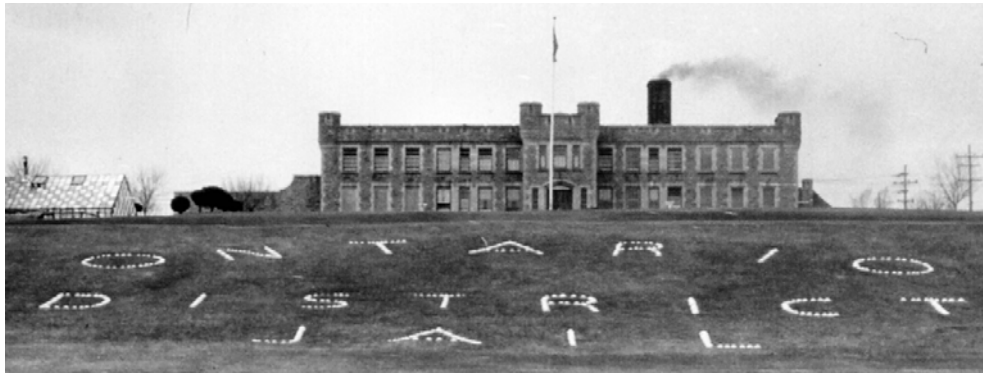


Thunder Bay Jail and the Thunder Bay Jail Governor's Residence
285 McDougall Street



Year Built: 1926

Architect: H. H. Russell

Added to Heritage Register: June 22, 2009

Description:

The Thunder Bay Jail was built in 1926, a time of architectural design and style, grumpily described by a famed Architectural Historian, H. H. Russell, as being ruled by “eclecticism that permitted an archeological sort of revival Gothic to thrive as a mode for churches and educational institutions.” While the Thunder Bay Jail is not a formal educational institution, it does have many stylistic references to the Neo-Gothic style, that was used so often throughout the Province of Ontario between 1900-1945 for scholastic buildings that it became known also as the “Collegiate Gothic” style.

In general terms, Neo-Gothic Collegiate Gothic design elements include a symmetrical facade composition, grandness of scale, monochromatic exterior finishes and a stress on horizontal lines. The Thunder Bay Jail, which has an inmate capacity of 102, features a symmetrical front façade, organized around a projecting entry area, with corner turrets and a flattened gothic limestone arch, also referred to as a compound arch, at the entry door.

The strong horizontal line of the front facade is broken only by the massing of the turrets at the outer corners. The turrets at the entry and corners, a crenellated parapet and random ashlar sandstone exterior finish, give the building a monumental, fortress look. The fortress look is further reinforced by the appearance of razor ribbon (a type of barbed wire) adorning the top edge of the exterior walls of the inmate exercise yards. Also typical of this style is the use of smooth limestone for the lintels, sills, quoins and stringcourse. The overall effect is of a monumental fortress, whose presence was intended to impress upon the criminal element the power of the institution and its ability to ensure the safety of the local citizenry.

The third floor of the jail houses the death cell. Prisoners scheduled for hanging were housed in the death cell. The hangings are said to have taken place in a third floor hallway with a rope suspended from a water pipe exposed in the ceiling of the hallway.