

Central School
10 Algoma Street South



Year Built: 1884

Architect: Robert J. Edwards

Style:

Notable Features: Central entrance with fan light and wheel window above in the tower

Symmetrical façade featuring projecting square tower with pyramidal roof

Elongated Italianate brackets below the eaves of the tower

Designation Date: May 25th, 1983

By-Law No.: 105 – 1983

Legal Description: Town Plot Pt Reserve C RP 55R2409 Part 1

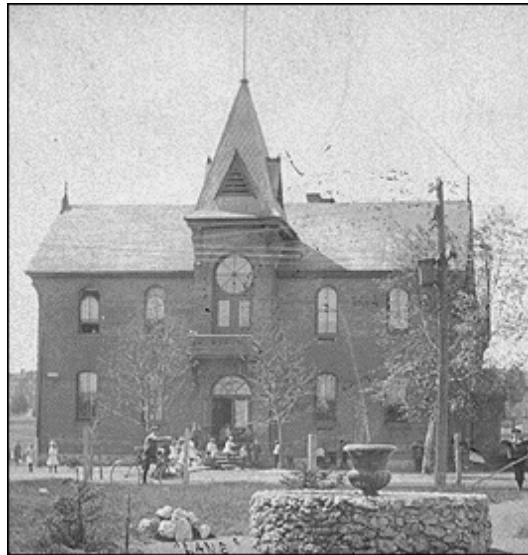
Current Owner: City of Thunder Bay

Description:

Central School, situated in the Waverly Park Heritage Conservation District, is one of the oldest buildings in Thunder Bay. The site was granted by the Crown for school use in 1876, at which time a temporary wooden structure was erected. The symmetrical brick school building was built by 1884, it was the first permanent school in the Lakehead. The site for the building was purposefully chosen to sit atop the hill so that visitors arriving at the docks below would be able to glimpse the beautiful structure. Central School remained open until 1965, at which time the building was made into offices for the Board of Education's Resource Centre.

The Resource centre worked from the Central School site until 1977, when it once again changed hands, this time to the City of Thunder Bay, using the building for the Social Services Department. It wasn't until 1997 that the site would undergo its' next big change.

A Central School stakeholders meeting was held to decide what should be done with the historic building. Two serious propositions were presented to the board, the first from Kauzlarick Business Trust and the next from Magnus Theatre. The Business Trust had plans to renovate the old school into condominiums, while Magnus desired the property for their professional theatre group. After much deliberation and a close vote, Magnus Theatre won out and began fund-raising for the \$5.5 million renovations. The building transformation was completed in 2001, after having undergone major interior renovations, as well as an addition and landscaping alterations.



Architecture:

The projecting central tower with its' pyramidal roof and eaves supported by elongated wooden brackets dominates the façade of the brick school. The tower has a large wheel window at the apex; a projecting shelf protects the double entrance doors and the fanlight. Brickwork on the tower is patterned with circles above the window wheel, horizontal bands at regular intervals and arched surrounds for the other windows.

To either side of the tower, there is a bay with two windows for each floor. The first floor windows have segmental arches while the second level windows are round-arched. A brick stringcourse crosses the wall at each level with arches over each window openings. The present windows were installed in 1976.

On the gable ends to the north and south, the projecting eaves have triple wooden brackets at the eaves return. A circular opening in the gable is outlined in raised brick and is now filled with louvers; originally there was glass. On each floor there are three window openings which repeat the shapes found on the façade. This portion of the building originally contained four classrooms.

In 1901, eight more classrooms were added to the structure. The architects for the addition were R. H. Wheeler; the contractor's name was L. A. Purcell. The addition was constructed in brick, with window openings, wall surfaces, and roof lines designed to blend with the existing structure.

The site in Waverly Park was granted by the Crown for school use in 1876; at the time, a temporary wooden building was constructed. The building was deliberately constructed on the hill so that it could be seen and appreciated by visitors arriving by boat at the docks farther down Arthur Street.

As the first permanent school building in the Lakehead, the structure was used as a school until 1965, after which it was the location of the Board of Education's Resource Centre until 1977. The City of Thunder Bay bought the building at this time and used it for the Social Service Department offices. The building was designated as a Heritage Site in 1983.

Magnus Theatre, Thunder Bay's only professional theatre group, moved into the Central School building in 2001 after a 4 year fundraising campaign to offset the 5.5 million dollar cost of renovation. The company uses the original Central School as offices and administrative space and added on to the back of the 1901 addition to accommodate the theatre room.

History of Magnus Theatre:

The history of Magnus Theatre begins in 1971 when British director Burton Lancaster decided to create a new theatre in a small community. Apparently he randomly chose Thunder Bay by blindly placing a finger on a map of North America. Luckily for the City, Lancaster was serious about his dream and upon arrival in Thunder Bay immediately began planning for the theatre company and searching for an appropriate venue. The Slovakian Hall, in the East End of the city proved to be adequate enough for the time being, as so commenced Magnus Theatre. By 1977, it had become the only professional theatre company between Winnipeg and Sudbury.

Over the years, different directors have focused on various aspects of theatre, some emphasized the importance of community theatre while others preferred a national outlook. Regardless, Magnus Theatre enjoyed success in Thunder Bay and, by the mid-90's had outgrown their humble abode. The search for a new site didn't take long, and proponents for Magnus were overjoyed that there was potential for the Theatre company to take part in the conservation of Central School, one of the oldest buildings in Thunder Bay. Magnus's proposal was approved by the Central School stakeholders and so embarked on an ambitious fund-raising campaign.

The 2001 – 2002 30th Anniversary Season was inaugurated in the new Theatre Hall, housed in the thoroughly updated Central School site. The company has thrived from its' new location, employing upwards of 60 artists, technicians and designers per year and boasting a volunteer base of over 250 individuals.

For a more complete history of Magnus Theatre, please visit:

< http://www.magnus.on.ca/content/Who_is_Magnus/Magnus_History >



Magnus Theatre