

DENVER FIRE STATION NO. 3

2500 N. Washington Street, Denver, Colorado 80205



Architect: C. Francis Pillsbury

Year Built: 1931

Denver Fire Station No.3 is notable for its complicated and troubled history along with its architecture. Located one block south from the 5-way intersection that gives Five Points its name, this is oldest and the smallest operating fire station in Denver. It stands across the street from its predecessor, the former Fire Station No. 3 at 2563 Glenarm Place.

The building's design was influenced by two notable changes in firehouse architecture: smaller motorized fire engines that replaced horse-drawn equipment, and a growing desire by city planners to see public buildings that were more responsive to their architectural context. The result was this small, one-story firehouse designed in a Spanish Bungalow style to fit into the neighborhood where it was built.

A red tile roof is the most recognizable of the Spanish Colonial influences, but it's only found at the western gabled portion on the front façade, the rest of the roof is flat. Varying shades of red and brown brick clad the building, ornamented with terra cotta courses and insets. Under the eaves of the tiled roof on the west elevation, a blind arcade holds three semicircular arches filled with header bond brick above double hung windows in two of the arches and an entry door in the third. A course of terra cotta sits above these openings at lintel level. Opposite this is a pedimented, stepped gable with red tile at its peak and decorated with a small blind arcade. Underneath, large double wooden doors protect the apparatus floor, the space where the actual fire engine and equipment are stored. A terra cotta plaque above the doors reads "D.F.D. NO. 3" and bears the date of the building's completion.

On the south elevation there are more blind arcades held at either end inside slightly projecting, pedimented, stepped gables with terra cotta decoration. Between the gables, terra cotta coping of alternating heights form a cornice along the flat roof. Diamond-shaped terra cotta insets and decorative downspouts complete the ornate street side building faces.

The architectural significance of this Denver Landmark is tempered by an off-putting history. In 1893, the City allowed an all African-American company, under the command of a white captain, to serve this station, a first for Denver. Just two years later in March of 1895, they all were killed, four men in total, when a floor collapsed at the burning St. James Hotel. Another two years past and Station 3 became the first and only all African-American company in Denver. They were consistently given the oldest equipment D.F.D had and when their engine collided with another during an emergency, killing two senior members of Station No. 3 and critically injuring 3 others, the old faulty equipment was quickly identified as the cause. However, City officials blamed the all black crew and spurred a bitter resentment in Station 3 and the community they served. Memories of these tragedies eventually faded. D.F.D. was desegregated in 1958. Some firefighters have said Station No. 3 is haunted. They describe footsteps, flickering lights and cabinet doors that swing open and close on their own.

References

City and County of Denver. (1994). *Denver Landmark Preservation Commission Landmark Designation Application*. (Report No. 982) Denver County, Denver, Colorado.

Doors Open Denver Preview: Denver Fire Department Station. Retrieved from <https://denverurbanism.com/2015/03/doors-open-denver-preview-denver-fire-department-tation-3.html>