

Site Name: **NEWS BLOCK**

Date of Construction: 1903

Address: 601 – 607 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE

Original Owners: Medicine Hat Printing and Publishing Company

Architect: Charles Roche (TBD)

Contractors: Unknown

Neighbourhood: Downtown

Legal: 1491;14;1,2

Historic Legal:

ATS: 4;5;12;31



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

The News Block is a two-storey stucco clad building situated at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE in Medicine Hat's historic commercial downtown. The impressive commercial block with Italianate characteristics is identifiable through its parapet with corbelled brick dentils punctuated by asymmetrical column-like elements that project above the height of parapet and stretch down the face of the second storey. The building's north façade is characterized by wooden-sash windows with arched upper sashes below inverted u-shaped crowns and by a centrally placed arched pediment that projects above the parapet. The first storey possesses two structural bays with full-height storefronts and recessed entries below a projecting metal canopy that wraps around the building's public façades.

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

The News Block, built in 1903, is highly valued as a purpose-built commercial block constructed to house one of Medicine Hat's earliest and longest running newspaper publications, "The Medicine Hat News." Shortly after the railway crossed the South Saskatchewan River in 1883, Medicine Hat's growing population and its establishment as a key transportation centre in southern Alberta, warranted the founding of the city's first newspaper. A. M. Armour and T. D. Braden, entrepreneurs from Ontario, established "The Medicine Hat Times" in 1885. Originally a weekly publication, the newspaper not only conveyed local and national news to Medicine Hat residents, but also projected a sense of permanency and economic prosperity to the outside world. In 1886, William Cousins purchased the newspaper; however, upon realizing the level of work required to publish the periodical, sold the paper in 1888, to J. K. Drinnan. Drinnan owned the newspaper, renamed "The Weekly Times," for six years before the Medicine Hat Printing and Publishing Company purchased the paper. The new owners changed the name to "The Medicine Hat Weekly News" and relocated the offices to South Railway. As Medicine Hat's growth and development boomed at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the size of the newspaper and its audience also grew. In 1903, the newspaper's board proposed a new purpose-built building. Work began on the extant two-storey brick building in the fall of 1903. The building occupies two lots and was designed with two commercial bays facing 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE. Once completed, the western bay housed the newspaper's offices with the other portion of the block housing W. M. Williamson's furniture, hardware, and household goods store. The second floor of the building provided office space for a variety of businesses including insurance and real estate firms. Although the newspaper remained at this location until 1914, the building was sold in 1912 to investors from the Netherlands for \$100,000. In 1914, the newspaper relocated to a new building designed by the local firm of Bourne and Morrison, which was constructed north of the Empress Theatre. Following its departure from the News Block, the commercial block's exterior and interior was renovated to permit both structural bays to suit commercial businesses. Over the years the block has housed a variety of businesses including real estate firms, insurance firms, furniture businesses, clothing stores, and notably Boylan's Drug Store, which remained in the News Block from 1935 until the late 1960s.

The News Block is also significant as a physical reflection of the evolution of building uses and architectural styles in Medicine Hats commercial. Following Medicine Hat Weekly News' departure from the commercial block in 1914, the building underwent its first renovation when the western structural bay was modified to suit a commercial business. The renovation involved the removal of the Italianate detailing of the bay through the installation of storefront glazing and transom that wrapped around the northwest corner of the building, installation of a storefront cornice, and resizing of a number of first floor windows on the west façade. The building's design remained unaltered until 1924, when a fire extensively damaged the storefront and interior of the building. Following the fire, the storefront was reconfigured through the reduction in the size of individual storefront glazing panels and the boarding-over of the storefront transom. The News Block underwent the most extensive alterations to its exterior in 1951, evidence of which is still present on the extant building. Remaining Italianate details were removed at this time as were components projecting above the parapet including the pediment and asymmetrical column caps. The lower courses of the parapet's corbelled dentils were removed and the remaining portion boxed over. These modifications gave the News Block a modern architectural appearance, keeping with the prominent architectural style of the period. This building's modern styling was reiterated through the installation of aluminum storefronts and canopy and the application of stucco to the building's exterior. As a program of work to return a number of Medicine Hat's historic commercial blocks to their earlier form, the News Block was rehabilitated through Medicine Hat's 1989 DBRZ Revitalization Project. Through this program the block's corbelled dentils, pediment, asymmetrical columns, inverted u-shaped crowns with dentil courses, and storefront cornice and transom were rehabilitated.

The News Block is further valued as a commercial expression of Italianate architecture constructed during the early Edwardian era. Italianate architecture originated in England as a component of the Picturesque movement, which was rooted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century fashionable ideas regarding classical architecture and art. This style of architecture was represented in both commercial and residential forms. Buildings

two or three storeys in height with ornate detailing focused on the entry, windows, and cornices characterize commercial examples of this style. XXXDesigned by Charles Fredrick Roche, a brick mason from Chicago, the News Block's possesses a refined interpretation of the Italianate style. The block's original design featured two structural bays with a full-height storefront, recessed entry in the east bay and chamfered recessed entry with arched brick detailing in the west - the latter is no longer evident. The most prominent Italianate elements are the arched windows with inverted u-shaped crowns, and ornate brick parapet with corbelled dentils, brackets, and asymmetrical decorative columns projecting above the parapet and extending down the face of the building. A decorative pediment with column and dentil detailing further characterizes the block's front façade.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

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

- location on the southeast corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE in Medicine Hat's historic downtown commercial core;
- positioning at the property line with minimal setback from the street, occupying two lots;
- form, scale, and massing as expressed by its: rectangular plan; two-storey height with full-height basement; flat roof; parapet;
- masonry construction with: stone foundation; soft mud brick laid in common bond;
- Italianate-style details including: height; row of arched windows on front façade; segmental arch windows on the west façade; continuous columns at either end of front façade; decorative asymmetrical columns on the second storey of the east façade;
- fenestration such as: single assembly 2-over-2 single-hung wooden-sash windows with arched upper sash; single assembly segmented arched 2-over-2 single-hung wooden-sash windows; single assembly 1-over-1 single-hung wooden-sash windows; prism glass transom at west entry; and
- interior elements including transoms above second floor interior doors.

## Additional Images



Modified storefront of east structural bay of News Block, 2014 (DLA)



Modified storefront of west structural bay of News Block, 2014 (DLA)





1951 canopy with tongue and groove wooden soffit, 2014 (DLA)



Wooden storefront cornice exhibiting paint loss and water damage, 2014 (DLA)





Second storey north façade arched windows with inverted u-shaped crowns. Parapet with corbelled dentils, central arched sign band with dentils and columns with corbelled terminuses, 2014 (DLA)



West façade with 1951 canopy and storefront cornice, 2014 (DLA)



Cracks in parapet stucco, 2014 (DLA)



Interior of News Block, 2014 (DLA)





Wooden floor, 2014 (DLA)



Boarded over prism glass transom on west façade, 2014 (DLA)



## Historic Images



Medicine Hat News advertisement, 1908 (Esplanade Archives)



Public parade, 1910 (Peel's Prairie Provinces)



News Block (on right), circa 1910s (Peel's Prairie Provinces)



Medicine Hat News, 1914 (Esplanade Archives)





Fire at McNally Men's Furnishings Store (formerly Medicine Hat News), 1924 (Esplanade Archives)



News Block, post 1937 (Esplanade Archives)



Boylan's Drugs, 1962 (Esplanade Archives)



Interior Boylan's Drug Store, 1962 (Esplanade Archives)




### Statement of Integrity

<b>Property Name &amp; Address</b>	News Block 601 – 603 2 <sup>nd</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  The News Block, built in 1903, is valued as a purpose-built commercial block constructed to house one of Medicine Hat's earliest newspaper publications, "The Medicine Hat News" (<b>Theme Value – Transportation and Communication Crossroads</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 News Block is further valued as a commercial expression of Italianate architecture constructed during the Edwardian era (<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>	1885 – 1905 Railway/Early Settlement
<b>Chronology of Alterations</b>	1914 New glass storefront and transom installed, storefront cornice install, first floor west façade windows resized 1924 Repairs to storefront interior due to fire 1935 Interior renovations for Boylan's Drug Store 1951 Canopy installed, Italianate details removed. parapet altered, stucco applied to exterior 1989 Exterior rehabilitated as part of Medicine Hat's DBRZ Revitalization Project
<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 the News Block has not changed.</p> <p><b>Design</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable  The exterior of the building was altered significantly in the 1914, 1924, and 1951. Aspects of its original design were rehabilitated as part of Medicine Hat's DBRZ Revitalization Project.</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 have been covered with stucco. The second floor windows are original.</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 is evident the building's detailing.</p> <p><b>Feeling</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable  The building continues to convey an historic aesthetic.</p>

	<b>Association</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable The commercial block is presently vacant.
<b>Statement of Integrity</b>	<p>The <u>News Block</u> maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance/heritage value.</p> <p>The News Block is in fair condition with its original form, scale, and massing intact. The exterior of the building and storefront have been altered through multiple past renovations. The present storefront is the result of a 1951 renovation where new glazing and canopy were installed. Overall, the extant storefront is in good condition with deterioration restricted to the wooden storefront cornice and wooden cladding below the storefront glazing. Both areas should be monitored, especially the cornice, which exhibits signs of rot and may be permitting moisture to penetrate behind the cornice and into the building. Presently, the cornice and canopy appear to be adequately anchored to the building. The second floor exterior and parapet were significantly altered in the 1951 through the removal of the pediment and asymmetrical column caps and through the partial demolition and subsequent boxing in of the parapet's corbelled dentils. The inverted u-shaped crowns above the windows and dentil course were removed when stucco cladding was installed. Multiple windows have also been infilled or boarded over including: one arched window on the front façade (1914), one small rectangular window on the second storey of the west façade (circa 1950s), and multiple first floor windows on the west façade have been boarded over, but the opening size and shape has been maintained. The stucco cladding is in fair condition; however, extensive cracks are present throughout especially below parapet and below windowsills. Staining is present on all of the building's visible façades. A number of the concrete windowsills are also cracked and should be repaired to prevent further deterioration. The second storey possesses all of its original single-hung wooden-sash windows. The paint has begun to fail on the windows and requires repair. This commercial block was a component of the Medicine Hat's DBRZ Revitalization Project, which resulted in the rehabilitation of a number of the early exterior character defining elements.</p>



	Site Number	Category
	C	
	Community District	
		Downtown
Designation		

<b>Site Name(s):</b> News Block			
<b>Municipal Address:</b> 601 – 603 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street SE		Date of Construction:	1903
<b>Consultant(s):</b> Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.		Evaluation Date:	Y 14 M 06 D 09
<b>Heritage Committee:</b> Heritage Resource Committee			
<b>Heritage Planner:</b> Chris Reddy			
			<b>TOTAL</b>
			55

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P		(H) SCORE
H.1 Associations/Patterns		X				20	40
H.2 Age	X					20	
Comments: H.1 The News Block is a purpose-built commercial block constructed to house one of Medicine Hat’s earliest newspaper publications, “The Medicine Hat News.” H.2 Constructed in 1903.							

Architecture (A)	E	VG	G	F	P		(A) SCORE
A.1 Style/Type/Design		X				20	0
A.2 Designer/Builder				X		3	
A.3 Construction Technology			X			5	
A.4 Interior Details				X		2	
A.5 Alterations					X	-30	
Comments:							
A.1 The News Block is a rare example of commercial Italianate architecture in Medicine Hat.							
A.2 Architect Charles Roche (TBD), Contractor – Unknown							
A.3 Building constructed using red pressed brick, which was later covered in stucco.							
A.4 Few original interior elements remain in the building.							
A.5 The storefront of the building has been significantly altered, the exterior clad in stucco, windows infilled or boarded over and the block's exterior rehabilitated to its current form.							

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P		(C) SCORE
C.1 Landmark/Character		X				10	15
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape			X			5	
Comments:							
C.1 The News Block is an identified historic building in Medicine Hat’s historic commercial downtown.							
C.2 The building contributes to the historic aesthetic of the street.							