

## The Historic Ormond Beach Fire House 160 E. Granada Boulevard WPA Building - Circa 1937

The Fire House was built for the Town of Ormond police and fire departments. Not long before it was built Ormond relied on a volunteer fire department and a hand drawn hose cart. The professional fire fighters and fire truck had to be housed. Since the fire chief was also the police chief having both departments at a single location made sense.

The Fire House was approved by the federal government as a WPA project on November 27, 1935 with an appropriation of \$12,467. The total construction cost was \$22,000 and Ormond paid the difference. It was the only WPA funded building in Ormond. Construction started on July 18, 1936 and the Fire House was placed in service on October 14, 1937. The mayor was Hubert A. Price and the police/fire chief was D.W. Whitehurst.

52 workers, at least some of whom were African American, were transferred from the completed WPA Granada Avenue street improvement project to work on the Fire House. It was built with brick and native coquina rock, which was a common building material in the area at the time. There were two bays, an office for the police/fire chief and a "sturdy" two cell jail on the first floor and separate living quarters for the chief and the firemen on the second. The chief's quarters were on the east side above the jail and the firemen's were on the west side above the bays. There was a single interior staircase to the second floor and an exterior staircase on the west side of the building to the firemen's quarters. A small basement, with an outside entrance, be-

neath part of the jail contained the furnace and a full attic could be accessed by a staircase from the chief's living quarters. At the time it was built the Fire House was considered a model facility for communities the size of Ormond.

Although designed for two fire trucks it was not until 1949 that Ormond acquired a second truck. However, in 1938 famous painter Fred Dana Marsh donated his personally designed and specially built roadster to the department because he felt they had a need for such a vehicle. Earlier that year Ormond purchased a new police patrol car so apparently Chief Whitehurst had options.

The Fire House served additional duty as a polling station, hurricane shelter, municipal courtroom, Civil Defense observation post, and Raid Casualty Station during World War II, among others. From 1947 to 1971 there was a municipal water tower right behind the jail. From 1977 until



**New Municipal Building 1939**



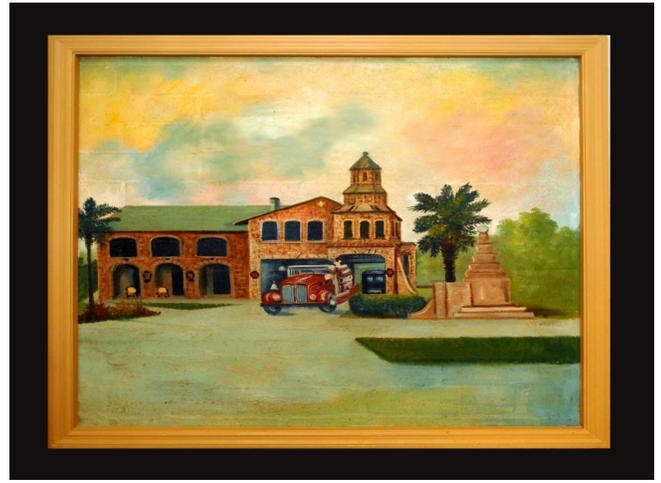
**1954 Ormond Beach Police**

1995, except one year it was closed, the Birthplace of Speed Museum, occupied part of the premises.

The architect of the Fire House was Alan J. MacDonough, also the architect of the Daytona Beach Bandshell and Holly Hill City Hall, which like the Fire House, were WPA projects built of coquina. The Streamline Hotel, Jackie Robinson Ballpark and Peabody Auditorium were his as well. While previously residing in nearby Lake County Mr. MacDonough designed most of the public buildings and many fine homes there. He is the architect of record for numerous structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The architectural style of the building is Spanish Colonial Revival, incorporating both Mission and Spanish Revival elements. Prominent architectural features, aside from the coquina, include arched covered porches on the first and second floors; a cross-gabled roof; keystones above all doors, windows and arches; and an octagonal tower with pyramidal low pitched roof. There is a monument in front by Granada Boulevard that has an octagonal central feature.

The Fire House remains today much as it was when built. The exterior is almost identical, even with original light fixtures at the first floor porch. The original interior walls are largely intact, including the thick jail cell walls. While some walls have been added inside the layout is much the same as it was when built and many original aspects are apparent, such as exposed brick and coquina walls, keystones, the high ceiling and concrete floor in the large bay and the jail cell door frame. The fire pole hangs horizontally as part of a lighting fixture in the large bay and the original furnace remains in the basement.



There was a fire station at the Fire House continuously until November 2006 when Station 91 moved to a new home nearby on A1A, a span of nearly 70 years. It was extensively renovated in a manner sensitive to its history by the new private owners and is currently used as offices for the business law firm Snell Legal. It was designated an Ormond Beach Historic Landmark in 1987 and National Register of Historic Places status is pending. For a YouTube video of photos of the Fire House see the “Our Historic Building” page of the Snell Legal website, [www.snelllegal.com](http://www.snelllegal.com).

i Ormond changed its name to Ormond Beach in 1950.

ii The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was part of the “New Deal” of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, devised to create jobs with federal money during the Great Depression. From 1935-43 the WPA employed nearly 8½ million people and 1.4 million individual projects, costing about \$11 billion, were undertaken. Almost every community in America has a WPA park, bridge or public building.

iii Mr. Marsh was a part time resident of Ormond. In 1932 he built a noteworthy home on 300 feet of the oceanfront locals called “The Battleship.” After his death the property was purchased by Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University for a residence and entertainment site for its presidents. It was demolished in May 1996 to facilitate a sale of the land. There is a Fred Dana Marsh Museum at Tomoka State Park.

iv The Birthplace of Speed Museum was dedicated to the early automobile beach racing and speed record setting history of Ormond involving many of the luminaries of the automobile industry.

v The Streamline Hotel is where NASCAR was founded.

vi Jackie Robinson Ballpark is on City Island in Daytona Beach and is where the first integrated professional baseball game was played. Jackie Robinson played in an exhibition game there for the AAA Montreal Royals against their parent club, the Brooklyn Dodgers on March 17, 1946. The next year Robinson played for the Dodgers and the major leagues were integrated. Mr. MacDonough designed the grandstands and press box at Jackie Robinson Park long after it opened in 1914.

vii The original Peabody Auditorium in Daytona Beach opened in 1920 and burned to the ground in 1945. Mr. MacDonough was one of two architects for the second Peabody Auditorium, still in use, which opened on October 6, 1949.

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