

Fifth Avenue Methodist Church



Date of Construction	1911-1913 / 1931
Address	476 - 4 (Montreal) Street SE
Current Name	Fifth Avenue Memorial
Architects	William T. Williams (1911-1913) Fordyce & Stevenson (1931)
Contractor	Lussier Construction Co. (1911-1913)
Neighbourhood	Downtown/SE Hill
Legal	36556;21;11-13

Description of Historic Place

Fifth Avenue Methodist Church, currently called Fifth Avenue Memorial United Church, is an imposing two-storey, with full-height basement, red brick building situated at the corner of 5th Avenue SE and 4th Street SE in Medicine Hat. The church's characteristic Arts and Crafts style is reflected by its medium-pitched side gabled roof, red pressed brick exterior, brick buttresses with sandstone capping, exposed rafters, massive Gothic-ogee-shaped stained glass windows, and square corner towers with crenelated parapets.

Heritage Value of Historic Place

Fifth Avenue Methodist Church, first built at its present site in 1913 and re-built following a devastating fire in 1931, is valued as a community institution that has served the religious needs of Medicine Hat for over a century. The Methodist church has a long history in Medicine Hat with the first church, a modest wooden-framed building, erected at the corner of 3rd Street and 6th Avenue in September 1883. With

a rapidly growing congregation, the original wooden church was replaced by a brick building in 1900 and renamed the Century Methodist Church. The congregation again outgrew the church and in 1911, the lots on which the current church stands were purchased. The building was constructed for a cost of \$100,000 and renamed Fifth Avenue Methodist Church. A two-storey manse, with brick exterior and enclosed porch, was also constructed across the street the same year. The amalgamation of the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational Churches in 1925 resulted in the renaming of the church to the Fifth Avenue United Church. In July 1931, the church was devastated by fire. Five months after the fire, church services once again were held in the re-built church. In 1957, the church facilities and available services were expanded through the construction of the Christian Education Building to the west of the original building. The church has made their facilities available to local community groups such as the Firehall Theatre (1970-1982) and Scouts groups. The church's name underwent one final modification in 1998, Fifth Avenue Memorial United Church, with the joining of

the Memorial Salem United Church congregation. The church remains as a strong testament to this early pioneering religious community's long-standing presence in the city.

Fifth Avenue Methodist Church, originally designed by William T. Williams, is additionally valued as an excellent example of Arts and Crafts architecture in Medicine Hat. Initiated in Britain, the Arts and Crafts style was initiated as a response to the Industrial Age and the dehumanization and restructuring of populations to accommodate large factories. Williams, a classically English-trained architect, designed a number of prominent buildings in the city including the Town Hall (1905), several schools, and the Cypress Club (1907). Fifth Avenue Methodist Church characterizes Williams' English roots and understanding of the Arts and Crafts style through its beautifully crafted formal massing, its elegant crenelated towers with corner brick buttress accented with lancet windows and louvres, exposed rafter tails, and massive ogee-arched stained glass windows. The 1931 restoration was sensitively designed by prominent Calgary-based architects, Fordyce & Stevenson. The architects used the remaining architectural

elements in its redesign and modest modifications were made to the original design such as the deletion of the side balconies and alteration of sanctuary's roof pitch.

Fifth Avenue Methodist Church is further valued as an example of the high quality of Medicine Hat's institutional architecture, workmanship, and manufactured building materials. The church was originally built by local construction firm, Lussier Construction Company, using local brick from Redcliff Premier Brick and sandstone from locally sourced Bedford Quarry. Following the 1931 fire, the original architectural elements incorporated into the new design included the church's brick façade with sandstone detailing, steel structural frame, and remaining stained glass windows. The use of local labour and locally manufactured materials throughout the church's multiple periods of construction continually contributes to Medicine Hat's economy.

The church is also valued as a historic landmark sitting prominently on a corner lot in downtown Medicine Hat. Its placement and form, scale, and massing contribute to its commanding presence.

View of Fifth Avenue Methodist Church in the fall of 1950



Gainsboro Studio.
Esplanade Archives, Medicine Hat, Alberta. 1552.

Character-Defining Elements - Fifth Avenue Methodist Church (476 - 4 Street SE)



- Prominent location on a sloping lot at the corner of 5th Avenue SE and 4th Street SE overlooking Medicine Hat's downtown



- Close set-backs to the street



- Landscape elements such as mature trees, hedges, and landscaping



- Form scale and massing as expressed by its: two-storey height with full basement; side-gabled roof; rectangular plan with three square corner towers; three-storey square bell-tower



- Steel frame construction with red pressed brick with red-tooled mortar; Bedford sandstone detailing



- Arts and Crafts details such as: pier buttresses with sandstone caps; square towers topped with crenulations; sandstone watertable, sills, lintels; decorative wooden fascia; exposed rafters; recessed arched entry



- Original fenestrations including: large ogee shaped arched stained glass windows; lancet stained glass windows; large double wooden main entry doors with stained glass transom



- Later (1957) red brick Christian Education Centre addition

- Interior features such as: original 1912 wooden church pews with scorch marks from fire; grand three-manual 1931 Casavant pipe organ



Statement of Integrity - Fifth Avenue Methodist Church (476 - 4 Street SE)

Applicable Significance Criteria

This site is significant because...

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

-Fifth Avenue Methodist Church, first built at its present site between 1911-13 and re-built following a devastating fire in 1931, is valued as a community institution that has served the religious needs of Medicine Hat for over a century (**Theme Value - Spiritual Life in Medicine Hat**).

-Fifth Avenue Methodist Church, originally designed by William T. Williams, is additionally valued as an excellent example of Arts and Crafts architecture in Medicine Hat. (**Theme Value - Built in Medicine Hat**).

-Fifth Avenue Methodist Church is further valued as an example of the high quality of Medicine Hat's institutional architecture, workmanship, and manufactured building materials. The use of local labour and locally manufactured materials throughout the church's multiple periods of construction continually contributes to Medicine Hat's economy. (**Theme Value - Made in Medicine Hat**).

Institution / Person ☐ Yes ☒ No

Design / Style / Construction ☐ Yes ☒ No

Information Potential ☐ Yes ☒ No

Landmark / Symbolic Value ☒ Yes ☐ No

The church is a valued historic landmark sitting prominently on a corner lot in downtown Medicine Hat. Its' placement, form, scale, and massing contribute to its commanding presence.

Period of Significance

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

Chronology of Alterations

1931 - Partial reconstruction following fire
1957 - Construction of Christian Education Centre
2010s - Restoration of stained glass windows

Aspects of Integrity

LOCATION ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The church is situated at the corner of 5th Avenue SE and 4th Street SE.

DESIGN ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The design of the church has been maintained, except for the addition of the Christian Education Building.

ENVIRONMENT ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The building is located on the edge of a residential neighbourhood and Medicine Hat's commercial core.

MATERIALS ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The authentic materials of the building have not changed.

WORKMANSHIP ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The high quality of the workmanship is clearly evident and visible in the building's details, stained glass windows and condition.

FEELING ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The feeling of the building has not changed. It conveys a strong ecclesiastical aesthetic.

ASSOCIATION ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The association of the building has not altered.

Statement of Integrity continued on next page...

Statement of Integrity - Fifth Avenue Methodist Church (476 - 4 Street SE)**Statement of Integrity**

Fifth Avenue Methodist Church maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance / heritage value.

Fifth Avenue Methodist Church is a significant intact historic resource overlooking downtown Medicine Hat. The exterior façade's red brick and sandstone elements are in good condition; however, cracks are evident in the church's concrete foundation. A number of the intricate stained glass windows are cracked or missing panes of glass. The parish is currently undertaking a significant capital project to restore all the stained glass windows to their original condition. The church has undergone two significant renovations that have altered its form, scale, and massing. The first alteration occurred in 1931 following a catastrophic fire and the second in 1957 with the construction of the Christian Education Centre. Overall, the Fifth Avenue Methodist Church, currently named Fifth Avenue Memorial United Church, is well maintained and continues to serve the religious, spiritual, and charitable needs of the Medicine Hat community.

Additional Images - Fifth Avenue Methodist Church (476 - 4 Street SE)

Interior view of the sanctuary of Fifth Avenue Methodist Church


Donald Luxton & Associates
September 2012



Fordyce & Stevenson Architects. *Fifth Avenue United Church. Proposed Re-construction of Roof.* July 1931.
Canadian Architectural Archives, Calgary, Alberta. 37A/78.25.

Side (southeast) elevation drawing by Fordyce & Stevenson Architects of Calgary regarding the reconstruction of Fifth Avenue Methodist Church in 1931. Note the outline of the previous cross-gable peak which was not rebuilt after the fire

Heritage Evaluation Form - Fifth Avenue Methodist Church (476 - 4 Street SE)

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

Site Name(s): Fifth Avenue Methodist Church			
Municipal Address: 476 - 4 Street SE		Date of Construction:	Y 1911-13 / 31
Consultant(s): Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.		Evaluation Date:	Y 12 M 09 D 05
Heritage Committee: Heritage Resource Committee			
Heritage Planner: Jeanie Gartly			
		Total	
		95	

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P		(H) SCORE
H.1 Associations/Patterns	X					40	35
H.2 Age			X			5	
Comments: H.1 First Methodist church erected in 1883 was one of the earliest in Medicine Hat. The Fifth Avenue church was first built in 1913 and rebuilt in 1931 following a fire. The church continues to serve the community. H.2 Constructed 1913, rebuilt 1931. Christian Education Building 1957.							

Architecture (A)	E	VG	G	F	P		(A) SCORE
A.1 Style/Type/Design		X				40	40
A.2 Designer/Builder	X					20	
A.3 Construction Technology			X			5	
A.4 Interior Details		X				8	
A.5 Alterations			X			-10	
Comments: A.1 Designed in Arts and Crafts style of red brick and sandstone windows and stained glass windows. A.2 Architect – William T. Williams (1913), Fordyce & Stevenson (1931). Contractor – Lussier Construction Co. A.3 Good example. A.4 Wooden pews, 1931 Casavant pipe organ. A.5 Christian Education Building 1957.							

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P		(C) SCORE
C.1 Landmark/Character	X					15	20
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape	X					15	
Comments: C.1 Church belongs to one of the city's earliest congregations who built their first church in 1883. C.2 The building maintains a dominant positioning of the streetscape.							