

Public Service Railway Company, Newton  
Avenue Car Shops (New Jersey Transit Bus  
Operations, Inc., Newton Avenue Bus Garage)  
Bounded by 10th Street, Mt. Ephraim Avenue,  
Border Street and Newton Avenue  
Camden  
Camden County  
New Jersey

HAER No. NJ-65

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

PUBLIC SERVICE RAILWAY COMPANY,  
NEWTON AVENUE CAR SHOPS  
(New Jersey Transit Bus Operations, Inc.,  
Newton Avenue Bus Garage)

HAER No. NJ-65

LOCATION: Bounded by 10th Street, Mt. Ephraim Avenue, Border Street and Newton Avenue, Camden, New Jersey  
UTM: A: 18/490510 4420960  
B: 18/490260 4420790  
C: 18/490340 4420940  
D: 18/490410 4421030  
QUAD: Camden, N.J. - PA.

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: 1907 - 1959

PRESENT OWNERS: Buildings G through L: New Jersey Transit Bus Operations, Inc., Maplewood, New Jersey

PRESENT USES: Buildings G through L: Bus Maintenance Facility

Buildings A through E: Vacant/Storage

All buildings except E, the Mt. Ephraim facades of G and H, and the Northeast and Southeast elevations of B and C, to be demolished by 1987

SIGNIFICANCE: The Newton Avenue Car Shops have been found significant as among the last structural remains associated with the history of trolley transportation in the City of Camden. By the close of the 19th century, trolleys constituted a major form of transportation in Camden. Their development was tied to the emergence of the city as a major industrial center and to the generally poor condition of city streets and of the privately-run turnpike roads between Camden and its suburbs. Camden's trolley system, initially developed by local firms beginning in the early 1870s, became in 1907 the nucleus of the Southern Division of the Public Service Railway Company, which developed the Newton Avenue

Car Shops as the division's headquarters for repair, maintenance and operations. Subsequent expansion and contraction of the facility, and conversion of the system to buses by 1935, left the core of the Newton Avenue facility largely intact, although alterations have been made to accommodate the repair requirements of a bus fleet. The Newton Avenue facility remains today the administrative headquarters of the bus system operated by New Jersey Transit Bus Operations, Inc. in Southern New Jersey,

PROJECT INFORMATION:

The Newton Avenue Car Shops were documented by Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., East Orange, New Jersey, for Johnson Jones, Architects, Princeton, New Jersey; the New Jersey Transit Corporation, Newark, New Jersey; and the Urban Mass Transit Authority (UMTA) in January, 1986. Project personnel consisted of Martha H. Bowers, architectural historian; Rob Tucher and Tony Masso, photographers; Ingrid Wuebber, research historian; and April Stefel, draftsperson.

## I. DESCRIPTION

The former Public Service Railway Company's Newton Avenue Car Shops occupy a polygonal 4.87-acre block on Camden's east side. The southwest edge of the facility is bordered by railroad tracks on a high embankment. To the northwest, northeast and southeast are a variety of industrial properties, including the City of Camden's Public Works Garage and a major facility of the Campbell Soup Company.

The Newton Avenue facility, operated by New Jersey Transit Bus Operations, Inc. since 1980, consists of an assemblage of six contiguous building units, occupying the northern three-quarters of the block, that are used for repair, maintenance, and storage of NJ Transit buses. At the extreme south end of the block are five buildings, originally a functional part of the facility, that are currently in separate ownership and used chiefly for storage. Much of the southwesterly portion of the block is open paved space owned by NJ Transit and used for bus parking (see sketch plan). This area originally was the main access for trolley cars from Newton Avenue, and contained the transfer table for moving cars from one repair bay to another.

The eleven buildings on the facility were erected between 1907 and 1959. The major buildings, in place by 1918, were constructed for the Public Service Railway Corporation as trolley car maintenance and repair shops for Public Service's Southern Division, which served the City of Camden and its suburbs. The later buildings, and subsequent alterations to the original structures, are associated with the gradual replacement of trolleys with buses (completed by 1935) and the continued operation of the facility for bus maintenance and division offices to the present day. Despite such changes, the overall arrangement of the structures retains much of its original configuration, the chief loss being two large shop buildings along Mt. Ephraim Avenue that burned in 1932. The site of these buildings, designated as "F" on the sketch plan, remained vacant until erection of a fueling and washing bay (Building L) in 1959 (see sketch plan).

The buildings of the Newton Avenue Shops vary considerably in size, but many have features in common that can be said to constitute an overall design theme for the facility. The basic form is strictly rectilinear, with front-gable orientation and symmetrical facade treatment. Brick is a primary construction material, used either in 12-inch bearing walls or as facing for bearing walls of concrete block. Most of the buildings are one story high, their concrete-floored interiors characteristically open to the roofs and resulting spaces unbroken by columns or

partitions. These expanses are achieved through the use of trusses the most notable of which are light-membered steel Fink trusses that carry the roofs of buildings G, H and E. Simple timber trusses span vehicle bays in Building I, and smaller steel trusses are found in Buildings B and C. Use of natural light was an important factor in the design of many of the buildings. This is seen in skylights (Buildings C, J and I, for example), and in by the long monitors that distinguish the roofs of buildings E, G and H. It is also demonstrated by the large expanses of multi-light sash below concrete lintels or steel channels that originally characterized facades on Mt. Ephraim Avenue and that remain least altered on Buildings B and G. With functional considerations paramount, the buildings of the facility display few decorative elements. These are limited to brick pilasters and corbel strips that articulate bays, and to stepped parapets with terracotta coping and prominently centered oculi, each with four symmetrically-arranged keystones, that finish many gable ends (for example on Buildings E, G, H, and I).

Within such gross design themes, a variety of more particular features can be identified. The polygonal plan of Building A (1909) is obviously the result of its siting at the acute angle formed by Mt. Ephraim Avenue and Border Street. This two-story, flat-roofed building has unarticulated brick walls and segmental-arched talarched openings. It was built as a line office and stable, and evidence of the original function remains in the wide double-leaf metal doors of the main entrance; the rows of small, square stall windows toward the rear; and the hayloft door, with I-beam "crane", on the upper level.

Buildings B (1930), C (1909), and D (1930), are distinguished by low, broad proportions, pilastering and corbel strips, and plain, shallow gable roofs without parapets. The obvious similarities among these three, despite the twenty-year gap in construction between C and B and D, were carefully planned, as evidenced by an instruction on an original drawing for Building B, which notes that "proposed building [is] to conform with style of present storeroom" ([Public Service Coordinated Transport Co., ca. 1930]). As indicated, Buildings B and C were intended for storage; Building D was an oil house. Buildings B and D replaced an assemblage of small frame structures that originally flanked Building C on both east and west.

Building E (1907) originally housed the power plant for the trolley maintenance shops, a function still represented in the truncated remains of an octagonal chimney off the rear of the building. The structure retains original wide window openings, monitor roof with stepped parapets at each end, and steel Fink trusses within.

Buildings G (1907) and H (1918) are the remains of what was a four-building row consisting of a machine shop and carpenter shop (shown as F on the sketch plan), a paint shop (Building G) and paint shop addition (H). The first three were built simultaneously, and were much alike in terms of scale, form, exterior treatment and interior spatial arrangements. The later Building H adheres to the pattern established by the first three shops but is slightly narrower. The machine and carpenter shops (Building F) were burned in 1932, and only sections of rebuilt brick wall remain to mark their location. The remaining two shops are the most prominent buildings in the facility, with open interiors spanned by Fink trusses, boldly-stepped parapet gables with prominent oculi, and pedimented monitors on the wide gable roofs. The Newton Avenue facades of these buildings retain their original five bays, but the original tall, narrow double-leaf vehicle doors have been removed, and the openings widened, to accommodate buses. Concomitantly, the Mt. Ephraim Avenue facades have lost many of their original multilight sash windows to vehicle entrances with overhead roll doors.

Building I consists of a row of five storage bays. Bays 1,2,3 and 4 were built in 1907 as part of the original complex. Their open interiors were spanned by heavy wooden trusses (still visible in Bay 4) that supported skylight roofs. The Mt. Ephraim Avenue facades retain their distinctive stepped parapets, pilasters and corbelling, but the tall paired sash windows have been replaced by overhead vehicle access doors. Only one stepped parapet remains on the Newton Avenue facade, and the vehicle doorways have been enlarged for buses. A fire in July, 1985, destroyed all of the roof and Bay 3, and part of that of Bay 4, but the exterior walls were essentially undamaged. Bay 5, a brick-faced concrete-block unit built in 1959, replaces a similar unit originally built in 1924.

Building J is not actually a separate structure, but an office unit positioned on steel I-beams over the west ends of Bays 1,2, and 3 of Building I and, given its 1907 date, part of the original design for Building I. The interior is arranged around a double-loaded corridor running parallel to the Newton Avenue facade, with space originally used as an "auditorium" at the north end, and an oriel window overlooking Newton Avenue toward the south end. Despite periodic alterations (including dropped acoustical ceilings, fluorescent lighting, and addition of toilet facilities) something of the original environment is conveyed by remaining skylights and decorative pressed-metal ceiling panels, two wood-framed archways, and simple door moldings.

Building K is a series of narrow one and two-story units ranged along the south wall of Building I. One portion, containing the

stair to the office area, was built in 1907; among additions in 1912 was a projecting, polygonal extension toward Newton Avenue that served as an office for the Depot Master. The flat roof of this unit is edged with a "scaloped" parapet rather out of keeping with the rectilinearity that dominates the complex as a whole. Portions of Building K also served as locker rooms, and as space for a compressor. It has been extended back to Building H, obscuring the northernmost bay of the latter.

The original designs for the Newton Avenue Car Shops, dated 1906, were generated by the Department of Maintenance and Way of the South Jersey Gas, Electric and Traction Company, whose lease to operate the Camden-area trolley system was conveyed to the Public Service Corporation the following year. Not surprisingly, the complex resembles its northern division counterpart, the much larger Plank Road Shops in Newark, where shop buildings with the distinctive stepped parapets can still be seen today. Camden's Newton Avenue facility is also representative of industrial architecture of its time, combining a variety of materials (brick, mass and reinforced concrete, and steel) and straightforward construction techniques to create utilitarian clear-span work spaces that have for the most part survived the transition from trolley to bus maintenance and repair that occurred some fifty years ago.

## II. HISTORICAL DISCUSSION

European settlement of the Camden County area was initiated by Irish Quakers in the late seventeenth century. Philadelphia, founded in 1682, attracted commerce from West Jersey, and as a result, a string of ferries along the Delaware River began operation. The earliest record of ferry service within the future City of Camden was by one William Royden in 1688. His ferry was taken over by Daniel Cooper in 1695. Daniel Cooper's father, William, had established a ferry at Cooper's Point ca. 1689. More ferries were established during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, providing the impetus for growth of several villages devoted to the ferrying business. Many of these villages, which would later form the City of Camden, were on land owned by three families: the Coopers, Kaighns and Mickles (Drobbin 1982:12-15; Gimigliano 1979:9-10).

William Cooper settled on 300 acres of land at the mouth of Cooper's Creek in 1681. His great grandson, Jacob Cooper, laid out a town on forty acres of Cooper property in 1773 that he named Camden. Expansion of the area continued with new developments created out of Cooper family holdings such as Cooper's Village (1803), Camden Village (1820), and Cooper's Hill (1842). Kaighn family property was developed into Kaighnsborough (1801), Fettersville (1833) and Kaighnsville (1840s). Stockton, formerly

Centreville, was laid out by the Kaighn's Point Land Company in 1851, having been purchased from the Mickle family and Isaac Mulford (Drobbin 1982:20-24).

Throughout the eighteenth century Camden remained essentially rural with a hinterland of large estates owned by wealthy Philadelphians. (Gimigliano 1979:10). In 1828 the City of Camden was incorporated. Prior to this date, the Camden vicinity was known as Cooper's Ferry. The burgeoning population resulted in the formation of Camden County out of Gloucester County in 1844, and Camden was voted the county seat soon thereafter. In the early nineteenth century Camden began to evolve from a transportation terminal oriented toward Philadelphia into a city with its own industries and a varied economic base. This was due largely to its location between the Delaware and Cooper Rivers, combined with its proximity to Philadelphia. Early industrial products included wood shingles, pork sausage, candles, carriages, leather and harness. Other business interests were lumber dealers and blacksmiths (Drobbin 1982:27).

The railroad was vitally important to the growth of industry in Camden. Railroad service between Camden and Perth Amboy began in 1835. The Camden and Atlantic Railroad, organized less than twenty years later, helped develop South Jersey and especially the resort of Atlantic City. By 1881, six railroad companies linked Camden to Philadelphia, Trenton, New York, the Atlantic shore and points west. During the 1880s and 1890s, the Pennsylvania Railroad consolidated its control over Camden's rail transportation (Drobbin 1982:27-30).

Improvements to Camden's transportation system attracted many new industries and expanded those already established. The city boasted woolen and worsted mills, oil cloth manufactures, iron works, lumber mills, shoe factories, and cigar factories, as well as the Victor Talking Machine Company (later RCA), the J.B. Van Sciver Furniture Company, Campbell's Soup Company and the New York Ship Building Company (presently the South Jersey Port Corporation) (Drobbin 1982:34).

Camden's increasing industrialization fostered, and in turn was fostered by, development of a trolley system in the city. The system was begun with the chartering of the Camden Horse Railroad Company in 1866 and the inauguration of service in 1871 with three small horse-drawn cars on a route from the ferries, along Federal Street to Fifth Street. During the remainder of the decade, the company gradually extended its lines to include Kaighn's Point Avenue, Market Street, and North Second Street, the whole system oriented toward connecting various points of the

city with the ferry terminals (Drobbin 1982:30; Boyer 1921:18-19; Francis 1952:2-4).

In 1889 the Camden Horse Railroad Co. was sold to a syndicate of local investors who soon moved to electrify the system, the first electric cars going into service in June, 1890. The new owners also built the city's first suburban line, which reached Merchantville in 1892 (Boyer 1921:19). The Camden Horse Railroad Co. was further challenged to expand its service by the West Jersey Traction Co., which was organized in 1893 to develop trolley lines to outlying communities such as Haddonfield, Burlington, Moorestown and Mt. Ephraim. A period of intense legal battle between the two companies ended in 1896 with their both being taken over by the Camden Suburban Railway Company organized that same year (Boyer 1921:19-20; Francis 1952:6-7). Over the next eight years, a new car house and shop were built on Newton Avenue (1897), and trolley service was extended to a variety of communities, including Haddonfield (1898), Moorestown (1901), Mount Holly (1904), East Pennsauken (1903), and Haddon Heights (1903). A line to West Palmyra was connected in 1902 with a line built by the Camden and Trenton Railway Co., thereby providing trolley service from Camden, via Trenton, to Jersey City (Francis 1952:8-11).

Camden's trolley system stimulated industrial and residential development along its lines in locations that had heretofore not been readily accessible; for example, along Haddon Avenue (Drobbin 1982:30). The trolley also became Camden County's primary method of transportation, due in large measure to the inadequacy of the county's street and road systems. In the early years of the twentieth century, many city streets remained unpaved, and those paved roads often consisted of poorly-maintained surfaces ranging from rubble, cobble, and granite block to concrete, sheet asphalt and vitrified brick. In addition, private turnpike companies owned a significant number of county roads, from which they derived tolls but for which they provided few repair or maintenance services (Dorwart and Mackey 1976:175; Drobbin 1982:30).

The vitality of the Camden trolley system, and its pivotal location at the southwest end of the historic transportation corridor through New Jersey between New York and Philadelphia, made it almost inevitable that it would eventually be drawn into the extraordinary system of energy and transportation utilities assembled by the Public Service Corporation of New Jersey.

On February 19, 1903 a trolley car of the North Jersey Street Railway Company collided with a train of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad. The subsequent investigation involved the state's young attorney general, Thomas N. McCarter. The accident resulted from a lack of track maintenance and absence of necessary equipment. The railway company admitted it was foundering financially, as were most of the other transportation companies throughout the state. Inflated stock prices and poor management had allowed tracks, cars, powerlines, and generating systems to deteriorate. Thomas McCarter saw the potential for providing an efficient transportation and energy system to the Metropolitan area. He resigned his post as state attorney general and with \$10 million capital incorporated the Public Service Corporation of New Jersey on May 6, 1903. The new company's objectives were to acquire and resuscitate dilapidated railways, renovate the inefficient and outdated electric power system and infuse gas companies with necessary capital. In the following years, with McCarter as President, Public Service acquired 521 companies, nearly all concentrated in a 120-mile by 15-mile corridor across New Jersey that contained the majority of the state's residents and industries (Conniff and Conniff 1978:65-68).

Public Service began its transportation system with a highly varied assortment of railway companies, inheriting from them an inadequate number of trolley cars, many in disrepair; worn tracks, and antiquated and overloaded power sources. Public Service's primary objective, therefore, was to upgrade or replace existing cars and tracks and to create a functionally, and economically, efficient transportation system across the state. Initial efforts were hampered by a lack of uniformity in railway equipment, a threatened strike by motormen, an unusually severe winter, and a lack of confidence by the ridership (Conniff and Conniff 1978:82-83). Nonetheless, Public Service pressed forward with the organization of its holdings into six divisions, the Essex, Hudson, Passaic, Bergen, Central and Southern. The boundaries of the first four of these original divisions for the most part corresponded to those of their namesake counties. The Central Division, geographically the largest, extended from Elizabeth to Plainsboro and from Perth Amboy to Raritan. The Southern Division included both Trenton and Camden, as well as those cities' outlying suburban areas (Public Service Corporation 1924:64ff).

Camden's trolley system was brought into the Public Service network in 1904, through the agency of a subsidiary. The South Jersey Gas, Electric and Traction Company had been organized in 1900 to consolidate the gas, electric and street railway companies in that area of the state. That year, South Jersey leased the Camden, Gloucester and Woodbury Railway, and in 1904 obtained

the lease of the Camden and Suburban Railway, which was assigned to Public Service that same year. In 1907, both Camden trolley companies were assigned to the newly-created Public Service Railway Company, which had been organized to operate all Public Service's street railway properties (Francis 1952:10-11).

In order to provide proper maintenance and repair services for the street railway system, Public Service established two major, as well as a variety of smaller, facilities. The largest was the complex of car shops at Plank Road and Ferry Street in Newark, a remodeled and expanded facility brought into service in 1905. It included storage for 162 cars, some 5 miles of interior trackage, an erecting shop, paint shop, machine shop, and a 100-car capacity trolley barn (Karshner 1985:112). The other major facility was developed in Camden, on a then-vacant parcel between Newton and Starr (now Mt. Ephraim) Avenues. The Newton Avenue Shops, opened in 1907, included a repair shop for 20 cars and a car house with a 91-car capacity (Public Service Annual Report, 1909). Its position as, next to the Newark Shops, the largest and most important in the system, was also due to its being equipped for track construction, as the track gauge of the Southern Division differed from that used in the other five divisions (Public Service Corporation 1924:78).

Until World War I, the Southern Division and its Newton Avenue Shops concentrated primarily on maintenance and repair of the existing Camden trolley system. With the war, however, came government demands for the extension of lines to booming shipyards and other industrial plants in many New Jersey cities, Camden in particular. Loop tracks were built at Broadway and Morgan Street to serve the New York Shipbuilding Co., the Haddon Heights line was double-tracked, and a new line was built from Broadway to a shipyard workers' housing development called Yorkship Village (later Fairview). To handle the increased traffic, 58 city cars and 10 interurban cars, many moved from Newark, were added to the Camden system, and the Newton Avenue Car Shops were expanded through development of additional storage areas north of the main complex and construction of a large addition to the paint shop (Francis 1952:13; see also Drawing #17995-L, Nov. 26, 1919, Public Service Railway Co., "Sketch Showing Development of Newton Avenue Car House".) In 1919 a fire at the shops destroyed 18 cars and damaged a portion of the car house, but this was soon repaired (Public Service Annual Report, 1919).

After the war, trolley ridership, which had reached a peak in 1917, began to decline throughout the system. In Camden, some of the decline was attributable to competition from independent bus routes, which first began operation in the city in 1916. The

buses also prospered from a 1919 boycott of Public Service caused by the implementation (soon terminated) of a controversial zone system of fares ("Camden Area Trolleys", 1976; Dorwart and Mackey 1976:231). In the face of growing public enthusiasm for buses, the Public Service Railway Co. began bus service on two lines in Camden in 1923. Public Service also began to buy up independent bus lines throughout its operating area and to develop a coordinated system utilizing both buses and trolleys. For the Southern Division, a fifth bay was added to the existing car house in 1924, and Bay 4, originally the northernmost, was removed for bus storage (Francis 1952:13; Public Service Annual Report, 1924). North of what is now 10th Street, former trolley yards were replaced with a new bus shop and 50-car storage facilities in 1926-27, and additional facilities were erected elsewhere in Camden to house Public Service's recently-acquired PennJersey Bus Fleet (Public Service Annual Report, 1927).

Creation of the Public Service Coordinated Transportation Company in 1928 resulted in a formal merger of Public Service's street railway and bus operations (the latter formerly under the New Jersey Transportation Co. (1917-23) and Public Service Transportation Co. (1923-28)), and a stronger base from which to meet competition from independent lines across New Jersey (Karshner 1985:112). Substitution of buses for trolleys increased, hastened in part by the growing demands for interstate commuter service to Philadelphia (over the Ben Franklin Bridge, completed in 1926) and New York (through the Holland Tunnel, completed in 1927, and the George Washington Bridge, opened in 1931). By the 1930s only eight railway lines remained, the rest having been replaced with buses. In an effort to gain some use out of still-functional equipment, Public Service developed an "all service" vehicle or "trolley-bus", a bus equipped with trolley poles that could run on either gas or electric power (Conniff and Conniff 1978:230).

At the Newton Avenue Shops in Camden, the 1930s saw erection of a large storeroom addition which permitted centralized handling of all stores for the Southern Division, and, in 1932, destruction by fire of the original machine and carpenter shops (Public Service Annual Reports 1930, 1932). By 1935, only one Camden line, the Haddon Heights line, still operated with trolleys, and these were replaced with all-service trolley-buses in September of that year (Francis 1952:14). As a result, the Newton Avenue Shops became wholly devoted to bus repair, maintenance and storage. Over the next 50 years, property at both the north and south ends of the facility was sold off as no longer needed, and numerous alterations were made to the remaining buildings to increase their utility (see Public Service Coordinated Transport 1950). In 1980 Public Service relinquished its public transpor-

PUBLIC SERVICE RAILWAY COMPANY, NEWTON  
AVENUE CAR SHOPS (New Jersey Transit  
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HAER No. NJ-65 (Page 12)

tation system to New Jersey Transit Bus Operations, Inc. which continues to operate the Newton Avenue Shops and to maintain its Southern Division administrative headquarters from this location.

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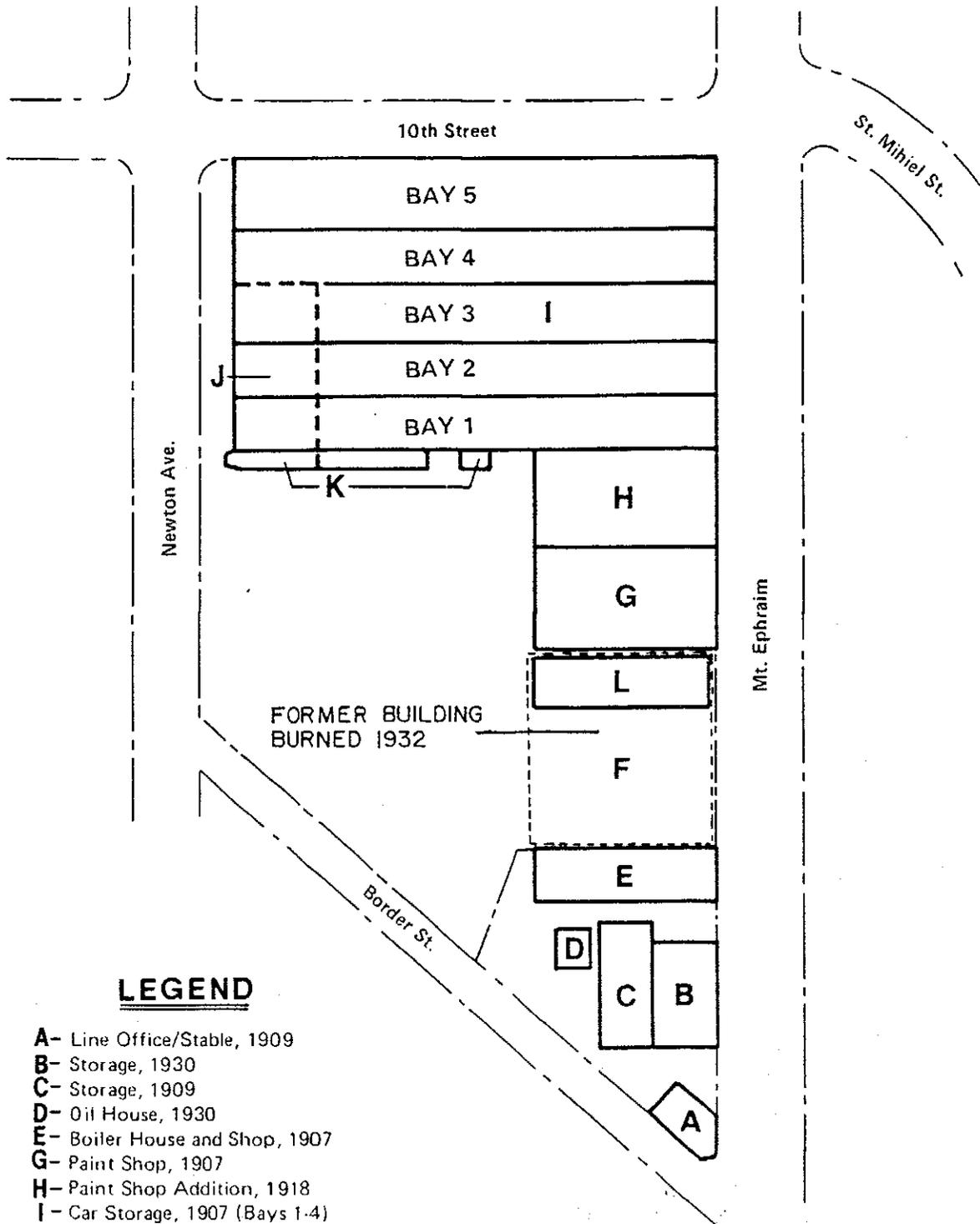
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NEWTON AVENUE CAR SHOPS



**LEGEND**

- A- Line Office/Stable, 1909
- B- Storage, 1930
- C- Storage, 1909
- D- Oil House, 1930
- E- Boiler House and Shop, 1907
- G- Paint Shop, 1907
- H- Paint Shop Addition, 1918
- I- Car Storage, 1907 (Bays 1-4)  
1959 (Bay 5)
- J- Office, 1907
- K- Locker Room and Depot Master, 1907 Et Seq.
- L- Fueling and Bus Wash 1959

