

# No. 62 HILL STREET

A Rich Heritage Rejuvenated



## 2002 AWARD

**Owner:**  
*Singapore Civil Defence Force*

**Architect:**  
*PWD Consultants Pte Ltd*

**Engineer:**  
*PWD Consultants Pte Ltd*

**Contractor:**  
*Wee Wah Maintenance Pte Ltd*

This project involved the restoration of the Central Fire Station, a gazetted national monument, the retention of the Annexe Block and the construction of a new wing that respected the character and scale of the monument.

The Central Fire Station is the oldest functioning fire station in Singapore. Its Main Block, with its distinctive rusticated red brick and plaster banded façade, arched doorways and look-out tower, was built in 1908 in the “Edwardian England” architectural style. Its structural core of British steel I-beams was clad in bricks imported from the United Kingdom. In 1926, a replicate of the Main Block in reinforced concrete was added. An Annexe Block was built at the entrance gate in 1936. Over the years, several modern additions compared to the original design, such as the pitched roof over the 1926 addition and lean-to roofs at the rooftop, were made. The buildings were physically inconsistent in design.

Prior to restoration, extensive research was carried out to ascertain the original design of the monument. Archival drawings, photographic and pictorial records were referred to. During restoration, the 3-R principle - maximum retention, sensitive restoration and careful repair



*Old fire station rejuvenated*

- was observed. Priority was also given to retain the inherent spirit, spatial quality and fabric of the monument.

The existing firefighters’ quarters which were no longer required on site, were demolished. All additions and alterations to the buildings were removed. The monument was restored and upgraded

to meet its modern needs as a fire station with a part of it turned into a fire museum. The 1936 Annexe Block, which formed the gateway to the Central Fire Station, was kept. Next to the Annex Block, the 3-metre high boundary walls, which block the view into the station, were removed and fencing of design similar to the entrance gate was put up.

Layers of paint were removed from the façade bricks and copper roof. Bricks from the boundary walls were used to replace broken ones on the Main Block and its addition. Plaster mouldings such as the delicate Corinthian column capitals and truncated pyramidal balusters were carefully repaired. Original windows were reinstated with fire doors and cast iron spiral staircases were restored to their original condition.

The result is the rejuvenation and reinvention of an old fire station into a modern fire station with a rich heritage value.



*Pedimented rusticated façade and copper domes*



*Architectural elements captured through special lighting*



*Circular columns with decorative capitals and base*



*Timber framed doors with glass infill*



*Side external façade restored to original*



*Rusticated red brick and plaster banded façade restored*



*Spiral staircase with wrought iron handrail and balustrade*



*Original arched timber door restored*



*Exhibits within the fire museum*



## A NATIONAL MONUMENT

Built in 1908 and gazetted as a National Monument in 1998 by the Preservation of Monuments Board, Central Fire Station is the oldest functioning fire station in Singapore. Strategically positioned in the city, it provides fire fighting, ambulance and rescue coverage for the Central District.



## HISTORY

Central Fire Station comprised buildings and extensions, which were built over many stages and at different periods. The oldest block with its distinctive rusticated red brick and plaster banded façade, arched doorways and look-out tower was built in 1908. The architect was William Ferguson and it was executed in the "Edwardian England" architectural style, which was popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The structural core was British steel I-beams, and imported bricks from the UK "cladded" the steel skeleton on the outside. The utilitarian-looking quarters hidden from the street by the main façade were built for the firemen to live in.

In 1926, Assistant Architect of the Municipal Council, D.C. Rae was responsible for designing the addition to the Main Block. He did a splendid job of replicating the design intent of original architect W. Ferguson, such that most people could not tell that the 2 blocks were built 18 years apart. This linear extension, while similar to the original 1908 block on the outside, its structural scheme was built on reinforced concrete instead of steel.

In 1936, an annex block was built at the entrance gate, using modern architectural language, constructed of load bearing facing bricks and concrete floors being expressed on the exterior as cantilevered fins skirting round the building. Whilst modern in its expression, it blended well with the main block and served to frame the main gate entrance well. This corner has since become a familiar vista at the junction of Hill Street and Coleman Street.

Over the years, numerous extensions were added to the fire station's compounds. Unfortunately, these extensions were insensitive to the original architecture. Metal roofed structures were added on the existing roof of the 1908 and 1926 main blocks. On the ground level, a huge metal shed also straddled at the foot of the watch tower and the single-men dormitory.

