

**Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada**  
**Le Journal de la Société pour l'étude de l'architecture au Canada**



**Urban Picturesque**  
**John James Browne and the Fire Stations of Montréal**

John Osborne

Volume 46, numéro 1, 2021

Current Research on Architecture in Québec  
État de la recherche en architecture au Québec

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1082357ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1082357ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

SSAC-SEAC

ISSN

1486-0872 (imprimé)

2563-8696 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Osborne, J. (2021). Urban Picturesque: John James Browne and the Fire Stations of Montréal. *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada / Le Journal de la Société pour l'étude de l'architecture au Canada*, 46(1), 4–13.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1082357ar>

© SSAC-SEAC, 2021

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

**é**rudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

## URBAN PICTURESQUE

### John James Browne and the Fire Stations of Montréal

> JOHN OSBORNE<sup>1</sup>

JOHN OSBORNE is an historian who specializes in the material culture of the European Middle Ages, with a special focus on the city of Rome. He taught at the University of Victoria (1979-2001) and Queen's University (2001-2005), before serving as dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Carleton University (2005-2015), where he remains a research professor. A secondary passion is the history of nineteenth-century Canada, first developed when he undertook research for National Historic Parks and Sites over the course of three summer internships in the mid-1970s. A monograph on the Québec photographers Charles and John Smeaton is currently in preparation.



FIG. 1. STUDIO OF JAMES INGLIS (MONTRÉAL), PHOTOGRAPH OF JOHN JAMES BROWNE, 1875. | BIBLIOTHÈQUE ET ARCHIVES NATIONALES DU QUÉBEC, [HTTPS://NUMERIQUE.BANQ.QC.CA/PATRIMOINE/DETAILS/52327/1956086], ACCESSED FEBRUARY 16, 2021. THE IMAGE WAS PUBLISHED IN BORTHWICK, 1875, MONTREAL, ITS HISTORY: TO WHICH IS ADDED BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES, P. 50\*.

Fire was one of the most formidable enemies of North American towns and cities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,<sup>2</sup> leading to the issuance of civic ordinances regarding building materials and the water supply, as well as the eventual establishment of actual fire brigades. In Boston, for example, the fire of January 14, 1653, led to the requirement that each house should have poles and ladders available for reaching the roof, the creation of a water reservoir, the establishment of nightly foot patrols to spot outbreaks, and two decades later the importation of a fire engine from England.<sup>3</sup> The primary building material for both domestic residences and commercial structures was often wood, a material easily combustible in burgeoning conurbations where these categories of buildings frequently stood side by side; and a supply of water adequate for dousing flames was not always readily at hand. Québec, for example, suffered two devastating conflagrations exactly one month apart, on May 28 and June 28, 1845, recorded for posterity by a contemporary painter, Joseph Légaré,<sup>4</sup> and then two decades later much the same area of the city experienced the “Great Fire” of October 14, 1866, which was claimed to have left some 20,000 inhabitants of the city homeless.<sup>5</sup> On this latter occasion, the extent of the destruction was rapidly communicated through photographs, with images appearing shortly thereafter in papers such as the *Illustrated Saturday Reader* (Montréal) and the *Illustrated London News*.<sup>6</sup>

Since the days of imperial Rome, and the foundation of the *vigiles urbani* by the

Emperor Augustus,<sup>7</sup> cities had attempted to reduce this risk through the creation of official fire brigades, whose members were provided with equipment and training. The earliest such association recorded in Canada was the Union Engine Company of Halifax, founded initially in 1754 as the Union Fire Club. Its printed “Rules and Regulations,” as revised in November 1835, specified that it would have sixty members under the command of a captain and five lieutenants, with each of the latter in charge of a fire engine. Meetings of the company were held on the third Tuesday of each month.<sup>8</sup> At first, the firemen were all volunteers, but by the mid-nineteenth century the increasing size of urban populations and the need for specialized pumping and other equipment led to the creation of permanent fire services in a number of Canadian cities. As always in such situations, there was frequently a debate between those who saw fire brigades as a necessity and those who balked at the considerable expense. In 1866 the perceived neglect of this issue by the Québec municipal authorities resulted in an outpouring of outrage against “the tyrants at the City Hall.”<sup>9</sup>

On May 1, 1863, the city of Montréal established Canada’s first professional fire service, with teams of full-time firemen based at eight “Hose Stations.”<sup>10</sup> They were supplemented by a network of telegraph boxes placed at strategic locations across the city, for the most part at major intersections, intended to facilitate the rapid reporting of any new outbreaks.<sup>11</sup> Alexander Bertram [1811-1875], who had risen through the ranks of the volunteer service and distinguished himself in combatting Montréal’s own series of “Great Fires” in the summer of 1852, transitioned to become the first full-time chief engineer, a position he would hold until his death. *Mackay’s*

*Montreal Directory, for 1863-64* lists the sites of the fire stations, as well as the locations of some fifty-three numbered boxes (the numbers go from 1 to 64, but it was noted that eleven numbers were not in use), accompanied by an indication of where the key could be found nearby. The Directory also supplied a brief description of the new fire department: “In each of the above stations, there are two or three fire guardians permanently, in addition to whom there is a volunteer fire company of one captain, two lieutenants and thirty-six men.”<sup>12</sup> The volunteer auxiliary would be phased out a few years later, in 1867.<sup>13</sup> The rapid expansion of the city, and specifically the industrialization and settlement of the *faubourg* Pointe-Saint-Charles, led to the addition of a ninth station in 1866-1867, at the Saint-Gabriel market.<sup>14</sup> By 1873-1874 the list of telegraph boxes had grown to ninety-four, again with some numbers missing.<sup>15</sup> In comparison, the city of Toronto lagged roughly a decade behind in this regard. It installed a fire alarm telegraph system in 1871, but a permanent paid fire service would follow only in 1874, after a prolonged debate.<sup>16</sup>

In the early 1870s, the city of Montréal decided to construct four new fire stations to replace existing older ones. In two instances this involved both moving to a new location and combining the fire hall with a nearby police station. Police Station B, formerly at 82 Panet, and Fire Station no. 8, formerly at 187 Craig (now Rue Saint-Antoine) at the corner of Visitation, were amalgamated in a single new structure, albeit with separate entrances, built farther to the east at 47-51 Craig, at the corner of Gain (now Rue Cartier), in a district still known as Papineau Square.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Police Station D and Fire Station no. 6 were combined in a new structure at 705-709 German Street (now Avenue de l’Hôtel de

Ville), at the corner of Ontario.<sup>18</sup> Of the two stand-alone fire stations, only no. 2 seems to have moved, from 179 Notre-Dame to 40 Saint-Gabriel. Station no. 3 was rebuilt on the same site, at the corner of Wellington and Dalhousie in the district known as Griffintown, although the street address was renumbered from 158-162 Wellington to 154-158.<sup>19</sup>

The Montréal directories of that era provide a great deal of useful information, including the names of those who lived and worked in these establishments. In the 1873-1874 *Directory*, for example, Station no. 2, in service from 1872 until 1939, was staffed by a “guardian” (Nathaniel Cairns), three additional firemen (Abraham Anderson, Henry Quelch, and Edward McLaughlin), the captain of the “Salvage Corps” (William McRobie, here misspelled “McCrobie”), and two additional members of the corps (Richard Choules and James Jackson).<sup>20</sup> These men presumably all resided in the station, although McRobie is given an additional street listing at no. 42, apparently indicating a separate apartment within the structure, with its own entrance.

The designs for these new edifices were supplied by a local architect, John James Browne [1837-1893]. In a notice dated June 14, 1871, issued under the name of the city clerk, Charles Glackmeyer, builders interested in the project were invited to submit tenders for the first two of the new fire stations, with submissions due on July 3 at noon. It was specified that these would have to conform to Browne’s design, which was available for public viewing at his office, 210 Great Saint James Street (Grande Rue Saint-Jacques). On July 4, a second call was issued for two additional structures, the two larger buildings intended to combine detachments of both the police and fire departments, and once again potential

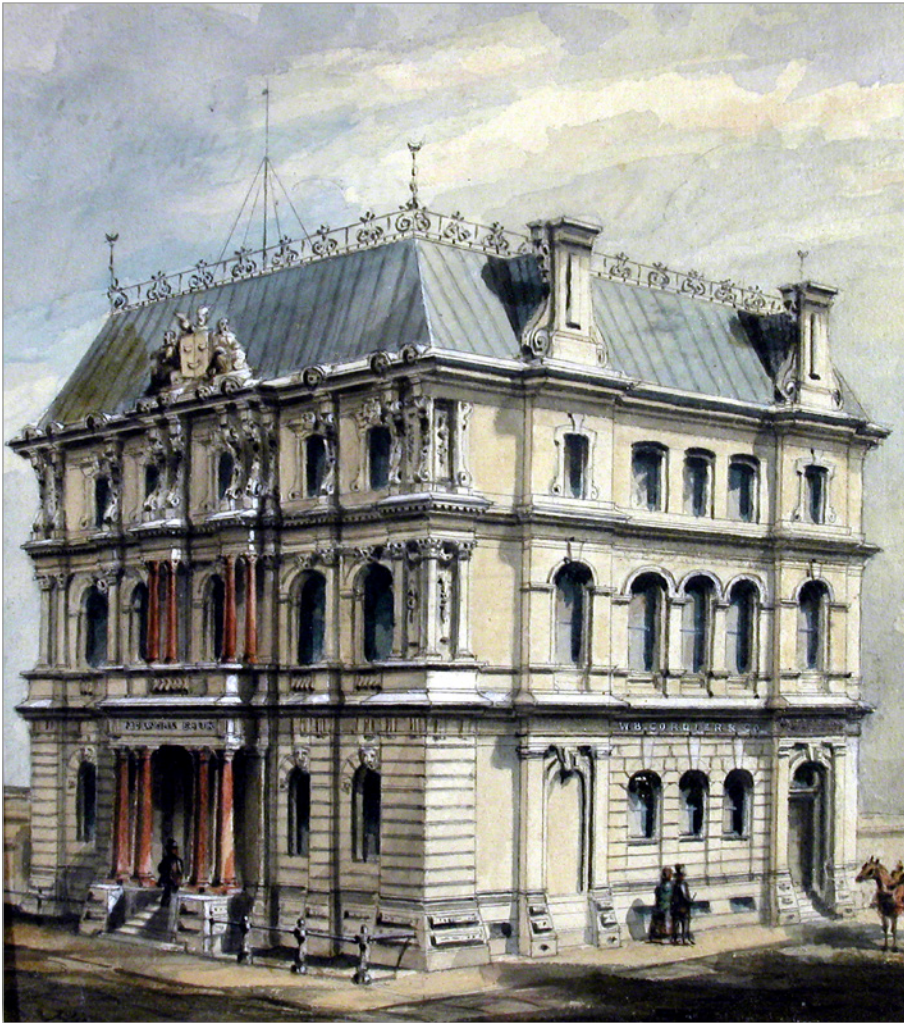


FIG. 2. JOHN HENRY WALKER, MOLSON'S BANK, MONTRÉAL, 1860-1870. | M966.149.2 © MCCORD MUSEUM.

contractors were invited to consult the plans at Browne's office.<sup>21</sup>

John James Browne (fig. 1) was born in Québec on October 12, 1837, and was already a practising architect by the time of his twentieth birthday, having trained under his Belfast-born father, George Browne [1811-1885], who is perhaps best known for his Kingston City Hall (Ontario) of 1844.<sup>22</sup> At first the two appear to have collaborated on a series of projects in Montréal, including the acclaimed Molson's Bank building

(1864-1866) (fig. 2), but in 1866 John James announced the establishment of his own office at 122 Great Saint James Street.<sup>23</sup> He would go on to a highly prolific career, primarily as a designer of private homes and commercial buildings, almost all in Montréal or its environs, until his life was cut short prematurely by a tragic street accident, leading to his death in August 1893 at the age of fifty-five. Writing in 1875, the Rev. J. Douglas Borthwick credited J.J. Browne with twenty-five villas, fourteen warehouses, three banks, six markets, forty stores,

twenty-five residences, ninety-seven terrace houses, three police stations, five fire stations, and four churches, in addition to a wide variety of projects then currently in progress.<sup>24</sup>

Until recently, the only known record of the visual appearance of Browne's four Montréal fire stations consisted of images included in a two-page spread celebrating the city's fire service, published in December 1874 in both the *Canadian Illustrated News* (figs. 3-4) and its sister publication, *L'Opinion publique*.<sup>25</sup> Launched in December 1869 and January 1870 respectively, the projects of the photographer and engraver William Augustus Leggo, and the printer George-Édouard Desbarats, these two weeklies were the first Canadian newspapers to feature the publication of actual photographs, in addition to lithographs and engravings. The pictorial includes engraved views of all nine of the city's fire stations, and portraits of three individuals: Louis-Onésime Loranger, alderman for the Saint-Louis ward and chairman of the city's Fire Committee, Alexander Bertram, the chief engineer, and William McRobie, the captain of the Salvage Corps. The English version includes an extensive and highly laudatory account of their contributions. Bertram, for example, is credited with the professionalization of the fire service, and the introduction of the telegraph alarm system; and Loranger is praised for having secured the most up-to-date equipment, following official visits of inspection to American cities. "Babcocks, Skinner-ladders, a second steam engine, new hose, and a variety of other apparatus were secured by him, and he has further laboured in improving the efficiency of the men themselves."<sup>26</sup>

The images of the four Browne-designed fire stations show that he developed two separate designs, both employing the



FIG. 3. "MONTREAL FIRE DEPARTMENT" [LEFT HALF] | CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS, DECEMBER 12, 1874, P. 376.



FIG. 4. "MONTREAL FIRE DEPARTMENT" [RIGHT HALF] | CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS, DECEMBER 12, 1874, P. 377.

same architectural "style": one with a single tower (used for stations 2 and 3), and one with a double tower, used when the fire station was combined with an adjacent police station (stations 6 and 8). All four structures were demolished at a later date, with the sole exception of the lower section of Station no. 2, which today survives in part, although without its tower, now at 444-448 Rue Saint-Gabriel (fig. 5).

Most early fire stations were simple affairs, often little more than sheds to house the pumps and the horses required to draw them, with a focus on practicality. In Montréal, accommodation for the firemen was provided by rooms on the upper floor(s).<sup>27</sup> And this is the case for what was apparently Browne's first venture into the field of fire station design: the newly created Station no. 9 at Pointe-Saint-Charles. The call for tenders, dated August 11, 1866, and published a week later in the *Montreal Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette*, invited contractors to inspect the "plans and specifications to be seen at the office of J.J. Browne, Architect."<sup>28</sup> It would have been among the very first projects of his independent practice. The image included in the *Canadian Illustrated News* and *L'Opinion publique* in December 1874 suggests a rather plain and sober two-storey building, with one large opening to the street, framed by a flattened "basket-handle" arch and flanked by windows, from which a horse-drawn fire carriage is shown emerging, and a separate smaller doorway to the left, presumably intended for pedestrians. There is no exterior articulation apart from the frames surrounding the doors and windows, and the window architraves in the upper floor (fig. 4, no. 9).

But this bare-bones design was not typical of Browne's other work in the mid-1860s,



FIG. 5. LOWER SECTION OF STATION NO. 2, 444-448 RUE SAINT-GABRIEL, MONTRÉAL. | J.T. STUBBS, 2020.

which revealed both great versatility and an interest in detailing, as well as considerable knowledge of both historic and contemporary architectural styles. The Molson's Bank building (fig. 2), for example, with its elaborate exterior ornamentation, projecting Doric portico, and the use of the Corinthian order on the second floor, is an early example of the importation from France of the Second Empire style made popular in Paris by Napoleon III, and based on a variety of Italian Renaissance precedents. A lengthy account of the structure published in the *Montreal Herald*, accompanied by a woodcut image, praised its "bold and inspiring character," and remarked on "the tendency at the present moment to the use of a much larger amount of carving for external decoration than has heretofore been employed."<sup>29</sup>

Nor was this Browne's only idiom. At the same time, he also designed the Union Church (1864), a joint project of the Presbyterian and Anglican communities in the Côte-des-Neiges district, employing the Gothic Revival style then in vogue for new ecclesiastical buildings. Reporting on the laying of the foundation in August 1864, the *Montreal Herald* described the design for the church as "in the early decorated style of Gothic architecture, of a plain but neat appearance, both internally and externally . . . This structure is to be built with red bricks, having corners of white and black bricks, and bands of tessellated [*sic*] tiles."<sup>30</sup> This church was destroyed by fire in 1888.

The style of Browne's buildings thus ranged broadly, with influences from a variety of sources, presumably depending on the function of the building and the wishes of the patron. This eclecticism was recognized by his contemporaries and was considered to have been informed by his extensive travels in both Britain and

continental Europe. In 1875, J. Douglas Borthwick observed that "Mr. Browne, having visited Europe four times, and travelled throughout England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, &c., examining all the ancient and modern buildings that were considered of any note, gained a very large amount of very valuable information, which he could never have attained, hence the success [of] his professional career."<sup>31</sup> The specific buildings studied during these travels are not recorded.

A more precise analysis of Browne's 1872 fire stations is now possible following the discovery of two contemporary photographs, depicting stations 3 (fig. 6) and 8 (fig. 7), preserved in the collection of the family of John Smeaton [1842-1904], a photographer and photo-engraver who began his career in Quebec City before moving to Montréal around 1871.<sup>32</sup> These appear to be the actual models used for the engravings published in the *Canadian Illustrated News* and *L'Opinion publique*, and it is likely no coincidence that Smeaton was employed in those years by the proprietors of the two weeklies, Leggo and Desbarats. He may have been the photographer, the engraver who prepared the composite pictorial spread, or indeed both; but it seems unlikely that the photographs would have come into his possession without some direct connection.

The contrast between these buildings and Browne's earlier fire station is striking. Station no. 3, at the corner of Wellington and Dalhousie streets in the Griffintown district, is an imposing three-storey structure, covered with a steep mansard roof punctuated by dormer windows. The projecting corner tower, square at the base, but then shifting above to an octagon, contains the principal opening for the fire engines under a broad "depressed"

or Tudor arch, in which the width exceeds the height. It is surmounted by a decorative hood moulding, extended upward in the centre to incorporate the coat of arms of the city of Montréal, and then a tall lancet, perhaps intended for a window but clearly left blind, spanning the two upper floors. The Wellington Street façade to the right has two more entrances: a second Tudor arch, its considerable width again presumably intended to accommodate engines and horses; and then a smaller pedestrian doorway (no. 158), set within an ogival or Gothic arch, presumably providing access to the quarters of William Patton, "assistant chief fire department."<sup>33</sup> The tower is topped with a crenellated viewing platform, decorated with an arcade of four pointed arches on each of its faces. Above this is a smaller turret, probably intended to house the station's alarm bell. A defined circular space above the arched openings may have been intended for a clock.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the exterior, a different coloured stone is used to emphasize the outline of the entrances and windows, as well as the extensive quoining.

The photograph of Fire Station no. 8 and Police Station B depicts their new location at 47-51 Craig, at the corner of Gain (under magnification, the street signs on the building are clearly legible). This reveals an entirely identical structure for the fire station (at no. 51), coupled with a slightly modified design for the adjoining police detachment (at no. 47), presumably reflecting the different function of the latter space.<sup>35</sup> The pedestrian entrance under the ogival arch (no. 49) now occupies the centre of the façade, and to its right is another "depressed" or Tudor arch, mirroring its counterpart to the left. This is not an open passage, however, but now a window divided into three vertical lights. The result is to create a symmetry that also extends to the floors above.



FIG. 6. JOHN SMEATON, FIRE STATION NO. 3, 154-158 WELLINGTON STREET, GRIFFINTOWN, MONTRÉAL, ABOUT 1874. | GIFT OF W. JAMES SMEATON, M2019.7.2.2.273 © MCCORD MUSEUM.



FIG. 7. JOHN SMEATON, FIRE STATION NO. 8, 47-51 CRAIG STREET, MONTRÉAL, ABOUT 1874. | GIFT OF W. JAMES SMEATON, M2019.7.2.2.271 © MCCORD MUSEUM.

The police station has its own protruding tower, but of a very different design. It is smaller and square, and the ground floor entrance is much narrower in width, no doubt intended for the passage of people and not horse-drawn fire engines. Two steps lead up to a recessed doorway, a lamp hangs over the portal, and there is also a sign identifying the building as "Police Station no. 2." In the tower above the entrance there is a large window with two lancets, all three with pointed arches. At the roof level the detailing employs the same decorative vocabulary as the fire station tower, including the Gothic arcing, but there is no viewing platform. Ornamental details abound, including stopped chamfers in the frame of the doorway and the emphasized quoining.

Beyond the tower is another arched opening, again filled with a three-light window, mirroring its counterpart. Thus some attention has been paid to the principle of symmetry, although this did not extend to the form of the towers.

The close similarity between the two fire stations is evidence that they were designed by the same architect,<sup>36</sup> and a number of the details have parallels in the residence that Browne designed at approximately the same time for the Montréal merchant and industrialist Andrew Frederick Gault [1833-1903]. "Rokeby," on Sherbrooke Street, built in what is usually described as the Scottish Baronial style, also features the emphasized quoins, exterior blind arcading, and

crenellated towers (fig. 8).<sup>37</sup> But while many if not most of the individual elements in the fire station design owe much to the legacy of the late Middle Ages, there are also borrowings from other traditions, seen for example in the roof, which evokes Second Empire models. Thus it is debatable whether they may be classified as High Victorian Gothic<sup>38</sup> structures in the same mode as, say, the many contemporary Gothic Revival churches<sup>39</sup> or Thomas Fuller's design for the slightly earlier Parliament Buildings in Ottawa (1860-1876). They certainly lack a Puginesque fidelity to a preferred model, and also the intellectual underpinnings which valued "Gothic" for reasons of religious and political ideology. The dilemma faced by nineteenth-century architects

was that they now had multiple styles at their disposal, from which to draw inspiration,<sup>40</sup> and the choice tended to depend on the whims of the patron and, perhaps even more importantly, the function of the building in question: “Gothic for churches, Greek for art galleries, Renaissance for banks and insurance offices, Romanesque for gaols, Tudor for schools and almshouses—and any one of these for villas.”<sup>41</sup>

Police and fire stations were intended to serve specific and highly practical functions; and, being primarily inventions of the nineteenth century, they had no firmly established architectural tradition. Nor was there any requirement that they make a visual statement beyond a demonstration of the interest being taken in the safety of the city’s inhabitants by its elected Council. In many ways this offered the architects of such structures almost

unlimited freedom for invention. Some of Browne’s various borrowings marry historic solutions with contemporary needs, for example the broad Tudor arches created openings of sufficient width to allow the passage of the fire engines;<sup>42</sup> but most are purely decorative, and unlikely to have been references to specific models. If the building style cannot easily be labelled “Gothic,” how then can it be described? One promising possible answer to that question is “Picturesque.”



FIG. 8. WM. NOTMAN & SON, “ROKEBY,” ANDREW FREDERICK GAULT’S HOUSE, SHERBROOKE STREET, MONTRÉAL, ABOUT 1885. | VIEW-2464 © MCCORD MUSEUM.

Deriving etymologically from the Italian term *pittresco* (literally, “painter-like”), the Picturesque had its origins in eighteenth-century landscape architecture in Britain, for example the gardens designed by Lancelot “Capability” Brown [1716-1783], from which it then passed to late Georgian (c. 1790-1810) and Regency-era (1811-1820) buildings. Its development is usually closely associated with theorists such as Uvedale Price [1747-1829] and Humphry Repton [1752-1818], as well as architects like John Nash [1752-1835].<sup>43</sup> Invariably linked to the general cultural movement known as “Romanticism,” it moved away from the more formal precepts of classicism, and the previous British inclination toward Palladian models, to produce landscapes and structures that sought to engage the eye rather than the mind. It was “architecture as scenery,” in the words of J. Mordaunt Crook.<sup>44</sup> Strictly speaking, it was not an architectural “style” at all, but rather an aesthetic approach. As Janet Wright has summed it up, “In essence the Picturesque invited an approach to design aimed at pleasing the eye and the emotions over the intellect. Principles of congruity and the creation of interesting visual effects replaced abstract standards of architectural correctness based on classical precepts.”<sup>45</sup> And it could and did borrow its design vocabulary from multiple earlier traditions.



Carroll Meeks identified five qualities to be associated with what he termed “picturesque eclecticism”: roughness, movement, irregularity, variety, and intricacy.<sup>46</sup> This approach to building—accentuating the ultimately medieval notion of *varietas*, delighting in the breaking up of surface planes through progression and recession in order to create plays of light and shadow, and borrowing eclectically for the decorative detailing, often with a particular emphasis on elements of Gothic origin—is usually associated exclusively with domestic architecture, and especially the villas constructed for upper-class patrons in suburban or rural settings. Wright has documented the passage of this Picturesque aesthetic to Canada in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when it was favoured by architects who had been trained in Britain, working for a political and economic elite who were themselves similarly immigrants.<sup>47</sup> It should perhaps come as no surprise to discover that one of the foremost architects in this group was George Browne, who in the late 1840s designed a number of “cottages” for the Molson family of Montréal, among a great many other similar commissions.<sup>48</sup>

John James Browne’s fire stations lack the rustic landscape setting, the context in which Picturesque architecture had its origins, and the atmosphere that it generally sought to invoke in most of its subsequent development. But one of the fundamental aspects of the Picturesque was its insistence on the creation of buildings that were appropriate to their location, that evoked the “spirit of the place,”<sup>49</sup> and in this respect the fire and police stations appear to live up well to that definition. They are quintessentially urban structures, reflecting the latest practical needs of a rapidly expanding population gathered in a densely populated space. Meeks’s five qualities of Picturesque design are all

present, to a greater or lesser extent, in Browne’s designs; indeed, they are here pushed beyond their usual limits, including the variegated surfaces and the emphasized and highly eclectic detailing, now used to create original and unprecedented buildings that must have created a powerful visual impression for contemporary viewers. It is interesting to note that in the following decade a remarkably similar approach would characterize the London fire stations of Robert Pearsall [1852-1929], for example his Woolwich fire station of 1887.<sup>50</sup>

John James Browne’s designs demonstrate that the Picturesque was not confined only to domestic villas. Indeed, his fire stations may be described as the Picturesque on steroids, and possibly a unique experiment in the annals of nineteenth-century Canadian civic architecture. Although these buildings apparently flew beneath the radar of comment in the contemporary press, the Smeaton photographs constitute a lasting testament to Browne’s imaginative response to his challenge.

#### NOTES

1. I would like to thank Anne-Frédérique Beaulieu-Plamondon, Janet Brooke, Lucie K. Morisset, Luc Noppen, Hélène Samson, the late Peter Smeaton, and especially Malcolm Thurlby for their comments, suggestions, and collegial assistance with images.
2. Major conflagrations destroyed large parts of Boston (1760, 1787, 1872), New York (1776, 1835, 1845), St. John’s, Newfoundland (1846), Toronto (1849), and Montréal (1734, 1852), to cite but a few.
3. Brayley, Arthur W., 1889, *A Complete History of the Boston Fire Department Including the Fire-alarm Service and the Protective Department from 1630 to 1888*, Boston, John P. Dale & Co., p. 5-15.
4. Joseph Légaré, *Après l’incendie du faubourg Saint-Roch à Québec, vu vers l’ouest*, and *L’incendie du quartier Saint-Jean à Québec, vu*

*vers l’ouest*, both dated 1848, and both in the collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, inv. 1958.534 and 1958.470.

5. *The Quebec Daily Mercury*, October 15, 1866, p. 2.
6. *Illustrated Saturday Reader*, October 27, 1866, p. 1; and *Illustrated London News*, November 10, 1866, p. 448-450.
7. Reynolds, P.K. Baillie, 1924, *The Vigiles of Imperial Rome*, London, Oxford University Press and H. Milford.
8. *Rules and Regulations of the Union Company, of Halifax, Nova Scotia*, 1836, Halifax, James Spike. Duties included ensuring that the doors of the engine houses were kept unencumbered from snow in winter (Rule V). Most of the regulations specify penalties to be levied on members for non-compliance with the specified duties, including fines for the use of “ill language” (Rule XXI). For the monthly meetings, it was also specified that “No liquor [is] to be brought in the room till the business of the Company is over” (Rule XV).
9. *The Quebec Daily Mercury*, October 13, 1866, p. 2.
10. Redfern, Bruce, 1993, *The Montreal Fire Department in the Nineteenth Century: Its Transformation from a Volunteer to a Professional Organization*, M.A. thesis in History, Montréal, Concordia University, p. 56-67.
11. *Id.*, p. 65-67. The concept had been first introduced in Boston a decade earlier.
12. *Mackay’s Montreal Directory, for 1863-64: Containing an Alphabetical Directory of the Citizens*, Montréal, John Lovell, p. 369.
13. By-law 11, adopted on May 8, 1867: see Redfern, “The Montreal Fire Department in the Nineteenth Century,” *op. cit.*, p. 73.
14. Station no. 9 first appears in *Mackay’s Montreal Directory, for 1867-68: Containing an Alphabetical Directory of the Citizens, and a Street Directory*, Montréal, John Lovell, p. 146, 452.
15. *Montreal Directory, for 1873-74: Containing an Alphabetical Directory of the Citizens, and a Street Directory*, Montréal, John Lovell, p. 617.
16. *History of the Toronto Fire Department*, 1924, Toronto, The Toronto Fireman’s Burial Fund, p. 25-27.
17. The old addresses last appear in the *Montreal Directory, for 1872-73, op. cit.*, p. 95, 153, 340, 606. The new location, with the police station

- entrance at no. 47 Craig and the fire station at no. 51, is listed in the *Montreal Directory, for 1873-74*, p. 110, 336, 618.
18. *Montreal Directory, for 1873-74*, p. 153, 336, 618. Previously, Fire Station no. 6 was situated at 126 German, in the block between Dorchester and Sainte-Catherine, and Police Station D was a few blocks away at 189 Rue Saint-Charles-Borromée (now Rue Clark), just north of Sainte-Catherine: see *Montreal Directory, for 1871-72: Containing an Alphabetical Directory of the Citizens, and a Street Directory*, Montréal, John Lovell, p. 107, 166, 307.
  19. *Montreal Directory, for 1872-73*, p. 340; and *Montreal Directory, for 1873-74*, p. 224, 336.
  20. *Montreal Directory, for 1873-74*, p. 190. For McRobie, see also Redfern, "The Montreal Fire Department in the Nineteenth Century," *op. cit.*, p. 44-47. The "Salvage Corps" was intended to protect commercial property and goods from water damage during the extinction of fires (*id.*, p. 78).
  21. Published in *La Minerve*, June 17, 1871, p. 1, and July 19, 1871, p. 1.
  22. Stewart, J. Douglas, 2003, "Browne, George," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Toronto and Quebec, University of Toronto / Université Laval, vol. 11, [[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/browne\\_george\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/browne_george_11E.html)], accessed February 16, 2021. For a list of all his known commissions, see Hill, Robert G., 2009, "Browne, George William Richardson," *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada*, [<http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1675>], accessed February 16, 2021.
  23. *Montreal Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette*, June 15, 1866, p. 2.
  24. Borthwick, J. Douglas, 1875, *Montreal, its History: To Which Is Added Biographical Sketches, with Photographs, of many of its Principal Citizens*, Montréal, Drysdale and Co., p. 50. See also Gersovitz, Julie, 2003, "Browne, John James," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, *op. cit.*, vol. 12, [[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/browne\\_john\\_james\\_12E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/browne_john_james_12E.html)], accessed February 16, 2021. For a list of his known buildings, see Hill, Robert G., 2009, "Browne, John James," *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada*, [<http://www.dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1677>], accessed February 16, 2021.
  25. "Montreal Fire Department," *Canadian Illustrated News*, December 12, 1874, vol. 10, no. 24, p. 376-377; and "Stations des pompiers, Montréal," *L'Opinion publique*, December 17, 1874, vol. 5, no. 51, p. 618-619.
  26. *Canadian Illustrated News*, December 12, 1874, vol. 10, no. 24, p. 375. The Babcock Company of Chicago was a leader in the manufacture of fire extinguishing engines and devices. Their Babcock chemical engine consisted of a large cylinder containing carbonic acid gas, mounted on wheels, providing an alternative to the use of water. A "Skinner ladder" was an early form of aerial extension ladder, allowing access to upper floors (see Redfern, "The Montreal Fire Department in the Nineteenth Century," *op. cit.*, p. 83). The very brief notice in *L'Opinion publique* (December 17, 1874, p. 616) mentions the names of the three men, but provides no other details of their accomplishments.
  27. Stations 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9 housed three "fire guardians," and the other stations four. See *Mackay's Montreal Directory, for 1867-68*, *op. cit.*, p. 452.
  28. *Montreal Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 18, 1866, p. 1.
  29. "Molsons Bank, Montreal," *Montreal Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 3, 1864, p. 2. A subsequent report on new buildings in the city, published by the newspaper in the following year, commented that the structure "reflects much credit upon the taste and skill of the architects" ("New Buildings," *id.*, December 21, 1865, p. 1).
  30. "Church at Cote St. Paul," *Montreal Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 8, 1864, p. 2. Much the same description is again provided in the *Herald's* December 1865 general report on new buildings (*id.*, December 21, 1865, p. 1). For the use of the Gothic Revival style for ecclesiastical architecture in both the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities in Montréal, see Noppen, Luc, 2020, "Adolphe Lévêque and the Influence of A.W.N. Pugin on the Architecture of the Roman Catholic Church in Lower Canada," in Jessica Mace (ed.), *A Medieval Legacy. The Ongoing Life of Forms in the Built Environment: Essays in Honour of Malcolm Thurlby*, Montréal, Patrimonium, p. 263-296.
  31. Borthwick, *Montreal, its History*, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
  32. This collection of photographs was donated to the McCord Museum in Montréal in December 2019, and is currently in the process of being accessioned and catalogued. I am very grateful to the late Peter Smeaton for sharing images from the family archive prior to the transfer.
  33. *Montreal Directory, for 1873-74*, *op. cit.*, p. 224, 474. The station itself is listed at 154 Wellington, along with the names of three resident firemen: Huddell Samuel, Mangen Thomas, and Donohue Thomas.
  34. The placement of clocks on the towers of public buildings dates back to the European Middle Ages. The clock on the market tower of Kingston City Hall (1844), designed by George Browne, provides an obvious precedent. This was destroyed when the tower burned in 1865, and a new clock was subsequently placed on the main cupola.
  35. The *Montreal Directory, for 1873-74*, p. 110, provides additional details for each entrance. The police station (no. 47 Craig) was under the command of Sergeant Joseph Riché, and the fire station (at no. 51) housed a guardian (Adolphe Godin), his assistant (Frederick Haine), and three firemen (Moise Aumond, Alfred Daunais, and Edward Brennan). The central doorway (no. 49) gave access to Godin's private apartment, presumably via a staircase leading to one of the upper floors.
  36. It should be noted that as far as can be observed from the images published in the *Canadian Illustrated News* and *L'Opinion publique*, Fire Station no. 6 was in every respect identical to Station no. 8. However, this cannot be said of stations 2 and 3. While both had a single and apparently identical tower, the surviving portion of Station no. 2 on Rue Saint-Gabriel indicates that it was a much wider structure (fig. 5), although unfortunately its full extent is not perceptible in the view chosen for the published prints. This increased size was presumably due to the fact that this building housed not only a detachment of firemen but also the associated "Salvage Corps," both listed at no. 40, as well as the residence of William McRobie, captain of the Corps, at no. 42: see *Montreal Directory, for 1873-74*, p. 190. Otherwise, however, the architectural "vocabulary" used in the design is precisely the same.
  37. "Rokeby," on Sherbrooke Street West near the corner of Mountain, was constructed in the early 1870s and demolished in 1924. It is now known only from photographs.
  38. For the problems inherent in attempts to define that term, see Kornwolf, James D., 1975, "High Victorian Gothic; Or, the Dilemma of Style in Modern Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 34, p. 37-47.
  39. Among the earliest Gothic Revival churches in Canada was Montréal's Notre-Dame basilica

- (1824), but the High Victorian Gothic became particularly associated with the Church of England (Anglican), for example the same city's Christ Church Cathedral (1857-1859). The latter was designed by Frank Wills, and completed posthumously following his death. Wills had previously been responsible for Christ Church Cathedral in Fredericton (1846-1853). See: Hill, Robert G., 2009, "Wills, Frank," *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada*, [<http://www.dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1284>], accessed February 16, 2021; and Thurlby, Malcolm, 2015, "Bishop John Medley (1804-1892), Frank Wills (1822-1857), and the designs of Christ Church Cathedral and St. Anne's Chapel of Ease, Fredericton, New Brunswick, with some elementary remarks on the impact of Bishop John Medley and Frank Wills on the arrangements of Anglican churches in New Brunswick," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada*, vol. 40, no. 1, p. 31-57.
40. Crook, J. Mordaunt, 1987, *The Dilemma of Style: Architectural Ideas from the Picturesque to the Post-Modern*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 13.
41. *Id.*, p. 33-34.
42. Browne was not the first to adopt this solution. For example, it can also be found in some contemporary or slightly earlier fire stations in Boston, including the station built in 1866 at 127 Mt. Vernon Street in that city's Beacon Hill district, which also features a mansard roof with dormer windows. See: [<https://bostonfirehistory.org/firehouses/former-firehouses-extant/engine-10-127-mt-vernon-st-beacon-hill/>], accessed February 16, 2021. There is no evidence that he had direct knowledge of such developments elsewhere, but it is certainly plausible.
43. For an overview of its origins and development: Crook, *The Dilemma of Style*, *op. cit.*, p. 13-41. For Price, see Watkins, Charles and Ben Cowell, 2012, *Uvedale Price (1747-1829): Deconstructing the Picturesque*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press.
44. Crook, *id.*, p. 14.
45. Wright, Janet, 1984, *Architecture of the Picturesque in Canada*, Ottawa, Parks Canada, p. 5.
46. Meeks, Carroll L.V., 1950, "Picturesque Eclecticism," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 32, p. 226-235.
47. Wright, *Architecture of the Picturesque in Canada*, p. 31.
48. *Id.*, p. 106-108. See also: McKendry, Jennifer, 1992, "'A Residence Fit for Any Gentleman in the Country': Three Kingston Villas by George Browne," *RACAR*, vol. 19, p. 68-78.
49. This aspect of "*genius loci*" is stressed by Nikolaus Pevsner in his essay "In Defence of the Picturesque," first published in the *Architectural Review* in April 1954, and since 2012 additionally available online: [<https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/nikolaus-pevsner-in-defence-of-the-picturesque>], accessed February 16, 2021.
50. See: [[https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101214385-woolwich-fire-station-woolwich-riverside-ward#.X3s\\_a5NKg3o](https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101214385-woolwich-fire-station-woolwich-riverside-ward#.X3s_a5NKg3o)], accessed February 16, 2021.