

Firehouse, Engine Company 88/ Ladder Company 38

2225 Belmont Avenue, Bronx
Tax Map Block 3086 Lot 38

Built: 1907-1908

Architect: Henry Beaumont Herts and Hugh Tallant

Style: Prairie Style

Proposed Action: Public Hearing May 2, 2023



Engine Co. 88 / Ladder 38, 2023 LPC

The Engine Company 88/ Ladder Company 38 firehouse was constructed in 1908 to serve the growing population of the Belmont neighborhood of the Bronx. This impressive example of early 20th century civic architecture is adorned with Prairie-style elements, including deeply set windows and a grand corbeled limestone window enframingent and decorative brickwork executed in both standard and Roman brick. Because of its relatively narrow mid-block location, living quarters are located on the second and third floors, above twin apparatus bays and facilities designed for horses housed on the ground floor. Carved stone signs above the bays identify the company.

Consolidation of the five boroughs of New York City in 1898 led to an expanded and more widely professionalized firefighting force, phasing out the remaining volunteer fire departments still operating in the outer boroughs. Firefighting infrastructure was needed after a period of reduced firehouse construction from 1860 until around 1880. This need, coupled with population growth in neighborhoods such as Belmont, led to the construction of many new firehouses in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Additionally, the turn of the century ushered in more complex, mechanized firefighting equipment. This firehouse represents the early transition period, built to accommodate both horses and mechanized equipment.

The firm of Herts & Tallant were engaged to design the firehouse in the early 1900s. The firm was established in 1897 when former Ecole des Beaux-Arts classmates Henry Beaumont Herts (1871-1933) and Hugh Tallant (1870-1952) joined in a partnership. They established themselves as Broadway theater designers as well as experts on and advocates for fireproof building design in the earliest days of the 20th century, designing such notable Broadway theaters as the New Amsterdam Theater, the Lyceum Theater, and the Booth Theater. Construction of the firehouse was completed in 1908. This would be one of the last commissions of the partnership, which dissolved in 1911.

The Engine Company 88/ Ladder Company 38 firehouse was constructed during a narrow window between the nearly identical designs of Napoleon Le Brun & Sons from 1880 to 1895, and the 1910 adoption of the standardized Model Fire House Plan. In the interim period, a variety of architecture firms designed firehouses that varied in style. The Prairie Style-influenced firehouse designed by Herts & Tallant is unique in its design and as the lone example of firehouse design by the firm.

