

596 ST. MARY'S ROAD – ST. VITAL FIRE STATION
Architect Unknown, 1914



Until 1912 the traditionalist French-Canadian Council of the Rural Municipality of St. Vital had effectively resisted attempts by Winnipeg land developers to establish residential neighbourhoods along the banks of the Red River south of St. Boniface. However, in 1912 the provincial government annexed the west side of the river from St. Vital to create the municipality of Fort Garry. The ensuing municipal elections saw a more “progressive” English-speaking council in place and within a few months the municipality was incorporated as a town with residential neighbourhoods beginning to appear near the boundary of St. Boniface.

St. Vital gradually grew southward along two main roads: St. Mary’s and St. Anne’s. The town began building newly-required services; a street and sidewalk paving program was initiated, the electric railway lines were extended to the southern boundary of the town, sewer and water mains systems were laid along the two main roads, and the hydro service was expanded. The new town also required Police and Fire Departments, which were housed together in a station

built in 1914 at the intersection of St. Mary's and St. Anne's Roads in the heart of the community.

The station is a two-storey brick structure with stone facing on the main level. The building is organized around the central coach hall which had three large glazed doors corresponding to the three structural bays of the hall. At the rear were stables for horses which drew the wagons and sleighs until the 1930s. Set two feet behind the hall on the St. Mary's Road (east) façade are wings housing the fire and police stations to the north and south respectively. The second floor originally provided living quarters for the firemen, and the oriel window lit the central lounge. a full-height attic for storage is provided beneath the wood-framed roof.

The station was retired after the amalgamation of services under Unicity in 1974. It has been adapted as a center for the City Health Department and an ambulance station. Although minor modifications have been made, the building still stands virtually as it did in 1914 when it marked the birth of St. Vital as a suburb of Winnipeg.