
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

Historic Landmark Case No. 05-16

**Sewage Pumping Station
(DC Water Main Pumping Station)
1331 2nd Street, SE
(Square 771-W Lot 800)**

Meeting Date: January 26, 2012
Applicant: D.C. Preservation League
Affected ANC: 6D

After careful consideration, the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) recommends that the Board designate the D.C. Water Main Pumping Station at 125 O Street, SE a landmark to be entered in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites, and that the nomination be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places. The property meets National Register Criterion A as an example of a high-style public works project and Criterion C as a premier example of Beaux Arts architecture and an important manifestation of the City Beautiful Movement.



The sewage pumping station is a striking 2-1/2-story brick building designed in a robust Beaux Arts manner reflecting late Renaissance Revival-style features and constructed between 1904 and 1907. The building is located at 2nd and O Streets, SE on the Anacostia River and is sandwiched between the Nationals Park stadium on the west and the Washington Navy Yard on its east. Constructed on fill land that was once the confluence of the Washington City Canal and the Anacostia River, the building measures a sizeable 130 feet by 310 feet and consists of end pavilions on the north and south connected by a long hyphen whose side walls face east and west. The pumping station is constructed of steel and is faced with a brownish-red pressed brick with extensive Classically derived stone decorative elements, including quoining, beltcourses,

cornice brackets, pedimented dormers, and capitals. The red brick walls and light colored stonework give the building a polychromatic appearance that contributes to its character. The building is covered with a combination of intersecting roof forms, originally clad in slate.

Construction of the pumping station began in 1904 and was completed in 1907, though the building's inception dates back to 1889 when the President of the United States appointed a board of sanitary engineers to devise a plan for disposal of the city's sewage. At that time, open sewers carrying the city's raw sewage emptied directly into the river along the waterfront. By 1898, the city had begun implementing the sewage system developed by the established board of engineers, including the "third largest sewer in the world," and was planning for construction of the pumping station. The building's design and development corresponded with the rise of the City Beautiful movement which, in an effort to beautify the city, sought to improve the city's municipal services and buildings, among other civic improvements. At the time that the pumping station was being constructed, several other major municipal projects were also undertaken, including the erection of street infrastructure (paving and lights), public school buildings, a water pumping station, public convenience stations, and the monumental Connecticut Avenue bridge over Rock Creek, in addition to the laying out and landscaping of the city's urban park system.

The Sewage Pumping Station is an excellent example of a high-style public works project that is a direct manifestation of the City Beautiful Movement. As such, the building meets D.C. Designation Criteria A and B (Events and History) and National Register Criterion A (Events) for its associations with the City Beautiful Movement.

In addition, the building, designed by local architect Clement A. Didden represents a sophisticated example of a Beaux Arts-style building, a style that was particularly popular during the City Beautiful era as it embodied characteristics of wealth, beauty and civic pride. While there are many examples of Beaux Arts design in the District, most notably Union Station (1908), the D.C. Main Pumping Station is an exceptional and unique example of a public works building reflecting the style. The building thus meets D.C. Designation Criterion D (Architecture and Urbanism) and National Register Criteria C (Architecture).

Despite the loss of certain original exterior features, the D.C. Pump Station retains a high degree of integrity with no major additions or alterations. The most notable changes to the building's original exterior include the loss of its cupolas along the roof ridge, the closing in of the louvered monitor roof at the south end pavilion, and the removal of a freestanding chimney stack at the southern end of the property. Several contemporary and temporary-looking buildings at the north end of the property are non-contributing resources.

The Period of Significance for the D.C. Sewage Pumping Station extends from 1904, when construction of the building commenced, to 1907 when it was completed.