

454 Bunker Hill Street, Engine #32 Fire Station (1883-1884)

From Boston Landmark Commission's Charlestown Historic Resources Study 1981 (E. W. Gordon, Consultant)*



454 Bunker Hill Street

1981(?)

Engine #32 Fire Station, now home of the Charlestown Working Theater, is a Queen Anne red brick, brownstone trimmed building. It has a rectangular plan. The main façade has two garage entrances surmounted by broad brownstone lintels. A continuous brownstone sill course runs beneath the second floor windows, and there is a brownstone course below the corbelled Cornice. The side and rear walls are characterized by planar brick surfaces and simple rectangular

sills and lintels, of brownstone. The building is enclosed by a steeply pitched gable-on-hip roof. There is a wide shed roof dormer at the center of the main façade slope. Particularly noteworthy is the hose-drying tower on the south side with its distinctive bell shaped roof.



454 Bunker Hill Street

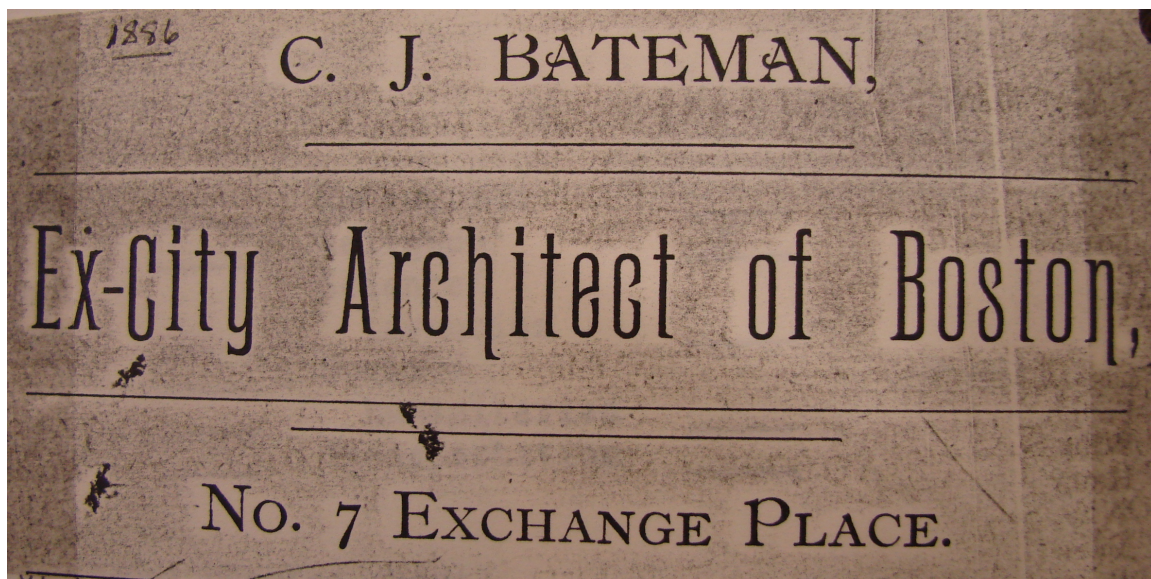
2015

Architect: C J Bateman
Original owner: City of Boston

The old Engine #32 Fire Station is situated near the intersection of Bunker Hill and Main streets. It stands alone in an area of victory gardens and vacant lots, its bell shaped hose drying towers striking a picturesque note. Designed in the Queen Anne style circa 1883-84, its polychromatic façades are characterized by planar red brick surfaces and brownstone trim. Particularly noteworthy is the distinctive bell shaped enclosure of its south wall's hose drying tower and its steeply pitched gable-on-hip roof.

Built 10 years after Charlestown's 1874 annexation to Boston, this engine house represents the work of Boston city architect Charles J Bateman. "He was born in Cambridge, March 4, 1851. He was educated in the public schools and in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and then studied architecture in the office of Faulkner & Clarke seven years, one of which was passed in their Chicago office. For three years he was with George Ropes, now of Kansas, and then began practice for himself in Boston, in 1876. In the year 1883 he was elected city architect, and appointed again in 1888. During his administration he built the 0 - street schoolhouse and also the school buildings on Auburn Street, Harbor View, George Putnam, Hammond Street, and the Roxbury High School; also an engine house in Charlestown, and other buildings. A peculiar feature of Mr. Bateman's work is that while in public office the actual cost of his plans never exceeded his first estimates. Mr. Bateman has also accomplished much notable work in private practice in the way of churches and parochial school buildings. In this class of work are the parochial school buildings in Charlestown, Malden, Waltham, and East Boston; the St. Cecilia Church, Back Bay district; the St. Catherine's

Church, Charlestown district; Most Precious Blood, Hyde Park; Sacred Heart School, East Boston, and others. Among larger buildings designed by Mr. Bateman are the Carney Hospital, South Boston, Boston College, Home for Aged Poor in Roxbury, and a similar structure in Somerville; apartment houses in Boston, and in Jamaica Plain, West Roxbury district; the Couch Block in Somerville; and the Hotel Miller. Although the greater portion of Mr. Bateman's work is seen in large buildings, he has designed many handsome residences in the Dorchester and the Roxbury districts, and in the cities of Keene and Nashua, N.H. He resides in the Roxbury district, with his wife and family” (from Sullivan, *One Hundred Years of Progress*, 1895



In recent years Engine #32 has housed a local community theater group.

Bibliography:

Atlases- 1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Boston Directories

B P L Architects file

*Digitized, and edited without change in content, from the scanned record in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, and with addition of current photographs. In the case of houses that have been altered since the survey, these photographs may not entirely correspond to the architectural description. If earlier photographs of suitable quality are available, these have been included.

R. Dinsmore

From- Massachusetts Historical Commission:

The Firehouse was built in 1883-1884 as part of the Boston Fire Department's response to the Great Fire of 1872, and as an element of Boston's expanding its city limits. The reorganization of Boston's Fire Department during the 1870's and 1880's was characterized by innovations in fire fighting and firehouse design. The Engine Company Number 32 Firehouse possessed at least one sliding pole, a feature introduced in Boston in 1880.

The Firehouse became surplus property of the city in 1970. It was used and restored by the Charlestown Working Theater as early as 1975, and transfer of ownership of the building to the Theater occurred in 1980.