

1 (Landmarks)

2 **DESIGNATING 1088 GREEN STREET, FORMER ENGINE NO. 31, AS LANDMARK NO.**  
 3 **220 PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 10 OF THE CITY PLANNING CODE.**

4 Be it ordained by the people of the City and County of San Francisco:

5 Section 1. The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that 1088 Green Street, former Engine  
 6 House No. 31, being Lot 10 in Assessor's Block 121, has a special character and special  
 7 historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value, and that its designation as a  
 8 Landmark will further the purposes of, and conform to the standards set forth in Article 10  
 9 of the City Planning Code.

11 (a) Designation: Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code, Chapter II, Part II of  
 12 the San Francisco Municipal Code, 1088 Green Street, the former Engine House No. 31,  
 13 is hereby designated as Landmark No. 220. This designation having been fully approved  
 14 by Resolution No. 14522 of the Planning Commission, which Resolution is on file with the  
 15 Clerk of the Board of Supervisors under File No. 98-0210 and is incorporated herein  
 16 and made part hereof as though fully set forth.

17 (b) Required Data:

18 (1) The description, location and boundary of the Landmark site is Lot 10 in  
 19 Assessor's Block 121.

20 (2) The characteristics of the of the Landmark which justify its designation  
 21 are described and shown in a Final Landmark Designation Report

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adopted by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board on September  
 17, 1997 and other supporting materials contained in Planning  
 Department Docket No. 97.467L.

(3) The particular features that should be preserved are those described in  
 the Final Landmark Designation Report on file in Planning Department  
 Docket No. 97.467L and Planning Commission Resolution No. 14522,  
 both of which are incorporated in this designation ordinance as though  
 fully set forth.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

LOUISE H. RENNE

BY

Kate Stacy

Deputy City Attorney

RECOMMENDED:

PLANNING COMMISSION

BY

Gerald G. Green

Director of Planning

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Vincent Marsn  
Landmarks Advisory Board  
1660 Mission Street  
5th floor

Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

|                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Passed on First Reading           | § Finally Passed                   |
| March 2, 1998                     | § March 9, 1998                    |
|                                   | §                                  |
| Ayes: Supervisors Ammiano Bierman | § Ayes: Supervisors Ammiano Brown  |
| Brown Kaufman Newsom Teng Yaki    | § Medina Newsom Teng Yee           |
| Yee                               | §                                  |
| Absent: Supervisors Katz Medina   | § Absent: Supervisors Bierman Katz |
|                                   | § Kaufman Yaki                     |

I hereby certify that the foregoing ordinance  
was finally passed by the Board of Supervisors  
of the City and County of San Francisco

*John Taylor*  
Clerk

*Dennis L. Barron*  
Mayor

File No.  
98-0210

MAR 20 1998

Date Approved

APR 10 1998  
CITY AND COUNTY OF S.F.  
DEPT OF CITY PLANNING

File No. 97.467L  
Engine House No. 31  
1088 Green Street  
Assessor's Block 121, Lot 10

SAN FRANCISCO  
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
RESOLUTION NO. 14522

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the Engine House No. 31, at 1088 Green Street, identified as Lot 10 in Assessor's Block 121, as Landmark No. 220, pursuant to the provisions of Article 10 of the City Planning Code, was filed on July 16, 1997 by the Saint Andrew's Society of San Francisco, the property owner; and

WHEREAS, The Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (hereafter, Landmarks Board), held duly noticed public hearings at its regular meetings of August 6th, September 3rd and 17th, 1997 and received public testimony on the proposed designation, reviewed a Landmark Designation Report on the subject property, initiated the landmark designation of the property and adopted Resolution No. 498 on September 17, 1997 recommending City Planning Commission designation of the property as City Landmark No. 220; and

WHEREAS, The Landmarks Board believes that the proposed Landmark has a special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value, and that the proposed designation would be in furtherance of and in conformance with the purposes and standards of the said Article 10; and

WHEREAS, The Landmarks Board recognizes that former Engine House No. 31, a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1987, has architectural and historic significance worthy of formal recognition as a local landmark; and

WHEREAS, The Planning Commission has reviewed the case file (97.467L) and considered the findings and recommendation of the Landmarks Board set forth in Landmarks Board Resolution no. 498, and held a duly noticed public hearing on the matter on January 8, 1998;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, First, That the Planning Commission does hereby concur with the findings and recommendation of the Landmarks Board and APPROVES the landmark designation of Engine House No. 31, at 1088 Green Street, identified as Lot 10 within Assessor's Block 121;

Second, That the special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value of the landmark is set forth in the photographs and other materials on file in the Planning Docket No. 97.467L, which is incorporated herein and made a part thereof as though fully set forth;

Third, That the particular exterior features that should be preserved are those shown in the photographs on file in the Planning Department Docket No. 97.467L and described in the Landmark Designation Report, in Section A, entitled "Architecture," Subsection No. 5, "Design," and in Section D "Integrity," said photographs and the Final Report are incorporated in this Resolution as though fully set forth.

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

File No. 97.467L  
Engine House No. 31  
1088 Green Street  
Assessor's Block 121, Lot 10  
Resolution No. 14522  
Page 2

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission hereby directs its Secretary to transmit the Final Designation Report and a copy of this Resolution of Approval of this Landmark Designation to the Board of Supervisors for appropriate action.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Planning Commission on January 8, 1998.

Linda Avery  
Commission Secretary

AYES: Commissioners Antenore, Chinchilla, Hills, Joe, and Theoharis  
NOES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioner Martin  
EXCUSED: Commissioner Mills  
ADOPTED: January 8, 1998

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**SAN FRANCISCO LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD**  
**1660 MISSION STREET, FIFTH FLOOR**  
**SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103**  
**Telephone: (415) 558-6345**

**FINAL CASE REPORT**

**PROPOSED LANDMARK NO 220**

**HISTORIC BUILDING NAME:** Engine House No. 31  
**ADDRESS:** 1088 Green Street  
**POPULAR BUILDING NAME:** Green Street Firehouse  
**ORIGINAL USE:** Fire house  
**CURRENT USE:** Club House  
**STYLE:** Tudor Revival  
**NUMBER OF STORIES:** 2 ½

**OWNER:** St. Andrews Society  
**BLOCK/LOT:** 121 / 10  
**ZONING:** RH-2  
**ARCHITECT:** Newton J. Tharp  
**CONSTRUCTION DATE:** 1908  
**EXTERIOR MATERIALS:** Wood and Stucco  
**LPAB VOTE:** 7 to 0 (Magrane and Levitt absent)



The building has undergone remarkably few alterations in its nearly ninety-year history which may be seen by comparing this 1910 photograph with a contemporary photograph. When the upper level was converted to private residential use, an existing street-level window was converted to a doorway and vestibule. Minor interior alterations allowed the upstairs to be used as a private residence, but the character of the entire building retains a high degree of integrity.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

As documented in the following report, Engine Company No. 31 Fire House is significant primarily for its architecture and relationship to the neighborhood, although it does have an interesting history dating from the post-quake reconstruction of the city, and a high degree of architectural integrity. The building is one of the few surviving (although somewhat uncharacteristic) works of architect Newton Tharp, who was appointed City Architect following the 1906 earthquake, a position he held until his untimely death eighteen months later, in 1909. As evidence of his innovative architecture, it was designed in a style that sought compatibility with the replacement residences then being built in this fire-ravaged area of Russian Hill, rather than the generally prescribed Beaux Arts concepts that characterize most civic buildings of this period. After a 44 year history of serving the Russian Hill community in its original purpose, the building was declared "surplus" and scheduled for demolition by the city in 1952, but was saved by the intervention of philanthropist Louise M. Davies who acquired it in 1958 as a *pied a terre*. Subsequently, in 1978, she deeded it to the National Trust, retaining a life tenancy. Recently, as the Trust has been forced to reorganize its assets in the wake of federal funding cutbacks, it has decided to return some of its properties, including the Russian Hill firehouse to private use. The building has recently been sold to its current owners, the St. Andrews Society, who have used the building for many years as a club house and meeting hall. A condition of sale was the nomination of the building as a San Francisco landmark.

## CRITERIA

### A. ARCHITECTURE

1. **STYLE:** *(Describe the significance of the structure as an example of a particular architectural style or convention)*

For the Green street fire house, architect Newton Tharp abandoned the traditional Beaux Arts styling of most civic buildings then being built, in favor of a style that, according to the *Municipal Record* of December 3, 1908 "would conform with the architectural features of the private residences of the district"; the front facade of the structure is decorated in half-timbering, a paraphrase of the Elizabethan/Tudor Revival that was and remains a very popular residential style in this country. This was an unique choice, for the six other reconstruction-era fire houses designed during Tharp's tenure as city architect were invariably Beaux Arts or Mediterranean adaptations. His best and most important civic works including the (old) Hall of Justice on Kearny Street and San Francisco General Hospital on Potrero Avenue, both of which were executed in the accepted Renaissance Revival styles derived from his brief exposure to Beaux Arts training he received in Paris.

2. **CONSTRUCTION TYPE / USE CATEGORY** *(Describe the significance of the proposed landmark as an example of a particular occupancy type or use, method of construction or material.)*

As a building type, the standard layout of fire stations has changed relatively little over the years. Generally they consist of a garage structure to house and maintain the rolling stock, surmounted by barracks-type living quarters above for the firemen. The barracks were invariably connected to the garage by means of a pole that firemen slid down to gain quick access to their trucks in emergency situations, and here the Green Street fire house is no exception. Not surprising in a city that reveres its firemen, the Fire Chief's residence and six of San Francisco's historic fire stations have been declared city landmarks (a seventh is a contributing structure in the Jackson Square Historic district) and several of the others( built during the reconstruction period) are listed in the Planning Department's *Citywide Survey* of 1976.

3. **DATE BUILT** *(Characterize the significance of the proposed landmark as it represent a particular period in San Francisco history.)*

Built in 1908, Engine Company No. 31 is an example of civic architecture produced by San Francisco during the post-quake/fire reconstruction period. San Francisco was eager to communicate to the rest of the world that it was capable of "rising from the ashes" of the 1906 devastation, and sought not only to replace the lost structures, but to restore the city's image through the construction of a series of important public works. On a large scale, such projects as the Civic Center, and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition contributed to the image of a revitalized San Francisco. On a smaller scale, these neighborhood fire stations, along with the police stations, libraries and hospitals also symbolize the public works of the city's reconstruction period.

4. **ARCHITECT:** *(Detail the importance of the architect or builder of the proposed landmark, and characterize the significance of his or her contribution to the community, state or nation.)*

The reconstruction of San Francisco's civic buildings lost during the tumultuous events of April, 1906, included the construction of new fire stations, police stations, schools, hospitals, and even City Hall itself. As a response to the urgent need to rebuild the city's public building's, sixty young architects were hired to work under the direction of newly-appointed City Architect Newton J. Tharp (1867-1909). Tharp was appointed by Mayor Edward Robeson Taylor in October, 1907 and charged with the responsibility of rebuilding the destroyed civic buildings. Although Tharp was only forty years old and the job paid a comparatively modest \$4,000 per year, Tharp correctly assessed the enormity of the opportunity placed before him.

According to Tharp's obituary in *Architect and Engineer*, he was born in Petaluma, California, one of eight children. He studied architecture at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art in San Francisco, and later in Chicago and in Paris at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts. Following an apprenticeship in Chicago and New York, he settled in San Francisco in 1889. He worked in the office of Edward R. Swain where he was involved in production of three structures that would become landmarks: the Union Ferry Depot, the Park Superintendent's Residence (McLaren Lodge) in Golden Gate Park and the Whittier residence on Jackson Street. In a short-lived partnership (Tharp and Holmes, 1899-1901) the firm designed the base of the Dewey Monument in Union Square. Shortly before his appointment as city architect, he worked briefly with architect Albert Farr. Two of his projects as city architect already enjoy landmark protection: Park Emergency Hospital and Firehouse No. 2 on Bush Street. Another Tharp design, (Old) Commerce High School at 170 Fell Street is a contributing structure in the Civic Center Historic District. The (Old) Hall of Justice at Kearny and Clay, perhaps architecturally Tharp's' most significant project, has unfortunately been demolished to make way for a Holiday Inn and the Chinese Cultural Center. It is not known if Tharp actually designed any of the municipal structures planned during his brief tenure as city architect, or if his work consisted primarily of the administrative functions required to run this large department. In a 1908 report to the Board of supervisors he indicated that the fire houses and schools would be designed "in-house" (i.e., under Tharp's supervision) and the larger civic commissions (such as Civic Center) would be determined by competitions. Whatever the degree of Tharp's involvement, within 18 months of his appointment, he was dead of pneumonia contracted while on an arduous junket to New York to gather information on hospital design. Commerce High School, subsequently relocated from it original location in what would become Civic Center, was briefly renamed Newton J. Tharp School as a posthumous honor. Although Tharp is not one of the architects that are routinely given the Landmark Board's highest rating, a larger percentage of his surviving structures have received landmarks protection than any other architect.

**5. DESIGN:** *(Characterize the quality of the composition, detailing and ornament, measured in originality, urban design, craftsmanship and/or uniqueness.)*

The structure has a richly detailed primary facade that successfully recalls its English origins. Additionally, the design is notable for its very successful integration of a civic function into an established residential neighborhood. Unknowingly, Tharp's residentially-scaled design ultimately figured in the building's preservation, because of the ease with which it was converted to a residence in 1958.

**6. INTERIOR:** *(Describe interior arrangement, finish, craftsmanship and workmanship or details that may be particularly attractive or unique)*

Buildings such as these rarely had decorative interiors; in fact they are often admired for the quality of honest function expressed through the use of simple everyday materials. In fact, the interiors were not included in the original designs for the building, and were supplied by the Superintendent of Public Buildings, after the building shell was completed.

## **B. HISTORIC CONTEXT**

**7. PERSONS:** *(Illustrate how the proposed landmark may be associated with the life or activities of a person, group or institution that has made a significant contribution to the community, state or nation.)*

There is no record that intimately associates the building with persons or organizations of particular significance during its period of significance. In terms of the building's modern history, its associations with philanthropist Louise M. Davies and the National Trust have led to the building's preservation.

**8. EVENTS:** *(Illustrate how the proposed landmark may be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the community, state or nation)*

There are no known historical events of significance associated with the building, beyond those normally associated with a fire house.

**9. PATTERNS:** *(Characterize how the proposed landmark may be associated with or illustrative of broad patterns of city's cultural, social, political or economic history or development.)*

The building exemplifies the post-quake reconstruction of municipal facilities including fire and police stations, libraries, hospitals, etc., many of which survive and are in use today. This structure was decommissioned and declared surplus in 1952, a pattern that occurred throughout the city as new technologies and efficiencies allowed a reduction in the number of fire stations from a high of 66 to the present 45. Until that time, no other patterns of extraordinary significance had been recorded as having been related to the structure. However, nearly forty years ago, in 1958, the building was acquired by philanthropist Louise M. Davies and adapted for her use as a private museum of fire house memorabilia and a *pied a terre*. Fire houses lend themselves easily to such adaptations, and many in San Francisco have found new uses as homes or schools - one has become a gymnasium for the city's firemen. In 1978,

Mrs. Davies deeded the building to the National Trust, and recently, the Trust, facing a reduction of its federal funding, has sold the fire house to the St. Andrews Society, who has occupied it as a tenant for many years.

## C. PHYSICAL CONTEXT

**10. CONTINUITY:** *(How does the structure contribute to the continuity or character of the street neighborhood or area?)*

Although the area has seen a number of demolitions followed by the construction of a number of replacement structures that have altered the scale of the block, the area is still best-known for the small scale of the older buildings. It is this continuity of scale that best describes the public's perceptions of the immediate area, known as the "Paris Block", that was designated a National Register Historic District in 1987.

**11. SETTING:** *(How does the setting and/or landscape of the proposed landmark contribute to the continuity or character of the street, neighborhood or area?)*

The verdant setting of Russian Hill is one of the most historic parts of San Francisco; a few of the nearby homes escaped the 1906 catastrophe, and actually date from the city's Settlement Period (1849-1860). The area derives its name from the remains of Russian sailors, buried here in the 1830s. The defining characteristics of these oldest surviving Russian Hill buildings include a domestic use and scale and a woodsy, free-standing or detached rural form, that was embraced by subsequent inhabitants who felt the rustic architecture suited their bohemian lifestyle. Architect Tharp was loosely associated with this bohemian crowd - he once contributed a drawing that was featured on the cover of *The Lark*, a literary magazine produced by the Hill's bohemian crowd in the 1890s. These earliest surviving buildings stylistically influenced the development of the post-fire replacements including Engine House No. 31, although the rural qualities of the earlier free-standing structures were replaced with row houses which had become the city standard. The choice of an English-derived facade for the building may be seen to relate to the international popularity of the late nineteenth century English Domestic Revival, which also inspired the works nearby by architects Willis Polk and others.

**12. VISUAL SIGNIFICANCE** *(Characterize the significance of the nominated structure as a visual landmark to the neighborhood, the city, the region or the nation.)*

Located on a "flat block" atop one of the city's steepest hills, the area is known as an isolated enclave in the midst of dense urban development. The steepness of the streets and terrain creates a few dead-end streets with little through traffic, resulting in an area that is better known in theoretical terms, than in actual experience. Combined with the building's small size and recessive scale, the building is not widely known outside of the immediate neighborhood.

**D. INTEGRITY** *(Describe the degree to which the property has retained original materials from which its significance is derived or which characterize its period.)*

The building has undergone remarkably few alterations in its nearly ninety-year history which may be

seen by comparing a 1910 photograph with a contemporary photograph. When the upper level was converted to private residential use, an existing street-level window was converted to a doorway and vestibule. Minor interior alterations allowed the upstairs to be used as a private residence, but the character of the entire building retains a high degree of integrity.

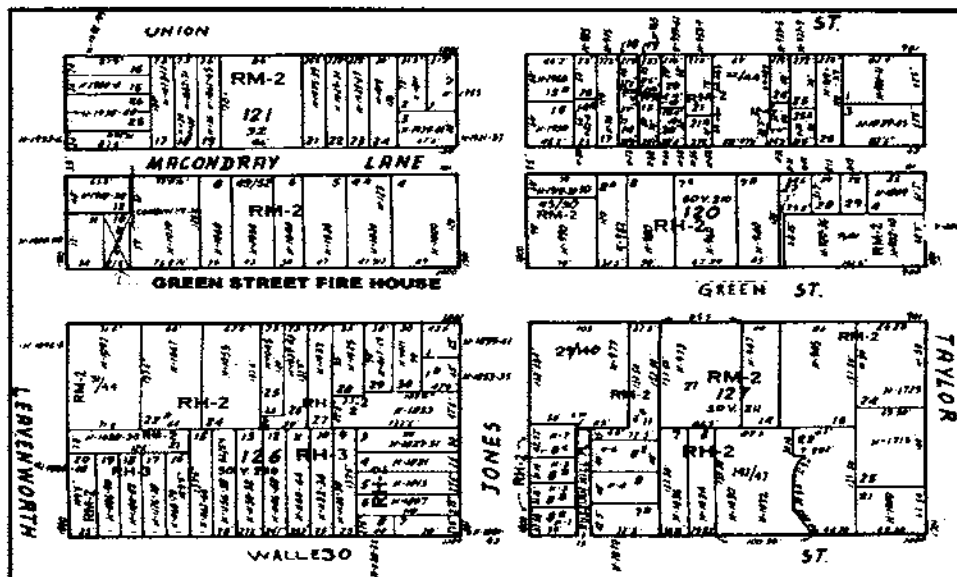
E. THREATS TO SITE: NONE ( ) DEVELOPMENT ( ) ZONING ( ) VANDALISM ( )  
PUBLIC WORKS ( ) OTHER ( ) NONE (X)

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS:**

(X) NATIONAL: Listed on the National Register: 30.Nov.87  
(X) STATE: Listed on the California State Register:  
(X) LOCAL: *HERE TODAY*, page 47  
CITYWIDE SURVEY: Rated 3  
HERITAGE SURVEYS: n/a

**REVIEWED AND EDITED BY LANDMARKS BOARD  
STAFF BASED UPON MATERIAL SUPPLIED BY:**

NAME: Patrick McGrew Associates Architects  
ADDRESS: 41 Sutter Street, Suite 500  
San Francisco, California 94104  
TELEPHONE: 415.981.3060  
DATE SUBMITTED: 1.June.97



Plat Map of Firehouse Vicinity

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### BOOKS

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**ARCHIVES CONSULTED**

Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of San Francisco. New York:

Sanborn or Sanborn- Perris Map Company.

San Francisco Assessor's Office

Title search of property tax records.

San Francisco Department of Public Works

Building permit records

San Francisco Main Library

Daniel Koshland History Room

*Here Today* Background files.

Clippings and Photography files

Block Books: 1894 and 1906

San Francisco Water Department

Historic water service connection records