

Medicine Hat Heritage Inventory Sites 2013

Site Name: **COUSINS BLOCK**
Date of Construction: 1911
Address: 317 6 Avenue SE
Original Owner: William Cousins
Architect: William T. Williams
Contractor: Morton Fulton
Neighbourhood: Downtown
Legal: 1491;23;1-3



Description of Historic Place

The Cousins Block is situated mid-block on 6 Avenue SE between 3 and 4 Streets SE in Medicine Hat's downtown commercial core. The two-storey brick commercial building possesses minimal setback from the street and is located adjacent and connected to other commercial buildings. The building is characterized by its stepped parapet with horizontal banding and central arch, quoining, and later added substantial storefront canopy.

Heritage Value of Historic Place

The Cousins Block, built in 1911, is valued as a component of Medicine Hat's pre-First World War downtown development. Medicine Hat's first downtown expansion had started in 1883 with the arrival of the railway. The initial settlement and growth of Medicine Hat was based around the positioning of the railway yard and station, and early commercial buildings were constructed along North and South Railway and adjacent streets. A second wave of downtown development occurred in the pre-First World War period. The Cousins Block represents this later period of economic prosperity during the early 1910s, which extended the downtown commercial core westward. The block's main floor could accommodate two tenants. An initial tenant was the Imperial Bank of Canada, which temporarily occupied one of the units immediately after the Cousins Block was finished. Another early, and long-term, business to occupy one of the Cousins Block's units was the financial brokers and real estate firm of Duggan & Duggan. The

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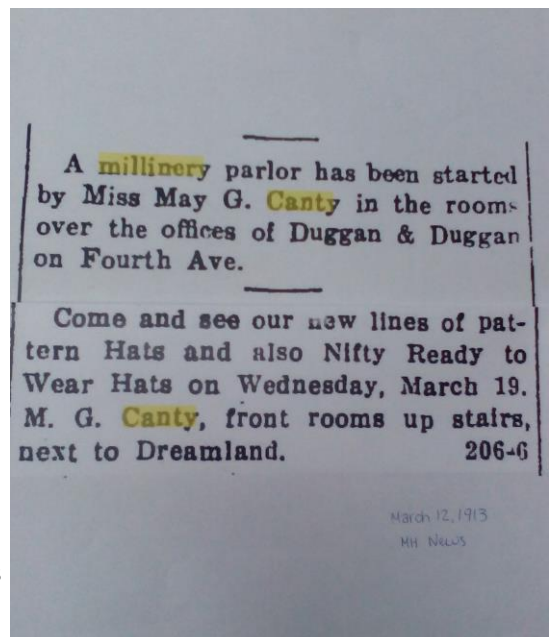
firm previously occupied offices in the block built by William Cousins on 3 Street SE, before relocating in late 1911, to Cousin's newly finished block on 6 Avenue SE. Over its lifetime, the Cousins Block housed a wide range of businesses including an Oil & Stock Exchange, a grocery, a beauty salon, and its most recognized association, a bakery – City Bakery. City Bakery was the longest operating business to occupy the commercial block. Hans-Karl Leupold, who trained as a baker in Germany, and his wife, Martha (nee Meyer) opened City Bakery in 1960. Leupold immigrated to Canada in 1953, settling in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where he met and married Martha. Together they operated Leo's Home Bakery, until they moved to Medicine Hat in 1960. Following their arrival, they opened City Bakery in the Cousins Block, which they operated until 2004.

The Cousins Block is further valued for its connection with early Medicine Hat pioneer William Cousins, who owned and developed the commercial block. William Cousins arrived in Medicine Hat via a 'prairie schooner' in May of 1883 - just prior to the arrival of the railway. Originally from London, Ontario, Cousins travelled west in the early 1880s, settling first in Winnipeg in 1882. Recognizing the potential business opportunity of the burgeoning railway townsite, Cousins took the railway to Regina, purchased merchandise, horses and wagons, and travelled to Medicine Hat entering the then tent town via the South Saskatchewan Valley by way of Porter's Hill. He established his first business, a mercantile store, in a tent in what is now Riverside Park, providing goods and merchandise to railway workers and their families, as well as early settlers. The following year he married Jessie Thornton and settled at 271 First Street. A shrewd businessman, Cousins frequently sought out opportunities to expand his financial position, such as investing in ranching and real estate. He constructed the first "Cousins Block" a two-storey commercial block at present day 666 - 3 Street SE, in 1901. The block was only referred to as the "Cousins Block" for roughly 10 years and was torn down sometime prior to 1955.

William Cousins owned the entire lot that fronted onto 6 Avenue SE on which the extant "Cousins Block" was built in 1911. The lot also included the Dreamland Theatre (1910) and Union Bank (1912). He bought and sold the lot twice during his lifetime making a sizeable profit each time - a practice the astute businessman would repeat with numerous properties during Medicine Hat's early development. Cousins was also a civic-minded man, instrumental in the development of *The Medicine Hat News*, a founder of the Medicine Hat Agricultural Society, co-founder of the Cypress Club, member of the inaugural Hospital Board, member of the Board of Trade, Town Mayor, as well as the first Clerk of the Supreme Court of the North West Territories.



6 Avenue & 3rd Street,
Southeast corner
c. 1912
(Esplanade Archives)



Medicine Hat News
March 12, 1913

MEDICINE HAT DAILY NEWS.

Duggan & Duggan

Real Estate Men of Wide Holdings in this Part of Canada, Believes Soundly
in Medicine Hat

Men who have but very few operations outside of the local territory would naturally hold biased views concerning the opportunities that this city affords. It is, however, reassuring to know that men or organizations who have been in various parts of the country have quite as strong hopes and convictions as those who have been identified for a lifetime with Medicine Hat. Duggan & Duggan, with office on Fourth Avenue, is one of the really concerns that has been interested in other progressive parts of the country. In truth, this company is operating both in this province and in British Columbia, but as an industrial community there is no city in the west with the natural advantages of Medicine Hat and these facts and others Duggan & Duggan believe and exploit.

This concern has been in operation in this city since May, 1911, and even before it had located here it had been apprised of the strides that Medicine Hat was taking and the wonderful future that lay before it. That Duggan & Duggan believed was evident in the fact that the firm had such investments here that when it started in business it had a sound basis for operations in property which it owned itself.

For the twenty months ensuing, the firm has continued this policy and has been a buyer as well as a seller on its own account and is never without considerable holdings of Medicine Hat land.

This concern put on the market Royal Heights, the subdivision to the north, about a mile from the city. Those who know that this will be a good residential property were among the first purchasers and others who were looking for a profitable investment were eager to take hold of lots. There are some six hundred lots in this addition and the sale is still going on, but prices have advanced some fifty per cent. from the original ones, and it is fair to suppose that other advances will take place as the industrial population of Medicine Hat continues to come in here.

A general real estate business is conducted by Duggan & Duggan, so that there is no property in which one



Photo by the Bartlett Studio.

is interested, but what may be considered here and authoritative information will be given concerning present and past values and the reasons why development will take place here and the value of property rise. Inside business property is listed and handled extensively by this firm and all the high class residential property is good for building purposes or for home seekers has been taken in some quantities by this firm or listed for others.

Loans are handled and insurance placed, so that there is no accommodation the realty owner may desire but what can be secured through this house as quickly as through any other institution. Duggan & Duggan is the sole representative of the Royal Trust Co. and has the district agency for the Imperial Life Insurance Co. Several fire insurance companies are represented so that the accumulation of property is not only encouraged by this concern, but its protection and legitimate extension is also exploited.

H. O. Duggan has been the member of the firm who has been identified with the Medicine Hat business. J. J. Duggan is in Nanton, Alberta, where the organization does an immense business in farm lands. It has offices in Kelowna, B. C., where fruit lands are a specialty and one in Edmonton where D. M. Duggan is located.

The firm in these extended areas have studied property and conditions in this last best Great West and every investment it takes hold of itself and every one that it advises its clients, has been investigated and is according to the judgment of the house a sound and productive one.

H. O. Duggan, in his own efforts, as well as the representative of the firm, has been trustworthy and reliable in all his dealings. The fairness and enterprise of the concern have been realized by the public so that the increasing business of the Medicine Hat house has been testimony to the confidence and regard of the public. The concern stands among the really organizations of high repute in this city and a general esteem is held for Mr. Duggan.

Medicine Hat Daily News article February 1912 (Esplanade Archives)

The Cousins Block holds further value as a representation of Medicine Hat's Edwardian era Classical Revival-style architecture. Designed by prominent local architect William T. Williams and built by M. Fulkan for \$5,000, the two-storey brick building reflects many of the characteristics of this architectural style, including its full-height storefront with wood cornice, stepped parapet, brick cornice with central arch, and brick quoining. The foundation of this architectural style is rooted in the period's increased understanding of Greek and Roman building construction, and the style is frequently found in buildings dating to the first decades of the 20th century.

Character-Defining Elements

The key elements that define the heritage character of Cousins Block include but are not limited to its:

- location mid-block on the west side of 6th Avenue SE in the commercial core of Medicine Hat, with minimal set back from the street;
- proximity to other commercial blocks of a similar age and construction;
- form, scale, and massing as expressed by its: two-storey height, rectangular form, flat roof with stepped parapet;
- masonry construction including: concrete foundation, pressed red brick with tooled grey mortar joints;
- Classical Revival-style details such as: simplicity of form; stepped parapet capped with parged brick; quoining; second storey cornice with arched banding; wood storefront cornice; and
- fenestration including the original second storey window openings.

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Additional Images



Block built by William Cousins, 1911 (Esplanade Archives).



Sixth Street SE, circa 1962 (Esplanade Archives).

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Statement of Integrity

Property Name & Address	Cousins Block 317 6 Avenue SE
Value Summary	<p>This site is significant because...</p> <p>Theme/Activity/Cultural Practice/ Event <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No The Cousins Block, built in 1911, is valued as a component of a period of downtown Medicine Hat development occurring prior to the First World War, which built upon early periods of economic growth (Theme Value - City Development in Medicine Hat).</p> <p>Institution/Person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No The Cousins Block is further valued for its connection with early Medicine Hat pioneer William Cousins. A shrewd businessman and civic leader, Cousins significantly shaped the development of Medicine Hat (Theme Value – Oasis in the Prairies: Settling Medicine Hat).</p> <p>Design/Style/Construction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No The Cousins Block is significant as a representation of Medicine Hat’s Edwardian era Classical Revival-style architecture, design by prominent local architect William T. Williams (Theme Value – Built in Medicine Hat).</p> <p>Information Potential <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Landmark/Symbolic Value <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p>
Period of Significance	1906 to 1913 Pre-First World War, Age of Optimism
Chronology of Alterations	Post 1950s Storefront reconfiguration Storefront canopy Rear addition 2012/13 Front façade painted
Aspects of Integrity	<p>Location <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The location of the building remains unchanged at 317 6 Avenue SE.</p> <p>Design <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The design of the building has not been altered overall, however the storefront has been reconfigured and original windows replaced.</p> <p>Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The building continues to be situated on a tree-lined street in Medicine Hat’s historic commercial core.</p> <p>Materials <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The building’s brick exterior was painted circa 2012/2013.</p> <p>Workmanship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The high quality of the workmanship of the building is evident in the building’s current condition.</p> <p>Feeling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The building continues to convey a strong historic sense.</p>

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	<p>Association <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The building maintains its commercial association.</p>
<p>Statement of Integrity</p>	<p>The <u>Cousins Block</u> maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance/heritage value.</p> <p>The Cousins Block possesses a fair degree of architectural integrity with elements of its original form still intact. The original red brick exterior is in good condition; however, the brick has been painted. The visible unpainted original brick does not exhibit signs of spalling or mortar loss. The storefront has been reconfigured and the original windows and door replaced. The later added storefront canopy obscures the original wood and tin storefront cornice. The second storey of the front façade resembles its original Edwardian era design. The windows of the second storey have been replaced; however, the openings are intact. The original window openings on the north side of the building have been filled in. The stepped parapet with its arched banding is intact and in good condition. A one-storey addition was placed on the rear of the building post-1955, and the interior of the building has been extensively renovated. The building's rear courtyard exhibits signs of pigeons roosting and steps should be taken to prevent the birds continuing to occupy this space and potentially attracting other pests.</p>

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	Site Number	Category C
	Community District Downtown	
	Designation	

Site Name(s): Cousins Block			
Municipal Address: 317 6 th Avenue SE		Date of Construction:	1911
Consultant(s): Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.		Evaluation Date:	Y 13 M 05 D 17
Heritage Committee: Heritage Resource Committee			
Heritage Planner: Chris Reddy			
			TOTAL
			50

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P	(H) SCORE
H.1 Associations/Patterns		X				20
H.2 Age		X				10
Comments: H.1 The Cousins Block is valued as a component of a period of downtown Medicine Hat development occurring prior to the First World War. H.2 Constructed in 1911.						30

Architecture (A)	E	VG	G	F	P	(A) SCORE
A.1 Style/Type/Design			X			10
A.2 Designer/Builder		X				10
A.3 Construction Technology			X			5
A.4 Interior Details					X	0
A.5 Alterations				X		-20
Comments: A.1 The Cousins Block is a significant representation of Medicine Hat Edwardian era Classical Revival-style architecture. A.2 Architect – William T. Williams, Contractor – Morton Fulton A.3 Building constructed using brick. A.4 Original interior elements and plan no longer evident. A.5 Brick exterior has been painted, original storefront reconfigured, and second storey windows replaced.						5

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P	(C) SCORE
C.1 Landmark/Character		X				10
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape			X			5
Comments: C.1 The commercial style architecture makes the building readily identifiable. C.2 The building is a component of a grouping of early commercial buildings in Medicine Hat's historic commercial downtown.						15