

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT  
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)**

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: **1026-1028 Belmont Avenue**  
Postal code: 19104 Councilmanic District: 3<sup>rd</sup>

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: **Fire House of Engine Company No. 16**  
Common Name: **Evangelistic Temple of I Am**

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building       Structure       Site       Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:     excellent     good     fair     poor     ruins  
Occupancy:    occupied    vacant    under construction    unknown  
Current use: Dwelling

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary.

**6. DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): 1895-1968  
Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: Built: 1895-1896  
Architect, engineer, and/or designer: John T. Windrim  
Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Henri Plasschaert, Sculptor  
Original owner: City of Philadelphia  
Other significant persons: NA

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Please attach a bibliography.

**9. NOMINATOR**

Name with Title: Andrew Cushing and Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historians/Historic Preservationists

Organization: University City Historical Society

Date: March 8, 2016

Address: PO Box 31927, Philadelphia, PA 19104

Email: Oscar.Beisert@gmail.com

Telephone: 215.387.3019

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 8 March 2016

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: 4/26/2016

Date of Notice Issuance: 4/28/2016

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Evangelistic Temple of I Am Inc.

Address: c/o Barbara Lowman

5704 Dunlap Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19131

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation:

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission:

Date of Final Action:

Designated  Rejected

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Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Designated  Rejected

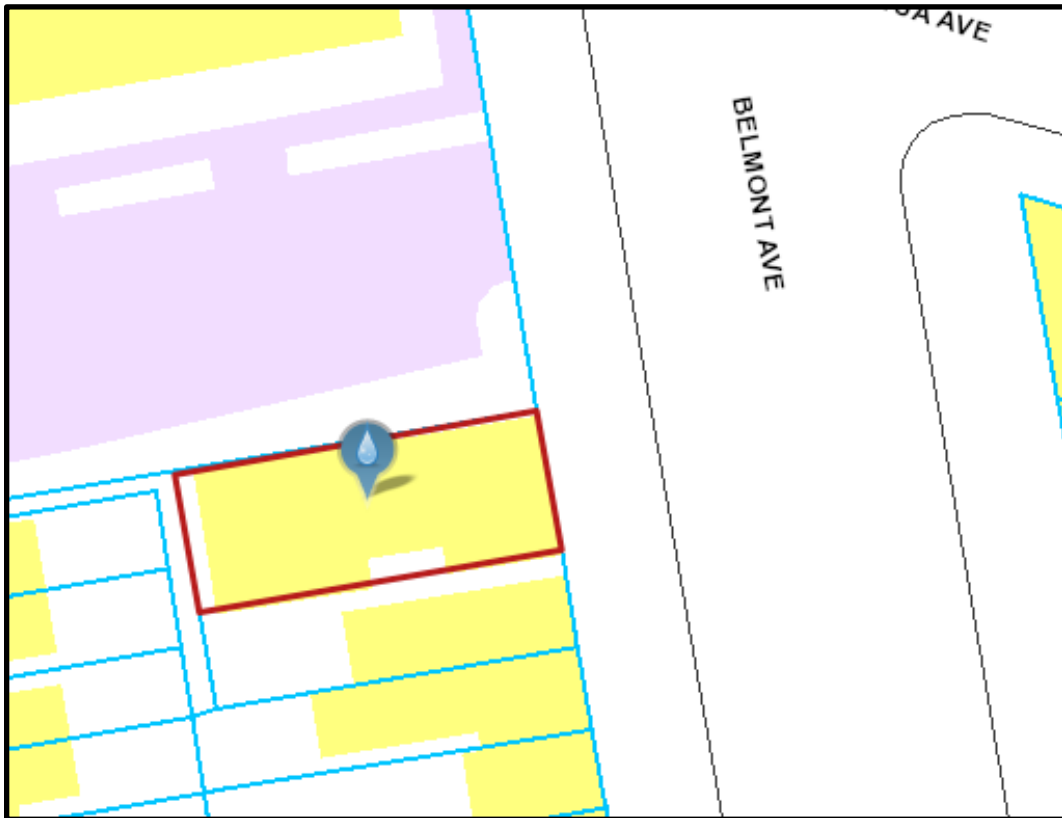
## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary description of the 1026-1028 Belmont Avenue is as follows:

Situate on the west side of Belmont Avenue, commencing at the distance of two hundred and twenty feet northward of the north side of Wyalusing Avenue. Containing in front or breath on the said Belmont Avenue thirty feet and extending of that width in length or depth westward between lines at right angles thereto on the north line thereof seventy-six feet three and one-eighth inches more or less end on the south line thereof seventy-six feet eight inches more or less to Olive Cemetery.

Parcel No. 059N13-0027

Tax Account No. BRT\_ID 062343200



The boundary for the subject property is in red. Courtesy Philadelphia Water.



Looking west. Courtesy Andrew Cushing.

## 6. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Situated at 1026-1028 Belmont Avenue, the Fire House of Engine Company No. 16 is a five bay wide, three story brick and terra cotta building that occupies a small lot on a high traffic street, connecting Lancaster Avenue with the former 1876 Centennial Exposition grounds at West Fairmount Park. The building is largely constructed of red brick with an “ornamented” primary façade of rusticated white sandstone at the first floor and buff brick at the first and upper stores with like-stone trimmings. While the building maintains a largely flat roof, a shallow side-gable roof rises above the cornice line.

The façade is divided into three distinct stories, demarcated by sandstone belt courses. The first story is clad in buff brick in running bond, arranged in horizontal and indented bands that lend the appearance of rustication. The bands break their horizontality when they approach the arched garage bay, whereupon they angle downward and form voussoirs. On the second and third stories, the brickwork is flush except for the arches above the second story windows. Here, the egg and dart molding on the extrados, the archivolt, and the imposts protrude from the otherwise co-planar surface.

Large sandstone blocks at the base provide a sense of heft and permanence, while the sandstone belt courses and cornice (the latter now covered with vinyl siding) are more delicate and ornate. Underneath the vinyl covering, a bracketed cornice with dentil molding can be seen. Sandstone also appears on the second and third story quoins, the second and third story window sills, and the surrounds of a third story opening – originally a loft door (served by a hoist) for accessing stored

equipment. A sculpted seal of the City of Pennsylvania and a garland keystone on the garage arch, both on the ground level, are made of buff-colored terra cotta.

The fenestration of the fire station is as differentiated as the brickwork. On the ground level, narrow arched windows, much like arrow slits, sandwich the sole arched garage bay. The garage bay itself has a triangular-paned window in the arch where rosettes cover the muntin meeting joints. On the second story an arcade of five windows consume the entire width of the building. Though the sashes have been removed, a sketch included in an 1896 newspaper article suggests that the sashes were eight-over-eight with lancet-like panes in the arches. Eight third-story windows also span the width of the façade, but the loft door divides the two sets of four small and rectangular openings. (Though also missing, the same newspaper drawing suggests they were potentially casement windows with square panes.)

Back on the ground level, the opening south of the garage bay (now walled off with painted brick) was once an iron-gated stable entrance for the department's horses. Topping this opening is a bas-relief terra cotta sculpture of the City of Philadelphia seal, set in a stepped, pedimental architrave. The relief is signed by artist Henri Plasschaert. Above the sculpture is the date of the building's construction – 1895 – in roman numerals. Unlike the two stories above, the ground level is not purely symmetrical but there is a balance between the garage bay and stable opening.

The north and south elevations of the fire station are largely nondescript. The south elevation shares a wall with a two story brick row house, and above that home's roofline one can see flaking stucco over common red brick. Similarly, the north elevation is windowless and its common brick is covered in flaking stucco. Both elevations expose the profile of the stepped gable where each step is capped with a slab of stone. The rear roof line's parapet is coped with Spanish tile. The north elevation's lack of an adjacent property gives clear view of the imposing chimney. The rectangular chimney shaft rises roughly twenty feet, is clad in the same buff brick as on the façade, and includes inset panels on the shaft's elevations and a decorative and capped hood.

The rear west elevation is clad in exposed common brick and extensive vegetation. Its three stories include paned sash windows with flat arches and a third story loft doorway, including an extant equipment arm and hook. The rear's most decorative elements include the brick corbels and cornice line, though these details are simple and sparse compared to the façade's ornament.

All of the original exterior brick, sandstone, and terra cotta masonry remain intact, even if under vinyl siding or other removable materials. The façade's windows, iron stable gate, garage door, and loft door have since been replaced with plywood or concrete blocking. However, the massing remains unchanged and the building is recognizable as a Renaissance Revival style Fire House.

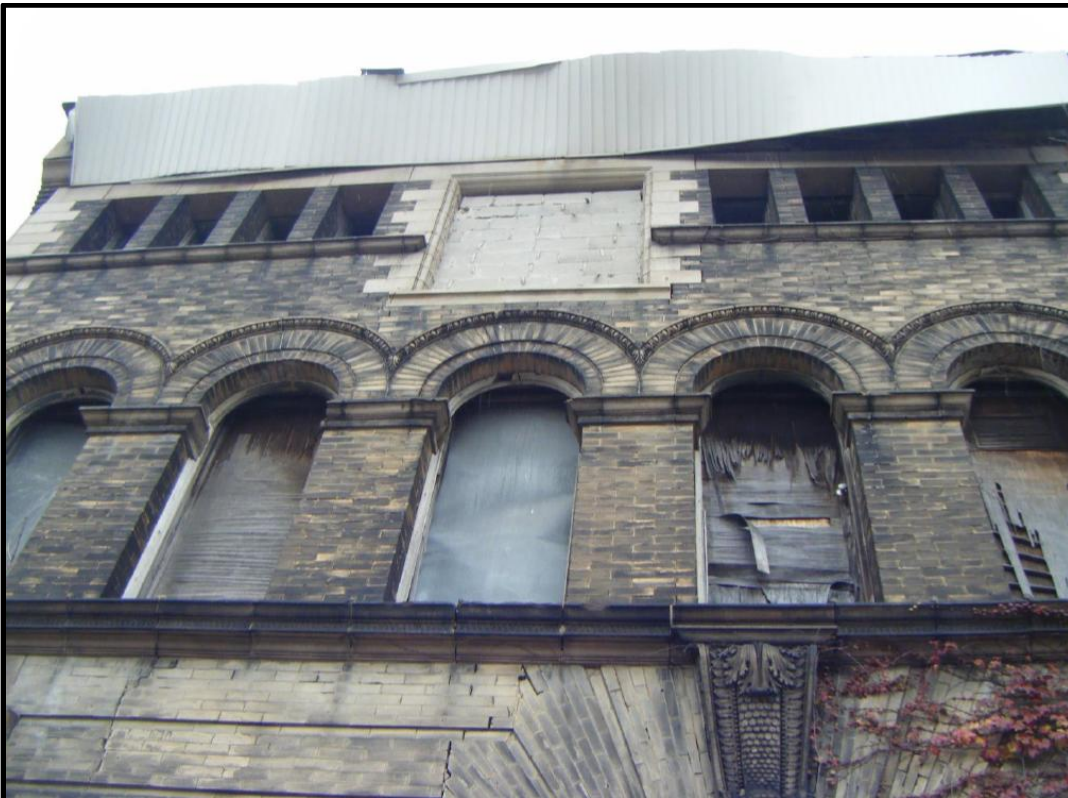


Looking west. Courtesy Andrew Cushing.





Looking west. Courtesy Andrew Cushing.



Looking west. Courtesy Andrew Cushing.



Looking west. Courtesy Andrew Cushing.



Looking west. Courtesy Bradley Maule.



Looking south. Courtesy Andrew Cushing.

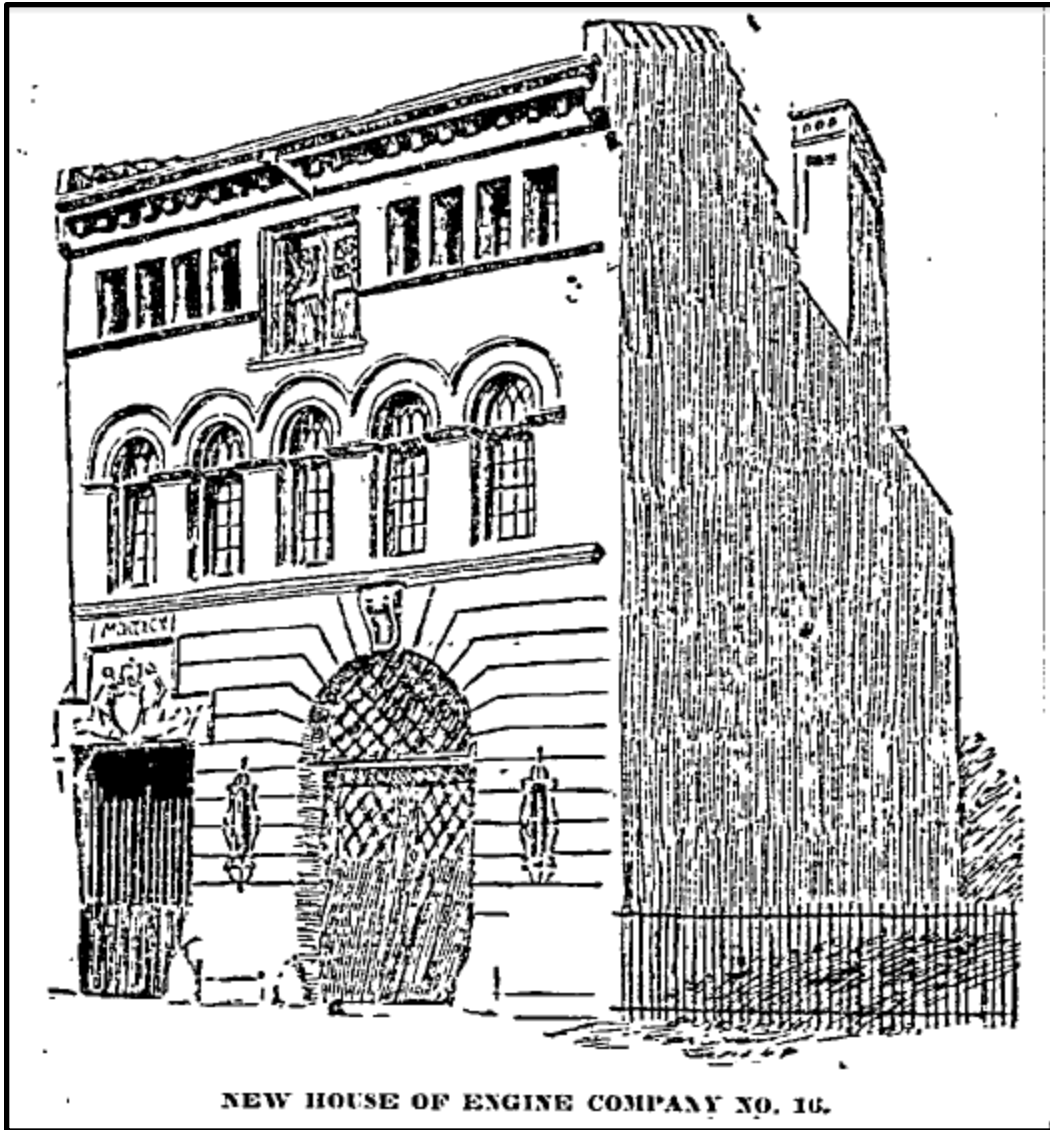


Looking south. Courtesy Andrew Cushing.

*1026-1028 Belmont Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – Fire House of Engine Company No. 16  
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, March 2015 – Page 7*



Looking east. Courtesy Andrew Cushing.



Drawing of Fire House for Engine Company No. 16. Courtesy Proquest Historical Newspapers.

## **7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The former Fire House of Engine Company No. 16 at 1026-1028 Belmont Avenue is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Located at 1026-1028 Belmont Avenue in the Belmont section of West Philadelphia, the former Fire House satisfies Criteria for Designation a, c, and d, as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code. The former Fire House:

- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; and,

*1026-1028 Belmont Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – Fire House of Engine Company No. 16  
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, March 2015 – Page 9*

- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,

### **Criteria C, D, and E**

The Italian Renaissance Revival style was popular in American Architecture from the 1880s to the 1930s. The style was occasionally called the Second Renaissance Revival style and was inspired by fourteenth and fifteenth century architecture in Florence, Italy. In the United States the first interpretation of the style was with the Palazzo variant of the Italianate style. In 1845 John Notman designed one of the first Palazzos in America with his designs for the Athenaeum in Philadelphia in 1845. As the nineteenth century progressed, the interpretations of this building form became larger in scale and more literal. In Philadelphia financial institutions were especially attracted to this rich form. The Drexel Building on S. 15<sup>th</sup> Street is the absolute deluxe example of this architectural style in the city. These institutions influenced government-sponsored public architecture, which led the style to evolve into the Renaissance Revival. Chief features included buildings with rectangular plans; symmetrical facades of cast stone or terra cotta details; rusticated ground floor and quoining at the corners, either in traditional stone or brick; a strong division of floors by elaborate string courses, which often define the sills of windows; rows of round topped windows, separated by colonettes; and a detailed cornice. Most buildings in this style have low pitched or flat roofs hidden by cornices, parapet shed roofs or balustrades. Buildings that are small in scale employ hip roofs with wide overhanging eaves employing clay tile.<sup>1</sup>

As was common in the late nineteenth century, the Fire House of Engine Company No. 16 does not conform to this specific architectural style. Constructed in 1896, the Fire House is an important example of the Italianate Palazzo form as interpreted by the early designs related to the Italianate Renaissance Revival. As was common in the Renaissance Revival, the design for the subject Fire House employs a rectangular plan; a rusticated stone base course; a rusticated ground floor; arched, curved top openings; a strong division of floor by elaborate string courses; rows of round top openings separated by colonettes; and a detailed cornice. The shed-like roof set created by Flemish-inspired parapets recalls the Mediterranean origin of the Italian Palazzo. The Fire House was design by the eminent Philadelphia architect John T. Windrim in 1895, who was an important designer of public buildings of this size and scale in neighborhoods throughout the city. Windrim was known for his use of the Renaissance and Romanesque Revival styles in his buildings, which he used interchangeably for the creation of eclectic forms. Several of his public buildings—police and fire stations alike used elements of the Italian Palazzo in the expression

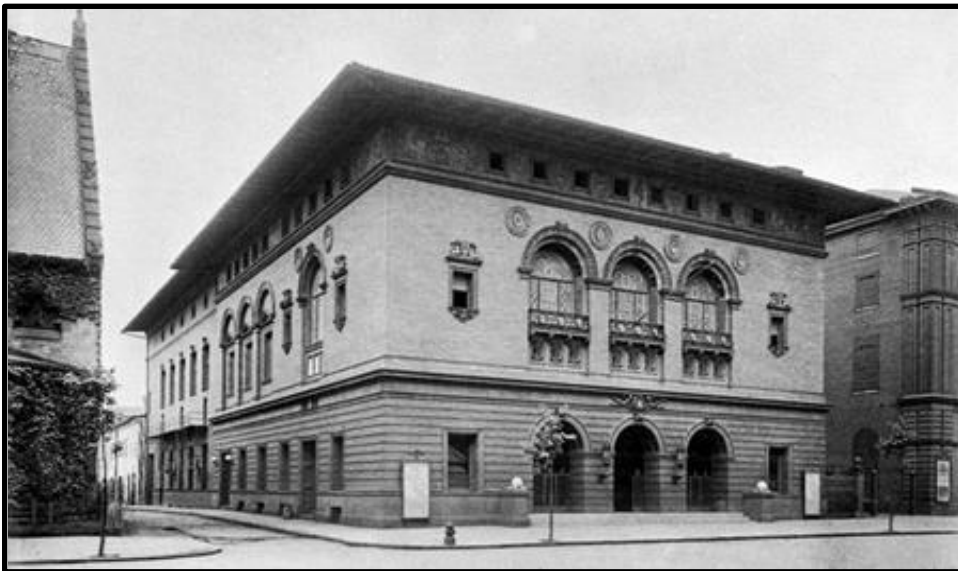
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<sup>1</sup> Robert Barlett Harmon, *The Second Renaissance Revival in American Architecture: A Brief Style Guide* (Monticello, Ill.: Vance Bibliographies, 1983), 1-12.

of the Renaissance Revival style.<sup>2</sup> The Philadelphia Art Club on South Broad Street, as well as Horticultural Hall were impressive examples of the style at the center of Philadelphia. Both were more fully articulated forms of the Italian Palazzo that have been taken down, but relate to the subject building.



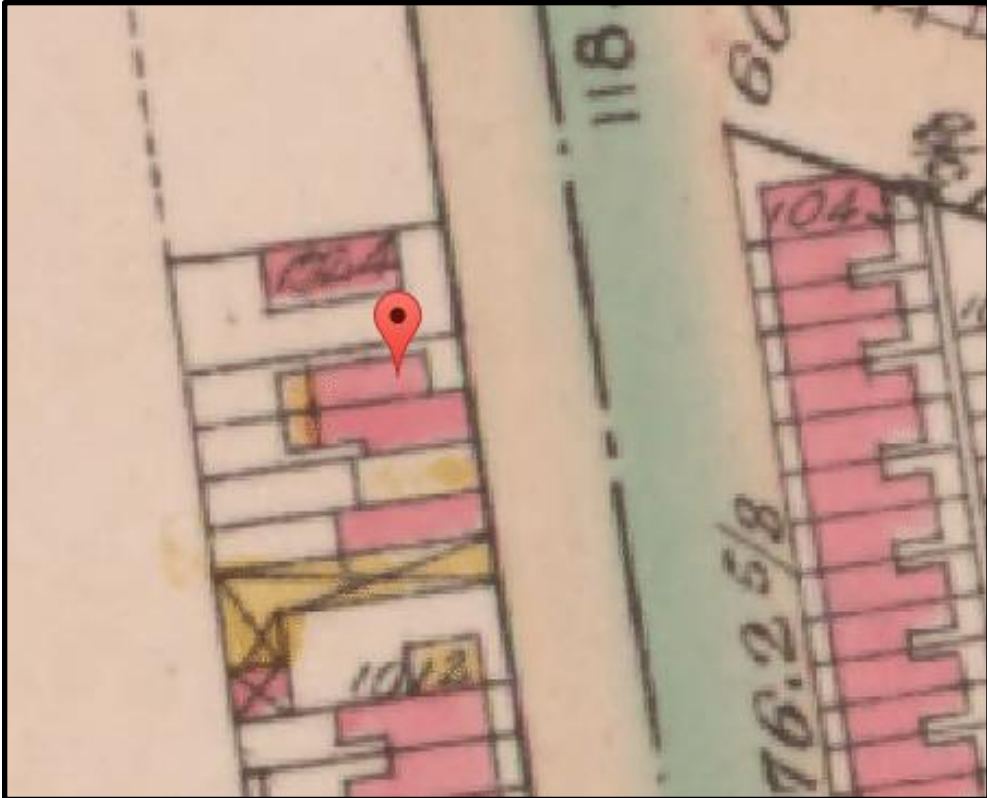
Philadelphia Art Club. Courtesy the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



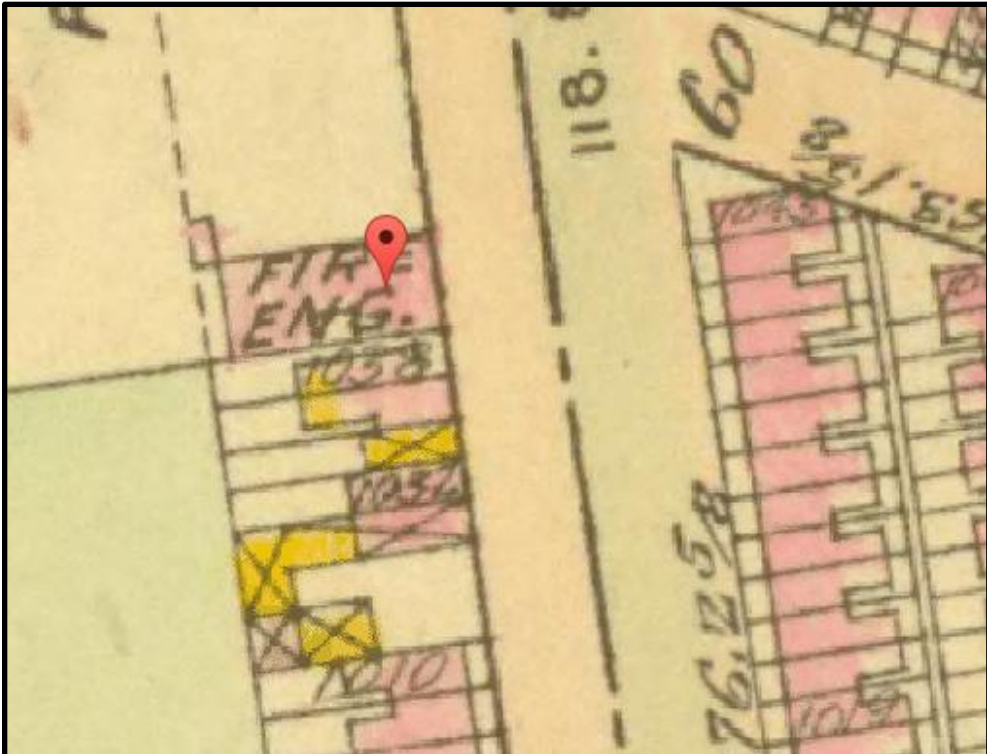
Horticultural Hall. Courtesy the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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<sup>2</sup> Sharon Reid and Emily Cooperman, "100 West Highland Avenue," Nomination for the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 27 April 2015, Philadelphia Historical Commission.



1895 Philadelphia Atlas. Courtesy the Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.



1910 Philadelphia Atlas. Courtesy Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

*1026-1028 Belmont Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – Fire House of Engine Company No. 16  
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, March 2015 – Page 12*



## John T. Windrim, Architect

Architect John Torrey Windrim designed Belmont's Renaissance Revival Fire House for Engine Company No. 16 in 1895. The building was constructed in 1896.

Recently, in the spring of 2015, Architectural Historian Emily Cooperman and Intern Sharon Reid submitted a nomination on behalf of the Chestnut Hill Historical Society for the Fire House at 100 West Highland Avenue, which was also designed in 1894 by John T. Windrim, but in the Romanesque Revival style. The discussion below was written by Cooperman and Reid and is an excellent description of Windrim's significance (the footnotes throughout were part of the aforementioned nomination):

The architect's early career was inextricably linked to that of his father, architect James H. Windrim.<sup>3</sup> While the younger Windrim attained significance in the Philadelphia architectural scene, a discussion of his work necessitates mention of his father.

In 1866, at the time the younger Windrim was born in Philadelphia, his father was a fledgling architect and Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) employee.<sup>4</sup> The following year, James left his position with the PRR and opened his own architectural firm in the city. Although at the beginning of his independent career, James instantly gained recognition by winning the 1867 Philadelphia Masonic Temple design competition.<sup>5</sup> Additional public commissions and architectural appointments quickly followed. In 1871 James was appointed the architect of the Girard Estate and in 1872 he was awarded the contract for the design of the city's Academy of Natural Sciences building. Thus, within a short time period both the Windrim family name and the Windrim architectural firm were quickly elevated in status with the city of Philadelphia.<sup>6</sup>

The architectural distinction that James cultivated in Philadelphia proved very beneficial to his son. In 1882, when many of Windrim's contemporaries began studying architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, Windrim started his architectural training in his father's

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<sup>3</sup> Sandra L. Tatman, "John T. Windrim (1866-1934): Architect," (Philadelphia: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012). Accessed on October 28, 2012. Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, [http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/21563](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/21563); "John Torrey Windrim," (Philadelphia: University Archives and Records Center 2012). Accessed on October 28, 2012. Penn Biographies, [http://www.archives.upenn.edu/people/1800s/windrim\\_john.html](http://www.archives.upenn.edu/people/1800s/windrim_john.html).

<sup>4</sup> Sandra L. Tatman, "Windrim, James Hamilton (1840-1919): Architect," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings. (The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012). Accessed on October 28, 2012, [http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/21564](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/21564).

<sup>5</sup> Sandra L. Tatman, "Windrim, James Hamilton (1840-1919): Architect," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings. (The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012). Accessed on October 28, 2012, [http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/21564](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/21564).

<sup>6</sup> Sandra L. Tatman, "Windrim, James Hamilton (1840-1919): Architect," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings. (The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012). Accessed on October 28, 2012, [http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/21564](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/21564).

office.<sup>7</sup> By the time that James was called to Washington, D.C. in 1889 to supervise the design of the U.S. Treasury building, the Windrim firm was well-recognized for revival-style designs of public, municipal, and commercial buildings. Windrim, who by 1899 was adequately trained to design the aforementioned revival styles, was also well positioned to oversee the operations of his family's firm.<sup>8</sup>

James Windrim returned to Philadelphia in 1891 and was immediately appointed the city's Director of Public Works—a position he would hold through 1895.<sup>9</sup> During James's tenure as Director, Windrim assumed official leadership of his family's firm and was awarded a number of municipal contracts for police and fire stations—presumably as a result of the influence and power that his father wielded in his new directorial position.<sup>10</sup> Among the younger Windrim's commissions during this time period were the police station at North Front and Westmoreland Streets (1892); the Engine #29 Fire station on the 1200 block of North 4th Street (1895); Southwark's Engine #3 firehouse on the 100 block of Queen Street (1893); the Central Fire Station on the 2100 block of Market Street (1894-5); Fire stations at 6th and Sansom Streets and the 1000 block of Belmont Avenue in West Philadelphia (1895); the 26th District police station on the 2100 block of East Dauphin Street (1895-1896); the firehouse at 26th and York Streets (1894); the Quarry Street firehouse (1899); and Chestnut Hill's police station and fire house (1894).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Architectural courses were offered at the University of Pennsylvania starting in 1868. The program was still nascent in 1882, when John T. Windrim began his training in his father's architectural office. It is therefore not surprising that John followed what was at the time the traditional path of architectural training through apprenticeship. For information on the founding of the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture, see Penn Design, "History of the School," (University of Pennsylvania School of Design, 2012), Accessed on October 28, 2012, <http://www.design.upenn.edu/about/history-school>; Tatman, "Windrim, John Torrey."

<sup>8</sup> Tatman, "Windrim, John Torrey."

<sup>9</sup> Tatman, "Windrim, James Hamilton."

<sup>10</sup> "Recent Brick and Terra-Cotta Work in American Cities," *The Brickbuilder*, 134.

<sup>11</sup> *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, v. 7, n. 40, p. 1495, 10/5/1892; Zenovia Campbell, "Historic firehouse provide a glimpse of the past," 24 May 2012, Zenovia Campbell. Accessed on October 29, 2012, <http://zencampbell.com/historic-firehouse-provides-a-glimpse-of-the-past/>; "Central Fire Station. New Station About to be Erected at Twenty-First and Market Streets," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 November 1894. Accessed on November 2, 2012 at <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/113FC101D8290348/0EC297002C4725AF>; "New Fire Station. It Will be Opened for Use in a Few Days," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 7 March 1895. Accessed on November 2, 2012, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/11466260F3DD2D08/0EC297002C4725AF>; "The Latest News in Real Estate. Business among the Operative Builders Keeps at a Rushing Pace," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 November 1895. Accessed on November 2, 2012, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/113B27FE45DA2758/0EC297002C4725AF>

James returned to work for his ever-growing firm in 1895, when his appointment with the city expired. The Windrim firm was continually awarded contracts for public buildings throughout subsequent decades. After James's departure from City Hall, however, it appears that the firm's design of fire and police stations quickly came to a halt.<sup>12</sup> John Windrim continued to design many of the public buildings erected from the mid-1890s until the time of his death in 1934, and many of his projects were collaborations with either his father or other architects that the firm employed.<sup>13</sup> John's designs were highly influential and he was well respected in the City of Philadelphia, the region, and even beyond.<sup>14</sup>

As the Windrim firm's portfolio reveals, John Windrim was associated with the design of numerous office buildings and banks in addition to a smattering of theaters, public libraries, factories, stores, and residences. He is perhaps best known for the numerous offices and exchanges that he designed for the Bell Telephone Company, and for the Philadelphia Electric Company offices, stations, and substations. In downtown Philadelphia, John Windrim is most noted for his involvement in such prominent landmark designs as the John Wanamaker Department Store, the Municipal Courthouse (also known as the Family Court Building), and along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, both the Franklin Institute and the Bell Telephone Company's Central Office building.<sup>15</sup>

Windrim designed fire houses and police stations in the both the Richardsonian Romanesque and Renaissance Revival styles. These building in particular were particularly rich in architectural detail. At the time of these designs in the 1890s was a shift in architectural taste brought on by the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and while Windrim would go on to become one of Philadelphia's leading designers in the Classical Revival style, his fire house and police station designs represent his mastery as an architect. His designs for the Chestnut Hill Police Station and Fire House, as well as the York Street Fire House exhibit his understanding and aptitude at executing the Romanesque Revival style. His versatility and mastery is

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<sup>12</sup> It is possible that the Windrim firm was responsible for the design of firehouses and police stations following the elder Windrim's departure from the City's Department of Public Works. I [Cooperman and Reid] did not, however, uncover any information relating to a Windrim-designed firehouse or police station following the completion of the 26th District police station in 1896.

<sup>13</sup> One of the Windrim firm's most noted architects was W.R. Morton Keast, a designer who took over the firm after John's death. Keast, for example, is said to have technically been responsible for the design of the Franklin Institute. See Sandra L. Tatman, "Keast, William Richard Morton (1888-1973), Architect: Biography," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings. The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2012. Accessed on October 28, 2012, [http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/25018](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/25018).

<sup>14</sup> Many of the Bell Telephone Company's offices and exchanges were located in other parts of Pennsylvania, such as Wilkes-Barre, Easton, and Northumberland County.

<sup>15</sup> Tatman, "Windrim, John Torrey (1866-1934), Architect: Projects," 1-10.

further found in his designs for the subject building, as well as his 4<sup>th</sup> Street Fire House, which were designed in the Renaissance Revival style.

Windrim's designs for his firehouses respond to three different important factors. First, while firehouses were called on to present an image of solidity and authority, at the end of the nineteenth century, there was no set firehouse configuration. In fact, in an effort to set firehouses apart from other municipal buildings, architects of the era were encouraged to be creative in these designs.<sup>16</sup> Second, given that Windrim was still an early point in his professional career when he was designing the firehouses, he may have embraced the opportunity to experiment with a popular mode: a mode that adapted itself to a wide variety of building types. Finally, during this era it was commonplace for the suburban sections of the city to have large freestanding firehouses that stood as architectural complements to the surrounding residences.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the location of each of Windrim's firehouse commissions—be it in a densely built area of the city or in a "streetcar suburb"—was reflected his design choice. Windrim is credited with the design of at least twelve Philadelphia police and fire station, including the Chestnut Hill Firehouse. Unfortunately, however, most of these structures have been razed.<sup>18</sup>

Of his few surviving fire houses and police stations, the Fire House for Engine No. 16 stands as an important example of his early works in the Renaissance Revival style.

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<sup>16</sup> Zurier, *The American Firehouse*, 135.

<sup>17</sup> Zurier, *The American Firehouse*, 117, 132, 138.

<sup>18</sup> Reid, Sharon and Emily Cooperman. "100 West Highland Avenue." Nomination for the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 27 April 2015, Philadelphia Historical Commission. The analysis included by Cooperman and Reid was included with the permission of Emily Cooperman.

## **HISTORIC CONTEXT: Fire House of Engine Company No. 16**

After the Philadelphia County and City consolidation of 1854, many government departments were reorganized to reflect the efficiency and capabilities of a modern city. Whereas prior to 1870 Philadelphia's firefighting forces existed as a series of private companies and volunteer units (or more accurately, gangs), after 1870 all fire companies merged under the auspices of Philadelphia city government. Further reorganization occurred in 1887 when the Bureau of Fire was created under the Department of Public Safety.<sup>19</sup> These organizational shifts helped standardize firemen's responsibilities and improve response time to fires throughout all city neighborhoods. In the West Philadelphia neighborhood of Belmont (also known as Mill Creek), the Monroe Fire Company existed near the intersection of Lancaster Avenue and 51st Street in Hestonville as early as 1823 and would persist through 1895 (this company was also Engine Company No. 16).<sup>20</sup>

By last years of the nineteenth century, the Philadelphia Bureau of Fire had grown in size and importance. In 1895 alone, roughly twelve stations citywide had been constructed or renovated. The "old Monroe house" was "poorly adapted for the purpose, and the owners [had] endeavored to compel the City to pay them increased rent."<sup>21</sup> After vacating the Hestonville building, Engine Company No. 16 was stationed with Truck Company F. However, there was a need for service of the Twenty-fourth and Thirty-fourth wards, which led to the construction of a new building at 1026-1028 Belmont Avenue.

Early in 1895, the Bureau of City Property of the City of Philadelphia approved the purchase of a lot at 1026-1028 Belmont Avenue. By June \$25,000 for the construction of the building was also procured.<sup>22</sup> An ordinance was passed by the Common Council of the City of Philadelphia on July 3, 1895.<sup>23</sup> The City of Philadelphia purchased the subject lot of ground from James C. and Margaret Ryan on July 15, 1895.<sup>24</sup> On October 11, 1895 the following was announced in the "Latest News in Real Estate" in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*:

Architect John T. Windrim is preparing plans for a new fire station at the southwest corner of Sixth and Sansom streets, on the site of the

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<sup>19</sup> Russell Weigly et. al. *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History* (New York: Norton, 1982), 438.

<sup>20</sup> *Bureau of Fire Annual Report*, 1896. City of Philadelphia, 22.

<sup>21</sup> *Bureau of Fire Annual Report*, 1896. City of Philadelphia, 22.

<sup>22</sup> "The Loan Apportioned a Half Million is Set Apart for Improved Pavements," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 7 June 1895.

<sup>23</sup> *Journal of the Common Council of the City of Philadelphia*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia, 1895).

<sup>24</sup> Deed: James J. Ryan and Margaret S., his wife, to the City of Philadelphia, 25 July 1895, Philadelphia Deed Book J.J.C., No. 105, p. 324, City Archives of Philadelphia.

old Board of Health office; also for a fire station on Belmont avenue below Girard avenue; also for a new police station to be built on the site of the station now on Trenton avenue below Dauphin street.<sup>25</sup>

According to the Journal of the Common Council of the City of Philadelphia, a bill was read in 1895 entitled, "An Ordinance to approve the contact and surety of William R. Dougherty for the erection of a fire house on Belmont avenue north of Wyalusing ave."<sup>26</sup> After being referred to the Committee on Finance, the Bureau of City Property assured that the Equitable Trust Company was surety for William R. Dougherty.<sup>27</sup>

Constructed was completed by June 1896.

The house is in every detail one of the best appointed of the department. The structure itself is three stories high with frontage of 31 feet and a depth of some 70 feet.

The first floor will be devoted to the use of apparatus and stables for the horses, with all the latest automatic improvements for feeding, releasing and harnessing the horses. On the second floor are the sleeping apartments, the sitting room, and other conveniences.

The interior of the building is finished in polished hard wood and the sitting room neatly carpeted. There are two brass sliding poles on this floor beside the stairway. The third floor is entirely devoted to storage purposes and a workshop. In the centre an air shaft is provided that extends fifteen feet beyond the roof the building.<sup>28</sup>

Engine Company No. 16's new station was beautiful, but most importantly, it was modern and efficient. Its design and layout enabled an increasingly professionalized staff to man it. Though there were sleeping quarters on the second floor, most likely the crew did not occupy them full time. Census records between 1900 and 1940 never list occupants of 1026 or 1028 Belmont Avenue. Evidence from earlier city annual reports suggests that most men employed by the fire department lived within walking distance of their station. An 1877 employee list at the Monroe station (which Belmont replaced) reveals that the twelve men all lived within a few blocks of Engine Company No. 16's headquarters and that they were a young crew, with the average age being just twenty-nine years.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "The Latest News in Real Estate," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 October 1895.

<sup>26</sup> *Journal of the Common Council of the City of Philadelphia*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia, 1895), 167.

<sup>27</sup> *Journal of the Common Council of the City of Philadelphia*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia, 1895), 197.

<sup>28</sup> "Fire House. West Philadelphia Boys Will Occupy It To-Morrow," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 June 1896.

<sup>29</sup> *Bureau of Fire Annual Report* (City of Philadelphia, 1877), 185-187. Engineers and foremen seemed to keep their positions for long periods of time. George Evans, the foreman of No. 16 in 1871, was listed as the foreman in 1886.

The building was first occupied on June 22, 1896.<sup>30</sup> Engine Company No. 16 used this building for much of the twentieth century as a fire house. Professionalization of firefighting also introduced specialization of firefighting positions. Each engine house had the following positions: foremen were in charge of the station, took attendance, and managed operations; enginemen cleaned and repaired the engines; drivers took care of horses; firemen drove the engine carts and attended the fires; hosemen maintained the hoses.<sup>31</sup> Some employees (hosemen were apparently only part-time) had other positions in Philadelphia's industrial economy, and these included carders, brick makers, cooper, and painters.<sup>32</sup> Hosemen Henry Houldsworth (age 24, carder) and John Wilkinson (age 33, painter) represented their six part-time peers at Engine Company No. 16. Both men were born in England and Ireland, respectively, and likely worked for the fire department for extra money and experience in a growing profession.<sup>33</sup>

Accidents, injuries, and even fatalities in the fire department were rare, but not unheard of. At Engine Company No. 16, John Spence, brother of veteran hoseman William Spence, cut his eye and fell from a sliding pole in two separate incidents in 1900.<sup>34</sup> In 1906 driver John Dougherty sustained injuries after he was thrown from a horse. Forty-three-year-old John Zebley struck his leg with an axe in 1910.<sup>35</sup> Zebley's unfortunate accident allows us to delve a little deeper into the type of people employed at Belmont's fire station. Zebley lived at 807 45th Street (one block away) with his wife, father and mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and five nieces and nephews. Though he was born in Pennsylvania, everyone else in the household was German-born (though everyone spoke English). The census lists him as a firefighter in both 1910 and 1920.<sup>36</sup> An accident such as Zebley's illustrated an important progressive reform that changed the lives of city employees, especially those in the public safety division: pension funds.

By 1952, a survey recommended the abandonment of Belmont Avenue's engine company and urged for the construction of a new station.<sup>37</sup> Trucks and newer apparatus could no longer fit in the station's one bay garage. By the 1950s and 1960s these technological and behavioral changes in firefighting made the Belmont Avenue station impractical for properly serving Philadelphia. Firefighting itself had transformed from being solely reactive to incorporating more preventative measures. Firefighters and Sparky the Dalmatian teamed up with school children, boy scouts, girl scouts, and other youth groups to spread the word about fire

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<sup>30</sup> "Fire House. West Philadelphia Boys Will Occupy It To-Morrow," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 June 1896.

<sup>31</sup> *Catalogue of the University of Pennsylvania, 1892-1896* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania).

<sup>32</sup> *Bureau of Fire Annual Report* (City of Philadelphia, 1877), 129.

<sup>33</sup> US Census, 1880.

<sup>34</sup> *Bureau of Fire Annual Report* (City of Philadelphia, 1900), 54.

<sup>35</sup> *Bureau of Fire Annual Report* (City of Philadelphia, 1910), 63.

<sup>36</sup> US Census, 1910 and 1920.

<sup>37</sup> *Fire Dept. Official Survey, 1952*, Philadelphia City Archives, box A3628, folder 74.3.

prevention and safety. In 1968 (the year Belmont's station closed and Engine Company No. 16 moved to a new site at Viola Street further north) the Philadelphia Fire Department demonstrated to 400,000 school children and printed four million leaflets about safety.<sup>19</sup> Another reorganization of the city's fire departments in the 1950s restructured the Bureau and many stations were subsequently consolidated, moving the station to 1517–19 Belmont Avenue in 1969.<sup>38</sup>

The City of Philadelphia sold the building in 1979 to the Rev. Earnest Hopkins.<sup>39</sup> The former station became a place of worship for a small and somewhat informal congregation. The Evangelistic Temple of I Am continued to meet in the former station in the following decades, though services became infrequent, especially in the colder months.

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<sup>38</sup> Appendix, *Hike Out* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Fire Department Historical Society, 1999, revised 2012).

<sup>39</sup> Deed: City of Philadelphia to Rev. Earnest Hopkins, 1979 (date blank in deed; acknowledged on 17 September 1979), Philadelphia Deed Book D.C.C., No. 2107, p. 425, City Archives of Philadelphia.

*1026-1028 Belmont Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – Fire House of Engine Company No. 16  
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, March 2015 – Page 20*



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