

200 CHARLES STREET – NORTH END POLICE SUBSTATION
E.H. Rogers, 1910



As Winnipeg's population expanded and its residential districts pushed outward in the early 1900s, the City's police force was hard-pressed to effectively deliver services from its downtown quarters.

To improve response times and increase its local profile, the department opted in 1910 to construct substations in two residential districts - the North End and Fort Rouge - as part of a new policy to decentralize operations.

These substations marked more than one departure in the approach taken to law enforcement by the department since its formation in 1874. The new facilities recognized the need for more liveable conditions for both policemen and prisoners. Indeed, when opened in May 1911, the structures were billed as the most modern of their kind in Canada.

For design services, the police turned to E.H. Rodgers, then a City building inspector and formerly the Fire Chief. This Ontario native apprenticed with a Toronto builder before relocating to

Winnipeg in 1879 where he was employed by Patterson and McComb, contractors. Over the next three years, he oversaw construction of Manitoba College and the Duffin and Dundee blocks.

Rodgers also became a fire fighter in 1880 and was lieutenant of the hook and ladder company when the volunteer brigade was transformed into a permanent civic department in mid-1882. He served as Foreman (i.e., Captain) of Fire Hall No. 3 in Point Douglas until promoted to Chief in 1895. That same year, he took on a dual role as a building inspector. Like his predecessor, however, Rodgers was forced to resign as Chief in 1899 after complaints arose about his department's fire-fighting capabilities. He remained with the building inspection office until 1925, after which no references to him can be found in available documentation.

In addition to his common design for the North End and Fort Rouge substations, Rodgers has been identified as architect of a police patrol and signal building erected on the south side of Rupert Avenue in 1911.

For the substations, he employed elements of Edwardian Classicism noted for its simplicity, balance, generous fenestration, and use of stylized classic ornamentation.

The Charles Street station, erected for \$27,000 on the southwest corner of the intersection with Magnus Avenue, has a smooth stone foundation up to the main-floor window sills on the finished street elevations. Two-storey, solid brick walls then rise to a stone-capped parapet.

On the east (Charles) and north (Magnus) facings, recessed sections of the walls alternate with projecting portions. Their red brick finish, laid in a garden wall pattern, is rusticated along the first floor. Pilasters run up the building's full height at the main entrance on the east facade. Elsewhere on the street elevations, brick pilasters only appear on the second storey, highlighted by stone bases and caps. These elements originally extended between stone cornices above the first and second floors. However, this ornamentation subsequently was displaced by smooth cement panels set in wide continuous bands. Only a portion of the original stone work remains evident above the first storey.

There are two other front entrances - a wooden garage door and a double door of similar design leading to an open area off the garage. Single rectangular windows appear on all elevations but are now boarded over. The more numerous openings on the east and north walls feature smooth stone lug sills and, along the second floor, flat brick arches with keystones. Brick, concrete and wood have been used for the sills and heads of windows and doors on the structure's west and south sides. These latter elevations are flat and faced with ordinary brick.

The original interior contained space for patrol wagons, horses, offices, a vault, search rooms, signal equipment, and recreation and reading areas for the policemen. There also were 11 small jail cells, each fitted with two folding wall bunks, toilets and sinks.

The detachment in this substation, comprising Number 5 or 'E' Division, was responsible for the area north of the Canadian Pacific Railway's main line. By 1920, the complement included an inspector, three sergeants and 45 men of various ranks. Staff turnover was high in the early 1900s. Policemen worked 12-hour shifts, seven days a week; were governed by a strict code of conduct; and rarely received salary increases. It was not until 1908 that they obtained one day of leave per month; in 1912, this increased to one day a week.

The North End station continued in use until June 1967 when operations were consolidated in the Public Safety Building opened a year earlier behind City Hall. An individual purchased the Charles Street facility shortly thereafter to convert it to residential use. However, this plan did not proceed and the building was abandoned.