

Kerr-Wallace Residence



Date of Construction	1912
Address	360 - 1 (Esplanade) Street
Original Owner	Harvey J. Kerr
Architect	Harvey J. Kerr
Contractors	Christopher S. Lowery (Builder) George Worthy (Bricklayer)
Neighbourhood	Downtown/SE Hill
Legal	47748;A;17

Description of Historic Place

The Kerr-Wallace Residence is a grand two and one-half storey brick residence with a bellcast hipped roof and a distinctive curved corner turret with a bulbous roof located just west of the downtown core in Medicine Hat. The eclectic historic house is situated at the eastern extent of a historic grouping of houses on 1st Street SE and features a full width enclosed porch with an upper balcony, and a decorative dormer with a palladian window.

Heritage Value of Historic Place

The Kerr-Wallace Residence, constructed in 1912, is highly valued as a hallmark of the height of the Edwardian era boom in Medicine Hat in the 1910s and is representative of the success of the first two owners of the house: the Kerr and the Hewitt families. Medicine Hat initially developed in the 1880s due to its positioning along the CPR rail line, but did not experience significant growth until the 1910s with a local industry boom due to the exploitation of inexpensive local gas and the presence

of high quality clay deposits. This finely built residence, prominently sited on the north side of 1st Street SE (formerly Esplanade Street) was first owned and designed by H.J. Kerr (born in 1866 in Ireland) for \$4,000. Kerr was a railway contractor for the CPR. He and his wife, Scottish-born Helena (born in 1871), and their two daughters moved from Collingwood, Ontario, post-1901 and purchased the lot in 1910. H.J. Kerr died in 1916 and the property was sold to the Hewitt family in 1920, long-time owners of the house. Joseph J. Hewitt moved from Orangeville, Ontario, in 1902 and homesteaded north of Medicine Hat. He worked as a ranch hand and hardware clerk prior to establishing his own hardware business, Hewitt's Hardware in 1908. He married Edythe M. circa 1910. The Hewitts, with their children, Mary E. (born in 1914) and Robert Leigh (born in 1911), lived in the house until 1937, when Joseph became ill and the family moved to Victoria. Joseph died the following year. Edythe returned with her daughter in 1943 and lived at the house until her death in 1965. The house continued to be occupied by Mary and her husband, Stewart Wallace, until 1973.

The Kerr-Wallace Residence is further significant as an excellent example of Medicine Hat's eclectic yet sophisticated architectural style, utilizing high quality local materials and contractors. The building, designed by original owner, Harvey Kerr, was built by Christopher S. Lowery with brickwork by local master bricklayer, George Worthy. The grand and opulent house expresses an elegantly detailed design with elements of the Queen Anne Revival and British Arts and Crafts styles. Design features of the Queen Anne Revival style, popular in Medicine Hat due to the large population of British residents, are evident in its square plan with bellcast hipped roof, and whimsical corner turret with exaggerated bulbous roofline. Another signature of Queen Anne Revival style is multiple verandahs, exhibited in the full-width enclosed porch projecting from the main entryway, two balconies on the second storey and a widow's walk on the roof. The building is richly textured with locally sourced red pressed brick with recessed black mortar and sandstone lintels and sills sourced from the local Bedford Quarry. Elements of the Arts and Crafts style are evident in its muscular porch columns and piers and decorative leaded glass windows. The

interior remains highly intact and features Arts and Crafts details such as a coffered ceiling, built-in cabinets and benches, original panelled doors and ornate hardware. The house has maple wood floors and a gas fireplace - specialized feature of many Edwardian-era Medicine Hat houses.

With the Kerr-Wallace Residence's prominent positioning on the tree-lined historic 1st Street SE and its exquisite and distinctive architecture, the residence is valued as a landmark in Medicine Hat.

Historical image of the Kerr-Wallace Residence

Esplanade Archives, Medicine Hat, Alberta. 0887.0001.



Character-Defining Elements - Kerr-Wallace Residence (360 - 1 Street SE)



- Prominent location on the north side of 1st Street SE (formally Esplanade Street) in Medicine Hat



- Original placement and siting at eastern extent of tree-lined historic residential neighbourhood on 1st Street SE



- Wood-frame construction with quality materials including: locally manufactured pressed red brick with recessed black mortar and half brick rounds in turret; sandstone lintels and sills; concrete foundation with parged faux concrete block finish; lapped siding on projection at rear of building



- Form, scale, and massing as expressed by its: two and one-half storey plus basement height; square plan; hipped roof with narrow overhanging eaves with closed soffits; gabled dormer with flared roofline; curved corner turret with bulbous, flared roofline



- Landscape features such as: open, grassed lot with mature trees; pedestrian trail along the embankment above the South Saskatchewan River



- Queen Anne Revival-style details such as: highly articulated details; corner turret with finial globe on the roof; decorative scroll-cut bargeboard in dormer; multiple verandahs including full width enclosed porch with closed brick balustrade and multi-paned fixed porch windows on main storey with balcony above with open wooden balustrade, widow's walk with wooden balustrade, balcony at second storey on north elevation; decorative cornice board under roofline; two interior red brick chimneys with corbelled chimney caps



- Arts and Crafts-style details such as: tapered porch columns; balustrade columns; brick porch piers



- Original windows such as: single assembly 1-over-1 single-hung wooden-sash windows with 2-over-2 wooden exterior storms; palladian window with 1-over-1 single-hung windows in gabled dormer; three-sided bay with windows on eastern elevation first storey; oriel window between the first and second storey on west elevation with decorative leaded windows in upper sash; single assembly 1-over-1 wooden-sash windows with Arts and Crafts inspired leaded glass on front façade at main level; wooden door with original hardware and single light; fixed wooden windows in turret roof

- Interior features including: the original layout; maple wooden floors on main floor; fir wooden flooring on upper floors; coffered ceiling in dining room; built-in cabinets, cupboards and seating; two brick fireplaces with gas inserts; wooden trim; original wood panelled doors with original ornate hardware



Statement of Integrity - Kerr-Wallace Residence (360 - 1 Street SE)

Applicable Significance Criteria

This site is significant because...

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

-The Kerr-Wallace Residence, constructed in 1912, is highly valued as a hallmark of the height of the Edwardian era boom in Medicine Hat in the 1910s and is representative of the success of the first two owners of the house: the Kerr and the Hewitt families (**Theme Value – Oasis in the Prairies: Settling Medicine Hat**).

-The Kerr-Wallace Residence is further significant as an excellent example of Medicine Hat's eclectic yet sophisticated architectural style, utilizing high quality local materials and contractors. The grand and opulent house expresses an elegantly detailed design with elements of the Queen Anne Revival and British Arts and Crafts styles (**Theme Value - Built in Medicine Hat**).

Institution / Person ☐ Yes ☒ No

Design / Style / Construction ☐ Yes ☒ No

Information Potential ☐ Yes ☒ No

Landmark / Symbolic Value ☒ Yes ☐ No

The Kerr-Wallace Residence's prominent positioning on the tree-lined historic 1st Street SE and its exquisite and distinctive architecture, the residence is valued as a landmark in Medicine Hat.

Period of Significance

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

Chronology of Alterations

1912 - Residence constructed
1910s - Porch enclosed
1980s - New wooden windows for enclosed porch

Aspects of Integrity

LOCATION ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The location of the building on 1st Street SE has not changed.

DESIGN ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The design of the building had not been altered, except for the front porch being enclosed.

ENVIRONMENT ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The residence maintains its siting in a primarily residential neighbourhood with mature trees.

MATERIALS ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The original buildings have not been altered, except for the enclosing of the front porch.

WORKMANSHIP ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The exceptional quality of the workmanship is evident in its materials, detailing, and conditions.

FEELING ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The impression of the residence has not changed and conveys a strong elegantly detailed aesthetic.

ASSOCIATION ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

The association of the building has not altered and continues to be used as a residence.

Statement of Integrity continued on next page...

Statement of Integrity - Kerr-Wallace Residence (360 - 1 Street SE)

Statement of Integrity

The Kerr-Wallace Residence maintains all the aspects of integrity necessary for it to convey its significance / heritage value.

The Kerr-Wallace Residence is an important historic residence in the City of Medicine Hat and has a high level of original integrity. The house has retained its original form, scale and massing, wooden-sash windows with multi-pane storms and decorative trim. The roof is in good condition and has recently been replaced with a new asphalt shingle roof. The windows are mostly intact and in good condition, with a few original glass panes replaced sometime in the last 10 years. The porch was originally built as an open porch, but was enclosed with wooden windows shortly after it was complete; new wooden windows were added to the porch in the 1980s. The upper balcony balustrade has been replaced with a taller balustrade, likely due to code compliance. The widow's walk is intact, but has been closed off. The exterior treatments are in good condition but there is cracking evident in the brick in the turret and in the foundation. These areas should be monitored to ensure that further cracking does not occur.

Additional Images - Kerr-Wallace Residence (360 - 1 Street SE)

View of the northeast corner of the Kerr-Wallace Residence


Donald Luxton & Associates
November 2012



Image courtesy of Elizabeth Evans, Toronto, Ontario, and Jim Evans, Calgary, Alberta

Circa 1900 portrait of three of the four members of the Kerr family who originally resided in the Kerr-Wallace Residence. From left: Helena Kerr (née Nesbitt), Helena Kerr (daughter), and Harvey Kerr. A second daughter, Dorothy, was born prior to the family moving into the residence

Heritage Evaluation Form - Kerr-Wallace Residence (360 - 1 Street SE)

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

Site Name(s): Kerr-Wallace Residence			
Municipal Address: 360 - 1 Street SE		Date of Construction:	Y 1912
Consultant(s): Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.		Evaluation Date:	Y 12 M 09 D 20
Heritage Committee: Heritage Resource Committee			
Heritage Planner: Jeanie Gartly			
		Total	
		90	

History (H)	E	VG	G	F	P		(H) SCORE
H.1 Associations/Patterns		X				20	30
H.2 Age		X				10	
Comments: H.1 The residence is a hallmark for the Edwardian era and significant for its link to early railway contractor H.J. Kerr. H.2 Constructed 1912.							

Architecture (A)	E	VG	G	F	P		(A) SCORE
A.1 Style/Type/Design	X					40	40
A.2 Designer/Builder				X		3	
A.3 Construction Technology				X		3	
A.4 Interior Details		X				8	
A.5 Alterations		X				-5	
Comments: A.1 Designed in Queen Anne style with Arts and Crafts elements. A.2 Designed - Harvey J. Kerr. Contractor – Christopher S. Lowery. A.3 Good example. A.4 Intact well maintained Arts and Crafts detailing. A.5 Front porch enclosed.							

Urban Context (C)	E	VG	G	F	P		(C) SCORE
C.1 Landmark/Character		X				10	20
C.2 Streetscape/Landscape	X					15	
Comments: C.1 Located on a prominent residential roadway. It is a landmark in the community. C.2 Dominant character of the streetscape.							