historically restricted to the area, pushing more people east toward the Five Points neighborhood.³³

While efforts to create city housing segregation codes failed, de facto segregation existed throughout Denver. Neighborhood associations also advocated for segregation policies by creating covenants to restrict home sales to White citizens and barring sales to non-Whites and Jewish residents.³⁴ Black citizens who tried to move into or were successful in purchasing homes in White-majority neighborhoods often faced threats and personal injury.³⁵ In 1920, Claude DePriest, a Black firefighter with Station No. 3, purchased 2649 Gaylord Street. The Clayton Improvement Association warned DePriest, "If you continue to reside at your present address, you do so at our own peril." In 1921, two bombs exploded on July 7 and November 15 at 2112 Gilpin Street after two consecutive African American families bought the residence.³⁶

Schools were also segregated by race. By 1920, over 90% of Black elementary school children attended the five grade schools in the Five Points neighborhood. Few Black students attended high school because the primary High schools were located in other parts of the city. Manual Training in the Whittier neighborhood, just east of Five Points, enrolled 88 African Americans in the 1925-26 school year, accounting for 10% of the total student population.³⁷ Denver's de facto segregation meant that areas like Five Points were the only safe and viable option for Black homeowners and renters. As a result, the neighborhood saw a large increase in its population. By 1929, more than 75% of Denver's Black residents lived in the Five Points neighborhood. Fire Station No. 3 on Washington Street opened in 1931 with an all-Black fire unit to serve Five Points and surrounding neighborhoods. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Five Point's population and significance with the local Black community grew. After World War II, the Black population nearly doubled to 13,500 in 1950. By the late 1950s, local, state, and national policies had broken down traditional discriminatory policies. Denver passed a fair housing policy in 1957, which removed restrictive policies on where Black citizens could own and live. Denver's Black population started to disburse throughout the city, no longer confined to the Five Points area. In 1958, the Denver Fire Department was desegregated, and Fire Station No. 3 no longer served as the only Black staffed firehouse. Later, statewide fair housing laws and antidiscrimination policies allowed African American residents to move into other city areas. New housing developments, like Montbello, offered an integrated, affordable housing option.³⁸ While the Black population in Denver became more dispersed over the next few decades, Five Points and the surrounding neighborhoods remained a central part of Denver's Black identity with the continuation of businesses and organizations.

Recent Changes and Developments

The overall population in Five Points began to decline in recent decades. In the 1940 census, 24,647 people called Five Points home. By the 1990 census, that number had fallen to 8,065. Five Points lost half its population by 1970. Despite the overall decrease in population, the area remained diverse, with significant representation in the African American and

³¹ Encyclopedia Staff. "Five Points."

³² Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 222.

³³ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 45.

³⁴ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 44.

³⁵ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 44.

³⁶ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 193.

³⁷ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 194.

³⁸ Leonard, Stephen; Noel, Thomas. Page 376.

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Latino communities. Many Black-owned businesses or Black-oriented establishments shuttered, including jazz clubs and hotels. Latino and Chicano citizens comprised the highest demographic group during this time, with almost 40%.

The area remains an active cultural and community center for the city, hosting numerous festivals, celebrations, and holidays, in addition to the continued restaurants, services, commercial spaces, museums, and cultural centers that continue to support the larger community in the area. The Regional Transportation Authority (RTD) opened a 5.3-mile light rail line, Denver's first rail line, between I-25 & Broadway Station and the 30th & Downing Station. The route includes the historic Five Points section of Welton Street. The line continues to run in the expanded light rail service system as the L line, which was truncated in 2018 to run services between the Five Points neighborhood and downtown.

History of the Denver Fire Department

Denver was founded in 1858 with primarily wooden buildings and structures, which meant the young city was susceptible to fires and related dangers. In those early years, citizens were the only defense to fire. They would respond and scramble without organized effort to extinguish flames. On April 19, 1863, a fire broke out and destroyed much of Denver's business district. This event, known as the Great Fire of 1863, and subsequent fires highlighted the need for a formalized fire response. The city government did not provide a fire department, so citizens met in early 1866 to discuss the issue. The Colorado Encyclopedia includes this information about this event:

Denver citizens called a mass meeting at the People's Theatre to discuss establishing a fire department. The meeting resulted in a vigilance committee to be on the lookout for fires, arsonists, and other criminal activity as well as a resolution asking the city council to organize a fire department and purchase a steam fire engine with at least one-half mile of hose. The next morning, a petition was circulated to gather signatures from any man who wanted to join a firefighting organization. About fifty men signed, but little was done to make the fire department a reality.³⁹

After another citizen-led meeting, the first Denver fire volunteer company was established in 1866. The City of Denver provided equipment and built a station at 1534 Lawrence Street for the all-volunteer Pioneer Denver Hook and Ladder Company No. 1's use.⁴⁰ Eventually, the volunteer fire force expanded to include seven companies around the city. This volunteer force remained the sole firefighters until 1881 when funding became available to establish paid companies. The last volunteer company ended in 1884.⁴¹ Engine Company #1, originally located at 1534 Lawrence and relocated to its present location on Tremont, was organized in 1881. By 1900, Denver's firefighting force included 15 companies, with sixty-four hoses and twenty-five fire wagons, operated by 200 men.

Between 1901 and 1924, the Denver Fire Department modernized all stations with motorized fire wagons and trucks. In 1920, Denver voters approved a two-platoon system for all fire stations. Before the city vote, fire stations operated on one platoon 24-hour schedule. The vote changed this to align with modern practices in other parts of the county to a two-platoon system with 12-hour shifts. Additional men were hired to meet the requirements to staff both shifts.

In 1893, African American men were first hired as firefighters at the Fire Station Number 3 near Five Points (Figure 2). A White captain operated the station until a Black captain was installed in 1897 when the station became an all-Black company. Fire Station Number 3 remained the only all-Black station until the Denver Fire Department was integrated in 1958. The Denver Fire Department employed only male firefighters until 1985 when the city's first female firefighter was hired. In 1987, Rich Gonzalez became the first Latino Fire Chief in the DFD. Gonzalez helped lead a new direction for the department that allowed other people of color to seek previously closed opportunities. Reflecting on Gonzalez, Rod Juniel said he was "very progressive and opened up the doors for a lot of the changes that took place in the fire service."⁴²

The DFD continued to grow into the 1990s. Five new fire stations were added to the service at and following the opening of Denver International Airport in 1995. These fire stations, also known as Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) stations,

³⁹ Kennedy, Anna. "Early Firefighting in Denver, 1858–81." History Colorado. Colorado Encyclopedia.

⁴⁰ Kennedy, Anna. "Early Firefighting in Denver, 1858–81."

⁴¹ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Denver Fire Department: 1866-2003. Denver Fire Department. 2003.

⁴² I AM DENVER. Fire Station No. 3. Denver Office of Storytelling. City and County of Denver.

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require special training for the crew and utilize specific equipment for aircraft and airport emergencies. In 2001, Roderick "Rod" Juniel, a twenty-six-year veteran with the DFD, was appointed Chief and became the first African-American man in Denver's history to have the role and title. Since Rod Juniel retired, there have been five Denver Fire Department Chiefs: Larry D. Trujillo, Nick Nuanes, James A. Sestrich, Eric C. Tade, and current Chief Desmond Fulton. In 2023, the Denver Fire Department employed over 1,000 professional firefighters from 39 firehouses across the city for fire and rescue services. The shift rotation (being an A, B, and C crew shift) means that there are 333 firefighters on duty in Denver on any given day. The role of the Denver Fire Department goes beyond fire suppression. Additional services include fire education and safety, automobile accidents, and hazardous material operations. About 80% of the DFD's responses are medical-related emergencies. Denver firefighters are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 4.7% of Denver firefighters identified as Black/African American.

History of Fire Station Number 3

Hose Company No. 3 was first established as a volunteer company within the J.E. Bates Company, a common practice in the early days of Denver. They transitioned to a paid company within the Denver Fire Department on March 15, 1882. They took over Hook and Ladder 2's building at 2600 Curtis Street, but kept the No. 3 name. In January 1885, the company moved to its new headquarters at 2563 Lincoln Avenue (later renamed Glenarm Place).⁴³ In 1888, Hose Company 3 was reorganized as Steamer No. 3 and established at 2563 Glenarm Place, one block south of Five Points and across the street from the current station. With the advent of new equipment, the name changed to Steamer Company 3 before becoming Fire Station Number 3. The fire company began as an all-White company since Black men were banned from firefighter service at the time. While some efforts progressed to draft Black firemen for service, no changes were made, and no Black men served in the Denver fire department until 1893.

In 1885, the first recorded attempt was made to establish a Black fire company station in Denver. A roster was made with firemen, including J.W. Hodges, a Black man, identified as Captain. However, the station and crew were never established. In 1892, Black Denver taxpayers and community leaders met to discuss demands for creating a Black fire company. At the time, Black men were prohibited from working as firefighters. The only position allowed was the Chief's driver. Local Black business leaders, including B. Forsyth, Ed Allison, F.T. Bruce, S.H. Johnson, and Peter Joseph, helped efforts to change things.⁴⁴ A Rocky Mountain News article on the creation of the Black firefighting company stated:

Hose Company No. 3 was organized late last summer at the earnest request of the colored taxpayers, who held a meeting in B. Forsyth's office in the Steele Block, at which it was resolved that recognition of the race would be demanded in the Denver Fire Department. The promoters of the scheme were Forsyth, Ed Allison, F.T. Bruce, S.H. Johnson, Peter Joseph and other prominent colored taxpayers. It was not long after the meeting until the company was formed and took charge of the house at Lincoln Avenue (now Glenarm Place) and Twenty-sixth Street.⁴⁵

Populist Governor David H. Waite, who won the 1892 election with support from the African American community, backed the creation of a Black fire company in Denver's Five Points neighborhood. These changes and political support helped to change Fire Station's No. 3 from an all-White company to include Black firefighters.

On March 23, 1895, a fire broke out in the St. James Hotel at 1528 Curtis. The fire started in the baggage room, likely due to faulty wiring.⁴⁶ Around 10:30 p.m., the hotel guests and staff were thoroughly evacuated. Fire companies were called to the scene around 10:50 p.m., with Hose Company 3 being one of the first to arrive. The company consisted of Captain Harold Hartwell, the only White member of the crew, Lieutenant Fred Brawley, Richard Danridge, and Stephen Martin. A fifth crew member, William Walton, was not on duty that night. Hose Company 3 entered the building at the lobby and focused on extinguishing the flames in the basement. Unknown to the crew, the fire burned away the lobby floor's wooden support beams. Eventually, and without warning, the floor gave out, and the men fell to their deaths. All four members of Hose Company 3 died. The fire was eventually extinguished after an hour. At this time, Chief William Roberts called for a search of the men. Their bodies were found in varying conditions, showing that some died from smoke inhalation and

⁴³ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 78.

⁴⁴ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 79.

⁴⁵ "Captain Hartwell Came from a Race of Fire Fighters Who Never Shirked Duty." Rocky Mountain News. March 24, 1895.

⁴⁶ Kennedy, Anna. "St. James Hotel Fire of 1895." History Colorado. Colorado Encyclopedia.

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others were burned. The fire did not claim any other victims. Allegations that William E. Robert neglected to order an evacuation for the crew due to his racial prejudices were later unfounded when many witnesses came forward saying they heard the call.⁴⁷

A common practice at the time would have meant that the White Captain would be mourned separately and differently than the Black crew members. Many in the city and the Denver Fire Department saw Black firemen as inferior to their White counterparts. However, in the aftermath of the St. James Hotel fire, the entire crew of Hose Company 3 were mourned together as heroes. The city held a single funeral for all four men, with all four caskets exactly alike as to make them indistinguishable.

A new company was hired within two days to support the area Hose Company 3 supported. J.E. Troy, a White man, served as the Captain. The other hires were all Black, including Silas Johnson, who served as Lieutenant.⁴⁸ Johnson was the first Black officer in the Denver Fire Department and later became the first Black Captain when he was promoted in August 1897. Upon his promotion, Fire Station Number 3 became Denver's first and only all-Black fire station.

In 1920, Denver voters approved creating and using a two-platoon system for the fire department.⁴⁹ This meant that firefighters' hours were fixed to twelve-hour days instead of the twenty-four previously used. Additional firemen were needed at all stations. The crew of Station Number 3 grew to eight men in 1921. The Denver Fire Department began using motorized fire trucks in the early 20th century. Between 1909 and 1924, all fire companies in Denver were motorized. Fire Station Number 3 continued to use the horse-drawn fire wagon and was not motorized until 1921 when it received a used fire truck from Station Number 6.

A New Building for Fire Company 3

In 1931, the 2563 Glenarm Place station was decommissioned, and Fire Station Number 3 was relocated across the intersection to 2500 North Washington Street, its present location (Figure 3). The Glenarm Place location was kept under City ownership. Eventually, it was used as an American Legion Wallace Simpson Post No. 29.⁵⁰

Despite a new building, the Department continued transferring used equipment to Station Number 3. In 1934, Shelly Rhyme said, "The new firehouse at 25th and Washington St. is equipped with the oldest fire engine in the city, but the all-Negro team is a thing of pure pride in the neighborhood." The continued use of old equipment remained an issue throughout the 1930s. Department officials blamed the men instead of the equipment for problems, and the all-Black unit called on the Department to provide better equipment. The issue became more prominent in 1938 when an accident occurred at Larimer and 20th Street. Engine No. 4 broadsided Engine No. 3 en route to an emergency. Engine No. 3 was "knocked into the air and flopped over on its side, pinning the members of the crew underneath the wreckage." Engine No. 4 also hit two passenger vehicles. Two Engine No. 3 members, James Simpson and Captain G.W. Brooks, were killed (Figure 7). Three additional members of the company, Carl De Prad, James Harrison, and Sidney Frelow, were dangerously injured. A citizen in one of the passenger vehicles was also critically injured. No other injuries or fatalities occurred.⁵¹

In the aftermath, the Engine No. 3 members could not speak due to the severity of their injuries. Some accounts found that the Engine No. 4 crew left their station late. In addition, faulty equipment at Engine No. 3, including bad breaks and inferior technology, were also blamed for contributing to the accident. Engine No. 3 used a 15-year-old fire truck with only two-wheel brakes, which did not meet the standard of the time. While many, including Mayor Stapleton, declared the event an accident with no one at fault or to blame, others used stereotypes of Black men to cast doubt on Engine No. 3's credibility. Others quoted the Denver Fire Chief, Healy, as saying, "Those fellows ride down the street waving their hats at their

⁴⁷ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 80.

⁴⁸ "Fire Vacancies." The Rocky Mountain News. March 27, 1895. Page 6.

⁴⁹ "Ten Amendments to Appear on Ballot This Election." Littleton Independent. October 15, 1920. Page 1.

⁵⁰ Wray, Diane. Glenarm USO Club / Glenarm Recreation Center (Wallace Simpson American Legion Post No. 29). Site #: 5DV.5292. 1998.

⁵¹ "Two Fire Trucks Speeding, Crash on 20th and Larimer." The Denver Star. July 23, 1938. Page 1.

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friends, running wild. I don't know how they were doing the night of the crash, but I've been told it was just like they always did."⁵²

The stories of the crew members impacted by the accident tell a fuller story. Beatrice Frelow Griffin, daughter of the critically injured Sidney Frelow, said, "The men were a cornerstone to the community, and the community went into mourning." Frelow had worked at Station No. 3 for three years before the accident. Before joining the Denver Fire Department, Griffin said "he had a 7th-grade education and was working as a busboy at the Denver Athletic Club. He was asked by the fire Chief what he had planned. He had no idea, but he was given the opportunity to take the exam. He never studied so hard and succeeded." Before that, "he was not even aware that it was possible for him to be a firefighter." Ultimately, the 1938 accident and the extent of his injuries forced Sidney Frelow to retire from the fire service.⁵³

Nathan Biffle was a Lieutenant at No. 3 before being promoted to Captain. Dr. Renee Cousins King, Nathan Biffle's niece, said, "Biffle was a patient man, a good communicator. His leadership helped advert many of the tragedies that occurred before his tenure."⁵⁴ During his retirement, Captain Biffle reflected on the active years at No. 3, saying, "I looked death right in the eye, and I scared it away."⁵⁵ "Captain Biffle was on a short list for promotion and would have been Assistant Chief in the 1950s. He was promoted when the Chief was away. When the Chief returned, he was demoted back to his old post," Chief Juniel shared. "The Denver Fire Department has worked since to have Biffle recognized as an Assistant Chief as reflected in his promotion." Ed Shorty, who served as a Lieutenant before becoming Captain upon Biffle's retirement, advised about how to work without a breathing apparatus: "Run in as fast as you can and hit the fire for as long as you can. When you come out, we'll have somebody ready to do it again."⁵⁶

In 1947, James Quigg Newton beat longtime incumbent Benjamin Stapleton in the Denver mayor's race. Shortly after his inauguration, Newton announced new efforts in civil rights, including policy efforts of non-discrimination in recreational facilities, city government, and city services.⁵⁷ Fire Station No. 3 continued as the city's only all-Black company until the integration of the Denver Fire Department in 1957.

Not only did these men of this time work in Five Points, they also lived in the neighborhood. "The firemen were men of their community. The area they served is where they lived and the people they served were their neighbors, pastors, and friends," said Dr. Renee Cousins King.⁵⁸ This helped raise the importance of the fire station during the segregation period.

Bob Nickerson was the first firefighter from No. 3 to break the segregation barrier when he was assigned to work at the all-White Station No. 10. Soon after, Glen Davis was transferred to the all-White Station No. 4.⁵⁹ Carl Rose, a White firefighter, was promoted to lieutenant at Station No. 3., becoming the first non-Black member of the company in 60 years since 1897. Additional No. 3 crew members transferred to other stations in the city. Several went to Station 8 and Station 10. Most newly promoted lieutenants in the Denver Fire Department started at No. 3 before transfer to aid the integration process.⁶⁰

Throughout the 1960s, the city's aging firehouse and financial challenges made No. 3 a prime target for closure. On July 4, 1970, Station No. 3 was disbanded, and the members were transferred to other stations around Denver.⁶¹ The crew from No. 8 immediately moved in while their firehouse was being rebuilt. The Five Points neighborhood community protested when they discovered that No. 8 was not a permanent crew, No. 3 had been disbanded, and the station was slated for closure. The community protests worked, and Department Chief Wise moved to reopen No. 3. Station No. 5 was closed on June 5, 1971, and the crew was relocated to 2600 Washington Street. Station No. 3 was only closed and unstaffed for 24 hours.⁶²

⁵² "Have Our Firemen Been Stabbed In The Back By Superior Officers While Suffering From Accidental Injuries." The Denver Star. July 30, 1938.

⁵³ Frelow Griffin, Interview. 2023.

⁵⁴ Cousins King, Interview. 2023.

⁵⁵ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 84.

⁵⁶ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 84.

⁵⁷ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 60.

⁵⁸ Cousins King, Interview. 2023.

⁵⁹ Sanchez, Haley. "Black History Month features firefighters exhibit, Denver Fire Department calls for diversity." The Denver Post. February 12, 2017.

⁶⁰ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 83.

⁶¹ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 84.

⁶² Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 86.

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As the neighborhood changed and became one of the poorest in the city, No. 3 became known as “the Oasis” for its continued service and pride within Five Points. “The community has always rallied around No. 3 because it is part of the community,” said Chief Juniel. “They were the original foundation of Five Points.” The threat of closure continued. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Department assessed all city firehouses and concluded that No. 3 and No. 10 were too close. The Five Points neighborhood community protested the potential closure of No. 3. In 1993, it was announced that No. 10 would close and relocate to a new part of the city.⁶³

Denver did establish other firehouses in the Five Points neighborhood. Station No. 4 opened in 1893 at 2026 Curtis Street on the western edge near downtown. This building underwent many changes and existed as a firehouse until 1962. The station is now located at 1890 Lawrence Street in the Central Business District neighborhood.⁶⁴ Denver Fire Department No. 10 was initially located at 3301 Arapahoe Street (no longer standing) before relocating to 3210 Curtis Street in 1928 (this building is no longer Denver Fire Department property) on the neighborhood's eastern side. The #10 crew relocated in 1993 to 3200 Steele Street in the Clayton neighborhood.⁶⁵ Despite both stations' location in the Five Points neighborhood and their proximity to a diverse population, these firehouses had all-White crews. Neither are located in the neighborhood anymore after new fire stations were built in surrounding communities. Fire Station No. 3 is the only active Denver Fire Department station in the Five Points neighborhood as of 2024.

Hijinks stories among the No. 3's crew members abound, from a fake lottery ticket, a boat in the bunkroom, a chrome-plated plug wrench, shift crew time clock pranks, and moving beds onto the roof.⁶⁶ Dave Motley was the longest service crew member at No. 3, serving 25 years until being transferred in 1999.⁶⁷

Promotions were difficult to come by during this time. Since No. 3 was the only station that employed Black firemen, promotions only occurred when a No. 3 officer died or retired. All promotions were handed in-house without regard to the Department's promotion lists.⁶⁸ The granddaughter of Glen Davis, a Denver firefighter who served at No. 3 before being transferred to No. 4 as part of the Denver Fire Department's integration process,⁶⁹ said: “These were not easy jobs to get. There were limited opportunities. So even if you wanted to be a fireperson, the opportunity probably wasn't there at that time because this was it. So, they suffered in so many ways.”⁷⁰ No. 3 was a leader and a trailblazer. The men never gave up. They had no chance or opportunity for advancement. “I stand on the shoulders of a lot of the firefighters from Station 3,” said Roderick Juniel, the Denver Fire Department's first Black fire chief.⁷¹

The central location made it one of the busiest in the city.⁷² Despite its small size, the station and its crew were and are considered one of the busiest stations in the city throughout its life. City records show that the station responded to 434 alarms in 1934.⁷³ Things never slowed down for the station. Engine 3 made 2,228 runs in 1985 and 3,544 in 1995. Vern Ellis worked at Station No. 3 as an Engineer for 14 years and recalled the crew responded to all types of emergencies during his time, including a mass shooting, a 14-hour multi-alarm fire, and frantic knocks at the door in the middle of the night.⁷⁴

The motto for Fire Station No. 3 is “the pride of the points” for its important role within the community. The station continued to serve the Five Points neighborhood and the city. As the Denver Fire Department says, “Hundreds of firefighters have worked at Station 3 over 120 years. We only wish we could acknowledge them all.”⁷⁵ Below is a list of known Fire Station No. 3 crew members and known dates served, as identified through written records or photographs.

⁶³ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 87.

⁶⁴ Denver Station 4. “Station 4 – Lower Downtown.” 5280 Fire.

⁶⁵ Denver Station 10. “Station 10 – Cole.” 5280 Fire.

⁶⁶ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Pages 82-89.

⁶⁷ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 87.

⁶⁸ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 81.

⁶⁹ Sanchez, Haley. “Black History Month features firefighters exhibit, Denver Fire Department calls for diversity.” The Denver Post. February 12, 2017.

⁷⁰ “Denver's Fire Station No. 3 housed the city's first all-Black fire unit.” 9news.

⁷¹ Juniel, Interview. 2023.

⁷² Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 87.

⁷³ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 82.

⁷⁴ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 87.

⁷⁵ Southwell, Carey; and Book Committee. Page 88.

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Men known to have served as a crew member of Fire Station No. 3 prior to 1957:

Nathan Biffle (Capt.) (1943)
F.S. Brawley (1893)
G.W. Brooks (Capt.) (1934)
Richard Danridge (1893)
Carl De Prad (1934)
Sidney Frelow (1934)
Hal Hartwell (Capt.) (1893)
James Harrison (1934)
Silas Johnson (Lt.) (1895)
Steve Martin (1893)
Driver McGruder (1895)
Carl Rose (1957)
James Simpson (1934)
J.E. Troy (Capt.) (1895)
George Walden (1893)

Fire Station No. 3 crew members known to have died in service:

F.S. Brawley (1893)
G.W. Brooks (Capt.) (1934)
Richard Danridge (1893)
Hal Hartwell (Capt.) (1893)
Steve Martin (1893)
James Simpson (1934)

Additional Fire Station No. 3 crew members:

Bob Belber (1996)
Charlie Bills (Lt) (1973)
Eldon "Butch" Buller
Charlie Chase (1971, 1972)

Daniel Clay (2001)
Chad Cramner (2001)
Jim Culp (2001)
Dwayne Davis (2001)
Steve Ellis (1996)
Vern Ellis (1971, 1972, 1973)
Joseph Florez III (FF1) (2001)
Steve Garrod (Capt.)
Roy Gelbhaus (1996)
John Himmeler (2001)
Patrick Hynes (Captain) (2001)
Terry Jiner
Jimmy "King Coil" Keelan
Don Lopezi (1972)
Bob Lorimer (Lt.) (2001)
Tom Martinez (2001)
Doug Mangels
Dave McGrail (asst. Chief)
Phil Miller (Lt.) (1996)
Ron Moeder (1971, 1972)
Dave Motley (1973, 1996)
Robert E. O'Neil (2001)
Sunny Rondo
Ted "Sapo" Romero (2001)
Josh Schauer (2001)
Ed Shorty
John Starns
Mike Tealer
Robert Vlalpando (2001)
Douglas White (2001)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.14 Acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(Insert additional points as needed.)

1 39°45'12"N 104°58'40"W
Latitude Longitude

3 _____
Latitude Longitude

2 _____
Latitude Longitude

4 _____
Latitude Longitude

or

UTM References

Datum:

NAD 1927 _____ or **NAD 1983** _____

(Insert additional UTM references as needed.)

1 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Denver Fire Station No. 3 is located on the northeast corner of 25th Avenue and Washington Street. The property is on Lots 16 & 17, Block 2 in the Horner's Addition in Denver. From west to east, the property goes approximately 140 feet from Washington Street to the alleyway dividing the block. From south to north, the property goes approximately 50 feet from 25th Avenue to the northern property line.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property is based on the parcel as identified by the Denver Assessor's Office.

FIRE STATION NO. 3

Name of Property

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title DAMION PECHOTA

organization HISTORY COLORADO

date February 2, 2024

street & number 1200 BROADWAY

telephone 720-262-1042

city or town DENVER

state CO

zip code 80203

e-mail DAMION.PECHOTA@STATE.CO.US

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) or **Google Earth** map indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Denver Fire Station No. 3

City or Vicinity: Denver

County: Denver State: Colorado

Photographer: Damion Pechota, History Colorado

Date Photographed: February 22, 2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 28. Western façade along Washington Street.

2 of 28. Close-up of engine room exterior (northwest corner of building) along Washington Street.

3 of 28. Close-up of gabled section of engine room exterior. Photo looking southeast.

4 of 28. Exterior view of engine room doors (north façade along Washington Street).

5 of 28. Close-up of front entrance and office windows located on the southeast corner of the building, along 25th Avenue and Washington Street.

6 of 28. Close-up of front façade (along Washing Street) windows. Front door is visible to the right.

7 of 28. Close-up of south façade with gabled roofline on southwest corner of the building along 25th Avenue and Washington Street.

8 of 28. South façade (along 25th Avenue) from southwest. The alley is visible in the distance.

9 of 28. South façade (along 25th Avenue) from southeast. Washington Street is visible in the distance.

10 of 28. Close-up of south façade with gabled parapet on southeast corner of the building along 25th Avenue.

11 of 28. East façade of building with rear door visible. Photo is taken from the alley.

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12 of 28. The east façade (rear of building) with communication tower visible. Photo taken from southeast corner of building.

13 of 28. North façade from northeast corner of building (near alley). The base of the communication tower is in the foreground.

14 of 28. North façade of building taken from northwest corner.

15 of 28. Communication/dispatch desks in the front office. Old phone room/closet is on the left side of photo.

16 of 28. Communication/dispatch desk with front windows (along Washington Street).

17 of 28. Interior view of engine room doors. The engine's front left headlight is visible in the foreground.

18 of 28. North interior wall of engine room. Three windows are located on the left side. The third window is blocked by a new structure (storage shed).

19 of 28. Close-up of middle engine room window on north wall. New storage structure is visible.

20 of 28. Rear (east) side of engine room, with kitchen door open on the left side of photo. The bunkroom door is closed directly ahead.

21 of 28. Kitchen facing west. Door to engine room is directly behind photographer.

22 of 28. Central hallway facing east toward. The rear entry room is directly ahead. The kitchen is the first door on the left. The engine room is directly behind the photographer.

23 of 28. Bunk room facing west toward the building's front on Washington Street. The door to the engine room is closed on the right.

24 of 28. Bunk room face east toward rear of building (along alley). The bathrooms are directly ahead.

25 of 28. Interior view of rear door near alley. Photo is taken looking northeast. Stairs to the basement are visible in the bottom right.

26 of 28. Wood closets in rear entry room.

27 of 28. Utility room in basement.

28 of 28. Storage room in basement, near southeast corner of the building.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Name of Property

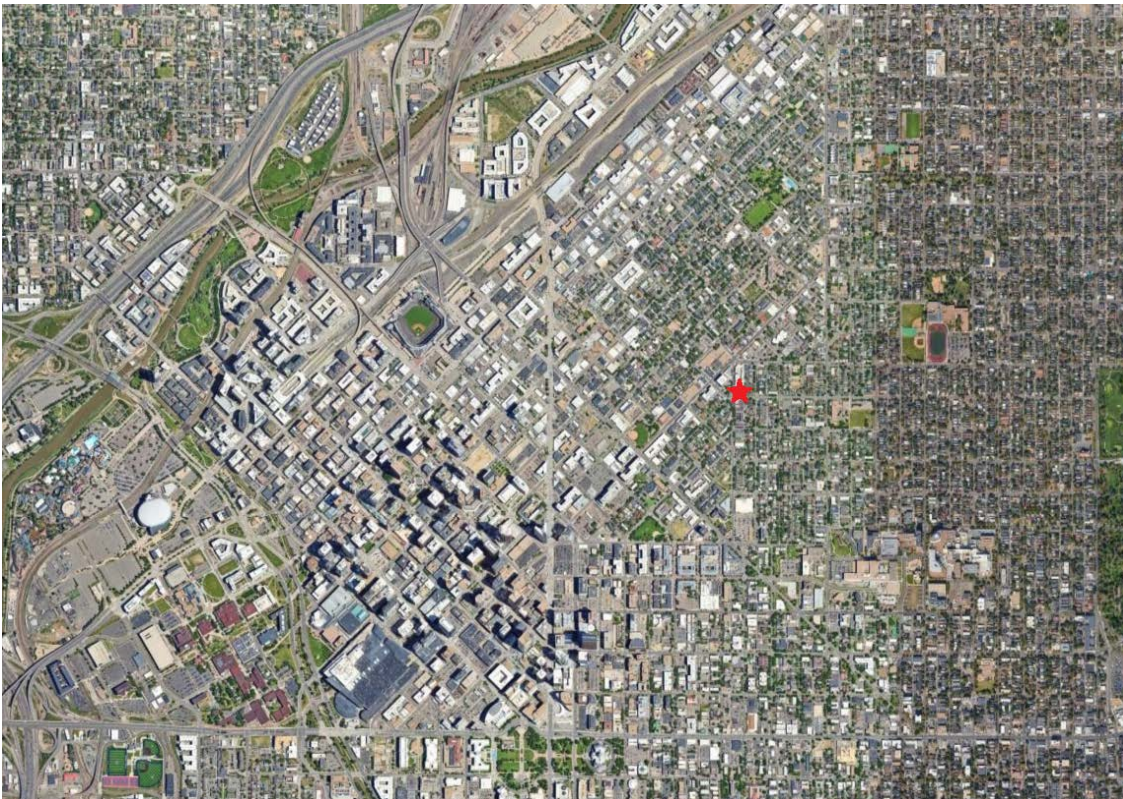
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MAPS



Map at 50 m of Fire Station No. located at 39°45'12"N 104°58'40"W



Map at 900 m of Fire Station No. located at 39°45'12"N 104°58'40"W

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HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Figure 1: Photo of Charles Francis Pillsbury. From the Rocky Mountain News on April 17, 1927.



Figure 2: Crew with engine in front of original Fire Station No. 3 on Glenarm Place, circa 1920s. From the Denver Firefighter Museum.

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Fire 3: Fire Station No. 3 in 1931 with crew. From the Denver Public Library.



Figure 4: Fire Station No. 3 circa 1930s. From the Denver Public Library.

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Figure 5: Engine in front of Fire Station No. 3 circa 1931. From the Denver Firefighter Museum.



Figure 6: Fire Department Station No. 3 crew circa 1930s-1940s. From the Denver Firefighter Museum.



Figure 7: The two firemen – Captain Brooks and J. Simpson – killed in a collision. From The Denver Star (July 23, 1938)

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Figure 8: Wagon in front of Fire Station No. 3 circa 1945. From the Denver Firefighter Museum.



Figure 9: Interior of engine room facing west (toward Washington Street) with crew. 1947. From History Colorado.



Figure 10: Wagon 3 with crew, circa 1950s. From the Denver Firefighter Museum.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: Western façade along Washington Street.

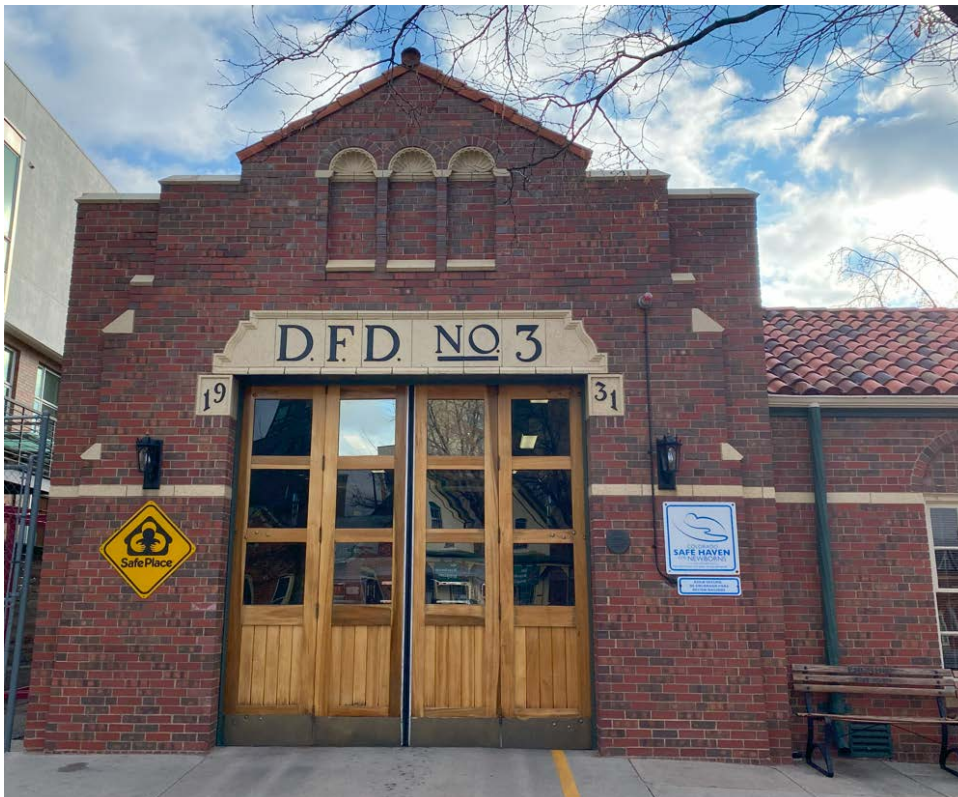


Photo 2: Close-up of engine room exterior (northwest corner of building) along Washington Street.



Photo 3: Close-up of gabled section of engine room exterior. Photo looking southeast.



Photo 4: Exterior view of engine room doors (north façade along Washington Street).



Photo 5: Close-up of front entrance and office windows located on the southeast corner of the building, along 25th Avenue and Washington Street.



Photo 6: Close-up of front façade (along Washing Street) windows. Front door is visible to the right.



Photo 7: Close-up of south façade with gabled roofline on southwest corner of the building along 25th Avenue and Washington Street.



Photo 8: South façade (along 25th Avenue) from southwest. The alley is visible in the distance.



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Photo 10: Close-up of south façade with gabled parapet on southeast corner of the building along 25th Avenue.



Photo 11: East façade of building with rear door visible. Photo is taken from the alley.



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Photo 14: North façade of building taken from northwest corner.



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