

 Medicine Hat The Gas City Heritage Evaluation Form	Site Number	Category A
	Community District Downtown	
	Designation	

Site Name(s): FINLAY BRIDGE			
Municipal Address: Crossing the South Saskatchewan River from 6 th Ave. SE to 2 nd Ave. NE., Medicine Hat		Date of Construction:	Y 1908
Consultant(s): n/a		Evaluation Date:	Y 11 M 07 D 05
Heritage Committee: Heritage Resources Committee			
Heritage Planner: Jeanie Gartly			
		Maximum Total 100	
		83	

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P	(H) SCORE Maximum 40
H.1 Associations/Patterns	X					40
H.2 Age		X				10
Comments: H.1 Finlay Bridge is a traffic and foot bridge crossing the South Saskatchewan River, connecting the north (Riverside) and south side (Downtown) of Medicine Hat. Constructed of steel, concrete, and wood, this 900 foot span, officially opened on May 14, 1908. The 100 th anniversary was celebrated by the City of Medicine Hat May 2008. On April 4, 1908, James Fleming was the first to cross the bridge, with horse and rig. H.2 1908						

Architecture (A)	E	VG	G	F	P	(A) SCORE Maximum 40
A.1 Style/Type/Design		X				20
A.2 Designer/Builder				X		3
A.3 Construction Technology			X			5
A.4 Interior Details						N/A
A.5 Alterations		X				-5
Comments: A.1 Mr. Ainsworth, of the Department of Public Works stated that "this structure will be the largest of its kind in Alberta and certainly one of the most modern in Western Canada" (Medicine Hat News, Dec. 13, 1906). At slightly over 900 feet in length, it was touted as the longest steel traffic bridge in the province. It is a riveted steel construction, with cast-in-place concrete piers and abutments and five spans of curved chord Pratt trusses. A.2 Builder: Joseph A. Carbert (Superintending Engineer) – employed by City of Medicine Hat, McIntyre (Engineer), John Chambers C.E. (Chief Engineer?) mentioned in Medicine Hat News Oct. 11, 1906, but not after. A.3 This is a period example of combination manual and automated construction methods. Large crews were required for the construction, and 30 to 40 teams of horses were used to haul in gravel for the concrete. Steam powered pumps were used to drain the water from the coffer dams used in the making of the piers and a steam powered pile driver was also employed. A.5 Upgraded for preservation and functional purposes in 2009.						

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P	(C) SCORE Maximum 20
C.1 Landmark/Character	X					15
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape	X					15
Comments: C.1 Finlay Bridge officially opened on May 14, 1908 with significant fanfare. Along with hundreds of Medicine Hatters, in attendance were Premier Alexander Rutherford, Honourable William Henry Cushing, Minister of Public Works, and the Honourable William Thomas Finlay. It was at this event that the bridge was officially named Finlay Bridge.						

It was in his role as Minister of Agriculture and MLA for Medicine Hat that W.T. Finlay had his greatest impact. As a mayor and representative in the Territorial Government, Finlay always advocated for his region, and it was on a platform of infrastructure development for southeast Alberta that saw him elected to the first session of the Alberta Legislature. During this first session he advocated for the construction of the \$140,000 bridge in Medicine Hat as well as straighter passable roads throughout the southeast corner.

Finlay Bridge is a symbol of being part of Alberta for the people of this region. As the potential of prairie provinces was debated leading up to 1905, Medicine Hatters did not know what province their town would be a part. Without this physical link, the connection to the new Province of Alberta would likely have been more strained.

The bridge connected Medicine Hat's core to Riverside, and what would become Crescent Heights, integrating the community more thoroughly with the surrounding economy. Cattle could be moved between pasture and to market without waiting for a low river or paying to have them loaded onto cattle cars, people were no longer dependent on the ferry which could not operate until the river was completely clear of ice (and did not operate on Sundays when people risked their lives to cross the rail bridge by foot), and as truck transport developed, the bridge became a link for goods from further afield.

Finlay Bridge was one of the first bridges built in western Canada with thoughts of the coming transportation revolution; the ribbon was cut the same year that Ford's Model T's began rolling off the assembly line. Until the current Trans-Canada Bridge was built in 1953, Finlay Bridge was part of the original Trans-Canada Highway, the only place for traffic to cross 90 miles in either direction.

C.2 The bridge established and maintains a dominate visual characteristic of the South Saskatchewan River especially for the pedestrian walking along the river trail system and escarpment trails.

<p style="text-align: center;">Statement of Significance</p>	<p>Site Number</p>	<p>Category A</p>
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Site Name: FINLAY BRIDGE

Municipal Address: Crossing the South Saskatchewan River from 6th Ave. SE to 2nd Ave. NE., Medicine Hat

Description of Historic Place:

Finlay Bridge is a traffic and foot bridge crossing the South Saskatchewan River, connecting the north (Riverside) and south side (Downtown) of Medicine Hat. Constructed of steel, concrete, and wood, this 900 foot span, officially opened on May 14, 1908.

Heritage Value of Historic Place:

The historical significance in the Finlay Bridge lies with the impact it had for the people of Medicine Hat and southeast Alberta in the first half of the twentieth century, its size, and its namesake and most vocal advocate, William Thomas Finlay.

Finlay Bridge officially opened on May 14, 1908. Although Medicine Hat's two banks had been connected by a rail bridge since 1883 and a small ferry service originally operated by the North West Mounted Police, Finlay Bridge meant that Medicine Hat and Southeast Alberta were truly linked to the rest of the new province of Alberta.

Finlay Bridge is named for William T. Finlay: Mayor of Medicine Hat from 1900-1902, representative for Medicine Hat in the Territorial Government 1902-1905, and Medicine Hat's first representative in the Alberta Legislature 1905-1910. As MLA and Minister of Agriculture, he advocated for many improvements to the region, perhaps most notably the bridge.

Structurally, Finlay Bridge consists of abutments on each bank of the river, 4 concrete piers (40 feet of which are above the bed and 25 feet which are below), and five steel arches (measuring 31 feet in height and are 180 feet length). The bridge as originally constructed was 28 feet wide with a wood deck and a wood sidewalk running along the west side of traffic. A six foot sidewalk was later added between 1908 and 1917 on the east side of traffic. At the time of construction, Finlay Bridge was the longest steel bridge in Alberta, and the second longest across the South Saskatchewan when built. The Traffic (Victoria) Bridge in Saskatoon which was completed months earlier and was modestly longer, however, is now closed.

Character Defining Elements:

The character defining elements include:

- Size
- Continuous use
- Riveted steel construction
- Cast-in-place concrete piers and abutments
- Five spans of curved chord Pratt trusses