

# Turpin Block



Date of Construction	1907
Address	644 - 2 (Main) Street SE
Original Owner	Turpin Brothers
Architect	William T. Williams
Contractor	Robert E. Walton
Neighbourhood	Downtown
Legal	1491;6;26

## Description of Historic Place

The Turpin Block is a two-storey red brick building situated mid-block between South Railway Street and 6th Street SE on the north side of 2nd Street SE, adjacent to a car park downtown in the City of Medicine Hat. The commercial building is identifiable by its elegant Classical Revival-style detailing. The building's second storey possesses two oeil-de-boeuf windows on either side of a projecting tripartite bay window with overhanging canopy. The substantial moulded cornice with modillions is accentuated by brackets and a moulded frieze. The building's sign band is found under a central peaked parapet. The first floor possesses a commercial storefront with full-height windows and off-centre entry.

## Heritage Value of Historic Place

The Turpin Block, built in 1907, is significant as a component of a grouping of early commercial buildings in Medicine Hat's downtown core. It was constructed during the early stage of the city's Edwardian boom period, during which

time the city built upon earlier development activities that included real estate speculation, resource exploitation, establishment of manufacturing companies, and railway expansion. The Turpin Block's high quality and intricately detailed architecture reflects the economic prosperity of the period. The ground floor originally housed the Turpin brothers' men's furnishings business, while the seven rooms of the upper floor were rented as office space. The high-value architecture of the Turpin Block conveys a strong sense of economic prosperity and attracted affluent tenants such as dentists, the Medicine Hat School District, and barristers. The Turpin brothers were able to purchase the lot and erect the two-storey brick commercial building within a few years of establishing their men's business in Medicine Hat.

The Turpin Block is further valued as an exceptional early example of the Classical Revival-style in the commercial context in Medicine Hat. The Turpin Block was designed by prominent Medicine Hat architect William T. Williams, and was one of the first documented

buildings designed by Williams following his arrival in Medicine Hat from Detroit, Michigan, in 1905. Built by local contractor Robert E. Walton, using locally manufactured brick, the building possesses quintessential Classical Revival-style elements such as its full-height storefront with moulded storefront style cornice, high-quality red brick with quoining on the second-storey, oeil-de-boeuf windows, a projecting central bay window with moulded canopy and dentils, elegant moulded roof cornice with carved brackets and dentils, and parapet with a central peak. Beneath the parapet peak is a prominent sign band, which reads "Turpin Block." Fuelled by an improved understanding of ancient Greek and Roman buildings through the study of archaeology, Classical Revival-style buildings were prominent during the Edwardian era as they projected a sense of permanency and security and possessed an elegant form that expressed good taste. The building was a component of the provincial Main Street Program and, although modern materials have been used in its restoration, the building's front façade effectively resembles its original configuration.

The Turpin Block is valued as a landmark in the downtown core for its high style Edwardian era architecture, its unique detailing, and prominent position on 2nd Street SE.

The Turpin Block (centre) in the early 1910s. The adjoining Stewart & Tweed Block, on the right, was destroyed by fire in December 1999



## Character-Defining Elements - Turpin Block (644 - 2 Street SE)



- Location mid-block, adjacent to a vacant lot on the north side of 2nd Street SE between South Railway Street and 6th Street SE, with minimal set back from the street

- Connection with surrounding commercial buildings of a similar age and construction in Medicine Hat's downtown core



- Form, scale, and massing as expressed by its: two-storey height, rectangular plan, flat roof with peaked parapet

- Masonry construction including: concrete foundation, red pressed brick with grey mortar joints; and



- Classical Revival architectural details such as: storefront at main level and second storey access on front façade





## Statement of Integrity - Turpin Block (644 - 2 Street SE)

## Applicable Significance Criteria

*This site is significant because...*

**Theme / Activity / Cultural Practice / Event** ☒ Yes ☐ No

-The Turpin Block, built in 1907, is significant as a component of a grouping of early commercial buildings in Medicine Hat's downtown core. Constructed during the early stage of the city's Edwardian boom the Turpin Block reflects the economic prosperity of the time (**Theme Value – City Development in Medicine Hat**).

**Institution / Person** ☐ Yes ☒ No

**Design / Style / Construction** ☒ Yes ☐ No

-The Turpin Block is further valued for its architectural style and distinctive, elegant detailing. Designed by William T. Williams, the building's Classical Revival style projects a sense of security and permanency, characteristics frequently exhibited by Edwardian era buildings (**Theme Value – Built in Medicine Hat**).

**Information Potential** ☐ Yes ☒ No

**Landmark / Symbolic Value** ☒ Yes ☐ No

-The Turpin Block is further valued as a landmark in Medicine Hat's downtown commercial core (**Landmark Value**).

## Period of Significance

1906 to 1913 Pre- First World War, Age of Optimism

## Chronology of Alterations

Post 1950s - Storefront altered  
1988-1991 - Main Street Program  
2013 - Storefront reconfigured to suit new business

## Aspects of Integrity

**LOCATION** ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The location of the building on 2nd Street SE has not changed.

**DESIGN** ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The fabric of the building on the second storey has been rehabilitated with the original design maintained.

**ENVIRONMENT** ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The building continues to be situated in the city's historic commercial core.

**MATERIALS** ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The authentic materials of the building have been altered at the storefront level.

**WORKMANSHIP** ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The high quality of workmanship of the building is evident in its current condition.

**FEELING** ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The feeling of the building has been maintained and continues to contribute to the commercial streetscape.

**ASSOCIATION** ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The association of the building has been maintained with that of surrounding historic commercial buildings.

## Statement of Integrity

*Turpin Block maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance / heritage value.*

The Turpin Block possesses a strong historic aesthetic. The building was restored as part of Alberta's Main Street Program and has had elements reinstated to match its original form, particularly on the second storey. Overall, the placement of the details is correct; however, the scale and form of some elements is incorrect, resulting in an over exaggeration of these elements. The storefront has been reconfigured and replaced; however, the access to the second floor remains in its original position. The brick exterior is in good condition and exhibits minimal evidence of mortar loss or cracking. The building has been well maintained and a commercial business continues to operate on the ground floor with residence above.

## Additional Images - Turpin Block (644 - 2 Street SE)

Historical architectural elements on the front facade of the Turpin Block were recreated as part of Alberta's Main Street Program in the late 1980s - early 1990s


Donald Luxton & Associates  
October 2013



The east facade of the Turpin Block, showing the one-storey rear addition, and large mural painted by local artist George Leask in 2013

Donald Luxton & Associates  
June 2013

## Heritage Evaluation Form - Turpin Block (644 - 2 Street SE)

 <b>Medicine Hat</b> <b>The Gas City</b> <b>Heritage Evaluation Form</b>	Site Number	Category B
	Community District Downtown	
	Designation	

<b>Site Name(s):</b> Turpin Block			
<b>Municipal Address:</b> 644 - 2 Street SE		Date of Construction:	Y 1907
<b>Consultant(s):</b> Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.		Evaluation Date:	Y 13 M 05 D 16
<b>Heritage Committee:</b> Heritage Resource Committee			
<b>Heritage Planner:</b> Chris Reddy			
		<b>Total</b>	
		70	

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P		(H) SCORE
H.1 Associations/Patterns		X				20	30
H.2 Age		X				10	
<b>Comments:</b> H.1 The Turpin Block is significant as a component of a grouping of early commercial buildings in Medicine Hat's downtown core. H.2 Constructed in 1907.							

Architecture (A)	E	VG	G	F	P		(A) SCORE
A.1 Style/Type/Design		X				20	20
A.2 Designer/Builder		X				10	
A.3 Construction Technology		X				10	
A.4 Interior Details					X	0	
A.5 Alterations				X		-20	
<b>Comments:</b> A.1 The Turpin Block is an early exceptional example of the Classical Revival-style in the commercial context in Medicine Hat A.2 Architect – William T. Williams, Contractor – R.E. Walton A.3 Building constructed using red pressed brick with sandstone detailing. A.4 Undetermined interior elements. A.5 Building was component of the Alberta Main Street Program. The original storefront is no longer evident.							

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P		(C) SCORE
C.1 Landmark/Character	X					15	20
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape		X				10	
<b>Comments:</b> C.1 The building is a landmark in the downtown core for its high style Edwardian era architecture, its unique detailing, and prominent siting. C.2 The building's historic aesthetic contributes to the surrounding streetscape.							