PEOPLE SAVING PLACES

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TRANSFORMING A BOSTON RELIC

FIRST LOOK

In Good Company

ESTABLISHED IN 1865, Manhattan's Engine Company 23 has responded to everything from the 1942 capsizing of the SS *Normandie* to the September 11 terror attacks. Since 1906, the company has been based out of a three-story, Beaux Arts–style building on West 58th Street, designed by the FDNY's onetime in-house architect Alexander H. Stevens. And now, after seven years of work, the landmarked building has received a major upgrade that supports the department's equity efforts—with the addition of a women's locker room and lactation area—while preserving its many historic elements.

What began as an interior renovation by New York firm Belmont Freeman Architects became a much bigger project when it became clear that the limestone cornice on the front of the building had separated from the brick side walls by as much as 2 inches. "It was really scary," says Belmont Freeman founding principal Monty Freeman, explaining that the team had to disassemble the cornice and repair it at street level. "Fortunately, we were able to conserve every single stone without any breakage."

Inside the building, they restored a pressed metal ceiling, uncovered and refinished the original heart pine floors, and kept the original oak locker doors, carved with initials and plastered with stickers from firefighters past. The project was completed in late 2020.

—Lauren Vespoli