200 BERRY STREET

ST. JAMES FIRE HALL NO. 1
(ST. JAMES FIRE HALL & POLICE STATION)

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
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For Winnipeg, the decade prior to World War I was one of almost unbridled growth in all aspects. Spatially, the city’s boundaries and, more significantly, its occupied territory increased dramatically. This fuelled the extensions of roadways and streetcar lines further and further from the downtown, in all directions.

And this growth was no less pronounced in the municipalities surrounding the City: St. James, St. Boniface, St. Vital and the Kildonans. Each of these separate entities had developed similarly and by 1900 was comprised of small commercial/residential districts surrounded by large agricultural holdings. They were transformed, however, into cities and towns with main street commercial development and blocks and blocks of residential lots that filled with new houses by the outbreak of World War I (Plate 1). As with Winnipeg, their larger, more established neighbour, these smaller communities struggled to provide modern services to their widely spread population – services that included telephones, electricity, roads, sewers, water and public transportation.

Fire protection was the most important of these services and the main concern of early 20th century civic organizations. For the Rural Municipality of Assiniboia, which had been incorporated in 1880, the sheer size of the municipality increased concerns as it occupied territory on both sides of the Assiniboine River as far west as Headingley (Plate 2). In 1912, the Municipality moved to modernize its emergency response system by constructing a large combination fire hall and police station on Berry Street just north of Portage Avenue – located in the centre of its growing commercial and residential development (Plate 3).

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1 D. Spector, “Architecture of Functionality,” report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, 1981, p. 44. The Municipality also included space for police vehicles in the new fire hall, similar to halls built in other municipalities around the same time. Manitoba Free Press, July 5, 1913, p. 13 and December 12, 1913, p. 7. The Municipality also operated a police court and police office facility on College Street (now Collegiate Street).
STYLE

Occupying the apex of a public utilities hierarchy were fire halls. These architect-designed edifices frequently were erected at strategic street corners. To enable each building to blend into its residential or commercial surroundings, architects specified gables and occasionally a stone facing.²

North American fire halls of the 20th century often were placed at busy street corners and therefore very conspicuous in their neighbourhoods. This visual conspicuousness was heightened by their very public role within the day-to-day lives of the citizenry. Ornamentation included the use of Classical and Romanesque elements such as corbelling, gables, crenellation, entablatures, roughly textured building materials and arched openings. Touches like window boxes, oriel windows or Dutch gables sometimes enhanced the façades.

But because of the importance of the function of the building, ornamental considerations were often secondary to concerns over the efficiency of the space and the durability of the structure. This was a delicate balance, especially for civic leaders in places like the Municipality of Assiniboia who wished to make a statement with their civic structures but has modest budgets with which to work.

The Fire Hall and Police Station on Berry Street is extremely modest in design, with few ornamental features to interrupt the brick superstructure. Municipal leaders in St. James chose not only to apply a limited amount of ornamentation, they had a combined police and fire services structure designed to further save money. Unlike the Municipality of St. Vital, which commissioned Winnipeg fire hall designers Alexander R. and William N. Melville to design their pre-World War I station with many of the same features as the City’s facilities (Plate 4), Assiniboia chose a municipality employee and kept ornamentation to a minimum.

² D. Spector, op. cit., p. 3.
CONSTRUCTION
The fire hall and police station was built in 1912 on the west side of Berry Street just north of Portage Avenue. Cost of the structure was $55,000, representing a major capital outlay for the Municipality.

News accounts described work on the fire hall and police station as well underway by September 1912, with the brickwork completed on the ground floor. By December the structure was nearly ready for occupation. According to Municipal Council Minutes, the original building had neither sewage nor running water and the stable was unventilated and had dirt floors as late as 1916.5

The building, due to its multiple functions, was constructed with one-, two-, and three-storey areas as well as a partial basement and a tall tower for hang drying hoses (see Appendix I for more construction information).

DESIGN
The building has been designed primarily for service, all ornamentation being made subservient to general utility.6

The author of this newspaper article correctly identified that, like so many other fire halls and police stations across North America, the St. James Fire Hall and Police Station was built with minimal architectural detailing in favour of efficiency and durability. It also kept construction and maintenance costs down.

3 D. Spector, op. cit., Appendix A.
5 Rural Municipality of Assiniboia, Council Minutes, August 19, 1913; March 23, 1915 and February 29, 1916, courtesy of the City of Winnipeg Archives.
Built of clay brick, the original front (east) façade included three large fire equipment doors at the north end, a small personnel entrance to the south and another large police equipment door at the south end. The fire department area is set back slightly from the rest of the building. The arches of the equipment doors were filled with transom windows (Plate 5). These were, due to the increased size of fire equipment, enlarged and squared in the early 1990s (Plate 6).  

The second floor, which has not seen major alteration, includes numerous arched windows with stone lug sills and radiating brick heads which are separated by plain brick pilasters. Corbelled brick areas top the second storey window openings, leading to a brick belt course, rectangular brick panels and another area of corbelled brick that ends in the flat roof (Plate 7). The hose drying tower, the most conspicuous element of the structure, features deeply recessed middle sections holding thin window openings on the front and back faces and windowless on the north and south faces. The tower is completed by brick corbelling, a modest brick cornice and a crenellated brick parapet (Plate 8).

Alterations to the front façade have been extensive. The three equipment doors at the north end have been completely replaced with square headed units with newer overhead doors. The personnel entrance has been brick in completely and is topped by a stone panel with the words “FIRE HALL NO 11” (Plate 9). The south end equipment door has been partially bricked in and now holds a small personnel door (Plate 10). The original wood frame windows on the second storey have all been replaced.

The south side of the building holds arched windows with stone lug sills on all levels (two floors at the front (east) and three floors at the rear (west), an attached brick chimney and a bricked in window at the east end (Plate 11). The brick wall of the north façade is interrupted by two small windows one on each floor (Plate 12). The rear (west) façade is three storeys high at the south end, which has arched windows on each floor and an arched personnel entrance (Plate 13); and two storeys at the north end, with a large overhead entrance and arched window openings on

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7 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #5083/1992, $27,000. This permit, according to Fire Department personnel, included the sandblasting of the exterior brick.
both floors (Plate 14). The rear façade of the third storey of the main building is visible above this two-storey section and includes arched windows.

Alterations to the rear elevation include the bricking in and redesigning of the ground floor entrances at the north end.

**INTERIOR**

As described in a newspaper just before the building was to open in late 1912, the interior was divided into two distinct areas to reflect its two uses. The police station portion of the interior (south end) included space for 30 steel cells to accommodate up to 60 prisoners. A police court room, chief’s office, a female ward, kitchen and officers’ room were found in the “police apartments.” On the fire department side, the apparatus room took up much of the ground floor (measuring 10.7 x 12.2 metres). The upper floor held bedrooms, a kitchen and washroom facilities for the brigade which included 3 paid firefighters and volunteers.\(^8\)

In the days prior to call boxes and alarms, the tower may have doubled as a watchtower for spotting smoke and fires in the municipality.

Today, much of the interior has changed as life at the fire hall has evolved. The police portion in the south end is now used for recreation and storage (Plate 15). The north end of the ground floor continues to hold the fire engines and still features the original tin ceiling (Plate 16). A unique element of this area is the ribbed concrete floor that heightens draining off of excess water (Plate 17). The tower is still used for hang drying hoses (Plate 18).

The second and third floors are accessed by a staircase (Plate 19) located behind the original personnel entrance, although originally poles were used for quick movement (Plate 20). The police or south end includes a second floor with renovated office space and a newer kitchen, the third floor has now been renovated into an exercise room (Plate 21), although the original metal wall grills for

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\(^8\) *Manitoba Free Press*, November 30, 1912, p. 13.
the heating system are still present. The second floor of the fire area (north end) features a long hallway with bedrooms on both sides. Arched doorways, transom lights, wood moulding are some of the original finishes and elements present (Plate 22).

The basement is used for storage.

**INTEGRITY**

The building stands on its original location and appears to be in good structural condition. Alterations to the original exterior have been numerous and severe and include: changing of personnel entrance to south end of main façade and bricking in of original door (pre-1981); bricking in of part of new south entrance door; replacement of original equipment doors; and the squaring off of original equipment door openings. The building’s exterior brick cladding has been sand blasted.

**STREETSCAPE**

Built just to the north of Portage Avenue, the area’s premier thoroughfare, the station’s scale, especially the hose drying tower, have been an integral part of this streetscape for over 100 years (Plate 23).

**ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS**

The architect of St. James Fire Hall No. 1 was William Robert Lynn (1874-?). Lynn was the eldest son of Washington Frank Lynn (ca.1827-1906), a well-known and accomplished early Western Canadian artist (Plate 24), author and newspaper editor. W.R. Lynn was born in Manitoba and the family, which included a brother and sister, lived for many years in St. James, settling on Wallasey

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Street by 1911.\textsuperscript{11} W.R. Lynn studied to become an electrician, advertising in the \textit{Manitoba Free Press} beginning in 1909.\textsuperscript{12} In 1912, Lynn was appointed the Municipal Electrician for the Rural Municipality of Assiniboia and only a few months later its Building Inspector. In this role, Lynn oversaw millions of dollars of permits for structures throughout the Municipality. He also oversaw the electrical work involved in the Municipalities new pressurized water and fire hydrant system, formally opened in 1914.\textsuperscript{13} By the mid-1920s, he was listed as a “Civil Draughtsman.”\textsuperscript{14} The designing of the St. James Police Station and Fire Hall on Berry Street is Lynn’s only known work as an architect (he was not registered with the Manitoba Association of Architects).

The contractor for the station was John Dolmer.\textsuperscript{15} Dolmer began his contracting work in Winnipeg in 1903\textsuperscript{16} alone (as the Dolmer Construction Company), or in partnership with A.J. Bonnett (which was dissolved in 1910).\textsuperscript{17} He built many large and small structures throughout the city, some of his larger works would include:\textsuperscript{18} Canadian Bank of Commerce, 1521 Logan Avenue, 1906; Great West Life Building, 177 Lombard Avenue, 1910 (Grade II); Royal Crown Soap Company Factory, King Street, 1911; Manitoba and Saskatchewan Bible Society Building, 184 Alexander Avenue, 1912 (Grade III); and Wonderland Theatre, 595 Sargent Avenue, 1912. Dolmer and his wife retired to California in 1920.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{11} Canada Census, 1911.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Manitoba Free Press}, September 1, 1909, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Manitoba Free Press}, August 13, 1914, p. 18. When it was turned on, the system, which was fed by a 108-metre artesian well at the corner of Woodlawn Street and Ness Avenue, serviced an area bounded by Portage and Ness avenues from Linwood to Conway streets, 11 blocks.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Manitoba Free Press}, February 20, 1912, p. 24, May 7, 1912, p. 16 and March 19, 1926, p. 15. There is also a reference to a Mr. W.R. Lynn building and operating an electrical generating power plant in Dugald, Manitoba in 1918 (www.dugaldmb.ca/history.htm [no date]).
\textsuperscript{15} Council Minutes, Rural Municipality of Assiniboia, August 19, 1913, March 23, 1915 and February 29, 1916, courtesy of the City of Winnipeg Archives; \textit{Manitoba Free Press}, September 28, 1912, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books}, 1899-1926, courtesy of City of Winnipeg Archives.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Manitoba Free Press}, March 10, 1910, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{18} Historical Buildings Committee files.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Manitoba Free Press}, June 2, 1925, p. 15.
PERSON/INSTITUTION

Located north of the Assiniboine River, St. James occupied the entire northwest corner of what is now the City of Winnipeg.

Its early history, prior to the arrival of Europeans in the 18th and 19th centuries, focused primarily on the use of the Assiniboine River by local First Nations bands for transportation, hunting and gathering activities and seasonal habitation.

Portage Avenue, the area’s main thoroughfare, originated as the main east-west overland trail connecting The Forks, an important hunting and meeting ground, and the western plains rich with herds of bison (Plate 25). As the fur trade in the region developed and expanded, the trail was an important freighting route for thousands of ox-carts transporting food and other goods – the Carlton Trail. Modern development transformed Portage Avenue into the hub of commerce and transportation for Winnipeg and its western suburbs.

Permanent settlement of the St. James area began as fur traders retired from their years of service and sought to take up land in the vicinity of the Upper Fort Garry. The prevailing system of land organization was River Lots, thin parcels of land stretching back a distance of 2 miles from the river, giving the land owner important access to the water. An additional 2-mile strip beyond the lot could also be obtained. As settlement increased, additional River Lots were established, extending development further west along the Assiniboine.

In 1850, the Parish of St. James was created by a grant of land from the Hudson’s Bay Company and encompassed property from Omand’s Creek (originally known as Catfish Creek and first bridged in 1860) to present-day St. James Street. Here a group of Anglicans built St. James Church in 1852 (today known as Old St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street).20 Around this structure the community grew. A school was built ca.1853.21 Early parishioners included Charles and Cornelius Fidler, James Spence, James Foulds, the Bourke family and

21 Ibid., p. 11. Honourable John Norquay, future Premier of Manitoba, taught at the school in 1857.
Gavin Garrioch (Plate 26). The Parish population grew mainly because of the resettling of Selkirk Settler families from the Kildonan area after the disastrous 1852 flood. These farmers sought higher land to avoid future floods and much of the land along the Assiniboine River had remained dry.

After the creation of the Province of Manitoba in 1870, a number of municipalities were established, including the Rural Municipality of Assiniboia, incorporated in 1880 to include the parishes of Headingly, St. Charles, St. James and part of St. Boniface on both the north and south sides of the Assiniboine River. This large municipality was steadily decreased over the years as new government organizations were formed: the Rural Municipality of Charleswood (1912); Town of Tuxedo (1913); and the Rural Municipality of St. James (1921). The Rural Municipality of St. James, the urban or northeast part of the Assiniboine Municipality, became the City of St. James in 1956 (Plate 27). In 1967, the Town of Brooklands merged with St. James as did the Rural Municipality of Assiniboia two years later to form the City of St. James-Assiniboia. It was this City that became part of the City of Winnipeg under Unicity in 1972.

At the beginning of the 20th century, settlement in the St. James area expanded. The extension of streetcar service from downtown to Deer Lodge in 1903 was an important factor (it was suspended in 1914 because of a lack of ridership), as was the opening of Assiniboine Park (originally City Park) in 1904 (Plate 28). As a result of the associated real estate boom, speculative residential developments including Oakdale Park (1911), Deer Lodge Place (1911), and Woodhaven (1913) sprang up in the St. James area, only to be abandoned in favour of districts closer to the downtown. But other parts of St. James did grow, with single family homes, churches, businesses, etc.

Slow growth continued for the entire region until after World War II when St. James began to expand rapidly. New residential neighbourhoods emerged including Silver Heights, Birchwood, Westwood, Crestview, and St. Charles. Other important developments in west Winnipeg

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included the founding and expansion of Winnipeg’s airport in 1928 (originally Stevenson Field, renamed Winnipeg International Airport in 1958 and James Armstrong Richardson International Airport in 2006) and Polo Park, originally one of Western Canada’s premier horse racing facility (1925-1956) and now one of its busiest shopping centres (built in 1959 and expanded several times since then).

The Berry Street fire hall and police station remained an important part of the community throughout all its evolution. It was used for community group meetings including the St. James Garden Club (1917), the Ratepayers Association (1918), the St. James Senior Softball League (1930), as an election polling station (1930) and the Women’s Conservative Association of Assiniboia (1932).23

The fire hall was busy, answering 93 calls in 1917.24 As this region developed, the hall’s personnel were called to an increasing number of fires outside of its boundaries, including a fire at the Tuxedo barracks in 194125 and another at the Johannesson’s Flying Services Hanger, Stevenson Field in 1946.

The police service was taken out of the building at an unknown date and the 1912 hall is being replaced by a new St. James Fire Paramedic Station located a short distance east on Portage Avenue (Plate 29).

**EVENT**

This structure, as the only emergency facility serving the area of what today is west Winnipeg for many decades, has been part of thousands of neighbourhood and area fire alarm and other distress calls throughout its history. There is no known significant historical event connected with this building.

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23 *Manitoba Free Press*, various dates.
25 *Winnipeg Free Press*, various dates. The St. James Fire Department charged the Tuxedo Barracks a flat rate for attending the 1941 fire.
CONTEXT
This structure was built by the Rural Municipality of Assiniboia at a time of great population growth in the area, when the organized government struggled financially to meet all of its civic obligations – including protecting the citizenry and their property from fire.

LANDMARK
Located just off the main regional thoroughfare, this structure was, for many decades after its construction, the tallest building in west Winnipeg. The construction of high rise apartment blocks has removed this distinction, but the St. James Fire Hall continues to be a conspicuous landmark in the neighbourhood.
APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report
Assessment Record

Building Address: 200 Berry Street  Building Name: Winnipeg Fire Hall No. 11

Original Use: Fire hall & police station  Current Use: Fire hall

Roll No. (Old): 07021816100 (---)  RSN: 183975

Legal Description: 34/35 St. James, Plan 1253, Block 1, Part Lot 68: Lots 69/72

Location: West side, south of Portage Avenue

Date of Construction: 1912  Storeys: 1, 2 and 3 storeys and partial basement

Heritage Status: **ON INVENTORY**

Construction Type: Masonry and stone foundation

- 8798/1957; 10255/1959; 562/1963; 5083/1992 $27,000 (exterior alterations); 184625/2001 $35,000 (interior renovations – kitchen)

Information:

- 29½ x 31½ x 30 + = 112,921 cu. ft.
- concrete floors on ground floor
- ceiling heights: B- 7’; 1st- 12’; 2nd- 8-9’

ARCHITECT: LYNN, WILLIAM ROBERT

CONTRACTOR: DOLMER, JOHN
Plate 1 – This ca.1915 photo is taken from the tower of the fire hall looking northwest. St. James Hall, Hampton Street is on the west side of the street in the middle of the photograph (with the sign “Lyric” and the date 1911 on the front façade). The church building in the right foreground is St. James Presbyterian Church, built in 1911 (demolished). It became Hampton Street United Church in 1925 [United Church of Canada Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Conference Archives]. The church in the left background is St. James Methodist Church, 232 Parkview Street. Built in 1910 as Olivet Baptist Church, it was bought by the Methodist congregation in 1917. The pictured edifice was destroyed by fire in January 1919, rebuilt and reopened in October 1920 [United Church of Canada Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Conference Archives and Manitoba Free Press, 1900-1920]. Note the extensive residential district stretching for many blocks to the west and north. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 2 – The Greater Winnipeg region, 1880. The Rural Municipality of Assiniboia is one of the largest of the surrounding municipalities. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 3 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, front (east) and south façades, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 4 – St. Vital Fire Hall and Police Station, 598 St. Mary’s Road, shortly after completion, ca.1914. This highly detailed structure included stone accenting and oriel window, Flemish gable with Palladian window and decorative metal cresting on the roof. (Courtesy of the St. Vital Historical Society.)
Plate 5 - Assiniboia Fire Hall and Police Station, 200 Berry Street, ca.1920. (Reproduced from Lucy Lindell, Memory Opens the Door [Eriksdale, MB: Author, 1970].)
Plate 6 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, detail of north end of front (east) façade, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)

Plate 7 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, detail of north end of front (east) façade, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 8 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, front (east) and south sides of the hose drying tower, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 9 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, original personnel entrance bricked in (left) and original police equipment doors partially bricked in with new personnel entrance (right), 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 10 – St. James Fire Hall, 200 Berry Street, 1981. Note the original personnel entrance has been bricked in (arrow), a new entrance has been built into the south equipment door, but it still includes the original transom windows and arch. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 11 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, south side, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 12 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, front (east) and north façades, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)

Plate 13 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, rear (west) and south façades, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 14 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, rear (west) and north façades, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 15 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, southeast corner room, originally the garage for police vehicles, now used for recreation and storage space. Outline of original vehicle door still visible on the wall, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 16 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, garage bay at north end of building, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 17 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, ribbed garage floor drainage system, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
200 BERRY STREET – ST. JAMES FIRE HALL NO. 1
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Plate 18 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, hoses hanging to dry in tower, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)

Plate 19 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, stairs from the first floor, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 20 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, covered over pole hole, ground floor, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)

Plate 21 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, third floor exercise room, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 22 – St. James Fire Hall No. 1, 200 Berry Street, second floor hallway looking north, 2013.
(M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 23 – Portage Avenue looking west from the Route 90 overpass. The new Fire Paramedic Station No. 11, 1705 Portage Avenue, is under construction to the right, the tower of the present St. James Fire Hall can be seen in the distance (arrow), 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)
Plate 24 – “Winnipeg 1875” by W. Frank Lynn. ( Courtesy of Manitoba Archives. )
Plate 25 – “Portage Avenue”, exact location unknown, 1910. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 26 – Map of the early river lot owners of the Parish of St. James. Lot 24 (James Bruce), #1, is the present-day location of the Assiniboine Park Footbridge at Overdale Street and Lot 34/35 (William Bourke), #2, is the location of the fire hall, Portage Avenue at Berry Street. (Reproduced from Mary McCarthy Ferguson, A History of St. James (Winnipeg, MB: Author, 1967.)
Plate 27 – City of Winnipeg and surrounding municipality boundaries, 1956, including the City of St. James and the Municipality of Assiniboia to the west. (Courtesy of City of Winnipeg Archives.)
Plate 28 – Driving in City (Assiniboine) Park, 1910. (City of Winnipeg.)

Plate 29 – New Fire Paramedic Station No. 11, 1705 Portage Avenue, designed by Nejmark Architects. (Reproduced from http://www.scottfielding.ca/assets/1032%20colour%20elevations%20copy.jpg.)