

Thunder Bay Armoury
317 Park Avenue



Year Built: 1913

Architect: Herbert E. Matthews

Added to Heritage Register: June 22, 2009

Description:

The Armoury was built in 1913 and is associated with the provision of drill halls for the active volunteer Militia in Canada, specifically under Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia and Defense from 1911 to 1916. He expedited the program of armoury construction initiated by Frederick Borden. The Armoury reflects a government policy to supply arms to all militias and to construct good local training facilities.

The Canadian Forces Armoury was built by local contractor A.C. Stewart. Both the land and the building costs were entirely covered by the federal government, without “calling on the City [of Port Arthur] to spend a cent.” Construction of the Armoury took nearly a year, and was a welcomed source of employment, as the city was enduring a “very slack season.”

The building is a smaller version of the Winnipeg Armoury. It was centrally located in Port Arthur and believed to be a “valuable asset to the City;” not just for the regiment, but also for purposes “outside of the military routine.”

The building of the Canadian Forces Armoury in Port Arthur sparked controversy and renewed the twin cities rivalry. The aforementioned ‘slack season’ was affecting employment rates in Fort William as well, which led to “considerable comment by non-political circles” on the “comparison of treatment accorded to the respective cities.” A 1914 Times Journal newspaper article claims that “the lack of armories [*sic*] hampers regiment in Fort William.”

The Armoury is valued for its good aesthetic and functional design. It reflects the influence of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and exhibits a monumental style using medieval military motifs. Built to standard plans, following departmental guidelines, the armoury is functionally organized with ancillary spaces around the drill hall.

The Park Street Armoury is a two-storey building, constructed of red brick with cut stone detailing. A crenellated parapet can be found on the façade and rear of the building. There are rounded battlements of the corners of the projecting central bay and the word “Armoury” carved in relief above the main entrance. Brick pilasters along the side of the building divide it into 13 bays and large semi-circular windows can be seen along each side.