

The Old Fire Hall

30 Main Street
Kingsville, ON



Description of Property

The Old Fire Hall, Constructed 1939-1942

Chain of Ownership

30 Main Street East				Plan 184/185 Lot 5 Main St E North Side			
Instr #	Type	Date	Registered	From	To	Price	Description/Remarks
	Patent		9 Feb 1824	Crown	John Tufflemire		Lot 1 Con 1 ED - 200 acres
	B & S		28 Jun 1824	John Tofflemire	Richard Herrington		Lot 1 Con 1 ED - 200 acres
184/185	Plan		29 Jan 1850				
G 19 A	Indenture	13 Feb 1850	13 Sep 1853	Richard Herrington & w	James King	£20	Lot No. 5
KV 17 A	Deed	4 Jan 1869	15 May 1882	Thomas Bennet & wife	Daniel B. Grenville	\$500	Lot No. 5
KV 1019 C	Deed	14 Oct 1891	7 Nov 1891	Wm A Grenville & wife	Sidney A. King	\$650	Lot No. 5
KV 1127 C	Deed	16 Oct 1891	12 Dec 1892	Sidney A. King	William A. Grenville	\$650	Lot No. 5
KV 1128 C	Deed	12 Dec 1892	12 Dec 1892	Wm A Grenville & wife	Colin Fox	\$700	Lot No. 5
KV 1798 E	Probate of Will	8 Feb 1878	16 Nov 1900	Daniel B. Grenville	Wm A Grenville		Lot No. 5
KV 1799	Deed	12 Dec 1892	16 Nov 1900	Colin Fox & wife	Wilhelmina Grenville	\$700	Lot No. 5
KT 2408 D	Grant	4 Oct 1915	2 Sep 1920	Wilhelmina Grenville	William Grenville	\$1 & con	Lot No. 5
KT 2409 D	Grant	19 Aug 1920	2 Sep 1920	Wm A Grenville	Orlin Wigle & wife	\$1900	Lot No. 5
KT 2414 D	Grant	31 Aug 1920	4 Sep 1920	Orlin & Catherine Wigle	Bonzano Jasperson	\$2000	Lot No. 5
KT 4394 F	Mort	8 Jun 1931	15 Jul 1931	Bon Jasperson	Bank of Montreal	\$2 & con	Lot No. 5
KT 4697 F	Release of Dower	29 Aug 1934	13 Sep 1934	Gertrude Jasperson	Bank of Montreal	\$1	Lot No. 5
KT 5187 G	QCD	3 Nov 1938	6 Nov 1938	Bonzano Jasperson & w	Bank of Montreal	\$1	Lot No. 5
KT 5270 G	Grant	28 Feb 1939	17 May 1939	Bank of Montreal	Corp of Kingsville	\$500	Lot No. 5

Not the First Fire Hall

In 1925 the original fire hall, where hoses were hung and stored, located at Chestnut and King, was in desperate need of repairs. The building had a leaky roof, smashed windows and Fire Chief Bennett believed the fire hose was in bad condition.¹



With no proper permanent home, the fire truck was sometimes stored at the Hydro Electric Power Commission for a cost of \$5.00 per month,² located on the south side of Main Street East, across from what would become the new fire hall location.

¹ Kingsville Reporter; 12 Mar 1925; pg. 8

² Kingsville Reporter; 19 Nov 1931; pg. 5

Construction 1939-1942

Town council purchased the 30 Main Street E. lot in 1939 for the purposes of constructing a new fire hall. The firemen wanted a site located close to the four corners and their plan was to look for the most modern fire halls in Michigan and Ohio before building Kingsville's new fire hall.³

The plans for the new fire hall were secured by Fire Chief Clinton Fox from a station built in Detroit.⁴ This saved the town money which would be a theme throughout the construction of the fire hall. Fire Chief Fox promised to build a suitable fire hall from "donations, solicitations, entertainments."⁵ Firemen and citizens would provide the bulk of the money and the labour required. The fire department was heralded with providing a "fine building" and for saving the town money while doing so. The money raised kept the cost to the town down to only \$8,000. The design with the apartments located above was expected to provide a return on investment. Being careful with expenses was seen as particularly important during war time.⁶

Fund raising for the new fire hall included such events as a children's pie eating contest.

This photo courtesy of the *Kingsville Fire Department* in the *Kingsville 1790-2000 A Stroll Through Time* pg. 451



³ Kingsville Reporter; 9 Feb 1939; pg. 1

⁴ Fire hall photo at the top of this report provided by the Kingsville Fire Department as published in *Kingsville 1790-2000 A Stroll Through Time* Volume 2; pg. 446

⁵ Kingsville Reporter; 9 Feb 1939; pg. 1

⁶ Kingsville Reporter; 13 Nov 1941; pg. 2

Getting it Built

Construction for the new fire hall began in 1939 with cement blocks being manufactured by members of the fire department and community volunteers, in a donated space in the William T. Fox and Son garage.⁷

It took only 30 days to make all the blocks needed for the new fire hall.⁸



1940 saw financing difficulties for the fire hall build and the fire department went to town council on at least three occasions to attempt to get funds to complete the building.⁹ By June 1940 the fire hall building was not yet finished but was far enough along for the fire truck to be stored in it.¹⁰ The truck had been stored across the street in the Hydro plant but that space was to be converted into a shop for gas meter inspection and could no longer house the fire truck.¹¹

The tender to finish the two apartments located above the firehall was given to James Countess in February 1941, he was also hired to do finishing work in the hall itself.¹²¹³ The apartments were to be rented out and provide a return on the town's investment. They would also house young firemen and their families for quick response to calls and ease of dispatching. Firemen's homes were equipped with fire bells that were activated by the dispatcher through the telephone.

⁷ Kingsville Reporter; 16 Mar 1939, pg. 4

⁸ *Kingsville 1790-2000 A Stroll Through Time*, pg. 447

⁹ Kingsville Reporter: 18 Jan 1940, pg. 1; 8 Feb 1940, pg. 1; 4 Apr 1940, pg. 2

¹⁰ Kingsville Reporter; 6 Jun 1940; pg. 1

¹¹ Kingsville Reporter; 6 Jun 1940; pg. 1

¹² Kingsville Reporter; 6 Feb 1941; pg. 1

¹³ Kingsville Reporter; 27 Mar 1941; pg. 1

The final touch of a cement floor was contracted to E.W. Cox in the summer of 1941 and the firehall officially opened in 1942.¹⁴ The iconic setback from the sidewalk allowed room for the fire vehicles to be washed outside.

In May 1989, Kingsville and Gosfield South councils decided that repairs needed to the fire hall were too costly and it was preferred to build an entirely new hall, to be located in an area with less congestion.¹⁵¹⁶ The current fire hall on Division Road North was constructed in 1990.



From Bucket Brigade to Fire Department

Early 19th century fire fighting was done by nearby citizens forming bucket brigades. James King and others sought a grant to purchase fire fighting equipment in 1862, but were denied.¹⁷

¹⁴ Kingsville Reporter; 10 Jul 1941; pg. 1

¹⁵ Photo of firehall in 1989 courtesy of Kingsville Archives

¹⁶ Kingsville Reporter; 16 May 1989; pg. 1

¹⁷ *Kingsville 1790-2000 A Stroll Through Time*, pg. 442

Kingsville's first official organized department came to be on February 9, 1884 and included: Reeve J.S. Middough as Fire Marshal, Captain S.T. Copus, 1st Lieutenant Henry Layman, 2nd Lieutenant Wesley Ulch and firemen Charles Tofflemire, C. Smith, Hugh Scratch, Ed. Grenville and Silas Brundage.¹⁸

"Proper fire fighting could be undertaken" with the installation of a waterworks system by Hiram Walker in 1889 for the Mettawas Hotel and the installation of underground waterlines and 27 fire hydrants in 1894.¹⁹ New volunteers for the Kingsville Fire Brigade were sought later that same year.²⁰ In 1892, Council passed a by-law "defining the fire limits and prohibiting the erection of buildings of inflammable material within said limits." which were Main from Prince Albert to Spruce, Division from Water to Mill and Queen from Main to Pearl.²¹

Kingsville town council formed a Fire and Light Committee.

In March 1919 the committee was authorized to obtain estimates for a fire truck.²²

In December, of that same year, council passed a by-law to issue debentures for \$4,000 to purchase the town's first fire truck and a fire alarm.²³



Bylaw for the newly purchased fire truck. Kingsville Reporter; 18 Dec 1919

¹⁸ ibid

¹⁹ ibid

²⁰ *Kingsville 1790-2000 A Stroll Through Time*, pg. 443

²¹ Amherstburg Echo; 22 Jul 1892; pg. 6

²² Kingsville Reporter; 13 Mar 1919; pg. 1

²³ Kingsville Reporter; 18 Dec 1919; pg. 1

The first motorized piece of equipment, a Model T Chemical Engine, was added to the department's fire fighting tools in 1920. Eight years later they would get their first pumper truck, a Gotfredson-Bickle which allowed them to reach two and three storey fires.²⁴



The buildings in the background would be torn down for the construction of the new Fire Hall. The equipment shown includes the truck purchased in 1928 on the left and the first motorized vehicle purchased in 1920 and later retrofitted into a ladder truck in 1931. This photo courtesy of the *Kingsville Fire Department* from *Kingsville 1790-2000 A Stroll Through Time* pg. 444

Fire Chief Clinton E. Fox (1919-1967) served as a fire department member for a total of 48 years, all but 10 as the chief. Lead by Fire Chief Fox, the Kingsville fire department was accredited with saving commercial buildings from fire: “on at least two occasions a large part of the town’s business section was saved only by our firemen’s diligence and their disregard for their personal safety...Fire Chief Fox and his department have contributed further to the town in their work on our Fire Hall. It is a fine building.”²⁵

²⁴ ibid

²⁵ ibid



Fire Chief Clinton E. Fox seen here on the far left posing in front of the 1928 Gotfredson-Bickle Fire Truck, Kingsville's first pumper truck. This photo courtesy of the *Kingsville Fire Department* in the *Kingsville 1790-2000 A Stroll Through Time* pg. 447

The Kingsville Fire Department received upgrades to their equipment in and around the same time that they were planning to build their new fire hall, including a number of two-wheeled hose reels carrying hundreds of feet of hose stored in various locations around town. "During large structural fires, the Mettawas Hotel fire hose could also be brought into service."²⁶

In 1944, The Town of Kingsville and the Township of Gosfield South reached their first formal agreement in fire fighting cooperation. the Township of Gosfield South purchased a 1944 Ford truck available to both municipalities. This agreement increased the fire coverage area to 50 square miles from 4. "This resulted in a significant increase in both the number of calls and the distance to travel to alarms."²⁷

²⁶ *Kingsville 1790-2000 A Stroll Through Time*, pg. 445

²⁷ *ibid*

The Cottam and Gosfield North Fire Departments were not initially associated with Kingsville or Gosfield South departments.²⁸ Cottam leased their first fire truck in 1947 to better serve their rural community and throughout the 1960's they made significant improvements and changes. In 1962 Cottam Fire Department amalgamated with the Gosfield North Fire Department.²⁹

On January 1, 1999 the three departments in Kingsville, Gosfield South and Cottam-Gosfield North were amalgamated into one. The Town of Kingsville Fire Department consists of two stations: 1720 Division Road N., Kingsville and 104 Hill Street, Cottam.³⁰

Kingsville's Main Street and Devastating Fires

In 1891, despite the efforts of prompt response from a citizens' bucket brigade, fire consumed seven buildings on Main Street including a hardware store, butcher shop, two barber shops, shoe shop, billiard hall and a stable. The brigade was credited for keeping the fire from being even more disastrous. Several other buildings caught fire but were saved thanks to the brigade's efforts.³¹

In 1894, again on Main Street, fire started in a furniture establishment and spread to a storehouse and office before crossing the street and bring the front of A. Conklin's Implement shop. It continued to the Scratch block where nearly every pane of glass was broken from the heat of the fire. The bucket brigade was, once again, credited with stopping the further spread of the fire.³²

Almost exactly one year later, in 1895, Kingsville's downtown suffered another serious fire on Main Street. It began in a dry goods store and spread to the neighbouring grocery and fancy goods store, the telegraph office, jeweller, barber shop, millinery, shoe shop and meat market. Despite a frozen hydrant, the department was able to save several buildings including the fairly newly built Conklin block.

²⁸ *Kingsville 1790-2000 A Stroll Through Time* pg. 449

²⁹ *Kingsville 1790-2000 A Stroll Through Time* pg. 450

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *Amherstburg Echo*; 6 Nov 1891; pg. 4

³² *Amherstburg Echo*; 9 Feb 1894; pg. 4

Despite the formalizing of an established Fire Department, fighting fires was still a community event and relied on citizen volunteers to minimize damage.

“Everybody worked hard and as fast as one man got covered with ice another took his place. the ladies of the town not only took a leading part in helping to rescue the stock from the various stores, but kept large quantities of hot coffee and cake in the M. Brethour’s store, which they dispensed to the tired and freezing firemen...If it were not for the system of waterworks every building on Main street south would have been in ashes.”³³

Later this same year, Main Street North would see a fire consume a bakery and barber shop.³⁴

Fire fighting efforts often went towards saving neighbouring and adjoining properties from catching on fire. In 1889, a bucket brigade consisting of town citizens was accredited with stopping the spread of a fire that consumed frame structures hosting a stable and harness shop located on Main Street West. These were replaced with brick buildings for the Oddfellows and Masons society.³⁵

Main Street got a reprieve from any major fire destruction for the next eight decades until the fall of 1981.

A devastating fire on the South West corner of Main Street and Division Road, displaced 23 people from their homes and destroyed nine businesses.³⁶



1981 Main Street, Kingsville fire devastation. Photo courtesy of the Toronto Star from the Virtual Reference Library.

³³ Amherstburg Echo; 8 Feb 1895; pg. 5

³⁴ Amherstburg Echo; 1 Nov 1895; pg. 5

³⁵ Amherstburg Echo; 22 Mar 1889; pg. 5

³⁶ Kingsville Reporter; 11 Nov 1981; pg. 1

Had it not been for residents, Terry Leng and Tony Carpeneto, there likely would have been loss of life in this 1981 fire. These two gentlemen worked to evacuate all the tenants before police and fire fighters were on scene.³⁷

Leamington, Harrow and Cottam Fire Departments were called in to assist with approximately 60 firefighters responding. Blowing cinders caused small fires as far as two and a half blocks away. Lost in the fire were many apartments, a hardware store, restaurant, law office, shoe store, decorating store, china shop, barber shop and fabric store.³⁸



1917 Fire Insurance Plan showing the location of the Electric Light Station and No. 3 Hose Reel House.

Fire Insurance Plan

Dec 1890: Population 1800, No Appliances

May 1906; Population 1650, 33 Hydrants, 1 Chemical Engine, 2500 ft Hose

April 1913: Population 1900, 35 Hydrants, 1 Chemical Engine, 1500 ft Hose

November 1917; Population 1706, 36 Hydrants, 6 Hose Reels, Ladder Truck, Central Station, 4 Hose Houses, Volunteer Brigade, Chief, 9 men, Patrolmen on duty all night in Business Section, No Clock

No. 3 Hose Reel House: south side of Main St E, near Electric Light Station

No. 3 Hose Reel House: east side of Lansdowne Ave, north of railway, near canning factory and train station

No. 5 Hose Reel House: south of Park, west of road leading to pump house near Mettawas

*couldn't locate 4th Hose Reel House on Fire Insurance Plan; population amounts don't match assessment which shows 1917 pop. of 1633 and 1913 pop. of 1742

³⁷ ibid

³⁸ ibid

The Old Fire Hall Today, 2018

