

= Fire Station No. 23 (Los Angeles , California) =

Fire Station No. 23 is a former fire station in Downtown Los Angeles . Built in 1910 as an operating fire station , it was also the Los Angeles Fire Department 's headquarters until 1920 and the residence of every fire chief from 1910 @-@ 1928 . When it opened , it spawned a political firestorm due to the ornate interior and expensive imported materials , leading to its being called the " Taj Mahal " of firehouses . After 50 years of operation , the station was closed in 1960 as the department began replacing older stations with new facilities . Since the 1980s , Fire Station No. 23 has been a popular filming location . Motion pictures filmed at the station include the Ghostbusters movies , The Mask , Police Academy 2 , Flatliners , Firehouse and National Security .

= = History = =

= = = Construction controversy = = =

In June 1909 , the city of Los Angeles announced plans to build a three @-@ story fire station in the heart of the wholesale and manufacturing district that would also serve as the fire department 's headquarters . The projected cost of the station was placed at \$ 35 @, @ 000 .

When the station opened in September 1910 at a final cost of \$ 53 @, @ 000 , a controversy arose over the cost and use of expensive materials , including Peruvian mahogany in the chief 's living quarters . It was considered the " most elaborate and richest engine @-@ house west of New York " and maybe the " most ornate ... in this or any other world . " The Los Angeles Times reported on its opulence as follows :

" It is the interior which is to reincarnate man and beast in the fire department . It is the interior which is a sort of Nirvana for a soulful legion of blue @-@ shirted civil service graduates . Its spell will be hypnotic , for if the visitor starts in with the third floor he will leave by Winston Street in stupefaction . "

The building was an unusually narrow structure , only 26 feet (7 @. @ 9 m) wide but 167 feet (51 m) deep stretching the entire distance from Fifth to Winston Streets . The main floor was an arcade connecting Fifth and Winston Streets with stalls for ten horses , repressed vitrified brick , walls of white enamel tiling , and pressed steel ceilings 21 feet (6 @. @ 4 m) above the floor . More than anything else , it was the extravagant third floor living quarters , described as " the chief 's boudoir " and a " palace for chiefs , " that drew the most attention . Access to the third floor was by a private elevator that " moves noiselessly and stealthily to the upper haven . " The third floor was covered in Peruvian mahogany with French bevel glass mirrors , a mantel of Vermont marble , polished inlaid oak floors , a private slide pole , a massive brass bed , private roof garden , and " a tub big enough for two chiefs . " The Times reported : " Notice the Peruvian mahogany carefully , and you will see that the heart of the log has been chosen and that its grain has been placed so that it gives the appearance of real flames . Certainly the esthetic for the reception room of the engine @-@ house de luxe . " The chief 's apartment alone was reported to have cost \$ 25 @, @ 000 . The Times noted that the quarters rivaled the finest suites in the country , referred to it as a " Sybaritic effort , " and offered its sarcastic speculation that the house captain would be expected to " wear evening dress after 6 o 'clock , at least . "

The unveiling of the ornate fire station set off " a political and civic storm . " It was called a waste of taxpayer funds , as critics contended " three station houses could be built for what this cost . " Amid the outcry , city fire commissioners denied knowledge that the fire house was to have been so luxurious , though newspapers reported that the commissioners had approved the plans .

= = = Operation = = =

Fire Station No. 23 remained an active firehouse from 1910 @-@ 1960 . When it opened , it was manned by fifteen firefighters and ten horses . The original equipment included a horse wagon ,

chief 's buggy , and a pumper that used a vertical tube boiler . The company 's first major call was a fire in the old Byrne Building that took ten hours to extinguish .

The station also served as the department 's headquarters from 1910 ? 1920 , and the home for every fire chief from 1910 to 1928 , including chief Ralph J. Scott . Chief Scott 's wife , Addie Scott , lived with him on the third floor and later recalled the station 's early days : " I remember the horses . They really knew what to do . When the bell would ring , they would come out and stand there to be hitched up It was a nice life here for us I remember trying to wax all these floors , and I just couldn 't do it . So someone came and helped me . This is a lot of floor space you know . "

Fire Station No. 23 was closed in November 1960 as the Los Angeles Fire Department began replacing older stations with newer stations with modern facilities . At the time of its closure , some of the 1 @, @ 100 men who had worked there attended a ceremony as the building was " mustered out of service . "

= = Museum = =

= = = Historic status = = =

In 1966 , the station was declared a Historic Cultural Monument by the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission ; at the time of the declaration the Los Angeles Times called it the " Taj Mahal of fire stations . " A Library of Congress survey of 250 firehouses concluded that Station 23 's interior was " unmatched in its beauty . " It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 .

= = = Controversy over restoration = = =

Through the 1960s and 1970s , the station deteriorated . The surrounding neighborhood became part of the city 's Skid Row and the station became " a hangout for the street people . " Looters stole most of the copper tubing and brasswork , banisters , doorknobs , firebells , and even the five brass firepoles .

By the mid @-@ 1970s , concerns were raised that the building had become a hazard , and some proposed tearing it down . However , in 1979 , the Fire Commission announced plans to restore the rooms back to their 1910 condition and turn the station into a museum . The City Council placed the station under control of the fire department , but provided that no city funds were to be used in creating the museum .

In 1981 , officials of the fire department set up a nonprofit organization called Olde 23 to raise funds to build the museum , but sufficient funds were never raised . The projected cost of the museum , even in 1982 , was \$ 1 million , and critics questioned the wisdom of building a museum in Skid Row . In 1988 , the city settled on a different location for the Los Angeles Fire Department Museum ? Engine Co . No. 27 in Hollywood .

Fire Station No. 23 became the subject of controversy again in 1995 when the Los Angeles Times ran a 2 @, @ 200 @-@ word , front @-@ page article reporting on alleged misuse of city funds by Olde 23 , the nonprofit charged with restoration of the station . Even though plans for the fire department museum had shifted to another location years earlier , Olde 23 continued to live on , banking more than \$ 200 @, @ 000 in fees from film and television producers using the station house as a shooting location . The Times reported that ex @-@ Chief Donald O. Manning had not told other city agencies about Olde 23 's continued operations , and Olde 23 had failed to turn over the income , as required by city law . Investigations by the Times and the City Controller also revealed that some filming fees had been paid in cash to James Croak , an American artist who leased the building from the City of Los Angeles from 1978 ? 85 , but no illegality was found as Mr. Croak had the right to sub @-@ lease the property for short periods as long as he notified the landlord that he was doing so . Notably Mr. Croak used most of the money to replace missing brass fire poles , balustrades and other period fixtures that were missing . Other fees were not accounted for , and Olde 23 the museum Non @-@ Profit had even collected fees for use of other city fire

stations as shooting locations . Also , even after the city chose a new location for a fire department museum , the chief did not use the funds collected by " Olde 23 " for the museum . The controversy came to light after an angry official for Warner Bros. wrote a memorandum complaining about " donations " to the Fire Department and referring to such donations as " extortion . "

= = Filming location = =

Since 1978 when James Croak occupied the building after an 18 @-@ year vacancy , Fire Station No. 23 became a popular filming location for motion pictures , television productions , commercials , and music videos . In 1995 , the Los Angeles Times wrote : " With its finely restored interior and turn @-@ of @-@ the @-@ century architecture , old Fire Station 23 in Downtown Los Angeles is one of the choicest filming locations in town . " One producer called it " a great raw architectural space that you can do a lot with . "

The first major motion picture filmed at Station 23 was Hammett (1982) by German director Wim Wenders , followed two years later by Ghostbusters . The station was used in the 1984 production as the location for the interior scenes of the headquarters of Drs. Venkman , Stantz and Spengler and Winston Zeddemore . Another station in New York , the Hook & Ladder Company 8 firehouse , was used for the exterior shots . The success of Ghostbusters helped popularize the station as a shooting location , and Fire Station No. 23 has since then been used in more than 50 productions , including Big Trouble in Little China (1986) , Ghostbusters II (1989) , The Mask (1994) , Police Academy 2 (1985) , A @-@ Team (1986) and V.I. Warshawski (1991) , Flatliners (1991) , Lost Highway (1997) , National Security (2003) , and RE (e) volution (2005) .