

325 TALBOT AVENUE – FIRE HALL NO. 8
A. and W. Melville, 1906



Constructed in 1906, No. 8 Fire Hall is located on Talbot Avenue in Elmwood. At that time Elmwood was a small suburb in the North End ward located at the foot of the Louise Bridge. Because of the successful lobbying by Winnipeg businessmen, the Canadian Pacific Railway was convinced to come to the West through Winnipeg, not Selkirk. The City built the bridge as access into Point Douglas. Originally part of the rural municipality of East Kildonan, Elmwood's development was largely uncontrolled as industry and manufacturers moved into the district to be close to the railway. Tax advantages, cheaper transportation costs, and a lack of any zoning by-laws attracted industries such as abattoirs, coal yards, breweries, machine works and lumber yards. Residential housing was also being built within this industrial complex to accommodate the large number of immigrants. Developers constructed wood frame houses on lots twenty-five to thirty-three feet wide.

The Elmwood community recognized the need for adequate municipal services and opted to join the City in 1906. Among the advantages of joining with Winnipeg came the construction of

Elmwood's own fire hall that same year. As part of Number 3 Fire District, it operated in conjunction with other fire halls in the North End. Elmwood's mixture of wood houses interspersed with heavy industry presented the Fire Department with a particularly difficult situation. A factory fire in 1923, for example, also burned five houses to the ground before being brought under control.

Designed by architects A and W. Melville, No. 8 Fire Hall is a solid brick building modeled on a prototype used for all of the City's fire halls from 1904 to 1914. Based on a classical vernacular tradition, the building featured four arcuated doorways without elaborate detail. A simplified Palladian motif was used in the gable window with an Italianate-style hose drying tower. Designed to house a maximum of eleven horses and sixteen men, in 1921, the firehall accommodated two captains with eight firemen, one horsedrawn hose wagon, one horsedrawn hook and ladder truck, one horsedrawn chemical fire engine of 100 gallon capacity and one steam fire engine of seven hundred and fifty gallon capacity.

With the creation of Unicity in 1972, the No. 8 Fire Hall became an ambulance depot and is presently leased to a private boxing club. Neither the façade of the building nor the interior have had any significant alterations.