

Site Name: **F. W. WOOLWORTH STORE**  
Date of Construction: 1941  
Address: 602 – 612 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE  
Original Owners: J. M. Bennett  
Architect: Principal Investment Company  
Contractors: Principal Investment Company  
Neighbourhood: Downtown  
Legal: 1491;14;36-38  
ATS: 4;5;12;31



#### **Description of Historic Place**

The F. W. Woolworth Store is a multi-storey masonry commercial block located at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE in Medicine Hat's historic downtown core. The building is easily identifiable by its varying one and two-storey height, faux sandstone detailing at the storefront level, red pressed brick exterior with concrete banding at sill, lintel, and parapet heights, horizontal concrete bands between rectangular window openings on the second storey, and unique recessed corner entry below projecting masonry canopy.

#### **Heritage Value of Historic Place**

The F.W. Woolworth Store, constructed in 1941, is valued as representative of Medicine Hat's strong economic base and sustained development during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and for its association with former retail magnate Woolworth's. Following the arrival of the railway in 1883, Medicine Hat's commercial centre began a period of rapid growth. Commercial development first occurred adjacent to the railway tracks, then spread outwards as more businesses were established. Medicine Hat's initial growth was linked to its vast natural resource deposits, geographical positioning in southern Alberta, and establishment as a key manufacturing and distribution centre. These factors attracted a diverse collection of businesses to the city such as W. F. Woolworth's, and buffered the city during periods of economic downturn and military conflict. Frank Winfield Woolworth opened his first

Woolworth's store in Utica, New York, in 1878. A complete failure, he restructured the business and started again in Pennsylvania the following year. Woolworth's unique business model offered merchandise at a lower price point than local retailers and was the first five and dime type store of its kind. It was also the first store of its kind to allow customers to handle merchandise on their own, unaided by store clerks. Initially operating as a chain of affiliated stores, under the Woolworth Syndicate, a total 596 stores throughout Canada and the United States were in existence when the chain was incorporated as the F. W. Woolworth Company in 1916. Over time, merchandise expanded to accommodate a 20-cent line in 1932, before discounting price limits in their entirety in 1935. The company's business model would eventually evolve to become a discount department store – Woolco's – in 1962. The company's early successes declined throughout the 1980s, with the chain closing its American stores in 1983. Canada retained its stores until 1993, at which point stores were closed, sold to competitors, or converted to "The Bargain! Shop." The F. W. Woolworth Company ceased all operations in 1997, when the company changed its name to Venator and focused solely on athletic goods. In 1916, Woolworth's established their first store in Medicine Hat at 640 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE. The company remained at this location for a decade before moving to a large space in the Becker Block at 635 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE. In 1941, the F. W. Woolworth Store moved to the extant purpose-built building at the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, former site of the Dixon Block, opening on December 5 of that year. The new commercial block possessed 7100 square feet of floor space, a Lunch Counter, and all the latest service amenities. The Woolworth's store remained at this location for nearly twenty-five years before moving to 450 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE, into what would be at the time it opened the largest Woolworth's store in Canada. Following its departure a variety of businesses occupied the block at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE ranging from hardware stores to financial institutions.

The F. W. Woolworth Store is further valued as a rare expression of pre-modern Stripped Classical style of architecture, reflective of the economic and social positioning of the war period. The brick and steel building was designed and constructed by the Principle Investment Company during the Second World War for a cost of \$40,000. To accommodate its construction, a number of early commercial blocks, including the Dixon Block, were demolished. Unlike early examples of Classical architecture, the F. W. Woolworth Store is a simplified expression, stripped of the Classical ornamentation typical of earlier commercial blocks. The building maintains classical tenants including symmetry, rectangular massing, and flat roof with minimal ornamentation that gives the building a linear effect. Building exteriors, including the F. W. Woolworth Store's, from this period were typically faced with brick with contrasting stone or concrete trim. Stripped Classicism, derived out of the post-First World War sobriety, abandoning highly decorative ornamentation of earlier decades. Buildings were frugal in character, handsome with a classical aesthetic and cost prohibitive ornamentation.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

The key elements that define the heritage character of the F. W. Woolworth Store include, but are not limited to its:

- location on the northeast corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE in Medicine Hat's historic commercial core;
- positioning at the property line with no setback from the street, with two street façades;
- form, scale, and massing as expressed by its: rectangular plan; overall one-storey height with single room width two-storey section along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE façade and a portion of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE façade; flat roof;
- masonry construction including: concrete foundation; steel structural frame; common bond red pressed brick with tan mortar; concrete banding at window sills and lintels, and parapet; partial concrete parapet with flat cap;
- Stripped Classical details including: symmetry; overall linear styling; minimal parapet; masonry exterior; recessed windows on the second storey separated by exaggerated brick pilasters with rectangular concrete detailing;

- fenestration such as: rectangular window openings; multi-light casement windows on either side of a fixed multi-light window; recessed chamfered entry; and
- additional elements including an external pressed red brick chimney incorporated into parapet.

#### Additional Images



View of flat roof and one and two-storey sections of F.W. Woolworth Store, 2014 (DLA)



West façade of F. W. Woolworth Store with faux sandstone tile, 2014 (DLA)



Original parapet with chimney incorporated at corner and rectangular concrete details, 2014 (DLA)



Red pressed brick parapet with concrete parapet cap, 2014 (DLA)



Second storey chamfered corner with window lintel and sill concrete banding and decorative rectangular concrete elements, 2014 (DLA)



Rectangular window openings with replaced sashes, 2014 (DLA)



Sole remaining original metal sash window, 2014 (DLA)



Parapet cap with common bond red pressed brick below, 2014 (DLA)



New storefront opening, 2014 (DLA)



Variation in brick between public and non-public façades, 2014 (DLA)

Historic Images



F.W. Woolworth Store, unknown date (Esplanade Archives)



Historic postcard of Third Street, F. W. Woolworth Store at left, 1940 (Peel's Prairie Provinces)



F. W. Woolworth Store during Stampede Parade, 1962 (courtesy Walt Schneiderei)




Relocated Woolworth store at 450 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE, date unknown (Esplanade Archives)

### Statement of Integrity

<b>Property Name &amp; Address</b>	F. W. Woolworth Store 602 – 612 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street SE
<b>Value Summary</b>	<p>This site is significant because.....</p> <p><b>Theme/Activity/Cultural Practice/ Event</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  <b>(Theme Value – City Development in Medicine Hat).</b>  The F.W. Woolworth Store, constructed in 1941, is valued as representative of Medicine Hat's strong economic base and sustained development during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and for its association with former retail magnate Woolworth's <b>(Theme Value – City Development in Medicine Hat).</b></p> <p><b>Institution/Person</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Design/Style/Construction</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  The F. W. Woolworth Store is further valued as a rare expression of pre-modern Stripped Classical style of architecture, reflective of the economic and social positioning of the war period <b>(Theme Value – Built in Medicine Hat).</b></p> <p><b>Information Potential</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Landmark/Symbolic Value</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<b>Period of Significance</b>	1940 – 1945 Second World War
<b>Chronology of Alterations</b>	1966 Addition and renovations
<b>Aspects of Integrity</b>	<p><b>Location</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable  The location of F. W. Woolworth Store's location has not changed.</p> <p><b>Design</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable  The design of the building has been altered, most significantly at the storefront level.</p> <p><b>Environment</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable  The building continues to be situated in Medicine Hat's historic commercial downtown.</p> <p><b>Materials</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable  The aspects of the original materials of the building are intact; however the storefront has been reconfigured and the majority of second storey windows replaced.</p> <p><b>Workmanship</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable  The high quality of the workmanship of the F. W. Woolworth Store is evident in its detailing and current condition.</p> <p><b>Feeling</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable  The building continues to convey a historic sense.</p> <p><b>Association</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p>

	The building is no longer associated with the Woolworth company.
<b>Statement of Integrity</b>	<p>The F. W. Woolworth Store maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance/heritage value.</p> <p>Overall, the F. W. Woolworth Store is in good condition with its original form, scale, and massing intact. The building's red pressed brick exterior is in good condition with no evidence of cracked, missing, or spalled bricks. The rear of the building does exhibit mortar loss that should be monitored and restored if deterioration continues. The decorative concrete elements are also in good condition, with minimal cracks and chipping of the windowsills and lintels. Minimal staining is evident below concrete windowsills. The second storey retains most of its original fabric; however, the original metal sash windows all been replaced but for one. The window openings have been maintained. The storefront exhibits the highest level of alterations through the addition of multiple new fenestration on the first storey of the west façade, the resizing of original storefront openings through the installation of additional courses of brick, and the application of faux sandstone tiles to around the entry. The buildings original recessed chamfered entry has been maintained; although a masonry clad canopy has been installed above the entry.</p>

	Site Number	Category B
	Community District Downtown	
	Designation	

<b>Site Name(s):</b> F. W. Woolworth Store			
<b>Municipal Address:</b> 602 - 612 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street SE		Date of Construction:	1941
<b>Consultant(s):</b> Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.		Evaluation Date:	Y 14 M 08 D 26
<b>Heritage Committee:</b> Heritage Resource Committee			
<b>Heritage Planner:</b> Chris Reddy			
			<b>TOTAL</b>
			60

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P	(H) SCORE
H.1 Associations/Patterns		X				20
H.2 Age				X		5
<b>Comments:</b> H.1 The F.W. Woolworth Store reflects Medicine Hat's strong economic base and sustained development during the early decades of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century and for its association with former retail magnate Woolworth's. H.2 Constructed in 1941.						

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			5
A.4 Interior Details						
A.5 Alterations			X			-10
<b>Comments:</b> A.1 The F. W. Woolworth Store is a rare example of a Stripped Classical style building. A.2 Architect: Principal Investment Company, Contractors: Principal Investment Company A.3 The multi-storey building was constructed using red pressed brick and linear concrete detailing. A.4 Unknown condition of interior. A.5 The original storefront has been significantly altered and the original windows replaced on the second storeys.						

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P	(C) SCORE
C.1 Landmark/Character			X			5
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape		X				10
<b>Comments:</b> C.1 The F. W. Woolworth Store contributes to the character of Medicine Hat's historic commercial core. C.2 The commercial building contributes to the historic aesthetic of the streetscape.						