



Fire fighters line up the horses and wagons in front of the fire hall in 1915.

100 years of service

When the population of St. Vital swelled to a staggering 1,600 residents in 1913, council decided the time had arrived for a fire hall.

Construction on the building began in January 1914 and completed in December. Unfortunately no records exist of the transaction including the plans, cost, architect, or builder. The material was among the many St. Vital documents lost in a flooded basement at the St. Vital Municipal offices, located at 847 St. Mary's Road, now the site of Christ the King Church.

Upon completion, the fire hall was the most elaborate building in St. Vital and a source of pride amongst residents.

The fire hall is a solid brick building, resting on a stone foundation and re-inforced by concrete beams and a concrete floor.

The three-fire bays in front stored the fire wagons with the horses stabled at the back of the bays. The second floor contained an office for the fire chief and sleeping quarters for the firemen who worked a four-day shift until sometime in the 1950s when an eight-hour shift was instituted.

In the mid-1920s, St. Vital's population had swelled to about 10,000 and the municipality teetered on bankruptcy and could no longer afford to operate the municipal offices which had been built in 1911

to also accommodate the police, magistrate court and a small jail.

In 1924, an addition was made to the south end of the fire hall to accommodate the police station and magistrate's court while the second floor was taken over by clerks, the health unit and council offices. The third floor became council chambers.

Until 1952 the police and fire fighters were interchangeable with one department acting as back-up for the other.

The fire fighters moved out in 1972 with the formation of Unicity.

The building is now home to the St. Vital Museum and the Winnipeg Paramedics.



Art "Cappy" Martin, left, and Clarence Gunn were the first firemen hired in 1914 for the St. Vital Fire Brigade. Chief Martin is also seen on the left in the top photo as the 1939 Fargo pumper truck is parked in front of the now 100-year old fire hall.

The truck is in the process of being restored by Leon St. Onge, Dave Reimer and Gord Bell after being rescued from a damp and unheated building. It will soon be available for community events and parades.



St. Vital Fire Brigade circa 1923
Photo courtesy of W. J. (Wif) Mager

Working with You in St. Vital

Brian Mayes
City Councillor - St. Vital Ward



204.986.5088 | BMayes@winnipeg.ca

SHELLY GLOVER

MP/Députée
Saint-Boniface



shelly@shellyglover.ca



Smitty's Pembina & Grant

Dave Thompson

580 Pembina Hwy (at Grant Ave.)
Winnipeg, MB R3M 2M5

Phone: 204-261-1005

Cell: 204-792-1683

Fax: 204-287-8664

Email: dave@smittysmb.com

www.smittysmb.ca



Canadian Heritage

www.pch.gc.ca



Jeff and his driver Victor Dawson.

Jeff was the first and last fire horse in St. Vital

In 1920s, Mutt and Jeff were not only beloved comic-strip characters, but also the names of two of the best horses ever to pull a St. Vital fire wagon.

The team was split in 1923 when St. Vital began to motorize its fire-fighting equipment and Mutt was auctioned off. Unfortunately for Mutt, his fate was to become food for the silver foxes bred by a south St. Vital farmer.

The action triggered a number of angry letters from across Canada by writers who were incensed that Mutt wasn't simply put out to pasture to live out his life.

Fire officials were braced for more criticism two years later when Jeff, the last horse, was scheduled for the auction block.

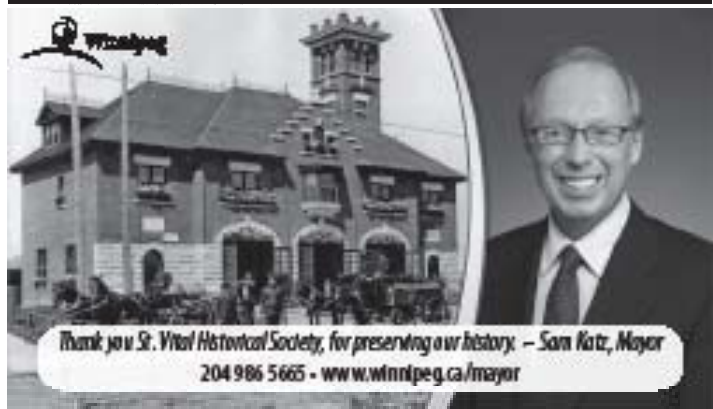
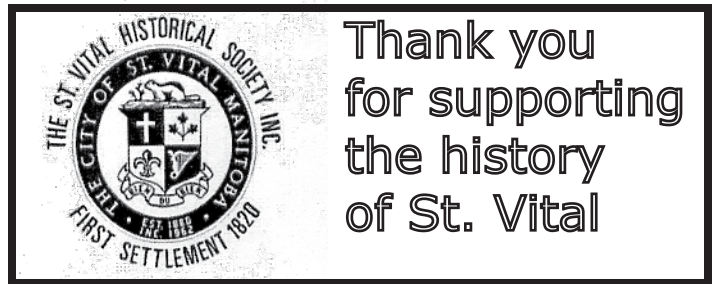
Sixteen-year old Jeff was the first horse purchased by the department and after 11 years of hauling the fire wagon, was the last of his breed still at the fire hall.

"In his first few years of service, the clang of the fire bell would send up his ears, and his nerves would tingle to get into harness and away to the fire," stated a Winnipeg newspaper dated Aug. 25, 1925.

The clipping is one of several kept by H. E. Rose, who served as chief of the fire and police departments.

"Mr. William Tod, himself a veteran of the municipality, was fond of Jeff and wanted to have him pensioned off, but he wasn't successful," continued the article which noted that his driver Victor Dawson was out of a job.

Fortunately for Jeff, he didn't meet the same fate as his partner as he was sold to an unnamed St. Vital dairy farmer.



New gloves for Chief Harry Rose

After he was attacked by a wolf at front door of fire hall

Harry E. Rose could be described as a mover and a shaker in early St. Vital.

Besides being the chief of both police and fire departments Rose was also very active in the community.

Rose was elected president of the St. Vital Agricultural Society following the fair of 1914 and in conjunction with W. H. Hack was a driving force in the early formation of the association. He even won a few trophies for raising champion chickens, according to published reports.

"As a school trustee his efforts to interest children in gardening resulted in the formation of the Gardening Bureau of the Glenwood School District," stated a published report.

Rose was also a founder, and honorary president, of the St. Vital Swimming Club in 1913. The club sold 2,000 shares for \$5 each, the proceeds were to further physical activity of Glenwood School youth.

The club wanted to purchase property "on the (Victor) Mager estate to the south of the property of the council on St. Mary's Road," reads a newspaper clipping in a scrapbook kept by Rose. The property referred to is the present location of the St. Vital Museum. The site was only to be temporary states the news item.



Harry Rose

"It will also be necessary to find a new location after the ensuing season (1913) owing to the present site being below the point at which the sewer will discharge."

Rose became a local hero of sorts in 1916 when he encountered a wolf on his way to work as reported in one of the Winnipeg newspapers.

"Wolves and the St. Vital police clashed yesterday. Chief H. E. Rose, as a result, will receive the government bounty as well as a first class wolf skin. Several wolves have been seen in the vicinity of St. Vital lately, but it was not till yesterday that they approached near enough to become dangerous, Chief Rose was waiting for a car when a wolf trotted across the (streetcar) tracks on the St. Anne's road. Such a chance was not to be missed and the chief placed a shot from his revolver in the stomach of the wolf. Then things got exciting. The wolf became furious and jumped for the chief and grabbed his hand. The chief was able to prevent serious injury to his hand by shoving it as far as possible down the wolf's throat and with his other hand he reached his revolver and shot the animal through the head and finished it. The scarcity of game is thought to be responsible for the entry of the wolves into the more settled districts."

Many thanks to the St. Vital Historical Society
for preserving our history



Nancy Allan
MLA for St. Vital
(204) 237-8771
NancyAllan.ca



Theresa Oswald
MLA for Seine River
(204) 255-7840
TheresaOswald.ca

From your St. Vital team!