

Seattle Fire Station No. 38
Landmark Nomination Report
October 2004

1. Introduction

This landmark nomination report for Seattle Fire Station No. 38 is one of eight local landmark nominations for existing fire stations built by the City of Seattle in the 1920s and 1930s. These nominations are accompanied by a separate appendix that provides background on the nomination process, and a historic overview about the Seattle Fire Department, its organization and facilities, fire fighting apparatus, other information about the stations, and an expanded bibliography. Separate nomination reports are provided for Fire Stations No. 6, 13, 14, 16, 17, 37, and 41.

Station No. 38 dates from 1930, and is one of the five Mission Revival-style station buildings presented for consideration as local landmarks. The building is located at 5503 - 33rd Avenue Northeast in the Ravenna / Bryant neighborhood.

This station was designed by architect George Stewart for the City's Building Department, and its design may have involved or been influenced by architect Daniel Huntington or Frank L. Baker. The building's design is very similar to Stations No. 13 on north Beacon Hill, and No. 16 in the Ravenna/Bryant neighborhood. Those two stations were constructed in 1928 and 1930 respectively.

This report includes the attached City of Seattle Landmark Nomination form, and descriptive text on the historic and architectural significance of Fire Station No. 38, illustrated by historic and contemporary maps, photos and drawings, and a bibliography.

Background

This landmark nomination was developed by BOLA Architecture + Planning at the request of the City of Seattle, represented by its Fleets and Facilities Department. The City is providing the nominations for the eight fire stations in response to an historic 2001 survey of its public facilities. The survey concluded that these buildings may meet the designation criteria required of Seattle Landmarks. Formal evaluation by the Landmarks Preservation Board is sought to resolve the status of each of these properties as future changes are proposed for them. The changes, funded by a bond levy, include the remodel and expansion of Station 38 in 2006 - 2008, or construction of a new station on a nearby site. The proposed project will respond to changing needs for fire fighting, emergency preparedness, and medical aid services.

Research

Research and development of this nomination report were undertaken in April – August 2004 by BOLA principal Susan Boyle, AIA, assisted by intern Matt Hamel and research assistant Angela Cassidy.

Research included several review meetings with the Seattle Fire Department (SFD), and collection of documents from its collection. Additional historic documents came from the following other sources:

- City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development (DPD) drawings and permit file, which document the original design, construction dates, and changes to the buildings
- UW Suzzallo Library and the UW Special Collections digital historic photo collection
- City of Seattle Clerk's Municipal Archives digital historic photo collection (Ravenna, Fire Stations, NE 33rd Avenue, NE 55th Street), and historic Fire Department Annual Reports

- Ravenna/Bryant Community Association (<http://www.scn.org/neighbors/rbca/>) and Laurelhurst Community Club (<http://www.laurelhurstcc.com/>) for information on the neighborhood's history and planning efforts
- City of Seattle Fleets and Facilities, drawings archives
- Seattle's Historic Preservation Program files for inventory and survey forms of this and other fire stations and for designated landmark buildings designed by architects Huntington and Stewart
- HistoryLink.Org on-line essays (Seattle Fire Department, Ravenna)
- Architectural publications on Mission and Colonial Revival architectural styles and design features
- Architectural history and other publications about the fire station as a building type, and fire fighting techniques, vehicles and equipment in the early twentieth century
- Kroll Map Company, historic real estate and /or insurance maps
- The Seattle Public Library collections, including *Polk Directories*, publications and newspaper articles on this fire station and the Ravenna neighborhood
- Personnel from the Seattle Fire Department, including fire fighters and officers from Engine Company 38, who provided insight into the department and the station's history, and Galen K. Thomaier of the Last Resort Fire Dept., who provided information about the apparatus

On site research included several tours of the building and neighborhood to document the presence or loss of original design features, changes through time, and current conditions. Its neighborhood and urban context, and exterior and interior views of the station were photo documented. Other comparable buildings were visited and photographed.

2. Property Data

Building Name:	Fire Station No. 38
Address:	5503 - 33 rd Avenue Northeast, Seattle, Washington 98105
Location:	Northwest corner of intersection. A Mission/Colonial Revival style building in the Ravenna neighborhood
Tax ID No.:	8827901028
Legal Description:	Lots 14-15, Plat Block 10, University View Addition
Date of Construction:	1930
Original Designer:	Architect George Stewart
Later Designers:	Tonkin/Koch/Architects (1987)
Original Contractor:	Daniels Construction Company
Original / Present Use:	Fire Station
Original/Present Owner:	City of Seattle
Property Size:	8,960 sf (0.21 acres)
Building Size:	2,568 gsf, according to current property tax records

3. Architectural Description

The Site

Station No. 38 is located at 5503 - 33rd Avenue Northeast, on the northwest corner of the intersection of Northeast 55th Street and 33rd Avenue Northeast in Seattle's Ravenna / Bryant neighborhood. The property is 80' wide by 112' deep, and contains 8,960 square feet (0.21 acres). The grade of the site slopes downwards from northeast to southwest, with an overall drop of approximately 18'-3", and is partially supported in part by retaining walls on the south and west.

The Fire Station is bordered by a two-lane residential street, 33rd Avenue Northeast, which provides two-way traffic in two lanes, with two additional lanes of parking. The front of the building faces onto this 60' wide street. To the south, Northeast 55th Street is a busier, four-lane arterial with a bus route. Historic maps and photos show relatively little development in the area until the 1940s. To the west of the site is a 14' wide paved alley, which provides access to the fire fighters' vehicle parking area at the back of the building. To the south of the site, across Northeast 55th Street, is Calvary Cemetery, which dates from 1889. Presently, the building is surrounded by 6' wide sidewalks on the south and east sides.

The building is set back 26'-6" from the front property line on the east, 37'-6" from the alley on the west, and 14'-6" from the north and south site property lines. The setbacks help identify the station as an "object building" on its site, and the equal side yard setbacks reinforce the symmetrical character of the original building design. The design is frontal, despite the corner site location, with the front facade facing east toward 33rd Avenue Northeast.

The site contains some landscaping, made up by mature cedar and spruce trees on all sides of the building, several of which extend from the west edge of the south wall to the alley, screening the parking from Northeast 55th Street. Planting beds with rhododendrons and other shrubs are located on the east side of the building in front of the two wings that flank the Apparatus Bay.

The paved apparatus access driveway was replaced in 1987, but appears to have retained its original configuration and approximately 20' width. A sidewalk leads from the driveway to the building entry in the south wing. An aluminum flagpole is placed near the entry door to the Watch Office in front of this wing.

Other site features include a concrete retaining wall at the inside edge of the sidewalk along the south side of the site, which rises from grade as the site slopes. The wall reaches a maximum height of 5'-6" at the southwest corner of the site, and wraps north along the west property line and alley. At the northwest corner of the site, the concrete foundations of an abandoned garage remain. Other retaining walls are used to contain the west parking area and the grade along the north property line.

The neighborhood immediately to the north of the station is made up of primarily single-family residences, typically placed on 40' wide by 112' deep parcels. In scale, the station fits well with this context as most of the houses are similar in size, though characterized by pitched roofs and porches. Directly to the north is a two-story wood frame house, which appears to have replaced an earlier residence visible in historic photos. To the east, a low-rise, three-story, flat roof, wood frame, multiplex dwelling currently is under construction. While most of the houses provide for vehicle access off the alley, it appears that this building may have an underground-parking garage accessed from the street.

The neighborhood to the north is zoned SF 5000. Parcels on the north side of Northeast 55th Avenue are zoned L-1 (Lowrise Residential Multi-Family), NC-1 and NC-2 (Neighborhood Commercial). The specific zoning designation of the fire station parcel is L-1, which allows construction of Lowrise

Residential Multi-Family buildings, with up to 35' in height and 50% lot coverage. The current building footprint, at 2,444 square feet, covers 27% of the site.

The Building Structure and Exterior Features

The building is structured by a tall concrete foundation, supporting reinforced concrete walls and parapets, and a concrete frame and slab roofs. The exterior finish is smooth stucco, with some Mission/Spanish Revival and Neo-Classical Revival stylistic features, including cast stone elements and detailing at the window sills, upper pilaster corners. The stucco finish and shallow, half-elliptical arched opening over the Apparatus Room and corresponding arched parapet above the door clearly recall Mission Revival buildings.

Fire Station No. 38 is a 50'-8" wide by 48'-2" deep rectangular building with a slight, 1'-6" projection for the Apparatus Room in the center of the primary facade. The primary east facade presents a symmetrical form, with two 10'-9" tall wings flanking the 17'-5" tall, 18' wide center bay. The lower roofs wrap in a U-shape around the central mass. At the back of the Apparatus Room, a Hose Tower projects another 6'-6" above the center roof, to a full height of nearly 24' from grade. All of the roofs are flat, with built-up roofing installed during the 1987 renovation and a 3-ply built up roof with insulation installed in 2001.

The building originally featured multi-paned industrial steel sash windows, which provided a distinct contrast of scale with the massive stucco clad walls. Contemporary steel sash windows with double-glazing have replaced all of these windows, although the original cast stone sills remain. The windows are rectangular, except for the transom over the apparatus doors. Typically, windows on the south and east facades are 5'-3 1/2" tall by 2'-5 3/4" wide, and include a transom. Smaller windows are found on the north and west elevations, ranging from 2+/-' to 4'-3" tall and 1'-8 5/8" to 2'-5 3/4" wide.

The Apparatus Bay on the primary east facade is emphasized by its size and by arched opening and parapet. The opening has a formed surround, and is flanked by sconce light fixtures with globe lamps. The large opening contains a multi-paned arched transom above a non-original overhead-type metal door. This door replaced the original pair of double doors. The current door width is limited by the building structure to 10', allowing only 3" - 6" side clearance for the engine. (Station No. 38 has only one Apparatus Bay with only a single vehicle door, and it houses only one engine. The arched door opening at Station 38 is shorter than those at Stations 13 and 16.)

Narrow cast stone capitals wrap the corners of the apparatus bay and provide a reference to Neo Classical pilasters. This design element is repeated in the simple cast stone bands which emphasize the building's other corners, including the corners of the small Hose Tower, and those of the secondary north, south and west facades. A wide, cast stone cornice band projects on upper walls of the east facade to the sides of the center bay. A large multi-paned window and original entry door and transom are provided in the south wing. The north wing contains a single, central, large, multi-paned window, which provides light into the Officer's Room.

The south facade provides similar features as the north one, and is a secondary façade despite its visibility from Northeast 55th Street. Along its length there are five tall narrow window openings. Three of these, located near the west end, originally were blind openings (without windows) at the main window portion, with transoms above, characterizing the original Handball Court within the structure. A window has been placed in one of these, similar in composition and materials to other contemporary windows. There are similar clerestory windows on both the south and north sides of the tall Apparatus Room. The Hose Tower is characterized by narrow, vertically aligned windows.

The secondary north facade is composed with a narrow window into the Officer's Room on the east end, and large window openings into Dormitory / Bunk Room spaces, and three smaller windows into

bathrooms, toward the west end. Clerestory and Hose Tower windows match those on the south facade. The back, west facade is composed with less formality and contains a row of varied sized windows, and a stair to the Basement.

Use of stylistic features on Stations 13, 16, 38 is restrained, particularly in contrast to the expressiveness qualities of Stations 37 (1925 - 1926) and 14 (1926 - 1927), which feature tile clad, gable and hip roofs which are based clearly on historic Spanish Missions and Mediterranean buildings. Station No. 38 was constructed five to six years after 37 and 14, and its references to historical buildings are more muted. It is somewhat more direct than the two older stations by expressing a strength and solidity simply through the building mass and use of concrete, cast stone and stucco. The site is a corner one, affording territorial views to the south over the nearby cemetery, but the original building design was frontal.

It is informative to compare the original design of Station No. 38 with those of Stations No. 13 and 16. The three buildings were conceived of as similar, and appear to have been based on a standard or prototypical design. Each building originally had only a single lower wing, containing semi-public and private station functions, which was placed on the side of the taller Apparatus Room. The massing provided a clear hierarchy of forms, and the local symmetry of the Apparatus Room reinforced the design's sense of strength and order. The three stations feature similar references to the Mission Revival style, particularly in the arched opening and parapet above the apparatus door(s), but have flat roofs and simpler forms that foresee Modernism.

Additions and modifications to these buildings in 1987 have varied, and the appearance of the current buildings diverse somewhat. At Stations No. 14 and at 38 the original single wing was retained, while an addition was constructed to expand Station 13.

The Plan and Interior Features

The single-engine Apparatus Room is the central organizing element in the building plan. The Hose Tower, a Laundry / Decontamination Room and a stair to the Basement, are located behind the Apparatus Room. Presently located in the southwest corner is the Beanery, in a space that originally contained a Handball Court. The Watch Office is a semi-public room placed at the southeast corner in the south wing. The crew quarters and restrooms are located in the north wing.

This is one of the few subject stations, along with Station No. 16, which has not been expanded with an addition, and which retains a single subsidiary wing on one side of the Apparatus Room. Major changes to the interior plan in 1987 included removal of the original Handball Court, and construction of a new floor in that space to accommodate a larger Beanery, and construction of partitions in the Bunk Room / Dormitory area to provide more privacy for sleeping firefighters. Restrooms were remodeled, to provide for both men and women firefighters, and a corridor constructed along the back of the building to link the crew quarters to the Beanery and allow circulation without passage through the Apparatus Room.

The concrete floor and walls of the Apparatus Room remain as originally constructed. In an effort to address structural concerns, the plaster-clad, hollow clay tile (HCT) infill interior walls were replaced with wood framed partitions throughout the building, and exterior walls were furred to accommodate insulation. The 1987 renovation resulted in a compartmentalized plan, with more hallways and buffering from the Apparatus Room. The lower level of the original Handball Court, in the Basement, is used for storage and an Exercise Room. Other rooms in the Basement house mechanical equipment and hose storage at the base of the Hose Tower.

Current finishes within the building include painted gypsum wallboard walls and ceilings, acoustic tile ceiling systems, and resilient flooring. Doors have been upgraded and those in the Apparatus Room

feature smoke gaskets. Apparatus vehicles typically back into the station upon return from an incident. In a recent project, air quality in the station was improved by the addition of a vehicle exhaust system of hoses and ducts.

Documented Changes to the Building

The following changes to the building are indicated in historic photos or in DPD records or Fire Department reports in the Municipal Archives, or have been observed at the building:

- 1930: Construction of original building (George Stewart)
- 1942: Temporary building to house equipment and auxiliary firemen during WWII
- 1961: Re-roofing, sealing of exterior, glazing repairs
- 1987: Renovation (Tonkin / Koch / Architects)
- 1998: Exhaust Upgrade
- 2001: Re-roof details for Stations No. 6 & 38 (Executive Services Department)

The 1987 project was guided by a 1983 study by architects from the Morse Stafford Partnership, which called for the building's renovation, along with renovation of ten other stations and modifications to eight others for larger apparatus. This project anticipated that Fire Station No. 38 would house one, 27' long pumper engine and staffing typically by three personnel at any one time. The project, budgeted in 1983 at \$244,000, was intended as an upgrade to meet the 1979 *Uniform Building Code*, and to add 40-years to the life to the station. The renovation work, designed by Tonkin / Koch / Architects, included relocation of the Beanery, removal of the former Handball Court, new Dormitory / Bunk Rooms, new restrooms including toilet/shower rooms for women firefighters, replacement of industrial sash steel windows with new double-glazed steel sash windows, and upgrading of all systems and finishes.

In 2002 the station exterior was repainted, with multiple paint colors and tones used to define the walls, corner pilasters, foundation and trim. The color palate of grays and off-white, with red accents, was similar to that used for Station No. 16. The original and earlier single-color schemes tended to emphasize the planar differences and cubic qualities of the building mass. In contrast, the current color scheme appears more two-dimensional, with a visual focus on accented doors and window sash.

Current Conditions and Use

According to the Seattle Fire Department's web site and other sources, Station No. 38 presently houses a primary engine, a 1991 Spartan/E-One 1,500/500 (gallons per minute and psi tank capacity) pumper. In 2002, Engine Company 38 responded to approximately 1,900 incidents. Of these, about 450 were in response to fire calls, while 1,300 (over 65%) were in response to calls for medical aid. Other dispatches involved investigations, rescues, and fuel leaks or spills.

4. Historic Context

Historic Overview of the Seattle Fire Department

(Note: A lengthy overview of the Seattle Fire Department, up to the 1920s, is provided in an appendix to the landmark nominations of the eight fire stations. The following text includes an overview of the department in the early decades of the 20th century, and specific history of Station No. 38, and other fire stations in the Ravenna and nearby northeast city neighborhoods. Most of the information in this section is from Wickwire, 2001.)

Once the Seattle Fire Department became well established in the city's downtown core in the 1890s, new stations were then opened to extend service to outlying areas. The need for additional stations became even more critical when the City doubled in size after the North Seattle Annexation of May 1891. The annexed area encompassed the northern ends of Capitol and Queen Anne Hills as well as Magnolia, Fremont, Wallingford, Greenlake, Latona, and Brooklyn (later the University District). By this time, new electric streetcar and cable car lines were bringing substantial real estate development to these and other previously inaccessible areas.

In October of 1893, the Fremont Volunteers formed Hose Company No. 8 and occupied rented quarters in the vicinity of Linden Avenue North and North 34th Street. This was the Seattle Fire Department's first company on the north of Lake Union. Nine fire stations that were built between 1894 and 1908, which shared a similar design, with a simple Classic Box or Foursquare form, embellished with Colonial Revival stylistic features.

Between 1900 and 1910, Seattle's population almost tripled from 80,671 to 237,194. This growth was fueled initially by the Klondike Gold Rush in the late 1890s, when the city emerged as a major shipping and trade center, and later by further annexations of territory between 1905 and 1910.

Annexation of South Seattle in 1905 was the first expansion of the city in almost fifteen years. It began a series of annexations over the next five years, which culminated with the annexation of the Laurelhurst district in December of 1910. The annexations once again doubled the size of the city and immediately increased the overall population, especially with the addition of Ballard, then Washington State's fourth largest city with a populace of 17,000. Voters in these areas approved the annexations based on promises of better municipal services, including professional fire protection services. However, it was several years before the Seattle Fire Department was able to finance paid companies within the 32 square miles annexed in 1907, with the exception of Ballard where the Flemish Revival style Station 18 was built in 1911.

In the first decade of the 20th century, 21 new permanent fire stations were built, including a new headquarters in Pioneer Square and five replacement fire stations, as well as a temporary fire station built for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, on the grounds of the University of Washington campus, in 1909. The majority of these early 20th century buildings were two-story wood frame structures although six were made of brick. New stations in Madrona, Beacon Hill, Greenlake, the University District, Cascade, Greenwood, and the South Industrial area extended service to these neighborhoods for the first time.

Between 1910 and 1920, Seattle built twelve permanent stations and one temporary station, including five replacement stations. Half of the new stations were wood-frame structures while the other half were made of either brick or reinforced concrete. All five of the replacement structures were of masonry construction. Seattle City Architect Daniel R. Huntington designed the majority of these new buildings.

Between 1921 and 1930, ten new fire stations were completed, and all but two of them replaced earlier structures. Unlike most of the early masonry stations, only two of the new stations were made of brick while the rest, like Fire Station No. 38, were of reinforced concrete construction. By this time, fire protection services had been extended to most areas of the city. However, many of the early fire stations were too small or too old to accommodate modern fire fighting equipment and motorized vehicles, which necessitated their remodel or replacement. This was especially the case after 1924 when the gradual phase out of all horse-drawn apparatus was complete, and the last of the Department's horses were retired.

Service improved in the northeast and southwest areas of Seattle with the construction of two new stations in the second half of the decade. Fire Station No. 38 was the first to be built in the northeast area of the city, which ended at Northeast 65th Street to the east of 20th Avenue Northeast at the time of its construction in 1930. (The University District and Greenlake stations had previously provided services to the Ravenna, Bryant and Laurelhurst neighborhoods after these areas were annexed by Seattle in 1907 - 1910.) Until the 1954 annexation of Lake City, Fire Station No. 38 was the farthest northeast of the stations in Seattle.

During the 1930s, the Seattle Fire Department suffered the effects of the nationwide financial depression. Between April 1933 and January 1934, many stations were closed, and hundreds of firemen were laid off, including those from Station No. 38. Records at the City Archives include strong opposition letters from neighborhood groups. Staffing remained low, however, and only two new permanent fire stations were completed in the latter half of the 1930s.

This ended more than three decades of growth for the department, which had resulted in the construction of over forty new stations. Most of the new structures featured unique designs, which were in keeping with the architecture of the time and sympathetic to their respective neighborhoods. Coverage had been extended to nearly all areas of the city.

Until 1949, the combination of financial difficulties due to the economic depression of the 1930s and shortages of labor and materials brought on by the Second World War halted construction of any new fire stations for a fifteen-year period.

Between 1949 and 1965, the Seattle Fire Department constructed ten new brick fire stations, and acquired four additional stations when the City annexed areas north to 145th Street in the early 1950s. In 1954 Seattle completed its annexations of all of the unincorporated neighborhoods north and northeast of the city limits up to 145th Street. As part of the annexations, the City acquired the facilities of several King County fire districts in the north end and immediately converted them into Seattle Fire Department stations.

On January 18, 1954, the Seattle Fire Department reopened Fire Station No. 39 to serve the newly annexed Lake City District, and established Fire Station No. 31, on North Northgate Way at Interlake Avenue North, and Fire Station No. 24, on Greenwood Avenue North near North 117th Street. A new facility, Fire Station No. 40, was constructed in 1965 at 9401 - 35th Avenue Northeast to address increased needs in the Lake City area. This station was a Modern style, brick clad building.

Over the next ten years, the Seattle Fire Department replaced ten older fire stations with modern new facilities, closed four older stations and transferred responsibility for their service areas to nearby stations. The City of Seattle eventually sold most of the former fire station buildings to private property owners but retained several of the former stations and converted them to new uses. In the mid-1980s, the Department undertook a program of modernization and substantially remodeled many of the stations, including No. 38.

Historic Development of the Ravenna /Bryant Neighborhood

The community surrounding the station is loosely defined by the hills of Wedgwood to the North, Ravenna Park to the west, University Village and Union Bay to the South and Laurelhurst to the east. Known as Ravenna-Bryant, the area is characterized by its single-family residential neighborhoods and close proximity to the University of Washington. Station No. 38 serves this area along with Laurelhurst, Wedgewood, Windermere, and other parts of Northeast Seattle.

The central portion of North Seattle, up to 85th Street, was annexed by the city in 1891. However, Ravenna was not annexed until 1907, and Laurelhurst was not annexed until 1910.

At the turn of the century, Lake Washington and Union Bay were at higher elevations until the Montlake Cut was completed in 1914, and the lake shore extended north into what is presently University Village. In the 1890s a small settlement, known as Yesler, arose to surround a mill established by Henry Yesler on the north shore of Union Bay in the 1890s.

Small farms and woodlands then characterized the area, like so many parts of north Seattle. Early development included a private golf club, near 51st Street Northeast in Laurelhurst, which was established by 50 wealthy Seattle businessmen in 1900. Known as the Seattle Golf Club, it operated until 1909.

The shoreline area of Laurelhurst was the site of many small seasonal cottages and recreational boathouses in the early decades of the twentieth century. These were accessed by an urban railroad, which ran along the present Burke Gilman Trail, and by boat, with several small steamers running from the foot of Madison Street in Madison Park, to Webster Point. Several developers who purchased the Seattle Golf Club and an additional 100 acres to create "Laurelhurst" and "Laurelhurst Heights" developed the Point. The neighborhood was envisioned as exclusive with lot prices starting at \$10,000, and creation of a private beach club.

Residential growth in the Ravenna-Bryant area followed the establishment of the University of Washington campus, which followed the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition of 1909. The first public buildings in the area included the first Bryant School, which opened in 1919 at the southwest corner of the present day school playfield, several blocks north of Station No. 38. Around the same time a one-room school was built in Laurelhurst. The Sacred Heart Villa (presently Villa Academy), in Laurelhurst, was established as an orphanage in 1913. The original Bryant School accommodated grades one through eight. It was closed in 1926 and was replaced by the Bryant Elementary School in 1926. The neighborhood continued to grow, and the school building was expanded in 1931. Laurelhurst Elementary School was constructed in 1929.

Although there are many homes in the area that predate the 1920s, most of the residential development in the area began during that decade. The neighborhood's population boomed during World War II along with employment and immigration of military-industry workers to Seattle. During and after the war, the University constructed student family housing on a parcel along Northeast Blakely near Northeast 45th Street. Swampy land near the bay was gradually developed for use by plant nurseries and truck farmers. Union Bay, which had been a landfill site, was developed as sports fields and parking lots, with a series of stadiums, and later facilities for the University's fine art and horticulture programs.

Seattle developer Albert Bach was responsible for the development of the Wedgwood and View Ridge neighborhoods. In 1940, Bach purchased a tract of land from Seattle University, with the intent of establishing a 200-home development. Prior to Seattle University's ownership, a ginseng farmer, Charles Thorpe, had held the land. (The neighborhood's name is attributed to Bach's wife, an avid collector of Wedgwood china.) Architects Thomas, Grainger and Thomas were contracted for the design of the \$1 million development. View Ridge had preceded Wedgwood in its planning and construction. (*Seattle Times*, July 3, 1941.)

Urban Characteristics of Ravenna / Bryant

As with many close-in suburban neighborhoods, this area exemplifies a pattern of pre and post war growth in Seattle. The immediate area that surrounds the Station was once served by trolley lines which were gradually replaced by buses. By the 1940s, however, private automobiles and single-family residences were preferred by the middle class. As a result, the neighborhood includes lot parcels associated with the city's older "streetcar" suburbs and some wider streets, and larger lots with deeper yards. Similarly, nearby residences are made up by one to two-story bungalows, Craftsmen and historic revival styled homes from ca. 1915 - 1930 as well as by newer one-story, post-war houses. The streetscapes, in either case feature extensive domestic landscaping.

Until the construction of nearby University Village, commerce in the neighborhood was limited to small commercial centers, such as that along Northeast 55th Street to the east and west of the station, which currently provides neighborhood services, such as the nearby shoe repair shop and attorney's offices, with some restaurants and cafes. (In contrast there are several auto dealership and repair facilities further west on Northeast 55th Street.) Institutions are those that relate to a primary pattern of residential use with churches, retirement and nursing homes, schools and daycare facilities.

University Village opened in 1956, on wetlands at the north end of Union Bay which were exposed during the 1916 lowering of Lake Washington to the level of Lake Union for the opening of the ship canal. The larger national chain stores and mall-type planning created competition with smaller traditional shops along 45th and 50th Streets and University Avenue, by affording more automobile-focused shopping. Both University Village and Northgate Mall have affected the vitality of urban retail in surrounding neighborhoods.

Calvary Cemetery is directly south of Fire Station No. 38, across Northeast 55th Street. The large, 40-acre parcel was Seattle's first major Catholic Cemetery. Father Emmanuel Demanez, chaplain of Providence Hospital, purchased the property from its original homesteader to augment the small Holy Cross Cemetery on Capitol Hill. The cemetery was dedicated in 1889 (the same year as the Great Seattle Fire), and platted and opened officially in 1904. Early travelers reached the burial ground by taking the train to Ravenna Station on the Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern Railway before roads had been graded. Over 40,000 Catholics are buried there, many graves having been relocated from other cemeteries around the city, and it remains an active cemetery.

There are a number of significant buildings in and near the neighborhood of Ravenna / Bryant, including several postwar era Modern buildings:

- The North East Public Library, at 6801 35th Avenue Northeast, a Modern era building designed by architect Paul Thiry (1954, a designated Seattle landmark)
- Bryant Elementary School, at 3311 Northeast 60th Street (1926, a designated Seattle landmark)
- University Unitarian Church, at 6556 - 35th Avenue Northeast, an early 1960s Modern era building designed by architect Paul Kirk

- The Battelle Memorial Institute, at 4000 Northeast 41st Street, in nearby Laurelhurst, designed by NBBJ and landscape architect Richard Haag (1966 - 1970)
- Ravenna-Cowen Park, and two bridges over the park -- Cowen and 20th Avenue Northeast Bridges (both designated Seattle landmarks)
- Nathan Eckstein Junior High School, at 3003 Northeast 75th Street, a post-war building designed by William Mallis (1950, a designated Seattle landmark)

Demographic Character of the Neighborhood

Recent demographic statistics for the city's northeast neighborhoods indicates that the household sizes in Ravenna/Bryant are slightly larger than those in the rest of the city, with a larger number of married couple families, and fewer single and single-parent households. The average age of residents tends to be slightly older than the citywide average and incomes tend to be higher compared to those citywide.

Between the years 1980 and 1990, the population of the children in the district under the age of 5 increased slightly, while the population aged 65 years and over decreased. The 2000 census data indicates this pattern has continued. The percentage of young children in the district is more than the city's 4.7% average, while that of residents over 65 is slightly lower than the 12% citywide average, with clusters of aged residents in some specific areas. The Ravenna / Bryant neighborhood has been described as "quintessential Seattle" in one newspaper account. The services provided by Station No. 38 have been similar also. The response to aid calls, which constitute about 80% of the total calls, has remained a consistent percentage since 2001, and in this sense it is typical.

Company 38 responds to calls from the University of Washington campus. However, many of the University's fire prevention activities, such as monitoring and review of fire protection systems and inspections are undertaken by the University's Environmental Health and Safety Division, rather than by the Seattle Fire Department.

Construction of Station No. 38

Station No. 38 was the first to be built in the northeast area of the city in the 1920s and 1930s. Until its completion, the entire northeast of the city, including all neighborhoods south of NE 65th Street and west of 20th Avenue NE, were served by earlier fire stations in the University District and Greenlake, which had been constructed in 1905 and 1908 respectively.

Land for the station was purchased in September 1927. After its construction in 1930, Fire Station No. 38 remained the only fire station in northeast Seattle until the city acquired other stations from King County in its 1954 annexation of Lake City. By that time, the city had annexed all of the territory up to 145th Street.

Since opening on November 2, 1930, Station No. 38 has been in continuous operation with the exception of an eight-month period in the early 1930s. Between April 1933 and January 1934, many stations were closed, and hundreds of firemen were laid off in a move by Mayor John F. Dore to economize due to the financial depression. Many letters were sent to the mayor in response to his action from residents who called for the station's continued operation. They reflect the strong bonds that formed between the station and its surrounding neighborhoods, which remain active today.

The Original Architect, George Stewart

George Stewart was born July 27, 1886, in Richmond, Ontario and attended the University of Minnesota where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Architecture in June 1922.

He started as a draftsman in 1908, and worked in Ottawa; Winnipeg; Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; St. Paul, Minnesota; Idaho Falls and eventually in Seattle. In 1916 Stewart established an architect's office under the name of Wyvill and Stewart in St. Paul, but closed it soon afterwards to enlist in the Army during World War I. In Seattle he worked for several architectural firms, including Schack Young & Myers (sometime from 1920 to 1925) and Huntington & Torbitt (sometime from 1927 and 1928).

Stewart's employment with Schack and Myers occurred during 1917 - 1920, before James Schack and David Myers partnered with engineer Arrigo Young. The three partners worked together on a city plan for Longview, Washington and the Hotel Monticello in that city, in 1922 - 1923, and on Seattle's Chamber of Commerce Building in 1924, and Seattle Civic Auditorium Complex in 1925. David Myers left the firm shortly in the mid-1920s, and Schack and Young continued to work together until 1933. (Schack had had a brief partnership with Daniel R. Huntington in 1907 - 1909, during which time he designed the First Methodist Church, and the first Arctic Club Building.) Stewart also worked on city projects for almost two years under the direction of another Seattle architect, Frank L. Baker. Stewart successfully passed the civil service exam on November 5, 1929 for the position of Sr. Arch. Draftsman. He did not pass the architectural exam for the State of Washington, but asked for reconsideration in a December 22, 1930 letter, which was approved. (Information in this biography is derived from Washington State Board of Registration records, various dates.)

Drawings from the City of Seattle Municipal Archives suggest that Stewart worked for the City's Building Department during the late 1920s and early 1930s. His name appears on a set of drawing sketches dated 1933 (five years after this station's construction), titled "Standard Two-Company Fire Station." The notes also identify "Station 13, 16, 38 and 39." Although Station No. 38 is a single-bay station, it is similar to No. 13 and 16. (Station No. 13 is at 3601 Beacon Avenue South on Beacon Hill and No. 16 at 6846 Oswego Place Northeast, in the Greenlake neighborhood. The drawing identification is not accurate as Station No. 39 is a dissimilar and later building in Lake City, which was not built by the Seattle Fire Department from the same design.)

Specific design drawings for Station No. 38 identify Stewart as the building's designer. His drawings for it and for the prototypical building shows Mission Revival references and a front facade, with arched parapets over the apparatus doors, which are similar to Stations 13 and 16. These elements in George Stewart's designs for these buildings that are also similar to Daniel Huntington's Mission Revival Stations No. 14 and 37, and they may suggest some direct influence between Stewart and his former employer. Whether Huntington and Stewart worked together as colleagues during the period when Huntington served as City Architect is not known.

George Stewart designed Station No. 6 in 1932. It is a unique Art Deco Moderne building, unlike any other stations of its era. Its design eliminated earlier historical references and featured an expressive stepped massing, zigzag pattern over the apparatus doors and fluted, cast concrete perimeter walls. Similar to Station No. 38, it originally had industrial sash windows, with narrow frames that contrasted with the solidity of the walls.

Stewart was in his mid fifties when he designed Station No. 6. Additional information about the balance of his career has not been discovered. (The design of Station 6 has been attributed incorrectly in some standard references to Bertram Dudley Stuart, a more well known Seattle architect.)

Mission Revival and Modernistic Styles

Five of Seattle's fire stations -- No. 37, 13, 14, 16, and 38 -- are based on the Mission Revival or Spanish Mission styles. Stations No. 14 and 37, are direct in their use of both Mediterranean and Mission forms and design elements, with their patterned stucco walls, Mission-tile clad gable and hip roofs, integration of bell towers, and surface patterns in gable ends. In contrast Stations 13, 16 and 38 are more restrained, and suggest a less romantic or thematic use of the style. Their flat roofs and block, stepped massing seem to call upon some Art Deco precedents, and their simplicity and heavy mass seem to anticipate the Depression era.

The Mission Style is somewhat unusual in Seattle, and is more often associated with sunnier climates. Their use appears to be more common in more romantic or thematic building types, such as theaters, hotels and resorts, and housing, rather than in fire stations. The style flourished in California, before the 1920s and became popular in other areas of the country in 1915 to 1945.

Characteristics of the Mission style include stucco walls and deeply recessed openings -- sometimes fronted by arcaded porches, and exposed often carved, rafter and beam-ends. Balconies, terraces, or patios provide a close indoor-outdoor relation. Decoration included ornamental ironwork, glazed tiles, and friezes and panels with decorative motifs drawn from plants and geometric forms. Roof forms typically were low-pitched gables and hips with red tiles. Building plans included asymmetrical facades, as is evident on Station No. 14 and 37, as well as a stylistic subtype with symmetrical facades. (McAlester, p. 411 - 415.)

In contrast to the more ornate, decorative expression of Mission Revival and Art Deco buildings, Station No. 38 is a simpler more straightforward design. Architectural historians have described its style in a variety of categories, which include "Starved" or "Stripped Classicism," "Moderne" and "Modernistic." Sources for this design are diffused, and include factory and industrial design, and functionalist designs from Europe in the 1920s. (McAlester, p. 464 - 465).

Classic revival design components include a strong sense of the building base, wall and top, and the use of symmetry in composition, but in these cases without the direct use of columns, fluted pilasters, capitals, porticos and other derivative features. In Seattle there are few buildings that use of the Modernistic style or Stripped Classicism, in part because of the minimal building during the Depression era. However, there are some examples, including the US Federal Courthouse (1939, 1010 5th Avenue), the original designs of the Coca Cola Bottling Plant on Capitol Hill (1920, demolished), and the original Civic Auditorium (1925 - 1928, on the grounds of the Seattle Center), has been transformed through a series of remodels into the Opera House/McCaw Hall, but its original design was both Mediterranean Revival and Modernistic.

Other buildings that combine historic Mission Revival and Moderne elements in eclectic designs include the Lake Union Power Steam Plant (1912 - 1921, at Eastlake and Fairview Avenues East, by Daniel Huntington), the Cornish School of Art (ca. 1920 at 710 Harvard Avenue East, by Albertson Wilson and Richardson), and the Columbia Elementary School (1922 but altered, by architect Floyd Naramore).

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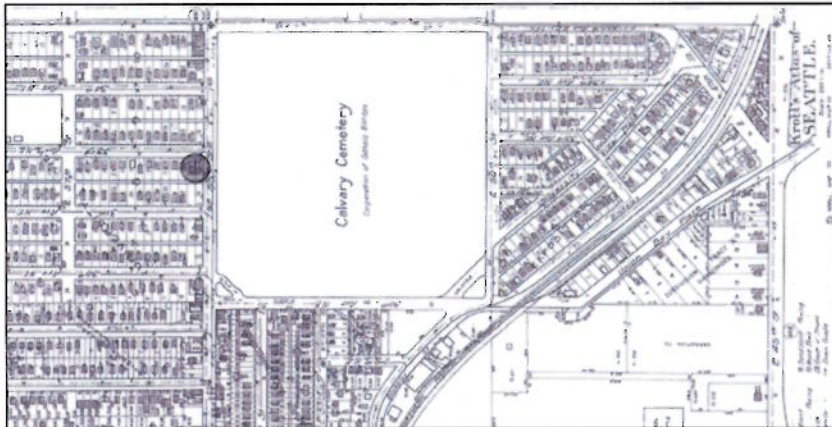
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There are multiple sources for drawings associated with the subject Fire Stations. Original construction drawings or full size copies for several of the stations are held at the City of Seattle's Fleets and Facilities Department. Most permit drawings for initial construction and later renovations are available from the Seattle Department of Planning and Design on microfiche, but many are of poor quality. The Seattle Municipal Archives also has some drawings from the Department of Administration Services' Facility Architectural Plans.

Below, excerpts from figure-ground maps of the neighborhood surrounding, south and west of Station No. 38 in Seattle's Ravenna District, dating from 1912, 1940 and 2000, which show the development of single-family residences over the past 90 years. Source: Kroll Map Company.



1912 Kroll Map



1940 Kroll Map

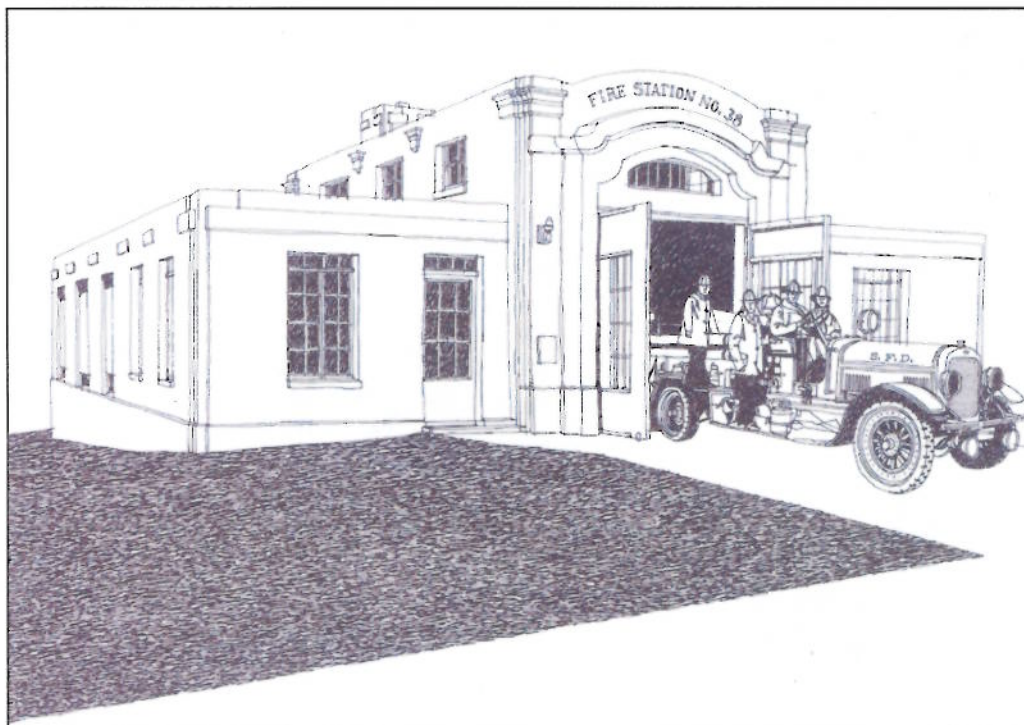


2000 Kroll Map



Above, view looking northwest, ca. 1936. Source: King County Tax Assessment Records.

Below, sketch of Firehouse 38, ca. 1970. Source: *Seattle Firehouses*. A comparison of this building with No. 13 and No. 16 indicates their similarity. However, only Station No. 38 was originally built with the lower wings on two sides.





Above, view looking northwest across Northeast 55th Street along 33rd Avenue Northeast. Station No. 38 is at left. This and all contemporary photos are by BOLA, and date from April – August, 2004, unless noted otherwise.

Below, view looking southwest from the station's site towards downtown Seattle beyond the Calvary Cemetery, which is located across Northeast 55th Street to the south of Station No. 38.





Above, view looking west, showing partial east and north facades.

Below, view of north facade looking southwest. The windows are not original. Note the corner treatment and raised wall / foundation planes.





Above, partial view of north facade with Apparatus Bay clerestory and Hose Tower beyond. Note the original use of a fragmented classical cornice bands.

Below, view of east primary facade with Engine 38 visible through the open overhead door. The doors and exterior light fixtures are not original.





Above left, a detail of Apparatus Bay entry on the east facade. Above right, partial view of the east facade showing the south end with door and transom into the Watch Office, looking southwest.

Below, view from driveway looking south, showing landscaping on the east side with partial east facade and flag pole at right. Calvary Cemetery is visible beyond, across Northeast 55th Street.





Above, view of south facade from across Northeast 55th Street with higher Apparatus Bay clerestory and Hose Tower visible beyond. The window at far left is new, replacing a similar transom and blind opening as the two to the right. The interior space was originally the Handball Court, later modified to serve as the Beanery.

Below, partial view of south facade. The original building was painted a consistent light color, which allowed the fine detailing to be more visible.





Above, partial view of the west facade looking east from alley. The parking lot is shown in the forefront, and the stair to the Basement is near the center of the facade.

Below, view looking northeast at alley entry to the parking lot behind the cedar trees, with partial view of south facade.





Above, view of Apparatus Room looking east. Note the clerestory windows at upper right and the arched transom over the door. The overhead door dates from ca. 1987.

Below, view of the east wall of the Apparatus Room. The opening at left is the stair to the Basement. The glazed wood door in the center accesses the Hose Tower. The door at right accesses the Laundry and Decontamination Room.





Above, view of the Watch Office desk.

Below left, view of the Watch Office with its contemporary finishes, looking southeast. Below right, a view of the new hallway, which was inserted along the west wall of the building in 1987.





Above left, turn-out coat racks along north wall of the Apparatus Room. Above right, view from Apparatus Room looking south into the Watch Office.

Below left, view of the Officer's Room looking north. Below right, view looking west in the hallway from the Watch Office into the Beanery.





Above, view looking southeast at the Beanery. The Kitchen in this station appears domestic, with the exception of ceiling finishes.

Below, view looking southwest at the dining area of the Beanery.

