	PDE Heritage – FORM 1	Department of Planning, Development and Engineering			
	Heritage Building Designation				
PROPERTY LOCATION					
Civic Address: 265 LeMarchant Road					
Applicant Name: City of St. John's		Phone (h)		(c)	
Mailing Address:		Email:			
ARCHITECTURE (maximum 35)					SECTION A
		E	VG	G	F/P
1. Style: Modern Architecture - good example if few survive.	20	10	5	0	
2. Construction: Early example of modern concrete buildings	15	8	4	0	
3. Age: 1944	10	8	5	0	
4. Architect: William D. McCarter and Frederick Colbourne made great contributions in St. John's	8	4	2	0	
5. Design: Good but some details have been removed	8	4	2	0	
6. Interior: Significant upgrades required	4	2	1	0	
Sub Total		35			
HISTORY (maximum 35)					SECTION B
7. Person: Group: St. John's Fire Fighters Association	25	10	5	0	
8. Event: Start of the emergence of Modern Architecture in St. John's	15	8	4	0	
9. Context: Start of suburban development in St. John's	10	5	2	0	
Sub Total		31			
ENVIRONMENT (maximum 15)					SECTION C
10. Continuity: Important in establishing the Modern Architecture in the area	5	3	1	0	
11. Setting: Setting contributes to the continuity or character of the street	5	3	1	0	
12. Landmark: A familiar structure in the context of the City.	5	3	1	0	
Sub Total		9			
INTEGRITY (maximum 15)					SECTION D
13. Site: Occupies its original site	5	3	1	0	
14. Alterations: Character retained on all sides.	5	3	2	0	
15. Condition: Satisfactory structural condition; roof may require replacing	5	3	2	0	
Sub Total		11			
TOTAL SCORE		86			
SIGNATURE					
Reviewed by: <u>Ann-Marie Cashin</u> Date (yyyy-mm-dd) <u>2021-11-10</u>					

E - Excellent

VG - Very Good

G – Good

F/P – Fair/Poor

ST. JOHN'S

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR, CANADA

Statement of Significance



265 LeMarchant Road (West End Fire Station)

Formal Recognition Type

City of St. John's Heritage Building, Structure, Land or Area

Description of Historic Place

265 LeMarchant Road is two-storey, concrete structure located in St. John's, NL. The designation is confined to the footprint of the building.

Heritage Value

265 LeMarchant Road has been designated because of its aesthetic and historic values.

265 LeMarchant Road achieves aesthetic value because it is a good surviving example of an early Modernist Architecture structure in St. John's. Features of this style include: clean, minimal lines, two storey concrete construction, smooth surface, flat roof, rounded columns, simple window and door design, and slightly recessed windows. The building was also designed with stables at the rear of the building. The original building contained glass block around the main entrance in the transom and side lights, as well as steel signage with individual lettering. Both elements are characteristics of Modernist Architecture but have since been removed. The building also originally had three rounded columns and three bays, however one column was removed in 1973 in order to install two new garage doors. The structure has been renovated over the years, but the character of the building remains generally unchanged.

The West End Fire Station was built at a time when the city was expanding away from the downtown and Modernist Architecture buildings were beginning to emerge in these

new suburban areas. This building achieves historic value because it was the first concrete building in the LeMarchant Road area and the start of a cluster of concrete building developments. The West End Fire Station was built between 1942 and 1944 by the firm of William D. McCarter, Architect, with assistance of his draughtsman, Frederick Colbourne. McCarter and Colbourne went on to design other concrete buildings such as the American Aerated Water Company Building at 278 LeMarchant Road (now a provincial owned building) and Colbourne designed the Cornwall Theatre at 264 LeMarchant Road (now Smith Stockley). These building create an enclave of Modern Architecture in St. John's and development the West End Fire Station played a prominent part in introducing that trend.

Source: Designated at a regular meeting of the St. John's Municipal Council held on _____. The St. John's Heritage Designation (265 LeMarchant Road, PID #13652) By-Law came into effect on _____, upon notice in The Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette.

Character Defining Elements

All elements that define the building's Modern Architecture design including:

- clean, minimal line
- two storey concrete construction
- smooth surface
- flat roof
- rounded columns
- simple window and door design

Location and History

Community	St. John's
Municipality	City of St. John's
Civic Address	265 LeMarchant Road
Construction	1942-1944
Builder	William D. McCarter, Architect, with assistance of his draughtsman, Frederick Colbourne.
Style	Modern
Building Plan	L-Shape

Additional Photos



Building Preservation Brief: Central Fire Station and other St. John's Fire Halls

prepared by the
Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador



Dale Jarvis
Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
St. John's, Newfoundland
April 2001

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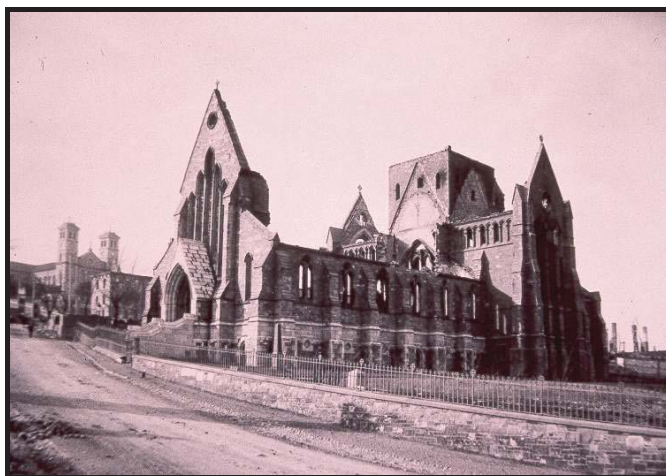
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The Great Fire and After

On the afternoon of July 8, 1892, a labourer dropped his lit pipe in the hay in the stable of Timothy O'Brien, close to the junction of Freshwater and Pennywell Roads at the top of Long's Hill, St. John's, Newfoundland. The hay caught fire, and soon so did the stable.

By some odd coincidence, the water supply to the area had been turned off that very morning in order to make some new connections of mains. It had been reconnected, but its force on the high ground was slight. A nearby water supply tank had been emptied the previous evening by firemen practising their hose work, and had not been filled.

The fire from the stable quickly grew, and fanned by strong winds coming from the north-west, it hurled sparks far and wide on the roofs of nearby wooden houses. For a month before hardly any rain had fallen. By the end of the day, nearly the entire city was reduced to ashes. Hundreds upon hundreds of houses and businesses burned to the ground. The total loss was estimated at \$13,000,000 with over 11,000 people left homeless. This was the St. John's Great Fire, perhaps the darkest single day in the history of the city.



Judge D.W. Prowse was approached to investigate the fire and the response of the local fire brigades. In his report Prowse described the organization of the fire brigades as "starved, mismanaged, rotten". He noted that if City Council was unwilling to improve the fire brigade, the Newfoundland Government would have to take steps to ensure that another Great Fire did not occur.

In November 1892 the Government acted on the advice of Prowse and sent John R. McCowen, the Superintendent of the Penitentiary, to tour fire departments elsewhere in North America and evaluate their equipment and organization. In January 1893 McCowen tabled his report with the Government, stating that the brigade was "disgracefully equipped" and making fourteen recommendations to improve the situation. He recommended either a paid fire department or a combined police and fire department, noting that a combined force would cost \$12,000 less.

In March 1893 John Sullivan of the Newfoundland Constabulary was sent to Montreal to buy the necessary equipment for the proposed fire department. Three new fire stations were commissioned to be built in June 1893 and were to be opened in November of that year. The openings were delayed, however, until April 1894. As well, legislation was passed in 1893 appointing a Board of Commissioners who supported the idea of a mixed police and fire department. The Fire Department Act of 1895 placed the proposed new force under the control of the Inspector-General of the

Constabulary, and it remained a part of the Constabulary until May 28th, 1957.

The legislation also divided St. John's into three districts, each of which contained one of three new fire stations. The Central district included the area between King's Road and Adelaide Street. The Eastern District included the area east of King's Road, and the Western District included the area west of Adelaide Street including the South Side. By the end of 1895 there were three new fire stations, housing in total twenty-two paid firemen. The Government worked out an arrangement to share the cost of the fire department with the St. John's Municipal Council.

Central Fire Station

The Board of Commissioners recommended that a new Central Station should be erected to form the headquarters of the department, to be equipped with 1 steam fire engine, 1 chemical engine, 2 Badcock chemical extinguishers, 1 hook and ladder truck, 1 horse hose reel, 1 ambulance wagon, 1 salvage or police patrol wagon, 3000 feet of hose, 8 horses, 10 men and 12 fire alarm boxes (Fox 95).

The site for the Central Station was chosen to be Fort Townshend, off Bonaventure Avenue. The site chosen was the former site of the old Government House, a two storey wooden dwelling house designed by Lt. John Caddy as the summer residence of the Governor of Newfoundland, which had been erected in 1779. Repaired and enlarged in 1812, it was found to be unfit for year round occupation by 1817, but continued as the official home of the Governor until the construction of the current Government House in 1829. By the late 1800's, there was nothing on that particular site, but the 1889 insurance atlas for St. John's does show a two-storey hose house south of where the building was to be constructed.

The fire hall building was constructed from 1893 to 1894, and is visible on the 1893-1907 city insurance atlas. The building was of wooden construction, 3 ½ storeys high with an imposing five storey tower in the south east corner. At the time of its construction the tower would have had a most commanding view of the entire city, and was the perfect location for a fire lookout. It was officially opened July 8, 1895.

Originally constructed to stand alone, there were a number of additions made to the station over



the years. By 1914, a narrow wooden hook and ladder shed was constructed along the west face of the building, with an exterior alarm bell tower to the immediate south west of the building. The station had a two storey stable at the rear, one outbuilding also behind the station, and was listed as having offices on the second floor.

Around 1921 or 1922, and visible on maps from 1925, the hook and ladder shed had been replaced with a two storey, shed roof addition, with two bays for trucks or wagons in the front facade. The addition had a dormitory at the front and rear of the second storey, with a large drill room in the centre. By 1925 as well, there was a two storey stable to the rear of the station proper, and the original outbuilding had been joined to the main hall by the construction of a one storey linking building.

The main floor of the station was used for the engines, cars and "all the necessary equipment for fighting fires" (City 26). The upper storeys were used as barracks for firefighters. A 1920 article in the *Newfoundland Quarterly* noted that:

Very excellent quarters have been provided for the single men of the Department [sic], who were formerly scattered in different parts of the City. They have a very large and airy dormitory and a dining room, kitchen, reading room and recreation room provide them with suitable conveniences. Everything is kept in a very clean and orderly manner. Other points of interest to the visitor are the drill room and apparatus controlling the fire signals throughout the City (City 26).

The upper levels of the Central Fire Hall, along with the East and West stations, also served as barracks for single constables of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary until 1936. The words of a former constable barracked in the Central Fire Hall differ greatly from the glowing description of the *Newfoundland Quarterly* writer:

There were the fire trucks on the main floor, and some of them seventeen- or eighteen-hundred-pound horses were out in the back. In the morning around seven o'clock now, they'd start up the fire engines. Of course as soon as they started up the engines you know, the fumes from the trucks, the smell of the barn, and everything would just be stirred up, and it used to come right up through the three floors, right up the pole to the third. We slept there with the stink of that. We didn't have cots, we had bunks built up on the side of the wall. The hay was stored in another part of it there, and the fleas would get in the hay. There was fleas, and you name it. It was never as bad as that out to the seal fishery in my time (Kenny and Wentzel, 26).

In spite of the stink and the fleas, the Central Fire Station continued to use horses and stable them on site. As late as 1935, the station still housed a 1895 horse-drawn Merryweather model pumper.

Starting in the mid 1930s however, there were a number of changes made to the Fire Department,

largely the work of Patrick O'Neill. Patrick J. O'Neill was born at Witless Bay on March 10, 1883 and entered the police force in 1903. He was promoted to Sergeant in 1907, Head Constable in 1920, Superintendent in 1922, and on August 8 1934 was appointed to the new office of Chief of Police and Head of the St. John's Fire Department.



As Head of the Department, O'Neill was instrumental in its reorganization. His aim was to put the department on a footing equal to or better than departments elsewhere. His improvements included instituting a system of promotions and retirements, and an increase in numbers of paid employees to a total of forty men by 1935. O'Neill was also responsible for updating the city's fire alarm system and ordering two additional fire engines (Fox 124).

Changes in fire fighting technology, organization of the department, and deficiencies in the old wooden station meant that a new station was required. According to a dated photograph in the July 1937 edition of the *Newfoundland Quarterly*, the wood fire hall was standing on May 2nd of that year. Then, on the 25th of May, 1937, then Governor Humphrey Walwyn wrote the following letter to The Right Honourable Malcolm MacDonald, M.P., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:

I have the honour to inform you that it is necessary to build a new Central Fire Hall to replace the present building which was erected in 1894 and is a wooden structure consisting of a three-storey main block with a two-story side annex and a single-story rear annex. It was used jointly as a fire station and a residence for the unmarried men of the Newfoundland Constabulary until early in 1936 when the police were transferred to the newly erected barracks. In October last the Chief Engineer of the Department of Public Works made a detailed examination of the building. He reported that the whole structure was distorted to an alarming degree, beams were deflected and generally the building was in a most unstable condition. He advised that any attempt to strengthen the structure would be a waste of money. The building has been under constant observation and, to prevent an immediate collapse, it has been necessary to augment the trusses which carry the main floor.

2. To continue the use of the present building for any extended period would be to risk disaster and it is therefore a matter of urgency to proceed with the erection of a new fire station with the greatest possible dispatch. Plans have been prepared for a new concrete and steel framed structure 79 feet long x 68 feet wide consisting of a partly excavated basement, ground floor and upper floor.

The excavated portion of the basement (79 feet x 22 feet) contains the furnace room, fuel store, a small ammunition room and a miniature rifle range for police use. The whole of the ground floor is taken up with the fire fighting apparatus and stalls for five horses.

The upper floor provides the following accommodation:-

Dormitory for Firemen	30' 0" x 27' 0"
Day room for Firemen	31' 6" x 13' 0"
Tailor's Workshop	31' 0" x 17' 0"
Superintendent's Office	10' 6" x 7' 0"
Superintendent's Bedroom	11' 0" x 11' 0"
Officers Bedroom	11' 0" x 10' 6"
do.	11' 0" x 9' 0"
Police Drill Room	34' 0" x 27' 0"
Lavatory (3 W.C's, Urinal, 1 Bath, 1 Shower)	20' 0" x 11' 0"
Hay Store	27' 0" x 10' 6"
Feed Bins	25' 0" x 11' 0"

A hose-drying tower runs from the ground floor to the top of the building. A separate entrance to the drill room has been provided for the police. All external and basement walls are concrete. The rooms on the upper floors are formed by plastered wood stud partitions. The basement and ground floors are of concrete and the upper floor of wood supported by steel girders. The roof is covered with pitch and gravel. Steel window sashes are used throughout the building and the apparatus doors are specifically designed for rapid opening. The building is heated by low pressure steam radiators.

3. It is estimated that the new building will cost \$60,000 and, as it is proposed that the work should be begun with the least possible delay, the Commission of Government would be glad to receive by telegraph your authority to proceed. Provision has been included in the draft Estimates for 1937-38 (GN 38).

Demolition of the old structure and the construction of the new hall was underway at least by August of 1937, with a Mr. Thompson acting as foreman. The modern Central Fire Station was officially opened in 1938, the same year as a new Police Drill Hall was also opened at Fort Townshend. The building first appears on the 1942 Ryan map of St. John's.

The current fire hall is one of the older poured concrete buildings standing in St. John's. It is designed in a restrained Classical Revival style, most evident in its use of heavy exterior pilasters and heavy



cornice moulding. The building has a symmetrical facade, with large garage doors. Plans for the building were largely drawn up by a "C.H.C." of the Department of Public Works, while the steel framing plans for the building were drawn up by the United States Steel Products Co. and the American Bridge Co., of New York. The glass for the building was provided locally by Thomas Glass.

The building was constructed with a very slight pitch to the roof (1 in 48). Revised plans included a skylight over the tailor's shop and the inclusion of a quartermaster's store, also with a skylight. Originally, this building had multi-pane casement windows in the upper storey, with the lower storey windows being larger 12 pane windows, with the upper central 4 panes forming an operable awning style window. These windows were kept in the building at least until 1963. At some point after this they were replaced with windows of a more modern material and design, although the original window openings were maintained. Plans were also drawn up in 1943 for changes to the original kitchen and dining room layout, and additional plans for a large built in refrigerator were drawn up in 1944. Changes were proposed to the main doors in 1950, which had apparently been the cause of some problems. In 1952, further plans were drawn up for the construction of the drill tower which stands today to the north west of the building.

West End Fire Station

The Central Fire Station was supported by two sister stations, and two smaller sub-stations. The original West End Fire Station, or Fire Station #3, was constructed on New Gower Street, at the intersection of New Gower Street and what was then Bambrick's Street, close to the Horwood Lumber lot off Springdale Street. The exact date of its construction is not known, but a wooden building is shown, labelled as "Western Fire Station 3" on the 1880-1889 insurance atlas, with a 1 ½ storey stable at the rear and an "Alarm Bell" located quite close to the middle of New Gower Street. This structure was probably quite similar to that built by the Central Fire Station. The same fire station building is shown on the 1893-1902 insurance atlas, but the alarm bell was apparently moved off the street by this time.

The West End station was equipped circa 1895 with 1 steam fire engine, 1 horse hose reel, 2 Badcock chemical extinguishers, 2000 feet of hose, 3 horses, 6 men and 8 fire alarm boxes (Fox 95). By 1920 the station also boasted an American-LaFrance motor car, a combination chemical engine and hose car, with a 105 horse power six cylinder motor and ten inch electric searchlight. Concerns were raised at the time whether such a contraption would be able to navigate the winter streets of St. John's (City 26-27).

The West End Fire Station was on New Gower Street at least until July 1931, as it appears on dated maps drawn for the widening of the street. Like the old Central Station however, the wooden station had its fair share of problems. In November of 1938, Superintendent M. Codner wrote that the main stringers supporting the main floor of the building were so rotten, that there was a danger of the fire engine falling through the floor!

There were other reasons for a new station as well. In September of 1941, the Commissioner for Justice and Defense wrote,

I am very much alarmed at the rapidity with which all land in the vicinity of Cornwall Avenue is being built up. In another twelve months there will be practically nothing left. I therefore urge most strongly that a piece of land be acquired immediately for the purpose of the West End Fire Hall, and held until we are in a position to build. The area west and north of LeMarchant Road and Cornwall Avenue has, as you are aware become thickly populated in recent years and the expansion no in that direction has increased and continues to increase with great speed. It is essential for the protection of that area that a fire station should be placed there. In that location it will act as a protection for the lower part of the town to the same extent as the present Fire Hall (GN 13).

As a result, a more modern facility was constructed on LeMarchant Road, c1942. Unlike the Central Fire Station, the new West End Station was designed by an architect outside of the Department of Public Works. The building was designed by the firm of William D. McCarter, Architect, who had his offices in the Royal Bank Building, St. John's. Between 1942 and 1944, the firm drew up a very detailed series of blueprint plans, diagrams and sections, which have been deposited into the collections of the Provincial Archives.



The building at #205 LeMarchant Road first appears on the 1942 Ryan map of St. John's as an L-shaped concrete building. On the 1946 Insurance Atlas, the building is drawn as having 2 storeys and a basement, with stables at the rear. Interestingly, Bennett's Brook is shown on the 1942 plan as flowing to the west of the building, while the 1946 plan shows the brook flowing directly underneath the structure. For a number of years, both the LeMarchant Road Station and the wooden New Gower station were used. Operations shifted entirely to the LeMarchant location in 1945, and the old station was demolished in June of 1946.

East End Fire Station (Fire Station #2)

The East End Station on Duckworth Street is the newest of the three downtown fire halls. Like the

Central Station, it is the second fire hall on the site. Before the Great Fire of 1892, the spot was occupied by the Water Works pipe yard, and specifically by the pipe yard workshop and stores. The original station was constructed c1893-1895, and first appears on the 1893-1902 insurance atlas.

The original building was a wooden 3 ½ storey structure, with a two storey stable/hayloft in the rear. Its original 1895 equipment included 1 steam fire engine, 1 horse hose reel, 2 Badcock chemical extinguishers, 2000 feet of hose, 3 horses, 6 men and 15 fire alarm boxes (Fox 95). By 1925 it had introduced a motor combination chemical truck, and an ambulance wagon. By 1946 it had added a set of extension ladders. Photographs from the late 1940s show the wooden building still in existence.

Again, as time wore on, the wooden structure became less and less usable. From a series of letters to his superiors spanning several years, it seems that the then Superintendent F. Vivian fought an ongoing battle to keep the building in one piece. By 1942 the building was apparently in danger of collapse, and while repairs stabilized the building, it was the start of the end. By the mid forties there was no hot water for cleaning or other purposes. The windows were in deplorable condition, some falling out, many with no putty, forcing officers to move their beds to avoid rain and snow falling on them. Even the brass fireman's pole was in bad shape, sinking into the soft ground, and despite temporary fixes, unusable in times of emergency.

On July 8th, 1947, Vivian wrote,

The apparatus floor is of rough timber and holds dust and dirt which makes it impossible for it to be swept or washed clean. The floors in the dormitory and bedrooms are warped and twisted to such an extent that it even makes walking dangerous, this is due to the building sagging over a period of years. The window frames and sashes are practically falling out on the street. The chimney has been smoking for a long time and a short while ago it was swept and it still smokes, which makes life very uncomfortable when men are arranging their meals. The range is a very large one, infact [sic] it is a ship's range which has been in use for a number of years and it in my opinion has outlived its usefulness. The dining-room and kitchen where the men have to prepare and eat their meals is in a desperate condition which is due to the dilapidated condition of the building. The electric wiring is a knob and tube job and is definitely a fire hazard (GN 13).

Vivian closed his letter with the hope that "arrangements will be made within the year to have the East End Station replaced by a new one, as this is urgently needed" (GN 13). Apparently, his letters work, and the building was replaced with a concrete structure similar in design to the west end station. This building was designed by the Department of Public Works, with plans drawn up by the same "CHC" who drew up the plans for the Central Fire Station. A series of plans, dating from January to July of 1948, are currently on file at the Provincial Archives.



On the 1962 St. John's Insurance Atlas, the wooden fire hall has been replaced by the modern reinforced concrete station, two storeys high with a basement, very similar in design to the West End Station. The building is currently owned by the City of St. John's, and administered by the Department of Building and Property Management.

Sub-Stations

In addition to the three main stations, there were also two smaller sub-stations. The first was on Cookstown Road, at the intersection with Freshwater Road. This was a 1 ½ storey detached concrete building, with a 20,000 gallon capacity water storage tank. On the 1925 insurance atlas it is listed as a sub fire station, housing one steam engine, one hose reel, and 1,000 feet of hose. It first appears on the 1893-1907 insurance atlas listed as a "Fire Engine House". By 1920, there was also a fire hall on the Southside equipped with a hand fire engine, hose reels and ladders (City 27).

Heritage Recommendations

Central Fire Station

- The Central Fire Station is one of the oldest poured concrete buildings standing in the city, and is somewhat unique in an architectural context. Of the three downtown concrete fire stations, this is the finest example. It is in good condition, and is something of a local landmark. Given the construction of the building, it would be very difficult to move.
- If the building is to be demolished, it is the recommendation of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador that proper steps be undertaken to ensure the building is properly documented. This should include a complete photographic record of the interior and exterior of the building and its demolition. Copies of all documentary material should be deposited in the collections of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the City of St. John's Archives.

Central Fire Station Additional Photographs



Front Facade, pilaster and door detail



Firefighters' Monument



Fire Station, rear facade



Training Tower

References

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"Fire Fighting and Prevention". Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador. CDROM version 1.2 Harry Cuff Publications Limited.

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Fox, Arthur. The Newfoundland Constabulary. St. John's: Robinson Blackmore, 1971.

GN 13/1/B Box #148, File #150 "Fire Halls (East and West)". PANL

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"O'Neill, Patrick J". Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador. CDROM version 1.2 Harry Cuff Publications Limited.

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Historical fire hall photographs courtesy Helen Miller, Archivist, City of St. John's Archives. Photos of Central Fire Station courtesy Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, taken April 2000. Original archival research by Dale G. Jarvis, Heritage Preservation Officer, Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador.

List of Archived Drawings and Plans

1893 Central Station

Central Fire Hall (plans)

no date, 100-H-031 1.4.2

PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Proposed Addition to Central Fire Hall (Motor, Ladder, Truck Garage plans and elevations)

no date, 100-H-001 1.4.2

PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

1937-38 Central Fire Hall

Details of Doorways, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works

24 April 1937, 100-H-018 1.4.2

PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Window Details, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works

1 May 1937, 100-H-019 1.4.2

PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Description Plans and Details of R.S. Beams and CI Columns,

Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works

25 May 1937, Drawing No. S1, 100-H-014 1.4.2

PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Floor, Foundation and Roof Plans, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works

24 June 1937, Drawing No. 1, 100-H-035 1.4.2

PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Plans and Details Plumbing and Heating and Electrical Services

Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works

24 June 1937, Drawing No SM1, 100-H-029 1.4.2

PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Reinforced Concrete Work - Beams, Slabs, Etc., Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works

25 June 1937, Drawing No. R.C1, 100-H-015 1.4.2

PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

North and West Elevations and Site Plan, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
 27 June 1927, Drawing No. 3, 100-H-033 1.4.2
 PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

South (Front) and East Elevations and Details of Cornice and Pilasters
 Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
 27 June 1927, Drawing No. 2, 100-H-032 1.4.2
 PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Section A-A, Section B-B, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
 27 June 1937, Drawing No. 4, 100-H-034 1.4.2
 PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Central Fire Hall (framing), United States Steel Products Co. / American Bridge Co., New York
 16 July 1937, 100-H-005 1.4.2
 PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Revised Detail of Flashing, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
 20 July 1937, 100-H-020 1.4.2
 PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Revised Layout of Ground Floor Steel Scheme B, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
 Sept 27 1937, Drawing No. S2, 100-H-013 1.4.2
 PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Base Plate for Ground Floor Columns, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
 2 Oct 1937, 100-H-021 1.4.2
 PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Plan Showing Revised Location and Layout of Dormitory and Details of Cubicles
 Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
 23 Oct 1937, Drawing No RD1, 100-H-025 1.4.2
 PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Revised Plan of First Floor, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
 27 Oct 1937, Drawing No. R2, 100-H 028 1.4.R
 PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Revised Layout of Horse Stalls, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
 Apr 22 1938, Drawing No. R3, 100-H-024 1.4.2
 PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Details of Hatch-way Ground Floor, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
Apr 26 1938, Drawing No. R4, 100-H-023 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Details of Shelving in Q-M Stores, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
30 May 1938, 100-H-022, PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Rifle Range, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
20 Sept 1938, 100-H-007 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Detail of Hose Hoist Block, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
30 Nov 1938, 100-H-017 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Plan of South East Corner of Basement Showing Kitchen and Dining Room for Firemen
Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
9 Nov 1943, 100-H-012 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

North East Corner - First Floor (Dining Room and Kitchen)
Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
21 Nov 1943, 100-H-011 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Alterations (windows), Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
11 Jan 1944, 100-H-009 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Details of Refrigerator, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
13 Jan 1944, 100-H-010 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

New Stable for Fire Horses in Old Manure Pound. Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
14 Feb 1944, 100-H-008 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Detail of Window Opening in Kitchen,
10 May 1950, Drawn by TWS, 100-H-002 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Detail of Window Frame and Sashes for Kitchen Window,
13 May 1950, Drawn by TWS, 100-H-004 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Details of #2 Rolltite Steel Frame with #1201 E.O. (Steel doors)
22 Aug 1950, Drawing No C8773, 100-H-016
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Drill Tower Plans Elevations and Details, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
21 Aug 1952, 100-A-003 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Ground Floor Plan, Revised Plan
no date, 100-H-030 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

Isometric Drawing of Backstop Miniature Rifle Range
no date, 100-H-006 1.4.2
PANL R.G. 4.3 41/83 617-687

New Gower Street Station

West Fire Station Stable
100-H-014.161
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 1211-1279

Detail Storm Sash, Drawn by CHC
27 October 1942, 100-H-013
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 1211-1279

West End (LeMarchant Road) Station

Plan Showing Suggested Site for New West End Fire Hall
12/2/42, Drawn by CHC, 100-H-012
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 1211-1279

Complete blueprint series of Plans, Sections, Details and Elevations by
William D. McCarter, Architect, Royal Bank Building, St. John's
Drawn by FAC, dating 1942-1944
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 1211-1279

East End Fire Station

Preliminary Floor Plans, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
24 Jan 1948, 710A 3-1-1
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4571-4640

Floor Plans, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
1 March 1948, 710A 3-1-1
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4571-4640

Electrical Services, Drawn by CHC, Department of Public Works
1 March 1948, 711-C-3-1-1
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4571-4640

East Fire Station (plans and sections)
no date, 711-D-3-1-1
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4571-4640

Plumbing and Heating Plan, Fred W. Bishop, Heating and Piping Consultant
April 1948, 711-A-3-1-1
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4641-4696

East Fire Station Erection Plan, Drawn for contractor Heap and Partners, Nfld Ltd.
By the Ingalls Iron Works Co, Birmingham, Ala.
23 April 1948, 710-E-3-1-1
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4641-4696

East Fire Station Columns, Drawn for contractor Heap and Partners, Nfld Ltd.
By the Ingalls Iron Works Co, Birmingham, Ala.
5 May 1948, 710-G-3-1-1
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4641-4696

Beams and Angles, Drawn for contractor Heap and Partners, Nfld Ltd.
By the Ingalls Iron Works Co, Birmingham, Ala., 14 June 1948
710-F-3-1-1, PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4641-4696

#433AX Hdwe. For Slidetite Door, 22 July 1948
Drawn by KEJ for Richards-Wilcox Canadian Co, 710H-3-1-1
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4641-4696

Opening Mechanism for Centre Doors
no date, Drawn by KEJ for Richards-Wilcox Canadian Co, 712-H-3-1-1
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4641-4696

Details of Automatic Firing, Fred W. Bishop, Heating and Piping Consultant
28 Oct 1948, 711-B-3-1-1
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4641-4696

Revised Fixture and Piping Layout
5 Feb 1949, F. Bishop
PANL RG 4.3 41/83 4571-4640

LeMarchant Road: An Enclave of Mid-Century Modernist Structures in St. John's, NL



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By Eddy O'Toole and Jerry Dick

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Introduction

The 1940s brought significant change to St. John's. An influx of American and Canadian troops, who established bases in and around St. John's during the war, brought with them North American cultural influences and contributed to a booming economy and population growth. With this came new ways of thinking about buildings. The city's traditional Georgian and Victorian wood, brick and stone residential and commercial structures gradually gave way to buildings of a "Modernist" design. Often built of concrete and steel, these structures generally had little in the way of decoration with the exception of a number of Art Deco buildings.

Modernist architecture sought to break with the styles and "excessive" decorative treatments of the past and to employ a "modern" industrial

aesthetic where form was a direct expression of function. Some of the early modern buildings in the city reflected the Art Deco style, characterized by sleek lines but also fine craftsmanship, and a pastiche of decorative styles that represented luxury, glamour, exuberance, and faith in social and technological progress.

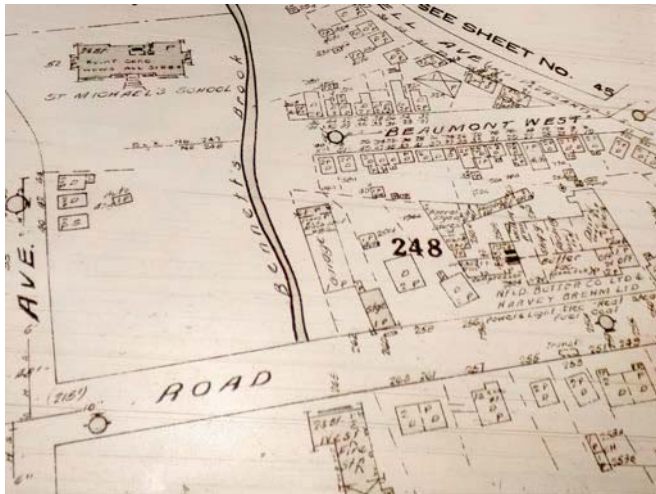
A cluster of buildings near the intersection of Bennett Avenue and LeMarchant Road are a testament to this era in St. John's which saw the city expand rapidly in the west end. While most have been changed over the years and have lost some of their original features, the simple elegance and refinement of these buildings remain. Most were designed by the St. John's architectural firm of McCarter and Colbourne which give these buildings a certain cohesion.

Below: An aerial photograph of the subject stretch of LeMarchant Rd. L-R: McCarter House, American Aerated Water Company, Cornwall Theatre, Cox House, Automobile Showroom, West Fire Station (opposite).

Source: Atlantic Guardian 5(4), July 1948, 14.



For a more detailed look at this era of architecture in Newfoundland and Labrador see Robert Mellin's 2011 book, *Newfoundland Modern: Architecture in the Smallwood Years 1949-1972* which was a source for much of the information in this report.



An excerpt from a 1946 insurance map depicting the corner of LeMarchant Rd. and Bennett Ave. West Fire Hall (bottom middle) and St. Michael's (top left) have already been constructed.
Source: *The Rooms Archives*.

Structures

West Fire Station (265 LeMarchant Rd.)

William D. McCarter and Frederick A. Colbourne



West Fire Station in the early 1960s.
Source: *The Rooms Archives*.

The earliest of the buildings in this cluster, the West Fire Station, was first conceived in January 1940 to service new development in the west end

of St. John's. Newfoundland's Chief of Police recognized that the city was moving westward and suggested three possible locations to replace the deteriorated Western Station on New Gower. High demand for land in the area of LeMarchant and Bennett increased the price of the two most desirable parcels. A portion of land at the rear of the government's Highroads Garage was unenthusiastically selected to be the station's site as it would have to be built immediately adjacent to an active brook. In addition to deliberating on an effective location, the Chief explored ideas to modernize accommodations from those that existed at the old Western Station. The building program for the new structure called for horse stables which the project architect opposed, "as the presence of horses in the same building is objectionable for many reasons" (Mellin 2011, 30).

Initial plans for the station were provided by Montreal architect A. J. C. Paine. The final construction plans were completed in April 1942 by local architect William D. McCarter and his draughtsman, Frederick A. Colbourne. On its upper floor, the two-storey structure was designed to house fifteen firemen and three officers. Below, a 55-foot, three-bay garage would house the station's equipment, with 12 feet. of additional accommodation for three horses. Horses were deemed more effective at hauling fire-fighting equipment through heavy snow than the fire trucks of the period. A full basement and hose tower were also included.

The station's facade was simple with subtle design elements including a slightly recessed row of upper windows and large, rounded columns that separated the three garage bays. Glass block, a common modernist material, was used for the transom and sidelights of the main entrance. The building's sign, located above the garage doors, was fabricated in individual steel letters projecting from the building in a clean, modern font.

The war effort delayed construction. Originally the building had been designed as a steel structure but steel shortages led to a change in design in 1942 to reinforced concrete. Difficulties in accessing steel reinforcing bars further delayed construction until the summer of 1944. During

this time, plans for the horse stables were moved from inside of the equipment garage to the basement level, accessible at the lower west side of the station. The building was finally occupied by the Fire Department the following summer.

A number of problems arose in the years after the West Fire Station's construction. As the structure settled, multiple cracks opened in its concrete joints which leaked when engines were washed or rain blew in. Additionally, its placement adjacent to the brook left the basement prone to flooding. When the storm drains of Lemarchant were clogged, water would rush down into this level and destroy all the horse feed and leave behind a layer of silt.

In June of 1973 the front facade's eastern-most column was removed and two new aluminum garage doors were installed onto the station. Since then, the glass blocks around the main entrance have been removed as well but the basic sense of the original design remains.

St. Michael's Anglican School, later I.J. Samson Jr. High (Bennett Ave.)

Frederick A. Colbourne



St. Michael's/I.J. Samson Junior High in 1954 during construction of the new west wing.

Source: St. Michael's Shield, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, MUN

As the city spread westward, additional schools were required in the area. Curtis Academy and St. Michael's Anglican School were the first to service this area of town. The former was built in a style common in the interwar period with somewhat classical detailing. St. Michael's, which later became I.J. Samson Jr. High, was, at the time of its construction, the largest Church of England school built in the province. It was designed by Colbourne in a much more pared-down fashion

than Curtis Academy. Its decoration was reduced to horizontal bands of recessed lines, a feature used by Colbourne on other buildings in the neighbourhood. The symmetrical two-storey structure was articulated with a slightly protruding central entrance and two side wings. Large window openings made of sets of three wood windows permitted lots of light to flood into the classrooms.

The school responded to the public's desire for more diverse programming than had previously been offered at most schools.

“bearing in mind the purpose in which the school was erected...we have refrained from offering one language and one science only, rather than an offering of two languages and two sciences as at present, . . . if you can prove to the people and the government that you are better citizens and better leaders because you have been educated in a large school, then other large schools will be built.” (George 1953)

By 1953 the already large school was struggling with overcrowding. The building, originally designed to accommodate 480, now held 780 pupils such that classes spilled into the halls and prospective students were being turned away (*Daily News* 1953). In 1954 a large west wing and auditorium were added, increasing overall capacity for classrooms as well as a dedicated space for sports, drama, and music. This addition employed Colbourne's horizontal banding and incorporated a large amount of glass block, common among his work of this period. This new wing supported an enrolment of 1028 in 1956.

“There is a School in Newfoundland,
In the city it does stand,
The School of St. Michael's is its name,
Where Many pupils have won fame.
Last year was built an extra wing
In which we learn to play and sing,
The classrooms are modern in every way,
Compared with any School today.

The Auditorium when complete
Will to the pupils be a treat,

Then of Physical Training we'll all partake,
And stronger children thus will make."
(Rendell 1954)

Since being acquired by the St. John's School Board in 1969, windows were replaced and a large skywalk connected the original and western structures on their second floor. In 2017 the building was demolished. While not a great architectural monument, the school, together with the other structures described in this article, formed a distinctive modernist precinct in the West End of St. John's, not to mention the memories that it held for many of its former students.

American Aerated Water Company (278 LeMarchant Rd.)

Frederick A. Colbourne and William D. McCarter



The AAWC is visible in the background of this 1956 photo of a Lions-Kiwanis safety patrol. Source: St. Michael's Shield, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, MUN.

Another project by Colbourne and McCarter was the American Aerated Water Company (AAWC), a soda-bottling operation situated one block south of St. Michael's on Lemarchant Rd. The company commissioned the construction of the building after its operations outgrew its first location on Barter's Hill. A new drive to meet "international pure food standards" influenced the sleek, modern styling of the factory.

"[AAWC] began laying plans for...an ultra-modern plant that would not only be a credit to the industry but which upon its completion has proven to be an architectural triumph." (Who's Who 1948)

The factory was built by McCarter's own construction firm, the Clayton Construction Company, and incorporated a number of features typically found on Colbourne and McCarter's buildings of the period. According to Mellin:

"[the] building incorporated Art Deco and modernist detailing. At night, the soda-bottling operation was visible through the large front windows and the glow from the illuminated roof lantern turned the building into a local landmark. The central lantern or beacon comprised a cube with circular windows on all sides. Two wide, horizontally ribbed bands, corresponding to the heights of the first and second floor windows, were cast in the concrete, providing a horizontal emphasis. These bands contrast with pronounced verticals in the form of curved concrete fins that frame the front entrance" (Mellin 2011, 31)

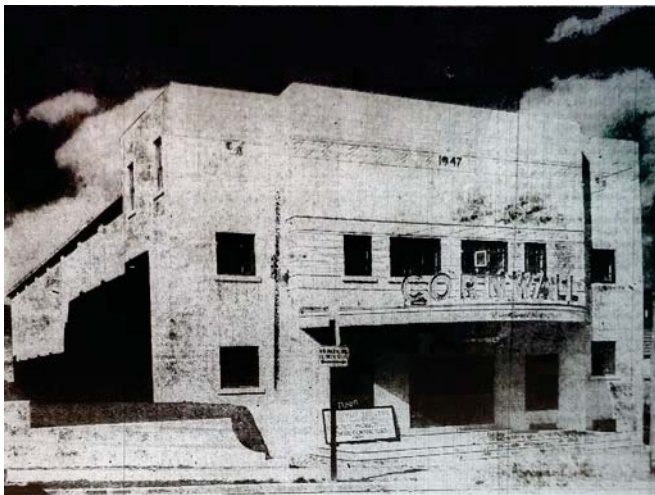
These fins echoed the columns separating the garage doors of the fire hall across the road. The building also made ample use of glass block which served to screen the interior workings of the building from public view but which admitted lots of natural light.



An AAWC ad published shortly before the move to LeMarchant Rd. Source: Newfoundland Board of Trade, Journal of Commerce, January 1946, 11.

While the company's production quadrupled it closed its doors a short five years later. The building was purchased by the Smallwood government for \$215,000 and it has remained a provincial government office building ever since, housing several different departments over the years. Until 1966 its excavated basement and rear trucking bay were used as storage for the Board of Liquor Corporation. During this time a garage door was added to the front elevation and an elevator at the rear, allowing for easier movement of stock around the premises. By 1954 two sections of glass block windows had been removed from the West end of the building. In the last couple of decades the lantern/beacon was also removed.

Cornwall Theatre (264 LeMarchant Rd.)
Luke, Little, and Mace (Montreal)



The Cornwall Theatre as it appeared at its opening.
Source: The Daily News, October 1948.

The most decorative of the modernist structures in this precinct is the building that, since 1961, houses plumbing supplier Smith Stockley. The Cornwall Theatre was built between 1947 and 1948 in an Art Deco style from plans by architects Luke, Little, and Mace of Montreal, the same architects as 1944's Paramount Theatre on Harvey Rd. It was built by Concrete Products Limited of St. John's as something of a proof-of-concept for local concrete construction at a cost of \$90,000 (Newfoundland Board of Trade 1948, 7). The theatre opened on October 8th, 1948 to a screening of *Sun Valley Serenade*, a

film nominated for Best Cinematography and Best Music at the 1942 Academy Awards.

Oh, by the way, before I go, would you have a dime to lend me?
You see, I want to go to the Cornwall this afternoon after school.
JIM BUTLER, Grade X.

Movie-going was a popular after-school activity among nearby students. Source: The Curtis Academy Magazine, June 1951, 79.

On the exterior Art Deco features, all of cast-in-place concrete, included a band of curtain-like motifs spanning the facade's third storey, flanked by two crests of the same design, embossed with the letters "CT." Rather ornate, nine-pane windows occupied the second floor, their mullions were arranged as a hash-symbol, with a large square centre on hinges that could be opened. Below this, a large neon sign and semi-circular marquee sheltered the main glass doors and a set of cascading concrete stairs. The 926 theatre auditorium at the rear of the building was constructed of concrete block.

Inside, floors were covered by Kentile or carpet, and wall lights were hidden from view to provide soft illumination throughout the space. In case of power failure, a battery-powered backup system was installed to engage automatically. The outfitting of the Cornwall Theatre was supervised by Alec MacKenzie of United Movies Ltd., who was praised by The Evening Telegram and the Daily News for creating a state-of-the-art experience:

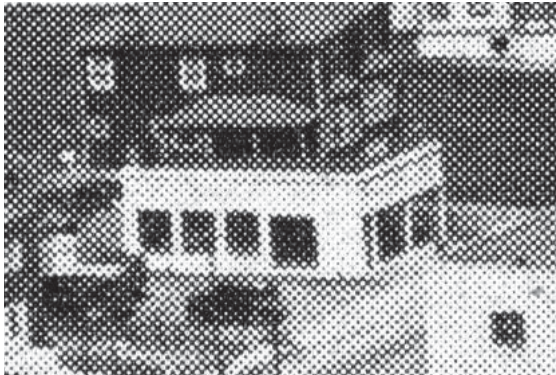
All in all, the New Cornwall Theatre is the last word in modern design and up to the minute layout. The fact that it is so completely equipped, despite present day shortages, reflects great credit on the owners and on Mr. Alec MacKenzie of United Movies Ltd. who has supervised the outfitting of this modern showplace.

The Cornwall Theatre was an up-to-date and well-appointed facility when it opened in 1948.
Source: Evening Telegram, October 1948.

The Neighbours

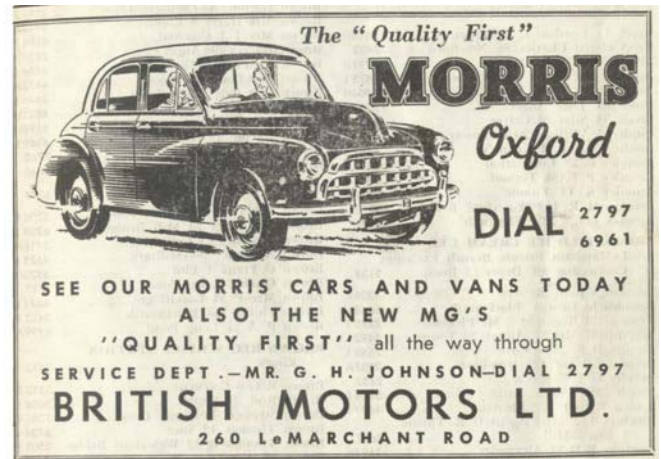
In addition to the four structures described above, several nearby structures were erected by the same architects and builders in the same period.

Automobile Showroom (260 LeMarchant Rd.)



View from aerial photo, page 1.

The storefront at 260 Lemarchant Road dates to the late 1940s and was designed in a style similar to Le Corbusier's early work. Aside from its few window sills and small roof moulding, the cast-in-place structure was simply composed of plate-glass and a smooth, white, facade. A street-side glass wall vertically occupied two thirds of the front facade, and was separated by concrete columns set back an inch from the main form. Looking across the street, this method mimics that of the columns which separate the West Fire Station's garage bay. This building was designed to serve as an automobile showroom. It was first occupied by Hudson Motor Cars followed by British Motors which remained until 1955. With many windows bricked in and a second floor added, it is substantially changed. It remains today as a show-floor for Smith Stockley.



This period ad employs a modern typeface reminiscent of the West Fire Station's signage.

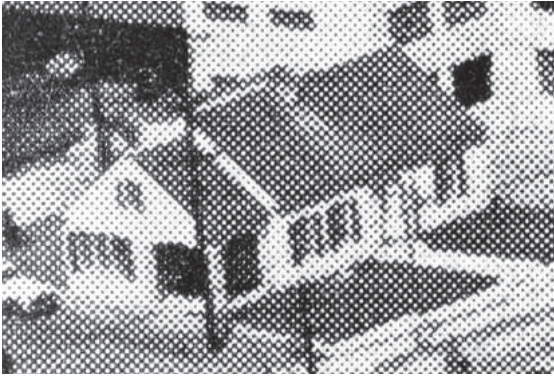
Source: Telephone directory, 1954, Avalon Telephone Company Ltd., 31

Cox House (262 LeMarchant Rd.)



View from aerial photo, page 1.

Number 262, the residence adjacent to the Cornwall Theatre, was built for Arch E. Cox and his wife. Cox was the chief engineer at McCarter's Clayton Construction. Cox's home is unique compared to even the most contemporary residential architecture in St. John's at the time in its very simple cubist form. While clad in clapboard, there is no ornamentation in the way of window trim or corner boards. Like some of the other buildings described here, the second storey windows are slightly recessed from the front façade, creating a discrete shadow line.

McCarter House (282 LeMarchant Rd.)*View from aerial photo, page 1.*

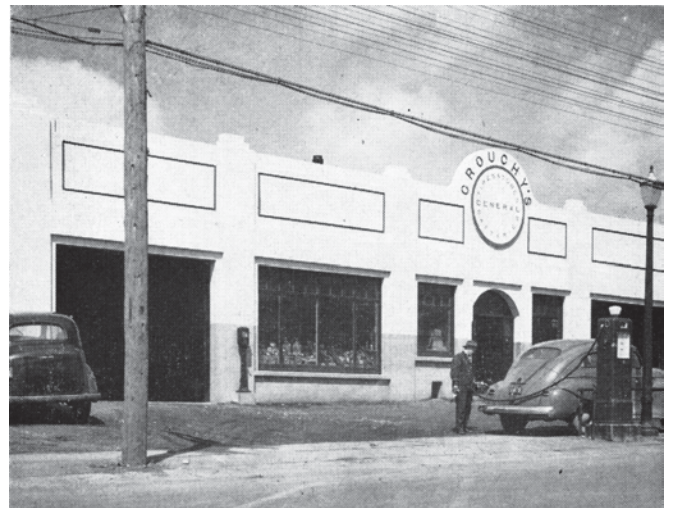
A building at the corner of Bennett and Lemarchant, also built by McCarter and, in fact constructed as the architect's residence, is something of an anomaly in the district. Built in 1948, the structure follows a vaguely Cape Cod style typical of what was found in many American suburbs of the time. It is curious that the architect of so many modern structures in St. John's chose as his home a more traditional building form. Today the building serves as a pharmacy and doctor's clinic.

Brookfield Ice Cream Factory (316 LeMarchant Rd.)

The 1947 expansion of the Brookfield Ice Cream Factory, circa 1960s. Source: 11-01-276, City of St. John's Archives.

Several doors down from the contiguous enclave described above are two further examples of mid-century construction. Brookfield Ice Cream had been established on LeMarchant Rd. since

1928 but was expanded in 1947 with a "playfully designed," Art Deco-inspired frontage (Mellin 2011, 137). The addition sported Pittsburgh Plate Glass's (PPG) "Vitrolite" glass cladding with glass block walls illuminating work areas as at the AAWC building. With this mid-century cladding now removed, the effect is conveyed today through a horizontal corrugated metal cladding in the original black-and-cream colour palette. A current development proposal would see the former factory demolished for the construction of a mid-size residential building.

Grouchy's (340 LeMarchant Rd.)

Grouchy's as it appeared circa 1948. Source: Atlantic Guardian 5(3), June 1948, 47.

The former Avalon Garage and Service Station, also known as Grouchy's after owner Frank Grouchy, is located a stone's throw from the Brookfield building. Built of cast-in-place concrete in 1929, Grouchy's exhibits Art Deco stylistic elements including the central rounded crest, stepped caps atop the repeated pilasters, and recessed rectangular panels along the frieze. The station, located on what was then on a major road artery leading in and out of the city, was meant to evoke the sleek sophistication of the automobile era. The building was eventually acquired by Brookfield (later Scotsburn) for use as a warehouse.

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