

Alexander McCarter Residence and Contractor Office #1

25-2 Street. S.E. *Historic Address: 825 Main* Lot 25' of 4, all 5 Block 52, Plan 61685 Construction Date: **1912**
Permit: #372 July 24, 1912, Brick residence 28'x33', estimated cost \$6000 Architect/builder: A. McCarter

Alexander McCarter was born on Dec. 20, 1872 at Nottawasaga (Orillia/Simcoe), Ontario, the eldest of 10 children of Irish born David McCarter and his Scottish born wife, Margaret. There he received his training as a builder. By 1901, he had relocated to Galt (Waterloo), Ontario and set up a contracting business. While in Waterloo, he met music teacher Agnes J. Jones, the daughter of English parents Edmund, a shoemaker and Emma Jones. Alexander and Agnes married in Galt in 1902.

A year later the McCarter's moved west, first coming to Indian Head, SK; and in 1904, to Medicine Hat. In 1906, daughter Florence was born. For several years, Alex was employed as a foreman for A. P Burns.

His skill as a builder was recognized when in the Dec. 19, 1907 issue of the Medicine Hat News, his own home, located at 112 Toronto St. (800 block of 3 St. today) was featured in a "City of Homes" article. The 2 ½ storey frame house with bay window, porch and mansard roof is gone.

In 1910, McCarter branched out for himself, purchasing 20 lots at \$110/lot from land developer F.O. Sissons in the new Herald Subdivision. As a contractor, he was also involved in commercial structures in the downtown core, none of which have survived.



M.H News. Apr. 12, 1906

Alex had a strong interest in gardening and was well-known for his prize tomatoes. In 1912, His love of gardening prompted the sponsorship of a contest for child gardeners with the Medicine Hat Agricultural Assn. He was also a monetary sponsor at the local Fall Fair Exhibitions.

The McCarter's love of nature led to the purchase of a cabin at Elkwater.

In July 1912, mega-land developer E.D. Bennett purchased a large tract of land in newly opened North East Crescent Heights which included all of Plan 4440AH. McCarter acquired two large lots from Bennett in 1913 where he built what became his longest-lived and last office and personal residence. His craftsman style home at 120 – 9 St. NE fits in with the many NECH's Bennett built homes designed by architect Arthur Dickinson.



The area outlined in red is Plan 4440AH, 1912.
The left boundary of map is Division Ave. N. The blue square is the former site of St. Theresa's Academy.

When the building boom ended with the advent of World War I, McCarter's big contracts petered out, as did all other builders' contracts. Adding to this hardship was a failed business arrangement with his younger brother, John D. McCarter. John, a druggist and Alex went into partnership under the name "Depot Drug Store". The Depot Drug Store, a building owned by prominent pharmacist Albert Hughes was only in operation from 1913-1915. In October 1915, the Depot Drug Store went into receivership.

The building, located at 427 North Railway St. still exists.



Unlike many of the big builders, some of whom lost their fortunes, such as E.D. Bennett, Alex survived the downturn in the building profession because of his jack-of-all-trade building skills which included carpentry, masonry and concrete work, and his acceptance of small jobs. In 1913, Alex was one of over 30 local contractors. By 1927, he was one of three.

Failing health led to McCarter's retirement in the mid 1930's. The gardening skills honed by the McCarter's proved useful when Agnes operated "McCarter's Grocery" from their NECH residence from about 1937 to 1941. McCarter passed away on April 30, 1942. He was praised as being a "good husband and father".

Riverside School, 1925

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Daughter Florence McCarter is 2nd L to R, in the back row of 5 students. To her right is teacher Miss Taylor. To her left is future sister-in-law Edith Hargrave. To Miss Taylor's right is future sister-in-law Elaine Hargrave.

Five years later, in 1930, Florence married Thomas "Campbell" McKee Hargrave, the brother of schoolmates Edith and Elaine.

Florence and Campbell had 3 children; John, Rosamund, and Simon Fraser.

Although many of McCarter's homes have disappeared, a selection of existing McCarter homes has been photographed and featured in the "McCarter Photo Gallery of Homes" document.

Heritage Resources Committee
 Prepared by: Sally Sehn, April 1, 2018
 Sources: Esplanade Archives, MH News, Malcolm Sissons,
 Library & Archives Canada