

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Site Name: **FINLAY BRIDGE**

Date of Construction: 1908

Address: 2nd Avenue NE spanning the South Saskatchewan River connecting 2nd Street NE and 1 Street SE

Original Owners: City of Medicine Hat

Engineer: Joseph A. Carbert

Contractor: Canadian Bridge Co. Ltd.

Neighbourhood: Downtown

Legal: n/a

ATS: 11;NW;31;12;5;4



Description of Historic Place

The Finlay Bridge is situated in Medicine Hat's historic downtown core. The bridge spans the South Saskatchewan River, extending the roadway of 2nd Avenue NE across the river and connecting 2nd Street NE and 1st Street SE. The bridge is approximately 274 meters long and accommodates both automobile and pedestrian traffic. It is characterized by its five-arched spans of riveted steel resting on concrete piers and abutments.

Heritage Value of Historic Place

Finlay Bridge, constructed in 1908, is valued as Medicine Hat's first purpose-built traffic bridge across the South Saskatchewan River, providing a means for local residents to cross the river and also allowed farmers and ranchers to move goods to the CPR train station. Prior to its construction, residents crossed the river either by using the CPR bridge or by ferry - both could be a hazardous and unreliable. To use the CPR bridge to travel between downtown and Riverside meant dodging passenger and freight trains. The ferry, although less hazardous, typically only operated for six months of the year. The absence of a traffic bridge limited the movement of people, goods, and livestock in the City and restricted the development of the land north of the river. The bridge, constructed during the City's Edwardian Boom at the turn of the

century, opened the land on the north bank of the South Saskatchewan River for development and contributed to the City's sense of permanency. The bridge's construction also increased property values of an area initially known as Riverside, which had previously been viewed as less desirable to settlers and developers due to it being cut off from the City's downtown and railway station. Not only did the bridge instigate development within new areas of the City, but it also solidified Medicine Hat's establishment as a transportation hub in southeastern Alberta. The bridge was constructed at the advent of the "age of the automobile" and over the subsequent decades, horses would give way to the automobile. Finlay Bridge would also play a crucial part in the construction of the Trans-Canada Highway serving as the primary crossing point of the South Saskatchewan River. It maintained this role until a wider bridge was constructed in 1953 further to the west. When constructed, Finlay Bridge served as one of the few locations to cross the river in the area, resulting in Medicine Hat developing as a key distribution and service centre in southeastern Alberta, which it continues to be to the present day.

Finlay Bridge is further valued for its connection with longstanding civil servant and businessman William Thomas Finlay. Finlay, born in Northern Ireland circa 1854, worked for a grocery firm before immigrating to Canada in 1874. After working first in Montreal and Toronto, he moved to Winnipeg in 1883, where he served as a sales agent for the Northwest Lumber Company. It was during his time in Winnipeg that he met and married Catherine Tomlinson. Recognizing the economic potential of Medicine Hat, Finlay travelled to the burgeoning community in 1884 and established a lumberyard for the Northwest Lumber Company. His entrepreneurial nature again manifested itself when he partnered with three other men to form the Medicine Hat Rancho Company in 1888. Around the same time as Finlay's shift into ranching, he also became involved in politics, running and losing a seat in the Legislative Assembly of the North West Territories. Undeterred, Finlay continued his public service serving on numerous local boards and associations. Twelve years after his first attempt to enter the civil service, Finlay was elected Mayor of Medicine Hat in 1900, serving for two years during which time he improved the community's infrastructure and most significantly secured the municipal ownership of the natural gas resources. His public career continued throughout the first decade of the 20th century during which he served as Medicine Hat's representative in the Territorial Government (1902-1905), and the City's MLA in the Alberta Legislature (1905-1910). It was while serving as the Minister of Agriculture that he advocated for the construction of a traffic bridge across the South Saskatchewan River to benefit the City's residents. He continued in the public service until poor health forced him to resign in 1910. After moving to Vancouver, Finlay passed away on May 9, 1914.

Finlay Bridge is also valued as an excellent example of a Parker "Camelback" (Pratt) Truss bridge, the only one of its kind in the City of Medicine Hat. Designed by district engineer Joseph A. Carbert, Finlay Bridge is a variation of a Pratt Truss bridge, which was originally designed by Thomas and Caleb Pratt in 1844. The emergence of this style of bridge reflected a shift in bridge construction materials from wood to steel. A Parker "Camelback" (Pratt) Truss bridge, patented by C. H. Parker 1868-1871, is similar in design to a Pratt Truss bridge except the top chord is not parallel with the bottom chord. This variation results in a lighter structure while maintaining the bridge's overall strength making it ideal for longer spans. Work on Finlay Bridge commenced in October 1906 with the construction of the bridge's abutments. The piers were started shortly thereafter with work completing in August 1907. The wooden deck of the bridge was worked on throughout the winter with work finishing in April 1908, and the pedestrian walkways completed a few weeks later. When the bridge was completed, it spanned nearly 274 meters, was 8 meters wide and supported by five concrete piers; the riveted steel superstructure consisted of five arches. The grand opening for the bridge was held on May 14, 1908.

Finlay Bridge is further significant as a highly recognizable local landmark in the City of Medicine Hat. The bridge design, span, and siting in downtown Medicine Hat make this unique structure a key point of reference for locals and visitors. Its over a century-old existence is a testament to its original design and construction, and the ongoing maintenance of the structure reflects the pride of place the bridge holds for the City of Medicine Hat. The bridge underwent extensive restoration in 2009 and was designated a Municipal Historic Resource in 2011.

Character-Defining Elements

The key elements that define the heritage character of Finlay Bridge include, but are not limited to its:

- location extending 2nd Avenue NE across the South Saskatchewan River connecting Medicine Hat's historic downtown core with Riverside;
- form, scale, and massing as expressed by its: 274-meter length; 8-meter width; two lane vehicular traffic bridge deck with pedestrian walkways suspended outside the bridge superstructure;
- steel and concrete construction including: concrete abutments; five concrete piers; riveted steel construction of five arched spans; steel I-beams spanning piers; original wooden deck components;
- Parker "Camelback" (Pratt) Truss design such as: arched top chord of each span; diagonal web members forming V-shape sections; centre section with crossed diagonal members; varied length of web members from one panel to the next; and
- additional elements including: pedestrian walkways on the east and west sides of the bridge with steel posts and lattice balustrade panel; "Carnegie.C" stamped on steel.

Historic Images



Finlay Bridge with only the sidewalk on the west side of the bridge, 1908 (Esplanade Archives).



Finlay Bridge, 1912 (Esplanade Archives)



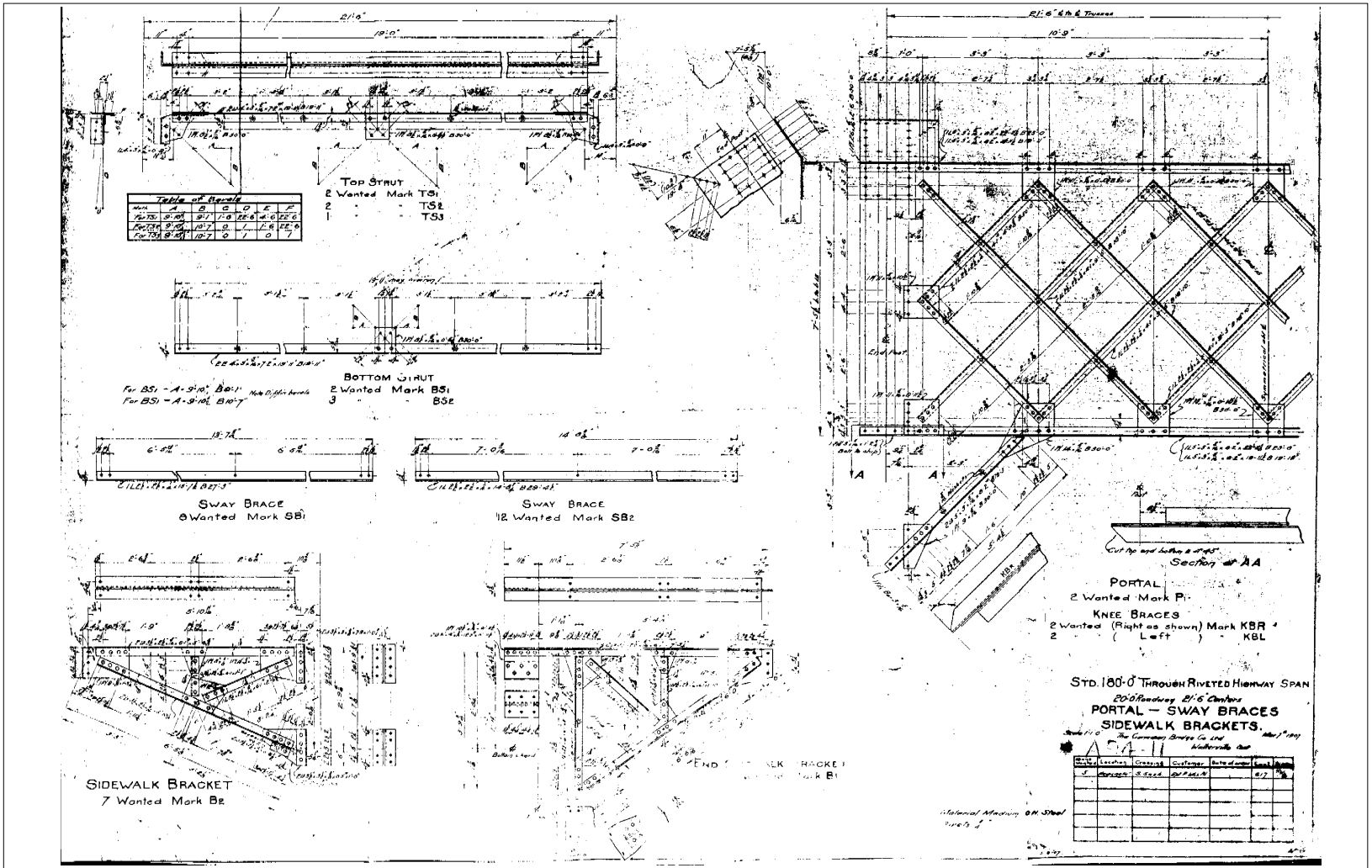
Coloured postcard Finlay Bridge, circa 1910s (Esplanade Archives)



Finlay Bridge looking north, note sidewalks present on both sides of the bridge 1917 (Esplanade Archives)



Finlay Bridge, 1950s (Esplanade Archives)



Finaly Bridge detail drawing of Sidewalk brace, bracket, balustrade by The Canadian Bridge Co. Ltd., 1908 (Esplanade Archives)

Current Images



Finlay Bridge showing four of its five arched spans and concrete piers, June 2015 (DLA)



Two lane traffic deck with pedestrian walkways on the outside of the superstructure, June 2015 (DLA)



Southern end of bridge with River Road SE and pedestrian walkway running underneath, June 2015 (DLA)



Pedestrian sidewalk adjacent to traffic lanes, June 2015 (DLA)



Underside of bridge deck showing wooden deck with steel stringers, June 2015 (DLA)



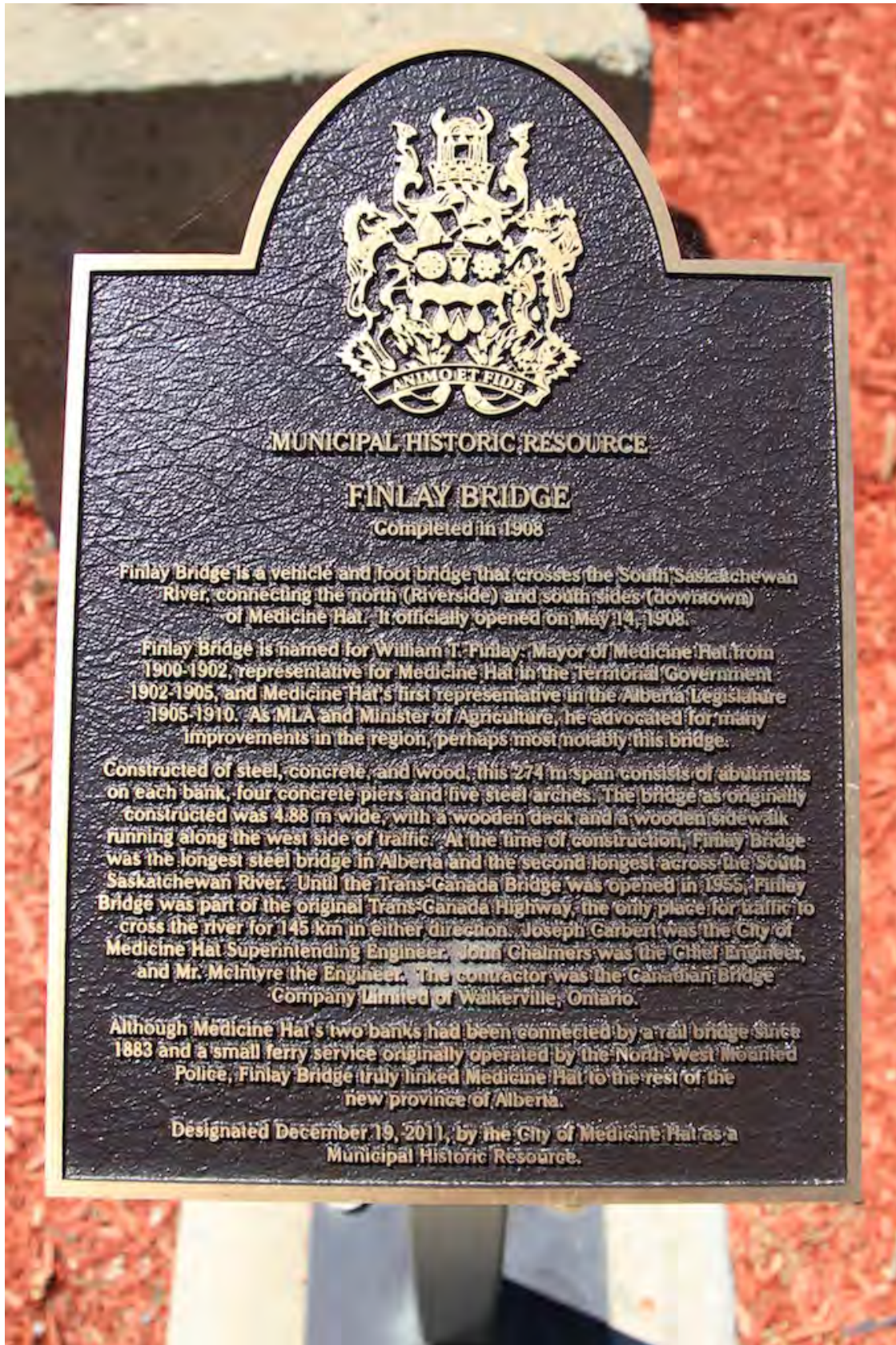
Underside of bridge deck showing bracing for sidewalk and replaced metal deck, June 2015 (DLA)



Example of riveting at connection of top chord, vertical members and diagonal and lateral bracing, June 2015 (DLA)



Stamp of "Carnegie.C" on steel vertical member, June 2015 (DLA)



Municipal Historic Resource designation plaque, June 2015 (DLA)



Commemorative marker for centennial of Finlay Bridge, June 2015 (DLA)

Statement of Integrity

Property Name & Address	Finlay Bridge 2 nd Avenue NE spanning the South Saskatchewan River connecting 2 nd Street NE and 1 Street 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 Finlay Bridge, constructed in 1908, is valued as Medicine Hat’s first purpose built traffic bridge across the South Saskatchewan River providing a means for local residents to cross the river and also allowed farmers and ranchers to move goods to the CPR train station (Theme Value- Transportation and Communication Crossroads).</p> <p>Institution/Person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Finlay Bridge is further value for its connection with longstanding civil servant and businessman William Thomas Finlay (Theme Value – Managing Growth in Medicine Hat).</p> <p>Design/Style/Construction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Finlay Bridge is valued as an excellent example of a Parker “Camelback” (Pratt) Truss bridge 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>

	Finlay Bridge is further significant as a highly recognizable local landmark in the City of Medicine Hat. The bridge's design, span, and siting make this unique structure a key point of reference for locals and visitors alike.
Period of Significance	1906 – 1913 Pre-First World War, Age of Optimism
Chronology of Alterations	1912/1913 Sidewalk added to east side of bridge 1913 Additional planks added to deck of bridge 1920 Concrete topping placed over wood decking of bridge 1924 Wooden plank sidewalks changed to cement 1947 New I-beam installed 1948 Laminated planks installed for decking 1955 Finlay Bridge no longer used for Trans-Canada 1964 New concrete deck installed at east side sidewalk of bridge 1978 Bridge re-decked 2009 Deck rehabilitation, painting, replacement of sidewalks, replacement of guardrails, installation of metal mesh panels along balustrade 2011 Lighting installed on bridge
Aspects of Integrity	<p>Location <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The location of the bridge has not been altered.</p> <p>Design <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The design of the bridge has not substantially changed; lighting has been installed, the original wooden deck and sidewalks replaced, and metal mesh panels installed over the steel balustrade.</p> <p>Environment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The bridge continues to be situated near Medicine Hat's historic commercial centre.</p> <p>Materials <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The steel superstructure is intact; however the original wooden decking and sidewalks have been replaced.</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 bridge is evident in its current condition.</p> <p>Feeling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The bridge continues to convey a strong historical aesthetic.</p> <p>Association <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The association of the bridge has not been changed.</p>
Statement of Integrity	<p>The <u>Finlay Bridge</u> maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance/heritage value.</p> <p>The Finlay Bridge is in good condition with a most of its original historic fabric intact. Overall, the bridge's form, scale, and massing have not been altered since the time it was constructed in 1908. An early modification was the addition of a pedestrian sidewalk on the east side of the bridge completed in 1912/1913. The steel superstructure appears to be in good condition with no evidence that members have been replaced and or are deteriorating. However, the bridge appears to have been recently painted,</p>

	<p>which limits the ability to assess any rusting or deteriorated components. Steel decking with concrete cap has been installed for the sidewalks on the east and west sides of the bridge. The sidewalk's steel posts and steel lattice balustrades have been maintained; however mesh metal panels have been installed to the inside of the balustrade as a safety measure. The deck for the traffic lanes was initially built up layers of timber; however, material longevity, increased traffic use, increased vehicle size, etc. have impacted the original design of the deck. Aspects of the original wooden decking may be present under later added asphalt. Although primary research indicates that repairs to the wooden decking have occurred repeatedly since the bridge was constructed; it is unclear if the repairs to the wooden decking was partial or in their entirety. An additional steel I-beam was added in 1947, to reinforce the bridge due to the increase in the number and size of vehicles. The concrete abutments on the north and south banks require reparging. New traffic barriers have been installed on both sides of the bridge. Lighting to enhance the appearance of the bridge at night has been installed along the entire span of the bridge. A plaque commemorating its designation as a Municipal Historic Resource and carved stone celebrating its centenary have also been added to the bridge landscape.</p>
--	--



Medicine Hat
The Gas City
Heritage Evaluation Form

Site Number	Category A
Community District Downtown	
Designation Municipal Historic Resource	

Site Name(s): Finlay Bridge

Municipal Address: 2nd Avenue NE spanning the South Saskatchewan River connecting 2nd Street NE and 1 Street SE

Consultant(s): Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.

Heritage Committee: Heritage Resource Committee

Heritage Planner:

Date of Construction:	1908		
Evaluation Date:	Y 15	M 06	D 23
			TOTAL
			95

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P	(H) SCORE
H.1 Associations/Patterns	X				40	40
H.2 Age		X			10	
Comments: H.1 Finlay Bridge was Medicine Hat's first purpose-built traffic bridge across the South Saskatchewan River. H.2 Constructed in 1908.						

Architecture (A)	E	VG	G	F	P	(A) SCORE
A.1 Style/Type/Design		X			20	35
A.2 Designer/Builder		X			10	
A.3 Construction Technology		X			10	
A.4 Interior Details					n/a	
A.5 Alterations		X			-5	
Comments: A.1 The Finlay Bridge is an excellent example of a Parker "Camelback" (Pratt) Truss style bridge. A.2 Engineer – Joseph A. Carbert, Contractor: Canadian Bridge Co. Ltd. A.3 Bridge was constructed using steel with members riveted together and originally had a timber deck. A.4 Not applicable A.5 Deck for the traffic lanes and sidewalk has been altered and mesh metal panels installed along the balustrade.						

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P	(C) SCORE
C.1 Landmark/Character		X			10	20
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape		X			10	
Comments: C.1 The Finlay Bridge is a landmark in the City of Medicine Hat. C.2 The bridge contributes to the historic aesthetic of the street and downtown core.						