

Potomac Electric Power Company
405 Eighth Street, NW (Substation)
Washington
District of Columbia

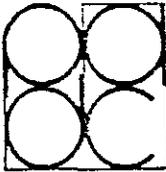
HABS No. DC-577

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291-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20013-7127



PENNSYLVANIA
AVENUE
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION

425 13TH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

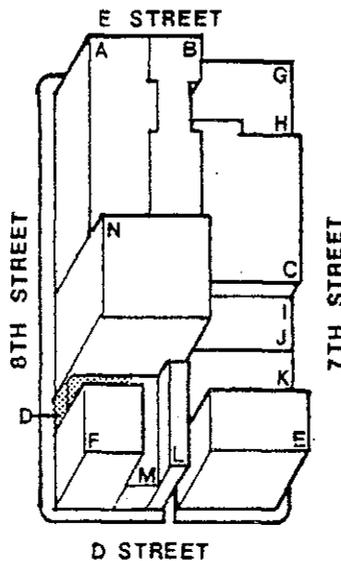
GENERAL CONSULTANTS

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

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POTOMAC ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY
405 EIGHTH STREET, N.W.
LOT 800



This documentation was produced for mitigation purposes by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation. Additional documentation exists for Square 431, within which this structure stands. For photographs, historical, and descriptive data on Square 431, see HABS No. DC-574.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Potomac Electric Power Company substation stands on the east side of Eighth Street Between D and E Streets. To its south is a five-story brick commercial building and to its north is a mid-Twentieth Century warehouse.

The utility structure completely covers its rectangular site which measures approximately thirty feet wide by sixty-five feet deep. The building is thirty-five feet high at the sidewalk, where it has two stories. There is a one-story rear portion. On both levels the roof is basically flat. A narrow public alley off D Street permits access at the rear.

Through the incorporation of pilasters and belt courses, the street (west) facade is expressed as a traditional grid of three bays and two floors. It is dark red brick, enhanced by red-tinted mortar.

The interior of the two-story substation has been entirely rebuilt. A single row of concrete columns runs east-west. The first floor entrance contains only two rows of free-standing electrical transformers. The second floor is reached by an iron spiral staircase at the south front corner. It is open in plan, entirely vacant, and displays no significant finish or adornment.

Although plat map information verifies a building's existence on the lot during the late Nineteenth Century (Hopkins, 1887), additional supporting documentation concerning this structure's architectural function or character is unavailable until the turn of the century. Between 1899 and 1901, the building was occupied by Hurdle and Kidwell, wagon-makers. A 1903 Building permit indicates that the structure underwent considerable structural conversion to satisfy functional demands as a PEPCO substation. In addition, alterations called for the removal of a storefront (Building Permit #1592, 4/16/1903). Despite this documentary evidence of removal of the storefront, the facade shows no sign of change.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

As an isolated entity, the substation constitutes a pleasant example of small-scale industrial architecture popular in Washington at the turn of the century. The typical Queen Anne integration of facade elements creates an overall cohesiveness which remains agreeable, especially at the pedestrian scale. The building's low scale provides a pause along the otherwise high streetscape.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Facade: The street facade is carefully articulated. Four pilasters rise from the ground to a dropped cornice and divide the facade into three bays. The central bay is slightly wider than the two flanking bays. Three horizontal brick stringcourses provide further definition to the street facade: two stringcourses extend across the facade just above the first and second story lintels; the third stringcourse extends the line of the second level window sills across the entire facade. Spandrel panels are located in each bay above and below the second level windows. In keeping with the a-b-a rhythm of the building, the central spandrel panels are slightly longer than those of the flanking bays. Each spandrel is ornamented by a panel of projecting and recessed bricks forming a checkerboard pattern. ...

At the first level, there are two paneled sliding doors, each surmounted by a two-light transom in the central bay. This bay also has a partially exposed lintel composed of two I-beams bolted together, spanning the opening. Each flanking bay has a single two-over-two double-hung wooden window. The second level central bay has two one-over-one double-hung windows. This bay is flanked on each side by a single large two-over-two double-hung window, also in wood. At both the first and second levels the lintels are rustic stone and the sills are stone.

The dropped cornice is composed of four rows of corbeled brick capped by a slender metal cornice. A brick parapet rises above the cornice and is topped by a similar metal cornice.



View of Facade

Lot 5 (Sublot 800)
405-411 8th Street

Lot 5 originally measured 57' x 104'-4". In the early 1900's it was minimized lengthwise to a 31'-5" frontage. By 1919 it became no. 800 (Baist Plat Map).

1819.....Orlando Cook owned Lot 5.

1824.....Cook was assessed \$687.00 (lot) and \$550.00 (improvements) for his lot.

1829/33...Cook's title was transferred to R.W. Barry and J.C. Holtzman. The lot value was \$778.00.

1844.....The owners were assessed \$1,145.00 for their lot.

1859.....The lot, valued at \$4,123.00, was now owned by Samuel Kirby.

1872/73...Kirby's assessment had risen significantly to \$6,871.00.

1878.....Charlotte Cartwright, midwife, was listed as tenant at 411 8th Street until 1914.

1878/79...The assessment declined to \$4,581.00, still in Kirby's name.

1883/84...Kirby's assessment was unchanged.

1893/94...An assessment of \$11,453.00 (lot) and \$3,000.00 (improvements) was indicated to Kirby.

1899/

1900.....Lot 5 had been divided. The southern property (31.50 frontage) was assessed to David H. Hazen, \$6,287.00 (lot), \$16,000.00 (improvements). The northern part (19.50 frontage) was assessed to the District of Columbia, \$4,068.00 (lot). James W. Hurdle, a carriage and wagon maker, was listed in the City Directories until 1901.

1903.....Baists Real Estate Atlas indicated that the above configuration did occur to Lot 5 and, also, that the northern boundary was reduced to allow for an alley.

Building Permit #1592, 4/16/1903, called for the removal, then replacement of a party wall. Also to remove wood collars and girders and replace with iron columns and beams. General repairs, including the removal of storefront. Cost: \$3,000.00.

1917

to

1981.....The 411 D Street building was occupied by PEPCO as a substation, according to the City Directories (verified by Baist Plat Map, 1919). In 1925 the address was changed to 405 D Street (City Directories).

1930.....Building Permit #138,189 to construct a penthouse and install a ventilating duct (11/28/1930. Cost: \$200.00).

1934.....A December Building Permit #176,769, granted the construction of a penthouse hatch roof of angle iron frame covered with galvanized iron. Cost: \$100.00.

SOURCES

Baist Real Estate Atlas

Bastert and Enthoffer Plat Maps

Boyd's City Directories

District of Columbia Building Permits

District of Columbia General Assessment Records

District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds

District of Columbia Surveyor's Office Records

District of Columbia Tax Records

Hopkins Real Estate Atlas

Polk's City Directories

Property Map for Downtown Urban Renewal Area for District of Columbia Redevelopment
Land Agency

Sanborn Insurance Map