

New tenant sparks new life for abandoned fire house

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The old saw that says a book should not be judged by its cover might aptly be applied to the old Webster Groves fire engine house at Lockwood and Gore avenues which has recently undergone renovation by a firm of architects and planners for its offices.

Minimal changes have been made to the exterior of the building which in any age would have ever received recognition as an outstanding architectural accomplishment. However, the interior has been converted into a beautiful, functional building with the innovative use of limited space.

The fire house at 130 West Lockwood ave., was purchased from the city last September by Jockenhoefer Associates after it was declared surplus by the city. The building was abandoned after the city built a new fire house south of the city hall.

IN RENOVATING the building no efforts were made to disguise the building from its original function. The inscription in stone over the front window, which was formerly the door to the fire house, still proclaims it to be Webster Groves Fire Co. No. 1.

The large opening for the overhead doorway for egress and ingress of the pumper stationed at the fire house has been reduced slightly and replaced by a window. A vertical wooden grill has been placed outside the window.

The grill concept has been repeated on the passageway to the east of the building which will provide a garden entry into the building. The entry is through a side door of the building.

Facing the entry is a large expanse of brick wall which has been sandblasted to remove layers of paint from the original wall. This is the reception room which is covered by a deep brown carpet.

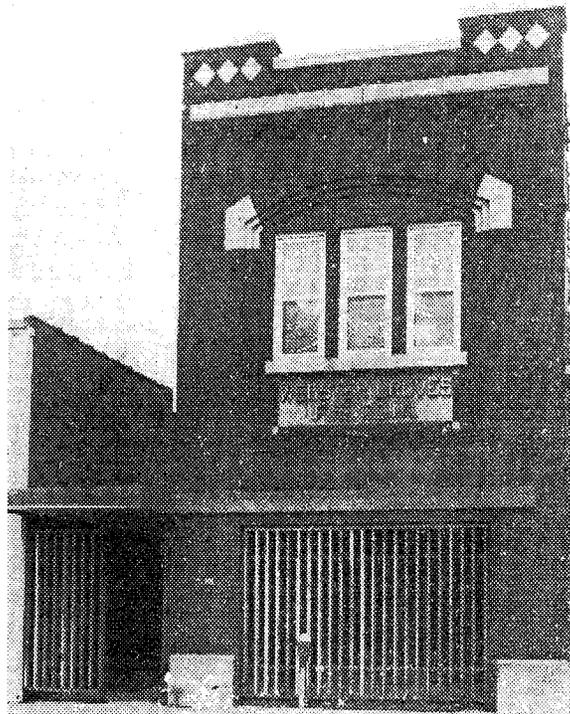
THE CEILING of the reception room is a gentle rolling mass of oak members set away from the walls by a six inch recess, which tends to allow the ceiling to float. There is a work center to the left of the entrance.

The walls of the reception room will be used for the display of works by local artists. The present display are works by Mrs. Sharon Erbe.

Immediately to the rear of the reception room along a corridor following the west wall of the building is the office of the principal partner, Theodore Jockenhoefer Jr., and a conference room.

Jockenhoefer's office and the conference room are separated by colonial panel doors which are over 100 years old. Both rooms have metal ceiling panels which were carefully removed and refinished from the ceiling of the fire house.

AT THE REAR of the corridor are the stairs to the second floor. They are the original stairs which have been carpeted to reduce the noise and a fire resistant enclosure added.



This old engine house at Lockwood and Gore avenues in Webster Groves has been completely renovated and is now occupied by Jockenhoefer Associates, architects. The exterior of the building is about the way it appeared before renovation with the exception of the grill covering a window replacing the overhead doors and the grilled garden entry at left.

Globe-Democrat photos by Roy Cook

The kitchen used by the firemen and the hose tower for drying the fire hose has been converted into a library and conference room.

The dormitory formerly used by the firemen is used as a production and drafting room. The room has eight windows which provide adequate natural light. Partitioned cubicles divide the room for each draftsman.

In one of the second floor offices, the walls are covered

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with door panels which were salvaged from St. Mary's Seminary in Perryville when the firm did some renovation there. The panels were made about 1850 and set in the doors with hand forged nails.

TOM STEVENER, an associate of the firm, who is also historian for the project, furnished some interesting sidelights concerning the building.

He said the building was built in 1913 and the original apparatus was horse drawn. The engine was kept in the front of the building with the horses in the middle of the first floor. Fodder for the horses was kept on the second floor. A chute from the storage place to the mangers below is still visible.

Sometime in the early 20s, Stevener said the horse drawn equipment was discarded for motorized equipment. About the same time, he said, the fire department went from a volunteer department to a full time crew.

During the influenza epidemic in the late 30s, Stevener said he learned many of the firemen were laid up with the ailment while the remaining men were overworked. He said it was during this time that the engine house caught on fire in the old kitchen area. He said the damage was slight before the fire was confined.

It was during the same epidemic, Stevener said that the fire chief elected to stay overnight because of the manpower shortage.

It was a bitter cold night and the chief before retiring removed his false teeth and placed them in a glass of water at his bedside. When he awoke the next morning the water with his teeth in it had frozen solid.