

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of property**

historic name Charlotte Fire Station No. 4

other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 420 West Fifth Street not for publication N/A

city or town Charlotte vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Mecklenburg code 119 zip code 28202

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<u>    </u> entered in the National Register <u>    </u> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<u>    </u> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<u>    </u> See continuation sheet.		
<u>    </u> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<u>    </u> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<u>    </u> other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____		
_____		

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, North Carolina  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: GOVERNMENT Sub: fire station

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: WORK IN PROGRESS Sub: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

roof OTHER/built up

walls BRICK

other OTHER/cast stone

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, North Carolina  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government

**Period of Significance**

1926-1966

**Significant Dates**

1926

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Hook, Charles Christian – Architect

Gardner, J. A. – General Contractor

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, North Carolina  
County and State

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### 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 0.228 acre

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing  
1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

Zone Easting Northing  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet for Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Laura A. W. Phillips, Architectural Historian

organization N/A date July 19, 2016

street & number 59 Park Boulevard telephone 336/727-1968

city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27127

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### 12. Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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### Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Randy Watson Holdings, LLC

street & number 423 South Summit Avenue telephone 803/643-4224

city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28208

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 1

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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### DESCRIPTION

*With the exception of a few revisions by the nomination author, the following description has been taken from the Part I Historic Preservation Certification Application for the property written by Heather Fearnbach.*

#### Summary and Setting

The Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 is a two-story, rectangular, brick building with brick and cast-stone decorative façade details reflective of the Commercial Style popular in urban settings during the 1920s. The building occupies a rectangular, 0.228-acre lot near the northeast corner of the intersection of North Graham Street and West Fifth Street in downtown Charlotte, North Carolina. The fire station is rotated approximately thirty degrees from true cardinal direction alignment, but for the purposes of this nomination, the narrative is written as if the structure has a true north-south orientation. Thus, the West Fifth Street south façade will be referred to as the south elevation and the other elevations will follow accordingly.

The fire station is bounded by asphalt-paved parking lots to the west and north. The site slopes to the west, with a sparsely landscaped bank and formed concrete and concrete-block retaining walls mitigating the change in grade between the lots. A concrete municipal sidewalk and North Graham Street border the west parking lot's west edge. South of the building, an asphalt-paved area spans the façade's three fire-truck bays and extends to the concrete sidewalk adjacent to West Fifth Street. A narrow concrete-paved alley separates the east elevation from the seven-story brick parking garage and rooftop pool that serve "The VUE Charlotte," the contiguous luxury fifty-one-story apartment building completed in 2010.

The Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, conveying physically the significance that renders the building eligible for listing in the National Register. The fire station remains at its original location and retains the urban commercial setting in which it was built. Although the original windows and fire truck doors have been replaced within their original openings, the overall design of both the exterior and the interior of the fire station, as well as the materials used in its construction, remain largely intact. The building exhibits quality of workmanship on its exterior and interior. This is especially evident in the original brick and cast-stone detailing of the facade. The building retains its association with municipal firefighting efforts in Charlotte, and although it has not been used as a fire station since 1972, the building maintains the feeling of a

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 2

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

---

fire station, largely due to such architectural features as the large fire-truck bays and signage on the south façade.

### Exterior

Architect Charles Christian Hook specified ornamental brickwork and cast-stone accents to enliven the otherwise austere three-bay-wide south façade of Charlotte Fire Station No. 4. When the fire station was built, masons added rough, red-face bricks laid in a running bond to the exterior of the building's six-to-one common bond brick walls. Soldier-course lintels top the three tall fire-truck bays. At the base of each door opening, projecting concrete bumpers with rounded upper edges protected the walls from potential damage by fire trucks. The wood roll-up doors, which are comprised of two upper and two lower rows of six square plywood panels and two central rows of square glazed panes, are replacements dating from prior to 1969. Portions of the original paneled and glazed wood folding doors are visible in photographs taken soon after the fire station's completion in 1926.

Slightly recessed brick panels above each roll-up door feature narrow, vertical, rectangular, cast-stone blocks at their east and west edges. Vertical header courses border the sides of each block. Longer cast-stone blocks separate the entrance bays. Above the panels, brick soldier courses span each of the three second-story window openings beneath the continuous projecting cast-stone sill that extends across the façade. Cast-stone keystones ornament the segmental-arched second-story brick window lintels and introduce a classical influence. The window openings contain ca. 2002 replacement three-part fixed wood frames with tall, rectangular, plate-glass panes. A ca. 1926 photograph shows that the original fenestration comprised three windows in each opening – a central double-hung four-over-four wood-frame sash flanked by double-hung two-over-two wood-frame sash.

The parapet's central cast-stone panel is painted with the fire station name "C. F. D. No. 4." Plain, round, cast-stone medallions flank the panel. A slightly-projecting cast-stone cornice continues around the east and west elevations, and metal coping protects the parapet's upper edge.

The building is eight bays deep. The west-side elevation's first story fenestration consists of four tall, evenly spaced, window openings with segmental-arched soldier-course brick lintels and projecting brick sills. The original window sash have been replaced with double-hung one-over-one wood-frame sash, fixed louvered wood shutters installed, and the openings filled with plywood inside the shutters. Along with the windows of the other elevations, these are believed

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 3

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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to have been replaced when the building was rehabilitated ca. 2002 for use as the fire department museum.<sup>1</sup> Soldier-course segmental-arched lintels also span the seven, evenly spaced, second-story window openings, which are slightly shorter than those on the first story. They contain replacement, fixed, wood-frame, single-pane sash. A steel fire escape with round-horizontal-bar metal railings rises from the south elevation in two straight runs to a landing outside the entrance in the fifth bay from the second-story's south end. A single-leaf steel door and a plate-glass transom fill the segmental-arched former window opening at the top of the fire escape. The earliest photograph of the fire station, dating from ca. 1926, does not show a fire escape at this location. The present fire escape was added after 1972. Between the second-story windows and the parapeted cornice are four evenly spaced rectangular vents with metal grills that are aligned with the four first-story windows.

The east-side elevation's eight second-story, segmental-arched window openings contain replacement, fixed, wood-frame, single-pane sash. On the first story, in the first bay from the south end, a single-leaf steel door and a boarded-up transom replace the original door and transom of building's main pedestrian entrance. Two tall segmental-arched window openings pierce the wall's center and two short segmental-arched windows are to the north. Louvered fixed wood shutters and plywood fill each first-story window opening.

The two-bay-wide north rear elevation is dominated by a slightly projecting brick rectangular chimney near its center that serves the second-story north room fireplace. The chimney narrows at flat shoulders to a tall square stack between the two flanking second-story windows. The segmental-arched window openings with soldier-course lintels contain replacement, paired, fixed, wood-frame, single-pane sash. The first-story entrance, west of the chimney, is composed of a tall, single-leaf, paneled replacement door and a square plate-glass transom beneath a segmental-arched soldier-course lintel. Formed concrete steps with brick side walls and a pressure-treated-wood railing provide access to the door. West of the door, a small, brick, store room with a shallow shed roof spans most of the distance to the west wall and extends north to the base of the steps. A door to the storage room is on its west-side wall. A narrow window with a projecting header-course sill and a two-header-course segmental-arched lintel is east of the chimney. A brick square chimney near the wall's east end contains the boiler flue. The building's roof slopes slightly downward to the north, facilitating water movement away from the building through scuppers and round metal downspouts located below the north elevation's flat parapet.

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<sup>1</sup> Phone conversation with Stewart Gray (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission), July 21, 2016.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 4

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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### Interior

Most of the fire station's first story is one large open room with six-to-one common bond walls and a poured concrete floor. Portions of the walls have been painted, but the brick is exposed on the north elevation, the majority of the east elevation, and the west elevation's north end. A formed-concrete baseboard with a flat upper edge lines the walls. The metal-lath and plaster ceiling has suffered some water damage but is in fair condition. Rectangular acoustical panels, fluorescent lights, pendant lights, sprinkler system pipes, and rigid metal ductwork hang from the ceiling. Surface-mounted metal conduit houses electrical wiring. Arthur Foundry of Charlotte manufactured the round metal plate that covers a hole in the floor adjacent to the rear entrance.

At the first-story's northeast corner, frame partition walls, sheathed with gypsum board and plywood, enclose two small low-ceilinged rooms, north and south, on the first floor and one room at mezzanine level. The south room was the captain's office, and the north room was used for storage. Beadboard sheathes the wall beneath two wood-frame windows on the south elevation of the first-floor's room enclosure. A wood door with a glazed upper section and a three-horizontal-panel lower section secures the entrance east of the windows. The glass of the door and the windows has been covered with painted particle board mounted on the interior. Beadboard wainscoting and peg board cover portions of the south first-floor room's interior walls. In the north room, vertical boards sheathe the south and west walls. The exterior walls are painted brick.

The lower stair run rises on the partition wall's west side to a landing and a mezzanine-level room. The first four concrete steps leading to the narrow basement furnace room are west of these stairs. A short set of steel steps continues under them to the furnace room. Round metal-pipe railings with two horizontal bars secure the stairs. The basement utility room has a concrete floor and exposed brick walls.

On the first floor, north of the basement stair, a single-leaf wood door with four tall rectangular panes above a solid lower rectangular panel encloses a narrow restroom. The door has been removed from the storage closet west of the restroom.

As the stair rises to the second floor, it is interrupted by a mezzanine that encompasses a narrow hall with exposed-brick outer walls and commercial-grade carpeting that continues up the remainder of the stair to the second floor. A door opens from the mezzanine to an L-shaped

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 5

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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room with gypsum board walls and narrow pine floor boards. On the room's west wall, a two-part wood-frame window that overlooked the first floor has been enclosed.

Three exterior windows illuminate the enclosed straight upper run of stairs leading to two sizable second-floor rooms. A hollow-core replacement door opens onto the landing from the north room, which originally served as the recreation room for the firemen. North of the door to the stair, a row of four wood-framed single-pane interior windows, recently uncovered, line the east wall between the stair and the recreation room. With the three exterior windows along the east wall of the stair, this row of windows allowed more natural light into the recreation room. Between the windows of the recreation room's north wall, a large, rough-faced, brick fireplace features two rows of soldier-course bricks above the fire box, a wood mantel shelf with simple moldings at top and bottom, and a poured-concrete hearth.

Intact original finishes throughout the second floor include plaster walls and ceilings, wood window and door surrounds with molded edges, baseboards, and crown molding. Octagonal patches on the narrow-board pine floors delineate the former locations of three holes – one in the north room and two in the south room – that once contained fire station poles. Five wood-panel and glazed doors and one five-horizontal-panel wood door have been removed from their original locations and stored for reuse.

At the west end of the recreation room is a partially enclosed room that served as the fire-station kitchen. Square vinyl composition tiles cover the floor, but cabinets and kitchen appliances of unknown date were removed prior to when the building became the fire department museum in 2002.

Accessed from the recreation room, the second-floor's large, completely open, south room provided sleeping quarters for the firemen. The well-lit room has three large windows on the south end, five windows along the east side, and four windows and a door to the fire escape on the west side.

A door near the northwest corner of the sleeping quarters opens to a restroom created by partition walls at the southwest corner of the recreation room. The restroom retains a hexagonal white tile floor and white marble stall partition walls. Two white marble panels also sheathe the wall behind the east lavatory, which is raised, baseboard height, above the rest of the restroom floor. That area comprised the original restroom, consisting of a toilet, sink, and shower. The fixtures to the west of the bathroom entrance were added after 1972. Prior to that, the area was

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 6

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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used for lockers. A four-part, metal-frame, gabled skylight rises from a square opening in the restroom ceiling.

The current layout of both the first and second floors of Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 is believed to be largely intact. A large open space to house the fire trucks, along with a captain's office, were necessary features of the first floor.<sup>2</sup> On the second floor, dorm-like sleeping quarters for the firemen, a restroom, and a kitchen were all needed. Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 retains all these spaces.

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<sup>2</sup> Stewart Gray, Charlotte Fire Station Number 4 Architectural Description (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission), 7.  
<http://www.cmhpf.org/S&Rs%20Alphabetical%20Order/surveys&firestation4arch.htm>. Accessed February 13, 2016.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 7

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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### SIGNIFICANCE

#### Summary

From the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, grew rapidly in territory, population, and building stock. One decade was particularly noteworthy in this regard. From 1920 to 1930, Charlotte's population mushroomed from 46,447 to 82,676 residents. An increase in municipal services was required to sustain such growth, and fire protection was one of the most essential of these services.

Designed by prominent and prolific Charlotte architect Charles Christian Hook, Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 was built in 1925-1926 in the middle of the city's decade of phenomenal prosperity. As Charlotte's population burgeoned and more suburbs were developed, additional fire stations were constructed to protect these new areas. However, during its years of service, 1926-1972, Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 played a critical role in safe-guarding Charlotte's commercial center city from fire.

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 meets National Register Criterion A for its local significance in the area of politics/government because of its association with the city's efforts to improve municipal services – specifically fire protection – in the midst of rapid population growth. Its period of significance spans the years from 1926, when construction of the fire station was completed, to 1966, fifty years ago, when it was still serving the fire protection needs of the city of Charlotte. Although Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 continued in its original use until 1972, those last six years are not of exceptional significance.

#### Historical Background and Politics/Government Context

The year 1753 witnessed the arrival of the first settlers to the area now encompassed by the Charlotte city limits. During the decade that followed, more settlers arrived, and in 1762, Mecklenburg County was formed from Anson County. Charlotte was named the county seat and in 1768 was incorporated. Charlotte served not only as Mecklenburg County's seat of government, but also as the center of trade in the county. Still, by the time the first United States census was enumerated in 1790, Charlotte consisted of fewer than five hundred people.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Growth of Charlotte: A History," 2-3. <http://www.cmhpf.org/educhargrowth.htm>. Accessed April 20, 2016.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 8

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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After gold was discovered in the vicinity of Charlotte in 1799, the town became the center of trade, not only for Mecklenburg County, but also for a region composed of several counties. However, it was the arrival of the railroad in Charlotte in 1852 that set the town on its course to becoming the largest city in the Carolinas. By 1861, four rail lines converged in Charlotte, and in 1872, a fifth railroad was added. The impact that multiple rail lines had on the growth of trade in Charlotte and, concomitantly, on the town's population, can be seen in the census figures of the period. From 1850 to 1860, Charlotte's population more than doubled, from 1,065 to 2,265. By 1870 the number of inhabitants had nearly doubled again, to 4,473.<sup>4</sup>

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, Charlotte developed as a progressive New South city whose leadership as a trade center, especially in cotton, was accompanied by a developing leadership in cotton manufacturing. The city's first successful cotton mill, the Charlotte Cotton Mill, was located on West Fifth Street at Graham Street, near the future location of Charlotte Fire Station No. 4.<sup>5</sup>

As the late nineteenth century rolled over to the twentieth century, Charlotte's industrial ventures broadened from cotton mills to include other types of textile mills as well as non-textile industries. Charlotte's industrial growth was accompanied by an expansion in both wholesale and retail commerce. However, the development of banking in twentieth-century Charlotte became as important as industry and commerce to the city's economy, for it provided the capital needed to finance the growing economic development of both Charlotte and much of the surrounding Piedmont region. At the same time, James B. and Benjamin N. Duke and W. Gill and Robert H. Wylie developed Southern Power Company – later Duke Power Company and now Duke Energy – which began delivering electricity to customers in 1904.<sup>6</sup>

Charlotte's booming economic growth was accompanied by a tremendous physical expansion of the city. From 1900 to 1910, the city's population grew from 18,091 to 34,014, an increase that represented the largest during any decade of the twentieth century. Not only did Charlotte's commercial center expand both outward and upward, but a ring of residential suburbs soon surrounded the city. Reflecting this growth, Charlotte's city boundaries were expanded in 1907 to include 12.76 square miles – a 570 percent increase over the previous boundary drawn in 1885.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hanchett, 3-5.

<sup>5</sup> Hanchett, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Hanchett, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Hanchett, 11.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 9

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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The expanding city's need for the construction of buildings of all types drew architects to Charlotte in increasing numbers. Prominent and prolific architects Charles Christian Hook and his partner, Frank Sawyer, as well as Frank Milburn and his protégé, L. E. Schwend, had arrived in the city in the 1890s. During the first decade of the twentieth century, they were joined by James M. McMichael, William H. Peeps, partners L. L. Hunter and Franklin Gordon, Louis Asbury, Fred Bonfoey, and others.<sup>8</sup>

With America's participation in World War I during the late 1910s and with the mild economic depression that followed, Charlotte's growth slowed. However, by the early 1920s, the city, like many other cities during this decade of general prosperity, had entered a period of phenomenal growth that lasted until the end of the decade. At that point, Charlotte was home to 82,675 residents and was the largest city in the Carolinas. In response to this population explosion, the city boundaries were extended in 1928 to include nearly twenty square miles.<sup>9</sup>

The economic factors that drove Charlotte's growth in the 1920s were textiles, distribution, wholesale and retail commerce, and banking. During the 1920s, Charlotte's role as the center of textile manufacturing in this region of the state grew, with a manufacturing territory of 770 mills, and it was the largest center in the South for textile mill machinery and equipment. The city grew in importance as a distribution center. For example, in 1925 Ford Motor Company opened a large assembly-line plant in Charlotte that produced 300 Model T automobiles per day to supply the Southern market. The Victor Corporation, later RCA Victor, selected Charlotte as a regional distribution city for its radios, photographs, and records, and the city became a major recording center, especially of country music. During the decade, a network of paved highways began to converge in the city as part of North Carolina's "Good Roads" program, and these new highways helped Charlotte grow not only as a wholesaling point but also as a trucking center for the entire Southeast. Retailing expanded substantially during the decade. Department store chains Iveys and Efirds constructed large new stores on North Tryon Street downtown, and a third chain, Belks, enlarged its East Trade Street establishment. New banks also were erected, and a branch of the Federal Reserve opened in 1927, giving Charlotte a financial edge over other cities in the area. Charlotte already had more banks, capital, deposits, and resources than any other city in North Carolina. The construction of new skyscrapers downtown reflected Charlotte's strong economic growth. Among these were the ten-story Hotel Charlotte, erected at the corner of Trade and Poplar Streets in 1924 and demolished in 1988 (NR, 1979); the seventeen-story Johnston Building, erected in 1924 at 212 South Tryon Street; the twenty-story

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<sup>8</sup> Hanchett, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Hanchett, 13-14.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 10

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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First National Bank Building, erected in 1926 at 110-112 South Tryon Street; and the ten-story Wilder Building, erected at 237 South Tryon Street in 1926 and demolished in 1983.<sup>10</sup>

As Charlotte grew, so did the need for municipal services, including fire protection. Over time, providing adequate fire protection meant that fire stations opened, closed, multiplied in number, and changed locations in response to the directions of population expansion and the evolving technology and practices of firefighting.

City records first mention firefighting services in 1845, when the Board of Aldermen approved payment for a hand-drawn, hand-pumped fire engine. So-called “fire masters” operated the engine and were paid by the city on an on-call basis, but the other firefighters were volunteers. Prior to the construction of Charlotte’s first waterworks in 1882, water for fighting fires was obtained from rain water collected in underground cisterns for that purpose. The cisterns were connected to gutters on buildings throughout the downtown area, and when the collected water was needed to fight a fire, fireman dropped a suction hose into the nearest cistern and pumped the water by hand.<sup>11</sup>

On August 1, 1887, the city’s Board of Aldermen voted to establish the Charlotte Fire Department, at which point paid firemen replaced most of the volunteer firefighters. Another change was the replacement of hand-drawn equipment by horse-drawn equipment. Charlotte’s new fire department had a fire marshal, four full-time firefighters, and eight more who served on an on-call basis. The fire marshal was paid \$40 per month, while the full-time firefighters and the on-call firemen were paid \$25 a month and \$8 a month, respectively.<sup>12</sup>

Charlotte’s first fire station, built by 1888 and demolished in the 1970s, stood at 222 East Trade Street. The mayor had a small office in the building. It served the city until Charlotte’s first City Hall, an architecturally elaborate building, was erected in 1891 at the corner of North Tryon and East Fifth streets. Quarters at the rear of the new City Hall were provided for the fire department, and bays for the fire-fighting apparatus faced East Fifth Street. With the building of the 1891 City Hall with its accommodations for the fire department, the first fire station on East Trade Street was turned over to the African American Neptune Company, the last of the

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<sup>10</sup> Hanchett, 13-15.

<sup>11</sup> Young and Hickin, 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Young and Hickin, 3-4.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 11

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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volunteer fire fighting companies in the city. The first City Hall stood until 1925, when city offices moved to a new municipal complex and the 1891 building was demolished.<sup>13</sup>

In 1901, Charlotte built a second fire station at the corner of North Church and West Trade streets, but it was demolished to make way for the 1907 construction of the Selwyn Hotel. The second fire station was then relocated at South Church Street between Trade and Fourth streets.<sup>14</sup>

The development of Dilworth, Charlotte's first suburb, necessitated the construction of an additional fire station. Fire Station No. 2 (NR, 1980), also known as the Old Dilworth Station, opened in 1909 at 1212 South Boulevard. This brought an increase in the number of full-time firefighters and, at the same time, the disbanding of the Neptune volunteer company. The 1909 Dilworth station remains standing, but it has not been used as fire station since 1948.<sup>15</sup>

In 1912, the Charlotte Fire Department purchased its first motorized fire truck, which seated twelve men and carried forty gallons of chemicals and water. The new fire truck's success led to the purchase of more automotive equipment, but it also resulted in the closure of the fire station on South Church Street, which could not accommodate the new equipment. This left the station at City Hall, which had all automotive apparatus, and the South Boulevard station, which retained horse-drawn equipment. In 1917, all of the fire department's horse-drawn equipment was removed from service, and in that same year, the Board of Alderman approved the purchase of an American LaFrance aerial fire truck. Around 1917, another fire station was built, this one in the 800 block of Louise Avenue to serve the Belmont neighborhood.<sup>16</sup>

In 1919, the Charlotte Fire Department converted to a two-platoon-shift system, which required the hiring of eight additional firefighters and brought the total number of fire department employees to forty-three. Under the two-platoon system, firemen worked seven daylight shifts and then an equal number of night shifts with shifts changing on Sunday.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Young and Hickin, 4; and Dan L. Morrill, "A Brief History of Charlotte Fire Station Number 4," 4.

<http://www.cmhpf.org/S&Rs%20Alphabetical%20Order/surveys&firestation4.htm>. Accessed January 7, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> "Selwyn Hotel, Charlotte, N.C." Postcard in the Mary Boyer Collection, J. Murray Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte. <http://digitalcollections.uncc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15483coll1/id/750>. Accessed July 22, 2016; and Young and Hickin, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Young and Hickin, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Young and Hickin, 5-6.

<sup>17</sup> Young and Hickin, 6.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 12

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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In 1925, the grand Beaux Arts-style City Hall was completed at 600 East Trade Street. At this time, the Headquarters Fire Station moved to a new station built behind City Hall at 125 South Davidson Avenue, a location it continued to occupy until 1990. At the South Davidson Avenue location, the new Headquarters Fire Station stood six blocks east of the center of the city. To better balance the city's fire protection services downtown, construction on a fourth station in the 400 block of West Fifth Street near the corner of North Graham Street was begun in 1925.<sup>18</sup> It is this fire station that is the subject of this National Register nomination.

On September 11, 1925, the City of Charlotte paid Cornelia Tate Whitted and her husband, T. B. Whitted, \$1,000 for a lot on West Fifth Street sixty feet east of its intersection with Graham Street.<sup>19</sup> On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, *The Charlotte Observer* announced that the fifty-foot-wide lot was to be used for the immediate erection of an additional fire station. Plans for Fire Station No. 4 proceeded accordingly. The West Fifth Street site was chosen for the new fire station because of its proximity to the uptown (center) section of the city and its accessibility to the Fourth Ward neighborhood.<sup>20</sup> Fire Station No. 4 was one of four new stations planned and built by the city in the 1920s, in addition to the 1925 Headquarters Fire Station. The other three, built after Fire Station No. 4, were the second Fire Station No. 3, (demolished in the 1980s), built in 1928 at the corner of Belmont and Allen Streets, and Fire Station No. 5 at 224 Wesley Avenue and Fire Station No. 6 at 249 South Laurel Avenue, both built in 1929 and still in operation.<sup>21</sup>

Before Fire Station No. 4 could be built, a house on the property had to be moved, and the Board of Commissioners (formerly the Board of Aldermen) agreed to this at their September 19, 1925, meeting.<sup>22</sup> At its October 16, 1925, meeting, the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution to advertise for bids for construction of the new fire station on West Fifth Street. Sealed bids were to be submitted on October 28<sup>th</sup> and were not to include heating and plumbing. Bids for those aspects of the work were to be requested later. According to *The Charlotte Observer*, firms wishing to submit bids could view the drawings and specifications for the building at the City Clerk's Office or at the office of the architect, C. C. Hook.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Young and Hickin, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Deed Book 594, p. 682.

<sup>20</sup> "Fire Facilities to Be Enlarged," *The Charlotte Observer*, September 23, 1925, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Mike Legeros, "Charlotte Former Firehouses," 6, <http://legeros.com/history/stations/charlotte/> Accessed January 7, 2016; and Young and Hickin, 7.

<sup>22</sup> City Council Minute Books, Vol. 18: Years 1924-26, p. 270.

<sup>23</sup> City Council Minute Books, Vol. 18: Years 1924-26, p. 287; and "Bids Are Requested for Building Fire Station," *The Charlotte Observer*, October 17, 1925, p. 11.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 13

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

Although records of the Board of Commissioners naming C. C. Hook as the architect for the new fire station were not found, it is clear from the above-cited newspaper article and other records that he was, indeed, the architect. Charles Christian Hook (1870-1938) was a prolific and accomplished architect in North Carolina. Born in Wheeling, West Virginia, Hook attended Washington University in St. Louis, and upon graduation in 1890, moved to Charlotte, where he soon became the city's first full-time professional architect. Over his career, Hook practiced alone and in three partnerships – with Frank McMurray Sawyer from 1898 to 1905, with Willard G. Rogers from 1905 to 1916, and with his son, Walter Hook, from 1924 until his death in 1938. Although C. C. Hook was best known for his work in the Colonial Revival style, he was adept at a wide range of other styles popular during the years of his practice. His commissions included residences, commercial buildings, schools, municipal and other government buildings, and other types of structures. A skilled promoter of his own work, Hook was also a leader in the nascent architectural profession in North Carolina. In 1906, he was part of a small group of architects who established North Carolina's first organization of professional architects – the North Carolina Architectural Association – and served on the first North Carolina Board of Architectural Registration and Examination, which was established in 1915.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to Charlotte Fire Station No. 4, Hook designed other public buildings in the city. Among these were the Charlotte Women's Club (1923, extant) at 1001 East Morehead Street, Charlotte Fire Station No. 6 (1929, extant) at 2495 Laurel Avenue, and the most important, Charlotte's 1925 City Hall and accompanying police station, fire station, and public health building – all erected in the block bounded by East Trade, South Davidson, South Alexander, and East Fourth Streets. Of this municipal complex, only the monumental Beaux Arts-style City Hall, at 600 East Trade Street, remains.<sup>25</sup>

With the replacement of horses by motorized vehicles and the conversion to a two-platoon-shift system, requirements for the design of fire stations in Charlotte changed. With a greater ability to focus on the health and comfort of firefighters, new fire stations switched from wood to concrete floors (on the first story), ample windows, and the installation of kitchens.<sup>26</sup>

For Charlotte Fire Station No. 4, Hook incorporated these changes and designed a building that was altogether at home in its center-city urban setting. While incorporating a

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<sup>24</sup> Michelle Ann Michael, "Charles Christian Hook," *North Carolina Architects and Builders*. Published online in 2009. <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000211>. Accessed February 13, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Michael; and "City Government Transfers to Handsome New Municipal Buildings," *Charlotte Sunday Observer*, November 1, 1925, Section 4, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Morrill, 6.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 14

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

reference to classicism in the use of keystones over the façade windows, Hook's design reflected primarily the Commercial Style that was popular during the first several decades of the twentieth century, especially in the 1920s. The Commercial Style, commonly used for one- and two-story urban commercial buildings, utilized largely flat wall surfaces decorated with patterned brick masonry, often with contrasting cast stone or limestone, and large windows arranged in groups. Against the plain stretcher bond of the fire station façade, Hook used subtle brick refinements including soldier-course bands and arches and slightly recessed panels. White cast-stone elements serve as decorative accents that enliven the simplicity of the façade's design.

Five sealed bids for the construction of the new fire station on West Fifth Street were opened by Charlotte's Board of Commissioners at their October 28, 1925, meeting. J. A. Gardner, who presented the lowest bid of \$17,500, was awarded the contract for the building project. Three bids each for the plumbing and the heating of the building were also received. With their lowest bids, Tompkins, Johnston, and Company was awarded the plumbing contract and Charles W. Christian was awarded the heating contract.<sup>27</sup>

Even before construction was underway, the City Commission began awarding contracts for fire protection equipment for the new fire station. According to *The Charlotte Observer*, on October 31, 1925, the commission awarded contracts to the Charlotte Supply Company and to the Fabric Fire Hose Company for providing 3,000 feet of fire hose each.<sup>28</sup>

On December 7, 1925, a building permit was granted for the construction of Charlotte Fire Station No. 4, with C. C. Hook listed as the architect. The building, to be located at 420 West Fifth Street, was to measure forty feet by sixty-seven feet on a lot that measured fifty feet by 400 feet. At a projected cost of around \$20,000, it was to be two stories in height with five rooms. Contractor J. A. Gardner signed the permit application.<sup>29</sup>

Construction apparently began immediately, for on February 23, 1926, *The Charlotte Observer* reported that, "The new fire station at the corner of Fifth and Graham streets will probably be completed this week [ . . . ]." The article continued that only a small amount of paving on the exterior of the building remained to be completed. It noted that two fire trucks would be used at the station, which was to serve the areas west of Tryon Street and across the

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<sup>27</sup>City Council Minute Books, Vol. 18: Years 1924-26, pp. 292-293; and "Gardner Gets Contract to Build Fire Station," *The Charlotte Observer*, October 29, 1925, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup>"Purchase Fire Hose for Fifth Street Station," *The Charlotte Observer*, October 31, 1925, page number unreadable.

<sup>29</sup>Application for Building Permit, Charlotte, N.C., December 7, 1925.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 15

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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Southern Railway tracks. Completion of the building actually took somewhat longer, for on March 12, the local paper mentioned that the firemen were beginning to move from their old location at City Hall to their new building. A later article reveals that the station opened for business on April 1, 1926.<sup>30</sup>

After Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 was built, it went about its intended purpose of providing fire protection to the long-developed western section of downtown Charlotte, and information concerning the station appeared only sporadically. However, a year after its construction, a political advertisement in the local newspaper pointed out another advantage to the city of having built the new fire station. W. R. Robertson, Charlotte's Commissioner of Public Safety, was running for re-election and published a half-page letter to the citizens of Charlotte that set forth all he had done to make Charlotte a safer and better place in which to live. In terms of fire safety, he pointed out that:

By the installation of additional and improved fire fighting machinery and by the establishment of an additional fire station on West Fifth Street, the rating of Charlotte has been changed to first class. This has caused a reduction of the fire insurance rates which has saved a good many thousand dollars for the property owners of Charlotte.<sup>31</sup>

Only three years after Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 was completed, a new heating plant was needed. The reason for this is not known. However, while Charles W. Christian's original heating system had cost \$1,300, the new plant was to cost less than \$200 in labor, with the city paying for the necessary materials. The lower cost was due to the fact that the firemen, themselves, were to provide the labor. Fire Chief Hendrix Palmer informed the City Council that the new heating plant would pay for itself in fuel savings.<sup>32</sup>

Other than the construction of new facilities, the biggest news reported about Charlotte's various fire stations tended to be the participation of stations in the fighting of a major fire or the deaths of firemen in the line of duty. Such was the case with Charlotte Fire Station No. 4. On April 2, 1934, the main headline of Section 2 of *The Charlotte Observer* was, "Charlotte Fireman Loses Life in Fall at Station." Indeed, the article reported the death of fireman Pruette L. Black

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<sup>30</sup> "5<sup>th</sup> Street Fire Station Just About Completed," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 23, 1926; "Move in New Station," *The Charlotte Observer*, March 12, 1926; and Merle D. Kellerhals Jr., "Plans for Station Near OK," *Charlotte News*, January 28, 1981.

<sup>31</sup> "Robertson," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 14, 1927.

<sup>32</sup> "Firemen Get Heat Plant; Save Installing Costs," *The Charlotte Observer*, July 13, 1929, page number unreadable.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 16

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

at Fire Station No. 4. In a bizarre accident, Black died when, in answering a fire alarm, he lost his footing and plunged head-first through the pole opening in the second-floor sleeping quarters to the concrete first floor fourteen feet below.<sup>33</sup>

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 continued to provide fire protection services in center city Charlotte until 1972. By that time, the station had become obsolete, its bays no longer large enough to accommodate the new fire apparatus. At that time, the station was relocated to a new building at 525 North Church Street in the city's Fourth Ward. The new station's four bays varied in size to handle the modern equipment.<sup>34</sup> For the first decade after it closed, the former fire station on West Fifth Street was used by the city sanitation department for storage. The city sold the building in 1982, and subsequently it had various uses, including offices and a commercial production studio. From 2002 to 2009, it housed the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Fire Museum. Currently, the building is owned by Randy Watson Holdings, LLC, a cover name for Charlotte Panthers defensive end, Charles Johnson, who plans to open a restaurant in the building.<sup>35</sup>

Just as Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 had been built in response to the city's expansion, so other fire stations were built over time as Charlotte continued to grow. The boom years of the 1920s brought a particularly large increase in population and suburban development. The 1930 population of 82,675 represented a seventy-eight percent increase over the population of 46,447 in 1920.<sup>36</sup> At the beginning of 1929, Charlotte annexed development on the east and west sides of the city, which necessitated the construction of two additional fire stations, Station No. 5 at 224 Tuckaseegee Road (now Wesley Heights Way) and Station No. 6 at 249 South Laurel Avenue. Both opened on April 24, 1929. In 1935, Station No. 7 was built at 3210 North Davidson Street to serve North Charlotte. No other stations were built until after World War II, although the Palmer Fire School was erected on Monroe Road in 1940. When Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 was built, it had been designed to fit in with its center-city environment, and the

<sup>33</sup> "Charlotte Fireman Loses Life in Fall at Station," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 2, 1934, Section 2, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Phone conversation with Charlotte Fire Department Division Chief Gary McCormick, July 25, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Legeros, 3; Merle D. Kellerhals Jr., "Plans for Station Near OK," *Charlotte News*, January 28, 1981, p. 11A; Abbe Fletman, "Fire Station Ready in Early '83," *Charlotte News*, December 13, 1982, p. 12 A; "Fire Museum Closing Its Doors," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 5, 2009, <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/living/health-family/moms/moms-columns-blogs/article>, Accessed January 20, 2016; Deed Book 29826, pp. 437-441; and Katherine Peralta, "Panthers' Charles Johnson Planning Uptown Restaurant," *The Charlotte Observer*, September 30, 2015, <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/business/biz-columns-blogs/whats-in-store/article3702510.html>, Accessed January 7, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Hanchett, 14.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 17

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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stations that followed were likewise designed to mesh with their environments, be they commercial or residential.<sup>37</sup>

By 1929, the Charlotte Fire Department had six fire stations and 117 firefighters. By 2015, those numbers had grown to forty-two fire stations and 1,154 full-time employees, eighty-nine percent of whom were fire-suppression personnel.<sup>38</sup> One truth of the Charlotte Fire Department from its establishment in 1887 to the present is that it constantly evolved in order to best provide fire protection for the city. This meant not only that new fire stations were frequently built, but also that the location of a particular station could change one or more times, such as Fire Station No. 2, which occupied several locations over time. As part of this evolution, many fire stations were put out of service and some of those were demolished.

Today, Charlotte Fire Station No. 4 is the only surviving pre-World War II building in center-city Charlotte that once served as a fire station. At the same time, it is one of only six pre-World War II buildings in the city as a whole that are or were associated with firefighting. Of those, Fire Stations No. 5, 6, and 7 are still used as fire stations, while Fire Stations No. 2 and 4 and the Palmer Fire School are no longer used by the Fire Department.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Young and Hickin, 7-8; Legeros, 5; and Morrill, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Legeros, 1; "About the Charlotte Fire Department,"

<http://charmec.org/city/charlotte/Fire/About%20Us/Pages/Default.aspx>, Accessed March 30, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Morrill, 2, 7-8.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9 Page 18

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9 Page 19

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 10 Page 20

Charlotte Fire Station No. 4  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Latitude: 35.231300 Longitude: -80.845350

#### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property coincides with the boundary of Mecklenburg County tax parcel #07805308 as indicated on the accompanying National Register Boundary Map, drawn to a scale of 1" = 50'.

#### Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property encompasses the 0.228-acre tract that forms the original and current setting associated with the Charlotte Fire Station No. 4.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information for #1, 2, 4, and 5 applies to all nomination photographs. Number 3 gives the photographers' names and the particular photographs they shot.

- 1) Charlotte Fire Station No. 4
- 2) Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
- 3) Photographer: Laura A. W. Phillips – photos 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8  
Heather Fearnbach – photos 2, 6 and 9
- 4) February 12, 2016
- 5) CD:NCHPO, Raleigh, NC
- 6-7) 1: Fire station in setting, view to northwest  
2: Front (south) façade, view to north  
3: Side (west) elevation, view to east  
4: Side (east) elevation, view to southwest  
5: Rear (north) elevation, view to south  
6: First floor, view to south toward garage doors  
7: First floor, view to northeast  
8: Second floor, recreation room with historic fireplace, view to north  
9: Second floor, sleeping quarters, view to south