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Item No. 9.1.4
Heritage Advisory Committee
June 25, 2020

TO: Chair and Members of the Heritage Advisory Committee

SUBMITTED BY: *-Original Signed-*

Kelly Denty, Director of Planning and Development
-Original Signed-

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: April 17, 2020

SUBJECT: **Case H00481: Request to Include 5988 University Avenue, Halifax in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality**

ORIGIN

On August 13, 2019, Regional Council passed a motion directing staff to examine the potential for including 5988 University Avenue, Halifax, in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Heritage Property Act

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Regional Council:

1. Set a date for a heritage hearing to consider the inclusion of 5988 University Avenue, Halifax, as shown on Map 1, in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality; and
2. Approve the request to include 5988 University Avenue, Halifax, as shown on Map 1, in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality as a municipal heritage property.

BACKGROUND

On August 13, 2019, Regional Council directed staff to examine the potential of including 5988 University Avenue in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality (see Figure 1). The subject property is located at the southeast quadrant of the University Avenue / Robie Street intersection and is the site of the historic Morris Street Engine House (now known as Fire Station #2). The construction of the two-storey structure began in 1907 and concluded the following year. The building was built by George B. Low (who was one of Halifax's pioneers in concrete building construction) and designed by William B. Fidler. Morris Street Engine House has served Canada's oldest fire service for over 110 years, and today it acts as a repository for many of the department's historic artifacts.



Figure 1: Morris Street Station
Source: Woodford, Zane (1999), *Halifax Star*

This application is being considered in accordance with Sections 14 (Recommendation as municipal heritage property) and 15 (Registration as municipal heritage property) of the *Heritage Property Act*.

HRM's Heritage Property Program

The purpose of the HRM Heritage Property Program is to help protect and conserve significant heritage resources including buildings, streetscapes, sites, areas, and conservation districts that reflect the rich heritage found in local communities throughout HRM. One of the principal aims of the Heritage Property Program is to recognize significant heritage resources through the inclusion of properties into the Municipal Registry of Heritage Properties.

Under the Heritage Property Program, all registration applications for heritage buildings are evaluated by the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) using "The Evaluation Criteria for Registration of Heritage Buildings in Halifax Regional Municipality" (Attachment A).

The Evaluation Criteria for scoring a property and building are broken down into six categories as follows:

Criterion	Highest Possible Score
1. Age	25
2. Historical or Architectural Importance	20
3. Significance of Architect/Builder	10
4. Architectural Merit: Construction type and Style	20
5. Architectural Integrity	15
6. Relationship to Surrounding Area	10
Total	100

Should the HAC score a property with more than 50 points, a positive recommendation will be forwarded to Regional Council. If the property does not score more than 50 points, then the report will not be forwarded to Regional Council.

Nova Scotia Heritage Property Act

HRM's Heritage Property Program receives its authority from the *Heritage Property Act* which seeks:

“...to provide for the identification, designation, preservation, conservation, protection and rehabilitation of buildings, public-building interiors, structures, streetscapes, cultural landscapes, areas and districts of historic, architectural or cultural value, in both urban and rural areas, and to encourage their continued use.”

Sections 14(2) and 15(1) under the *Heritage Property Act* require that notice of recommendation is given to the property owner at least thirty (30) days prior to any Council decision to include the property in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality. The property owner is also given an opportunity to address Council before they make a decision on the registration request. Should a positive recommendation be forwarded to Council, heritage staff will ensure the required notices are sent to the owners and deposited at the Registry of Deeds. In this case, where the property is owned by HRM, notice shall be served to the Office of the Clerk.

DISCUSSION

Heritage registration applications are evaluated by the HAC relative to six evaluation criteria as outlined previously, and described in greater detail in Attachment A. To assist the HAC in their evaluation and scoring, staff offer the following comments based on a historical research report (Attachment B). The historical research in support of this application has been undertaken by an experienced research consultant.

1. Age:

The property at 5988 University Avenue was acquired in 1907 to house the Morris Street Engine House. After reviewing numerous construction bids, the City Works Office accepted a proposal spearheaded by George B. Low in April 1907. Low's proposal for a singular building made entirely of concrete was selected because it was unique and the most affordable option. Low partnered with William B. Fidler, who designed the building, and began construction in 1907.

Due to the age of the engine house, staff recommend a score of 9 points.

2. Historical OR Architectural Importance:

Relationship to Important Occasions, Institutions, Personages or Groups

Halifax's Union Fire Club was founded in 1754, making it the oldest fire service in Canada. The service continued to operate relatively unchanged until the late-1800s when a dispute between the City and the volunteer force ultimately led to the creation of the Halifax Fire Department in 1896. The department's establishment led its transition from part-time to full-time firefighters by the end of 1919. Morris Street Engine House has provided local fire services for over 110 years. In recent years, it has also served as a tourist attraction, as a collection of the department's historical documents, photographs, and artifacts are stored and displayed there.

Due to the property's unique historic connection with the Halifax Fire Department (the oldest fire department in Canada), staff recommend a score between 11 and 15 points.

3. Significance of Architect or Builder:

George B. Low was a Halifax-based contractor who immigrated from Scotland to Canada in 1885. Low was a local pioneer in reinforced concrete building construction; he constructed Halifax's first fully concrete building, the A.M. Bell building at 1861 Granville Street, in 1904 (see Figure 2). The A.M. Bell building was added to HRM's Registry of Heritage Property in 1981 (the Granville Mall Streetscape is also included in the Canadian Register of Historic Places). Low's resume also includes: the concrete Bengal Lancers

building on Bell Road (municipally registered in 2001); his Oakland Cottage on Cartaret Street, which he constructed out of concrete blocks (municipally registered in 2011); the Halifax Folklore Centre on Brunswick Street; and other concrete block homes near Carteret Street.

Morris Street Engine House was designed by William B. Fidler, a carpenter who partnered with Josiah Jordan in 1877 to form Jordan & Fidler, Builders. When the business closed a decade later, Fidler continued to work as a builder and contractor until 1895. Fidler then became an operator and engineer with the Halifax Fire Department, and simultaneously performed maintenance and carpentry duties for the department. Due to his previous experience, Fidler consulted on several departmental projects and in 1896, he designed the fire station at West and James Streets. After Fidler designed Morris Street Engine House, he continued to work as an architect and carpenter until his death in 1919.

Due to the importance of William B. Fidler and George B. Lowe in the local construction industry, staff recommend a score between 1 and 6 points.



Figure 2: A.M. Bell Building, 2009
Source: HRM Property Files

4. Architectural Merit:

Construction type or building technology

Concrete's prominence as a building material emerged during the early-twentieth century with the creation of reinforced concrete. In Halifax, George B. Low helped launch this trend with the construction of Halifax's first fully concrete building (the A.M. Building on Granville Street) in 1904. Not only were the building's walls and piers made from concrete and steel bars, but the face work and mouldings were also constructed entirely of concrete. Morris Street Engine House was another early example of this practice. While the City Works Office's decision to accept Low's concrete engine house seems to have been primarily motivated by cost, the resulting building was a part of a larger shift in the city's architectural history.

As a rare early example of concrete construction in Halifax, staff recommend a score between 7 and 10 points for architectural merit.

Style

Morris Street Engine House is a unique building that was constructed during the Edwardian Era, which spanned from approximately 1900 to 1914. Edwardian era buildings are characterized by symmetrical designs, simple and balanced massing, the prevalence of windows, and modest detailing. Morris Street Engine House embodies this style through its exterior design - which incorporates uniform bays, garage doors, windows, and concrete detailing along the building's exterior - and application of light colours.

While Low's buildings (including the A.M. Bell building and Bengal Lancers building) exemplify Edwardian traits, they stand out from most Edwardian structures due to his focus on early-concrete building construction and blending of architectural styles that were popular during the late-1800s. Morris Street Engine House incorporates a mansard roof and central projecting bay with pediment gable facing University Avenue; both are defining features of the Second Empire style, which was popular between 1855 and 1900. Additionally, the building shows influences of the Classical and Chicago architectural styles, including the

decorative cornice¹ and protruding curved arches (with a central keystone) above the garage doors and windows.

The building's character-defining elements include:

- Symmetrical and balanced building design;
- Concrete building construction with concrete exterior walls and detailing;
- University Avenue façade divided into three symmetrical bays with uniform arched windows and garage doors;
- Robie Street façade divided into four bays with uniform arched windows;
- A two-storey projecting bay with dormer and pediment gable on both the University Avenue and Robie Street façades;
- Decorative concrete arches with central keystones over windows, garage doors and the Robie Street entryway;
- Central string course that transverses the building and three interrupted string courses;
- Mansard roof and decorative cornice; and
- The hose tower at the southeastern portion of the building.

Due to the building's rare design features, staff recommend a score between 7 and 10 points for architectural style.

5. Architectural Integrity:

The Morris Street Engine House has a high degree of architectural integrity, as the building's appearance is largely unchanged since the building opened in 1908. Much of the building's character defining elements, including the original building façade, concrete construction, and window / door openings, have been preserved over time. Photographic evidence suggests that minimal-to-no modifications were made prior to the late-1940s; however, a variety of modifications have been carried out during the past 65 years:

- The Halifax Fire Historical Society indicates that a horse stable, which was originally constructed to the rear of engine house, was subsequently modified on several occasions. The stable, in its current form, can be seen at the building's rear.
- A series of alterations occurred between 1945 and 1950 (Figure 3):
 - The dormer roof facing University Avenue was lowered;
 - The original wooden doors with glass windows facing University Avenue, including the transom windows above, were replaced with garage doors; and
 - The hose tower's arched windows were replaced with modest rectangular windows.
- The second storey, single-hung windows facing both University Avenue and Robie Street were replaced with modernized windows (single-hung with projected bottom and transom above).
- The engine house is amid HRM approved renovations: Phase one focused on the replacement of front and rear stairs to meet the National Building Code; the roof was re-surfaced during phase two; and the final phase involves interior renovations.

Morris Street Engine House has been modified several times during its 110+ year lifespan, but overall, these modifications are relatively minor. Due to the building's high degree of integrity, staff recommend a score between 6 and 10 points.

¹ Some Chicago style buildings contain a Chicago style copper cornice. While the subject property's cornice appears to be plaster and staff cannot find evidence that a copper cornice was installed on the engine house, a member of the Halifax Fire Historical Society speculates that the original downspouts may have been copper.

6. Relationship to Surrounding Area:

The property at 5988 University Avenue sits at the southeast corner of Robie Street and University Avenue within Halifax's South End neighbourhood. The building is complemented by the Dalhousie Dentistry building (constructed from 1956-1958) on the intersection's northeast quadrant. This concrete, brick-clad building was designed by prominent local architect Philip Dumaresq, and its original mass and three-storey height helped establish the area's unified streetwall height and institutional form. While the surrounding lands have redeveloped significantly during the past decades (e.g., IWK Health Centre, QEII Health Sciences Centre, Nova Scotia Archives, and additions to the Dentistry building) these two noteworthy institutions still define the intersection, as do a collection of late-Victorian homes on the Northwest quadrant.



Figure 3: Morris Street Station, late-1940s
Source: Nova Scotia Archives, Places: Halifax, Halifax Co.:
Fires & Fire Dept.: No. 201744113

Morris Street Engine House has maintained its historic appearance during the past 110+ years and due to its stability and strategic placement near modern-day institutions, the engine house illustrates how Halifax's institutional building design has evolved over time. The engine house also partners with several wooden residential buildings on the northwest portion of the intersection, including the municipally registered Louis Kaye House at 1328 Robie Street, are, to highlight the neighbourhood's unique uses, building styles, and typologies from the turn of the twenty-first century.

The building is an architectural asset that reflects the neighbourhood's historical character and changing trends in Halifax's building design. As such, staff recommend a score between 6 and 10 points.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The HRM costs associated with advertising and processing this application can be accommodated within the approved 2020/2021 operating budget for C340 - Social and Heritage Policy.

As an HRM-owned property and functioning fire station, the registration of the property may result in higher maintenance costs pertaining to the retention of the building's character defining elements (including stucco and masonry architectural elements). Any proposed substantial alterations to these elements would require Regional Council approval. Fire Station #2 is currently undergoing capital upgrades. HRM Corporate Facility Design and Construction staff have been working with heritage staff to ensure the proposed work can be supported if the property is successfully registered.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this Report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The community engagement process for a heritage registration is consistent with the intent of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy. The level of community engagement was information sharing achieved

through public access to the required Heritage Advisory Committee meeting. As a provision of the *Heritage Property Act*, no registration of a municipal heritage property shall take place until Regional Council has given the owner of the property an opportunity to be heard.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant environmental implications associated with the recommendations in this Report.

ALTERNATIVE

1. The Heritage Advisory Committee may choose to refuse the application to include 5988 University Avenue, Halifax in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality if the property does not score above 50 points based on the evaluation criteria. In doing so, the application will not proceed to Regional Council for evaluation.
2. The Heritage Advisory Committee may choose to forward the application to include 5988 University Avenue, Halifax in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality to Regional Council without a recommendation.

ATTACHMENTS

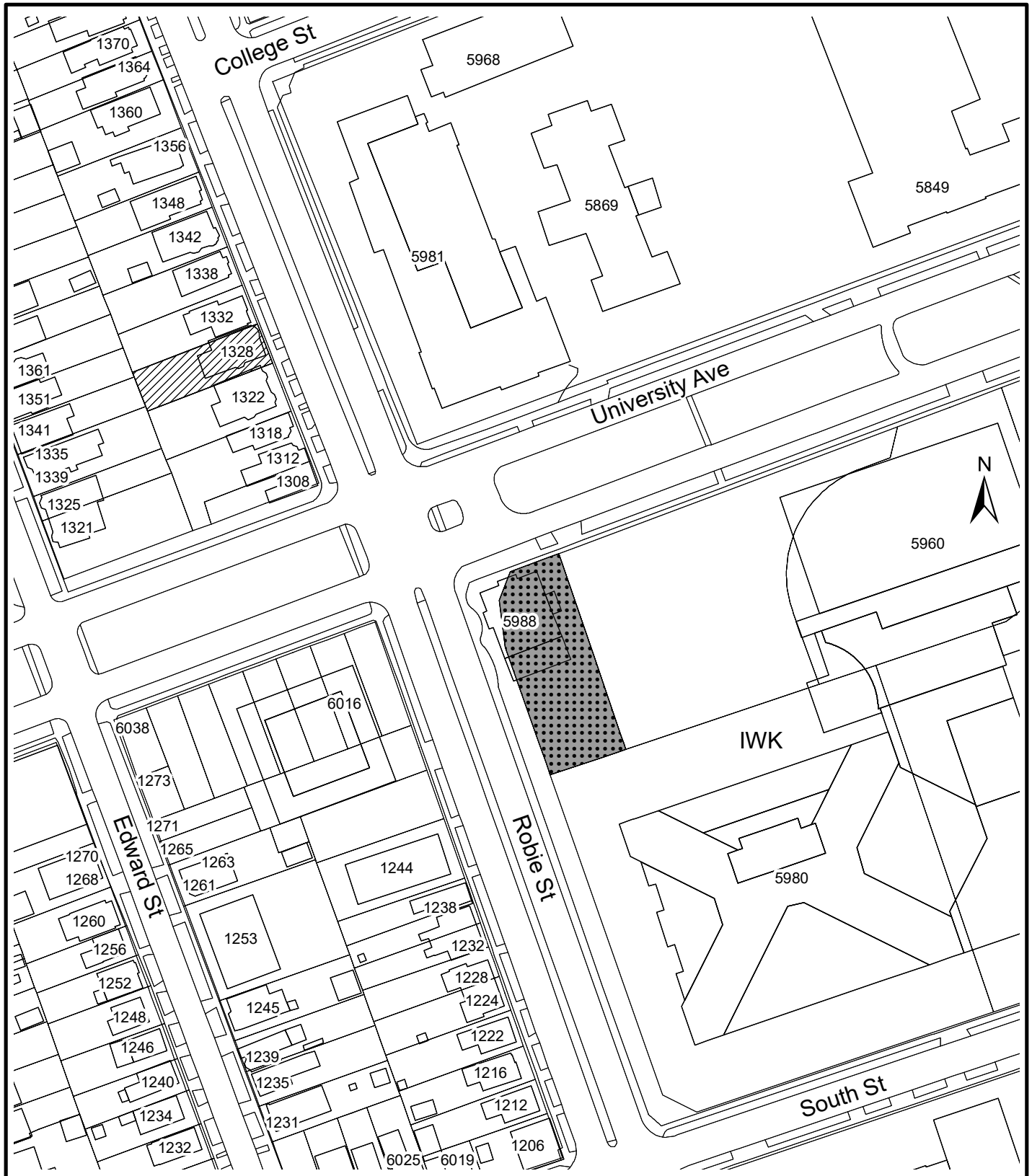
Map 1: Location Map

Attachment A: Evaluation Criteria

Attachment B: Historical Research Report



A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Jesse Morton, Planner II, 902.490.4844



Map 1 - Location Map

5988 University Ave,
Halifax

-  Registered Heritage Property
-  Subject Properties



HRM does not guarantee the accuracy of any representation on this plan.

Attachment A



HERITAGE PROPERTY PROGRAM

EVALUATION CRITERIA

**Heritage Property Program
Community & Recreation Services**

March 2013

**EVALUATION CRITERIA
FOR REGISTRATION OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS (Revised 2004)**

1. AGE

Age is probably the single most important factor in the popular understanding of the heritage value of buildings. The following age categories are based on local, national and international occasions that may be considered to have defined the character of what is how the Halifax Regional Municipality and its architecture.

Date of Construction	Points	Timeline
1749 - 1785	25	Halifax Garrison Town to the Loyalist migration
1786 - 1830	20	Boom period following construction of Shubenacadie Canal
1831 - 1867	16	From Boom to Confederation
1868 - 1899	13	Confederation to the end of the 19 th century
1900 - 1917	9	Turn of the Century to Halifax Harbour Explosion
1918 - 1945	5	The War Years
1945 - Present	3	Post-War

** Maximum score of 25 points in this category*

2. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE

A building can receive points for:

- A) Having specific associations with important occasions, institutions, personages and groups,
OR
B) For being architecturally important unique/representative of a particular period.

2A) Relationship to Important Occasions, Institutions, Personages or Groups

Nationally	Points	Comments
Intimately Related	16 - 20	
Moderately Related	11 - 15	
Loosely Related	1 - 10	
Provincially	Points	Comments
Intimately Related	11 - 15	
Moderately Related	6 - 10	
Loosely Related	1 - 5	

Locally	Points	Comments
Intimately Related	11 - 15	
Moderately Related	6 - 10	
Loosely Related	1 - 5	
No relationship to important occasions, institutions, personages or groups.	0	

** Maximum score of 20 points in this category, scoring from one of the three categories only*

2B) Important/Unique Architectural Style or Highly Representative of an Era

Importance	Points	Comments
Highly important, Unique, or representative of an era	16 - 20	
Moderately important, Unique, or representative of an era	11 - 15	
Somewhat important, or representative of an era	10 - 1	
Not important, Unique, or representative of an era	0	

** Maximum score of 20 points in this category.*

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF ARCHITECT/BUILDER

Is the structure representative of the work of an architect or builder of local, provincial or national importance?

Status	Points	Comments
Nationally	7 - 10	
Provincially Significant	4 - 6	
Locally Significant	1 - 3	
Not Significant	0	

** Maximum score of 10 points in this category.*

4. ARCHITECTURAL MERIT

The assessment of architectural merit is based on two factors:

A) **Construction type/building technology:** which refers to the method by which the structure was built (early or rare uses of materials), and building techniques;

AND

B) **Style:** which refers to the form or appearance of the architecture.

Construction Type/Building Technology		
A) Construction type	Points	Comments
Very rare/ early example	7 - 10	
Moderately rare/ early	4 - 6	
Somewhat rare/ early example	1 - 3	
Not rare/ common example	0	
B) Style	Points	Comments
Very rare/ early example	7 - 10	
Moderately rare/ early	4 - 6	
Somewhat rare/ early example	1 - 3	
Not rare/ common example	0	

** Maximum score of 10 points for Construction Type, and a maximum score of 10 for Style - a total maximum of 20 points in this category.*

5. ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

Architectural Integrity refers to the extent to which the building retains original features/ structures/ styles, not the state of the building's condition.

Architecture	Consider any additions/ removal/ alterations to windows, doors, porches, dormers, roof lines, foundations, chimneys, and cladding.	
Exterior	Points	Comments
Largely unchanged	11 - 15	
Modest changes	6 - 10	
Major changes	1 - 5	
Seriously compromised	0	

** Maximum score of 15 points in this category.*

6. RELATIONSHIP TO SURROUNDING AREA

Points	Comments
6 - 10	The building is an important architectural asset contributing to the heritage character of the surrounding area.
1 - 5	The Architecture is compatible with the surrounding area and maintains its heritage character.
0	Does not contribute to the character of the surrounding area.

** Maximum score of 10 points in this category.*

Attachment B

Research Report

5988 University Avenue, Halifax

Edited & Formatted by:

HRM's Heritage Team

Prepared by:

Carli LaPierre, Researcher

With contributions from the Halifax Fire Historical Society

March 2020



HALIFAX

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Age

In March 1907 Halifax City Council passed the Board of Fire Wards' motion to secure funds to purchase land and construct engine houses at Morris Street and Campbell Road.¹ Land at the corner of Morris and Robie Streets was purchased for Morris Street Engine House in the same year (Figure 1). The engine house, designed by W.B. Fidler,² was meant as a replacement for the Queen Street Station.³ The City Works Office received multiple bids for the construction of the station, including brick buildings from Sam Marshall & Son and Edward Marshall. However, the Committee on Works and City Council accepted George B. Low's fully concrete proposal on April 4, 1907.⁴ On May 6, 1907, Low's application for a two-storey engine house measuring 54 feet by 85 feet 6 inches was approved by the Inspector of Buildings at an estimated cost of \$17,616.00 (Figure 2).⁵ The Morris Street Engine House opened in 1908. The Morris Street Engine House, now known as Fire Station 2, is located at 5988 University Avenue and continues to serve the city of Halifax as a part of its Fire Department (Figure 3 through 7).

Historical or Architectural Importance

Relationship to Important Occasions, Institutions, Personages or Groups

The Morris Street Engine House continues to operate as a fire station, but in recent years it has also become a repository for the Fire Department's history; the engine house has several artifacts and themed displays on hand, which are coordinated by the Halifax Fire Historical Society. Halifax's first fire service, the Union Fire Club, was established in 1754, making it the oldest fire service in Canada.⁶ In 1894, there was a dispute between the City of Halifax and the volunteer force (then known as the Union Engine Company) and the company ultimately disbanded. The remaining volunteers continued under the direction of the Board of Firewards for two years until the Halifax Fire Department was formally established on March 10, 1896,⁷ as the City re-organized and moved from part-time, part-pay towards full-time, full-pay staff (i.e., senior officers and engineers) to accommodate the growing city's needs.⁸ In 1903, P.J. Broderick became the Chief and he is remembered for "introducing the first piece of motor

¹"Report Board of Fire Wards: March 1, 1907," in Halifax City Minutes, (Halifax, 1907): p. 303-5.

<http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/archives/HalifaxCityMinutes/documents/102-1a-1907-02-12to1907-03-07p0271-0305.pdf>

² Snider, Don Snider, "Halifax fire station architect, William B Fidler, was a fireman, carpenter and builder," in *The Griffin: A Publication of Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia*. Vol. 28, No. 2. (June 2003), p. 1. http://www.htns.ca/pdf_Griffin/G0306-2.pdf

³ "Message from His Worship the Mayor re Fire Stations: February 12, 1907," in Halifax City Minutes, (Halifax, 1907): p. 271-2. <http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/archives/HalifaxCityMinutes/documents/102-1a-1907-02-12to1907-03-07p0271-0305.pdf>

⁴ "Report: Committee on Works re tenders for construction Morris Street Engine House: April 4, 1907," in Halifax City Minutes, (Halifax, 1907): p. 325-6. <http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/archives/HalifaxCityMinutes/documents/102-1a-1907-03-07to1907-04-04p0306-0339.pdf>

⁵ Nova Scotia Archives. Building Permit: City of Halifax, Works Dept. Building Inspections. "Application for New Building No. 401." RG 35-102 Series 39, No. 54. Robie-St. Paul St. Microfilm 23546.

⁶ Halifax Regional Municipality, "About Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency," *Halifax Fire*, September 4, 2019, accessed February 2020 from <https://www.halifax.ca/fire-police/fire/about-us>

⁷ Halifax Fire Historical Society. Jeff Brown. Personal Communications. March 27, 2020.

⁸ Pearl Connelly, *The Bicentennial of the Halifax Fire Department: 200 Years of Firefighting, 1768-1968*. Prepared for the Halifax Fire Department. Nova Scotia Archives: V/F v. 271 #10, p. 9.

equipment in the department which was also the first motor pumper in Canada.”⁹ All departmental staff, including firefighters, were full-time, full-pay employees by 1919.¹⁰

The first motor pumper, an American LaFrance model nicknamed The Patricia and posted at the West Street Station, was responding to an alarm at Pier 6 when the Halifax Explosion occurred in 1917. The Patricia was destroyed in the blast and nine members of the engine’s crew were killed during the explosion, the largest loss of firefighter life in a single incident in Canada’s history. One member of the crew, William Wells, survived after the explosion propelled him out of his position in the driver’s seat with a portion of the wheel still in his hands. The other half of the steering wheel, that remained on the Patricia through the Explosion, is still owned by the Fire Department.¹¹ This artifact is currently housed at the Morris Street Engine House. New Glasgow’s 1877 Lulan steam engine, sent by the town to help after the Explosion, is another important artifact from this period of the city’s history that is kept at the engine house.¹²

Along with its firefighting artifacts from the Halifax Explosion, the engine house is the home of the Queen (Figure 8). The fire truck, made in 1934, was given this nickname because of its role in fighting the Queen Hotel fire in 1939. The Queen was retired in the 1960s and continued to be used as a hearse in Department funeral processions before coming to the station. Without a proper museum to house firefighting memorabilia, the engine house has become a noted repository and tourist attraction for those in search of historical documents, photographs and artifacts from the Department.¹³

Important / Unique Architectural Style or Highly Representative of an Era

Concrete has been used as a building material for centuries, but rose in prominence through the twentieth century with the development of reinforced concrete.¹⁴ George B. Low was an early adopter of reinforced concrete and his portfolio includes Halifax’s first fully concrete building (Figure 9). Owned by A.M. Bell & Co. and designed by R. A. Johnson, the building was completed in 1904. Not only were the walls and piers made from concrete and steel bars, but the face work and mouldings were also constructed without any additional facing materials.¹⁵

The Morris Street Engine House is another example of this practice (Figure 4 through 5). In his proposal, Low presented multiple schemes for the station. Proposed options included: concrete block buildings in two sizes, and solid concrete constructions at a lower cost. These suggestions were unique in comparison to the other bids. Sam Marshall & Son and Edward Marshall both proposed more expensive brick options that followed the general trend in building at the time. While the Committee’s decision to accept Low’s

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰ Halifax Fire Historical Society. Jeff Brown. Personal Communications. March 27, 2020.

¹¹ Janice Landry, “When the Bell Calls: The Last Alarm,” in *Halifax Magazine* (Halifax, November 28, 2012), accessed February 2020 from <https://halifaxmag.com/cover/the-last-alarm/>

¹² Ben Cleary, “The Queen of Fire Station 2,” in *The Signal*, (Halifax, University of King’s College School of Journalism, February 15, 2019). Accessed from <https://signalhfx.ca/the-queen-of-fire-station-2/>

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ J. Hori, “Concrete,” in *A Dictionary of Modern Architecture*, (University of Chicago: November 16, 2015), accessed from <https://voices.uchicago.edu/201504arth15709-01a2/2015/11/16/concrete/>

¹⁵ Canadian Architect and Builder, “An Entirely Concrete Building in Halifax,” Volume 17 (1904), Issue 9 (September):. p. 159. http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/cab/search/search_frameset.htm

concrete engine house seems to have been primarily motivated by cost, the resulting building was a part of a larger shift in the city's architectural history.¹⁶

Significance of Architect / Builder

George B. Low was a contractor based in Halifax. He was born in Scotland and immigrated to Canada in 1885 with his wife and children (Figure 10).¹⁷ The family's property, Oakland Cottage, was built with concrete blocks in 1899 and was recommended for heritage registration in 2011. In addition to constructing his home in 1899 and the A.M. Bell & Co. building in 1904, Low was involved in the construction of several other concrete structures in the city. Low's other projects include: the Bengal Lancers stables on Bell Road (Figure 11), the current location of the Halifax Folklore Centre on Brunswick Street, and portions of both the Oxford Street and Chebucto Road Schools.¹⁸

William B. Fidler, the station's designer, wore many hats in his lifetime. Fidler was a carpenter through the 1870s and partnered with Josiah Jordan from 1877-1887 to form Jordan & Fidler, Builders. After the business with Jordan dissolved, Fidler continued to work as builder until 1895.¹⁹ He then became a firefighter and engineer, whose duties included the maintenance and operation of chemical engines, as well as attending to carpentry work for the department.²⁰ Based on his previous experience as a builder, Fidler was consulted on projects for the Department and in 1896 he designed the station at West and James Streets.²¹ In 1907 Fidler designed the Morris Street Engine House in his spare time.²² Fidler worked as an architect and carpenter from 1913 until his death in 1919.²³

Architectural Merit

Morris Street Engine House is a unique building that was constructed during the Edwardian Era, which spans from approximately 1900 to 1914. Edwardian buildings share some similarities with the preceding Victorian Era, though Edwardian buildings are significantly less ornate by comparison. The Edwardian style is characterized by symmetrical design, simple and balanced massing, the prevalence of windows, and modest detailing. The engine house embodies this style through its exterior design - which incorporates

¹⁶ "Morris Street Engine House: Evening Session: April 4, 1907," Halifax City Minutes, (Halifax, 1907): p. 326. <http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/archives/HalifaxCityMinutes/documents/102-1a-1907-03-07to1907-04-04p0306-0339.pdf>

¹⁷ "1911 Census of Canada: Place: 42 – Ward 1, Halifax, Nova Scotia [database on-line]." Ancestry.com, Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006.

¹⁸ Heritage Advisory Committee, "Case H00353: Application to Consider 1141 Cartaret Street, Halifax as a Municipally Registered Heritage Property," *Halifax Regional Municipality*, (Halifax, November 11, 2011): p. 2-3, accessed from <http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/111122ca1021.pdf>

¹⁹ Snider, "Halifax fire station architect, William B Fidler, was a fireman, carpenter and builder," p. 1.

²⁰ "Re Payment to W. B. Fidler: Evening Session: November 11, 1907," Halifax City Minutes, (Halifax, 1907): p. 193. <http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/archives/HalifaxCityMinutes/documents/102-1a-1907-11-11to1907-12-31p0192-0228.pdf>

²¹ Snider, "Halifax fire station architect, William B Fidler, was a fireman, carpenter and builder," p. 1.

²² "Re Payment to W. B. Fidler: Evening Session: November 11, 1907," p. 193.

²³ Snider, "Halifax fire station architect, William B Fidler, was a fireman, carpenter and builder," p. 1.

uniform bays, garage doors, windows, and concrete detailing along the building's exterior - and application of light colours.

While Morris Street Engine House shares many similarities with Halifax's other institutional / industrial buildings from the Edwardian Era, the building has qualities that make it unique. First, the engine house is constructed entirely of concrete rather than brick, which was commonplace during the turn of the twentieth century. Second, the building's hybrid roof combines the Edwardian Era's trademark "straight lines" with the Second Empire's defining feature, a mansard roof. Lastly, the building has features that are emblematic of the Chicago style of architecture - decorative cornices and roulette curves that are a common feature of the style.²⁴ These decorative concrete trimmings are found in other buildings from the era, including the Bedford Row Station completed in 1906 (Figure 12),²⁵ and Low's other projects from the period (Figure 11). The Morris Street Engine House is therefore representative of turn of the century architecture in Halifax.

Architectural Integrity

Morris Street Engine House has a high degree of architectural integrity, as the original building façade at the Robie / University intersection is largely unchanged since its opening in 1908. The station's character-defining concrete walls, detailing and hose tower have been maintained throughout its lifespan. Photographic evidence suggests that minimal-to-no modifications were made prior to the mid-1940s, however, a variety of modifications have been carried out during the past 65 years, including:

- The Halifax Fire Historical Society indicates that a horse stable, which was attached to the rear of George B. Low's concrete engine house, was subsequently modified on several occasions (dates unknown).²⁶ The original stable, in its current form, can be seen at the building's rear.
- A series of alterations occurred between 1945 and 1950:
 - The dormer roof facing University Avenue was lowered;
 - The original wooden doors with glass windows facing University Avenue, including the transom windows above, were replaced with garage doors; and
 - The hose tower's arched windows were replaced with modest rectangular windows.
- Council minutes from January 30, 1950 state that the station was approved for a \$20,000.00 rehabilitation project²⁷ following a proposal that was delivered by Fire Chief F.C. MacGillivray.²⁸ Little-to-no exterior changes occurred during this funded project (Figure 3 through 7).
- The second storey, single-hung windows facing both University Avenue and Robie Street were replaced with modernized windows (single-hung with projected bottom and transom above). The

²⁴ Elizabeth Blasius, "An Illustrated Guide to Chicago Architecture," *Curbed Chicago*, December 5, 2019, accessed from <https://chicago.curbed.com/2019/12/5/20976351/chicago-architecture-guide>

²⁵ BuiltHalifax, "#4 Fire Station," *BuiltHalifax: Local Architectural History and Theory*, (March 29, 2017), accessed from <https://halifaxbloggers.ca/builthalifax/2017/03/4-fire-station/>

²⁶ Halifax Fire Historical Society. Personal Communications. March 27, 2020.

²⁷ "Rehabilitation Morris St. Fire Station \$20,000.00: January 30, 1950," Halifax City Minutes, (Halifax, 1950): p. 72. <http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/archives/HalifaxCityMinutes/documents/102-1a-1950-01-12to01-30p1-79.pdf>

²⁸ "Repairs to Morris Street Fire Station: June 15, 1950," Halifax City Minutes, (Halifax, 1950): p. 499.

<http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/archives/HalifaxCityMinutes/documents/102-1a-1950-06-15to06-28p463-561.pdf>

ground-floor windows facing Robie Street had been modernized, though all openings maintain their original dimensions.

- Internal and external improvements (totaling approximately \$1,000,000.00) were included in the 2018/19 Multi-Year Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency Budget and Business Plan.²⁹ Phase one focused on the replacement of front and rear stairs to meet the National Building Code; the roof was re-surfaced during phase two; and the final phase will redesign the internal living area (including kitchen and dining quarters, washrooms, locker rooms, training room, and a fitness area).

Relationship to Surrounding Area

Station 2 sits at the corner of Robie Street and University Avenue in Halifax's South End. Since the early 1900s, the surrounding area has seen: the Victoria General Hospital and Poor Asylum evolve into the IWK Health Centre and QEII Health Sciences Centre, Dalhousie University's expansion beyond Carleton Campus' Forrest Building, the development of residential areas, and the construction of new structures like the Nova Scotia Archives building. Most of these buildings are brick structures or wood-sided homes. The station remains the oldest example of fully concrete construction in the neighbourhood. A part of district 7, the station continues to serve the city as a career fire station.

²⁹ Committee of the Whole on Budget, "Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency: 2018/19 Multi-Year Budget & Business Plan," (Halifax, February 14, 2018): p. 34. <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/180214bcow4.pdf>

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Figure 3: Morris Street Station, 1910
Halifax Fire Historical Society, Photography Collection



Figure 4: Morris Street Station, 1945
Halifax Fire Historical Society, Photography Collection



Figure 5: Morris Street Station, late-1940s
Nova Scotia Archives, Places: Halifax, Halifax Co.: Fires & Fire Dept.: No. 201744113.



Figure 6: Morris Street Station, 1962
Halifax Fire Historical Society, Photography Collection



Figure 7: Morris Street Station, 1999
Image of the station from Zane Woodford, "Council to consider adding municipal fire station, recreation centre to Halifax heritage registry," in *Star Halifax*, August 12, 2019, accessed from

<https://www.thestar.com/halifax/2019/08/12/council-to-consider-adding-municipal-fire-station-recreation-centre-to-halifax-heritage-registry.html>



Figure 8: Image of Jeff Brown and The Queen
Ben Cleary, "The Queen of Fire Station 2," in *The Signal*. Halifax, University of King's College School of Journalism, February 15, 2019, accessed from <https://signalhfx.ca/the-queen-of-fire-station-2/>

AN ENTIRELY CONCRETE BUILDING IN
HALIFAX.

On the illustration sheets of this number is a building owned by A. M. Bell & Co. in Halifax, N.S., in which the walls and piers are entirely of concrete and steel bars. This forms quite a precedent in Canada, as in the majority of cases of buildings of concrete construction we usually find the facings of brick, stone or marble, but in this building all the face work and even the mouldings are of concrete.

The walls were constructed in the usual way by building up wooden sheeting on each side and filling in the concrete. They are twenty inches thick to the top of the first floor, sixteen inches to the top of the second and twelve inches in thickness for the remaining three upper stories, the building being five stories high. The piers on the two frontages are four feet wide and two feet thick.

The mouldings which stand out strongly in the illustrations were formed by building up the reverse mouldings in wood, thus forming the concrete mouldings in one piece with the walls.

Cracks, due to the expansion and contraction of the concrete, were prevented by building up the main piers in both frontages separately with boxes built in recesses to receive the ends of the lintels which were built in later, thus forming joints where the movement due to expansion and contraction could be taken up. These lintels, as also all the piers and walls, were reinforced

by iron beams and twisted steel rods, while iron rods were laid horizontally in the walls every four feet of the height, and twisted iron rods were run vertically the full length of the piers.

The concrete used in the construction was of various grades and qualities, that used for the walls being composed in the proportion of seven parts of sand and gravel to one of cement; that in the piers of five parts of sand and gravel to one of cement, while the mouldings were constructed of cement composed of equal parts of sand and cement.

Within the interior of the building is a large two-story vault with double 8-inch cinder concrete walls.

The building was designed by R. A. Johnson, architect, successor to Hopson Bros. of Halifax, N.S., and constructed by Geo. B. Low, contractor, of Halifax.

PUBLICATIONS.

A fourteenth edition, revised and rewritten, of the Architects' and Builders' Pocket Book, by Frank E. Kidder, C.E., Ph. D., has been published by John Wiley & Sons, New York. It contains 1650 pages, size 6½x3¾, with 1000 illustrations. Price, in morocco binding, \$5.00.

The McGraw Publishing Company, 114 Liberty Street, New York, have recently issued an instructive work by Frank W. Skinner entitled "Types and Details of Bridge Construction." The book comprises 294 pages and is liberally illustrated. It is printed on heavy paper and substantially bound in cloth. The price is \$3.00.

When melting size for distemper keep it well stirred, and it should not be allowed to get beyond a lukewarm state. If very hot when mixed with the whitening the distemper will be "runny" when cold instead of a jellified mass.

Figure 9: Halifax's Concrete Building, 1904

Canadian Architect and Builder, "An Entirely Concrete Building in Halifax," Volume 17 (1904), Issue 9 (September):
p. 159. http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/cab/search/search_frameset.htm



Figure 11: Bengal Lancers Building, 2005

Heritage Division, N.S. Dept. of Tourism, Culture and Heritage, *Bell Road elevation of barn, Bengal Lancers Property*, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2005, accessed from <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/image-image.aspx?id=3316#i1>



Figure 12: Bedford Row Station (Fire Station 4, now McKelvie's Restaurant), 1910
BuiltHalifax: Local Architectural History and Theory, (March 29, 2017), accessed from <https://halifaxbloggers.ca/builthalifax/2017/03/4-fire-station/>