

Site Name: **RANCHMEN MOTEL SIGN**
Date of Construction: 1964
Address: 533 16th Street SW
Original Owners: Russell and Mary Papoe
Architect: Doug Winton from Neon Products (Calgary Office)
Contractor: Neon Products
Neighbourhood:
Legal: 657HK;x;2-4
Historic Legal:
ATS:



Description of Historic Place

The Ranchmen Motel Sign is situated on the built on east side of a large triangular property, west of the Trans Canada Highway at the corner of 16th Street, Bomford Crescent, and 17th Street SW in the City of Medicine Hat, the Ranchmen Motel Sign is a prominent metal figurine of a cartoon-like cowboy holding a rope next to tapered column with three signs neon and rotating signs. The cowboy is painted and is secured on a board formed concrete base and is surrounded on the south side by a rock wall and gardens. The sign is situated on the east side of the Ranchmen Motel property in front of and to the north of the motel's office.

Heritage Value of Historic Place

The Ranchmen Motel sign, erected in 1964, is highly valued as a vestige of a grouping of mid century signs built in the 1950s to 1960s along the Trans Canada Highway through Medicine Hat. During this era, motels, restaurants, and commercial buildings were generally identified by oversized and often playful neon and painted signs, which served as beacons and advertisements for automobiles passing by on the highway. Many of these signs have been removed or destroyed thus this sign is an important reminder of the 'golden age' of highway signs that once dominated the highway. The cowboy sign was conceived and leased by first owners, Russell and Mary Papoe, who owned the Ranchmen Motel from 1959 to 1974.

Russell worked at the Dominion Fruit Company in Medicine Hat from 1945, until he was let go in 1959. He and Mary purchased the property and built the Ranchmen Motel that same year as a 15-unit hotel with an office and residence at the south side of the property. Russell was actively involved in several grassroots tourism associations to help establish Medicine Hat as tourist destination, including the Medicine Hat Tourist Association, started in 1959, and the Medicine Hat Motel Association established in 1961. The local tourist centre, known as the Jaycee Tourist Centre, situated along the Trans Canada Highway, proclaimed a drastic increase in tourism from the United States from a few hundred at the beginning of the 1950s to over 15,000 tourists by the end of the decade. Russell was also an active gardener and constructed a stone wall and attractive gardens around the south side of the sign.

The Ranchmen Motel sign is further significant for its design as an excellent, highly intact, and unique example of a mid century sign in Medicine Hat. The sign replaced the original 'Ranchmen Motel' sign, a simple, less elaborate sign. The sign was designed and manufactured by Neon Products, established as Neon Products of Western Canada Ltd. in 1928 with offices in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg; one of the leading sign specialists in Canada. The company was acquired by Jim Pattison, in 1968, with the name changed to Pattison Sign Group in 2002. Doug Winton, a 40-year employee of Neon Products, worked with Russell and their daughter Audrey to design the sign, conceived on a piece of wallpaper from one of the motel's rooms. The cowboy portion of the sign was built in the Edmonton warehouse using a lock-form system consisting of individual metal plates manufactured on a Pittsburgh machine. The metal panels were finished with a mallet and pieced together into three sections, which were shipped separately to Medicine Hat. The metal was acquired from Second World War planes and ships, which was readily available during this time. Smaller panels situated strategically on the sign, were made openable so as to access the interior electrode system for the neon and lighting. The newly installed sign was leased to the Papoes and maintained by Neon Products, a common practice during the heyday of roadway signs. The sign has maintained much of its original form and construction.

The Ranchmen Motel Sign is also valued as a landmark in the City of Medicine Hat for its unique mid century design and its visibility from the Trans Canada Highway.

Character-Defining Elements

The key elements that define the heritage character of the Ranchmen Motel Sign include, but are not limited to its:

- location on the east side of the Ranchmen Motel property on the corner of 16th Street, Bomford Crescent and 17th Street SW;
- landscape elements such as coursed stone wall and gardens surrounding the sign on south side;
- form, scale, and massing as expressed by its: large metal box in the figure of a painted cowboy mirrored on north and south facades supported by a cast iron column next to and connected to a cast iron column with three stacked and spaced signs; metal fence at base of sign;
- mid century sign manufacturing techniques such as: board formed concrete base; metal box of figurine made up of metal plates riveted on faces of plates to steel substructure; access panels on face of sign to access electrodes; adjacent cast iron column with three signs: upper sign, marked with 'Motel' sign rotates; middle sign marked with 'Ranchmen No Vacancy' is embellished with neon tubing; lower sign stating 'Fridge, Microwave, Coffee & Dataport in all rooms. Kitchen Units'" is backlit; and
- additional elements such as baked enamel Neon Products logo on south side of sign.

Additional Images



Surrounding rock walls and board formed concrete base, 2014 (DLA)



West side of sign showing depth of figurine, 2014 (DLA)



Base of figurine, south side, showing gardens, June 2014 (DLA)



Attachment juncture of cowboy to cast iron column and small access panel on bottom right side of photo, June 2014 (DLA)



Upper sign that rotates, June 2014 (DLA)



Close up of neon on 'Ranchmen No Vacancy sign; Neon Products logo on bottom right of photo (painted over), June 2014 (DLA)



Lower sign (Backlit), June 2014 (DLA)



Base of cowboy showing cast iron column, June 2014 (DLA)



Early photo of Ranchland Motel Sign, circa 1960s (Esplanade Archives, 0672.0065)

MEDICINE HAT, Alberta, Canada

RANCHMEN MOTEL

On Trans Canada Highway S.W.
Tel. (403) 527-2263



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Ranchmen Motel grounds, circa 1960s (Courtesy of Joe Fartak)



Papoe-Fuenning family in front of sign, 1965 (Courtesy of Robert Fuenning)




Landscaping surrounding sign, 1965 (Courtesy of Robert Fuenning)

Statement of Integrity

Property Name & Address	Ranchman Motel Sign 533 16 th Street SW
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 Ranchmen Motel sign, erected in 1964, is highly valued as a vestige of a grouping of mid century signs built in the 1950s to 1960s along the Trans Canada Highway through Medicine Hat. (Theme Value – Transportation and Communication Crossroads).</p> <p>Institution/Person <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Design/Style/Construction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No The Ranchmen Motel sign is further significant for its design as an excellent, highly intact, and unique example of a mid century sign in Medicine Hat.</p> <p>Information Potential <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Landmark/Symbolic Value <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No The Ranchmen Motel Sign is also valued as a landmark in the City of Medicine Hat for its unique mid century design and its visibility from the Trans Canada Highway.</p>
Period of Significance	1957-1982 - Modern
Chronology of Alterations	1958 Construction of Ranchmen Motel 1959 Residence and office constructed 1964 Council approves sign and 6 foot high fence at motel to replace original sign 1967 8-room addition to motel 1976 20-unit addition designed by Needham Architects Ltd 2001 Addition and renovations due to explosion at motel
Aspects of Integrity	<p>Location <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The location of the Ranchmen Motel Sign has not changed.</p> <p>Design <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable Form, scale, and massing has remained the same; however, the manner and colour in which the sign is painted has changed from the original</p> <p>Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The sign is still associated with the Ranchmen Motel and the rock wall and gardens surrounding the sign.</p> <p>Materials <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The materiality of the sign is very original and very little has been changed apart from the neon and paint.</p> <p>Workmanship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The workmanship of the sign is excellent.</p>

	<p>Feeling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The sign continues to portray a strong mid century feel.</p> <p>Association <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The sign is still associated with the Ranchmen Motel</p>
<p>Statement of Integrity</p>	<p>The <u>Ranchmen Motel Sign</u> maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance/heritage value.</p> <p>The Ranchmen Motel Sign has retained its original form, scale, and massing and appears to have maintained good connections to the concrete base. The sign also does not appear to be leaning and contains all of the components from its original design. The three signs attached to the cast iron column are original. However, the bottom sign has been moved down substantially. It was originally attached to the cross-beam connecting the cowboy to the column. This likely occurred when the original sandwich board sign was replaced with a backlit sign. Likely some time in the 1980s. The middle neon sign still functions but the neon has been replaced with new. The upper sign originally rotated; however, this feature no longer works and requires repair. The most drastic change to the sign is the quality and condition of the painted cowboy. The painted elements of the cowboy are far less detailed and the paint is fading. It is recommended to do a colour testing on the sign to determine the original colour palette and restore the painted elements.</p> <p>A metal panel is missing on the north side of the sign at the base and should be replaced with new to protect from bird infestation and damage. In repainting, the Neon Products logo should have paint removed so it is exposed.</p> <p>Some plates are bent while others are exhibiting rust at the seams. This should be monitored to ensure that no permanent damage occurs to the sign.</p>

	Site Number	Category B
	Community District	
	Designation	

Site Name(s): Ranchmen Motel Sign			
Municipal Address: 533 16 Street NW		Date of Construction:	1964
Consultant(s): Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.		Evaluation Date:	Y 14 M 06 D 09
Heritage Committee: Heritage Resource Committee			
Heritage Planner: Chris Reddy			
			TOTAL
			68

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P		(H) SCORE
H.1 Associations/Patterns		X				20	23
H.2 Age				X		3	
Comments: H.1 The Ranchmen Motel sign is a vestige of a grouping of mid century signs built in the 1950s to 1960s along the Trans Canada Highway through Medicine Hat. H.2 Erected I n1964							

Architecture (A)	E	VG	G	F	P	(A) SCORE
A.1 Style/Type/Design		X				20
A.2 Designer/Builder			X			5
A.3 Construction Technology		X				10
A.4 Interior Details						N/A
A.5 Alterations			X			-10
Comments:						
A.1 The Ranchmen Motel sign excellent design and condition, make it a unique example of a mid century sign in Medicine Hat.						
A.2 The sign was designed and manufactured by Neon Products.						
A.3 The cowboy portion of the sign was built using a lock-form system consisting of individual metal plates manufactured on a Pittsburgh machine. The metal panels were finished with a mallet and pieced together into three sections. The metal was acquired from Second World War planes and ships.						
A.4 Not applicable						
A.5. Portions of the sign have been adjusted in their placement over time. The most notable is the quality of workmanship of the paint applied to the cowboy. The most recent paint application lacks the details that existed in the original paint application.						

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P		(C) SCORE
C.1 Landmark/Character	X					15	20
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape		X				10	
Comments: C.1 The Ranchmen Motel Sign is a landmark in the City of Medicine Hat and highly visible from the Trans Canada Highway. C.2 The Ranchmen Motel Sign contributes to the unique Streetscape of the Trans Canada Highway.							