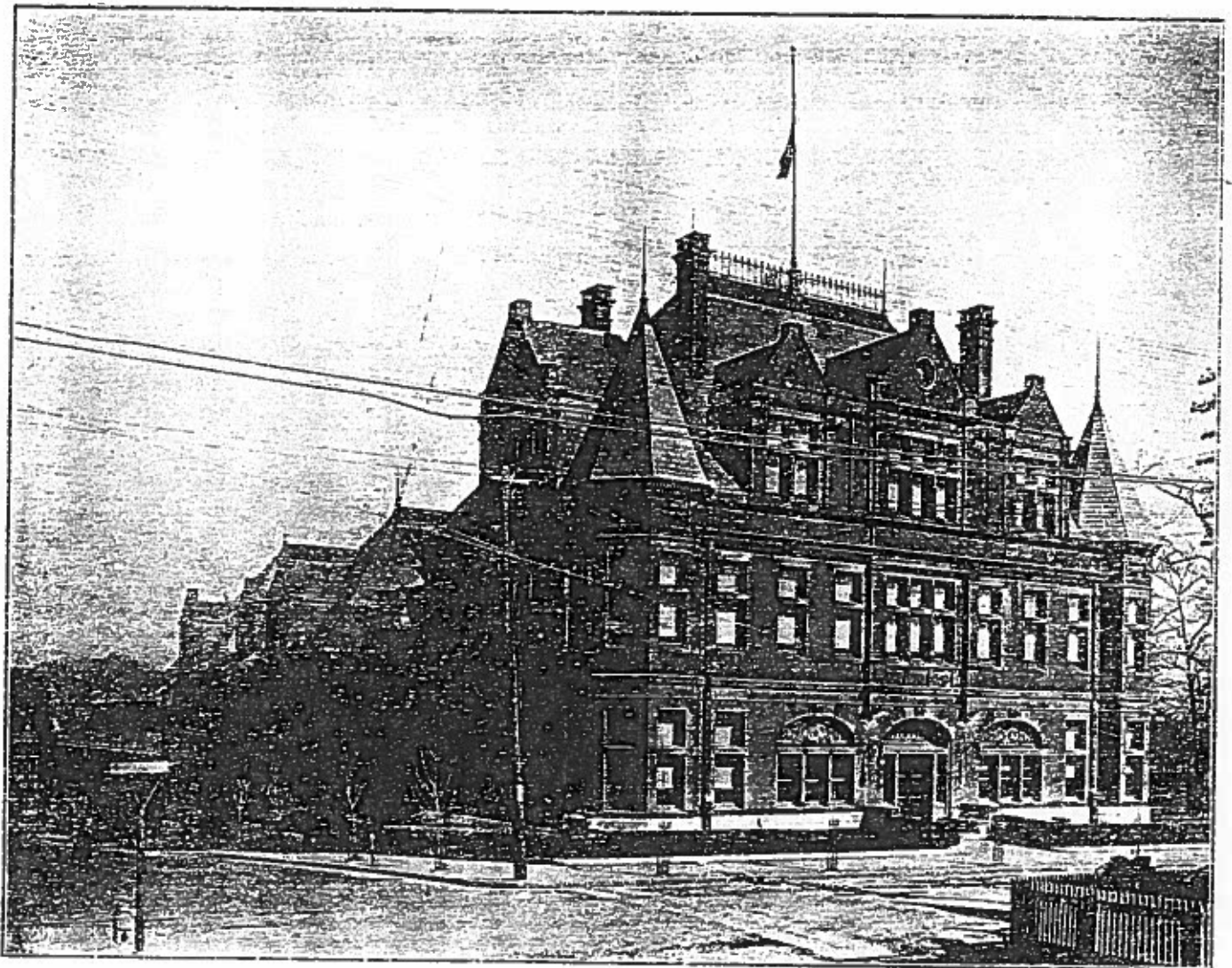


Northern District Police Station Landmark Designation Report

For Baltimore City Commission For
Historical Architectural Preservation
September 14, 1999



Northern District Police Station
Landmark Designation Report
For Baltimore City Commission for
Historical and Architectural Hearing
September 14, 1999

The Northern District Police Station Located at the corner Keswick Road and 34th Streets is eligible for listing on the Baltimore City Landmark List by meeting CHAP's Standards for designation number 4. The police station is "significant of the architectural period in which it was built and has distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, method of construction, or engineering, or is the notable work of a master builder, designer, engineer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

The police station is a magnificent masterpiece of the Victorian era as well as one of the best buildings designed by Henry Brauns. The architectural details as well as the shape and massing captures the fashion and style of the 1890s Baltimore and relate to the eclectic architectural fashion of the day.

The Sun printed the following article on 7/7/1898

The police board yesterday accepted the plans of Architect Henry Brauns for the New Northern Station house, which is to be located at Cedar, Second and Beech avenues in the northern annex. Mr. Brauns has endeavored to give all the good points of new stations houses throughout the east in the new building and for this purpose visited New York, Boston and Philadelphia. Many ideas were picked up. He also made a thorough investigation of the southern police station and took many ideas from that structure.

The new building will occupy but a portion of the lot acquired by the police board in the Northern Annex, the unused part being devoted to a pasture for the horses of the department. The building will have a frontage of 90 feet, with a depth of 207 feet, and will surround a courtyard, over which will be a shed where the horses may be given air without being brought directly in contact with extreme weather.

The structure will be two stories high and will have a high pitched roof of French design. It will be of pressed brick and brown tone trimmings, with a granite base. At the entrance will be two massive oak doors, which will lead into the large assembly room. To the left of the room will be the lieutenant's desk. While to the right will be the magistrate's courtroom. All will be finished in oak and brass, and be equipped for gas or electric lights.

Back of the magistrates court will be the prison. This will contain sixteen cells of the "intest"?? design of steel cages, which will be so arranged that all may be opened at one time if necessary. The prison will also be equipped with private toilet rooms...

Under the high pitched roof will be a modern gymnasium and drill room, while the whole building will be supplied with modern heating and ventilating machines.

Not much is known about Henry Brauns. Nevertheless, he left Baltimore several highly detailed Victorian Buildings: most outstanding are the Eastern Avenue Pumping station at the corner of Easter Avenue and President Street, and the Northern District Police Station.

Description:

The Northern District Police Station sits on the southeast corner Keswick and 34th and wraps around the corner from Keswick Avenue onto 34th Street. Pivoting and meshing the two side facades together is an octagonal turret on the corner. The main façade, which faces Keswick Avenue, is seven bays wide and symmetrically complete in itself. Two Octagonal turrets two stories high bookend the façade. The turret roofs are octagonal and rise into a point that is topped by a finial. The tips of the turrets sit below the roof ridge and cresting and lend a cylindrical shape to the three-gabled dormer.

Sitting on top of a rather simple and flat cornice – an architectural detail consciously minimized in order to show off vertical features of the building – is a the gabled dormer. Here, two smaller dormer windows – each with two one over one windows – flank a central large dormer. Each dormer is parapetted with a squared-off top. An ocular window fashions the center gable.

Above the ornamented three-gabled dormer is another layer of decoration. Sitting above and flanking the dormer are two chimneys ornamented by a corbelled brick design. The main roof is a doubled-hipped in the French Renaissance style (which also clued the writer of the 1898 column to describe it as “French”). The roofline again is ornamented with a wrought iron roof cresting. Directly in the middle is a fashioned flagpole.

Horizontally, the main façade is broken up into three stories (including the gable dormer, which reads as a third story), which are visually separated from each other by bands of brownstone. The three center bays on the first floor are topped with a stained-glass transom depicting a detailed plant motif. The keystones above the transoms are detailed with carved acanthus leaves. The center bay above the front door projects outward in brick paneled fashion. Pilasters frame the second story of the center bay and are visually supported on brownstone drop-pedants carved in Victorian fashion. Upon a closer look, the pedants harbor a man-beast.

Henry Brauns designed the building to be ‘intentionally’ eclectic. In other words, he was free from the criticisms of the tastemakers to choose freely

from a palette of ornamentation as well as shape and massing. Here, transomed arched first floor bays as well as its squatness becomes reminiscent of H.H. Richardson. The floral patterns in the stained glass as well as man-beasts in pedants hearken to the romantic emphasis on architecture, something that was brought to fruition most beautifully in Louis Sullivan. Octagonal turrets are of the Queen Anne style and the parapetted gables from some European antecedent. In addition, the newspaper article spells out the care and analysis of Braun's design. Here, Brauns did study other police stations in order to put forth first the function of the building. And upon the function came the detailing. This building represents the one of the best of Braun's work, one of the best of Victorian Architecture that is left in Baltimore, and one of the best of institutional architecture in Baltimore. Here Brauns shows us, stone brick and stone, that function does not need to destroy ornament.

In conclusion, the Northern District police station is an Architectural Landmark of Baltimore. Moreover, it is an architectural landmark of Hampden, a small village on the outskirts of town that grew into and developed as a neighborhood of Baltimore. Here too, the police station marks the acceptance and transition of Hampdem from a country village to a sub-urban neighborhood.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Northern District Police Station

The Commission approves the landmark designation of the Northern District Police Station located at 3355 Keswick Road the corner of Keswick and 34th Streets because it meets criteria number four as it is a significant of the architectural period in which it was built and has distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, method of construction, or engineering, or is the notable work of a master builder, designer, engineer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age. The police station is a magnificent masterpiece from the Victorian era as well as one of the best buildings designed by Henry Brauns.