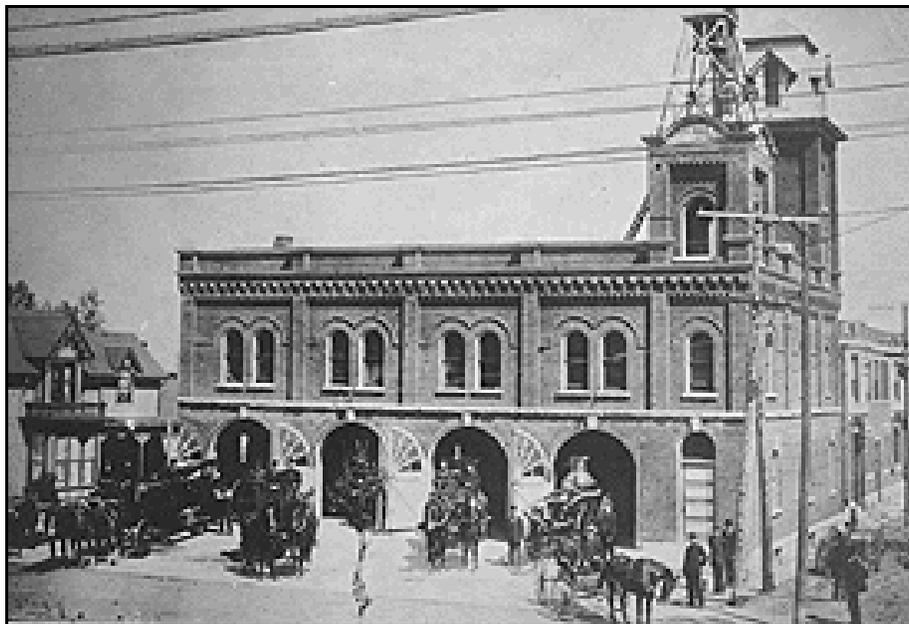


**Thunder Bay Multicultural Centre**  
**(formerly the Central Fire Station/Court Street Fire Station)**  
**17 Court Street North**



**Year Built:** 1906

**Architect:** Thomas Hanley

**Notable Features:** Corbelled brickwork  
Arched windows connected by brick stringcourses  
Hose-drying tower

**Date of Designation:** May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1994

**By-Law No.:** 105 - 1994

**Legal Description:** Town Plot N Arthur Pt Lot 5 RP 55R6957 Part 1

**Current Owner:** Thunder Bay Multicultural Centre

**Description:**

The Court Street Fire Hall was built in Port Arthur in 1907/08 to serve the needs of the ever-expanding city. There were firefighting crews in the area prior to the construction of the all-brick Court Street Building, a volunteer fire department was organized in Port Arthur in 1884. The previous wooden fire hall had been situated first at the water front, then, in 1900, at the foot of Arthur Street (now Red River Road). In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the fire department still functioned with an all-volunteer crew and used hand and horse drawn hand pumps.

The staff of the Court Street Fire Department began to receive full-time pay for their services in 1912. Roderick McLeod was made the new Fire Chief, as he had volunteered for many years with the department. His crew was paid \$75 per month and

expected to work 24 hours a day, 6 days per week. The men were granted one hour-long break in their day to “attend a family or restaurant meal.” The fire department was comprised of 9 firefighters, 6 horses, a horse drawn 100 psi steamer pump, hose and ladder wagons, chemical wagon and Chief buggies. The Court Street Station was the only fire hall in Port Arthur at this time.

The station received a motorized combination pumper/hose truck in 1913. The truck was outfitted with 6 cylinder air cooled engine, right hand drive controls and solid rubber wheels. It was delivered to the lakehead via rail and had to be horse-drawn to the station, as no one knew how to operate the machine.

In 1919 the fire department of Port Arthur adopted reduced hours; down to 72 per week, without any loss of pay. This remained the norm until the end of World War 2 when the schedule was changed to 3 platoon shift work ensuring that each man would work no more than 48 hours per week.

The Court Street facility underwent many changes over its' 79 years of operation as a Fire Hall. The structure was updated often to meet the demands of the expanding fleet and the newer technologies that were introduced nearly annually. The station was the last of the horse stable stations in the area to retire, which it did in 1986 with the construction of the 9<sup>th</sup> Fire Hall in Thunder Bay, the North Central Fire Station.

Considering the fire hall's ideal location in the downtown core of the Port Arthur end of Thunder Bay, much interest in the building was sparked upon its' closure. Offers to purchase the property came from restaurateur hopefuls, a business man, who wished to use the space for commercial stores and offices and the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association.

Controversy ensued as City aldermen debated whether to attempt to conserve and restore the building, or sell it for top dollar. Jelenko Zugic, the businessman offered \$105,000 but made no promises to restore the site's original façade. The Multicultural Association proposed significantly less, \$85,000, but budgeted to spend over a quarter million dollars on restoration. Although one alderman claimed his ultimate responsibility to the City was “to be fiscally responsible,” believing he had an “obligation to generate as much revenue as possible,” other council members saw the restoration opportunity as important to the City.

The Thunder Bay Multicultural Association eventually won out and purchased the building in 1987. Upon restoration of the old fire hall, the building was designated as a Heritage property in 1994.

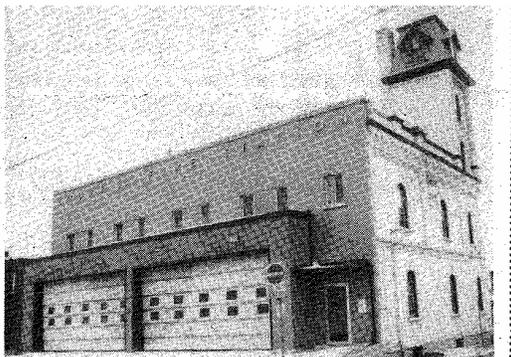
### **Architecture:**

The original Court Street Fire Hall was built in 1906 to a design by architect Thomas Hanley of Port Arthur; the contractor was W.E. White. The brick two-storey structure was designed for horse-drawn fire wagons with access provided by four round-

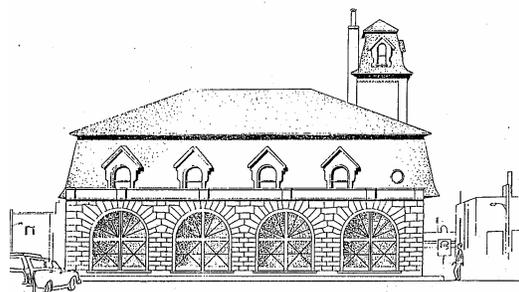
arched wooden doors; the upper half of each door was glass in the form of a fanlight. Shallow brick buttresses divided the façade into four-and-a-half bays, four for the wagon doors and the half for an ordinary round-arched doorway. The second floor consisted of pairs of round-arched windows over each wagon door and a single window over the doorway. Rows of ornamental brick work formed the cornice while a simple parapet with buttresses established the roofline.

At the southwest corner, a one-storey tower features a rounded pediment; the tower originally housed the fire bell. By 1910, a metal frame above the tower supported the fire bell, while is now displayed at Hillcrest Park. Another hose-drying tower at the southeast corner rose five storeys with a mansard roof at the fifth level and a pyramid hip at the peak. Gabled dormers projected from the south and west faces of the mansard whose surfaces are covered with patterned shingles. At each level of the tower, a single round-arched window repeated those on the façade. The Cooke Street side of the building and the north side continue the corbelled brick work, but the north side windows are segmental arched, those on the Cooke Street side are round-arched like the façade.

By 1986, the building had been drastically altered to accommodate a modern fleet of fire trucks. The round-arched doors had been replaced by garage doors, thus altering the entire façade of the court street wall. The Thunder Bay Multicultural Association bought the property in 1987 and restored much of the structure to its' original façade. An addition was added to the west side of the building at this time, extending the structure to the sidewalk. Four large arched openings form a covered entry for four large round-arched solid wooden doors. On the second storey are paired arched windows, buttresses and horizontal courses of patterned brick.



Court Street Fire Hall, 1987



Proposal for Restoration of  
Court Street Fire Hall;  
Thunder Bay Multicultural Centre