



106GROUP

THE SAINT PAUL FIRE DEPARTMENT ENGINE HOUSES – 1869 TO 1930 HISTORIC CONTEXT

Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota

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106 Group Project No. 2203

SUBMITTED TO:

City of Saint Paul
Planning and Economic Development
1400 City Hall Annex
25 West Fourth Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102

SUBMITTED BY:

106 Group
1295 Bandana Blvd #335
Saint Paul, MN 55108

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kelli

Andre Kellerhals, M.S.

REPORT AUTHOR:

Erin Que, M.A.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the 2010 *City of Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan*, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) identified the need for additional historic contexts and themes to be developed and explored to “contribute to a more complete understanding of Saint Paul’s historic resources and to guide the preservation planning process.”¹ One of the historic contexts recommended by the HPC was a context study of engine houses in Saint Paul.² The Comprehensive Plan states “this civic property type would benefit from a comparative analysis of the styles and trends of currently used or rehabilitated historical fire houses and fire engine stations to evaluate and prioritize preservation needs.”² In 2016, one of Saint Paul’s oldest extant engine houses was threatened with demolition due to a proposed hotel development. In response to this threat, the HPC prioritized development of a context of fire engine houses in Saint Paul and requested that the 106 Group prepare a historic context for the Saint Paul Fire Department (SPFD) engine houses, from 1869 to 1930, to assist with future survey and evaluation of engine houses in Saint Paul. Several engine houses from the nineteenth century are extant and most likely to be threatened by potential redevelopment. **This context begins in 1869, marking the passage of a City Charter amendment to the Minnesota State Legislature to build new engine houses and acquire equipment. This context ends in 1930, when the SPFD moved its department headquarters downtown to the new Public Safety Building due to improvements to the SPFD and expansion of its duties.** This context addresses SPFD history between the years above; identifies building typologies and features using field examples of engine houses in Saint Paul; highlights key architects and builders involved with the design and construction of engine houses in Saint Paul; provides guidelines for evaluating SPFD properties of the context era; and makes recommendations for additional research. Appendix A contains a glossary of terms related to engine house construction and SPFD history. Appendix B is a map of known engine houses in Saint Paul constructed between 1869 and 1930. Appendix C provides a chronological list of these engine houses. Appendix D contains representative three-dimensional models and historical and current photographs of all known engine houses in Saint Paul, if available. Finally, Appendix E identifies the project personnel.

PURPOSE OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS

A historic context provides the framework for evaluating resources for potential National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility. A context is a document “created for planning purposes that groups information about historic properties based on a shared theme, specific time and geographical area.”³ This context describes engine house architecture in Saint Paul and the SPFD’s development over time, to enable evaluation of the City’s extant engine houses, assess their significance, and inform preservation priorities.

Historic contexts are an integral component of the preservation planning process. Contexts serve preservation planning by assuring that the full range of historic properties are identified and subsequently evaluated, registered, and protected. Contexts help to prioritize preservation decision making by comparing similar historic resources, describing their prevalence, and ascertaining their relative significance. Historic contexts help to guide future survey and designation efforts by proactively and objectively identifying geographical areas, resource types, or themes that are likely to be associated with valued historic resources. In local preservation planning, they allow an

¹ City of Saint Paul, *City of Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan* (Saint Paul: City of Saint Paul, 2010), 67. ² Ibid., 15, 67.

² Ibid., 67.

³ National Park Service, *How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form*. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2014).

HPC to pursue designation in a thoughtful, deliberate, and coordinated manner, rather than solely responding to community or development pressures. For an HPC, historic contexts are particularly critical in justifying the identification and designation of historic resources in a regulatory process. Without a historic context to demonstrate the relative significance of a resource, HPC decisions are less able to withstand public scrutiny and legal challenges.⁴

2.0 THE SAINT PAUL FIRE DEPARTMENT ENGINE HOUSES – 1869 TO 1930

HISTORIC CONTEXT

This historic context, *The Saint Paul Fire Department Engine Houses – 1869 to 1930*, begins with the passage of the Saint Paul City Charter amendment by the Minnesota State Legislature approving the sale of bonds to construct SPFD engine houses. The context ends in 1930 when the headquarters of the SPFD, along with the Saint Paul Police Department and the Saint Paul Health Department, moved downtown to the newly constructed Public Safety Building, signaling the centralization of municipal services as part of a major investment in public improvement and civic infrastructure. Historical information pertaining to engine houses in the United States and in Minneapolis is also included to place developments in Saint Paul within a regional and national context. Additionally, this context includes information about the establishment of volunteer fire companies in Saint Paul and the creation of the SPFD, prior to the 1869 amendment, to provide a framework for understanding the early history of the SPFD.

HISTORY OF ENGINE HOUSE DESIGN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF FIRE DEPARTMENTS

ENGINE HOUSES IN THE UNITED STATES

At the end of the eighteenth century, volunteer companies composed of private citizens took over the responsibility for fire protection in American cities to improve fire protection. This service had previously been the obligation of the entire community, like other civic duties such as night watch, militia duty, or road maintenance. Each citizen was legally obligated to commit a certain amount of time to each of these tasks or pay for a proxy. Initially, firefighting equipment such as hooks and ladders, was housed in wooden sheds, and fire companies held their meetings in taverns, rented halls, or private homes.⁵ More substantial engine houses began to be constructed in cities in the Eastern United States in the 1820s and 1830s, typically designed in the prevailing Greek Revival architectural style and constructed from granite, brick, or other masonry (Figure 1).⁶

⁴ William Stark, “Appendix: Historic Preservation, Historic Contexts,” in *Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan*, prepared by Stark Preservation Planning, LLC and the 106 Group, Ltd. for the City of Saint Paul, 2008.

⁵ Rebecca Zurier, *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982), 17-18, 32.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-33.



Figure 1. Spring Street Elementary School and Fire Station, Portland, Maine, built 1837⁷

Engine houses had few programmatic requirements aside from the accommodation of firefighting equipment and personnel, and direct access to the street. These requirements typically resulted in buildings with rectangular forms of two to three stories in height, an open space for the fire engine on the ground floor, and meeting rooms in the rear of the engine house or on the second floor. With few requirements, engine houses exhibited great freedom in their design, and these characteristics hold true today.⁸ Engine houses generally followed existing architectural styles, which were adapted to the programmatic needs of a fire company, rather than engine houses pioneering new design methods.⁹ The location of engine houses within a city was also not prescribed, as long as it was conveniently located to provide efficient service.¹⁰ City governments often provided equipment to the volunteer companies, although volunteers would spend their own money to decorate the engines and engine houses with emblems and murals to convey company pride.¹¹

Engine houses in Eastern cities shifted towards employing the Italianate style in the 1840s, following the rise of the style's popularity (Figure 2). Engine houses continued to be constructed from brick or stone, although warmer tones became favored. Additionally, the Italianate style incorporated more ornate decoration than the Greek Revival style, including carvings, moldings, and cast iron.¹² For example, the tower, which is an element of the Italianate style, emerged in engine house design in the 1850s and conveniently also served a practical function by providing a place to hang up the hose to dry. As towers became more commonly constructed on engine houses, they also served as aesthetic indicators of the building's function.¹³¹⁴

⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁸ Halsey Wainwright Parker, "Fire Department Buildings," *The Brickbuilder* 19 (May 1910):117.

⁹ Zurier, *The American Firehouse*, 13.

¹⁰ Parker, "Fire Department Buildings," 117.

¹¹ Zurier, *The American Firehouse*, 43.

¹² Ibid., 57.

¹³ Ibid., 65.

¹⁴ Ibid., 53.



Figure 2. Steamer 5, Richmond, Virginia, built 1849¹⁵

In the 1850s, cities continued to struggle with inadequate fire protection, despite the formation of volunteer companies, and insurance premiums continued to rise for building owners. Additionally, volunteer companies demanded and received more pay for their services, through solicited “donations” from insurance companies and the public, and appropriations from municipal treasuries.¹⁵ At the same time, volunteer fire companies had become more like fraternities, with their engine houses serving as clubhouses. Firefighting also became regarded as a spectator sport where firefighters could display their strength and daring, and competing volunteer fire companies used names and uniforms to assert their identities. Firefighters participated in parades to demonstrate company pride, which caused some rivalries among the various companies.¹⁶ Rowdy behavior and altercations between volunteer companies became common as the focus shifted to socializing more than serving the community.¹⁷ As the decade went on, the public began to lose trust in the volunteer companies because of their poor manners and inability to keep up with the public need for fire protection.¹⁸ However, city leaders were hesitant to curtail the firemen's behavior, since the independently-managed fire companies could influence citywide elections by swinging votes against sitting city officials.¹⁹ By the late 1850s, cities had begun to replace volunteer companies with part-time, all-paid fire departments. This transition occurred in Saint Louis and Chicago in 1857, in Baltimore in 1858, and in Buffalo in 1859.²⁰ The establishment of paid fire departments brought about increased professionalization through a new hierarchical organization of positions within the department, including captains, lieutenants, and sergeants. New York City established the first fulltime paid fire department in 1865, which influenced other fire departments in large cities across the country to follow suit.²¹

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 40-43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

The formal organization of fire departments under municipal management changed engine house construction. New engine houses in the 1860s and 1870s exhibited less ornamentation than their Greek Revival and Italianate style predecessors, following more austere forms and exhibiting greater unity of design in each city (Figure 3). Volunteer companies had previously hired their own architects and used the design of their engine house to set themselves apart from their competitors. However, with municipal governments now in charge of all the companies, engine houses became more likely to look alike.^{22,23}



Figure 3. Fire Company 12, Cincinnati, Ohio, built 1876²⁴

Engine house construction was also impacted by new organizational practices and equipment. As urban populations grew in the second half of the nineteenth century, new engine houses were built at a rapid rate, wherever space was available, due to the urgent need for fire protection in these crowded downtown areas.²⁴ In some cases, an engine house would be used by several fire companies or by a fire company and the department headquarters, necessitating larger accommodations.²⁶ Consolidation of companies into one engine house meant that all necessary companies, such as a ladder company, a hose company, and an engine company, could answer an alarm together instead of separately, resulting in a faster response time.²⁵ Additionally, manufactured red brick became the material of choice for engine houses, as it was less expensive than stone but not considered an inferior material according to late nineteenth century preferences.²⁶ Engine house design was also changed by the advent of the horse-drawn steam engine, in the late 1850s and early 1860s, which replaced the hand-drawn steam engine. Firemen were initially reluctant to share the engine house space with horses and wary of labor-saving measures. However, they gradually conceded and accepted this new type of equipment, and engine houses began to be expanded to accommodate horses in the 1870s and 1880s.²⁷ For example, in the circa 1890 Fire Department and

²² *Ibid.*, 81.

²³ *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 89. ²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 78, 98.

Town Hall in Wyoming, Ohio, among numerous other examples, the horse stalls were located on the first floor in the rear of the engine house with the hay loft located above on the second floor (Figure 4).²⁸

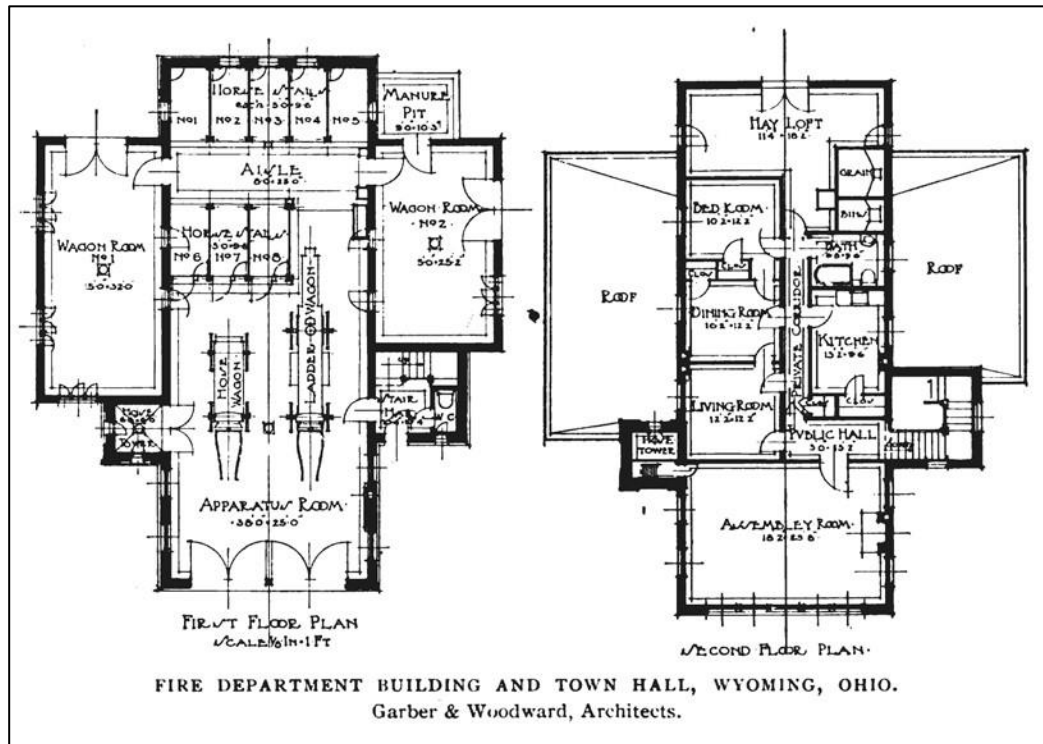


Figure 4. Plan of Engine House in Wyoming, Ohio, c. 1890²⁹

An alternate style for engine houses, particularly in urban areas, was the “storefront style,” which emerged in 1832 and prevailed into the twentieth century. “Storefront style” engine houses were typically narrow and two or three stories tall, to fit between other buildings on the same block (Figure 5). A personnel entrance and a window would flank the large engine door on the façade, likening it to the symmetrical arrangement of a store’s entrance and display windows. Exterior ornamentation was often visible on the first story, specifically around the door, and the cornice sometimes extended above the roofline, forming a parapet wall. The engine was stored on the first floor, and meeting rooms and living quarters were located on the second floor.³² Towers, when present, were typically located in the rear of the engine house to make it easier to unload the hose and hang it to dry. Engine houses sometimes had cupolas in the center of the façade, often sheltering a bell used to sound the alarm.

²⁸ Parker, “Fire Department Buildings,” 117-125, and City of Wyoming, “About Wyoming,” accessed November 14, 2016, <http://wyomingohio.gov/about-wyoming/>.

²⁹ Parker, “Fire Department Buildings,” 117.



Figure 5. Truck 2, Chicago, Illinois, built 1872³³

Engine house design continued to evolve in the 1880s as styles and the needs of municipal fire departments changed. For example, architects began to showcase the tower by moving it from the rear of the engine house to a front corner of the building. Although this arrangement was less convenient, the tower now served as a more prominent identifying feature of the structure. Engine houses also grew to accommodate additional equipment; greater size reflected growing civic pride for the institution. Also during this time, the Richardsonian Romanesque style began to be used in engine house design, as

³² Zurier, *The American Firehouse*, 87.

³³ *Ibid.*, 71.

this style was gaining popularity throughout the country (Figure 6).³⁰ Some cities began the practice of hiring one architect to design all the engine houses within their respective cities, while other cities established the full-time salaried position of City Architect to design all public building projects.³¹ Both practices in municipal coordination led to greater standardization of engine house design within a city.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 82.



Figure 6. Engine 33/Ladder 15, Boston, Massachusetts, built 1888³²

In the 1890s, the red brick engine house gave way to a greater variety of style references, including medieval castles, French chateaux, Italian palaces, and Swiss chalets (Figures 7 and 8).³³ The firemen had regained public favor and citizens were more willing to spend money on the comfort of the firemen and design of the engine house. In general, the 1890s saw an expansion of municipal services, including extensive sewer systems, street lighting, and playgrounds, in addition to increased funding for fire departments.³⁴ Engine houses also began to be constructed of lighter colored brick, signaling a change in material preference.³⁵

³² Ibid., 99.

³³ Ibid., 119.

³⁴ Ibid., 127.

³⁵ Ibid., 128.



Figure 7. Engine 31, New York City, built 1895³⁶



Figure 8. Engine 26, Buffalo, New York, built 1895³⁷

³⁶ Ibid., 119.

³⁷ Ibid., 125.

The early twentieth century brought significant changes to firefighting equipment and personnel management, which also influenced engine house design. The first gasoline-powered fire engine was introduced in Connecticut in 1903. The trend did not catch on nationwide until 1912, and by 1919 most large American cities used motorized equipment in place of horse-drawn engines. This change impacted engine house design by eliminating the need for haylofts, stables, and feed rooms. It was also considered more sanitary and comfortable for firemen.³⁸ Another change during this time was the introduction of a two-platoon arrangement. Prior to the twentieth century, firemen were on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with minimal time off over the course of a year. Under the two-platoon arrangement, firemen now worked in alternating 12-hour shifts and could not leave the engine house while on duty. This led to the introduction of kitchens in the engine house so firemen could take meals while on duty.³⁹

World War I brought about employment shortages and stalled new engine house construction, but fire departments rebounded in the 1920s and 1930s and could resume construction efforts.⁴⁰

Additionally, during this time engine houses were scaled down, often to the size of a modest home, as the motorized equipment took up much less space than horse-drawn steam engines.⁴¹ Engine houses exhibited a variety of architectural styles during this time. Fire departments also continued to evolve with the modernization and consolidation of facilities, increased governmental oversight, and formalized professional training for firemen.



Figure 9. Fire Station 2, Albuquerque, New Mexico, built 1937⁴⁶

³⁸ Ibid., 159-160.

³⁹ Ibid., 161, 163.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 155.

⁴¹ Ibid., 168. ⁴⁶ Ibid., 198.

ENGINE HOUSES IN THE TWIN CITIES

Minneapolis

Minneapolis and Saint Paul both developed as urban areas in the mid-nineteenth century. As such, the development of their respective fire protection services occurred concurrently and often followed national trends. In 1851, the Village of St. Anthony in Minnesota established a volunteer fire department.⁴² The City of Minneapolis was established in 1855 across the river from St. Anthony and consequently relied on St. Anthony's services, including fire protection, until 1868.⁴³ Minneapolis and St. Anthony merged in 1872, but maintained separate volunteer fire companies until 1879 when the City of Minneapolis organized a part-time fire department. In 1884, Minneapolis transitioned to a full-time paid fire department following the national trend. By 1885, the city had 105 staff members. Minneapolis' population burgeoned in the final decades of the nineteenth century, increasing the need for fire protection. As a result, the Minneapolis Fire Department (MFD) built 14 new engine houses between 1884 and 1895.⁴⁴

The first decade of the twentieth century was a period of great operational change as the MFD determined infrastructure needs, rewrote the fire codes to improve fire protection services, and conducted the first survey to assess the City's fire protection needs.⁴⁵ Following the national trend, the MFD's first motorized engine was introduced in 1910. Motorization reduced call times, allowed water pumps and hoses to be accommodated on one truck, and prompted changes in engine house design, including the elimination of spaces related to livestock such as tack rooms, stalls, and feed rooms.⁴⁶ Four bond issues were passed between 1911 and 1913 to fund the construction of new engine houses and continued motorization of the MFD's equipment.⁴⁷ After the construction of Station 29 in 1916, the MFD was equipped to provide fire protection for the entire City of Minneapolis. After this point, all new engine house construction was directed at replacing old facilities instead of establishing new neighborhood locations.⁴⁸ The last MFD horse was retired in 1923, by which point the MFD employed 528 firemen and operated 28 engine houses.⁴⁹

Engine houses in Minneapolis generally followed prevailing architectural styles. At least four engine houses constructed for the MFD in the 1870s exhibited characteristics of the Italianate style, including former Station 2 at 13th Avenue Northeast and Main Street (1877; non-extant); former Station E at 43 South 3rd Street (1879; non-extant); former Station 1 at 259 6th (today known as Portland) Avenue South (1879; non-extant; Figure 10); and former Station 11 at 28 2nd Street Southeast (1879; non-extant). Numerous engine houses from the 1880s and 1890s featured Victorian ornamentation and are

⁴² Carole S. Zellie, "Station 13 Minneapolis Fire Department (MFD) National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," available at the State Historic Preservation Office and Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 2003, Section 8, Page 1.

⁴³ Larry Millett, *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007), 5, and Zellie, "Station 13," Section 8, Page 1.

⁴⁴ Zellie, "Station 13," Section 8, Page 1.

⁴⁵ Susan Granger and Patricia Murphy, "Station 28 Minneapolis Fire Department National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," available at the State Historic Preservation Office and Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 1993, Section 8, Page 7.

⁴⁶ Zellie, "Station 13," Section 8, Pages 2-3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Section 8, Page 2.

⁴⁸ Granger and Murphy, "Station 28," Section 8, Page 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Section 8, Page 8.

representative of the “storefront style” façade arrangement that was common in downtown areas. Former Station 12 at 700 Jackson Street Northeast (1886; non-extant; Figure 11) was designed in the Shingle style, and several engine houses from the late 1880s to the early 1900s exhibit traits of the Richardson Romanesque style. Beaux Arts details appeared in Minneapolis engine houses around 1910 and an Arts and Crafts-style bungalow engine house, former Station 13 at 4201 Cedar Avenue (extant), was built in 1923. According to historical photographs, after this point, engine houses in Minneapolis took on more rectangular block forms with less ornament and occasional Art Deco details, revealing a move toward standardization and greater functionality.⁵⁰



Figure 10. Station 1 at 259 6th Avenue South, c. 1879

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⁵⁰ Extra Alarm Association of the Twin Cities, Inc., “Extra Alarm Association of the Twin Cities, Inc.”, accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.extraalarm.org/>.

⁵¹ Ibid.



Figure 11. Station 12 at 700 Jackson Street NE, n.d.⁵⁷

Saint Paul

Volunteer Organizations and the Foundation of the SPFD 1850s-1860s

Following the trend of other cities nationwide, fire protection in Saint Paul was initially provided by volunteer hook-and-ladder organizations starting around 1850. In 1855, one such organization called the Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company was recognized by the City of Saint Paul as the official fire protection force for the City and received City funding. This marked the beginning of the SPFD. Initially, the SPFD had only one-horse cart and one ladder truck to serve the entire city, which covered an area three miles by one-half mile and had a population of 4,716.⁵² Several large fires in the summer of 1857 prompted the City Council to accept other volunteer hook-and-ladder organizations into the SPFD, including Hope Engine Company No. 1 from the Upper Town community and the Minnehaha Engine

Company No. 2 from the Lowertown community.⁵³ Company nicknames (e.g. Hope, Minnehaha, or Pioneer) often exhibited patriotism or made allegorical references to water, and the rest of the company's name (e.g. hook and ladder, or engine) indicated which equipment it would provide in the event of a fire.⁵⁴ In 1859, the City built two permanent brick engine houses on rented sites for the two new volunteer companies: Hope Engine Company No. 1 on 3rd Street at Washington Street and Minnehaha Engine Company No. 2 on Jackson Street between 3rd and 4th Streets.⁵⁵ These buildings are no longer extant and no information could be found about their dates of demolition.⁵⁶ By 1859, the SPFD was composed of 104 volunteer firefighters and three chiefs.⁶³ The volunteer fire department continued to operate in conjunction with the SPFD during this time.

⁵² Richard L. Heath, *St. Paul Fire: A History, 1856-1994* (Minneapolis: Extra Alarm Association of the Twin Cities, Inc., 1998), 4, and Carole Zellie and Garneth O. Peterson, "Pioneer Houses: 1854-1880," prepared for the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, 2001, 2.

⁵³ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 4-5.

⁵⁴ Zurier, *The American Firehouse*, 40.

⁵⁵ Alix J. Muller and Frank J. Mead, *History of the Police and Fire Departments of the Twin Cities: Their Origin in Early Village Days and Progress to 1900* (Minneapolis: American Land & Title Register Association, 1899), 184.

⁵⁶ Sources consulted include Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, and Extra Alarm Association of the Twin Cities, Inc., "Extra Alarm Association of the Twin Cities, Inc." ⁶³ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 3-4.

The SPFD was impacted by the outbreak of the Civil War, as firefighters volunteered for military service and fewer citizens were available for service. However, its ranks rebounded as the end of the war neared. During this time, the SPFD began the practice of paying individuals for their service to the department. In 1864, Charles H. Williams became Fire Chief, with an annual salary of \$200.⁵⁷ In August of 1866, the City purchased a Silsby rotary steamer engine and hired a steam engineer from Cincinnati, Ohio, with an annual salary of \$1,600 to operate the engine.⁵⁸ This new steamer engine was pulled by a team of two horses, whose care became the responsibility of the firemen. The engineer's appointment caused much contention within the volunteer companies, although it is unknown whether it was because an unpaid volunteer firefighter had to drive the engine or because the volunteer companies were not given the power to select the engineer.⁵⁹ Due to the acquisition of a steam engine, the City initiated the development of a city-wide water system in 1867 to increase the effectiveness of the volunteer companies.⁶⁰ Between 1867 and 1869, the City expanded its fire protection services and new volunteer companies formed, including Saint Paul Hose Company No. 1, the Trout Brook Hose Company No. 2, and the Hope Engine Company No. 3.⁶⁸

City Charter Amendment of 1869 and Initial Engine House Construction 1869-1872

In February of 1869, the City promoted a City Charter amendment to the Minnesota State Legislature, which approved the sale of bonds to acquire sites to build new engine houses and purchase additional Silsby rotary steamer engines.⁶¹ This was a critical turning point as the City began to supply the necessary infrastructure for the SPFD to provide fire protection. As the result of this amendment, four engine houses were known to have been constructed between 1869 and 1872. The first engine house built by the City was for the Minnehaha Engine Company No. 2 in 1869, later called Engine House No. 2, and located on 7th and Sibley Streets (non-extant). The City sold this site in 1872, continued to rent it for more than a year after the sale, and then moved the engine house to a new site on Wacouta Street between 6th and 7th Streets.⁶² The second engine house, constructed for the Saint Paul steamer and hose company (later called Engine House No. 1), was built on St. Peter Street near 7th Street (1870; non-extant). The engine house built for Trout Brook Engine Company No. 4 (later called Engine House No. 4) was located at 10th and Broadway Streets (1871; non-extant), and the engine house for Hope Engine Company No. 3 (later called Engine House No. 3) was built at 1 South Leech Street (1871-1872; RA-SPC-4229; extant; determined NRHP-eligible).⁶³ All four houses were constructed in the Italianate style with very similar features including a two-story brick house with a three-bay façade and cupola; a center bay that is taller than the side bays; arched fenestration with brick crowns and keystones; brick pilasters that divide the bays; an arched center opening on the second story that contains a pair of arched two-over-two, double-hung windows; and two-over-two, double-hung windows in the outside bays on each story (Figure 12).

⁵⁷ William B. Hennessey, *History of the Saint Paul Fire Department* (Saint Paul: Pioneer Press Company, 1909), 38.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵⁹ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 4-7, and Hennessey, *History*, 42.

⁶⁰ Susan Granger, "St. Paul's Nineteenth Century Fire and Police Stations National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form," available at the State Historic Preservation Office and the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 1984, and Hennessey, *History*, 47. ⁶⁸ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8-9.



Figure 12. Engine House No. 3 at 1 South Leech Street, c. 1899⁶⁴

Population Growth, Departmental Management, and the Establishment of an All-Paid Fire Department During the 1870s, the City's population doubled, increasing the City's density and therefore its risk of fire.⁶⁵ A fire alarm system was installed in 1873 with 15 signal boxes.⁷⁴ These boxes were placed primarily at downtown intersections and helped speed up department responses.⁶⁶ As the population increased, middle-class citizens began to move out of the downtown core, which reduced the number of available volunteers to provide fire protection downtown, especially in company leadership positions. They were replaced by increasing numbers of partially employed or unemployed members of the working class. The City passed ordinances to curb unruly behavior, such as closing the engine houses on Sunday, prohibiting smoking in the stables, and forbidding unauthorized uses of equipment. However, conflicts continued to arise between salaried employees and the volunteer firefighters, and because many of the paid employees had been appointed by City elected officials thanks to political associations. Throughout the 1870s, volunteer numbers declined and the City continued to confront issues of drunkenness, incompetence, and public brawls among the volunteer firefighters. These challenges led to the termination of the volunteer fire department by the City Council on October 1, 1877, and the establishment of an all paid fire department.⁶⁷ This transition in Saint Paul followed a similar pattern in cities across the country, but was seven years ahead of Minneapolis, which did not establish an all-paid department until 1884. The SPFD initially employed only 42 men, but continued to grow throughout the late nineteenth century.⁶⁸ In 1883, the SPFD

⁶⁴ Muller and Mead, *History of the Police*, 201.

⁶⁵ Department of Fire and Safety Services, *Proud Traditions: A History in Words and Pictures of St. Paul Firefighters 1854-1979* (Saint Paul: Department of Fire and Safety Services, 1979), 73, and *Annual Report of the Bureau of Fire Protection for the Year 1914* (Saint Paul: Department of Public Safety, 1914). ⁷⁴ Hennessey, *History*, 56.

⁶⁶ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 15. ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*,

transitioned to a full-time, all-paid department.⁷⁸ The SPFD continued to use the engine houses that were built for the volunteer fire companies; no engine houses are known to have been built between 1872 and 1882.

SPFD Expansion and Significant Engine House Construction 1880s

With the establishment of an all-paid fire department in 1877, the City needed to expand services throughout the city, and 15 engine houses are known to have been constructed during the 1880s in various neighborhoods. Fire companies served their immediate neighborhoods but often also traveled throughout the City to fight fires if other companies were unavailable. The first engine house known to have been built in the 1880s was the first Engine House No. 5 (1882; RA-SPC-3248; extant) at 498 Selby Avenue (Figure 13; Appendix B), whose design correlates with a shift in engine house styles.⁶⁹ Whereas the engine houses built between 1869 and 1872 were designed in the Italianate style, beginning in the 1880s, engine houses were designed in more Victorian styles. Firemen were also on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and the shift to an all-paid fire department necessitated the inclusion of sleeping accommodations within the engine house.⁷⁰ In 1881, the City established the Board of Fire

Commissioners to oversee the SPFD's operations and plan the construction of a new headquarters for the SPFD, which was built at 8th and Minnesota Streets in 1883. The SPFD continued to expand its workforce and its physical facilities and, in 1885, added 26 new members and invested \$18,000 in engine house construction.⁷¹ The department now numbered 95 men total, including William R. Godette, the first African American fireman to join the force.

Between 1869 and 1930, the time of this context study, there was only one all-African American company in the SPFD. At a meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners on September 28, 1885, the formation of "a company composed of African citizens" was discussed due to the "large number of colored citizens residing in St. Paul and the deep interest taken by a considerable portion of the colored population in Fire Department matters."⁷² An all-African American company was subsequently established in 1887 and housed at first Chemical House No. 4 at Edmund Avenue and Marion Street (1885; non-extant).⁷³ That same year, the all-African American company moved to a new building at 293 Front Avenue, which became second Chemical House No. 4 (1887; RA-SPC-1400; extant). As a result, the first Chemical House No. 4 at Edmund Avenue and Marion Street (1885; non-extant) became Engine House No. 9, hereafter referred to as first Chemical House No. 4/Engine House No. 9. In 1912, the second Chemical House No. 4 became Engine House No. 22, hereafter referred to as second Chemical House No. 4/Engine House No. 22 (1887; RA-SPC-1400; extant).⁷⁴ The all-African American company was often sent to fight the least desirable fires, often in city dumps or bogs which would burn for multiple days.⁷⁵ The all-African American company remained at second Chemical House No.4/Engine House No. 22 until 1923 when it transferred back to first Chemical House No.4/Engine House No. 9 at Edmund Avenue and Marion Street (1885; non-extant). First Chemical House No.4/Engine House No. 9 closed in 1942 due to a manpower

⁶⁹ *Annual Report of the Bureau of Fire Protection for the Year 1914.*

⁷⁰ Zurier, *The American Firehouse*, 13.

⁷¹ Susan Granger, "RA-SPC-3110 Historic Inventory Form," available at the State Historic Preservation Office and Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 1981.

⁷² "Proceedings Board Fire Commissioners," *The St. Paul Daily Globe* (Saint Paul, Minnesota), October 2, 1885, 3.

⁷³ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 33.

⁷⁴ Granger, "St. Paul's Nineteenth Century," and Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 65.

⁷⁵ Patricia Murphy, "RA-SPC-1400 Historic Inventory Form," available at the State Historic Preservation Office and Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 1981.

shortage. As a result, the all-African American company was disbanded and the African American firefighters were integrated into other crews at other engine houses in the SPFD. However, within individual engine houses, the African American members of these integrated crews were only allowed to occupy designated beds at their assigned stations.⁷⁶ Moreover, at Chemical House No. 5/Engine House No. 10 at 754 Randolph Avenue (1885; RA-SPC-3110; extant), the African American firefighters had separate kitchens and entrances from the white firefighters.⁷⁷

William R. Godette, the first African American fireman to join the SPFD, served at first Chemical House No. 4/Engine House No. 9 (1885; non-extant) in 1887, second Chemical House No.4/Engine House No.22 (1887; RA-SPC-1400; extant) in 1887-1923, and at first Chemical House No. 4/Engine House No. 9 (1885; non-extant) from 1923-1926 at which point he retired. He was captain for the final 14 years of his career.⁷⁸ In 2010, the SPFD Headquarters and Station 1 at 1000 West Seventh Street was named the William and Alfred Godette Memorial Building, after William and his younger brother Alfred who also worked for the fire department.⁷⁹



Figure 13. First Engine House No. 5 at 498 Selby Avenue, c. 1882⁸⁰

In addition to Victorian styles, engine houses began to be constructed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style from the mid-1880s into the 1900s, following national trends. The City of Saint Paul continued to grow and totaled 55 square miles by 1887, which increased the service area of the SPFD.⁸¹ By the end of 1887, the department had

⁷⁶ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 121.

⁷⁷ Mara H. Gottfried, "A well-earned retirement," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 14, 2010.

⁷⁸ David Riehle, email communication with the author, February 9, 2017.

⁷⁹ Charles Hallman, "Station 1 HQ named for Godette brothers," last modified September 30, 2010, <https://www.tcdailyplanet.net/station-1-hq-named-godette-brothers/>.

⁸⁰ Department of Fire and Safety Services, *Proud Traditions*, 74.

⁸¹ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 30.

nine engine companies, seven chemical companies, and seven hook and ladder companies, together requiring the use of 93 horses. At this point in time, the SPFD was “in splendid condition.”⁸²

Ongoing Department Challenges and Impact of the Economic Depression 1890s-1904

Throughout the 1890s, the administration of the SPFD continued to evolve. Starting in 1890, the SPFD increased its efforts toward professionalization by enacting permanent rules and regulations, as well as a series of selection guidelines. These rules served to codify the process of officer appointments, determine requirements for employment, and establish disciplinary actions. In 1891, the City Charter was revised to cap police and fire department expenditures. This action resulted in the reduction of crews, the inability to purchase new equipment, decreases in salaries, and the inability to control fires throughout the decade.⁸³ Only three engine houses are known to have been built between 1890 and 1901, in large part because of financial difficulties stemming from the 1893 economic depression in the United States, known as the Panic of 1893, and subsequent slowdown of population growth.⁸⁴ These engine houses included Engine House No. 12 at 357 Rosabel Street (1892; non-extant); Engine House No. 13 at Hampden and Raymond Avenues (1894; RA-SPC-1708; extant); and Engine House No. 15 at Livingston and Fairfield Avenues (1901; non-extant). Engine House No. 13 was one of the last engine houses in the City to use horse-drawn engines.⁸⁵

The SPFD Reaches a Critical Turning Point 1904-1913

The City had recovered from the 1893 economic depression by the start of the twentieth century, and the population began to rise. However, greater population density again increased fire hazards, creating additional challenges for the SPFD, which was already limited financially by the City. In 1904, voters approved an amendment to the City Charter to raise the expenditure cap by \$30,000, although this was far less than the Fire Department Chief and Board of Fire Commissioners had requested.⁹⁶ The worst fire in Saint Paul history occurred in 1906 at the Ryan Annex-Schutte Block. The following year, the National Board of Underwriters evaluated the SPFD and characterized the department as “fairly efficient, but weak for a city of this size.”⁸⁶ Consequently, voters approved an amendment to the City Charter to remove limits on fire department expenditures and permit the City to sell \$100,000 in bonds to finance new engine houses and equipment.⁸⁷ As a direct result of the bonds, three new engine houses were built between 1908 and 1910, including Engine House No. 18 at 681 University Avenue West (1908; RA-SPC3887; extant; determined NRHP-eligible; Figure 14); Engine House No. 20 at 91 Snelling Avenue North (1909; RA-SPC-3414; extant); and Engine House No. 21 at 643 Ohio Street South (1910; RA-SPC-4767; extant; determined NRHP-eligible). All three engine houses exhibited Beaux Arts style detailing, representing another stylistic shift in engine house design.

⁸² Muller and Mead, *History of the Police*, 219.

⁸³ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 41.

⁸⁴ *Annual Report of the Bureau of Fire Protection for the Year 1914*, Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 43, and Hennessey, *History*, 100.

⁸⁵ L. Scott, “RA-SPC-1708 Historic Inventory Form,” available at the State Historic Preservation Office and Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 1981. ⁹⁶ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 54.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.



Figure 14. Engine House No. 18 at 681 University Avenue West, c. 1909⁸⁸

Randall J. Niles was appointed Fire Chief in 1913 and began planning for motorization of the department and construction of three new engine houses to replace older engine houses and consolidate companies.⁸⁹ The first motorized pumper was assigned to Engine House No. 18 in 1913 due to the engine house's large size and centralized location, which allowed the company to quickly respond to calls throughout the city. Additionally, this engine house was built with a concrete floor and without a basement below, which provided better support for the heavier motorized apparatus.⁹⁰ The SPFD continued to replace steam engines with motorized apparatuses as resources became available, and the department was fully motorized by 1924.⁹¹ Despite Niles' plans, engine house construction would not resume until 1918 due to administrative changes in the SPFD, which are outlined below.

Establishment of City Architect and Development of Prototypes 1914-1930

A new City Charter for Saint Paul was adopted in 1914, which transferred management of the SPFD from the Board of Fire Commissioners to an appointed Commissioner. The new City Charter also established the Office of the City Architect, which became responsible for the design of all publicly funded buildings, including engine houses. As a result, architectural styles of engine houses changed again. Charles A. Hausler was the first City Architect. He oversaw the construction of three engine houses and likely designed a fourth engine house before his dismissal as City Architect in 1922.⁹² As City Architect, Hausler developed rectangular block designs for engine houses featuring one, two, or three bays that were used from 1918 to 1930 and exhibited much less ornament than the earlier Victorian, Richardsonian Romanesque, and Beaux Arts engine houses in Saint Paul. These prototypes responded to the function and space requirements of engine houses to modernize and make the SPFD more efficient, and exhibited a variety of architectural styles.¹⁰⁴ The earliest example of Hausler's prototypes is Engine

⁸⁸ Hennessey, *History*, 99.

⁸⁹ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 83.

⁹⁰ Sara Nelson, Andrew Schmidt, and Marjorie Pearson, "Fire Station No. 18 National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," prepared by Summit Envirosolutions, Inc., 2015, Section 8, Page 14.

⁹¹ *Annual Report of the Bureau of Fire Protection for the Year 1924* (Saint Paul: Department of Public Safety, 1924), 2.

⁹² Sara Nelson, Andrew Schmidt, and Marjorie Pearson, "Fire Station No. 20 National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," 2015, prepared by Summit Envirosolutions, Inc., 2015, Section 8, Page 18. ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Section 8, Page 18.

House No. 24 at 1720 East Seventh Street (1918; RA-SPC-540; extant). Hausler also designed Engine House No. 25 at 2179 University Avenue West (1919-1920; RA-SPC-3931; extant; Figure 15); and the new Engine House No. 2 at 412 Wacouta Street North (1922; RA-SPC-5462; extant). The second Engine House No. 23 at 1290 Snelling Avenue North (1922; RA-SPC-3433; extant) was authorized in June 1922 around the time Hausler was dismissed as City Architect; it closely resembles Engine House No. 24, which suggests that it was also designed by Hausler or used his prototypes. Hausler's prototypes also influenced the four engine houses constructed in 1930, which include the second Engine House No. 7 at 1038 Ross Avenue East (1930; RA-SPC-3219; extant); the second Engine House No. 17 at 1226 Payne Avenue North (1930; RA-SPC-5529; extant); the second Engine House No. 5 at 860 Ashland Avenue West (1930; RA-SPC-0186; extant); and the second Engine House No. 19 at 750 Snelling Avenue South (1930; RA-SPC-6169; extant; determined NRHP-eligible). Although Charles Bassford was the City Architect in 1930, three of the four engine houses have been attributed to Clarence W. "Cap" Wigington, the Office of the City Architect's head draftsman at the time. The second Engine House No. 19 (1930; RA-SPC-6169; extant; determined NRHP-eligible) features beige brick cladding and red terracotta roof tile, and exhibits the Mediterranean Revival style. The water tower in Highland Park also exhibits these features and was designed by Wigington; therefore, it is likely that he also designed the fourth engine house, the second Engine House No. 19.⁹³



Figure 15. Engine House No. 25 at 2179 University Avenue West, 2016

Following the new City Charter of 1914, new engine house construction did not resume until 1918, likely due to administrative changes and World War I. However, Fire Chief Henry Devlin commented in 1915 that the SPFD's engine houses were gradually being remodeled during this time, particularly with concrete floors replacing wooden floors, and these updates were considered essential to the preservation of good, sanitary conditions.¹⁰⁶

From 1914-1930, personnel management also evolved within the SPFD. Following the national trend, the two-platoon system, in which firemen worked in alternating 12-hour shifts, was implemented in Saint Paul in 1918 and

⁹³ Summit Envirosolutions, Inc., "RA-SPC-6169 Minnesota Architecture-History Inventory Form," available at the State Historic Preservation Office and Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 2014. ¹⁰⁶ *Annual Report of the Bureau of Fire Protection* (Saint Paul: Department of Public Safety, 1915), 4.

was soon followed by formalized medical and firefighting training for new fireman in the 1920s.⁹⁴ In addition to new engine house construction during the 1920s, the SPFD also retired the last horse-drawn engine in 1924, signaling complete motorization of the SPFD engines.⁹⁵ In the *Annual Report of the Bureau of Fire Protection for the Year 1924*, Fire Chief Owen C. Dunn reported that the SPFD completed 8,376 runs, traveled 18,693.24 miles, and worked 4,349 hours and 12 minutes, demonstrating the great capacity of a fully-motorized department.⁹⁶

SPFD's Move to the Public Safety Building in 1930

In 1927, the United Improvement Council of Saint Paul was formed through the joining of 27 civic, commercial, and neighborhood groups, largely outside the City's political process, in order to focus on civic improvements.⁹⁷ A \$15 million bond program resulted through city and county bonding referenda of 1928 and 1930, providing funding for four new engine houses, a new City Hall, the Ramsey County Courthouse, and the Public Safety Building.⁹⁸ The four new engine houses included the second Engine House No. 7 at 1038 Ross Avenue East (1930; RA-SPC-3219; extant); the second Engine House No. 17 at 1226 Payne Avenue North (1930; RA-SPC-5529; extant); the second Engine House No. 5 at 860 Ashland Avenue West (1930; RA-SPC-0186; extant); and the second Engine House No. 19 at 750 Snelling Avenue South (1930; RA-SPC-6169; extant; determined NRHP-eligible).

In 1930, the Public Safety Building opened to house the headquarters for the SPFD, the Saint Paul Police Department, and the Saint Paul Health Department (RA-SPC-5426; façade partially extant). This new structure allowed for consolidation of administrative offices and centralization of the new fire and police telegraph alarm system. The building also provided modern garaging for new police and fire-fighting vehicles. The construction of new civic buildings also signaled the City's response to the public's demand for major capital improvements.⁹⁹ The Public Safety Building, with its neoclassical building envelope, was the last civic building in Saint Paul to employ the monumental architectural styling popular at the turn of the twentieth century, as the City began to embrace modern architectural styles, particularly Art Deco, for its other new public buildings.¹⁰⁰ For example, the Minnesota Building at 42-48 East 4th Street

(1930) features horizontal bands of windows with subtle ornamentation on the façade, and the Saint Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse at 15 West Kellogg Boulevard (1932) features vertical bands of windows with minimal ornamentation and bas-relief carvings.¹⁰¹ An additional component of the bond program was the implementation of one-way radios to improve communication between stations; the radio control center was initially based in Engine House No. 18 before relocating downtown in 1939.¹⁰² In the *Annual Report of the Bureau of Fire Protection for the Year 1930*, Fire Chief Owen C. Dunn remarked with pride on the construction of four new engine houses and a fifth company housed in the new Public Safety Building, all of which had replaced "antiquated stations which were in need of considerable repairs" and were "a much-needed improvement in our

⁹⁴ Granger, "St. Paul's Nineteenth Century."

⁹⁵ *Annual Report of the Bureau of Fire Protection for the Year 1924* (Saint Paul: Department of Public Safety, 1924), 2.

⁹⁶ *Annual Report of the Bureau of Fire Protection for the Year 1924*, 12.

⁹⁷ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 99.

⁹⁸ Summit Envirosolutions, Inc., "RA-SPC-6169," 3.

⁹⁹ Heath, *St. Paul Fire*, 98-101.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Clifford Larson, "Historic Site Survey of the St. Paul Public Safety Building," available at the State Historic Preservation Office and Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 2005, 14-15.

¹⁰¹ Millett, *AIA Guide*, 324, 339.

¹⁰² Nelson et al., "Fire Station No. 18," Section 8, Page 17.

firefighting facilities.”¹⁰³ In particular, the new SPFD headquarters now accommodated an assembly room on the third floor, which was well suited for training sessions. That year, the SPFD completed 12,788 runs, traveled 62,006 miles, and worked 9,530 hours and ten minutes.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

The SPFD experienced substantial growth between 1869 and 1930, both in terms of its physical facilities and its administrative structure. During this time, the City of Saint Paul assumed responsibility to construct engine houses and provide the infrastructure necessary for adequate fire protection, which was made possible through City Charter amendments and bond issues. Generally, engine houses in Saint Paul constructed between 1869 and 1914 followed prevailing architectural styles of the day that were modified for the functions of the fire department. At least 34 known engine houses were constructed during this period, some of which were replacements of older engine houses, which paralleled the expansion of the City to its present-day boundaries and subsequent need for greater fire protection. The 1914 establishment of the Office of the City Architect brought more cohesion to engine house design, which moved away from stylistic trends towards modernization and functionality. The SPFD also evolved as an organization and established the administrative structure it would use throughout the twentieth century.

¹⁰³ *Annual Report of the Bureau of Fire Protection for the Year 1930* (Saint Paul: Department of Public Safety, 1930), 6.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.