

Walnut Street Fire Company #4
808 Walnut Street
Madison
Jefferson County
Indiana

HABS No. IN-131

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WALNUT STREET FIRE COMPANY #4

HABS No. IN-131

Location: 808 Walnut Street, Madison, Jefferson County, Indiana.

USGS Madison West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 16.641040 4289190

Present Owner/
Occupant: Jefferson County Republican Club, Inc.

Present Use: Meeting hall and headquarters

Significance: The Walnut Street Fire Company #4 was built in 1874,
probably to the designs of Alexander White, and originally
included arched equipment doors and a delicately detailed
bell cupola.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1874-75. The Minutes of Fire Meetings of the Walnut Street Fire Company #4 describe the purchase of the property on July 3, 1874, the building of the fire hall in 1874 and 1875, and the discharge of the Building Committee on August 6, 1875.
2. Architect: On August 21, 1874, "Mr. White presented the plan of the Hall and explained the same....." A contract was drawn up and signed. Mr. White could have been either Alexander White (1821-1884) or his nephew, James White (1842-1932). As Alexander White was the more experienced architect, it seems likely that he was the architect of the Walnut Street Fire Company. He also was elected Mayor of Madison in May, 1874, and served until May, 1876.

James White, however, did design the alterations to the front entrance in April, 1894. He formed a partnership with Robert H. Rankin in 1872 or 1873 which was active until Rankin's death in 1887.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The legal description of the property is part of Lot 34, parcel 15, in John Woodburn's Addition North to the City of Madison. The deed references may be found at the Recorder's Office in the Jefferson County Courthouse, Madison, Indiana.

- 1874 Warranty Deed July 9, 1874 recorded July 11, 1874 in Book 39 page 140 (all of lot 33 and part of lot 34) Spencer and Mary Ball
to
Samuel Watson, Albert Hall, and Calvin DeVeary,
Trustees of the Walnut Street Fire Company #4
(for \$1,000.00)
- 1961 Warranty Deed April 25, 1961 recorded May 1, 1961 in Book 131 page 133
Trustees of the Walnut Street Fire Company #4
to
Howard and Marion Overpeck for Madison Transfer
and Storage Company (for \$1.00)
- 1965 Warranty Deed December 1, 1965 recorded February 17, 1967 in Book 142 page 79
Howard and Marion Overpeck for Madison Transfer
and Storage Company
to
Jefferson County Republican Club (for \$1.00)

4. Builder: Alexander White was an accomplished builder and may have been the contractor as well as architect.
5. Original plans and construction: The Standing Committee met on August 13, 1874, to "receive the plans and specifications of a Hall...proposed to build a Hall 60 feet by 22 feet." Mr. White failed to appear at the meeting, however, and it was not until August 21, 1874, that the plans and specifications were explained by White and adopted by the Committee. The building consisted of two stories, each with one large room. A broad semi-circular arched entry for the fire equipment was flanked by two smaller arched street doorways, similar to the original facade of the Washington Fire Company #2 on West Third Street (HABS No. IN-132). An elaborate cupola with a bell tower was square in plan and rose to a curved roof. Early photographs reveal the cupola's birdcage-like delicacy, a startling contrast to the solid form of the building. The building was lighted with gas, and had no interior plumbing. Construction costs totalled about \$1900 disbursed between October, 1874, and December, 1875. The bell for the cupola cost \$221, paid on May 29, 1875.
6. Alterations and additions: The seven volumes which comprise the Minutes of Fire Meetings of the Walnut Street Fire Company No. 4 contain detailed records of the changes to the engine house from March 17, 1873, to April 25, 1961. Entries include information ranging from the purchase of a new fire engine to the selection of door hardware.

- 1879 The original engine, a hose and ladder truck, was drawn by the firemen themselves until a new horse-drawn engine was purchased in March, 1879. The Company then built a horse stall and feed box in the rear of the fire house. "An anchor through the building was needed" for which Joseph Heck was paid \$5.30 for the installation on April 18, 1879. The anchor probably was the tie-rod placed on the facade's two front corners, just above the equipment doors.
- 1883 The Company recommended altering the plan of the fire house to place "an anty room [sic] in the front of the hall." The plans drawn by H.H. Mayer called for moving the second-floor anteroom from the rear to the front, the installation of balusters on the stair, and the replacement of the street door. The present stair, located inside the engine house at the rear, originally was placed in the front with access gained by the northern street door. Fred Binder was paid \$59.15 for this work on March 30, 1883, and Henry H. Mayer was paid \$75.00 for painting and frescoing the hall.
- 1884 Four gas light chandeliers were installed in the center of the ceiling on the second floor, and two lights of two burners each put in at each end. The fixtures were installed on March 7, 1884, by a Mr. Sanger who was paid \$116.25.
- 1886 The Standing Committee of the Fire Company was ordered to pay Henry Hare and Fred Grebe \$1.50 each to "have the front arch of the building repaired" on September 3, 1886.
- 1887 A fire cistern was constructed in back of the engine house.
- 1891 A wood horse stall measuring 21' x 21' was built behind the fire house during the fall.
- 1893 The Company replaced the first floor front of the building. The Standing Committee reported the cost of an iron front at \$8.00 per lineal [sic] foot; the contract was approved on September 1, 1893 for an estimated cost of \$450.

On November 3, Hoffman and Quinn were paid \$79.40 to install the galvanized cornice and S. Leggett was paid \$20.20 for work on the foundations. John Forsee received \$448.00 on November 17 for "putting on a new front." A bull's-eye window, installed by the City Planning Mill Co., cost \$7.00.

- 1894 James White received \$3.00 for the "plans and specifications for front of engine house."
- 1933 The company removed the cupola from the building and built a steel tower in which to hang the firebell. The contract was won by George Lohrig who was paid \$456.93 on October 6, 1933.
- 1936 The Overhead Door Corporation installed overhead doors costing \$179.00.
- 1938 Indoor plumbing for the second floor was contracted to the Economy Plumbing Co. for \$72.40 in April.
- 1946 The wood first floor was replaced with cement by A.L. Young & Co..
- 1955 A gas heater was added by the Natural Gas Co., Inc. The second floor of the firehouse was rewired and the present fluorescent fixtures were installed.
- 1959 The second floor was remodeled by a Mr. Kalb.
- 1960 The first floor ceiling was installed by Ben Schnabel for \$200.67.

In November, the Company proposed to buy the lot at the southeast corner of East Third and Walnut Streets for a new firehouse. The lot was purchased for \$8500.00 on December 1; Mr. O'Brien was to draw up plans after February 2, 1960.

- 1961 Howard and Marion Overpeck purchased the old engine house for \$7900. The Company moved out of the second floor on April 27, 1961, but continued to use the first floor until the new firehouse was ready on August 3. The bell installed in 1933 was moved to the new engine house after June 15.

B. Historical Context: The Walnut Street Fire Company No. 4 was organized on March 17, 1873, and since has served the City of Madison. The nickname "The Wooden Shoes" originated because of the shoes worn by the early firemen of German-American descent. As early as January 21, 1898, the nickname was mentioned in the Company's Minutes. In spite of the Company's attachment to Madison's German community, the Company's symbol is a shamrock, and its engine is painted a brilliant green.

Alexander White, Mayor of Madison from 1874 to 1876, was one of many Madison architect/builders active during the mid-19th century. White was born in 1821, and moved to Madison from Richmond, Virginia, in 1849. By 1859-60 White was a partner of Robert Pattie under the name White and Pattie, carpenters and builders. The shop was located on the north side of Main Cross Street between West and Poplar; White lived on the north side of Presbyterian Avenue between Broadway and Elm Streets. In 1867, White's shop moved to 59 West Main Street. James S. Rea, a carpenter who is thought to have been the partner of David Dubach on the original Western Fire Co. No. 3, may have worked with White at this time.

White entered into a partnership with Robert H. Rankin in 1871 with offices at 61 West Main Cross. White's short association with Rankin ended in 1872 when Rankin formed a partnership with James White, Alexander White's nephew and apprentice. In 1874, Alexander White was elected Mayor, and moved to the east side of Broadway between Main Cross and Second Street. After his term as Mayor, White went into the lumber business, probably continuing as architect/builder until his death on March 1, 1884. White's obituary stated that he "built some of the most substantial residences and business houses in the city," although few have been identified. White evidently designed a townhouse at 509 West Main Street (1851) and the Presbyterian Church of Hanover, Indiana (1871).

In a career which echoed his uncle's, James White was an architect/builder who also served as Madison's Mayor (1918-22). In the years before the Civil War, he apprenticed with his uncle, first as a carpenter, and later as a builder. The younger White was a member of the City Council in 1878 and 1904.

White was born on April 17, 1842, at Blackwood in Closeburn Parish in Dumfriesshire, Scotland, the son of James and Elizabeth White. The Whites emigrated to the United States in late 1850, landed in New Orleans, traveled up the Mississippi and arrived in Madison on March 22, 1851. By this time, Alexander White, who had preceded his brother by two years, already had established his career. James apprenticed with his uncle between 1852 and 1862.

On July 22, 1862, James enlisted in Company E of the 70th Indiana Infantry, commanded by Benjamin Harrison. White served until June 25, 1865, and attained the rank of Sargeant on Sherman's March to the Sea. After the war, White returned to Madison where he married Margaret J. Kellaway on December 5, 1867. In March, 1868, White was a partner of Cochrane and White until purchasing Cochrane's share in 1870. In 1871, he constructed his own house in 1871 on the east side of Broadway between Main Cross and Third Street, now 410 Broadway. White later was a partner of Robert H. Rankin with whom he designed

cotton and woolen mills such as the Eagle Cotton Mill of Madison (1884-85). In 1894, White designed the alterations to the facade of the Walnut Street Fire Company No. 4, his last known work. He was President of the Home Building and Loan Association No. 5, and a member of the Grand Army of the Republic, a charter member of the Elks, and treasurer of the Odd Fellows from 1866 to 1916. White retired his practice ca. 1925, remaining at his home until his death on January 18, 1932.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Books, Recorders Office, Jefferson County Courthouse,
Madison, Indiana.

Records of Minutes of Fire Meetings of the Walnut Street Fire Company #4. The minutes of the Walnut Street Company consist of eight volumes, as listed below, and are kept in the Company's fire house located at the corner of Walnut and East Third Streets.

March 17, 1873 - January 2, 1880
January 16, 1880 - June 15, 1894
July 6, 1894 - December 3, 1909
(December 14, 1909 - January 2, 1925 was missing, and is
presumed lost)
January 2, 1925 - September 16, 1958
October 7, 1945 - December 4, 1959
January 1, 1960 - February 19, 1976
(February 26, 1976 to the Present was not used in the
preparation of this report).

2. Secondary and published sources:

Madison Daily Courier: March 3, 1884 (Obituary of Alexander White); January 18, 1932 (Obituary of James White); July 9, 1871; October 14, 1871.

Madison City Directories (published by various companies):
1859-1860, 1867, 1871-1872, 1872-1873, 1875, 1879, 1887-1888.

Prepared by: John Linn Hopkins
Project Historian
Summer 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A good example of a late 19th century firehouse with Italianate details, modernized by the addition of a cast-iron front in 1893.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This two-story firehouse measures approximately 27' (three-bay front) x 75'.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: Red brick, laid in common bond, has been painted gray on the west and part of the south facades. A cast-iron front has been added to the first floor of the west facade.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick load-bearing walls with wood joists and rafters.
5. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys on the south side of the building are located near the front and rear. The rear chimney has a clay flue pot and many metal flues dot the roof.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The large overhead engine door, in the center of the west facade, is wood and glass paneled with stone sill and is crowned by an eight-light transom. An entrance door on each side of the engine door completes the cast iron front. The cast-iron surround has plinth blocks and recessed round-headed insets in the door jambs, topped by paterae. Hinge mountings for the old swinging door still are visible. An architrave extends across all three doors.

A doorway on the east wall, near the north, leads to the engine room. The opening with wood surround has a stone sill, two light-transom and a wood door with two raised panels.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Windows on both floors have four-over-four-light double-hung wood sash with wood surrounds and stone sills. The second-floor windows on the east wall have been cut down to accommodate the lowered height of the new

acoustical ceiling; the window openings have been boarded by plywood. The center window on the second floor in the west facade has a pedimented metal hood supported by two brackets. The windows on either side of the center have metal hoods, also supported by brackets. A round one-light wood sash window in the center of west gable end has a brick rowlock course.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The gable roof is covered by standing seam metal.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The elaborate Italianate cornice treatment on the west face suggests a broken pediment, complete with a bull's-eye window in the center. Both the raking and horizontal cornices are heavily molded metal with brackets and dentils.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The entrance on the west facade leads to the large engine room which occupies all of the first floor. A small toilet was installed in the southeast corner. A ceiling scuttle to the now-demolished cupola is located near the center of the second floor.
2. Stairways: The wood stair is reached by a door at the first floor. The stair has a paneled rail at the opening on the second floor. There is also an iron handrail on the wall.
3. Flooring: The first floor has concrete flooring scored in 5" squares at the center. Wood flooring on the second floor has been covered with asphalt tiles.
4. Walls and ceiling finish: Plaster walls on the first floor also have fiber panels and a wood rail. The second floor walls have modern wood paneling. Both ceilings have acoustical tiles.
5. Doorways and doors: Doorways have wood double panel doors with a two-light transom.
6. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Modern forced air heat supplied by a gas-fired furnace.
 - b. Lighting: Modern fluorescent lighting fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The firehouse faces west and shares a party wall on the south with a house. Another house is located very close to the north wall. A manufacturing company and more houses are situated across the street. The grassy rear yard has a cistern. A paved alley extends behind the property.

Prepared by: John P. White
Project Supervisor
August 1978

III. Project Information:

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with Historic Madison, Inc. and the Indiana Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief, H.A.B.S., and Kenneth L. Anderson, Jr., Principal Architect, the project was completed during the summer of 1978 at the Historic American Buildings Survey Field Office, Madison, Indiana, by John P. White, Project Supervisor (Associate Professor, Texas Tech University); John Hopkins, Project Historian (Skidmore College); and Student Assistant Architects Richard Berliner (Rhode Island School of Design); Jon Lourie (University of Maryland); Eric Swanson (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute); and Peter Whitehead (State University of New York at Buffalo). The written data were edited by Jan Cigliano, HABS Historian, in November, 1978.

ADDENDUM TO
WALNUT STREET FIRE COMPANY NO. 4
808 Walnut Street
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HABS No. IN-131

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U.S. Department of the Interior
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Washington, DC 20240-0001